

THE BOOK OF SOULS

A Netbook for the Ravenloft
and Gothic Earth settings

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Notes from the Kargatane:

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All submissions have been edited to use Americanized spelling. This was done simply to give *The Book of Souls* a more coherent
appearance, and should not be meant as a slight against our Anglicized authors.

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THE BOOK OF SOULS

RAVENLOFT

Foreword	3.	Kislova	77.
Introduction	4.	By Eric C. Daniel	
Running Ravenloft		Vin'Ejal	80.
Art in the Land	7.	By Bil Boozer	
By Christopher Dale Nichols		Things	
The Realms Beyond	10.	Mask Doppelganger	85.
By John W. Mangrum		By Adam Windsor	
Saga of the Mists: Appendix	16.	The Ecology of the Poltergeist	88.
By Matthew L. Martin		By Jon Winter	
Tarokka Games	29.	Foul Rat	93.
By Andrew Hackard		By Adam Windsor	
People		Doom Locusts	95.
Burke & Hare	35.	By Christopher Dale Nichols	
By Christopher Dale Nichols		Van Richten's Notes on the Ravenkin	97.
Keepers of the Coil	37.	By Lincoln "swoon" O'Brien	
By John W. Mangrum		War Wraiths	101.
Professor Abelhous Nicholosi	46.	By John W. Mangrum	
By Christopher Dale Nichols		Voodan Zombie	103.
Katarina	48.	By Bil Boozer	
By Francis Montenegro		Weapons of Sacrifice	105.
Marquis Stezen D'Polarno	54.	By Paul Fox	
By John Baker		Tarokka Deck of Many Things	107.
Donovan Kaiser	59.	By Andrew Hackard	
By Jarrod R. Lowe		Player Character Rules	
La Soci�t� de Legerdemain	61.	Into the Mists	110.
By Stuart Turner		By Jon Winter	
Celia Whitmoor	65.	Beasts at Heart	117.
By John W. Mangrum		By John W. Mangrum	
The Patchwork Bride	69.	The Making of Men	131.
By Stuart Turner		By John W. Mangrum	
Places		Out of the Mists	136.
Carcharodon Isle	72.	By Jon Winter	
By Geoff Kimber		Interlude	143.

MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH

People		Player Character Rules	
Harry Kirkland	146.	Archeologist	156.
By Joe "darkelf" Bardales		By Joe "darkelf" Bardales	
Mysterious Stranger	148.	Antiquarian	157.
By Joe "darkelf" Bardales		By Andrew "Quistar" Hauptman	
William Kemmler	149.	Alienist	159.
By John W. Mangrum		By Joe "darkelf" Bardales	
The Sentinel Order	151.	Jewel Thief	161.
By Joe "darkelf" Bardales		By Joe "darkelf" Bardales	
Places		Conclusion	163.
Gothic New York	152.	The Souls (Credits)	165.
By Joe "darkelf" Bardales			
Things			
The Spear of Destiny	154.		
By Kevin Webb			

Fear In a Handful of Dust

Welcome to the *Book of Souls*. Brought to you by fellow devotees of the dark lands of Ravenloft, this netbook is a gift to all who find themselves drawn into the Demiplane of Dread.

In his poem *The Wastelands*, T.S. Eliot said, "I will show you fear in a handful of dust." He was right, of course. Something as simple as a handful of dust can hold fear... and horror. Dust is the poison slipped into the wine of a politician's rival. Dust is the ashes of the woman who immolates herself when her lover turns to an other. Dust is the remains of the vampire scattering on the winds. Dust is that which drifts from the cerements of the dead. Dust is soil without life promising famine.

The worlds of Ravenloft are our handfuls of dust. Ever since the first handful the Kargat brought, we came and added our own dust. An island of dust, a continent, a world, two worlds built of the dusts that bear fear and horror. As the Demiplane of Dread and the Gothic Earth grow, we add more and more to our wasteland of dust.

This is our handful of dust. Let us show you fear within it.

Chris Nichols, *Kargatane*

THE BOOK OF SOULS: INTRODUCTION

October 31st, 751.

NECROPOLIS.



A thick layer of dust coated the hall, pressed into the bare stones by a heavy silence. The hall was vast and dark, the lightless torches resting cold and dead in their sconces. Only the faintest trickles of light were able to creep in from the hall's many doorways, offering only hints of the room's details. The hall was shaped like two mammoth, joined rings; winding staircases led up to the hall's second level and beyond, disappearing into the shadows of the ceiling.

Suddenly, the silence was broken. Echoing from some distant chamber, the sounds of men's screams burst to life, growing clearer, then fading out in a gurgling death rattle. Once, the cries rang out and faded. Again, a scream was heard, nearer now, but ending as the first.

The third scream came from directly behind the massive double doors which led into the vast hall. That scream died suddenly, matched by a jarring impact which shook the dust from the doors' ancient timbers. Two suits of plate armor were mounted to either side of these great doors, posed as if standing watch. The thick coat of dust covered these suits of armor as thickly as the floor, betraying the guards as simple displays, and if they took notice of the struggle outside their doors, they showed no sign.

One of the massive doors shuddered again. This time, it continued to move, slowly opening, its untended hinges protesting every inch. When the door had opened barely more than a foot, three intruders slipped through the gap, panicked and splattered with fresh blood. No sooner had the three intruders entered the hall, their lanterns doing little to dispel its shadows, than they threw their shoulders against the door again and slowly pushed it shut, straining against the weight. As the gap narrowed to just a few inches, an arm reached through, blindly grasping for anyone it could snatch. The arm was shriveled and rotten, pale bones exposed by tears in the withered skin. The arm was undead, and an instant later a dozen of its companions reached through the gap to join it. Although at least a dozen shambling undead were now scabbling outside the door, they made far less noise than the three living intruders within.

"This is madness!" cried the man closest to the hinges. He was dark and spindly, his eyes squinting even in his terror. "Kazandra told us nothing of walking dead! *Look* at us! We've barely gotten inside, and we've lost half our number!"

The intruder pressing against the middle of the door was an elven woman with flowing red hair, and she continued her neighbor's lament. "Kazandra told us the guardians followed strict patterns! She told us we could avoid them completely! We have been betrayed!"

Both the dark man and the fire-haired elf had directed their complaints at the third intruder, a broad-shouldered man with a strong jaw, straw-colored hair, and small eyes the color of ice. He was closest to the gap, and although decayed hands were clutching at his sleeves and collar, he remained calm and determined.

"Dinchara, Cyrise," he began, addressing his companions with a chill in his voice, "I will not hear talk of betrayal. Remember who you serve! Remember the cause! Focus on getting this damned door shut, and *then* we can talk about what went wrong and who to blame!"

Cyrise, the elven woman, grumbled and pressed all the harder against the door. Dinchara did likewise, although a moment later he heard something which made his skin crawl. A rasping hiss, the sound of metal sliding on metal. It wasn't the squealing hinge, he was sure of that; it was too quiet, and coming from the wrong direction. Glancing at his companions, Dinchara saw that neither was reacting; only he could hear it over the hinge. Craning his neck, he twisted to peer at its source.

It was the mounted suit of armor. Slowly, mechanically, the helmet was turning. Turning to look at *him*. The light from Dinchara's low-slung lantern shone up into the helmet, showing thick cobwebs to be its only occupant. The entire suit of armor turned to face him, mutely bringing its heavy, spiked mace to bear. Numb with terror, Dinchara stepped back from the door, meekly bringing his upraised, spidery hands up before his face.

The pale-eyed man felt the sudden extra weight on the door, and without turning to face the others he started to bark a warning—but he was cut off by Dinchara's

THE BOOK OF SOULS: INTRODUCTION

sudden, brief shriek, quickly ended by a wet *smack* not unlike a smashing melon.

Cyrise and the pale-eyed man leapt back from the door, spinning to look at Dinchara, just as the latter's ruined corpse slumped to the floor, his blood quickly sopped up by the thick layer of dust. The soulless *thing* which had killed Dinchara turned its helmet to stare at them, and raised its mace again, the weapon still dripping with crimson gore.

Cyrise and the pale-eyed man backed away in shock. When the second suit of armor also stepped forward, the clang of its metal foot against the dead stone echoing through the hall, the two intruders scrambled away, backing further into the hall.

Cyrise grabbed the arm of her companion. "What are we going to do?" she screamed.

His cheeks ashen, the pale-eyed man raised his lantern high to search for escape; what he saw brought vigor back to his face. "Look," he commanded, "Look at the walls!"

The curved walls of the vast hall were covered with paintings. Although the darkness and the dust dimmed their colors, all were clearly portraits of men and women, no two alike.

The pale-eyed man looked to his companion, grinning widely. "This is as Kazandra told us! Do *not* doubt our mistress! All we have to do is search for the man with the monocle!" Cyrise nodded, seeming to regain a bit of her own confidence. In just a moment, they had found the portrait they sought, but in that time the double doors had been left undefended. The pack of undead had pushed the door open wide enough for them to start pouring through the gap. As the two intruders examined the portrait, the two suits of armor and the mob of rotting, walking corpses closed the gap between them, their lifeless steps slow and methodical.

The portrait the intruders sought showed a handsome and dashing man, dressed in frills and finery. He was tall and well-muscled, with perfect proportions. He had thick, wavy black hair and a finely trimmed beard. A twinkle in his eye told of his zest for life, and something more sinister, perhaps. His other eye was hidden by a monocle, and he wore an ornate sword on his belt. With one hand, he held an elaborately carved harp, and the other rested on the shoulder of a young girl. No more than thirteen years of age, she was a dark beauty, like the man.

The pale-eyed man gave this portrait one cursory glance before flinging it from the wall. A black, round stone was set in the mortar, kept free of dust by the painting. The stone was the size of his hand, and he cupped his palm against it, pressing hard. The stone slid into a niche; immediately the entire section of wall started to slowly and silently swing outward, revealing a wide, short passage beyond.

The two intruders ran into the passage, grabbing the handles to the double doors at its end. To their horror, they discovered the doors were locked.

The pale-eyed man looked back at the approaching creatures, then turned to his companion. "It will take me several minutes to pick this lock. Find a way to keep those things away!"

As the man started in on the lock, Cyrise looked about. Spotting a torch sconce twisted askew, she smiled with a sudden realization. Twisting it, the walls started to slowly swing shut again. She watched the walls shut, but as she did her smug grin dissolved.

"It's too slow," she murmured. Backing away from the closing walls, she said it again. "It's too slow! Those things will reach us before the walls shut! All we're going to do is seal them in with us!"

"No we won't." The pale-eyed man's stony statement cut off Cyrise's panic. While she'd been looking away he'd walked up directly behind her. "We only need to buy a moment's time."

Cyrise's eyes flashed wide as she realized his intention, but it was too late. In that instant, the man grabbed her belt and her hair with his strong hands, hurling her forward, through the narrowing gap, into the vast portrait hall. She tumbled to the floor, landing at the feet of the unnatural mob. She simply stared back at her companion, stunned with surprise and horror.

"It's for the cause," the man coldly assured her, raising a hand to point at her. "And you should *not* have doubted Kazandra."

Cyrise's fear shifted into a blazing anger. She was hurling curses at her companion when the first of the undead fell upon her, and she was still hurling them when the walls shut, leaving the pale-eyed man alone to work. In a moment, the lock opened to his tools, and he cautiously entered the room beyond.

It was a library. He stood in one corner, amid the stacks, and his greedy eyes danced along the titles of the endless display of books.

"May I be of assistance?"

The pale-eyed man jumped, spinning to find the source of the hollow, clipped voice. A figure glided into his lantern's light, but not from the direction of the voice. It was pale and vague, a transparent shape. A ghost. It had obviously been human, and its cause of death was clear: the silent figure lacked a head. Gliding past the pale-eyed man, the spirit moved to the source of the voice: a head resting among the tomes on a high shelf in the stacks. Like its companion, the head was spectral, its features aged and sunken. The body plucked up the head and held it out to the pale-eyed man, just as the man held out his lantern to the spirit.

"W-what are you?" the intruder stammered.

The head flickered with a smirk, a horrid little tic that was more spasm than smile.

THE BOOK OF SOULS: INTRODUCTION

“I . . . am the librarian,” said the head.

The pale-eyed man pondered this answer for a moment. His next words showed more confidence than his last. “Very well, spirit. If you are the keeper of this library, then give me the knowledge I seek.”

The spectral head frowned. “And who are you to offer such a command? You stand in the castle of Azalin, and I am *his* servant.”

The pale-eyed man grinned. “I am Ludvig von Eislund. I am Kargatane, as were my companions, and we loyally serve our mistress, Kazandra of the Kargat! We serve the same master, spirit, and I have come to Avernus to learn his fate!”

The spectral head’s eyes narrowed. “von Eislund, eh? Kargatane?” It pursed its lips as it pondered its reply. “Very well, Kargatane. You say you wish to learn the fate of our master? You have come to the right place. This is the Hall of Records. The knowledge you seek, *all* the knowledge, surrounds you! In these chambers, Azalin collected all that was ever written about these lands. Biographies, histories, romances, tragedies, all this and more . . . Of course, it can sometimes be difficult to discern the truthful works from the propaganda.”

Ludvig cut the spirit off. “Yes, but what of Azalin?!? What happened to him in Il Aluk? Answer me!”

The librarian’s head sighed. “So impatient. As I once read in one of these books, ‘One measures a circle beginning anywhere.’ If you wish to know my master’s plans, you must share in his knowledge. In short, pick a book and begin reading.”

The librarian’s body reached to a shelf and plucked out a tome. “Start with this one, for instance. Think of it as a way to expand your horizons . . .”



THE BOOK OF SOULS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

ART IN THE LAND

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INTRODUCTION

In our land, the tragedies and triumphs of the people find expression in the varied outlets of art. Facets such as painting, sculpture, music, architecture, drama, prose and poetry express a high, if blamelessly morbid, level of development.

Painting

Of the highest quality and especially well-regarded among noble patrons of the arts, are the works of the mysterious man known as Richard Upton Pickman. Who or where Pickman is, is unknown, but his works are among the most disturbingly evocative of the artistes of the Land. His depictions of debased humanoids were especially popular among the wealthier families and priests of G'Henna, prior to the Sundering.

Though his works are of dark subjects, rarely appealing to any other than the connoisseur, Horatio Ontrangio is the Land's premiere abstract artist. His canvasses, worked in deep tones favoring red and black, evoke the thoughts of caves long lost beneath Avernus, dim recesses of the Balinoks, and strange hunts in wooden Sithican hills. Patronned by Lord Hugo von Hauer, Ontrangio is favored by a select group of Darkonian nobles. Ontrangio's most famous work, entitled *Dark Side of the Moon*, hung in Museum of Il Aluk and unfortunately, is believed destroyed.

The most extensive collection of paintings and other art in Ravenloft, lies in the extensive collections of Comte Stezen D'Polarno of Ghastria. His collection contains art from all the ages of the Land as well as many pieces by today's most coveted artisans. Visitations are conducted on a quarterly basis.

Moving away from the somber tones of previous works, Borigia Vetighetto of Borca, was a master of the landscape. Born in 620, Vetighetto traveled the Land and several of the lands beyond the Mists, painting a series of landscapes that currently grace the walls of the Boritsi

estate. All of the landscapes feature prominent landmarks of the nations of the land. Shortly before his death in 686, Vetighetto painted the famous and prophetic cityscape *Ils Sont la Ville du Mort*, depicting Il Aluk as the necropolis it is today.

Nova Vaasa houses the famed Cats-Eyes Gallery, in Egertus. Here, dreamy surrealist works sit side-by-side with images pulled from nightmares. The gallery is owned by one Gerry Olaaf, who claims the art is the work of inmates at the nearby Clinic for the Mentally Distressed.

Michael van Bluhdt (700-740), a former soldier of Falkovnia, has created the greatest depictions of battles in the Land today. Prior to his death, he resided in Toyalis, Hazlan, where, despite the destruction of his mind caused by serving in each of the four Falkovnia-Darkon wars, he produced many fine works. *Death and Brutality* is often considered his finest piece, a superb commentary on the folly of war.

Sculpture

Laars Skolsson of Ludendorf is commonly credited as the fore-most realistic sculptor today. He lives in Ludendorf, but works in his family's estate on Skolskin Island in the Lamordian reach of the Jagged Coast. His sculpting techniques are based in classical sculpture and contain exacting detail. He never allows visits to his studios on Skolskin Island, leading to rumors in more flighty circles that his works are bought from traders at a secret meeting place near the Isle of Demise.

In the wood between the East Timori Road and the Darkon border in Tepest, one may find many fine examples of primitive statuary. Squat blocks of rough-hewn stone carved into cruel parodies of the strange beings the Darkonians call "gnomes," these carvings were left by primitive inhabitants long before the Tepesti people came. According to local legends, the witches that inhabit the mountains of Tepest can command the stone gnomes to life, in order to work dark deeds in the night. Interestingly, a local lord, Sir Frederick Luprine, has

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

commissioned masons in Tempe Falls to produce recreations of these statues for his lands.

The single largest item of statuary in the Land is *Falkovnia Triumphant* in Lekar. A great granite statue of a younger, more vital Vlad Drakov in full regalia with sword upraised seated upon a rearing charger. Contrary to rumors outside of Falkovnia, peasants are not impaled upon the statue's upraised sword.

In Nomdemal Square in Port-a-Lucine, a tall pillar bearing the statue of General Pieter Delapont stands. The statue commemorates one of the great heroes of Dementlieu. General Delapont led the Dementlieuvian defense many years ago when Falkovnia attempted to invade. When he was assassinated by Falkovnian sympathizers, the people of Dementlieu erected Delapont's Column in tribute to the fallen leader.

Gabriel Dunwell, a blacksmith in Habelnik is the creator of sculptures regarding the darker natures of our land. Made in metal and stone, images of fantastic and frightening creatures, rulers, battles, and heroes, his works have found popularity among the wealthy in the southern lands.

Music

Apparently written in Borca in the year 602, the opera *Massa di Requiem per Shuggay* turned up in 727 when the advocates of Harolds and Sons turned it over to Lady Ivana Boritsi, in accordance to the composer's will. Composed by Benvento Chieti Bordighera of Borca, the opera is a revel in degrading pursuits, presaging the works of the Marquis de Penible. Oddly, while the opera consists of three acts, only two have ever been found; the third was not among the items given to Lady Boritsi. This opera is widely banned, with Dementlieu, Borca, Richemulot, and (previously) Darkon being the only lands where this opera's performance was legal.

Since the appearance of the eastern sea, cities such as Nevuchar Springs, Egertus and Arbora have become port cities, trying to adapt to the life the sea brings. Each city has received traders who come in low, black ships, populated by swarthy men in dark robes and turbans who pay for their goods in gems. With them, they have brought rumors of slave trading and strange wild music played on flutes and drums. Seven men have died while caught in ecstasies induced by this music. The music has taken root in the new port-cities, despite edicts against it issued by the churches of Ezra and Bane.

More mundane, but far greater, are the works of Theodorus Paganni and Wilhiem Wagner. Wagner (541-599), a Lamordian native, composed the famous *Symphony of the Balinoks*, along with many other works for the piano and orchestra. Paganni (718) is a master violinist of Kartakass, standing even above the high standards of that land's music. His work, *Der*

Tragedaire, which he calls "a tragic novel writ in music," is so moving, a legend has arisen that he sold his soul to the devil so that he could compose it.

Architecture

The single oldest and most recognizable piece of architecture in the Land is Castle Ravenloft. An intriguing place, undoubtedly full of clues to the history of the Land, it is unfortunately completely off-limits to scholars. The lord of Barovia, Count Von Zarovich, enforces this law with the penalty of death.

The two greatest religious sites in the Land are each fine examples of architecture. For instance, the Great Temple of Bane in Kantora is widely known for its massive stained glass dome and catacombs. Frescoes here depict scenes of rulership, conquest and divine wrath. In Levkarest, at the Cathedral of Ezra, we can find the many arches and niches fill with statuary and relics of saints, as well as the many bell-towers the cathedral sports. In the cathedral, frescoes show scenes of healing, miracles, and a peaceable afterlife.

Of all the nations of the Land, Darkon near certainly has the most architectural oddities. In the hills and moors south of Castle Avernus, a fallen tower, shaped like a man and built years ago by Baron Caidin of Nartok, lies broken and crumbled. The stone towers of Corvia. The houses on the lake in Delagia. The churches of the Eternal Order. The Tower of the Overseer in Martira Bay. The Clockworks and much of Mayvin. The arches of Nartok. The ill-reputed tomb-stone city of Neblus. The Crystal Garden of Rivalis. The Brooding Bridge and Omen Watchers tower in Sidnar. The bridges, fountains and aqueducts of Tempe Falls. All facets of Darkon's architectural variety.

In Port-a-Lucine, the most famous building is the Grand Opera House, built by the famous "Mad Architect of Dementlieu," Andre Sanspetre. According to legend, the first owner of the Opera House went mad, immolating himself and the leading lady of the opera. Supposedly, his ghost still haunts the Opera House.

Drama

One of the earliest plays in the Land is *The Damneable Tragedie of Counte Vonn Zarovych* by Demius the Bard. Written in 436, this drama is both political satire and philosophical work, with elements of farce. The drama tells of a young Von Zarovich general making a pact with a devil by the name of Inajira, and of the great and tragic curse which befalls him when he breaks that pact. The Von Zarovich in the play is undoubtedly an ancestor of the current Count Von Zarovich.

Currently, religious dramas are rising in popularity, despite the general lack of religious sensibilities in the

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

populace. In the north, the mystery and miracle plays of the Church of Ezra are finding acceptance among the people. In Barovia, a drama of the mysteries of the Morninglord reaches a growing audience. However, in Darkon, the mystery and miracle play of the Temple of the Eternal Order have been losing ground ever since the Grim Harvest.

The King in Yellow is the single most reviled work in the Land, banned and destroyed in every corner. It was brought out of the Mists two centuries ago by a single mad Vistani wanderer. Since then, it has brought madness and death in its wake. An underground group calling itself the Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign currently works to bring secret performances of this work to the cities of the Land. They are considered extremely dangerous, and are to be handed to authorities immediately.

A tale of love lost, *Mort D'Amour* by William On-Arden is currently the most popular play in the Land. The play features rival families of nobles, of which two children fall in love. Their love is thwarted when the young gentleman dies, and the Phantom Lover steals away the young lady.

Prose

The books currently enjoying popularity are those of the *Romance From Beyond the Grave* series. These include *The Dead Travel Fast*, *Dead But Not Forgotten*, and *Love Lies Dying*, among others. Honestly, these novels are tawdry and of no use to serious scholars.

Popular works of better standing include *The Castle of Aornis*, *Mordenheim*, *The Vampyr Lord*, and other works in the tradition called “gothic.” Additional authors, such as Phillip Edgar, have produced popular collections of ghost stories. The author of *The Tales of Howard L. Crofter*, with the works known as the ‘Mists Cycle,’ has found a small but growing following.

Prior to the Grim Harvest, the University of Il Aluk possessed the great literary collection in the Land. Especially famous were the Restricted Stacks, a special storage vault for particularly dangerous works. Included in these were a partial copy of the *Madrigorian*, a fragment of a text entitled *Kitab Al-Azif* in the language of al-Kathos; *Unausprechlichen Kulten* by von Junzt; the *Cultes Des Goules* detailing Dementlieu and Rlichemulot; the grimoires *Liber Ivonis*, *De Vermiis Mysteriis*, and *True Magick*; the bestiaries *Monstres and Their Kynde*, *Catalouge of the Undead*, and *Ye Books of Monstres*; two of the *Revelations of Glaaki*; three *Cryptical Books of Hsan*; and a complete set of *Van Richten's Guides* and accompanying notes.

The religions of the Land produce works of prose as well. The holy text of the Church of Ezra is called the *Medicia Deitus*. Banites follow the *Book of Wrath*, while

followers of the Morninglord read the *Light of New Dawn*. Other religions less widely followed have their own holy texts as well.

Poetry

The epic poem *Night Faeries*, by Lord Darryn of Vuchar, tells of the nightly march of the fey spirits of the night through the lands of man. A sweeping cast of goblins, dark sprites, and elves torment the hero Thomas. Eventually, Thomas is brought before the dark queen of the faerie and enslaved as her consort.

The book *Love Songs and Grave Poems*, by Lady Veronica Blackstone of Bergovista contains an anthology of popular works dedicated to her lover Sir Rowan Falstone. Sir Rowan died while assisting the city militia in attempting to apprehend the fiend Malken. Lady Blackstone visits the Falstone family mausoleum frequently. There, she composes her best verse, for she claim that Sir Rowan sometimes speaks new verses to her from beyond.

In Rlichemulot, a modestly famous work entitled *The Black Death, A Plague Chronicle In Verse* can be found. Credited only to “The Scrivner,” this work is a medical view of the many horrors of the great plague that struck Rlichemulot in 697.

In the Curios Museum in Karina, an extremely rare and valuable book can be found. An untitled text of oriental design, the book is a collection of stylized love poems writ in red inks. However, roughly halfway through the text, the assertions of love turn into obscene poetry of degenerate fleshy pleasures, with the red inks giving over to dark blood.

Other examples of the poetic arts include the (fairly skillless) writings and music of Baron Evensong of Liffe, and the compilations entitled *Azathoth and Other Horrors* by Edward Derby and *The People of the Monolith* by Justin Geoffrey.



THE REALMS BEYOND

New Rules for Ravenloft Psionics and Bluetspur

by John W. Mangrum
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From the research journals of Dr. Sean McClintock, doctor-in-residence of Saulbridge Sanitarium, Mordentshire:

Such a mysterious realm, the mind. Often, at the end of my rounds, I look up at the portrait of Saulbridge's esteemed founder, Docteur Germain d'Honaire, and I wonder if we have truly learned anything more about the mind's secrets since his day.

The mind can twist and contort, can hide the past or rewrite it. There are many in the world too weak to bear life's weight; they retreat into themselves, or lash out at the world they think has harmed them. In the cells of this facility, and in the journals of my colleagues, I have seen many pitiful accounts of the mind's collapse. Such is our profession, and the sorrow of man is something we have come to accept. So why does this report linger in the shadows of my mind?

This account was brought to me by a pair of travelers. Although it is quite fanciful, I ask you to give their tale due consideration. Sadly, it is a tale which may not yet be done.

There are people in these lands who claim to possess preternatural mental abilities. The example which comes quickly to mind is the common, superstitious claim that the Vistani can see into a man's future or past, but I have encountered other tales of individuals professing unusual Psychical powers. I have even heard that a few people make it their work to study these "supernatural" areas of the mind with all the scientific clarity which those in our profession apply to the "natural" mind. Although I have never met such an individual, they call themselves "psionics," and call the psychical abilities they tap into "psionics." These are individuals who spend their lives in the mysterious seas of the psyche, stretching their consciousness into uncharted waters. And it would appear that sometimes, when a man sails into those

boundless seas, he can come across islands no man was ever meant to reach.

This is a tale of one such psionics, relayed to me by his worried companions. For the sake of this account, I will assume what they told me is true; at the very least, I conclude that they believe every word of it. The man's name is Marcu V___, and his current whereabouts are unknown. Originally hailing from Borca, this man traveled with a small entourage of friends, and he was traveling in the southern lands when he becomes of interest to us. Although Marcu's friends claimed he was quite skilled in the use of psionic abilities, it seems Marcu made his money at the tables. Marcu apparently had the ability to see into the minds of other men, and on occasion was known to psychically communicate his own thoughts. Needless to say, he was a masterful card player. Marcu's companions described him as jovial and relaxed, a peaceful, if not entirely honest man given to sessions of quiet contemplation. He had no history of violent or irrational behavior.

The account of Marcu's collapse begins three months ago in a gambling hall in Zeidenburg. Marcu was the gambler; his two companions (Artur C___ and Lidia K___, also of Borca) were there in case those who Marcu beat at cards didn't take the loss well. By their account, this scheme had worked quite well for quite some time. On this night, Marcu and his two companions were staying at a typically seedy Zeidenburg inn, relieving a few locals of their coppers. Outside, a heavy rain kept most patrons away, but those already in the inn's common room could be easily persuaded to sit by the fire for "one more hand." For several hours, Marcu had been peering beyond the senses to pluck the thoughts from his opponents, and of course he'd done well. Apparently, the use of these psionic powers is draining, and Marcu was ready to wrap it up for the evening. By all accounts, it had been a good night.

Then a patron entered the inn, her cloak pulled tight around her body, her cowl pulled up over her head to keep off the rain. By Artur's account, Marcu glanced briefly at this newcomer, then looked back at his cards. An instant later, as if given a physical shock, Marcu's

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

face blanched; his head snapped back toward the newcomer, still closing the door behind her. Marcu leapt to his feet, knocking his chair out behind him, and rushed to the woman. To the shocked eyes of all, Marcu roughly ripped the hood back to reveal... the entirely normal face of a terrified woman. Marcu backed off, apologizing, appearing to be as shocked and confused as everyone else. The innkeeper “suggested” they retire to their rooms, and the cards were done for the night. Upstairs, Marcu tried to explain his sudden, manic reaction. When he had glanced at the newcomer, he swore that out of the corner of his eye he saw a pinkish, ropy, glistening tentacle sneak from the cowl’s shadows, only to retreat back into its hiding spot as quickly as it appeared. His reaction had been one of fear, a basic, primal instinct of fight or flight. He had no explanation for what he thought he had seen. After this disturbing episode, life went back to normal for more than a month.¹

The next incident occurred in Ungrad. Marcu’s delusional episode had been all but forgotten, and the threesome had continued to travel from card game to card game. During this period, Marcu had continued to use his psychical abilities in his usual fashion.

The following incident comes from the account of Lidia K____. It is apparent that Marcu and Lidia were more than friends; at the time of this event, the two had retired to Marcu’s room after a successful night. Lidia reports that she had already fallen asleep. Suddenly, Marcu awoke Lidia with quite a clamor; at the moment she woke, Marcu’s reactions convinced her they were being attacked! But there was nothing. Marcu was in a panic, wet with cold sweat. He was obviously badly frightened and seemed confused. Upon waking Lidia, Marcu lit the nightstand lamp, plucked a dagger from his pack, and proceeded to feel about the walls of the inn room, as though searching for something. Only with some pleading did Lidia convince Marcu to abandon his strange search and tell her what had happened.

Marcu’s tale was bizarre. He had been lying in bed, his mind calm, slowly drifting off to sleep. Then, in the calm, he heard noises. These noises started out barely audible, but seemed to grow closer. At their loudest, the sounds were still soft and distant. These unnatural sounds, slithering, rasping noises, seemed to be the sounds of movement somewhere else in the building, but Marcu could not tell where they were coming from. Marcu described the disquiet as “the most fascinatingly grotesque whispers.”

Then a sharp scent reached Marcu’s nose, an acrid, salty stench. Momentarily, in the dark room, Marcu discerned eerie, unnatural shapes *emerging from the walls* like bathers slowly rising from the surface of a lake. These shapes were creatures; horrific, weird inhuman things. Although their shape was vaguely human, they were nothing of the sort. Their moist, glistening flesh was

the color of an infected wound. Their heads owed more to the cuttlefish than to man: their faces were made up of writhing, reaching tentacles, and they turned to look at Marcu with bulging black eyes.

Marcu claimed that the alien beings stared at him with their expressionless eyes for an eternity, but he later admitted that the entire encounter up to this point had probably not lasted more than a few seconds. He screamed in panic, shaking Lidia awake. In that instant, the alien things disappeared completely. He searched the walls for hidden passages, but could find nothing, and he was unable to return to sleep that night. As with the earlier hallucination, Marcu could offer no explanation for what he had experienced. The incident left Marcu badly shaken. He became sullen and quiet. Since he had no proof that anything had actually happened in either incident, Artur and Lidia had to doubt their companion’s sanity. Privately, they decided to keep a careful eye on Marcu. They hoped these delusions would prove to be an isolated episode. Their hopes came to nothing.²

We pick up with Marcu again three weeks later. Although Marcu was on edge, the trio had continued to travel, and Marcu continued to use his psionic skills on a regular basis. At the time of this incident, they were staying in Rotwold. If Marcu had suffered any further delusions during this period, he did not admit to them. It was the dinner hour, and Artur and Lidia were in the common room, waiting for their companion to come down to join them. Suddenly, his terrified screams could be heard upstairs. They could hear him thrashing about in his room, but before they could run to join him, Marcu came hurtling down the stairs, literally throwing himself past them in a frenzied dash to escape some unseen horror. There was nothing chasing him, and nothing found upstairs. Marcu’s room was in disarray, but it was obvious he had done this himself in his frenzied panic.

An hour later, Marcu was calmed enough to explain his actions. He claimed the weird creatures had come for him again, giving details corresponding to the earlier “attack.” This time, however, he knew he had not been dreaming, and the hallucination seemed even more real. He claimed that when he had thrown himself down the stairs, the entities had been nipping at his heels. Marcu could scarce believe that no one else had seen anything.

Artur and Lidia grew wary of their companion, and began to wonder if Marcu didn’t pose a threat to himself or to others during these violent episodes. Lidia took to staying in a separate room. For his part, Marcu grew surly and suspicious, obviously angry that no one believed his incredible claims. Marcu insisted on going about his business, but became increasingly paranoid.³

More than a week passed, and Marcu suffered no more delusional attacks. However, his disposition degenerated. Marcu demonstrated that he neither liked to have people behind him nor sit with his back to the wall.

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

He often seemed distracted, and it was Artur's opinion that Marcu was commonly using his psychical abilities to peer into the minds of those around him, apparently in a paranoid notion that his enemies were lurking behind these mundane faces. Artur and Lidia had been trying to gently urge Marcu in the direction of Mordentshire (intending to bring him to Saulbridge for examination); they had gotten as far as Habelnik when Lidia discovered just how seriously Marcu's sanity had deteriorated.

At the end of this day, Marcu took Lidia aside and asked her to stay with him. He said he was afraid to be alone, because he knew "the things" were coming for him. When Lidia resisted, Marcu confessed that he could "sense them" all around him. Their brackish stench was always in his nostrils. In quiet moments, he could hear their rasping, slithering sounds. And out of the corner of his eye, he could see them. They surrounded him. Somehow, Marcu sensed that these things wanted him for some dire, inconceivable purpose, but that somehow Lidia's presence helped keep them "out."⁴

Lidia was shaken, but agreed to watch over him. Privately, she confided to Artur that Marcu was teetering on the brink of madness, and they decided to bring Marcu to Saulbridge as quickly as possible. They made it as far as Waterford, a hamlet to the south of Mordentshire, essentially little more than a way-station for travelers. Marcu was notably paranoid, convinced his inhuman creatures were always just beyond his ability to sense, and he continued to use his psionic gifts to see beyond his sight, all in the hopes of keeping his guard up.

The following account is a combination of the testimony of both Artur and Lidia. They took rooms in Waterford's bed & breakfast, and sat down to dinner in the common room. The owner of the establishment and another two guests were also present. Just after dusk, Lidia and Artur tried to quietly and calmly explain their intentions to Marcu. What they claim happened next must be taken with a grain of salt; they were both in quite an agitated state when they testified to these events.

Marcu stared across the table at them, disheveled, brooding, and silent. Artur believes Marcu was using his psychical gifts to search their minds, looking for signs of betrayal. Both Artur and Lidia say they saw Marcu's gaze shift from their faces to some unknown space beyond. They claim that the lamps and the fire blazing in the hearth all dimmed until they gave off nothing more than a dull, crimson glow which did nothing to illuminate the room. In the next moments, there was an uneasy pause as everyone's eyes adjusted to the darkness. Then came the first crash of lightning, and Marcu's hysterical shriek. As an electrical storm suddenly burst into life outside, Marcu threw himself into a frenzy, pulling a concealed dagger and acting like a caged animal. Each flash of lightning seemed to heighten Marcu's panic, and he started shrieking gibberish and reacting to the shocked

people around him as though they were demons biting at his flesh!

Artur tried to restrain his friend; Marcu lashed out with the dagger, slicing open a gash on Artur's bicep. Artur fell back, clutching his arm. For a moment, a twisted grin fluttered across Marcu's lips, as though he considered wounding his companion a victory, but this look of triumph immediately wilted. For a moment, Marcu's eyes cleared, and he looked about, afraid, but apparently aware of his surroundings again. Looking to Lidia, Marcu let the dagger clatter to the floor and clasped her face in his hands, pressing his forehead to hers. They both screamed in unison, and Lidia collapsed to the floor. The madness overtook Marcu again, and he fled the room screaming, rushing up the stairs. Artur chased after his friend, worried the man would inflict some harm upon himself. Artur swears he was no more than a few steps behind Marcu, and in the darkness could still hear Marcu's frantic cries. But when Artur reached the top of the stairs, Marcu was nowhere to be seen. Artur could still hear Marcu's screams, but these grew more distant with every passing moment.

Artur quickly searched the second floor, which was small to begin with. Artur could not find his friend, and after a few moments the screams drifted away. Marcu V was gone. Vanished without trace. The storm outside died as quickly as it had come, and the lights returned to normal. Artur's arm still bled, Lidia still lay dazed on the floor, and the others present were still shocked, but all signs of Marcu and his unnatural madness had been erased.

Lidia and Artur came to Mordentshire the next day and gave me the account I have just presented. Marcu and Lidia's final moment intrigued me; although she had experienced *something* unusual, she had no memory of that moment. At my request she allowed herself to undergo hypnosis. Placing Lidia under a trance, I was able to explore this repressed memory, and learn what she had experienced. In Marcu's last lucid moment, he had reached out to Lidia, mind to mind. As he clutched to her sanity, she saw the scene through his eyes. What Marcu was experiencing is the stuff of nightmare.

Marcu saw himself in a strange, unfamiliar place. Although it had the same basic dimensions as the common room he actually stood in, the walls, ceiling, and floor were rough, reddish stone. The air carried a thick, briny stench, and a droning tone buzzed in his ears. Five of the alien, man-shaped horrors surrounded him. Three grasped at him; another clutched a wounded limb, the gash weeping viscous fluid. He found himself grappling one of the monstrosities, his fingers entwined with the squirming tentacles on the creature's head.

But Marcu and these five inhuman fiends were not the only ones present. Marcu sensed the presence of a vast, unknowable intelligence beating down on his

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

psyche, oozing into the cracks of his intellect. It was this intelligence which had reached out to touch his mind.⁵

I have placed Lidia K___ in Saulbridge for further examination, and leave my colleagues to draw their own conclusions. I am currently unsure of what to make of these proceedings. The strongest possibility is that Marcu V___ fled into the night, and still lurks in the area, dangerously delusional and paranoid, believing the people around him are loathsome monsters. If so, he poses a distinct danger to himself and to others, and I have notified our local Sheriff Finhallen of the threat this mind-reading madman poses.

But my mind is unable to rest on the matter. As much as I try, I cannot totally accept this conclusion. Looking through treatment records, I have pieced together a second, more dreadful possibility. I do not profess to be able to prove any of what I am about to claim; it is just a possibility.

Before the Great Upheaval, there was a land to the south commonly known as Bluetspur. It was a place of madness, where the few travelers who did return seldom came back with sanity intact. Something inherent in the nature of that blasted place snapped the mortal mind. There were also fantastical tales of freakish creatures similar to those Marcu claimed were pursuing him, although I've found nothing in the record to indicate that the existence of such creatures was ever proved. When Bluetspur disappeared, we all counted ourselves lucky to be rid of it.

But I fear that Bluetspur is not gone. It has simply moved beyond the limits of our world, just beyond our senses. Bluetspur is beyond our vision, and we are beyond its senses as well. But there are those who seek to see further than the senses, to explore the psychic realms beyond. I fear that one of these realms beyond is Bluetspur, home to some vast, ravenous, utterly inhuman intelligence. When these "psionicists" stretch their minds beyond the limits of our world, they touch the boundaries of this intellect. Having tasted the psionicist's mind, is it so incredible to believe that this eldritch intelligence could reach out, find that little mind, and devour it? I do not have the answer, and I pray I never find it.

Dr. S. McClintock,
Saulbridge Sanitarium
Mordentshire-on-the-Sea



DM'S NOTES

The lord of Bluetspur is an Illithid God-brain, a massive conglomeration of the brain of every dead illithid, merged together into a new, living, entirely alien entity. This creature has the memories and psionic strengths of every brain joined to it, but it is trapped; powerless to do anything but float in its subterranean saline pool, surrounded by the slithering forms of barely-sentient illithid tadpoles. It is a vast intelligence robbed of the ability to directly experience the world around it. The God-brain tries to feed this craving by searching the minds of those around it. The God-brain can read the mind of any creature in its domain, and on rare occasions it can sense the minds of individuals beyond the borders of Bluetspur. It can only sense the most powerful of these minds, those of characters with psionic abilities. If the God-brain senses such a mind, it may decide to try and integrate this mind into itself.

The chance of the God-brain detecting the use of psionic abilities is not great. The Dungeon Master should note the highest number of PSPs a psionic character uses in a single round in any given day. The percentage chance of the God-Brain noticing the character is equal to half this sum, rounding fractions up.

Alternatively, the Dungeon Master could make this check in any round when the character rolls the Power Score when using a psionic ability. The percentage chances are the same, equal to half the PSPs the character spends that round.

Once a roll determines that the God-brain has taken notice, the alien intelligence will attempt to abduct the psionic character with the intent of adding his mind to its own. This is a gradual process, during which the God-brain slowly superimposes the reality of Bluetspur over the area the psionic victim occupies. The God-brain uses the psionic character's own mind as the conduit for this process; in the beginning, this course of events can be dismissed as an overactive imagination. However, with time the psionic character is at risk of slipping entirely into Bluetspur; and only the anchoring presence of other human minds can save him.

Each time a roll determines the God-brain has noticed the use of a psionic ability, the character in question acquires a level of **Dire Attention**. Once a hero acquires a new level of Attention, the Dungeon Master should not make another check for a game week, giving the effects of each level time to manifest. However, after that week, the chance of drawing the God-brain's attention rises: the hero adds his level of Dire Attention to any future checks. (A character at level 2 adds 2% to any Dire Attention checks.)

(The following numbers correspond to the notes in the research journal above).

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

1. Level 1: The psionic hero suffers from brief, unsettling waking dreams, where hints of the reality of Bluetspur momentarily superimpose themselves on the scene. These visions are often only half-glimpsed, last only a few seconds, and typically only affect the character during calm moments. Other than disturbing the character, these subtle flashes have no game effects.

2. Level 2: The psionic character has a longer hallucination, this one lasting up to a minute. These events are still all in his mind, and will have no permanent effects, although they might call for a horror check. The psionic character has a nightmarish vision of alien creatures (the illithids) coming for him, but this vision fades quickly, and ends instantly if another person enters the scene. At this stage, the presence of other people can still force Bluetspur to retreat back into the recesses of the psionic hero's mind.

3. Level 3: The psionic hero suffers from more hallucinations along the lines of the one mentioned above. However, these visions are now semi-real; they end only under two conditions. *One:* the presence of another human mind will still instantly end the vision. *Two:* if the victimized hero suffers any damage (hp loss), be it from the illithids coming for him or from any other source, the shock is enough to block out Bluetspur's reality. Whenever the character suffers an hallucination, a horror check is called for.

4. Level 4: Bluetspur's reality presses heavily upon the psionic hero's world. Whenever the psionic hero is at rest, whether or not he is sleeping, he can sense the presence of the alien entities all around him. Out of the corner of his eye, he can see them; at the limits of his hearing, he can hear their wet, gibbering noises. Sometimes, when he closes his eyes, he can feel their damp, soft flesh pressing against him. However, the character does not suffer any direct attacks as in levels 2 or 3; the God-brain is massing its forces for one more strike. The character must make a madness check as the intelligence of the God-brain scratches at the borders of reality.

5. Level 5: The God-brain comes for the character, the reality of Bluetspur superimposes itself on the character's location. The brightest of lights dims to a dull glow, and a lightning storm rages to life. The other people around the psionic character appear to be illithids, and the hero interprets any action on the other characters' part as an attack from the illithids. Although anyone else present can see the strange lights and the lightning, they

cannot sense the illithids, nor can they really help the character in any active way.

The hero under attack must make an immediate madness check as the God-brain reaches out to his mind. As a note, if any other characters touch the mind of the character in question (such as with psionics or spells), they too must make a madness check. If such a character fails his madness check, he suffers all the normal results. In addition, the character has drawn to God-brain's attention to himself; and the character immediately gains 5 levels of Dire Attention, putting the second character in the exact same predicament the original character faces. Any characters drawn into such a situation at the same time can see each other as human, and can help each other, if possible.

The character must defend himself from the nightmare-illithids. There is one illithid for each character present; indeed, these mind flayers have superimposed themselves on the other minds present. They are totally real to the character; any damage inflicted by the illithids is real damage, and other characters may be able to see wounds spontaneously appear on the character's body. Each round, the psionic hero is allowed to make a Wisdom check. If the character succeeds at this check, he flashes back to reality for that round, and may be able to communicate with other characters, get his bearings, etc. However, the Wisdom check must be made every round until the attack is resolved, and failure means the character slips back into the superimposed Bluetspur reality.

The attack can be resolved in one of three ways:

- ❖ The character defeats the illithids. The Dungeon Master should run combat between the character and the illithids normally, but any damage the hero does to an illithid is also applied to the character the illithid has replaced. If the character defeats all of the illithids, the God-brain will withdraw, seeking easier prey. The scene will return to normal, and the hero loses all of his levels of Dire Attention. However, the God-brain always lurks at the edge of consciousness, and continued use of psionic abilities may attract it again someday.
- ❖ The character is defeated by the illithids. The other characters see the character's body suddenly spasm, shuddering to the floor like a puppet with its strings cut. If the others examine the body, they find the hero dead, his face a twisted mask of horror. If they examine the body very, very carefully, they may even discover the cause of death: the hero's cerebellum has vanished, the brain cavity filled with briny fluid. Oddly, the spell *Speak with Dead* produces no results . . .
- ❖ If the character flees from his companions and is completely alone for even a moment, he loses his

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

connection to his own world and is drawn bodily into the domain of the God-brain. The hero would find himself alone in Bluetspur, in the illithid complex deep below Mt. Makab. The illithids, dreadfully real this time, would extract his living brain, and integrate it into the God-Brain to add to its power. The psionicist would be alive forever, trapped in the consciousness of an alien intelligence.

Multiple heroes suffering a simultaneous attack (as described above) can aid each other, but cease to anchor each other to reality: if three characters in a room join minds so they can all face the illithids, they will all simply find themselves in Bluetspur.



SAGA OF THE MISTS: APPENDIX

Additional Rules for Using the Saga System in Ravenloft

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INTRODUCTION

Saga of the Mists” (*Dragon* #240) was, sadly, written before *Domains of Dread* hit the shelves. In addition, including the conversions from the material in that masterwork to the SAGA System would have made the article *insanely* long.

Thankfully, *The Book of Souls* is not constrained by print runs or page counts. Here are the conversions of the native player character benefits and the domain lords for those of you who want to give RAVENLOFT SAGA a try.

A Few Notes

- ❖ I’ve taken some mechanical liberties in converting the domain lords, most notably with the Reputations of the 0-level lords, as well as those of Soth and Strahd, and with Vecna’s stats.
- ❖ If using the skill system from *Dragon* #237 (highly recommended), it’s usually a good idea to treat the automatic trump benefits (which were usually proficiencies under the old rules) as bonus skills.
- ❖ Clerics have ‘Primary’ and ‘Secondary’ spheres listed. Primary Spheres are those chosen by priests with B or split A codes in Essence, while Secondary Spheres are taken in addition by those with dedicated A codes.
- ❖ If a domain is listed in *Domains of Dread* as having firearms, then heroes can use those weapons as determined by their Coordination code. If the domain lacks gunpowder weapons, the hero has an effective code of X when using guns and can never trump on a shot.

- ❖ Literacy is made reference to in several domain descriptions. A score of 5 or code of C in the Intellect ability is the ‘baseline’ for literacy unless stated otherwise.
- ❖ Domain lords with ‘standard’ special powers from the *Dragonlance: The Fifth Age* boxed set will have those powers simply listed here, and not described. However, the difficulty to resist any of those powers should be increased by one degree. If I had to make up a new ability that happens to fit several domain lords, its description can be found under the first lord that has it. Thus, ‘moving stealthily’ is described under Adam, while the dominate and suggestion rules are located in Dominic d’Honaire’s description.

Everything in here is in an order parallel to *Domains of Dread*. Enjoy!

THE CORE Lamordia

Heroes: Lamordian heroes cannot use miracles. The preponderance of craftsmen in the realm means that each hero receives an automatic trump for a chosen craft (woodworking, silversmithing, or the like).

Darklord: Adam

Nature: Violent and Rash

Demeanor: Reclusive

Reputation: Master (12 Quests)

Social Status: Peasant (2)

Ph: 12X **Co:** 8X **In:** 8X **Es:** 3X

Damage: +16 **Defense:** -0

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

Special Notes: Total ignorance of magic and religion, takes half damage from cold and electrical magic, immune to normal weapons, +5 to In or Es for resisting magic, regenerates damage when hit with non-damaging spells (1 pt. per effect point), can move silently and hide (challenging Intellect (Coordination) action to locate).

Dr. Victor Mordenheim

Nature: Obsessive and Scheming

Demeanor: Inquisitive and Aloof

Reputation: Champion (8 Quests)

Social Status: Aristocracy (7)

Ph: 5X **Co:** 8D **In:** 9X **Es:** 4X

Special Notes: Total ignorance of magic and religion, regenerates 1 damage point per scene if injured. Mordenheim's skills as a chemist and surgeon are so impressive that resisting the effects of his medicine or science is one degree more difficult than normal.

Dementlieu

Heroes: All heroes from the Core's most 'civilized' domain are literate regardless of their Intellect score or code.

Darklord: Dominic d'Honaire

Nature: Deceptive and Manipulative

Demeanor: Helpful and Wise

Reputation: Champion (7 Quests)

Social Status: Nobility (8)

Ph: 5D **Co:** 6D **In:** 9B **Es:** 5-8A

Special Notes: Great leadership abilities, acute hearing, suggestion (any hero listening to him must make a challenging Intellect (Essence) action to avoid having a hypnotic suggestion planted in his mind), domination (meeting d'Honaire's gaze requires an average Essence (Essence) action to avoid becoming his helpless slave until the scene ends).

Necropolis

Heroes: Fear and horror checks related to the undead have a +2 difficulty for Necropolitan heroes. The Church of the Eternal Order has the Primary Spheres of Priest, Bishop, and Shepherd, and the Secondary Spheres of Missionary and Charlatan.

Darklord: Unknown

Falkovnia

Heroes: Falkovnia heroes are limited to a D code in Physique and a C code in Coordination when starting. All Falkovnians have a +1 to fear or horror check actions.

Darklord: Vlad Drakov

Nature: Sadistic and Selfish

Demeanor: Oppressive and Commanding

Reputation: Master (15 Quests)

Social Status: Royalty (9)

Ph: 8A **Co:** 6A **In:** 8D **Es:** 7A

Melee Weapon: Rod of flailing (+12)

Missile Weapon: Horse bow (+4)

Armor: Plate mail (-5) or chain mail (-3)

Shield: Horse shield (-4)

Special Notes: Great leadership skills, largely ignorant of sorcery. Ring of free action (makes Drakov immune to movement-restricting spells), gauntlets of ogre power (grant him +4 to damage, increases difficulty of defending against his melee attacks by +4)

Keening

Heroes: Unfortunately, everyone in Keening is long-dead and mindless. Unless you want to run a Requiem game, there are no heroes from this bleak and withered realm.

Darklord: Tristessa

Nature: Melancholy

Demeanor: Bitter and Careless

Reputation: Champion (8 Quests)

Social Status: Peasant (2)

Ph: N/A **Co:** 6X **In:** 8A **Es:** 5C

Damage: 14 **Defense:** -5

Special Notes: Fear aura, death aura, keen sight and hearing, create dancing lights, faerie fire, or darkness at will, detect magic or lies at will, suggestion (average Intellect (Intellect) to resist having a suggestion planted in the hero's mind), levitate, distorting touch (hero must make a challenging Physique (Essence) action or a part of her body will become useless until Keening is left far behind). Takes 4 points of damage from holy water, adds +4 difficulty to turning attempts.

Tepest

Heroes: Tepestani heroes cannot use wizardry, but must have at least a score of 7 or a B code in Intellect to be considered literate. However, they are learned in other matters. If a Tepestani hero hears about a supernatural being, the Narrator should make a random draw. Good or neutral cards mean that the hero knows one of the creature's vulnerabilities. An evil draw, though, means that while the hero has some information, it is distorted and useless.

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

Darklords: All three hags share the following:

Nature: Sadistic and Selfish

Demeanor: Cruel and Destructive

Reputation: Champion (8 Quests)

Social Status: Peasant (2)

Special Notes: The sisters have access to the schools of necromancy, illusion, alteration, enchantment, and divination. They can cast combined spells (as per *Heroes of Sorcery* or *Heroes of Hope*) regardless of their individual locations. In addition, they can mimic other forms or voices (daunting Intellect (Essence) action to notice flaws). Mirrors crack with their reflection, and sunlight dispels their shapechanging and inflicts 1 point of damage.

Mechanically, they do differ somewhat:

Laveeda

Ph: 9X **Co:** 8X **In:** 7A (49) **Es:** 4C

Damage: +20 **Defense:** -5

Special Notes: Impossible to surprise, can track heroes by smell. If a hero has a mishap when defending against her attacks, he is considered grappled and cannot avoid subsequent damage.

Leticia

Ph: 9X **Co:** 8X **In:** 6A (36) **Es:** 4C

Damage: +10 **Defense:** -5

Special Notes: Paralyze gaze (a mishap causes death)

Lorinda

Ph: 8X **Co:** 8X **In:** 7A (49) **Es:** 5C

Damage: +8 **Defense:** -6

Special Notes: +4 difficulty to detecting her in the forest.

Mordent

Heroes: Mordentish heroes have a +2 to fear or horror checks against incorporeal creatures.

Darklord: Lord Wilfred Godefroy

Nature: Violent and Rash

Demeanor: Harsh and Inquisitive

Reputation: Champion (10 Quests)

Social Status: Nobility (8)

Ph: N/A **Co:** N/A **In:** 7C **Es:** 6D

Special Notes: Poor leadership ability, fear aura, drain Physique, possession (a failed challenging Essence (Essence) action means that Godefroy can control the hero's body until the scene's end) immune to normal weapons, immune to turning

Valachan

Heroes: Valachani heroes have no special benefits.

Darklord: Baron Urik von Kharkov

Nature: Controlling and Rigid

Demeanor: Reclusive

Reputation: Master (11 Quests)

Social Status: Royalty (9)

Ph: 11A **Co:** 9B **In:** 8C **Es:** 7B

Damage: +9 or by weapon **Defense:** -4

Special Notes: Charm, forget, drain Physique with bite, alteration (panther)

Richemulot

Heroes: Richemulot heroes automatically trump when trying to understand and keep up with the political intrigues of the domain.

Darklord: Jacqueline Renier

Nature: Greedy and Cunning

Demeanor: Seductive

Reputation: Adventurer (4 Quests)

Social Status: Aristocracy (8)

Ph: 6D **Co:** 8D **In:** 8C **Es:** 7C

Damage: By weapon **Defense:** -2 in wererat form

Special Notes: Immune to normal weapons, infect others with lycanthropy (every bite requires a random draw. If the card is *The Beast*, the foul disease has been transmitted), gaseous form at will or if fatally wounded. Opponents of Jacqueline gain a +2 to all actions opposing her if they can catch her alone.

Verbrek

Heroes: Verbrek, at the moment, doesn't seem to be producing any humans who aren't cowed by the werewolves that truly run the domain. No native heroes.

Darklord: Alfred Timothy

Nature: Rigid and Isolated

Demeanor: Reclusive and Nature-Loving

Reputation: Adventurer (6 Quests)

Social Status: Commoner (3)

Ph: 6(8)D **Co:** 6(8)D **In:** 6C **Es:** 7A (49)

Damage: +4 **Defense:** 0 (-3)

Special Notes: Alfred has a +5 to his scores for resisting magic, can teleport from moonshadow to moonshadow, has immunity to non-silver, non-magical weapons, is a good leader, and can use magic from the spheres of the Priest, the Druid, and the Monk.

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

Sithicus

The Laws of Nuitari: A random draw should be made to determine Nuitari's position, redrawing 9s or Crown cards. The affects on saving throws can be applied normally to attempts to resist spells; changes to casting levels result in a +5 bonus or -5 penalty to the wizard's spell point pool. Only characters with five schools of wizardry are considered affected by the moon's phases.

Heroes: Most Sithican heroes are elves, usually of Silvanesti stock. Kender should use the afflicted kender rules. Most elven heroes are open-minded and charming, but such benefits are offset by the xenophobia of most Ravenloftians, meaning that they still don't get any trump bonuses for dealing with other races. There's no justice in the world, is there?

Darklord: Lord Soth

Nature: Treacherous and Hateful

Demeanor: Nostalgic and Mysterious

Reputation: Legend (27 Quests)

Social Status: Nobility (8)

Ph: 11A **Co:** 7A **In:** 5B (75) **Es:** 8A

Damage: +11 (sword of wounding) or +3 **Defense:** -7

Special Notes: Fear aura, great leader, necromancy, invocation, divination, spell point bonus, teleport between shadows, +15 to resist magic (if the spell fails by 20 points, or 10 in Nedragaard, it bounces back on the caster).

Special Items: Wounds delivered by Soth's *sword of wounding* are resistant to magical healing; only time and rest will restore the hero to good health.

Invidia

Heroes: When accused or berated, Invidians must make an average Essence (Essence) action to avoid retaliating against the accuser. This tendency towards wrath can be put to good use, though; Invidians can choose a creature or group of people as an enemy, giving the hero an automatic trump on attacks against such victims.

Darklord: Gabrielle Aderre

Nature: Treacherous and Hateful

Demeanor: Helpful and Wise

Reputation: Champion (8 Quests)

Social Status: Aristocracy (7)

Ph: 5D **Co:** 7D **In:** 7A (49) **Es:** 8C

Weapon: Dagger (+2)

Armor: None

Special Notes: Gabrielle has access to the schools of enchantment, alteration, illusion, divination, and conjuration. She can cast any enchantment spell through her evil eye without losing spell points, but the glittering cat eyes that accompany this power tend to give her true nature away. Half-Vistani automatically trump to resist this attack, and full-blooded Vistani are immune to it.

Special Items: Gabrielle still has the Tarokka deck passed down from Madame Eva, and can use it to divine anything not hidden by the Mists (such as alignments, realms beyond the Land, etc). However, if she uses it, the pain will incapacitate her for the rest of the scene.

Malocchio Aderre

Nature: Sadistic and Selfish

Demeanor: Arrogant and Power-Hungry

Reputation: Adventurer (5 Quests)

Social Status: Gentry (6)

Ph: 6B **Co:** 8B **In:** 6C **Es:** 7B

Damage: +3 **Defense:** -4

Special Notes: Charm, suggestion, fear, summoning (wild animals), immune to non-magical weapons, takes half damage from fire, lightning, or poison

Borca

Heroes: Borcans suffer a -2 penalty to their wealth scores (they retain their status, they just don't have the money to go along with it), but automatically trump when trying to identify or use herbs. They also speak both Balok and Dementieu's native tongue.

Darklords: Ivana Boritsi

Nature: Bitter

Demeanor: Seductive and Amoral

Reputation: Champion (9 Quests)

Social Status: Nobility (8)

Ph: 4X **Co:** 6D **In:** 7D **Es:** 7D

Weapon: None

Armor: None

Special Notes: Detect poison at will, ignorant of magic and religion, poison kiss (heroes who fall to Ivana's charms must making a desperate Physique action. Success means that they lose one card a minute until dead, while failure slays them instantly).

Ivan Dilisnya

Nature: Greedy and Cunning

Demeanor: Enigmatic and Unpredictable

Reputation: Adventurer (6 Quests)

Social Status: Aristocracy (7)

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

Ph: 4X **Co:** 6X **In:** 9X **Es:** 6D

Weapon: None

Armor: None

Special Notes: No sense of smell or taste, poor leadership skills, and can use poisons to kill instantly, inflict 12 points of damage, or leave a victim weak and paralyzed for 3 days. He can also use more specialized poisons, but they take time to develop. Ivan is immune to all forms of poison, paralysis, or disease.

Barovia

Heroes: Barovians must make a fear check to step outside at night, but gain a +1 to Intellect actions regarding the creatures that make them so fearful of the dark. Barovians also have no access to miracles.

Gundarakites, meanwhile, have different psychological weaknesses. When confronted by an authority figure, an Essence (Essence) action of average difficulty is needed to avoid blind obedience. However, Gundarakites also trump automatically when flattering or acting submissive to their betters. The Cult of the Morninglord has the Primary Spheres of the Priest, Druid, and Healer, with Secondary Spheres of the Monk and Missionary.

Darklord: Count Strahd von Zarovich

Nature: Obsessive and Scheming

Demeanor: Oppressive and Commanding

Reputation: Legend (24 Quests)

Social Status: Royalty (9)

Ph: 11A **Co:** 8A **In:** 9A **Es:** 8B

Damage: +7 or by weapon **Defense:** -5

Special Notes: Strahd can use magic from the schools of necromancy, conjuration, invocation, abjuration, and divination, and has good leadership abilities. He also has a charm gaze, alteration (wolf, mist, or bat), Physique drain, immunity to normal weapons, takes half damage from cold or electricity, can summon bats, wolves, or his undead hordes, and has control over numerous inanimate objects in Barovia.

Kartakass

Heroes: All native Kartakans automatically trump when attempting to perform musical actions.

Darklord: Harkon Lukas

Nature: Arrogant and Power-Hungry

Demeanor: Motivated and Hopeful

Reputation: Champion (7 Quests)

Social Status: Guildsman (5)

Ph: 7(9)B **Co:** 8C **In:** 8B (64) **Es:** 7B

Damage: +8 (cursed sword) or +12 (claws)

Defense: -1 (human) -4 (wolfwere)

Special Abilities: Harkon can adopt wolf or wolfwere form at will, is immune to non-iron, non-magical weapons, and can cast spells from the schools of invocation, illusion, or alteration.

Forlorn

Heroes: Another realm that has yet to contribute to the champions of the Dark Domains, unfortunately.

Darklord: Tristen ApBlanc

Nature: Deceptive and Manipulative

Demeanor: Helpful and Wise

Reputation: Master (11 Quests)

Social Status: Nobility (8)

Ph: 8A **Co:** 8B **In:** 8C **Es:** 7B

Damage: Physique drain (ghost) or +11 (vampyre)

Defense: -5

Special Notes: As a ghost, Tristen can dominate by gaze, keen to emit a death aura, can cause revulsion (make a challenging Physique (Essence) action or suffer a -6 to all actions until healed), and possess sleepers until dawn. He can also rejuvenate all his wounds, but has to rest until the start of the next scene after doing so.

As a vampyre, Tristen can summon wolves and charm victims of his bite (using Physique instead of Essence as the opposing score).

In either form, Tristen is immune to normal weapons.

Hazlan

Heroes: Hazlani heroes of Mulan descent are always literate and automatically trump when dealing with situations where social standing is important. Rashemi heroes lose two points of wealth, but gain +1 to their Physique scores.

The Church of Bane has the Primary Spheres of the Priest, the Bishop, and the Healer, and the Secondary Spheres of the Monk and the Shepherd.

Darklord: Hazlik

Nature: Greedy and Obsessive

Demeanor: Malevolent and Power-Hungry

Reputation: Master (12 Quests)

Social Status: Nobility (8)

Ph: 5X **Co:** 9X **In:** 9A (81) **Es:** 5D

Weapon: Dagger (+2)

Armor: None

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

Special Notes: Hazlik can cast spells from the schools of alteration, invocation, abjuration, divination, and necromancy. He can also detect magic used in Hazlan within a 10-mile radius, minus 1 mile for every 5 points put into the spell. Anyone who takes possession of his pendant after his death must make a daunting Essence action each night to avoid dying and having his body possessed by the ghost of Hazlik.

Nova Vaasa

Heroes: Nova Vaasan heroes with wealth scores of 2-5 lose one point off of those scores to reflect the abject poverty of the domain. Those with scores of 6 are treated normally, while those with scores of 7-9 are members of the nobility and must choose a noble family to be part of. Nova Vaasans always trump when interacting with or riding horses. Spheres for the Church of Bane can be found under the Hazlan entry.

Darklord: Sir Tristen Hiregaard / Malken

Nature: Scrupulous and Precise/Sadistic and Selfish

Demeanor: Generous and Prudent/Violent and Rash

Reputation: Champion (8 Quests)

Social Status: Nobility (8)

Ph: 9A **Co:** 8B **In:** 6C **Es:** 9A/4X

Weapon: Long sword, defender (base +7, can add up to +8 to damage, defense, or both)

Armor: Chain mail of distinction (-5)

Special Notes: Great leader

Sea of Sorrows

Heroes: None.

Darklord: Captain Pieter van Riese

Nature: Obsessive and Scheming

Demeanor: Oppressive and Commanding

Reputation: Master (14 Quests)

Social Status: Guildsman (5)

Ph: 9C **Co:** 7C **In:** 7C **Es:** 6B

Damage: +6, drains 2 points of Physique

Defense: -8

Special Notes: Dominate gaze, paralysis aura (on the Relentless, not the captain himself), summon bowlyns, create fog.

Markovia

Heroes: Sadly, any human who spends more than a few days on this forsaken isle will fall into Markov's hands and wind up a brutal, near-mindless broken one.

Darklord: Frantisek Markov

Nature: Rash and Inquisitive

Demeanor: Sadistic and Selfish

Reputation: Adventurer (5 Quests)

Social Status: Tradesman (4)

Ph: 9X **Co:** 9D **In:** 9A **Es:** 5D

Damage: +4 **Defense:** -2

Special Notes: Martok has keen senses of smell and hearing, and can shapechange into any animal form at will, shifting his 18 points of Physical abilities around as appropriate. He also heals up to 6 points of damage with every change.

The Nocturnal Sea

Heroes: None.

Darklord: Meredoth

Nature: Inquisitive and Aloof

Demeanor: Careful and Methodical

Reputation: Hero (20 Quests)

Social Status: Aristocracy (7)

Ph: 7X **Co:** 9X **In:** 10A (100) **Es:** 4C

Weapon: Staff (+2)

Armor: Bracers of defense and cloak of protection (-6 total)

Special Notes: Meredoth can cast spells from the schools of necromancy, abjuration, divination, invocation and conjuration. Undead with a Physique and Essence total of less than 15 find that their attacks and powers are of no use against Meredoth.

Vechor

Heroes: Vechorian heroes suffer a -1 penalty when attempting to resist illusion magic. Wizards of this domain must study the art of wild magic, which works as normal wizardry but with some important differences. When a wild mage casts a spell, he can choose to automatically trump. However, if the card drawn for the trump is of a suit different from that of the original card, the spell goes wild. It may or may not work, but the effects are never what the spellcaster really intended.

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

Darklord: **Easan the Mad**

Nature: Frenzied

Demeanor: Rash and Inquisitive

Reputation: Master (12 Quests)

Social Status: Aristocracy (7)

Ph: 5X **Co:** 9D **In:** 9A/3X **Es:** 4C/3X

Weapon: Stiletto (+1) or bare-handed when the fiend dominates him (+3)

Armor: None

Special Notes: Easan can cast spells from the schools of necromancy, conjuration, elementalism, alteration, and illusion. He also can read the thoughts of any creature in his domain.

ISLANDS OF TERROR

Bluetspur

Heroes: Any resident of this domain is either an illithid or a mental wreck.

Lord: **Illithid God-Brain**

Nature: Unknown

Demeanor: Deceptive and Manipulative

Reputation: Hero (20 Quests)

Social Status: N/A

The brain's statistics are unknown, but its psionic powers are all but limitless.

G'Henna

Heroes: G'Hennan heroes automatically trump when attempting to find food, water, or shelter in the desert. Priests of Zakhata the Provider use the Primary Spheres of the Priest, the Druid, and the Monk, with the Secondary Spheres of the Missionary and the Bishop.

Lord: **Yagno Petrovna**

Nature: Frenzied and Pious

Demeanor: Harsh and Corrupt

Reputation: Master (11 Quests)

Social Status: Aristocracy (7)

Ph: 7D **Co:** 6D **In:** 6C **Es:** 8A

Weapon: Dagger (+2)

Armor: None

Special Notes: Yagno is a good leader, and can use the Spheres of the Priest, the Bishop, and the Druid. He also is able to charm anyone listening to one of his sermons, and can transform believers into mongrelmen when standing at the High Altar.

I'Cath

Heroes: None.

Lord: **Tsien Chiang**

Nature: Obsessive and Scheming

Demeanor: Commanding and Bigoted

Reputation: Hero (20 Quests)

Social Status: Royalty (9)

Ph: 7D **Co:** 9D **In:** 10A (100) **Es:** 8C

Weapon: Dagger (+2)

Armor: None

Special Notes: Tsien can cast spells from the schools of invocation, necromancy, abjuration, divination, and conjuration, and can transform into an evil treant at will.

Kalidnay

Heroes: Kalidnay heroes should be generated using the rules in the DARK SUN world, then translated over to Ravenloft and the SAGA System.

Lord: **Thakok-An**

Nature: Greedy and Obsessive

Demeanor: Harsh and Corrupt

Reputation: Master (12 Quests)

Social Status: Nobility (8)

Ph: 5B **Co:** 7B **In:** 7C **Es:** 8A (64)

Weapon: Bone Club (+3)

Armor: None

Special Notes: In addition to half-elf benefits, Thakok-An can use the Spheres of the Priest, the Bishop, the Charlatan, the Missionary, and the Healer. Her psionic powers are best represented with a second pool of 64 points and powers mimicking the school of Enchantment and the Sphere of the Monk.

Nosos

Heroes: Heroes from Nosos that don't start with a Wealth score of 7-9 lose 1 point from the score and never trump on social interactions with the upper class. All Nosos natives gain a +1 to actions to resist disease, but upper-class citizens must make a fear check when confronted with the ill or dying.

Lord: **Malus Sceleris**

Nature: Vengeful

Demeanor: Conniving

Reputation: Adventurer (4 Quests)

Social Status: Nobility (8)

Ph: 7A **Co:** 8B **In:** 10C **Es:** 9B

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

Weapon: Short sword (+3)

Armor: None

Special Notes: Malus is a good leader, and supplements this with a charm ability. However, use of this power leaves Malus all but incapacitated (+4 to any actions against him) with headaches for the next few hours. In addition, Malus can create disease at will, and the illness cannot be reversed without powerful magic or items.

Odiare

Heroes: Odiare's heroes are limited to C codes in all abilities, know no language but Italian to start with, and have a maximum wealth score of 5.

Lord: Maligno

Nature: Cruel and Destructive

Demeanor: Naive

Reputation: Adventurer (6 Quests)

Social Status: N/A

Ph: 5X **Co:** 7X **In:** 8C **Es:** 6C

Damage: +2 **Defense:** -3

Special Notes: Paralysis, ventriloquism (must make a challenging Intellect (Essence) action to determine that the voice is a projection), taunt (must make a challenging Essence (Essence) action to avoid flying into a frenzy), dance (challenging Essence (Essence) action, failure curses the target to dance helplessly until exhausted or stopped by magic or death).

Souragne

Heroes: Souragnien shamans use the Primary Spheres of the Healer, the Druid, and the Bishop, with the Secondary Spheres of the Monk and the Missionary. Heroes with a Wealth score of 6 or less find that their final score is reduced 1 point due to the strong social divisions and widespread poverty of this swampy isle.

Lord: Anton Misroi

Nature: Sadistic and Selfish

Demeanor: Dramatic

Reputation: Adventurer (6 Quests)

Social Status: Aristocracy (8)

Ph: 7B **Co:** 9B **In:** 8C **Es:** 6C

Damage: +8 **Defense:** 0

Special Notes: Anton can transfer himself between plants at will and regenerate himself by merging with the swamp. He can cause death or disease at will, speak with the dead, animate as many dead as he can find corpses (and the swamp is *littered* with corpses), and duplicate

any necromantic effect with the *dance of the dead*, which takes him only one minute to perform.

Vorostokov

Heroes: Vorostokov's heroes gain a +1 bonus to their Physique scores. Miracle workers don't exist in this domain, and wizards must have Physiques of 8 to survive.

Lord: Gregor Zolnik

Nature: Rash and Bloodthirsty

Demeanor: Mysterious and Independent

Reputation: Champion (8 Quests)

Social Status: Nobility (8)

Ph: 8A **Co:** 7A **In:** 6B **Es:** 6A

Weapon: Bastard Sword of Renown (+11) or +24 as werewolf

Defense: -4 (-5)

Special Notes: Gregor can move stealthily, charm snakes and wolves, will grasp a victim's neck and inflict 12 points of damage a minute if the defense against his werewolf form's attack is a mishap. If a victim of this form of attack is grasped and fails an average Physique (Coordination) check each minute, the hero loses all cards and will die in a few moments if nothing is done to save him.

THE AMBER WASTES

Har'Akir

Heroes: Har'Akiri natives are unable to use miraculous magic. They automatically trump for desert survival actions, and receive a +1 to fear and horror checks against the creatures of the desert (mummies, desert zombies, and the like).

Overlord: Ankhtepot

Nature: Nostalgic and Mysterious

Demeanor: Malevolent

Reputation: Master (13 Quests)

Social Status: Royalty (9)

Ph: 11D **Co:** 4D **In:** 8C **Es:** 12A (144)

Damage: +9 **Defense:** -7

Special Notes: Ankhtepot's rotting touch will kill a hero in 1-3 days (draw a card: Evil cards mean that the hero will not see tomorrow, neutral cards give the victim two days, while good cards allow him to hold on for three sunrises) and costs 2 points of Physique and 1 point of Essence for each day that passes. Only powerful magic can cure the disease and restore the lost points. Ankhtepot adds a +6 difficulty to turning attempts and takes 3 points of damage from nonevil holy symbols. The

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

ankh he wears, though, restores 6 points of damage a minute. Ankhtepot has +5 to resist magic, and his mere presence forces a fear check at +4 difficulty. This undead pharaoh also wields magic from the Spheres of the Priest, the Bishop, the Druid, the Traitor, and the Shepherd.

Pharazia

Heroes: City-dwelling heroes are always literate, while nomadic heroes automatically trump when riding. No hero from this domain can use miracles, and all wizards must pick the schools of elementalism, abjuration, and necromancy.

Overlord: **Diamabel**

Nature: Cruel and Destructive

Demeanor: Devout and Passionate

Reputation: Hero (16 Quests)

Social Status: Nobility (8)

Ph: 10A **Co:** 9A **In:** 8C **Es:** 8A/4X

Damage: +12 **Defense:** -5

Special Notes: All who would confront Diamabel in battle must first pass a fear check in order to stand against him. He can buffet an opponent with his wings and, if the attack succeeds, the hero cannot make any actions but defense maneuvers for a minute. He regenerates 1 point of damage each minute and can completely heal himself once each day.

Sebua

Heroes: Sebuian heroes must start with codes of at best D in the Physical Abilities and C in the Mental abilities. In addition, they speak their own language at first, and have a maximum social status of 1. They automatically trump on desert survival or running actions.

Overlord: **Tiyet**

Nature: Isolated

Demeanor: Enigmatic

Reputation: Master (12 Quests)

Social Status: Royalty (9)

Ph: 5X **Co:** 6X **In:** 6C **Es:** 8B

Damage: +7 **Defense:** -0

Special Notes: Tiyet has a paralyzing gaze and touch (the gaze has an average difficulty to resist if she's simply looking at the victim, challenging if her opponent has made eye contact with her, and daunting if she is touching the poor soul), and the damage of her touch (listed above) can be delayed for two hours. Her kiss drains 1 point of Physique a minute, and the points recover at the rate of 1 a day. Tiyet can also create sandstorms, summon scarabs,

control any mummies in her domain, take on the form of a monkey, and is immune to normal weapons.

In addition, Tiyet can take horrible steps in order to satisfy her dark craving. After five minutes of concentration, she can focus her gaze on a victim and force him to suffer a heart attack. Each minute of this assault costs the target one card from his hand, to a minimum of one card (leaving the poor hero paralyzed with pain). At this point, Tiyet can either finish the attack and kill her victim with a touch, or draw the heart out of the chest to eat it.

THE BURNING PEAKS

Cavitius

Heroes: Cavitian heroes cannot use wizardry or miracles. They gain a +1 to their Physique scores, but lose 3 points from their Essence ability (minimum 1).

Overlord: **Vecna**

Nature: Malevolent and Power-Hungry

Demeanor: Oppressive

Reputation: Archetype (30 Quests)

Social Status: Royalty (9)

Ph: 20D **Co:** 20D **In:** 30A (900) **Es:** 20A (400)

Damage: +24 **Defense:** -10

Special Notes: Vecna can detect and discern secrets without effort, has a paralyzing touch in addition to his standard attack, and his mere presence requires a daunting Essence (Essence) action by anyone who sees him. If the heroes pass the check completely, there are no ill effects. If the result only exceeds a challenging difficulty, the hero is shaken, losing all actions for the next minute and suffering a -2 to all actions taken in Vecna's presence. Only hitting the 'average' point adds a fear check failure, and if the action would only have beaten 'easy' difficulty, the results of a failed horror check are added to the list. If the action fails completely, all three of these penalties take effect, plus a failed madness check. Vecna is immune to any weapon short of a weapon of legend or a holy weapon, and cannot be turned. He gains a +14 to resist any magic thrown at him by a hero. He cannot be effected by the schools of illusion, enchantment, and necromancy, or the spheres of the Healer, the Bishop, or the Anarchist. In addition, he cannot have his form changed.

Vecna can take two actions at once, and can create any spell effect within the limit of his spell point range (a frightening limit). He comprehends all languages, can grant miraculous abilities to any who truly believe in him as a god (the character's Essence code is raised by one degree), and can teleport anywhere in Cavitius at will.

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

Finally, Vecna can detect any action occurring in his citadel, and can dominate anyone using the Hand or Eye of Vecna.

Tovag

Heroes: Tovagian heroes suffer a -1 penalty to Intellect due to their rapid aging and concurrent immaturity. In addition, all Tovagians automatically trump when attempting to hide.

Overlord: Kas the Destroyer

Nature: Cruel and Destructive

Demeanor: Courageous and Vengeful

Reputation: Hero (17 Quests)

Social Status: Royalty (9)

Ph: 10A **Co:** 9A **In:** 9C **Es:** 6A

Weapon: Long sword of fame (+13)

Armor: Plate mail (-5)

Shield: Tower shield (-5)

Special Notes: Kas has the standard powers of an ancient vampire, as per the listing for Strahd von Zarovich and *Van Richten's Guide to Vampires*. In addition, he is a great leader, and has the avenger's ability to track his target (although it's a moot point) and can absorb 5 points of damage without ill effect when battling wizards and liches. In addition, his specialization in swords adds +4 to the difficulty of defending against Kas's attacks with this weapon.

ZHERISIA

Paridon

Heroes: Paridonian heroes automatically trump on Essence actions in formal social situations. Priests of the Divinity of Mankind have the Primary Spheres of the Monk, the Healer, and the Missionary, with the Secondary Spheres of the Anarchist and the Shepherd. Clergy of this faith must have a minimum Intellect of 7 in order to comprehend the church's doctrines.

Overlord: Sodo

Nature: Deceptive and Manipulative

Demeanor: Friendly and Deceitful

Reputation: Adventurer (5 Quests)

Social Status: Peasant (2)

Ph: 9A **Co:** 9A **In:** 9A **Es:** 7B

Damage: +6 **Defense:** -3

Special Notes: Sodo can read thoughts at will (don't call for resistance unless it's time-critical, as noted in the MC entry for Ravenloft doppelgangers). Sodo gains +18 to resist magic and is immune to anything less than an weapon of legend. Sodo's touch will ease all pain, meaning that the victim will be unaware of any wounds. Anyone touched by him will have all wounds healed by the time an hour has passed, going so far as to return from death.

Timor

Heroes: Everyone in this domain is a marikith and thus a member of the Hive. They are mindless drones, slaves of the Hive Queen, incapable of free will. (Why does this sound familiar?)

Overlord: The Hive Queen

Nature: Harsh and Corrupt

Demeanor: Cruel and Destructive

Reputation: Master (13 Quests)

Social Status: Royalty (9)

Ph: 10X **Co:** 4X **In:** 10A **Es:** 4X

Damage: +26 **Defense:** -7

Special Notes: The Hive Queen is keen-sighted and has an acute sense of hearing, but has no leadership ability. Her telepathic control of all marikith, though, makes it a moot point. She has a poisonous bite of lethal intensity that she can use if her attack hits, and her sting can transform a victim into a marikith over the course of a week (challenging Physique action to resist).

POCKET DOMAINS

Davion

Heroes: No one here is actually real, which tends to be a strike against them being heroes.

Demilord: Davion the Mad

Nature: Malevolent and Power-Hungry

Demeanor: Rash and Inquisitive

Reputation: Master (12 Quests)

Social Status: Peasant (2)

Ph: 7X **Co:** 8X **In:** 10A (100) **Es:** 8C

Weapon: Dagger (+2)

Armor: None (0)

Special Notes: Davion has the schools of conjuration, invocation, divination, alteration, and enchantment.

Boromar

Nature: Professional and Greedy

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

Demeanor: Violent and Powerful

Ph: 10A **Co:** 8A **In:** 7D **Es:** 8B

Weapon: Long sword of fame (+13), defender

Armor: Plate mail of renown (-9)

Special Notes: Boromar is ignorant of magic, but a good leader.

Narana

Nature: Sadistic and Selfish

Demeanor: Seductive and Amoral

Ph: 9D **Co:** 8D **In:** 7C **Es:** 9B (81)

Weapons: Fingernails (+1, poison)

Armor: Bracers of defense of renown (-4)

Special Notes: Narana wields magic from the Spheres of the Priest, the Traitor, and the Monk.

Augustus

Nature: Inquisitive and Aloof

Demeanor: Careful and Methodical

Ph: 7X **Co:** 10X **In:** 9A (81) **Es:** 8C

Weapon: Rod of smiting (+10)

Armor: Robe of Protection (-4)

Special Notes: Augustus uses the spheres of abjuration, alteration, divination, invocation, and elementalism.

Scaena

Heroes: The only people in this domain either were created by Lemot Juste or think that they were. In either case, they are forever bound to the stage and to this madman's productions.

Demilord: Lemot Sedium Juste

Nature: Obsessive and Scheming

Demeanor: Friendly

Reputation: Novice (3 Quests)

Social Status: Gentry (6)

Ph: 4X **Co:** 7X **In:** 10B (100) **Es:** 8B

Weapon: Long sword (+7)

Armor: None

Special Notes: Lemot can transport himself throughout the theater, cause the building to burn down around him, and regenerate one day after being slain. He's a dabbler in the arcane arts, as well, with access to the schools of illusion, enchantment, and divination. He can also attempt to persuade his victims that they are nothing but his creations (challenging Intellect (Essence) action to resist; after one week, another action must be made each day to prevent the loss of one point of Intellect and Essence each. Once the action is made, the spell is broken and the points return at the rate of one a week. If either score reaches 0, the hero becomes a bland, dull

minor character who can only be saved through leaving the theater or having Juste slain.

PURE HEROES

Heroes can, if they wish, start with a rating of 'Pure' on the revised Powers check scale instead of the standard 'Clean.' To have such a rating, the hero must have a Nature of good alignment and an Essence score of at least 6 to reflect their spiritual strength. Pure heroes automatically trump when resisting supernatural evil (such as dark magic or the powers of the undead), but suffer the penalties described in *Domains of Dread* and a -2 to all fear, horror, and madness check actions, reflecting their innocence and naiveté.

NEW RACE

Half-Vistani

Requirements: Half-Vistani must have at least 5s in their Intellect and Essence scores. Those of the Canjar or Zarovan bloodlines must be able to use wizardry, but no other requirements are placed upon this mysterious folk.

Advantages: All half-Vistani can identify plants and animals, discern fouled water, and start fires without fail. They can recognize tralaks with a successful easy Intellect action. In addition, all half-Vistani have special abilities inherited from their Vistani parent.

- ❖ **Kamii:** All half-Kamii automatically trump when forging items or identifying metalwork.
- ❖ **Equaar:** Half-Equaar automatically trump for riding, tracking, or for studying animals.
- ❖ **Vatraska:** Half-Vatraska can always identify poisons, and can create the potions described in *Domains of Dread*. 'Beneficiaries' of their antidotes must make an average Physique action to be cured; failure means a loss of all cards and death if further action is not taken. An average Physique action is also needed to resist their sleeping poison.
- ❖ **Naiat:** Half-Naiat automatically trump when attempting to sing, dance, or play a musical instrument, and gain a +1 to their Essence scores when attempting to charm or befriend someone.
- ❖ **Corvara:** Half-Corvara automatically trump when lockpicking or setting traps.
- ❖ **Canjar:** Three times a day, Half-Canjar can choose to cast a spell instantly but pay the cost as if they had been preparing it for a half-hour (1 SP). This reflects the fact that these mages can anticipate the spells that need to be cast and start preparing them ahead of time.
- ❖ **Zarovan:** In a combat situation, a random draw should be made for a Zarovan each minute. If the

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

card is Good, the Zarovan has 'sped up' time and gets an extra action. A neutral card means that the Vistana has remained fairly well-anchored in 'normal' or 'human' time. An evil result, though, means that the Vistana has gotten slowed down or stuck in time, losing that minute's action.

NEW ROLES

Avenger

Requirements: Avengers must have scores of at least 8 in Physique and 7 in Coordination, as well as codes of at least B in those abilities. In addition, they should be of a neutral or chaotic nature, and cannot learn to use magic.

Benefits: When fighting foes reminiscent of their archenemy, avengers can take 5 points of damage before feeling any ill effects. These extra points are renewed each battle. When face to face with their adversary himself, avengers gain 10 extra points.

In addition, avengers have an intuitive ability to track their enemy. To use this, the avenger must make an Essence action, with the difficulty based on where the target is.

Villain is . . .	Difficulty
Same Room	Easy
Same Building	Average
Same town, or a 1-mile radius in the country	Challenging
Same domain	Daunting
Same cluster or Core	Desperate
Elsewhere in Ravenloft	Impossible
Beyond Ravenloft	Truly impossible

Disadvantages: The avenger's major disadvantage is his thirst for vengeance. He never trumps when interacting with anyone that reminds him of his nemesis, and if something comes up that serves as a clue to his enemy's whereabouts or ultimate defeat, he must make a challenging Intellect action to ignore it.

Arcanist

Requirements: Arcanists have to have at least B codes in Intellect, cannot choose to use miracles, and must have scores of at least 7 in Intellect and Essence. In addition, their nature should be lawful. An arcanist with a B code should choose the schools of necromancy, divination, and abjuration, while one with an A code can learn enchantment and conjuration as well.

Benefits: Arcanists automatically trump when studying or recalling information about the arcane and macabre side of the Dark Domains, and gain a +2 to resist necromantic or divination magic, as well as to make fear or horror checks. Victims of their spells from those two schools suffer a -2 to their ability scores for resisting the spells. Finally, arcanists are considered people of true faith for turning or commanding the undead, regardless of their real spiritual side.

Disadvantages: Arcanists delve into knowledge man was not meant to know and deal with powers that are morally dubious at best. Thus, an arcanist must make a Powers check whenever he completes a quest. The Eight of Stars (The Necromancer) is a good target card, and the number of draws is equal to the number of cards in the arcanist's hand.

Anchorite

Requirements: Anchorites must have B codes in Physique and Essence, and an Essence score of at least 8. Their nature should be of lawful or true neutral alignment. All anchorites use the Spheres of the Priest, the Healer, and the Shepherd. Those with A codes have their remaining two spheres determined by their nature.

- ❖ **Lawful Neutral:** Order, responsibility, and fortitude are the watchwords of this order, using the Spheres of the Monk and the Bishop.
- ❖ **True Neutral:** The true neutral clergy of the faith are more focused on self-reliance than their brethren, as well as preserving free choice in harmony with law. The Spheres of the Anarchist (used to balance the Shepherd) and the Monk are most appropriate.
- ❖ **Lawful Good:** Lawful good anchorites see it as their duty to thwart and redeem the evil whenever possible, in addition to playing a more defensive role. The Sphere of the Missionary is at the heart of their teaching, and the Sphere of the Monk aids them in defending the weak.
- ❖ **Lawful Evil:** Those anchorites of dark heart see it as their duty to protect their faith and their flock from everything—even themselves and each other, if necessary. The Spheres of the Bishop and the Missionary help the evil anchorite "guide, nurture, and defend" the faith.

Benefits: At Adventurer rank, anchorites learn how to cast the Shield of Ezra. This power costs only 8 spell points due to its ritualized and well-taught nature. It takes only an instant to cast, has a personal range, lasts 15 minutes, affects only the anchorite, and has the effects listed in *Domains of Dread*. Evil anchorites gain an

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

immunity to mind-affecting spells, to prevent them from being pulled away from the 'truth' of the faith.

At Master reputation, anchorites can mistwalk, as described in *Domains of Dread*.

Disadvantages: Anchorites must adhere to the faith as described in *Domains of Dread*. Failing to uphold one of these strictures reduces the anchorite's Essence score by 1 until atonement is made.

Gypsy

Requirements: Gypsies need Physique and Intellect scores of at least 6, and have a minimum Coordination and Essence of 7. Their Intellect code must be at least B, although they cannot learn more than three spheres of wizardry. In addition, they have a maximum Physique code of D. Gypsies should not be of chaotic nature.

Benefits: Gypsies can gain shelter from clans of identical or similar moral nature, and automatically trump when knife-fighting or when trying to remember lore about the land. In addition, all gypsies can cast spells from the schools of divination, enchantment, or necromancy. However, their limited arcane training forces them to pay an extra two points when casting spells in order to overcome the gaps in their education. In essence, gypsies muscle their way through areas of spellcasting that other magicians have learned to circumvent or think their way around.

Disadvantages: Gypsies occupy a cultural 'netherworld' in Ravenloft, as *Domains of Dread* says. They never trump when interacting with either non-gypsies or 'true' Vistani.



THE BOOK OF SOULS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT TAROKKA GAMES

Several Games of Chance to Play Around the Campfire

by Andrew Hackard
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Dmitri stood well away from the fire, his thoughts turning toward his lovely Katarina, lying abed with the fever. He could hear her cries, although he was on the other side of the camp from the vardo.

“Be at peace, my friend,” said Alexei, walking up to stand beside Dmitri. “Our healers are doing all that they can.”

“I know, Alexei, I know. Still, I cannot help but think that there was something I should have done.”

“We didn’t know the fever was raging through Skald, or we surely would not have stopped there. The raunie—”

Dmitri turned, his eyes feral. “Do not speak of that woman to me! She sits in her wagon, playing at fortune-telling, when she should be brewing medicine, to help her own granddaughter...” Dmitri stopped, holding back tears—of rage or grief, none could say.

Alexei was quiet. “We all do what we can, and even so we are subject to the gods’ wills. Come—come with me and forget your cares for a time. Katya will still be there in the morning.” He took his friend’s arm. “Boris has organized some games to pass the time; he asked for you specifically. We daren’t let down our captain, now.”

Dmitri chuckled, a somehow threatening sound. “No, I suppose not—and I did tell Katya’s mother not to expect me tonight. What games do we play, then?”

“Why, I thought you’d never ask...”

This article describes some games that can be played using the Tarokka cards, found in the *Forbidden Lore* boxed set and the revised Ravenloft set (the “red box”). Many of these games are altered versions of Earth card games, but there are some significant changes to several. Some of these games are suitable for children, others for adults, and some for both.

I was inspired by Bill Connors’ “Geas” game, from *DRAGON Magazine*, which is a fine game but a little complicated for younger children, to write some games that young Vistani children might find enjoyable. Things got a bit out of hand. I ended up with seven new card

games, ranging from the very simple to the rather complicated.

I welcome comments on these games and their playability; I especially welcome any new variations or entirely new games you create. Have fun . . . but beware the Mists . . .

DARKLING

The first game is called Darkling.

Equipment Needed

- ❖ One or more common decks
- ❖ Several boisterous children (works well with three to six)

Goal

- ❖ To get rid of all the cards in your hand.

This one’s pretty simple. Cards go from 1-A. Deal cards clockwise around the table until all cards are exhausted (it does not matter if some players get more cards). It’s best to use one deck for three or four and two decks for five or six; the game is playable by up to eight people but gets *very* unwieldy. It’s a poor game for two players.

The player to the dealer’s left starts by playing from her hand, and play then moves clockwise. (Suit doesn’t matter.) Cards build up in rank and also in number of cards played; players may play the same number as the player before them or more (but not fewer). A player who cannot play or chooses not to play may pass by saying “Lunadi.” Whenever anyone plays an archetype card or set, she may then immediately play anything out of her hand, and play continues to the left; the same thing occurs if all players pass back to her. When a player goes out, the player to her left may play anything.

So, let’s say the first player plays a single 1. The next player plays a 3, and the next player then plays two 4’s. The following player could play any pair (or triple or

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

more) of 5's or higher, or could pass. When the round ends, by archetype cards being played or a play being passed all the way around, then the play starts over with any cards. (I'm afraid I'm not explaining this very clearly; feel free to ask for clarifications.)

The play continues until only one player has cards left, and players keep track of the order in which they "go out." The players rank themselves from top to bottom, using the following terms:

- First:** **Raunie**
- Next:** **Prastona** (only in games with four or more players)
- Next:** **Giogoto** (only in games with six or more players)
- Middle:** **Vardo** (only in games with an odd number of players)
- Next:** **Giorgio**
- Next:** **Mortu**
- Last:** **Darkling**

In some tasques, this game is called **Dukkar** and that rank comes last, but—especially since the Grand Conjunction—this is *much* less common. When boys play, it is common to replace **Raunie** with **Captain** and **Prastona** with **Vistana** (although girls will often tease boys with the real names, of course!). It is also common, especially when the adults are elsewhere, to replace all of these ranks with more scurrilous ones (so be creative).

For the next hand, deal as usual, but before play begins, the top and bottom players exchange a certain number of cards. In three-player games, the Raunie and Darkling trade one card apiece; in four- or five-player games the Raunie and Darkling trade two cards and the Prastona and Mortu trade one, and so forth. The Vardo, being a wagon, just sits there. The better player in each pair usually gives the worst cards to the other player and gets his best cards in exchange, though she may request certain cards (to complete a pair or triple, for instance). It is customary but not required to allow the lower player to keep sets and not have to break them.

This game can literally go on for hours, with some players being the Raunie over and over and then, in the space of two or three hands, becoming the Mortu or Darkling.

THE BAROVIAN MISTS

This one's called The Barovian Mists; the name itself has no significance.

Equipment Needed

- ❖ One or more full decks
- ❖ Another set of rambunctious children (it works well for any number, just figure one deck for every four kids or fraction of four)

Goal

- ❖ To get all the cards.

Deal the cards counterclockwise (again, it doesn't matter if one player gets more cards than another); the players square the cards and leave them face *down*. Play starts with the dealer and moves to the right.

All cards are played from the face down decks by flipping over the top card. Numbers are nulls, and there's no significance to one number over another. However, the crown cards and the archetypes (collectively called the High Deck) change the rules slightly.

When a player flips over a High card, the next player gets a certain number of cards to turn over a High card herself or the first player gets all the cards on the table (and adds them, face down, to her hand). Then the first player resumes play. If the next player *does* draw a High card, then the next player after him must do the same thing until someone doesn't; the last successful player gets all the cards.

1-card draw Artifact, Donjon, Raven, Beast, Ghost, Marionette

2-card draw Darklord, Esper, Hangman, Horseman

3-card draw Mists, Broken One, Temptress, Innocent

4-card draw all Archetypes

So, for example, Esmerelda plays the Mists from her hand. The next player, Stefan, has three cards in which to play another High card, or Esmerelda gets the cards on the table.

That's it. When a player has no cards, he's out, and when one player has all the cards, she wins! (This one's usually pretty quick.)

Variation

Some tribes play that if two cards played one after the other match, any player who slaps the pile before the next card is played gets the pile and starts again. Slaps override even High card plays, and any High cards of the same rank (on the chart above) are considered to "match." Some groups even let new players enter in mid-game by "slapping in."

Example: Stefan plays the Donjon. Esmerelda plays the Beast. Normally, the next player would have to play

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

one card and hope for a High card, but Stefan sees the match and slaps the pile, getting the cards.

ENDARI-VITIR

Here's Endari-vitir, an especially beloved form of Vistani poker. I've described the draw version here, but there are also stud variations and things even more exotic.

Equipment Needed

- ❖ One crown Deck
- ❖ One Low Deck (suits) (For especially large games, a second Low Deck may be added)
- ❖ Coins or chips

Goal

- ❖ To win money by having either the highest or lowest hand.

Cut for dealer; archetypes are high, 1's low, crown cards are nils. Dealer shuffles and then deals four cards to each player, starting to his left and moving clockwise. (There is an ante.) The player to the dealer's left bets first and may bet any amount up to the ante or may check by saying "**Lunadi**." Raises are uncommon but possible; you may not raise by an amount more than the ante in the first round. Folds are also uncommon early on; a player signifies a fold by saying "**Dya-yahg**."

After everyone has bet or checked, the player to the dealer's left may draw one or two cards or may stand pat. The dealer gives that player the number of cards discarded plus one, to bring the hand up to five cards. Every discard must be matched by a second ante into the pot, so a player who discards two cards must also contribute a double ante. (This is not a game for the poor; however, stakes tend to be quite low, and it's equally common to play for fun, or to use the chips as markers for a winner's prize.) Then there is a second round of betting; raises may be up to a double ante with no limit. Players call by saying "**Koorah**," and when all players have called or folded, the hands are exposed. High and low hands split the pot.

Scoring the Hands

The archetype cards may be high or low in their suit. Crown cards are nulls and do not contribute to scoring (but see below). For example, a player who has 3-6-6-C-C has a pair of sixes, nothing more. The hands rank as follows, high to low:

The Vistana: Five crown cards automatically take the whole pot (or split with any other player lucky enough to get five crown cards).

Tasque: Five connected cards of the same suit (they may wrap around). 2-3-4-5-6 of glyphs or 9-A-1-2-3 of stars would be tasques. Two tasques are compared starting with the highest cards on down.

Vardo: Three cards of one rank and two of another (a full house).

Tetran: Four cards of the same rank; the fifth card may be anything, even a null (but nulls rank below all other cards).

Caravan: Five connected cards of different suits. Comparison is as for tasques.

Lunaset: Five cards, all of different suits (in other words, one star, one glyph, one coin, one sword, and one crown).

Petit Caravan: Four connected cards of different suits and a null (a "four-straight").

Tribe: Five cards of the same suit.

Family: Four cards of the same suit and a null.

Marriage with Children: Two pairs.

Triskan: Three cards of the same rank.

Marriage: Two cards of the same rank.

Giorgio: Anything that doesn't fit the above.

(In multi-deck games, it is traditional to allow hands with two identical cards to beat others, so a marriage with two sixes of swords would beat a marriage of a six of coins and a six of glyphs.)

Variation

Sometimes, for spice, it is agreed that the archetypes will be wild cards. (In this case, there are only four archetypes, even if multiple low decks are used.) Archetypes may be used to match in suit but not rank or rank but not suit. For example, a player has the archetype of swords, the six of glyphs, the six of swords, and the seven of glyphs before the draw; he may consider his archetype to be a six of coins or stars, but not glyphs or swords. He may also consider it to be a glyph but need not specify which one until the hands are exposed. Archetypes may not be used for nulls.

GIORGIOS

Equipment Needed

- ❖ One low deck (1-A in each suit)
- ❖ Kidlets (use a second low deck for four or more)

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

Goal

- ❖ Dump your hand.

Deal six cards to each player. Turn over the top card. Dealer goes first, and may match the top card in rank or suit (or both, in a multi-deck game). If dealer cannot play, she must draw from the face-down cards until she can.

Sixes are the “giorgios,” and may be used as any suit. You may not play one giorgio on top of another.

The hand ends when one player goes out or no one can play and there are no cards left to draw. Each player with cards left adds the number of cards to his score; when one player goes over 25 the game is over and the lowest score wins. Giorgios count as two cards.

Variation I

Each player adds the sum of the card values, and the game goes until one player has over 100 points. Archetype cards count as 10 and giorgios count as 15 (ouch!).

Variation II

When a deuce is played, the next player must either match the deuce with another deuce or draw two cards and forfeit her turn. If two deuces are played together, then the next player must draw four, and so on. In this version the deuces are called the **Donnolas** (the weasels). Some people combine this with a rule where the archetype of stars, here called the **Strega** (the witch) forces the next player to draw three cards.

And finally, a variant that’s really a different game:

GIORGIOS AT THE PRASTONATA

Equipment Needed

- ❖ One full Tarokka deck (use a second full deck for six or more adults)

Goal

- ❖ Get the most crown cards and/or be the first to go out.

Deal six cards to each player. Every player immediately pulls out any crown cards he has in his hand and puts them in front of him. Then deal again, giving

each player enough cards to bring him back up to six. Repeat until all players have six low cards in their hands.

Play begins as above. However, if a player is drawing from the deck and draws a crown card, he immediately puts it in front of him and play passes to his left. The hand is over when all the crown cards have been played or one player has gone out.

Scoring

Each player receives one point for each crown card in front of him; if a player went out, he receives a five-point bonus. Play continues to 50 points.

SCIOCCO

Here’s a good game for *really* little kids. “Sciocco” is the Vistani word for “silly” (well, it is now).

Equipment Needed

- ❖ Cards (see below)
- ❖ Up to ten observant youngsters

Goal

- ❖ Get four of a kind.

This one’s easy. Take a deck of cards and remove sets of four for each player. (If you have eight players, take the 1-8 of each suit out.) Shuffle the cards and deal four to each player. Then, every player discards one to her left and picks up the card from her right. (This won’t work if your players won’t sit in a circle, so make them.) This continues until one player has four of a kind, at which point she just starts passing the card immediately from right to left. She also has to touch her chin with her forefinger. Everyone who notices her do this has to do it as well, until only one person does NOT notice. And when he finally gets the clue, everyone shouts “Sciocco!” at him and the game starts over.

Variation

Put enough objects (spoons, for instance) in the middle of the circle for all the players except one. Instead of touching the chin, the players have to sneak the objects out of the circle. Otherwise, it’s identical.

CONCIME!

(Apologies to those Italian readers I’ve just offended.)

This one’s for somewhat older Vistani children, probably early adolescents. (It gives them something to do when they’re still too young to chase giorgio boys and girls.) “Concime!” is the kids’ word for this game (and is,

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

frankly, rather rude); the adults call it “Precision,” at least around the youngsters. (The English version is called “Oh Hell!” which is not at all a literal translation of “Concime!”)

Equipment Needed

- ❖ One low deck, including archetypes
- ❖ Three to seven foul-mouthed kids

This game lasts for several rounds, depending on the number of players. Three players can play for 13 rounds, four for ten, five for eight, six for six, and seven for five. Start off by dealing one card to each player, and then turn over the next card. Whatever suit that card is becomes trump; a card in the trump suit is always higher than any card in another suit.

The players bid on how many tricks (sets of cards) they think they can take. (Obviously, for round one, that’s either one or zero, called **Pass** or **Lunadi**.) The players have to take exactly that number or tricks to score points. (It is traditional for the dealer, at the end of the bidding, to say either “**sotto**,” if the total bid is less than the total number of tricks possible, “**sopra**” if too many tricks were bid, or “**esatto**” if the total bid equals the number of tricks.) Players who do not take what they have bid release their frustration by yelling “Concime!” unless there are adults about, in which case they just sit and grumble.

After the bidding, the first player leads and the other players must follow suit if able. If unable to follow suit, a player may play any card. If a player does make his bid precisely, he gets ten points plus the amount of his bid unless he bid Lunadi, in which case he gets 5 points plus the number of cards in his hand. Then the cards are shuffled and one more card is dealt to every player than the previous hand. On the final hand, there is no trump card. After that hand, the player with the highest total score wins.

CINQUE ELEMENTI

This is a five-handed variation on Hearts... with a few added rules. (Of course.) The name of the game means “The Five Elements.”

Equipment Needed

- ❖ Five players

- ❖ One full deck of cards

Cut for the dealer; high card deals. Shuffle the cards *thoroughly*. Deal the cards, starting to the dealer’s left and moving left, in sets of 3, 2, 2, and 3 cards to each player. After each round of dealing, put one card into a sixth hand called the **Vedova** (widow). At the end of the deal, each player should have ten cards and the vedova will have four; these four cards will not be used.

Play consists of five rounds, over and over until one person scores 100 points and thus loses. In each round, a different suit is the “**penalty suit**,” as explained in a moment. Also, in each round, players pass two cards to another player as indicated below.

Round 1: **Terra** (earth) —**PS** swords, pass to immediate left.

Round 2: **Aria** (air) —**PS** coins, pass to second on left

Round 3: **Acqua** (water) —**PS** glyphs, pass to second on right

Round 4: **Fuoco** (fire) —**PS** stars, pass to immediate right

Round 5: **Anima** (spirit) —**PS** crowns, hold all cards

Play begins with the player to the dealer’s left. He may lead any suit *but* the penalty suit (or a special crown card). (If a crown card is led, that player is considered to have won the trick unless one of the four special cards, listed below, is played—the first player to play one of those to a trick where a crown card is led wins the trick.) A player who does not have a card in the suit led may play any card. Once a penalty-suit card has been played to a trick, the penalty suit (or special crown card) may be led.

At the end of the ten tricks, players look through the tricks they have taken and count the number of penalty cards; this number is added to their score. (A player who takes no tricks is given a -5 bonus.) There are four special crown cards that can affect this score, however:

The Darklord: Adds ten points to the player’s score.

The Hangman: Doubles all penalty cards in that player’s hand, including the Darklord.

The Artifact: The player with this card *subtracts* the points rather than adding them to his score (but see below).

The Innocent: Negates all penalty cards.

(Note that these four cards do *not* count as crown cards during the “anima” round.)

If a player takes all ten penalty-suit cards *and* the Darklord, he is said to have a **Paatern**. A player with a

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

paatern may either subtract 20 points from his score or add 20 points to the other four players' scores—unless that player has also taken another special card. The Hangman doubles this to 40 points, the Innocent negates even the paatern, and the Artifact reverses the paatern, so that the player may either add 20 points to his score or subtract 20 points from everyone else's. (Or 40, if the player is unlucky enough to get both the Artifact and the Hangman.)

Should a player collect all ten penalty cards *and* all four special crown cards, he is said to have completed the **Paatern Grosse** and his score immediately reverts to zero. (Of course, if he had a negative score to begin with, this isn't such a good thing.)

After the hand, the cards are reshuffled—carefully!—and the deal passes to the right. The player with the fewest points when one player goes over 100 points wins the game.

Games of Cinque Elementi can go very quickly, if one player is very lucky, or can take quite a while, when no player has been lucky. This is a favorite of slightly older children; for younger children, some of the rules may be relaxed, and sometimes the crown deck and vedova are omitted and the game is a four-player game rather than a five-player game.

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THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

BURKE AND HARE

A Pair of Ghoulish NPCs for Ravenloft

by Christopher Dale Nichols
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"Burke's the butcher,
Hare's the thief,
Knox the man that buys the beef."

BACKGROUND

An old rhyme sung in lanes of Il Aluk in happier days, as little children ran and laughed and jumped and played. But like so many things in the Land, a darkness lurks behind this light. A tale of greed and death, the story of one William Burke and William Hare.

Back in 697, Amo Pesadilla, the Undertaker of Il Aluk, faced certain problems. Chiefly, the numbers of grave-robbing was soaring. Bodies were being sold to the University, the underground and illegal "Ecole du Mots Morte," and gods only knew who else. For in those days, as in these, men were eager to pull back the veils that hide reality, eager to shine the light of science into the darkness. And, for these pursuits, the men of science required supplies. Fresh supplies, and they were quite willing to pay for it. Even the prestigious University of Il Aluk was eager enough to turn a blind eye to the illegality and immorality of the practice. Thus entered Masters Burke and Hare.

Operating out of a nameless dive facing the Great Cemetery of Il Aluk, Burke and Hare became the most proficient resurrection men in the city. Burke was tall, heavy and muscled. Hare, on the other hand, was tall, but thin and calculating. As told in their confessions, they sold corpses to the University, as well as every practitioner of dark arts, illegal venture, madman, and butcher in the city. Among their clients, was Prof. Robert Knox of the University of Il Aluk, head of the School of Medicine. From Burke and Hare, Knox procured the bodies with which he and his colleagues taught their students.

One night, Burke, by nature the more violent of the two, somewhat accidentally killed a local doxy. Rushing

to Hare, his smarter companion, he explained the situation. Hare immediately told Burke to gather up the body, and off they went to sell the body to Prof. Knox. Thus, Burke and Hare began to supplement their grave-robbing with murder. All was going well, with the duo creating two or three new corpses per week, until they killed one of the secondary city undertakers.

Grumman Knox was at the time a close friend of Amo Pesadilla, who had charged him with ridding the Great Cemetery of the over-population of resurrectionists. Additionally, and unfortunately for the two ghouls, he was the nephew of Prof. Knox. When he stumbled upon Burke and Hare, Burke took his shovel and caved in young Knox's head. That night, Burke and Hare brought his nephew's body to Prof. Knox as the day's delivery. Very coolly, Knox bought the body, then informed the police of what Burke and Hare had been doing.

Shortly, Burke and Hare found themselves wanted men. Poking around, they found that Knox had turned them in. Carefully breaking into the professor's home, they ambushed him as he arrived home from the day's classes, slitting his throat. As the pair left, still carrying the bloody straight-razor that had done the job, they had the misfortune to walk into the arms of a group of constables. After a confession was extracted under torture, Burke and Hare danced from the gallows of Requiem Square.

When the villains were cut down, and the crowd closed in to pay their respects in suitable fashion, it seems that the city's nightmare had not ended. As the first globs of spit spattered their corpses, with a hiss, a growl, and a shriek, up leapt the two ghouls, now resurrected as real ghouls. Slashing and biting their way through the terrified crowd, Burke and Hare tore up a grating and escaped deep into the sewers below.

To this day, no-one knows what became of Burke and Hare. But as the number of graves dug up, robbed, and defiled has hardly slowed in the intervening years, one could suppose that Burke and Hare returned to their trade, supplying meat for themselves and bodies for the use of others. But with the destruction of Il Aluk, perhaps the ghoulish resurrectionists have moved elsewhere. Or

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

perhaps, they live their unlives in the burrows and tunnels under the Necropolis, dug by centuries of ghouls and their horrid kin. Whatever the case, they live on in the grim rhyme sung by innocents...

"Burke's the butcher,
Hare's the thief,
Knox the man that buys the beef."

William Hare

Ghoul Resurrectionist (4th-level Thief), Chaotic Evil

Armor Class	6	Str	9
Movement	9	Dex	14
Level/Hit Dice	3	Con	10
Hit Points	18	Int	18
THAC0	18	Wis	12
No. of Attacks	3 or 1	Cha	3
Damage/Attack	1d3/1d3/1d6 or 1d4+type E poison or shovel *		
Special Attacks	Paralyzation, backstab		
Special Defenses	Charm/sleep immunities, thief abilities		
Magic Resistance	Nil		
Morale	14		
XP Value	750		

William Burke

Ghoul Resurrectionist (4th-Level Fighter), Chaotic Evil

Armor Class	6	Str	18/00
Movement	9	Dex	10
Level/Hit Dice	3+1	Con	12
Hit Points	19	Int	6
THAC0	18	Wis	8
No. of Attacks	3 or 1	Cha	3
Damage/Attack	1d3/1d3/1d6 or 1d4+type E poison or shovel *		
Special Attacks	Paralyzation		
Special Defenses	Charm/sleep immunities		
Magic Resistance	Nil		
Morale	13		
XP Value:	750		

* **Shovel Damage**— Both ghouls carry a *spade of grave-digging* which does 1d6 cutting damage with its edge or 1d6 blunt damage with its flat or handle.

The dark powers have granted this pair a gift, marking them as its creatures. If one of this pair is killed and the other yet lives, the slain partner will regenerate at the rate of 1 hp an hour until it can rejoin its companion.



THE KEEPERS OF THE COIL

An Order of the Guardians

by John W. Mangrum
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Note: The author would like to thank Elaine Bergstrom, Jeff Grubb, and Steve Miller for their creations.

INTRODUCTION

A midday sun did little to brighten the gloom of the Sithican woods. A scant few shafts of golden light pierced the canopy, achieving little more than to deepen the shadows surrounding them. A sullen, lifeless grey permeated the scene, in the stones which littered the forest floor, in the moss which clung to those boulders and made the ground spongy underfoot, and in the charcoal bark of the ancient trees. The thousand shadows of the Sithican woods hid as many secrets. One of those secrets shifted its weight.

The man rested on one knee, tucked between a boulder and a patch of underbrush which somehow had wrested some life from the somber trees around it. His name was Enrik; he had been a member of the Gundrakan militia fifteen years ago, before the assassination of Duke Gundar. In the chaos which followed his leader's death, Enrik decided to strike out on his own, and had found a talent for hunting men. Some called him bounty hunter, some mercenary, some hired killer. Enrik wasn't concerned with what he was called, or what men he hunted, or why. He cared only for the gold. And now, he needed that gold. His muscles were beginning to soften, his back to ache. He had been at this too long; he needed one last, sizable bounty so he could retire before he finally met the man who could best him.

Enrik had found the bounty he needed in Sithicus, offered by the fallen knight who ruled that region, Soth. Soth was convinced that a small group of rebels hid somewhere in his lands, harboring fugitives from his justice and stockpiling weapons against him. To receive the bounty, all Enrik had to do was discover their haven and report back to Soth with their location. With the money, he'd have enough perhaps to buy a tavern, or... who was he kidding? With that kind of money, Enrik

could surround himself with servants and never have to deal with the rabble again.

Soth could, or would, offer no clues to aid Enrik in his hunt. Enrik had sniffed around the cities, trying to find a connection to his prey; surely they could not exist totally cut off from society. Unfortunately, Enrik found the damned hissing elves most uncooperative. So total had been their rebuffing of his requests for information, Enrik couldn't tell if it was caused by spite for their rightful ruler, or their hatred for anyone unlike themselves.

But Enrik was no dim-witted thug, scarce more intelligent than the blade he wielded. Nor was he apt to give up the hunt until his prey was captured or dead, whichever his employer required. After extensive searching, he had found a connection to his prey. The elves were protected by warriors who rode huge, horrid insects. These elven warriors guarded the cities and patrolled the wilds as well. Enrik's keen eyes had found one of these warriors, "rangers" as Soth's freakish emissary Azrael had called them. This elven ranger was sneaking supplies out of Har-Thelen on the back of his riding-beast. Keeping to the shadows, creeping through the bushes, Enrik had managed to follow this elf for days through the boulder-strewn woods. And the elf had led Enrik right to his prey. Personally, Enrik was glad the rebels were elven; he had no love for the creatures, and would have happily slaughtered them then and there had Soth demanded it.

But Soth didn't want that; apparently he savored the thought of destroying them himself. Soth simply wanted to know what hole they were hiding in. Enrik, crouched in his hiding place, now looked upon that hole. Or tree, as the case may be. The rebels' hideaway was constructed overhead in the intertwining branches of several massive trees, and well disguised. A traveler could easily pass directly under the stronghold and never notice it.

Enrik silently watched the stronghold for several hours, counting faces whenever someone would appear, walking along the rope bridges from one tree-hut to another. Over the course of the afternoon, Enrik made

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

mental notes of all he saw, until he was sure he had a firm grip on the rebels' numbers. Those numbers were tiny at best. They couldn't possibly pose any real threat to Soth, Enrik was sure of that. Nor were they well defended; the elven ranger had the only weapons Enrik had seen, and none of the rebels had noticed him hiding in the gloom.

The thousand shadows of the Sithican woods held a thousand secrets. Enrik was one of those secrets, and he was not alone. Behind him, unseen, unheard, something crawled on its belly through the underbrush. A small figure, the size of a child. At a painfully slow, cautious rate, it crept up directly behind Enrik. After lingering for several moments, it began to crawl away again, backwards, as quietly and cautiously as it came. In time, it was gone. Enrik, studying the arboreal hideaway, never noticed it.

The distant, barely seen sun slid to the horizon. The scant beams of daylight slithered across the forest floor, crept up the moss-speckled bark of the tree trunks, then died out. Enrik crept away from his spot, hiking west back towards Har-Thelen. He wanted to put several miles between himself and the rebels before he made camp. The gloom intensified; the shadows slid from their places, starting to devour the woods around them.

Enrik was having difficulty making his way in the twilight; light and dark were blending into an all-pervasive murk. His skin tightened, his breath grew shallow. Enrik knew he was being foolish, but the moonless Sithican night worked at his nerves. Enrik had heard the tales of the restless spirits which haunted the elven forest. Although he'd never encountered such a spirit, he knew he'd never be able to rest easily under a Sithican sky. Instinctually, Enrik's hand went for his lucky piece, a simple pin he'd taken off some traitorous scum back in Gundarak, more than twenty years ago. It was a symbol of his happier days. Enrik's fingers slid into a belt pouch to retrieve this token—and poked through the slit cut into the pouch's stitching.

"*Pazitor sever!*" The old oath escaped his lips in his old tongue. How could it be? Robbed? In the deepest forest? By who? Enrik's blood ran cold as he realized the rebels *must* have seen him. But why steal from him? Why not kill him? Enrik drew his sword, expecting the elves to burst out at him at any moment. Four, maybe five against one; he could handle such a fight. Enrik started formulating a battle plan, his wide eyes bright in the gloom as he searched for signs of attackers.

Something moved in the shadows. But it wasn't an elf; the movement had been... *strange*... more like a ripple on a nighttime lake than the movement of anything solid. There! The movement again! It was as if the shadows themselves were moving, circling him like vultures. A rapid, metallic ticking noise reached his ears, then stopped; it had sounded like daggers being quickly

tapped against a metal shield. Enrik had no idea what caused the sound; but there it was again, still circling him!

Enrik spun about, following the sound as it moved. Now he saw the moving darkness as well, and was able to follow it with his eyes. The sound and the movement had the same source. It detached itself from the surrounding gloom and slithered up to him. The long, sinuous shape reared up before him and grew solid. Enrik could scarce believe what he saw before him. A serpent, huge, black, and unnatural; for it was made of a dull, black metal. Its jointed body was poised to strike, its head as high as his chest.

The serpent opened its hinged, hissing maw and the rapid ticking was repeated; Enrik now saw the source of that noise. Several sets of fangs popped into position and retracted again faster than his eye could follow. Each time a set of fangs popped into place, they would make a metallic tick. The serpent appeared to be choosing which set of teeth would have the honor of piercing Enrik's flesh.

Enrik knew he had at last met his match. Victory would come to he who struck first—but before Enrik could even complete the thought, the serpent struck, a black blur against the dim surroundings. Pain exploded in Enrik's wrist and he cried out. The metal serpent slithered back, but did not vacate the scene, as if it wished to watch the effects of its bite.

Enrik looked to his wounded arm, his weapon arm. A network of ebon veins spread along his skin, stretching from the twin puncture marks. As the black veins raced through his flesh, the arm grew cold.

"Damn you!" Enrik spat at the night serpent. The thing may have killed him, but it would not survive to enjoy its victory! Striding forward, he raised his sword high to strike the unnatural creature...

...but the sword fell to the soft ground. Enrik heard it hit the ground and stopped short; he had not let go of the blade; his hand was still clenched in a fist. Enrik looked at his hand in horror; it had become entirely black, the edges becoming indistinct. His hand was cold as ice, and that chill was spreading throughout his entire body. Enrik tried to grip his wounded hand with the good one; he found the midnight limb as insubstantial as air. Now, his other hand also grew dark and blurred, and the freezing chill grew too intense to bear. Shrieking in anguish, he dropped to his knees.

Enrik looked to the serpent. It seemed pleased with its deed, and slithered away, merging with the shadows once more. Alone, Enrik emptied his lungs with his cries of suffering. His body became a silhouette; his lasting screams faded until they couldn't be distinguished from the sound of leaves blowing across a courtyard.

Enrik's clothing, no longer supported by substantial flesh, slumped to the ground. Enrik was gone, and night

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

overtook the forest. The woods of Sithicus had lost one of their thousand secrets.

But they had gained a shadow.

The Shadow Serpent: A History

The Shadow Serpent is a unique, powerful, and accursed artifact watched over by the Order of the Guardians, a brotherhood dedicated to cloistering away the powerful tools of evil, thus keeping the world safe from their corruption. The members of the Guardian sect which watches over the Shadow Serpent call themselves the Keepers of the Coil.

It is impossible to say for certain where or when the Shadow Serpent was first created, but a commonly accepted origin is recorded in the Keepers' ledgers. This tale claims that decades ago, an unknown traveler arrived in the land of Vechor, bearing strange goods. These "goods" were two score of shadow asps carefully obtained in the arid land of Har' Akir. The Lord of Vechor, Easan the Mad, found the semi-substantial snakes fascinating and bought the lot. What became of the traveler after this, none can say.

Easan set to playing with his new pets. Unfortunately, well before Easan grew tired of the asps, his "games" had reduced them to an inky fluid: the very essence of darkness. Easan decided that he would create a new pet to replace the old, and set about creating a body into which he could infuse his distilled darkness. From his experiments slithered the Shadow Serpent, a mechanical horror unlike any seen before or since. Somehow, the Serpent eventually slipped out of Easan's hands. How this occurred may never be known.

The earliest verifiable accounts the Order could find concerning the Serpent date to 722. The Shadow Serpent was in the hands of a minor noble in Dorvinia, who had been using the mechanical murderer to torment and eliminate his political enemies while keeping his own hands clean. It is unknown how he acquired the Serpent, or how long it had been in his possession. The Serpent served the petty noble quite well, until he sent it after the wrong target. The noble wanted to torture a certain aging baron by the name of Fredrik Dilisnya, and had the Serpent slay Fredrik's wife, Tara. Fredrik never knew of the existence of the Serpent; all he knew was that his wife had been killed by forces unknown. Nor did Fredrik hold any special favor with his nephew, Ivan, but he was still a powerful member of an old and powerful family, and Fredrik's agents quickly rooted out the man who had sent the killer. The petty noble and his family were slaughtered by Fredrik's assassins.

Fortunately, the Shadow Serpent did not fall into the clutches of the Dilisnya family. On the night the petty noble was slain, his manservant stole away with the automaton. The manservant, a man no kinder than his

master, worked his way to Hazlan, far from anyone who might be looking for him. Over the next few years, the man became a prominent figure in the Toyalis crime scene, using the Serpent to eliminate his opposition. It was during this time that the Order of Guardians first started to hear rumors of the Serpent's existence.

In the year 727 the fates of the Shadow Serpent and the Guardians finally came together. A small group of adventurers went up against the servant-turned-crime lord and defeated him. Indeed, they stole the Serpent away from its owner, somehow learning the secrets of its operation, and used it to slay him. Whether or not they intended to use the Serpent to kill this man is a mystery, but there is no doubt they decided to use it again. They were young, naïve, and idealistic. They believed they could use the Serpent to do good. They resolved to use the Serpent to kill Lord Soth. A brother sent by the Order arrived in Toyalis shortly after these events and picked up the adventurers' trail.

The adventurers traveled to Sithicus, and immediately set about putting an end to Soth's reign. They may have been naïve, but they must have also been quite courageous; to acquire a personal token from Soth would have required them to slip into Nedragaard Keep itself! Somehow, they acquired the token, and sent the Serpent to destroy Soth.

It failed. Exactly why is unclear. Soth's undead nature and powers in the realm of shadow may have protected him from the Serpent's venom. Perhaps the dark powers simply kept their prized pet from harm. What is known is that the Serpent attacked Soth and was unable to destroy him. It returned to the adventurers who had sent it, and destroyed them in his place.

Their bodies had barely cooled before the brother from the Order discovered them. The serpent lay among them, coiled and inactive. Taking it was a simple matter, but the brother immediately had to escape the attentions of Lord Soth, who was making his outrage well-known. Perhaps it was fate, but the brother was found by an elven ranger of good conscience rather than one of Soth's servants. This ranger was protecting a handful of Soth's "enemies" from his fiery gaze, and brought the monk and his dire cargo to a sanctuary deep in the Sithican woods. The brother discovered these "enemies" were poor souls who had suffered Soth's wrath through no fault of their own. He detailed the dangers of the Serpent he bore, and explained the need to keep it hidden from the world. The small band rallied around his cause, and they formed a new Order, calling themselves the Keepers of the Coil.

The Keepers of the Coil are a small group and their lives depend largely on keeping their very existence a secret. Despite their lack in numbers they are strong in spirit, and have devoutly protected the world from the Serpent for nearly a quarter of a century. To their

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

knowledge, the Serpent has not so much as twitched in all that time.

The Shadow Serpent: A Description

The Shadow Serpent is an automated assassin, and the creation of Easan the Mad. Compared to many of Easan's mechanical and botanical abominations, the Serpent is perversely poetic in both form and function. It requires less effort to guard than some of the other magical horrors the Guardians hold. Unless activated, the Serpent remains motionless and rigid, clutching its tail in its jaws. (It is from this "coil" that the Keepers take their name.) When inactive, its threat is subtle and insidious, for its threat is an implied promise. The Serpent promises an easy method of eliminating one's enemies, a way to punish others without putting oneself at risk or staining one's hands with blood. When active, it is a relentless and nigh-unstoppable killer.

The Shadow Serpent is 9' long, and weighs nearly 100 lb. Its mechanical, segmented body is crafted from black meteoric iron. The dull finish reflects no light. Protected by these metal plates, a network of flexible tubes continually pump an inky fluid throughout its interior. This fluid is all that remains of dozens of shadow asps, somehow distilled to their essence by Easan's experiments. Unlike some iron cobras, the Shadow Serpent is obviously a mechanical construct; only a madman could mistake it for a natural creature. The top of the head reveals a clear panel protecting a hollow compartment; although this hinged panel seems to be made of crystal, it is as impervious to harm as any of the Serpent's other components.

To activate the Shadow Serpent, one must first acquire some small, personal possession of the intended victim. This token is then placed in the special compartment in the serpent's head and the cover closed. The compartment fills completely with the inky fluid, drowning the token in utter darkness. The Serpent is now active and will immediately seek to fulfill its commands. When those commands have been completed, the Serpent returns to its master and deactivates again. The inky fluid drains out of the compartment, revealing that the token is now gone.

Once the Shadow Serpent is active, it will accept commands. Although it isn't capable of a wide range of missions, it is very good at what it does, and is possessed of a malign cunning. It will accept three commands: Torment, Punish, or Destroy. Its exact method of attack will depend on the command used. It will immediately travel to its target and fulfill its mission. Exactly how the Serpent locates its victims is unknown, but it is unerringly accurate when seeking its prey.

While active, the Shadow Serpent has the following powers and values in combat:

The Shadow Serpent

Iron Cobra, Neutral Evil

Armor Class	0
Movement	12, 36 (Shadow walking)
Hit Dice	5
Hit Points	30
THAC0	15
No. of Attacks	1
Damage/Attack	1d3
Special Attacks	Venom
Special Defenses	See below
Magic Resistance	See below
Size	M (9' long)
Morale	Steady (12)
XP Value	4,000

Special Powers

- ❖ The Serpent has a mystic connection to the owner of the token placed in its brain. It can always sense the location of that individual to within 100'. This sense can even cross planar boundaries, although the Serpent has no innate ability to move from one plane to another.
- ❖ The Serpent has an 85% chance to Hide in Shadows, aided by the shadow essence pumping through its body. The Serpent can also shadow walk after a fashion; by truly merging itself with the shadows around it, the Serpent becomes intangible and can move at triple normal speed. It cannot attack while merged with shadow, but can use this ability to cross distances quickly or slip through walls, under doors, etc. The only areas the Serpent cannot cross or enter while in this form are those totally enveloped by light, be it sunlight or a *Light* spell. While merged with shadow, the Serpent is nearly invisible. It requires an Intelligence check to spot the Serpent while moving, and even then it appears as little more than a ripple in the darkness. The Serpent requires 1 round to merge with the shadows or emerge from them.
- ❖ The Serpent takes no damage from non-magical weapons. It takes only ½ damage from slashing or piercing magical weapons. Magical bludgeoning weapons inflict full damage. The serpent makes all saves as a 13th level wizard. It is immune to all mind-affecting spells, and cannot see illusions.
- ❖ Normally, the Shadow Serpent makes a metallic rasping noise as its iron body slithers along. Once per turn, however, it can partially merge itself with the shadows just enough to move completely silently for one round.

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

- ❖ If the Shadow Serpent is reduced to 0 hp, it is rendered inoperable but not destroyed. Somehow fueled by the essence of darkness flowing through its frame, it will repair itself at the rate of 1d4 hp per day. When fully “healed,” it becomes fully operational again, reactivates, and will return to its mission.
- ❖ The Shadow Serpent’s reservoirs hold three different types of venom. The type of venom the Serpent uses depends on the command it is given. The Serpent’s mouth has room for three sets of retractable fangs. These fangs can flick in and out like switchblades, and make an unnerving clicking noise when they do so. The serpent has been known to rapidly click its teeth in this fashion to announce its presence and spook its prey. Each type of toxin allows a save vs. poison to avoid the effects. If the victim is size Small or smaller, it receives a -4 penalty to this save. If the victim is Man-sized, it receives a -2 penalty. If the victim is size Large or bigger, it receives no penalty. The Serpent has been known to bite its prey repeatedly to ensure that the venom takes effect; multiple doses require additional saving throws, but have no cumulative effect.
- ❖ If the command is “Torment,” the Serpent will inject its victim with a toxin which makes the target extremely sensitive to bright light. Exposure to any source of light as bright as sunlight (including *continual light*) causes 1 hp of damage per round. The victim may repeat the save vs. poison (with applicable penalty) once a week until the save is successful. This venom has been used when the servant’s master simply wishes to “teach someone a lesson,” rather than kill. The toxin will only affect living matter (and thus cannot harm the undead or artificial constructs).
- ❖ If the command is “Punish,” the Serpent will inject its victim with poison which causes a terrible sleeping sickness. The victim must save vs. poison (at the listed penalty) or fall into a deep slumber lasting one year for every point by which the save was missed. Unless the victim is cared for during all this time, he will quickly waste away. Like the toxin above, this sleep poison can be used to both teach a lesson and temporarily (sometimes permanently) remove one’s enemies. The sleep poison has no effect on any creature which does not sleep (and thus cannot affect goblins, most constructs, or most undead). Undead which must rest, such as vampires, *can* be affected by the sleep poison.
- ❖ If the command is “Destroy,” the Serpent will use its most terrible weapon: it will inject the victim with some of its own essence of darkness. As this baneful substance flows through the victim’s veins, he will be converted into a living shadow. As an unbearable,

unnatural chill assails the character, he will lose one point of Strength per round. Unless both *dispel magic* and *continual light* are cast on the subject before his Strength reaches 0, he will become a shadow as described in the *Monstrous Manual*. The essence of darkness is used only to destroy one’s enemies. In addition, the transformation into a shadow will drive the victim insane, and he may cause even further harm to those around him. Some rumors claim that the Serpent can control the shadows it creates, but this has never been proven. The essence of darkness will not affect any creature with an innate ability to manipulate shadows (including Soth’s shadow-walking).

- ❖ The Shadow Serpent carries 3 doses of each type of venom. It can “recharge” at the rate of one dose of venom per day. It is not known how the serpent refills its venom supply. It is supposed that the essence of darkness has a role in this, but that simply answers one mystery with another.

Possible Means of Destruction

The Order knows of no sure way to permanently destroy the Shadow Serpent, but they do know of the following “weaknesses.”

- ❖ The ultimate source of the Serpent’s power remains unknown. While the essence of darkness flowing through its body is obviously part of the puzzle, there is also evidence that the Serpent somehow takes sustenance from the suffering it causes during its missions. If the Serpent is unable to fulfill its mission, it will return to its master and inflict the ordered attack on those who gave that order. There are three situations which may cause the Serpent to fail at its mission. They are:
- ❖ The Serpent is unable to locate its prey. The only known means of foiling the Serpent’s mystic link to its target is the *non-detection* spell. If the Serpent is unable to sense its target for three continuous days, it will return to its masters, to their misfortune.
- ❖ The Serpent’s target is immune to its venom. If a target resists all three doses of the intended toxin, the Serpent will continue to attack until it has expended all of its poisons. If the target is still unaffected, the Serpent will retreat, wait nine days until its venom reservoirs have been refilled, and attack its masters. Lord Soth is notoriously immune to all of the serpent’s toxins.
- ❖ The intended victim dies before the Serpent can reach him.

Other weaknesses:

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

- ❖ If a *light* or *continual light* spell is cast directly on the Shadow Serpent, it will be unable to shadow walk or move silently. However, the essence of darkness flowing through the Serpent will always eventually overcome such magic. A *light* spell cast directly on the Serpent will have its duration halved; a *continual light* will only have the duration of a *light* spell.
- ❖ If *dispel magic* is successfully cast on the Serpent, it will deactivate for a number of rounds equal to the level of the caster.
- ❖ Electrical attacks have a flat 10% chance of momentarily overloading the serpent, leaving it stunned for 1d4 rounds.
- ❖ In times of desperate need, there is one known non-magical means of protecting a targeted victim. The Serpent will attack people other than its target only when those people act as a direct barrier between the Serpent and its prey. If the Serpent uses up its venom on the target's defenders, it will retreat and return to its masters. So long as at least one of those defenders was affected by either the sleep poison or the essence of darkness, the Serpent will not turn on its masters, apparently sated.

The Keepers of the Coil also theorize about possible means of permanently destroying the Shadow Serpent, or at least forever removing it from the lands of men. Here are the possibilities they have considered.

- ❖ The Shadow Serpent must be sent to destroy a target outside Ravenloft. It is theorized that the Serpent will disappear into the Mists, forever searching the limits of the demiplane for a means to reach its target. Others theorize that this would only keep the Serpent occupied until such time as its target died. At that time, it would return to destroy its master.
- ❖ The Serpent must be sent to destroy a being of pure light. It is thought that a being whose essence is pure light would counteract the Serpent, a horror powered by the essence of darkness. In theory, the two beings would destroy each other.
- ❖ The Serpent must be sent to destroy itself. This is thought to be the least plausible of the theories. First of all, some piece of the Serpent must be placed in its cranial compartment. This would require breaking off a piece of the Serpent itself, which has never been accomplished. Secondly, it seems likely that the Serpent is immune to all of its own types of venom.

THE SANCTUARY

The Keepers of the Coil maintain a sanctuary in southeastern Sithicus. When it was built, it was practically on top of the Valachani border; since the Great Upheaval, it has been within a thousand feet of the Misty Border. In being so close to the edge of the domain, the Sanctuary escapes the notice of Soth's vampiric kenders, who are reluctant to travel closer than a mile to the edge of the domain.

The sanctuary itself was largely designed and built by Kortin Ashtender in 726, a kender who escaped Soth's attention when that dread lord drew his village into the demiplane. Although built to elven proportions, the arboreal structures are essentially kender in design. The sanctuary is built in the branches of several ancient trees, sturdy wooden structures connected by simple rope bridges. The layout is quite random, and no two rooms are the same size or at quite the same height. Each Keeper has his own quarters; due to the Sanctuary's design, additional rooms can simply be built as needed and connected via rope bridges to the existing buildings. All of the structures are extensively camouflaged and not easily detected from below. Access is gained via a small number of rope ladders which can be pulled up if needed.

The furnishings and lifestyle are simple, as they must be, since the Keepers must be largely self-reliant. They have no place for visitors to stay (with the exception of Tarilanas), but anyone they do take into their graces may be allowed to sleep in the communal dining hall, a cramped, curving room which follows the contours of its tree's trunk.

The Serpent itself, also called the Coil, has its own structure, high in the trees. Inside the single, small room, the inactive Coil is suspended above the floor, hanging from two long chains. Someone who paradoxically found himself here yet did not know what he was looking at might think the Serpent some manner of odd art object on display.

Were Soth ever to learn the location of the Sanctuary, it would likely take him less than a minute to destroy it completely.

THE KEEPERS

The Keepers of the Coil is one of the smallest Orders of the Guardians, with only four members and one close ally. In this case, total secrecy and small numbers are a strength; they do not seek to bolster their forces. The Keepers wear simple grey robes, although most also wear additional, utilitarian clothes underneath.

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

Josif Muscat was the brother sent by the Guardians to recover the Shadow Serpent back in 727, and it is he who turned this hideaway for Soth's political enemies into a new Order. Just shy of a quarter century has passed since Josif came to Sithicus, and today he is nearly sixty years old and feeling his age. Although he expects to remain in the land of the living for quite some time, he has started to think about naming a successor, the new leader of the Keepers. He has grown used to the elves in his time here, and believes he should make one of their ageless kind his successor.

Although a monk, Josif has no priestly abilities, nor has he faith in any gods. (After all, what gods would let such monstrosities as the Serpent into the world?) Before he joined the Order, Josif was in fact a traveling bard; he was sent to find the Serpent due to his information-gathering skills. He still has his mandolin, and has been known to occasionally pass an evening playing traditional tunes. Unfortunately, he receives little support from the Sithican brothers, who prefer dirges to his ballads.

Josif does have some small spellcasting ability, but in the last few years he's cast nothing more powerful than *mending*.

Josif Muscat

5th-Level Human Bard, Lawful Neutral

Armor Class	10	Str	10
Movement	12	Dex	11
Level/Hit Dice	5	Con	12
Hit Points	18	Int	16
THAC0	18	Wis	14
No. of Attacks	1	Cha	15
Damage/Attack	By weapon		
Special Attacks	Spellcasting		
Special Defenses	Bardic abilities		

Corilanthan believes himself to be over 400 years old, although some few sages would wager the Sithican elves did not exist before the appearance of Sithicus. For centuries, Corilanthan has been a priest of Gilean. When Sithicus was created in the spring of 720, Corilanthan discovered that no histories existed of Krynn, or of their new liege, Lord Soth. Corilanthan immediately set about scribing the history of Krynn as he knew it, hoping to preserve the ancient lore in this new land. He was quite pleased with the finished work, the true tale of the epic struggle between Law and Chaos, and one man led astray by forces beyond his control.

After Corilanthan released his History, he immediately became the target of Soth's ire. Apparently, the fallen knight felt his story had been told in a distorted form, an account rife with error. Corilanthan maintained that his history was accurate; after all, he had lived through much of it, and his comrades all attested to the

truth of his account. Soth was simply insulted, and Corilanthan was forced to flee his home before Azrael paid him a visit. Unwilling to risk travel into the lands of the humans (a brutish, inferior race), Corilanthan lived as a hermit, aided by the few friends still willing to risk their own lives to help him. (Tarilanas was among these allies.)

When Brother Josif came to Sithicus and explained the purpose of the Order of the Guardians, Corilanthan was renewed, given new purpose in life. Although it took Corilanthan years to accept Josif and Kortin as equals, and he is still aloof towards them, in many ways he became the spiritual leader of the group.

Suddenly and without any explicable reason, Corilanthan lost his priestly abilities in their entirety four years ago. In fact, this was the time of the Second Cataclysm on Krynn, when those gods left their creations forever. Sadly, Corilanthan has no way of knowing this. He is tormented by his sudden loss of favor, and blames a lack of faith in himself. He has emotionally collapsed, and is again as much of a ruin as he was in the years directly following Soth's condemnation. Whether Corilanthan will ever regain faith in himself is unknown, but he should have several centuries of life left to him to recover.

Corilanthan

8th-Level Elven Cleric of Gilean, Lawful Neutral

Armor Class	10	Str	12
Movement	12	Dex	14
Level/Hit Dice	8	Con	11
Hit Points	50	Int	13
THAC0	16	Wis	17
No. of Attacks	1	Cha	10
Damage/Attack	By weapon		
Special Attacks	Note that Corilanthan does not have the ability to cast spells.		

Haleth privately fears he may be a fool who has thrown his life away. A roguish, 240 year old Sithican, he made the dire mistake of standing up against Azrael, Soth's cruel seneschal. Haleth lived peacefully in Mal-Erek for a decade, until Azrael came in Soth's name, trying to billet troops to wipe out the Mileinosti, the feral elves which haunt the wilds of that region. Haleth, no

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

warrior himself and opposed to Soth's plan to turn elf against elf, instead tried to recruit a mob to rise up against Soth. Unfortunately for Haleth, he tried this within earshot of Azrael. The thoroughly bloodthirsty warrior made a beeline for Haleth, cutting down any elves who stood in his path. Haleth saw a ranger actually step forward and attack the rampaging dwarf, stabbing his blade deep into the seneschal's side. Azrael plunged his axe into the ranger's chest, never hinting that he had even felt the dire wound. Only by being quick of wit and fleet of foot did Haleth escape Azrael. Haleth fled Mal-Erek, and miraculously was not set upon by the savage Mileinosti.

Unable to return to his home, and unwilling to leave Sithicus and face the human lands, Haleth had nowhere to turn. He surely would have soon died, but luck was upon him. Tarilanas tracked Haleth down and brought him to the Sanctuary. At the Sanctuary, Haleth learned about the Keepers of the Coil and joined them.

Haleth remains militant in his hatred of Soth, but he recognizes that the Serpent can not be used against the lord himself, nor could it be sent to kill Azrael without surely bringing Soth's wrath down upon them all. For now, Haleth is content to keep the Shadow Serpent out of Soth's hands, but he would gladly strike against the fallen knight if given a good opportunity.

Despite Josif's theories concerning the Serpent's origin, Haleth remains personally convinced that the Serpent was created by Lord Soth himself. After all, the Serpent cannot harm Soth, and it seems as natural a part of the fabric of Sithicus as any other denizen, living or dead. Part of Haleth's reasons for discarding Josif's tales is his dislike for the human. Of all the Keepers, Haleth is the least accepting of the "inferior" races.

Haleth

6th-Level Elven Thief, Chaotic Good

Armor Class	8	Str	14
Movement	12	Dex	16
Level/Hit Dice	6	Con	10
Hit Points	20	Int	13
THAC0	18	Wis	12
No. of Attacks	1	Cha	14
Damage/Attack	By weapon		
Special Attacks	Backstab		
Special Defenses	Thieving abilities		

Tarilanas is not a Keeper, as he can serve the order much better as an ally. At 160 years of age, Tarilanas is still relatively young, from the elven standpoint. Like the other Sithicans, he remembers a life in Ansalon, a land much more fair and just than this. Tarilanas is a ranger, charged with the defense of his adopted home of Har-Thelen and the deep forests of Sithicus. Although he publicly serves his ruler well, he has worked secretly to

maintain justice in the face of Soth's tyranny practically from the first day he found himself in Sithicus. As a ranger, and as a member of a high-ranking house, he is privy to much of the news of the domain, and is well-equipped to lend what covert aid he can.

Tarilanas has taken it upon himself to quietly aid those who Soth has unfairly chosen to persecute, hiding them away where Soth's servants hopefully will not find them. He has a few connections worth mentioning. He has a formal relationship with the Wanderers, the Vistani tribe Soth keeps on his leash. They are a valuable source of information, but they require, and accept, little aid in return. He is also an ally of Jameld, an elf who has found some small fame outside of Sithicus thanks to his association with the human Rudolph Van Richten.

Tarilanas is the main provider for the Order, and often a source of common sense for the group as well. He is the elf who brought these individuals together, but he chooses not to take the leadership role. Tarilanas is one of those few Sithicans who is accepting of non-elves. However, although he is not intentionally hostile, he does still treat non-elves in a slightly condescending manner, much like a master with his pet.

Tarilanas

Elven 7th-Level Ranger, Neutral Good

Armor Class	8	Str	16
Movement	12	Dex	16
Level/Hit Dice	7	Con	15
Hit Points	40	Int	13
THAC0	14	Wis	14
No. of Attacks	3/2	Cha	12
Damage/Attack	By weapon (long sword)		
Special Attacks	Bow bonuses		
Special Defenses	Stealth, Animal Empathy		
HS:	53%	MS:	60%

Kortin Ashtender is a kender, brought into Sithicus in 725 with the rest of his village and immediately subjected to Soth's torturous, sadistic experiments. Most of his friends and family were killed, and the rest were transformed into undead abominations. To his knowledge, Kortin was the only kender to escape Soth's grasp. He knows of the vicious kendens living to the north, but believes they are more of Soth's abominations, not scarred escapees like himself. These nightmarish events drove a spike of suffering deep into Kortin's soul. He shows little of the mirth and childlike curiosity of the

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

typical kender, and his wanderlust has left him as well. None of his companions are aware that Kortin's behavior is unusual for his race, but for decades he was nearly an unique creature. Only now, with the arrival of the great wrym Malys in faraway Ansalon, will more kender like himself be created, and for a name to be given to his condition: Kortin is an *afflicted* kender.

Kortin is a quiet and deeply bitter individual who has now spent half his life in Sithicus. He still bears deep scars on both body and soul. However, he is also the architect of the Sanctuary, and highly dedicated to the Keepers. None of the other Keepers are aware of just *how* dedicated he is to the cause.

Kortin spends most of his days rummaging in the woods for herbs, game, and supplies. What he does not tell the others is that he also keeps his keen eyes peeled for intruders. As he silently creeps about the shadowy woods, he maintains a constant vigil for Soth's servants, or anyone else who seems suspicious. If Kortin decides that an individual presents a threat to the Keepers, he will use his "handling" skills to steal a few personal items from the intruder. He will then return to the Sanctuary, offer to take a shift guarding the Serpent, and send it after that individual without a second thought. He sees this as necessary to the survival of the group and the cause. He does not understand that he has already succumbed to the lure of the Shadow Serpent.

Kortin Ashtender

4th-Level Afflicted Kender Handler (Thief)

Chaotic Neutral

Armor Class	7	Str	12
Movement	12	Dex	17
Level/Hit Dice	4	Con	10
Hit Points	16	Int	14
THAC0	19	Wis	8
No. of Attacks	1	Cha	6
Damage/Attack	By weapon		
Special Attacks	Backstab		
Special Defenses	Handling abilities		

Note: For more information on Afflicted Kenders, see the *Dragonlance: Fifth Age* boxed set.



PROFESSOR ABELHOUS NICHOLSI

(Former) Professor of Biology at the University of Il Aluk

by Christopher Dale Nichols
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BACKGROUND

Born the son of a farmer in 689, Abelhaus Nicholshi was a gifted youth. He was strong and intelligent, capable on the farm and inventive at finding new methods of farming. Through his help, the Nicholshi's became moderately wealthy and managed to sponsor him at the University of Il Aluk. During his time at the university, Abelhaus was one of its most distinguished students, earning high marks and the respect of his teachers. Once Abelhaus had finished his studies in 718, he was offered a position in the ivy-cloaked halls of the University of Il Aluk.

Just entering his thirties at the time, Abelhaus jumped at the opportunity. He worked diligently within the school's biology department, specializing in botany. The flow of Abelhaus' life passed uneventfully until 724, and then the event that would lead him to make his mark occurred. Prof. Daniel Fyrehaaven disappeared, and suspicion fell on another professor, a rival of Fyrehaaven's. However, Abelhaus found the suspect dangling from a patch of ivy crawling up one of the academic buildings. When Abelhaus found the body, the vines writhed and twisted, straining to grasp him and crush his life also. Abelhaus evaded the carnivorous plant, and rousing the university's guards, had the plant sliced to bits and burnt. When the guards dug up the plant's roots, they found Prof. Fyrehaaven's corpse, the plant growing from his ruptured stomach.

That day, the biology and medical departments examined the bodies. They discovered that the unfortunate Professor Fyrehaaven's last meal had contained the berries of an unusual species of ivy, the carnivorous crawling ivy found by Prof. Nicholshi. This had poisoned the unfortunate professor, and the ivy

sprang up nearly overnight. The poisoning turned suspicions to Prof. Fyrehaaven's wife, Julia. When the guard arrived at the Fyrehaaven house, she was nowhere to be found. Later witnesses came forward, claiming that they had seen Julia with her husband's rival the night before she disappeared. Apparently, she had lured him with promises of a romantic interlude into the ivy patch, which had drained him of blood.

This encounter with such unnatural vegetation led Prof. Nicholshi to study the workings of the more unusual plants of the Land of the Mist. Intensive studies throughout the Core led him to catalog the bloodrose, the hangman tree, the fear weed, and a host of other dangerous plants. Eventually, while on sabbatical in 731 Abelhaus' researches led him to Forlorn, one of the most vegetation rich lands of the Core.

However, this trip wound up disastrously, as Prof. Nicholshi and his companions were captured by the goblins of Forlorn. The goblins tortured the captives. They used Prof. Nicholshi as a game board, carving games of noughts and crosses in his skin and marking their scores with their blades. For days, Prof. Nicholshi suffered under the slow torture the goblins practiced, until a group of druids raided the goblin camp. The battle was fierce, but finally the druids prevailed, although they suffered heavy losses in their ranks and among the prisoners. Horribly scarred, Abelhaus was nursed back to health by the druids, whom he vowed to help should they ever require his services.

Returning to Il Aluk, Abelhaus resumed his teaching, until the year 743 when reports of a meteor shower in Hazlan, led Abelhaus to lead a university expedition to attempt to locate the cryptobotanical legend, the doppelganger plant. However, this expedition proved futile, as no evidence of the legendary plant was unearthed. The expedition was not a complete failure, as Abelhaus and the members of the biology staff managed

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

to view the remains of one of the things from the Black Land that was formerly south of Hazlan. After the expedition, the biology department produced the text *Speculative Ecology of an Inhabitant of Bluetspur*. Abelhous resumed teaching for the next few years, until early in the year 750, when he took an opportunity to take a sabbatical. Gathering a team of selected students and fellow researchers, the team set out into the Mists, planning to produce a survey of the flora of the jungles of Sri Raji. Although, the group encountered many dangerous things in this tropical domain, there were few losses, and a wealth of new knowledge was unearthed. However, as the expedition returned, they found the city of Il Aluk a ravaged ruin, crawling with the walking dead. Fearfully, the members of the expedition retreated to Karg, where they hired messengers to find and gather any surviving members of the University's faculty.

Current Sketch

Prof. Abelhous Nicholsi is a tough, virile man in his early sixties. His skin possesses the dark leathery quality given by a lifetime of work outdoors, and he has the wiry strength granted by manual labor in the field. Abelhous' skin is marked all over with pink, irritated looking keloid scars, gained from the ministrations of Forlorn's goblins. These scars mark games of noughts and crosses and scores from these games. One particularly large game mars the bald area of his head. Abelhous suffers from male-pattern baldness, although were it remains he has thick white hair which he has pulled back into a pony tail. He also has a beard and mustache the same color as his hair. His eyes shine with intelligence and a keen sense of humor. The professor dresses in khakis and pith helmet when working in the field, although if the work is really dirty, he dons an ancient pair of leather coveralls. While at the university, Abelhous tends toward the formal clothes required by the school, donning breech, frock-coat, and vest, although these are old, comfortable, and long out of style.

Prof. Nicholsi has studied the flora of the Lands of the Mists for most of his life. His area of expertise is the more dangerous plants of the land. Additionally, he excels at deriving useful compounds from plants, and can identify poisons and similar substances that are plant-based.

Prof. Nicholsi has traveled all across the Core extensively, and has contacts in the intellectual communities across the Land. He is a prolific writer, constantly writing in a huge blank book. Abelhous has allies amongst the faculty of the University of Il Aluk and the druids of Forlorn. Governor Pall Ibington of Hazlan, who arranged Prof. Nicholsi's examination of the remains of an illithid, is a patron of the professor. However, Prof. Nicholsi has his enemies too. Tristen ApBlanc, lord of

Forlorn, still seethes with anger at his escape at the hands of the druids. Julia Fyrehaaven is still out there, and she occasionally sends messages to him and others who investigated her husband's death, generally in the form of subtle plant-derived toxins or strange carnivore plants left in homes and work-quarters. Also, the professor has attracted the interest of several shadowy figures in Sri Raji who envision uses he may serve in their plots. Finally, although no-one knows it, one of the students who accompanied Prof. Nicholsi to Sri Raji has contracted a rare tropical disease which he has brought to the Core. He is a Typhoid Mary, spreading the disease but not falling to it himself.

Prof. Abelhous Nicholsi

Human Scholar (5th-Level Thief), Lawful Good

Armor Class	10	Str	11
Movement	12	Dex	14
Level/Hit Dice	5	Con	9
Hit Points	30	Int	18
THAC0	16	Wis	16
No. of Attacks	1	Cha	12
Damage/Attack	By weapon (short sword: 1d6)		
Morale	12		
XP Value:	4,000		

Publications By Professor Abelhous Nicholsi

- ❖ *Soil Content and Agricultural Crops*
- ❖ *Crop Yields and Traditional Farming Techniques*
- ❖ *Medicinal Applications of Native Darkonian Flora*
- ❖ *Psychotropic Plants and the Mystic Tradition*
- ❖ *Distinctive Signatures of Flora and Floral Derivatives in Homicide*
- ❖ *Practical Chemical Derivatives of Core Flora*
- ❖ *Dangerous Flora: A Guide to Carnivorous and Toxic Plants*
- ❖ *Flora and Fauna of the Forfarian Forests*
- ❖ *Flora and Fauna of the Mordent Moorlands*
- ❖ *Cryptobotany: Search for the Doppelganger Plant and Others*
- ❖ *Speculative Biology of an Inhabitant of Bluetspur*
- ❖ *Native Flora of the Tropical Forests of Sri Raji (forthcoming)*



KATARINA

Taken from the Memoirs of Dr. Alphonse von Henkel,
Intrepid Foe of Evil

by Francis Montenegro
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INTRODUCTION

It was on the plains of Nova Vaasa that I first heard the song: a terrible song, a beautiful song, a song of unbearable sadness, arcing through the night. It was as if the sky itself had started to sing, and given vent to all its sorrows, so unearthly was the melody. I stopped my horse and listened, transfixed. I turned my horse in the song's direction, urged it forward, and then I saw her: a young woman, dressed all in white, perched upon a rock and keening at the sky. She had the smooth, unblemished skin of an aristocrat, and a golden mane of hair, shining like a halo in the moonlight. She stopped the song, then turned to face me. Her eyes were hunter's eyes, feral and dark, and they froze me in the saddle. She blinked once, and then with a rustle of her garments she was gone.

Against my better judgment I rushed forward to find her, but she had disappeared behind the rock, nowhere to be seen. I searched vainly around for tracks, then remembered my predicament: I was outdoors, long after dark, in the land of the mists. I cursed my stupidity, then spurred my horse full speed toward the city of Kantora.



Kantora was the capital of Nova Vaasa, and I had business with the government, of a sort. My friend and colleague in the city, Mr. Jonathan Larrabie, suspected a local noble of having fallen prey to the curse of vampirism, and had called me there to help investigate, and to assist in destroying the beast if needed. Thus it was that I found myself watching with interest as the Viscount Rasten attended the annual outdoor harvest banquet. I say "attended," not dined at, for I noted that he did not eat a morsel, but pushed his food dejectedly around the plate. When he prepared to give a toast, I observed him discreetly via a small mirror. It showed

nothing. Where the Viscount should have been was an empty seat.

"Well?" Jonathan asked.

"How long has it been since he was seen in the day?"

"Almost six months," Jonathan answered, "the same time span as this rash of disappearances."

I nodded gravely. "Very well then," I said, "We take him tomorrow."

Jonathan raised his eyebrows. "So soon?" he asked.

"We have all the information we need, and no more help is coming." I turned to face him. "Unlike him, we do not grow stronger with time. We destroy him tomorrow."

Jonathan nodded, "Tomorrow it is, then."

"Tomorrow it is."

We parted ways and I headed back to the inn. I must remember to smear garlic on my windows tonight, I was thinking, when I caught something out of the corner of my eye. At first it was nothing, a flash of blond hair, not so uncommon in this land, but as the woman passed me by I got a glimpse of her eyes: hunter's eyes, feral and dark.

I turned to get a better look. She was dressed in peasant's rags, but she walked with the proud, upright gait of a noblewoman, and she used it to move through the crowd with surprising speed. I gave chase, and though she did not turn around, she seemed to notice my advance, and darted into a nearby alley. I entered the alleyway, suddenly conscious of how dark and constricted a place it was. I pulled a tiny silver dagger from the pocket of my coat and continued.

I did not have to travel very far. The alley ended in a solid wall, far beyond my ability to climb. I searched around vainly for some sign of the young woman, but she had escaped me again. Glumly I exited the alleyway, and was about to head home when a street urchin tugged at my jacket.

"Go away," I said, "I don't have any money."

He shook his head. "Some lady gave me two silvers to give this to you," he said, and he handed me a sheet of paper.

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

I unfolded it and looked inside. There in a delicate, feminine script was written: “Beware. There are some questions better left unanswered.”

I looked around for the “lady,” but of course I found nothing. The child was similarly unhelpful. I put the paper in my pocket and returned to the inn.



When the sun rose again I prepared my tools. I had a mallet and a stake, of course, and my blessed accouterments: holy wafers, holy water, and a holy symbol. These I placed in a bag with some cloves of garlic and my dog-eared, leather-bound copy of *Van Richten's Guide to Vampires*. I also brought a pistol that I had purchased in Dementlieu. Though it was useless against the thing itself, it would be helpful in dealing with whatever minions the Viscount might choose to surround himself with. I examined my equipment carefully. I was as prepared as a mortal could be. If I was lucky, it would be enough. I put on my hat and ventured out to meet Jonathan.

Jonathan was waiting for me at the entrance to the city catacombs. Viscount Rasten's estate was nearby, and Jonathan had more than once spied on him as he entered here just before dawn. We nodded as we met. There was precious little to say. He lit his lantern and we entered into the darkness.

The catacombs themselves consisted of many great, echoing hallways, their walls lined with row upon row of alcoves for coffins. The place worried me deeply. An entire army of undead could be hidden here and we would not know it until they were upon us. I gripped my pistol tightly and continued on. Jonathan and I scanned the ground. The catacombs were seldom visited by living folk, so most of the floor was covered with a thick layer of cobwebs and dust. There was, however, a very definite trail on the floor, made by a combination of footprints and drag marks, leading through the labyrinthine passageways. These we followed until we entered a low, vaulted chamber, and then we heard the noise.

It was Jonathan who heard it first. He motioned me be still and raised his hand to his ear. I listened intently, then I heard it too: a muffled sobbing, just barely loud enough to be heard. Slowly, I moved off in its direction. I had known vampires to keep humans as cattle, “milking” them for blood, keeping them alive until they went mad from the confinement and died lingering, horrible deaths. I swore I would not let that happen here. So when I entered the next room and saw a rag-clothed woman, bound and gagged on the floor, I instantly rushed forward to free her. Which of course was a mistake. I knew I had erred as soon as I removed the gag, and she said to me in the raspy voice of undeath: “DIE, MORTAL, DIE!”

A heavy object hit me on the back of the head, and I fell spinning to the floor. Through the pain I caught images and sounds, though I could not separate fact from dream: Jonathan shouting, the roar of my pistol, a thousand wretched shapes emerging from the shadows, and somewhere in the background, Viscount Rasten's mocking voice saying, “Fools! Did you really think your pathetic observation had gone unnoticed? It is time for you to join my legion!” It was the last thing I heard before my sight went dark.



When I awoke the first thing I was aware of was a rat, skittering across my face. I bolted upright and threw it aside. I looked around, and immediately I regretted the decision. All about me were bodies in various states of decomposition, all slashed and torn as if some wild animal had attacked them, rending them to pieces. Already the rats were feasting, and I got to my feet so as to escape from the disagreeable sight. Stumbling into the next room, I saw a thing which gave me even more pause: Viscount Rasten, pinned to the wall with a wooden stake, his head removed and stuffed with holy wafers.

The sight should have filled me with joy, but instead I grew more concerned. Jonathan was young, strong, and a respectable brawler, but he could not have achieved all that I saw. His body was not amongst the corpses, so he had escaped, but why had he left me behind? I went to pick up the lantern, still burning dimly in the corner, and then I noticed: a trail of blood leading back the way we came. I gathered all of my equipment, including the stake, and followed.



The trail brought me to the catacomb entrance, and I breathed in deeply the cool night wind, so refreshing after the musty air of the crypts below. How long had we been underground? We had lost track of the time while wandering the catacombs, and our mysterious benefactor had refilled the oil in the lantern, so that was useless as a gauge. Looking around, I became aware of a noise being carried on the wind, a high, rhythmic, steady noise. Then I realized: it was the wheezing of a dying man. I made off in its direction, noting that it coincided with the trail of blood. It led to a small abandoned tower nearby, and up the stairs to the roof. It was there that I found the object of my search, and more: Jonathan lay face up on the roof, his head cradled in the arms of a woman in white—the one I had seen the other night, keening on the plains. They were both of them covered in blood, Jonathan with his own, she apparently with others', for she evinced no pain, and her skin was unscarred.

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

She smoothed down Jonathan's hair, then brought her finger to his lips barely moving lips. "Shhhh," she whispered, "your wounds are mortal. You have not long in this world. But look," she said, pointing at the sky, "I granted your wish. You can see the stars one last time."

I clutched at my heart, so touching was the scene. I was just about to step forward and join it when she did something that changed my view completely. She leaned down close to Jonathan and, like a cat does with milk, began to lick the blood from his wounds.

My sentiment quickly turned to revulsion. In rage I readied the stake which I had only recently pulled from Viscount Rasten, and raised it above my head. "Die, you fiend!" I cried, rushing forward to impale the beast I saw before me.

Alas, I was not equal to the task. Calmly, yet with supernatural speed, she laid Jonathan's head down, then leapt across the parapet into the night. There was a rustling, and then where she had been there was a tiny white hummingbird, winging quickly away into the distance.

I watched her go, then turned my attention back to Jonathan. His breast heaved one more time, then stopped. I closed his eyes. He died staring up at the stars.



I had Jonathan's body cremated the next day. He had no family, and I was his only friend. I stayed at the cathedral all day, with his ashes, all day and well into the night. It was around midnight that I heard the doors open behind me as I knelt before the altar. I did not turn around, for I presumed it was just another lost soul come to beg for guidance. Then a chill struck me as I realized that from behind me I heard the rustling of garments, but no footsteps. I had just remembered: vampires walk in total silence.

Whoever it was came up directly behind me, so close that the fabric of her gown brushed against my back, and then she spoke, confirming my fear, "Your friend fought bravely," she said, "you should be proud."

My body froze as I felt long, thin fingers reach down into my hair, playing with it lazily like a mother does with a little child's. "Who are you?" I stammered, "How can you be here, in this holy place?"

The fingers stopped moving, then withdrew. "I am Katarina," she said, "I am . . . not the same as the others you have known, at least not yet."

I spun around to face her, and she drew back in surprise. "You are a bloodsucking fiend!" I shouted, "You are an abomination against nature!"

She closed her eyes, regaining her composure. "Yes," she whispered, and a single red tear ran down her cheek. I was aghast. I did not know a vampire could cry. Without a word, she moved beside me, knelt before the

altar, and whispered a short little prayer in a language I did not know. Then she stood, and looked at me through bloodshot eyes. "Today," she said, "I sleep in Rasten's tomb." With that she turned around, and noiselessly as she had entered, walked out the cathedral door. I watched her go from the altar steps, and when she was gone, I sighed deeply. I knew what I had to do.



The catacombs were as dark and uninviting as before, but this time I knew the way. When I came to the place, the bodies were gone, and I followed the dust trail further on, to where a number of stone sarcophagi lay, inscribed with the Rasten family emblems. I paused at the threshold. Putting my lantern down, I took up my stake and mallet, moved to the one open sarcophagus, and opened up the wooden coffin that lay inside.

When I saw her, I caught my breath. She was dressed once again in her silken white gown, unstained and unblemished, her milky white skin stretched smooth across delicate cheekbones. Her lips, slightly opened, still retained the blush of life, and her hair, as before, glowed like a halo, even in the flickering lantern light. She looked peaceful and serene, like an innocent young maiden lain down to take a nap. I turned my head away. I would not be waylaid from my task by her beauty. With trembling hand I placed the point of the stake over her breast, and raised the mallet high over my head. Yet I could not bring myself to strike. The hand that held the mallet trembled uncontrollably, and I lowered it to my side. My heart was beating faster, a bead of sweat rolled down my temple. I felt like I had been in battle. Damn it! I said to myself, you know what must be done! Again I raised the mallet, and again I shook uncontrollably, and could not bring myself to drive the stake; and as I stood there, paralyzed and trembling, then slowly, languorously, she opened her eyes. Looking up at my face, beaded with sweat, she gently smiled, and with a single motion sat up and sank twin fangs into my wrist.

Instantly I felt the ecstasy which accompanies vampiric feeding, and I knew I had to get away, or I would be lost. I tried to pull my hand from her, but my arm would not move. I tried to scream, but my lips would not open. My vision blurred, and I had given myself up for lost when she let go of my arm, and I crumpled to the floor. I awoke the next day in my room at the inn. The serving boy told me that a woman in white had paid to have me taken care of, then sent for a carriage to take her out of the city — to where, he did not know.



That was many years ago. The two round scars on my wrist still haunt me, and I ensure now that I am

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

indoors long, long before the sun goes down. As my career as a vampire hunter winds to a close, I often think back to that day, and to the young lady in white, though be it with affection or revulsion, I cannot say. I have never seen her again, nor have I sought to. Yet every now and then, when I see a flash of blond hair, I am tempted to check for her hunter's eyes; and every now and then, far off in the distance, I can hear someone singing: a terrible song, a beautiful song, a song of unbearable sadness, arcing through the night.

Katarina

Very Old (?) Vampire, Lawful Good (?)			
Armor Class	1	Str	18/00
Movement	18, Fl 36 (A)	Dex	18
Level/Hit Dice	11+1	Con	18
Hit Points	56	Int	18
THAC0	6	Wis	16
Morale	16	Cha	19
No. of Attacks	1	XP	8,000
Damage/Attack	1d6+4		
Special Attacks	Energy drain		
Special Defenses	+2 or better weapon to hit		
Magic Resistance	See below		
Treasure	W		

It is said among the Vistani that in 741, one year to the day after the Grand Conjunction, a young woman dressed all in white walked silently through the village of Barovia, and up the long, winding path to Castle Ravenloft. The very next night, to the surprise of all who witnessed, she emerged from the castle unharmed and walked through the village once more, out into the

surrounding ring of fog, where she disappeared.

— From the Journals of
Dr. Rudolph van Richten

Background

Once, in a land far away, the Lady Katarina was a half-elven fighter/mage/priestess of uncommon skill and beauty, who fought a tireless battle against the forces of evil. How long ago that was no one knows, for now she walks the lands of Ravenloft, a member of the living dead. Unlike most other vampires, however, she has managed to maintain much of her Lawful Good alignment, and has dedicated her (un)life to destroying the evil creatures which she finds around her. Perhaps because of this surviving goodness, she is unharmed by holy water and symbols, and can enter any structure uninvited, including churches and temples, which she enters often to pray to her deity for strength and forgiveness.

Those who would have Katarina as an ally, however, had best be warned: hers is a constant struggle to avoid falling into the abyss of chaotic evil, and while she has sworn never to create another vampire, nor even to take a human life, she cannot resist the urge to drink blood, and those who have encountered her fear that with every drop she imbibes, she moves one step closer to becoming the sadistic predator that may be her ultimate destiny. Katarina herself senses this, and because she cannot bring herself to destroy herself, she expresses her sorrow from time to time by finding a secluded place and singing a lament for her lost mortality. In life she was an accomplished singer, and the transition to undeath has only enhanced her talents. Though her song has no magical effects, its unearthly beauty has caused many a mortal to wander foolishly out into the night, and more than one vampire to restrict his activities until her passing. Of the few evil beasts that have ventured out to destroy her, not a single one has returned.

Combat

In battle, Katarina is a fearsome opponent, as befits her hazardous occupation. While no one knows her exact age, she has the abilities of a Very Old vampire, including 18/00 strength that grants her a +3 to hit and +6 to damage. Because she was a specialty priestess and not a standard cleric, she is proficient with the long sword, and has been known to wield a long sword +2 named *Malik's Kiss* in combat, thus making her a match for all but the mightiest combatants. Even without the blade, however, she inflicts grievous damage upon her opponents, striking

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

them for 5-10 points of damage and draining two energy levels.

As with other vampires, those who look into Katarina's eyes must save vs. spell at -3 or be affected as if by a *charm person* spell. In truth, however, Katarina seldom uses this ability, for her natural beauty and charisma have convinced many a mortal (especially males) to do her bidding. Those who do manage to attack her will most likely find the result to be unsatisfying. She can only be harmed by a +2 or greater magical weapon, and even then regenerates 4 hit points per round. As an undead creature, Katarina is immune to *sleep*, *charm*, and *hold* spells, as well as poison and paralysis, and takes only half damage from magical cold or electricity. If she is reduced to zero hit points, Katarina will assume *gaseous form* and flee to her resting place. Usually this will be an empty crypt or a windowless room, but she also has an ornate wooden coffin which she often has shipped with her on her travels, in case she cannot find a suitable hiding place. Note that while she must rest in the daytime, she is by no means incapacitated, and can awake in a moment's notice to defend herself against attackers.

In addition to *gaseous form* Katarina can assume the shape of a white hummingbird, but not a bat as do other vampires. Like other vampires, she can summon animals such as rats, bats, and wolves to her aid, as well as command lesser forms of undead, but she seldom does so as she finds the act distasteful. She can also *spider climb* at will and uses this ability sometimes to ambush her opponents from above.

While Katarina is immune to holy symbols, she still possesses all of the other weaknesses attributed to vampires. She is repelled by garlic, and will likewise avoid mirrors, for she casts no reflection. She can be destroyed by both sunlight and running water and, for those who get close enough, a stake through the heart.

Finally, although she has lost her ability to cast clerical spells, Katarina's wizard abilities remain undiminished, and she casts spells as an eighth-level magic user. Though she prefers to engage her opponents in melee combat, she keeps the following spells in her spellbook:

First Level: *affect normal fires, cantrip, detect magic, erase, hold portal, identify, light, magic missile, mending, message, phantasmal force, read magic, sleep, unseen servant, wizard mark*

Second Level: *bind, continual light, forget, invisibility, knock, Melf's acid arrow, misdirection, whispering wind, wizard lock*

Third Level: *dispel magic, fly, illusionary script, nondetection, suggestion, tongues*

Fourth Level: *detect scrying, fumble, illusionary wall, Leomund's secure shelter, remove curse, wizard eye.*

Habitat/Society

The method of Katarina's conversion to undeath is known unknown, but theories abound. The one most often repeated is that someone she loved first fell prey to the curse, and out of devotion she agreed to become his vampiric "bride." Later she regretted the decision, and through sheer strength of will managed to escape both her lover and the evil behavior inherent to her kind. Some say she is even the bride of Strahd himself, and they point to the fact that she has never challenged the lord of Barovia nor, for that matter, any of the domain lords of Ravenloft. Others scoff at this idea, pointing out her lack of resemblance to Strahd's beloved Tatyana. Whatever the case, it seems destined to remain a mystery.

Another mystery is why she has the abilities of a vampire already centuries old. Has she really managed to maintain her good alignment for over three hundred years? Or is she a "precocious" vampire, as described in the *Van Richten's Guide*? Both are unlikely, yet definitely possible. Among those who believe she is an aged vampire, there are many who claim that she has lost her humanity long ago, that her "good" behavior is a ruse to throw off vampire hunters, and serves some nefarious purpose yet unknown. Like her origin, the answer is known only to Katarina herself, and perhaps to some among the creatures of the night.

On a final note, no less an authority than Rudolph Van Richten himself has been recorded as saying that Katarina does not exist, and that the stories which concern her are the product both of misidentification of different vampires, and the fanciful imagination of traveling storytellers. Strahd, of course, is not forthcoming, and the Vistani offer only vague warnings about avoiding "that which you were not meant to know." Once, however, a daring thief attempted to break in to Castle Avernus, and though he did not survive, beside his lifeless body the next day was found the only treasure he had managed to steal from Azalin: a polished gold locket with a portrait of Katarina.

Ecology

As a vampire, Katarina is an undead abomination and has no place in the world of living things. Unlike other vampires, however, she does not exude an unnatural aura and can pass by dogs and similar animals undetected. In fact she has a fondness for animals, and the loss of her link to the natural world only deepens her sorrow.

Adventure Ideas

At present, Katarina wanders the land, searching out evil creatures for destruction. As such, she can be used as a sort of supernatural cavalry, rushing in to save the player characters when they seemed doomed to certain death.

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

Note, however, that unless they are heroes of surpassing virtue and determination, she will refuse to form any but the most fleeting association with the heroes, and even then they must have performed some extraordinary feat, or she must be in need of assistance, a rare occurrence indeed!

Those who do manage to obtain her friendship may come to regret the achievement. As noted before, she has a voracious appetite for human blood, and while she will not take a human life, she is more than willing to “snack” upon them from time to time, beginning with the ones she is closest to. Furthermore, Katarina will periodically wander away from even her dearest allies, only to return some time later without explanation. If pressed, she will give only vague, noncommittal answers, and will ultimately leave if the questioner persists.

Another, more troubling concern is her ongoing struggle with her alignment. Although she has managed to maintain her good alignment so far, hers is a losing battle, and it is ultimately doomed to failure. When the end comes, and she finally succumbs to evil, she will lose many of her unique abilities, beginning with her immunity to holy symbols and her ability to enter a dwelling unsummoned. Some say this process has already begun, for she has not been seen to actually touch a holy symbol for quite some time. Because of her beauty and the tragic nature of her struggle, some heroes might find themselves inexorably attracted to Katarina, making it all the more poignant when they finally have to hunt her down and destroy her. If she proves to be too strong, the Dungeon Master could arrange for one last surviving bit of “goodness” to make her pause in battle, just long enough for the heroes to strike the fatal blow.

Dungeon Masters searching for a less heartrending adventure may want to present the heroes with a means of freeing her from the curse of vampirism, though only through extraordinary effort, and possibly at enormous price. Note that vampires for many eons have searched for a cure, and news of a successful one, even if it could not be replicated, would bring the heroes much unwanted attention. They would, however, have a lifelong ally in the form of the newly reborn Katarina, and further adventures could revolve around her attempts to recover what was left of her mortal existence.



THE UNAUTHORIZED BIOGRAPHY OF THE MARQUIS STEZEN D'POLARNO

As Told by His Vassal, the Baron Camar D'Marosso

by John Baker
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Author's Note: This includes the information from *Darklords* and the scant bit from *Domains of Dread*. It does not include information from the story, "Objects d'Art," as that doesn't really fit with the *Darklords* story of D'Polarno.

"T here are only two styles of portrait painting; the serious and the smirk."

—**Charles Dickens**
Nicholas Nickleby

"I t's easier to replace a dead man than a good picture."

—**George Bernard Shaw**

I *overheard this story at one of D'Polarno's infernal revelries. A very drunk Baron D'Marosso was trying to get into bed with some poor foreign young lass at the party while the Marquis himself was in another room making merry in his own horrible way. As the drunk are wont to do, he regaled on the girl this tale, simultaneously boring and*

scaring her to tears, I might add. I am glad I was able to escape the horrible island in time. May I never return.

"Ah, hello there, delectable miss, may I join you? Thank you. You know, I'm the Baron Camar D'Marosso, vassal and personal assistant to the Marquis. I'm able to get quite a wonderful number of favors from him, despite his terrible mood swings. I've even traveled around the Core a great deal, and I have developed quite the palate for the finer products of the land, despite the tastelessness of everything around. In fact, I'm able to say that I've become a Baron myself in recent years, the first of the D'Marossos to do so. The Marquis and I go way back.

"How far back? Well, I was with the Marquis even before he became ruler of Ghastria, a few hundred years ago.¹ He was simply a noble in the court of one King Oderic, and I was his faithful herald. Oh, the two of us would throw parties like you wouldn't believe! We'd have wines, beef, pork, whiskey, beer, juices, apples, oranges, and . . . oh, sorry for boring you just then, but you know, any food is quite a delicacy around here. But anyway, the Marquis would show off his swordplay, unveil his latest painting, and woo just about any woman

¹ Ghastria is actually one of the oldest domains in Ravenloft. After studying the archives of travelers, I have deduced that Ghastria entered Ravenloft at around BC 584.

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

he could find! In those days, he was really popular with the people. No, not at all like around here. You know, the *people*. Those little folks outside. He's come up with these beautiful schemes to make them love him. Lower the taxes! Spare the rod! Better festivals! Oderic didn't like the Marquis very much² but he couldn't do anything about it. How can you hurt a man whose ambition and youth and vigor is enough to fill a nation? Oderic was cunning, though. He saw that the Marquis was interested in eventually becoming king, himself. You see, the Marquis was actually the cousin of Oderic, and being the only man in the family after Oderic and his son, he figured he had a right to that throne.

In the meantime, the Marquis arranged the total political deaths of many of the other members of the court, all those who thought that Oderic really had a right to rule. All right, so maybe he had me go poison one or two nobles, but death might not be the right word. After all, if a person is completely destroyed, cut off from the things he loves, then he can just go on living, right? Each little betrayal was a rush to him. Basically, each 'assassination' left the Marquis with more energy with which to eventually destroy the king. So, the Marquis finally used all that energy one harsh winter. Grain was running short, but the bastard³ was keeping this huge stockpile of grain for himself. The Marquis just let the people know about the stockpile and Aha! Instant revolt! Oderic, however, despite his callous behavior, was able to suppress the revolt militarily, have some people dragged off and killed, then took the Marquis and threw him in the dungeon.

"But that filthy blackguard wasn't satisfied with just that. Oderic then turned to his little mistress, Annelise, the wife of a minor member of the court, the weakling foreigner Baron Leighton. You see, Annelise was dabbling in dark magic, and had become a powerful sorceress. No one knew that, of course, except Oderic and the Marquis, who was able to seduce her from time to time. The dark magic must have completely destroyed any sense of a lady that remained in her, because she was able to curse him so completely, despite the charms of the Marquis.⁴ Anyway, Oderic turned to Annelise and asked her to remove the Marquis's love of life and ambition.

² Notice how D'Marosso truly respects D'Polarno; he always calls Stezen "the Marquis" while King Oderic is simply "Oderic." This is probably the only reason that D'Marosso has survived all these years.

³ Stezen D'Polarno apparently claims to this day that King Oderic was the offspring of an illicit affair between his mother and a stable boy. As King Oderic was an only child, if his charges were true, then D'Polarno would really have been the rightful king.

⁴ D'Marosso really overestimates D'Polarno's charisma.

She worked on the hex, and found that it required an object that represented his vitality. That was a problem for a while, because the Marquis left very little in the way of proof of his vibrancy. What could it be, parties, women, or what? She almost gave up hope until she looked in the court chambers and saw the Marquis's self-portrait. Have you seen it? No, I guess you haven't, my sweet. You wouldn't want to see it right now, though, it looks dreadful. The Marquis is quite the artist, though. On his quieter days, he would go outside and paint and paint and paint. He painted his family, his friends, his surroundings, and as a favor to Oderic, he painted portraits of everyone in the bastard's court, including himself. His command of color was so marvelous, the hues always seem to leap from the canvas. His painting of the Lady D'Reyaldo on her deathbed always brings tears to my eyes and . . . you really should see his painting of the Orgy of Machostria! But to Annelise, the self-portrait meant something special. All of his paintings showed his attention to the world around him, she reasoned, but only the painting of himself represented what truly mattered to him: himself and himself alone. So, the witch completed her spell, and drained the personality from the Marquis. The Marquis was left much the way he is now. No, not *now*, but I think you understand. He became a bitter, vindictive, self-serving, spiteful curmudgeon who hated the world and everything in it. The public that adored him so now scorned him. I never did, however. I always saw that wonderful, ambitious nobleman, simply cursed, now. I hated Oderic for his underhanded ploy, but he just used the Marquis's own words in response: "After all, if a person is completely destroyed, cut off from the things he loves, then he can just go on living, right?"

"The Marquis eventually had his revenge, though. You see, no artist would be a true artist if he did not know the importance of each pigment, especially umbral grey. Umbral grey has a very smoky, almost misty quality, lending itself both to feelings of sorrow and loss as well as a lighter rejuvenation when combined with the reds. It is also one of the deadliest poisons that could be grown in the area. The only reason it does not gain much more use is because it has a horribly bitter taste, forcing the victim to spit it out usually before it has enough of an effect. He would complain for days that he couldn't remove the taste from umbral grey; he must have killed about thirty servants of his in the attempt to make umbral grey palatable. I never did find out exactly how he did it, although he did ask me to procure several carrion crawlers.⁵ He managed to poison all of the bastard's line,

⁵ For some odd reason, Ghastria suffers from carrion crawlers. The only other place I have been able to find carrion crawlers was the foul domain of Nosos, and as we will see, Nosos has far more carrion . . .

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

courtiers, and servants in a single feast. The pigment was so delightfully slow that the wails could be heard for hours. I think that was the first time since his curse that I ever saw him smile.

As Oderic lay dying, Annelise saw him, and recognized that the Marquis would be the next king. She was spared the poison, you see, because I kept her busy . . . *elsewhere* . . . as per the Marquis's wishes. She looked for the Marquis, and found him prying the jewels out of Oderic's crown. The blasphemous temptress tried to get him to love her and make her queen, now that the Baron Leighton died from the tincture, but being the loveless man she made him, he could easily resist her charms. He played along with her, long enough to let him paint a portrait of her. I will warn you right now that the effects of umbral grey when covering the skin for a long period of time are even more horrible than ingesting the minuscule amount Oderic had. I could smell the cloying pungency of the color as Annelise fell, her will sapped, damning the Marquis with her final breath: 'As you paint over my life, so shall your life be colored! May you always be covered with the Umbral Grey!' The scent from the paint filled the room with the utter dread of finality, and I should have recognized that the color in the air should not have been from the paint.

"We found ourselves here, in Ghastria, at this estate. It was a small land enshrouded in the mists back then. I scouted around the lands surrounding the estate while the Marquis examined the house. When I returned to the house, I heard shouts of joy and surprise coming from the Marquis! This was exceptionally bizarre, you must understand, because the Marquis never did anything of the sort after his curse. But there he was, shouting, running around, dancing, and making merry in one of the larger halls of the house. It appeared that wherever we had been transported to, his curse had been lifted! I gazed around the hall in wonder. Carefully placed on all the walls of the hall (listen, it rhymes!) were all the paintings the Marquis had ever painted, in all their glory, with the final touch of the central painting, which I had never seen before. The central painting looked like the Marquis, but his appearance was horribly bland, uninteresting, and above all, completely painted in shades of umbral grey. I could never remember him painting such a dreadful likeness of himself. This was all explained to me as the Marquis's revelry died down; suddenly a red mist rose from the Marquis, and a grey mist escaped the picture. The two ethereal beings swapped places, and to my astonishment, the central picture shifted and filled with color: it was that infernal self-portrait! Furthermore, the Marquis was returned to the cold soul he was.

"He was furious. He had been given what he had wanted for two years only to have it taken from him again. He explained to me that the painting apparently

sucked the life out of those that viewed the painting and gave it to him. He showed me the body of the unfortunate maid who was the first victim of his artwork. That was all well and good, I replied, but why hadn't I lost my life when I saw the painting? This drove him even madder, and he went around the estate, forcing everyone to look at the painting. Nothing happened until autumn came to Ghastria and the painting once again worked its deadly magic.

"Things went on like this for a while. As I scouted the land around here, I found some eerie occurrences. Carrion crawlers lived in the wild areas of Ghastria. The food itself was utterly tasteless. All of it. And the land was perpetually overcast and surrounded by mists that color of umbral grey. It was as if the land had given the Marquis everything he had ever hoped for, but in some horribly twisted way. I had to lead a group of locals against infestations of carrion crawlers. We desperately searched for food with any flavor . . . only available during the times the Marquis had his life back. I've actually suggested that the real name of this land should be Ghastria, that's G-A-S-T-R-I-A, because 'gastro' refers to matters of the stomach. Oh, and one other thing, the anguished ghost of Annelise still walks the land. Apparently, she can speak to the portrait, and has fallen madly in love with the lively Marquis. Of course, he can simply string her along indefinitely, adding to her torture . . .

"One question has popped up in my mind, however. The Marquis is, undisputedly, the ruler of Ghastria. As such for this cursed land, this also means that he should be horribly cursed, true? However, the land has seemed to deliver only gifts to the Marquis. He actually could hold a fraction of his previous vigor every once in a great while. Pigments, especially umbral grey, were readily available to him. He could lead the people, and despite his curse, they did not hate him. Ghastria was better than anything he had ever received before. However, I found that the curses of this land do indeed infect him. Notice how he is out there, dancing, carousing, drinking, and playing games? Well, just earlier today, he told me that he plans to paint another picture while he has his creativity. He told me he plans to show himself to the people while he has his charisma.⁶ And, he told me that he will look for a wife while he has his personality. He says those things all the time, and yet he never does anything he says he will do while he is frigid. He wastes the time all away with his frivolous frolicking. When his vitality leaves him, he always enters a rage as he realizes that he missed another opportunity. That is his curse. He

⁶ Stezen D'Polarno's Charisma is 17 while he is under the influence of the portrait. At other times, his Charisma is only 7.

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

retains all his ambition, but he no longer has any willpower with which to get things done. And he knows that he only has himself to blame.

“We eventually had another problem, though, of logistics. Every time the Marquis got his life back, he left a large number of dead people in its wake. I must admit that the solution to this problem was mine. You see, he stopped forcing the locals to view the portrait. After all, someone had to work the fields. So, he only invited visitors or those few people passing through each season to one of his ‘parties.’ Yes, people like you, my delicious little morsel. We couldn’t just let the bodies rot, or the land would be filled with those carrion crawlers in no time. Also, note that the peasants only ate the local, bland food, giving us all the flavorful food for the parties. In addition, all imported fruits and meats still kept all their flavor . . . perhaps you see where I’m going? I’ve started holding banquets for the locals after each party, and I let them have the ‘leftovers.’ They have not given us any trouble since our kind gestures have begun. And since they don’t know what should taste like what anyway, no one is more the wiser . . .⁷

“All right, we were found out once. You know the abandoned church in the center of town? They were put in charge of dealing with the town’s dead, among trying to lift their spirits. Many people say that the Marquis burned the church because he didn’t want to see his subjects happy. That’s just not true. The Marquis always loved an adoring public. The problem was that one of the priests found some of the bones from after one of our revelries. The pathetic little cretin told all the other priests about this, and soon they threatened to tell the people. Well, I’m sure you understand why the Marquis burned the church and left the bodies to hang, true? I still wish he had let me have the bodies, but the Marquis told me I could have none of it as punishment for being so sloppy. It was so hard to find good food in those days . . .

“Things really started picking up for us, though, about 30 years ago. The land of Sithicus appeared, and oddly enough, the mists parted and we were suddenly in trade with the elves and merchants from all around the Core! Foreigners would pile in, happy to get a taste of Ghastrian hospitality! Oh, we did eat well in those days . . . although the Marquis still won’t touch the stuff, I find that the proper recipes bring out a wonderful palate of flavors, not to mention help me keep my boyish looks over the centuries. I simply had to find out what was out there, this whole new land! So, I spent time exploring, and sampling the local cuisine wherever I went.

⁷ I cringe whenever I think about the poor peasants of Ghastria. Those innocent people, always thinking they’re only having pork. Woe will be the day for many of them when they discover what pork really tastes like . . .

“This went well for a while, until the Great Upheaval. As I felt the land shift, I decided I had to hurry back to Ghastria. But, wouldn’t you know, when I got there, I wasn’t in Ghastria at all! The land had been changed, and the road from Mal-Erek in Sithicus no longer connected to East Riding, but to Rotwald in Valachan! Confused, I didn’t know what to do . . . until one night I found myself in a Mordentish tavern, where a sailor off the Sea of Sorrows reported a strange island where the food had no taste. I immediately pressed him into service to take me back to Ghastria, where the sailors would be welcome to stay at D’Polarno Manor. He heartily agreed, and though they were a tough bunch, I found them quite satisfying dinner guests.

“But, to our dismay, Ghastria is now a remote island in a chartless sea. We are visited quite infrequently by ships, and some of them that do arrive need to be able to make it back home in one piece, my tender delight. The Marquis is quite upset, and would like nothing more than to see Valachan sink back into the mists for usurping our position in the Core. If I find my way back, I plan to deliver a gift to that fiend Urik von Kharkov myself! Also, some elves from Sithicus have strayed here before the domain became an island, and they’ve started terrorizing the villagers at night, stealing the milk from our cows and the breath from our children. I’m going to have to stamp them out, soon.⁸

“Er, well, I’ve probably told you too much. But please, make sure that you don’t ever tell a soul. I might just feel the need to invite you back to another party some day. And I make sure I always get the, ah, choicest parts.”

DM’S NOTES

The Baron Camar D’Marosso

6th-Level Human Bard (Herald), Neutral Evil

Armor Class	6 (with Dex)	Str	12
Movement	12	Dex	17
Hit Dice/Level	6	Con	15
Hit Points	25	Int	19

⁸ I have met these “elves.” The elves in the wilderness of Ghastria are actually kender from Sithicus. They must have fled the tyranny of Lord Soth, and now hide at the outskirts of civilization, coming into town at night to steal what they need to survive. A few locals have glimpsed the kender, numbering about 10, and have reported that they are elves, disguising themselves to look like children, although their topknot will always give them away. Over time, the kender have been dehumanized by the people’s superstition, and they are now thought to be evil creatures, like goblins, magically stealing vitality from children to keep their false appearance, and sprouting the tail of a scorpion from the back of their heads. Whenever a child gets sick, the “elves” are blamed.

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

THACO	18	Wis	9
No. Attacks	1	Cha	15
Damage/Attack	by weapon		
Special Attacks	Paralyzation		
Special Defenses	Nil		
Magic Resistance	Nil		

The Baron Camar D'Marosso is a dandy whose only loyalty is to Stezen D'Polarno. His evil acts over the years in poisoning others and abominable ideas have earned him the interest of the dark powers. Despite his preference of the name "Gastria," D'Marosso is turning into a ghastr. So far, he no longer ages and is immune to the effects of aging—as long as he eats human flesh at least once a week. He usually keeps a store of it well-cured between parties, and has no compunction killing others (usually using umbral grey) while he's traveling abroad. Also, his touch can cause paralysis if a save vs. paralyzation fails. He usually uses this power to keep a woman he's interested in from running away, but this simply turns out to be the second part of his curse: he will always end up eating instead of wooing whomever he desires. If he keeps this sort of behavior up, he'll probably have his own pocket domain very soon . . .

Umbral Grey

Umbral grey is a pigment created from a poisonous plant only found native to Ghastria. When used in paints, it creates a deep smoky color that bears an unsettling resemblance to the color of the Mists. Umbral grey is also a very toxic poison, and many artists in and associated with Ghastria have died trying to use this color. Wherever umbral grey strikes a victim, the flesh decays and shrinks, leaving a horrible grey mass of rot. The effects of umbral grey on a victim will vary depending on how it is used:

Ingested: Normally, the poison tastes so wretched that a person will know better than to consume poisoned food or drink. However, there are two ways around this:

First, mixing the poison with venom from carrion crawlers will mask the flavor by stunning the taste buds by carrion crawler venom. Secondly, any umbral grey harvested in Ghastria will have no flavor naturally.

Assuming that it is ingested, the victim makes a saving throw vs. poison. If successful, then the victim becomes extremely nauseous and vomits for 2-5 rounds, losing 3 hp each round as the poison is forced from his system. Any actions attempted during this time suffer a -3 penalty. If the victim fails, then the poison takes a hold within the bowels of the victim, slowly and agonizingly eating away at his insides, progressing much like rapid gangrene. The victim loses one hit point *permanently* each turn until the poison is neutralized or the victim is dead. While this happens, the victim is wracked with

agonizing pain, causing a -2 penalty to all actions. Lost hit points can be restored by a *regeneration* or similar spells (including *limited wish* and *wish*).

Injection: If the poison is introduced directly into the system, like from a sword blade, the effects are far worse. If the victim fails his saving throw, it has the same effect as if the poison were ingested, rotting him from the circulatory system out, but if the saving throw is successful, the victim is still in agonizing pain for 2-5 turns, and loses half of his starting hit points during this time. These lost hit points can be regained normally.

Contact: The skin is typically strong enough to withstand the effects of umbral grey if exposed over a small area for a short period of time. However, if the area of exposure is large or the time of exposure is long, then the pigment can still eat into the skin. Under such circumstances (let the Dungeon Master be the judge) a successful saving throw will give the victim time to notice that the paint is rotting the skin; if he does nothing about it, he makes another saving throw next turn. If the saving throw fails, the poison penetrates the skin and quickly spreads across the victim's body. In this state, the poison once again has the permanent losses associated with umbral grey. Also, if the poison is neutralized, it still leaves a nasty grey scar that will not heal over without powerful magic, possibly causing Cha or Con penalties (once again, let the Dungeon Master be the judge).

A favorite pastime of D'Polarno and D'Marosso when they are together is to find someone they particularly don't like during a party. Then, they spare that person the portrait's effect, paralyze the person, and slowly paint them to death with umbral grey.

Also, the curse of Ravenloft has affected the victims of umbral grey; they rise the night after their deaths as ghouls. Also note that D'Polarno and D'Marosso are both immune to the effects of umbral grey. ☠

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

DONAVAN KAIZER

A Faceless Villain for Ravenloft

by Jarrod R. Lowe
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DONAVAN KAIZER

Odem, Chaotic Evil

Armor Class	N/A	Str	N/A
Movement	9	Dex	N/A
Level/Hit Dice	N/A	Con	N/A
Hit Points	N/A	Int	18
THACO	N/A	Wis	17
No. of Attacks	1	Cha	18
Damage/Attack	N/A		
Special Attacks	Domination		
Special Defenses	See below		
Magic Resistance	See below		
Morale	Fearless (20)		

Donavan Kaizer is an odem, an undead spirit that moves into living beings and takes control of their body and mind.

Unlike other odems, Kaizer does not appear as a white vapor like others of his kind. He appears in a dark crimson, vaporous form when he's outside a body.

Background

Donavan Kaizer was once the head of a vicious thieves guild in Port-a-Lucine, Dementlieu. For years Kaizer's name fill fear into the hearts of the citizens of Dementlieu. The most horrific thing connected with Kaizer was that no on knew his face, where he was from, or virtually anything about his true nature.

It is said that he once had to choose between having his guild taken over by darklord Dominic d'Honaire or the death of his wife and children. Saying that no one threatened him or his family Donavan killed them and sent their severed heads back to d'Honaire.

This display of defiance simply pushed d'Honaire further. He used his powers to turn several of Kaizer's best guild members against him, changing them into his obedient.

They were the only ones left who knew Donavan Kaizer's true face, so they hunted him through his lair beneath Port-a-Lucine and killed him.

As their match-lock pistols blasted his flesh, Donavan cursed them. He said that no one, not even d'Honaire, would be spared his wrath.

Soon thereafter the word of Kaizer's death spread throughout the land and the citizens became more apt to let their guard down. This was just what d'Honaire wanted & his hold over the thieves of Port-a-Lucine grew tighter.

For months d'Honaire's grip held, until tales of Donavan Kaizer returning from the grave to regain his thieves guild came about. These tales didn't seem to bother d'Honaire, who saw it as an attempt of a small time hood to make a name for himself. Until one night during a meeting of the inner circle of the Dementlieu crime guild, the Phantom Circle, was interrupted by one of the thieves claiming to be Donavan Kaizer.

The new guild master (who was under the control of d'Honaire) saw this as some kind of sick joke. The thief was, in a sense, Donavan Kaizer: an Odem who's taken the body of the young guild member for his own.

Using his uncanny knowledge of chemicals, Kaizer rigged the new guild house to explode in a ball of fire, killing all members present. Some of the worlds most prominent thieves were present at the meeting, none of which survived.

During the following weeks he hunted down all the remaining thieves while in the various bodies. He killed all the remaining thieves in various gruesome and evil ways.

Eventually Kaizer entered d'Honaire's estate "disguised" as one of Dominic's personal bodyguards. Dominic's mental powers had no effect against the odem, and Kaizer ended up beating the darklord into a bloody pulp. As Kaizer heard a group of d'Honaire's guard rushing to their master's aide, he smiled and said,

"You've made a terrible enemy, my dear Dominic. You cannot stop me, you cannot even see me. I am everywhere and nowhere at once and I shall paint this fair city in your blood. Do not oppose the will of Donavan Kaizer."

With that a red mist spewed from the guard's mouth and the darklord's guards pounced on Kaizer's former

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

vessel. Even though Kaizer had escaped, d'Honaire had the guard killed just in case.

Though he will not admit it, Dominic truly fears Kaizer. In the weeks that followed the attack, d'Honaire's dreams were filled with images of the red mist hunting him. His nightmares continue to resurface to this day.

Current Sketch

Donavan Kaizer still resides in and around Port-a-Lucine, jumping from body to body, slowly rebuilding the criminal empire that he not only made but destroyed. Recently Kaizer has been haunted by the occasional glimpse of his wife and children.

Combat

Donavan Kaizer uses all the standard combat abilities of the normal Odem.

Ecology

Kaizer's goal, unlike most Odems, isn't to cause mayhem and destruction. His entire purpose is to recreate his extensive crime guild, this time from the ground up. He is also determined to destroy Dominic d'Honaire and to undermine all of his schemes.

☠

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

LA SOCIÉTÉ DE LEGERDEMAIN

A Sorcerous Secret Society for Ravenloft

by Stuart Turner
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INTRODUCTION

Please bear with us just a little longer, Monsieur D’Alton. The interview is almost over.”
Again it was the old man in the center who spoke. Three men sat across the room from Pierre D’Alton, all peering at him intensely as if scrutinizing his inner thoughts, yet only the aging Mordentish fellow in the middle had chosen to utter a word to him. Pierre thought he had already met quite a number of the Société members, but he was obviously mistaken—he recognized none of the three gentlemen in front of him now. To make things worse, they had not introduced themselves when he entered the room, so he could not address himself to them.

The Mordentish man shifted his considerable frame in the red leather chair. After glancing at the papers in front of him, he looked up at Pierre, tugging his bushy, grey sideburns as he considered his next question.

“Do you believe in the supernatural, Monsieur D’Alton?”

Pierre frowned at the men for a moment, before quickly returning his expression to one of considered thought. Had they seen that moment of surprise in his face? Was that going to count against him?

After a few more moments of careful thought, Pierre began.

“I believe we are the supernatural, as far as the people we entertain see the world. Those of us within the Société—the stage magicians, the escape artists, and the hypnotists—sate the people’s need for the unknowable and the mysterious through our art.” Pierre started confidently with his answer, but he began to tail off at the

end as he noted the dark-haired man on the right slightly shaking his head.

“That’s not the question I asked,” cautioned the man in the middle. “We in the Société may provide a workable proxy for the supernatural among the people we entertain, but what about us? We know that the work of a stage magician is nothing but sleight-of-hand. We’re well aware that the art of hypnotism is simply an application of some of the recent scientific discoveries about the human mind. And you, as an escape artist, know full well that your performances are based around nothing other than carefully rigged equipment and judicious placement of keys.” His voice was careful and reasoned, making sure that no hint was given as to the answer they were expecting. “My question is whether you believe in the supernatural. How do you sate your desire for the unknowable and the mysterious?”

Now it was Pierre’s turn to shuffle in his uncomfortable wooden seat, as he averted his eyes from the men before him for just a moment. As he did, they passed over the bookshelves lining the walls of the room, positively bending under the weight of the tomes they held. He had heard that if you finished your first year of training, and were allowed to continue as a member of the Société, you were given access to the Library. This room had to be part of that Library, and now that he saw the dusty, leather-bound books lined up, he was suddenly daunted by the prospect of having such a massive collection of texts to choose from. How could he ever decide where to begin? What secrets would they reveal?

With that thought, his answer came to him.

“I believe that what we do know about this world is far outweighed by the mysteries it contains. How can I claim, having seen so little, to know whether the many strange stories we hear are true or not? When a farmer arrives in Port-a-Lucine claiming that a ‘beast’ slaughtered his cattle, it is a rare occasion when someone

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

can prove otherwise. The town of Mordentshire is still rife with rumor about the house on Gryphon Hill, is it not? We can sit around the Société smoking room ridiculing these ideas for as long as we want, but despite our intellectual pretenses we cannot explain what happens in that house, nor do we offer to travel forth and investigate further!

“What I do know,” he continued, “is that a wealth of information is stored within the thousands of pages of this library. If you allow my studies to continue, perhaps I will begin to be able to answer your question—to myself, at the very least.”

For a moment, Pierre thought he noticed the gaunt man on the left with the white powdered wig show a glimpse of a smile. Pleased with his answer, and filled with a confidence that had seemed to leave him shortly after the interview began, Pierre’s head lifted a little as he matched the steady gaze of his interrogators. He felt as though he’d just passed some crucial test, some sort of examination of worthiness being conducted by these mystery individuals who appeared almost malevolent in the flickering lamplight. The process so far had confirmed, at the very least, something he had suspected—that the Société was not a simple entertainer’s guild, as the public saw them.

No, the interview had not been exactly what he had ex—

“This interview has not been exactly what you expected, has it,” asked the dark-haired man on the right. His voice was deep, and solemn in tone, almost shocking Pierre with its smooth, Dementlieu accent after having listened to the solid pronunciation of the Mordentshire native for the past hour.

“Uh . . .” stumbled Pierre, “No, it has not.” Was his question a coincidence?

“Yet you have not once questioned our process, even though you thought you were simply being interviewed for another year of study as an escape artist. When we asked about your political views, you barely raised an eyebrow. When we asked what language skills you had, you did not query their relevance. When we inquired on your thoughts on the supernatural, you willingly gave us an answer. All of these, just to learn how to escape from a damn water tank?”

Pierre sat in silence, unsure what to say. Confidence drained from his face like water from a dam, his jaw hanging slightly open as his eyes flitted between the stony-faced interviewers. Perhaps if he said he’d just heard rumors about what . . .

“You may have heard rumors about the Société, but I doubt they’re from anyone you’d trust.” The right-man appeared to be enjoying this, a thin smile creeping across his face. “Why don’t you tell us why you really joined the Société, Pierre? Tell us about your uncle.”

This time, Pierre could not prevent the shock from being clearly displayed on his face. His uncle had disappeared 18 months ago from his home, with little clue as to where he might have gone. All of his significant documents seem to have been taken, as if he had planned to leave. Pierre and his mother, being his closest living relatives, had packed up Uncle Nicolas’ things soon afterwards, in order to sell the abode and pay off Nicolas’ debt.

Nicolas had left something behind, however—a single book that had fallen behind the bookshelf, entitled *Beyonde the Veil*. Inside were Nicolas’ notes, made in an effort to understand the strange information the book provided. Pierre had been unable to read the text, but his uncle’s notes excited him, despite the sometimes frightening references it made to the nature of death. His uncle had even made direct mention of others at the Société being potential sources of help in some areas, and that was what had eventually led Pierre to this interview.

But he was sure, absolutely certain, that he had not told a soul anything about his discovery. Not even his mother.

For the first time, the gaunt man in the powdered wig spoke. “Do you know how your Uncle died, Pierre?”

Struggling to regain his composure, Pierre slowly shook his head.

“Painfully,” rumbled the voice of the dark man. At that moment, the oil lamp flickered, threatening to plunge the room into darkness.

The three men sat in silence for more than a minute, allowing Pierre time to gather his thoughts.

The grey-haired man from Mordent spoke again. “Do you still wish to join us?”

Again, silence seemed to smother the room.

“Yes.”

La Société de Legerdemain

A Lawful Neutral Secret Society

Unlike most secret societies, which prefer to remain completely unknown, the Société maintains a well-known public face within the domain of Dementlieu. However, this façade hides a network of individuals interested in all things arcane.

Ostensibly, the Société is a collection of entertainers from the less “artistic” fields—stage magicians, contortionists and hypnotists are all members. It is a guild where new blood can learn the unique skills of these professions, and where the secret tricks used by these entertainers can be kept from the prying eyes of the paying public.

Since its inception, however, the Société’s true reason for existence has changed significantly. Many years ago, some of the stage magicians who had been sharing their sleight-of-hand tricks stumbled upon

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

something that confused and amazed them—real magic. Not the petty sideshow cons they played to the public, but true, unexplainable, mysterious magic.

Now, years later, the Société has amassed a notable library of texts on the arcane. The organization itself has no overriding goal, other than to provide the means and ability for its members to research the mysterious world of the occult. What the members choose to do with their newfound powers is their own business, as long as they do not give away the existence of the Library or the true nature of the Société.

Membership

The elders of this society keep a tight control on the membership, ensuring that only the most trustworthy individuals are admitted.

To begin with, a current member of the Société must sponsor new applicants. That sponsor must also be the person who will apprentice the new member for their first year. During this time, the applicant must study one of the arts supported by the Société, which includes stage magic, mesmerism and escape tricks. New arts appear and disappear as fashion dictates—recently, faith healers have emerged as being popular in many of the theaters of Dementlieu.

For this first year, the applicant knows nothing of the true nature of the Société. The sponsor assesses their intelligence and potential during this time, in order to determine whether a second year of study will be offered. If so, the applicant is then put through a rigorous interview process by the elders of the order, designed to remove once and for all any inappropriate individuals or infiltrators. If the individual is approved, the member then gains access to the Library.

For the next two years, the sponsor of the individual is solely responsible for the education and training of the new member. Any transgressions by the new member reflect as badly on the sponsor as it does on the individual making the error, so sponsors normally keep a tight rein on their students. At the end of this period, the applicant is a full member of the society, and may do as they please.

The Elders of the Société are generally the oldest members. As many of these people moved out of the public arena as entertainers many years ago, the younger members may not even know whom the Elders are. As there are few formal meetings of Société members, there is little or no reason for lower ranked individuals to be aware of who controls the organization and conducts the interviews (and, indeed, many Elders wish to keep their membership completely secret).

What is known, however, is that Elders occasionally venture too far in their studies of the occult, with a significant number disappearing without a trace

(sometimes taking significant works from the Library with them!).

While as a general rule all members of La Société de Legerdemain are wizards of one sort or another, a large number are actually Arcanists (as detailed in *Domains of Dread*) and Spiritualists (see *Champions of the Mists*).

Recognition

As the members of the Société usually work independently of one another, there is little need for recognition among members. It's a fair bet, however, that any entertainer of the types described above is going to at least be aware of the Société.

Activities

Rarely does this group unite in a common cause. Despite having rigorous entry requirements, a member is largely free to study what and how they wish. While many research the occult for simply amusement and entertainment (learning spells to amuse the children with, or to use as part of their entertainment), others delve much deeper into the secrets that the world holds from them. More than one disaster has resulted from a Société member stumbling across a destructive piece of knowledge in the Library.

If a common goal does exist, it is to build up the wealth of material in the Library. Any discovery made by a member of the group is expected to be contributed for the betterment of all.

Headquarters

The notional headquarters of this society is the building containing the Library, which is Club l'Artiste in Port-a-Lucine, Dementlieu.

Club l'Artiste is an upper-class establishment, a sort of Gentleman's Club for entertainers from the surrounding domains. Large smoking rooms contain luxurious leather chairs, with playing cards and chess boards strategically located throughout. Waiters provide constant attention, and meals are available on request. Various props from classic stage acts decorate the room: the famed Sword-Box of Astoundo, and the water trap in which Joseph Cardona made his last escape attempt in.

Further into the building, however, lies the Library. The number of books contained therein is remarkable—were a fire to occur here, a significant part of the arcane knowledge available in the Core would be lost. Of course, many of the books contained here are littered with falsehoods, errors and downright lies, but the search for the elements of truth contained here is what drives many members of the Société.

Notable works available here include a single volume of the *Madrigorian*, some of the works of Abelhous

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

Nicholsi, and a series of documents detailing an item known as the Tapestry of Dark Souls, written by a Brother Dominic.

For a time, the Library was able to lay claim to one of the few complete collections of the works of Rudolph Van Richten. Since his disappearance, the collection has been considered very valuable, however the *Guide to Fiends* has been recently lost. Six months after that book went missing, rumors persist regarding a connection with the disappearance of Serge Farradie, one of the Guilds most senior and respected members. Those who visited his house to search for him refuse to speculate on what might have occurred to him.

One of the more interesting things to note about the Library's Van Richten collection involves his *Guide to Werebeasts*. Many members swear that the Société first received this tome back in 734, a full year before Van Richten began his crusade against the dark creatures of this land! Those who spent time in the library back then recall that it was delivered by an ancient-looking woman who simply called herself Eva. Why is anybody's guess.



CELIA WHITMOOR

A Troubled NPC for Ravenloft

by John W. Mangrum
iggycapital.net

BIOGRAPHY

Celia Whitmoor is an NPC a party may find a cautious ally, or an unwilling threat. She is a troubled woman who divides her life into two halves: the years before, and the years after she was attacked by a savage beast . . .

Before The Attack . . .

Celia was born in the tiny, isolated realm of Staunton Bluffs in the year 717 by the Barovian Calendar (although this is not the calendar used by her people, the Avergnites). Celia was the second child of Claude and Marie Whitmoor; her older brother was named Thaddeus. The Whitmoor family raised a few sheep and grew a small yield of crops on the cramped bit of land available to them. Compared to anywhere else in the lands of Mist, life in Staunton Bluffs was pleasant, calm, and predictably dull. While a young girl, Celia read every book she could get her hands on, filling her head with fantastic tales of knights in shining armor doing battle with wicked dragons.

To Celia, 16-square-mile Staunton Bluffs *was* the world. She had heard tales of lands somewhere beyond the ring of mist, but these stories were as much fancy as fact. A few lost travelers came out of the mists; a handful even visited the land more than once. But these visitors were rare, seldom stayed long, and were not always welcome, since they often drew the attention of the angry souls which roamed the moors.

Celia's life was not without pain, however. When Celia was ten, a fever swept through the community, introduced by an outsider. Marie Whitmoor succumbed to this fever, and left young Celia to fill her maternal role in the family. Celia spent her adolescence taking care of her father and brother, taking most of the household chores while they tended the farm. However, everyone had to be able to fill in for anyone else, so Celia was taught all the skills of the farm.

In 729, a badly shaken and injured man stumbled down from the highlands (feared to be the haunting grounds of countless restless spirits). Many Avergnites would have shied away from the stranger, fearing that the dead would follow him, but Claude took in the needy man. The stranger turned out to be a traveling tinker who had gotten lost in a fog, eventually finding himself in the highlands, where he had been attacked by a hungry animal. The man quickly recovered, and in thanks for the Whitmoors' help, the tinker crafted a silver locket. Inside the locket was a cameo of Marie, fashioned from Claude's description. After the tinker went on his way, Claude gave the locket to Celia. Celia has worn it constantly to this day; it is her most prized possession.

Celia grew up to be quite an enchanting and proper young beauty, who occasionally won the cooking contests commonly held in the land's only village, Willisford. Celia started to attract a few youthful suitors, but she hadn't started to consider any of their offers when *it* happened.

A month before Celia's 18th birthday, on a night when the moon was a mere sliver in the sky, the Whitmoor family was roused by the sounds of a wild animal trying to break into the sheep's stalls (kept in a section of the house). Thaddeus and Celia were the first ones downstairs and went out into the night armed with pitchforks to fend off the unknown beast. Celia saw her brother look past her and go pale. He started to shout a warning; something slammed into her back. Everything went dark.

. . . And After.

When Celia woke up, she was badly wounded, dirty, and cold. Worse, she was nude, although someone had considerably draped a tattered cloak over her form; all she had was her silver locket, still around her throat. Worst of all, her quiet life in Staunton Bluffs had come to an end. In dawn's pale light, she saw that three armed, ominous men stood over her. She would have thought them her attackers, but they were accompanied by a young boy; an odd companion for bandits. They talked to

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

her calmly and cautiously. They told her she was in the land of Darkon, near the border of Lamordia. Celia recognized neither name. Then they told her the news which destroyed her life: last night, they had been camping when they heard the sounds of a man being attacked by some sort of animal. When they followed the screams, they found the young man gasping his last, ragged breaths. He had been savaged by an unknown creature. Then they were attacked, attacked by a wolf which their weapons couldn't harm. One of the men could wield magic; a wizard. Thanks to the spells of this wizard, they had fought off the wolf. The *werewolf*. Celia was that werewolf.

When the sun appeared at the horizon, she had changed back into a dying human, her body unable to withstand the punishment the werewolf had endured. Another man wielded magic; a priest. This man saved her life on a whim. Celia asked to look at the young man she had slain, fearing it was her brother, but she did not recognize the man. This was odd in itself; Celia would at least have known the face of any Avergnite.

The men buried Celia's victim in a shallow grave. Then they equipped Celia as best they could from their own gear and allowed her to accompany them. They were men who made their own fates, "adventurers." The three men were traveling south to meet with one of their companions, and during these travels Celia gradually became one of their group. The boy, a 12-year-old they called Sniff due to a persistent cold, was named Richard Bigelow; he was another "lost soul" these men had picked up in their travels. Within a few weeks, the new moon confirmed Celia's curse, but the others were able to contain her lycanthropic rampages. In the beginning, Celia was despondent and considered suicide, but she bonded with Sniff, and her affection for the boy provided a link back to life.

Celia was overloaded; the new lands she found herself in stretched on endlessly, and she was terrified the first time she set eyes on the Sea of Sorrows. Although she had been raised to fear and object to magic of any sort, she had to learn to bite her tongue. The priest and wizard in the small party quickly grew tired of her repeated warning about the dangers of sorcery (dangers she'd never experienced first hand, of course). Worse than this, she found that in this larger world, good and evil were seldom as obvious as they were in her tales of daring knights and vengeful dead. Here, it seemed that the forces of Good and Evil pretended to be each other; the evil people all tried to be your friend before they put the dagger in your back, and the good people lurked in the shadows, trying to hide their actions from view. Even her companions, the adventurers, could act like saints one day and demons the next, according to their moods.

They looked into a cure for her curse, and learned of the difficult path which lay before her. Celia knew she

would have to return to her home one day. As much as she wanted this, she also deeply feared the idea. She was terrified that she had slaughtered her family and who knows how many other people during her blackout. Thus, so long as she could keep the wolf under control, she was content to attend to the others' business before her own.

She traveled with the adventurers for more than a year. It was a mixed time, full of highs and lows. Two of the three men who "saved" her died within a month of their meeting, and those who came after were a mixed lot. Some were curses, but some were blessings too. She grew closer to Sniff, her maternal instincts taking over. She became the boy's guardian, protecting the young man and raising him as best she could. She even met her knight in shining armor: a young man from Mordent named Argent, who followed the calling of a paladin. Given more time, something might have grown between them. With the riches the group acquired from the ill-gotten gains of their foes, Celia was even able to buy a house for herself and Sniff in Argent's home town of Mordentshire. For a time, Celia thought she had built a new life.

But it was not to last. When another companion took possession of the infamous Wishing Imp, most of her fellows were lost, including her valiant knight. One of her original companions, the priest (named Kevin), had been able to control Celia on the nights of the new moon for as long as they had traveled together. One disastrous night, she got past his formidable defenses and mauled him. Kevin survived, but inherited her curse. With the next new moon, the two werewolves were barely prevented from devouring Sniff.

This affected Celia deeply. Celia felt she had been fooling herself; for as long as a beast lurked within her soul, she could never pretend to have a normal life. The wolf would always be there, waiting for the chance to destroy all she had built, to slaughter those she loved. Worse, she could feel the beast beginning to affect her between the moons. Others had pointed out her developing taste for raw meat, and her temper was at times difficult to control; she occasionally found herself trembling with anger, struggling not to throw a fit when someone annoyed her.

More than a year after she was infected, Celia and Kevin went hunting for the werewolf which had attacked her. To start their search at the last known link in the chain, they found a way to reach Staunton Bluffs. Once there, Celia learned what had happened after the beast slammed into her.

The wolf had torn into her back, and would have ripped her to shreds if her brother had not beaten it off her. Thaddeus paid for the creature's attention with his life, but her father Claude was able to drive the beast away with a blazing torch. Celia survived the night thanks only to the constant care of her father. Although

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

she lived, Celia had been gravely wounded and remained unconscious through the next day. Claude used that day to bury his son.

During that day, a group of strangers entered Willisford. They claimed to be hunting a man named Yuri Pedorov, a man who could take the form of a savage wolf. They claimed to have pursued the beast across several lands, only to find themselves here. Last night, they had lost one of their party in the highlands. Only as the sun was setting did the rumors of the attack at the Whitmoor farm reach the hunters' ears. They rushed to the spot, but couldn't arrive before the new moon. Celia had transformed, and when they arrived, the hunters discovered a wolf in the act of devouring Celia's father. They gave chase, but the new werewolf fled into the mists. The hunters pursued the wolf, and did not return.

A day later, another stranger came to town, trying to pass himself off as the lost member of the hunters' party. The Avergnites are not a foolish folk, however, and they whispered to each other that this man was actually Pedorov. Before they could act, however, the man simply disappeared. Everyone assumed he too had fled into the mists.

Celia and Kevin spent months hunting the mysterious Yuri Pedorov, assuming him to be the progenitor of the bloodline. They had little to go on, and every month they had to make arrangements for the new moon. Once they came close to success; they briefly encountered Yuri, but he made good his escape. Yuri was skilled at throwing off his hunters, but before he lost them, Yuri had let a few hints of his origin slip. Yuri claimed that he too had been infected by another, a beast in a "frozen land" that Kevin and Celia could never defeat. The possibility of cure seemed ever more remote.

Kevin grew despondent and irrational. One day in 738, he declared he was going to settle an old score and rode away. Celia never saw Kevin again, and never learned just what score he had intended to settle. Celia and Sniff were left with each other. Celia put her focus back on raising Sniff properly. Sniff... Richard, I should say, was now 15, and the task fell to him to make sure Celia was securely shackled on any night when the moon was dark. Celia again tried to create a normal life for herself, but always the wolf worked at the corners of her mind.

By the Great Upheaval in 740, Richard was a young man about to set out on his own, and Celia decided to start hunting for her cure again. Ten years later, she still seeks that cure. Celia travels the lands, trying to find Pedorov again, or to piece together the fragmentary clues he let slip and discover who had infected him. Celia still searches for the "frozen land" where the progenitor roams, although she has yet to find any hint of it. Although she often returns to Mordentshire to rest and visit her few friends, Celia can be found virtually

anywhere in the Core, and more rarely in the Islands (she is still apprehensive when it comes to traveling the Mists). For several years, she has been trying to control her curse by herself, by finding somewhere isolated and shackling herself securely before the moon rises. Still, from time to time events have conspired to keep her from being able to chain herself, or her bestial alter-ego has been able to escape her bonds. On those nights, people have died. Some months, she finds it difficult to go through with shackling herself; the urge to let the wolf roam free is powerful and disturbing. So far, she has not succumbed.

Celia may distract herself from her fruitless quest by aiming for more immediate goals. If Celia encounters people working toward noble ends, she may offer her aid, although she simply does not trust demihumans, having had a number of bad experiences with such creatures. She also dislikes magic and those who use it often, but she has learned to tolerate these people as much as possible. If Celia grows to trust a capable group, she may ask them to help her in her hunt for the beast which infected her. However, she knows that she presents a certain risk to anyone around her, and will most likely not stay with anyone for long. Celia finds it specially important to physically separate herself from those she particularly cares for.

Current Sketch

On the night Il Aluk was destroyed Celia was at home in Mordentshire, celebrating Winter's Night with Richard Bigelow (now 27) and Argent's family. She had recently turned 33. Over the years, the curse has worked deeply into Celia's body and soul. The lycanthropic blood coursing through her veins has kept her hale and healthy; she hasn't suffered from one natural disease since her infection, and she still appears to be in her mid-20's. Celia is intelligent, cautious, and constructive, but her desire for a world that "makes sense" sometimes masks her instinctual distaste of magic.

Celia still considers herself a force for good and order, and feels a strong moral duty to help those around her whenever she can. But she can also display a fiery temper, which she tries to funnel towards those who work for evil ends. Simply put, Celia is deeply passionate; those she loves, she loves dearly; those she hates, she despises. Although she can be shy about expressing anything but familial affection, she is seldom able to long hold an angry tongue. She does not admit to her lycanthropy unless she feels it absolutely necessary (if her confession could save lives), although she always carries a set of heavy shackles in her pack. Celia tries to present a demure, rational, and appealing front, but she cannot totally hide an undercurrent of denied urges, suppressed passions, and lasting regrets. Deep in her heart, she still

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

waits for her knight in shining armor to rescue her, for her Argent to return.

Appearance

Celia is a captivatingly beautiful young woman. At a mere 5'4", her figure is petite yet feminine, and her delicate stature hides her skill with sword and bow. She has a fair complexion and an alluring face, which somehow manages to preserve the innocence of the girl next door while hinting at a smoldering sensuality. Celia has deep, emerald green eyes which flash with an inner fire. Her chestnut-brown hair is long and unruly, and carries a barely perceptible, musky scent. She usually ties her hair back with a tattered red ribbon, a token of an old, late friend. She is aware of her charms, and not above "unbuttoning her top button" to get what she wants. At the same time, she would react to a suitor's proposition with an honest blush and stifled chuckle.

The curse keeps her body fit, and she shows few scars for her years of hard living. A fine, pale scar is just visible at her temple, disappearing under the hairline. She also still bears a few scars on her back; these date back to the original attack.

While adventuring, Celia dons whatever is expedient, but most of the time she wears some variation on the same basic outfit: a vest or leather jerkin over a simple blouse, and a long, side-buttoned skirt over leggings. She habitually wears a dagger on her belt, more as a tool than anything else. Her preferred weapon is the long sword, although she does possess a magical sword-cane. She usually carries a pocket watch, and habitually keeps a careful eye on the time. She always wears her silver locket. She never dons heavy armor, mainly because anything weighing more than elven chain would bog her down.

As a werewolf, Celia resembles a large timber wolf. She has baleful yellow eyes; these eyes reflect the light and sometimes gleam red when she is angered. Her shaggy pelt is dark grey, growing lighter at the belly. Although ruled by bloodlust, the wolf retains Celia's memories, intelligence, and cunning. Her trigger is the nights of the new moon. Although Celia herself doesn't know it, her bloodline can be traced back to the Black Wolf of Vorostokov.

Celia Whitmoor

**6th-Level Human Fighter, Lawful Good
(Infected Werewolf, Chaotic Evil)**

Armor Class	8 (5)	Str	12 (18)
Movement	12 (15)	Dex	16
Level/Hit Dice	6	Con	14
Hit Points	31	Int	14
THAC0	15	Wis	12

No. of Attacks	1	Cha	17 (0)
Damage/Attack	By weapon (Bite: 2d4)		
Special Attacks	None (Surprise)		
Special Defenses	+2 bonus to fear checks, inspire bravery in others* (+1 or silver to hit)		
Magic Resistance	Nil		

Scores in parentheses reflect Celia while in wolf form.

* See *Domains of Dread*, pg. 248.

Weapon Proficiencies: Dagger, Short Sword, Short Bow, Long Sword, Quarterstaff

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Agriculture (14), Animal Handling (11), Bowyer/Fletcher (15), Cooking (14), Musical Instrument: Panpipe (15), Read/Write

Languages Spoken: Avergnite, Dementlieu (Mordentish dialect)

For use with the "Beasts at Heart" rules:

Lycanthropic Powers: Power of the Blood (2 slots; available in human form), Transformation (1 slot), Damage Healing, Damage Immunity, Progeny Control (1 slot)

Lycanthropic Weaknesses: Bloodlust, Chemical Vulnerability (wolfsbane), Dietary Requirement (25 lb.), Infected Lycanthrope, Weapon Vulnerability (silver)



THE PATCHWORK BRIDE

An Artificial NPC for Ravenloft

by Stuart Turner

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BIOGRAPHY

People always want to be “one of the crowd.” While many will make special efforts to curry favor with a certain group of people, or an individual, no one has had such efforts create as much sorrow as Gerhard Beckmann.

Gerhard Beckmann

Gerhard was the only child of a single mother in Neufurchtenburg, Lamordia. His life was hard from the start, often being excluded or ridiculed because of his socially unacceptable family background. Being neither physically strong, nor strong of character, Gerhard did little to fight this situation, instead finding solace in more educational pursuits.

His teachers quickly recognized his intelligence, and although most claimed that such a “bastard child” would never amount to anything, a few fostered his abilities. Gerhard felt more at home among the intellectual conversation of these people, enjoying the company of adults more than that of his rowdy peers.

Yet the desire to be “one of the crowd” still gnawed at him. The comfort he felt among teachers was no compensation for the ridicule and harassment he received from fellow students, and he yearned for the opportunity to prove his worth to people his own age. So, at the age of 15, he devised a plan.

Science was Gerhard’s main area of interest, and his own reading had taught him quite a bit about the nature of smokepowder, the substance used in firearms. Using all the money he had saved, he purchased a quantity of it, and began experimenting with using the powder to create colorful explosions, to dazzling effect. Eager to show off his tricks, he planned a display on the night of Winter’s End, when the small town would be celebrating the coming of Spring.

Disaster was the result. Too late, Gerhard saw a small boy wandering too close to the area where he had

set up the display. When one of the devices exploded unexpectedly, the small child was horribly burnt as the crowd looked on.

Rejected by the entire town (including the teachers Gerhard thought were his friends), Gerhard and his mother moved to Ludendorf to escape the past. The benefits were twofold, because Gerhard felt he was ready to attend the University in that city and continue his study of science. That interest in science quickly turned to the more delicate art of medicine while continuing his study there, as he began to see how respected doctors were among society. The acceptance he longed for seemed easy to achieve in that career.

He also found love during his stay in Ludendorf. Mirielle DuMont was the daughter of a well-to-do family in Port-a-Lucine, and was working as a nanny in Ludendorf when they met, and they quickly became a notable pair in Ludendorf’s social scene. Gerhard’s natural meekness meant that the relationship was controlled largely by Mirielle, people often noting the harshness with which she spoke to him. He, however, was blind to her unforgiving attitude, basking in the social world that she had introduced him to.

His final thesis however, was to ruin everything. Despite months of dedicated work, Gerhard had made a crucial oversight in his studies. When he presented his paper to his colleagues, he was practically laughed from the podium, his conclusions destroyed by a casual observation from one of the professors. Threatened with failure in his final year of study, he returned home to consider his position, deciding (as usual) to go and seek Mirielle’s opinion on the situation.

Word traveled fast, however, and Mirielle was already gone. Her note explained that her family would never let her be with a man who was not a respected member of the community. She had already left for Port-a-Lucine.

Gerhard stayed at his mother’s home for weeks, refusing to go and face those that had rejected him. The receipt of a letter from Dr. Mordenheim, though, proved a powerful tonic to his depression. In it, Dr. Mordenheim praised Gerhard’s thesis, noting that many parts of the

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

work were still valid in spite of the error. He went on to invite Gerhard to work with him on some important work he was involved with.

Dr. Mordenheim was infamous within the University, although few knew any details about his work. Such an opportunity could not be passed up, and Gerhard eagerly accepted the position. For a year, he worked for the Doctor, both impressed with the nature of Mordenheim's work, and happy to be somewhere where his work was appreciated. Unfortunately, the day he accidentally stumbled into the room containing Mordenheim's comatose wife, Elise, was his last at the residence. Gerhard's surprised expression caused Mordenheim to react badly, demanding that he leave the residence immediately.

This destroyed Gerhard's life. Mordenheim seemed the only person who still had any faith in Gerhard or his abilities. Schloss Mordenheim appeared to be the only place where he still had a chance to "fit in," let alone be liked and respected. So it was now that he came up with his most desperate plan.

He now knew what the purpose of Mordenheim's work was — the Doctor wanted to bring back his beloved wife, Elise. But using the knowledge he had gleaned from his studies with Victor, Gerhard sought another way to fill the emptiness of Mordenheim's existence. He created an abomination, a crass parody of everything that Elise von Brandthofen was. In a cellar within the city of Pont-a-Museau he worked on the creature, oblivious to the fact that he was unable to construct the delicate features or form of Elise, his mind focused on the accolades Mordenheim would shower him with when he presented the Doctor with his new wife.

His desperation summoned something more powerful than Gerhard could understand, and the grotesque figure was given life.

The next few months were spent educating the creature, telling her about her "husband," her identity, and her role as wife of Dr. Mordenheim. Gerhard gave her a picture of Elise that he had stolen from Schloss Mordenheim to show her what she looked like, saying that this was who she was.

Excitement forced Gerhard to move quickly, and before long he was taking "Elise" north to Lamordia. Before presenting her to Mordenheim, he even dressed his creation in an elaborate wedding gown, identical to that worn by Elise von Brandthofen on her wedding day. It was all for naught, however. Only moments after seeing the woman, Mordenheim flew into a rage, demanding that Gerhard leave the castle and never return. It is hard to know whether the Doctor's anger was due to the presumptuous behavior of Gerhard, the hideous parody of Elise that stood before him, or the fact that Gerhard seemed to so easily have done what he himself had struggled to replicate for so many years.

Gerhard fled as far as possible after the incident, seeking to get as far away from his troubled past as possible. Leaving the childlike Bride behind him, he traveled to Harmonia in the domain of Kartakass. There, remarkably, he found contentment for 11 years in a small but unnoteworthy medical practice.

Several months ago, he got the feeling that someone was stalking him. A few days later, he disappeared from his home, nothing but an open window and billowing curtains to mark his passing.

THE PATCHWORK BRIDE

T

he Patchwork Bride is a Ravenloft Flesh Golem created by Gerhard Beckmann, in the image of Elise von Brandthofen. While the likeness is there, the Patchwork Bride could never be mistaken for the woman she was built to replace.

Background

After being thrown from Schloss Mordenheim after Victor's rejection of her, she gravitated towards Ludendorf, the nearest population center. Still childlike, and unaware of the strength she possessed, she was taken in by a husband and wife who ran a Funhouse and Freak Show within the city. She was displayed to the population of Lamordia as "The Patchwork Bride," and was the prize exhibit of the show. Women traveling through the exhibition were known to faint at the sight of the Bride, who spent most of her time within her cell sketching pictures of Elise.

The end of the Freak Show came when the Bride unexpectedly broke out of her cell and killed a small child who had screamed upon seeing the frightening visage. She fled into the night while the Freak Show owners were left to control the panicking crowds around the venue.

It is not known where the Bride went for the next ten years. It's possible she simply roamed the countryside, feeding from livestock. A more likely possibility, however, is that she met up with Adam's Children, a secret society of flesh golems in Lamordia. Either way, her intelligence grew over this time, and it was not long before she decided why Mordenheim and others had rejected her.

She did not look enough like Elise von Brandthofen.

Gerhard had so strongly drilled her identity into her, that the creature could not give up the idea that she was Mordenheim's bride. Convinced that Gerhard would be able to correct this problem, she began to seek him out, and but a few months ago, she found him.

The Patchwork Bride

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

Ravenloft Flesh Golem, Chaotic Neutral

Armor Class	6	Str	19
Movement	12	Dex	18
Level/Hit Dice	9	Con	20
Hit Points	43	Int	13
THAC0	11	Wis	2
No. of Attacks	2 (fists)	Cha	3
Damage/Attack	2d8 / 2d8	XP	5,000
Special Attacks	Strangulation		
Special Defenses	As per Ravenloft Flesh Golem		
Magic Resistance	Nil		

While one half of her face will show a change in expression, the other will remain motionless.

She still wears Elise's bridal gown, determined that it shall serve its proper purpose in time. Occasionally, when her fantasy of marriage plays out in her mind, she wears the veil, which is the only time when the illusion of her being Elise almost works.



Current Sketch

The Patchwork Bride is currently wandering the Core with Gerhard Beckmann, hiding out in abandoned warehouses, empty houses, anywhere where they Gerhard can continue his work "undisturbed." Gerhard has little choice but to comply with the Bride's commands, as he is no match for her physically, particularly in his current weakened state.

The Bride is demanding that Gerhard make her "more like Elise." She still has the small painting that Gerhard stole from Schloss Mordenheim so many years ago, and wishes to be an exact replica of Elise. When this occurs, she intends to return to Doctor Mordenheim and take her rightful place as his wife.

Gerhard, of course, knows now that her aim is impossible. However, to placate her, he continues his work on her fractured face. With every incision, he knows he is only making her look even worse, but he sees no other option in the face of such overwhelming power.

The Patchwork Bride's most notable weakness is her continuing fantasy that she will marry Victor Mordenheim. When faced with any reasonably accurate depiction of Elise von Brandthofen, she will descend into an inner fantasy world, ignorant of her surroundings for several minutes.

Appearance

The Bride is taller than Elise, standing at 6 feet. While the hands and feet of the creature look quite delicate, the rest of her build is disproportionately large, making her hands seem shrunken and ineffective. As with many of the Created, her skin is waxen and yellow, showing pulsing veins underneath. In an effort to recreate Elise faithfully, Gerhard used the parts of a number of women to form the face, leaving noticeable scars around her various facial features. While the whole is vaguely recognizably as Victor Mordenheim's wife, the piecemeal nature of its construction means that the "sections" of her face seem to work out of sync. While one corner of her mouth may seem to smile, her eyes will indicate anger.

CARCHARODON ISLE

A Pocket Domain Off the Jagged Coast

by Geoff Kimber

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THE LAND

Carcharodon Isle is a rocky island lying three miles off the north-west coast of Necropolis. It is therefore at the very edge of the Core, in the Sea of Sorrows off Martira Bay. It is approximately five miles long and one-and-a-half miles wide.

Its coastline is predominantly sheer cliffs, mostly 300' high. However, it has two gravel beaches, one at each end of the "saddle" of the island, where landing is possible. Its northern tip is surrounded by shoals which are exposed at low tide.

The island is dominated by two stony peaks, and the terrain surrounding these peaks is steep and difficult. The locals call the northern rise "Carcharodon Peak" and the southern "Mermaid's Seat." Clouds seem to grapple with the tree cover on these hills, and can only be torn away by violent winds or midsummer sun.

The climate of Carcharodon Isle is temperate, with high rainfall, warm summers, and light snowfalls in winter. Unusually for such an exposed area, there is little wind, and mist clings to the shores in most weathers. Occasionally, however, as if to remind the island's inhabitants of their mortality, the winds and storms of Lamordia assault the island, but this is rare.

Because of the lack of strong wind and the height of the cliffs, there is little sea spray, and the island's vegetation is more reminiscent of temperate hills than coastal island. Dense pine forest covers the upland areas of the island. On the lower slopes the pines give way to heath or cleared grazing land. Among the pines a number of Meekelburn plants grow, some of the few outside the Ravenloft Domain of Kartakass. The islanders consider the plants and their berries to be poisonous (although they are not).

A solitary freshwater stream gathers water from the slopes of Carcharodon Peak and trickles down past the settlement of Mistlington into the sea.

A large portion of the island has been cleared for farming, and encounters with farmers (usually

accompanying grazing sheep) are quite common during the day. The easiest overland travel on the island is on the narrow paths that crisscross the grass- and farmland, and these lead to most points on the island below 140 yards above sea-level. There are a few main paths which are sufficiently wide for two people to walk abreast. There are almost no paths in the forest, and the terrain is fairly steep and rocky.

Access to and from the island is principally by boat, obviously. Boats leave the island for Martira Bay on the mainland once per month, and return a couple of days later. The boats are always skippered by a fisherman, and only the women of the village with children are allowed on as passengers. It is the women who do the trading and purchasing of goods on the mainland. The boat is always "protected" by two guards. The family ties and the two guards ensure that every woman who gets off at Martira Bay to do the shopping returns to the boat at the allotted time.

Cultural level

Chivalric.

The Folk

Mistlington, above the south-eastern beach of Carcharodon Isle, is the only settlement on the island. It consists of some twenty-five buildings, varying in construction from flimsy wooden boatsheds to a solid-looking white-plastered stone Church of Ezra. It houses approximately one hundred people, most of whom are fishermen and their families.

In addition to boatsheds, houses, and a church, there is a bakery, blacksmith, boatbuilder, seamstress, and a small general store-cum-tavern. The church doubles as village hall.

Elsewhere on the island there are another fifty people on small farms. Most run sheep, and grow a few vegetables for consumption and sale in Mistlington.

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PLACES

The people are mostly natives of Carcharodon Isle or the nearby coast of Necropolis. All are deeply mistrustful of outsiders.

The people subsist on seafood, mutton, and the vegetables they grow themselves. Once every month a group of villagers sails to Martira Bay on the mainland to sell excess produce and buy other necessities of life, such as grain and cloth.

Accordingly, there is no “adventuring” equipment for sale in Mistlington, or anywhere on the island. The general store sells common items of clothing, such as boots and belts, and household provisions (see *PLAYER’S HANDBOOK* pg. 66-67) at ten times the listed price.

Native Player Characters

The population of Carcharodon Isle is a little small from which to draw player characters. There is only one priest on the island, who attends the solitary church in Mistlington, and one low-level mage by the name of Alison Marjory (see *Personalities of Note*, below). Native bards are all wolfweres. However, players who wish their characters to come from Carcharodon Isle could choose to play fighters, avengers (special foe: wolfweres) or thieves, if they wish.

Personalities of Note

The administrative lord of Carcharodon Isle is a greater wolfwere by the name of Baron Mikhail Ulyanov. His (not entirely trusted) lieutenant is the wererat Sir Harrod Fisk. Sir Harrod was put on the island by the Kargat to keep a watchful eye on the wolfwere (also a Kargat agent). With the disappearance of Azalin and the resulting chaos among the Kargat, Sir Harrod’s position may become vacant in the near future.

It may appear to everyone that Ulyanov is the domain lord of Carcharodon Isle. In fact, there are two domain lords, and the Baron is not one of them. In a small cottage on the cliffs overlooking Mistlington lives Alison Marjory, a young woman cursed to monthly transformations into a greater seawolf and eternal longing for her lost love; she is one of the lovers cursed in the mid-600s by the dark powers of Ravenloft, and one of the two Demilords of the island. Alison Marjory appears as a beautiful young woman, barely twenty years old; she has remained that way for over a century. Her left hand has been amputated at the wrist, but despite her disability she has the abilities of a 1st level mage.

The other Demilord of the island is the fisherman Sean Mako. He is rarely encountered in human form, as he spends the majority of every month in the shape of a giant shark — he is a wereshark with no knowledge of, or control over, his affliction. On those nights when he is in human form, Alison is in seawolf form. Between them

they form a constant and fearsome predatory wall around the island that the Baron uses to his advantage.

Ulyanov makes sure that no-one leaves the island without his permission. The fishermen can fish in the nearby waters, but are greatly fearful of the “Great Beast” that swims the seas. The “Great Beast,” alternately described as a “huge shark,” or a “vast, wolf-headed seal,” is supposedly under Ulyanov’s control, and will attack and kill any fisherman who strays too far from the island. This is not entirely true. Ulyanov has only limited control over Sean, and has no control over Alice. But he has fed and promoted the rumor, and it is true that occasionally an unfortunate fisherman caught at sea during the night will be taken by one or other of them.

Sean and Alice, in their animal forms, only prowl the seas by night. During the day Alice reverts to her human form, and Sean sleeps in a cave underneath the Old Lighthouse. Note that whenever Sean is in human form Alice is in seawolf form, so that only one “Great Beast” prowls the seas at any one time, leading to the confused descriptions the fisherman may render.

The Law

Pre-Grand Conjunction, Carcharodon Isle came under the jurisdiction of the lord of Martira Bay. The lord of Martira Bay, on instructions from Azalin, installed a Kargat agent as the local baron of the island. Following the Grand Conjunction this Kargat agent, Baron Mikhail Ulyanov the wolfwere, has remained on the island, essentially free to act as he considers fit.

Ulyanov enforces his will on the 150 inhabitants of the island through Sir Harrod Fisk and his guards, a band of fourteen wolfweres who inhabit the Old Lighthouse on the northern tip of the island with the Baron.

Encounters

The only natural predators on Carcharodon Isle are a few wolves. According to the stories of the villagers, there were no wolves on the island prior to the appearance of Baron Mikhail Ulyanov about a hundred years ago. They form a constant threat to the farmers and their livestock, but thankfully subsist on deer, rabbit and other wild animals for the most part.

The most dangerous encounters on the island are with the wolfwere guards of the Baron, or the Baron himself. Both wolves and wolfweres prowl the forests and fields of the island more often at night.

The seas around the island are inhabited by sahuagin, who will avoid the wereshark and seawolf at all costs, but will attack solitary boats out on the water at night if the opportunity presents itself.

Demilords of Carcharodon Isle

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PLACES

The two domain lords are the victims of a curse laid by the dark powers over a century ago.

Background: The Lovers' Curse Origins

Approximately one hundred years ago a young fisherman by the name of Sean Mako lived in Mistlington. One afternoon, while fishing near the rocks to the northwest of Carcharodon Isle, he noticed what looked like a body washed up on the rocks. On closer inspection the body turned out to be a young and very beautiful mermaid. The mermaid had been badly injured. Her left hand had been severed at the wrist, and she was bleeding profusely from other wounds to her torso. She was quite unconscious and on the verge of death. Sean gathered her up and took her back to Mistlington, where he bound her wounds, gave her the best medical treatments he could afford, and nursed her constantly.

As he did so he felt the first stirrings of love for her. His heart stopped for a moment when she opened her eyes for the first time. Then she quietly reached up and caressed his unshaven face, whispered, "thank you," and his heart was lost.

The mermaid, who was called in the Common tongue "Alice," told a story of her and her tribe's capture by sahuagin, and of her attempted escape. She had been hit several times by sahuagin spears and crossbow bolts, and had been left to be dispatched by the sahuagins' pet sharks. She had lost her hand in one of their jaws. Shortly afterwards she had fallen unconscious from the pain and loss of blood. She does not know how she came to be washed up on the rocks, since she is sure that the sharks should have finished her off.

With Sean's care and attention Alice slowly recovered. And she began to return the fisherman's affection, for he was kind and gentle to her. As she regained her strength, however, Sean knew that she'd return to the sea. They would never be truly together for so long as he remained earthbound and she had a tail.

He started to despair, and talked daily with the local priest of his love and the impossible hurdle it faced. The priest was sympathetic but could offer no solutions. The other fishermen thought the young man foolish, and their wives, jealous of Alice's beauty, remarked loudly about the unnaturalness of Sean and Alice's cohabitation. Sean became desperate and moody.

Eventually, the village decided that the mermaid had to be "repatriated," since she was such a disruptive influence to the harmony of Mistlington. Without warning the men came to Sean's house one night, bludgeoned the fisherman unconscious, and bundled Alice off to a waiting boat.

When Sean came to he ran to his boat and rowed out after the men who had kidnapped his true love. With strength borne of passion he caught them, but they had already thrown the bound Alice overboard. Taking up a boathook, he slew the fishermen where they stood or hurled them into the water. When he was finished he looked down at his bloodstained hands, said, "Forgive me," and dove into the water after his mermaid. As he rose to the surface he cried to the full moon above, "Give me fins and a tail so that I will never be separated from my love."

The dark powers, attracted by the carnage below caused by one so mild as Sean, saw fit to grant him his desire. The young man's hands and arms flattened into fins, and a great dorsal fin thrust from his back. His legs welded together and lengthened into a massive body and his feet were encompassed by a huge vertical tail. Rows of sharp, triangular teeth filled his broad mouth and his head elongated into a dagger-like snout. Sean had transformed into a vast shark.

The following morning a young woman was found washed up on Mistlington's beach, unconscious but alive and apparently uninjured, except that she was missing her left hand.

What is the curse?

The dark powers of Ravenloft have perverted the desperate desires of a young couple such that they can never be together. Sean Mako, once a fisherman, has been transformed into an therianthrope megalodon, a man capable of taking the form of an enormous shark. His lover, Alice the mermaid, normally appears as a beautiful young woman, and is known as Alison Marjory in the town of Mistlington.

The curse is that the two can never meet as humans. Sean, as a wereshark, thinks himself to be an intelligent shark, incapable of becoming a man and walking on dry land. He will only transform into bipedal form if forced to. Since he does not know he can do it, he cannot be tricked into transforming—he must be forced out of shark form by magic.

Sean transforms into human form for three nights every month, the night before full moon, the night of full moon, and the night afterwards. This is the effect of the curse—he does not do it consciously. When in human form he has all the memories he had when the curse took hold. In addition, he remembers his activities as a shark, and is tormented by the carnage and chaos he creates. As a shark he has no memory or knowledge of his "other life" at all.

To make sure that the two lovers can never meet, the dark powers cursed Alice to transform as well. On the three nights around the full moon she undertakes a hideous transformation into a greater seawolf. As with

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PLACES

Sean, Alice remembers her entire life's story when in human form, but believes she has always been a seawolf when in seawolf form. She now knows on which nights the transformation takes place, and shortly beforehand leaves Mistlington for more remote areas of the island.

In all cases the transformation is accompanied by pain and an intense desire to be immersed in water or beached on land, as the case may be.

Lifting the curse

The curse will be lifted when Sean and Alice touch as humans. This can only be done by forcing Sean into human form while in Alice's presence, or vice-versa. Note that Baron Mikhail Ulyanov possesses an amulet of the beast, and knows its powers and capabilities.

Closing the Borders

Neither Sean nor Alice can truly close the borders of the domain. However, should characters attempt to escape, both are more than powerful enough to smash whatever boat the characters are traveling in (there only being small fishing boats on the island), and are truly fearsome adversaries in their natural, watery, habitat.

Sean Mako

Wereshark, Neutral Evil

(0-level human, Neutral Good)

Armor Class	0 (10)	Str	(14)
Movement	Sw: 21, 12 (12)	Dex	(12)
		Con	(16)
Level/Hit Dice	10+3 (1)	Int	(13)
Hit Points	48 (7)	Wis	(9)
THAC0	9 (20)	Cha	(12)
No. of Attacks	1	XP	10,000
Damage/Attack	5d4 (By weapon)		
Special Attacks	Sharpness bite		
Special Defenses	Silver or magic weapons to hit		
Size	M-L (M)		
Morale	14 (8)		

Note: Scores in parentheses reflect Sean in human form.

Current Sketch

Sean is one of the victims of the Lovers' Curse. His usual form is that of a thirty-foot long shark, and it is in this form he cruises the dark seas around Carcharodon Isle as the "Great Beast." Although his usual fare consists of fish and the odd sahuagin, he will take anyone foolish enough to be at sea at night. During the day he sleeps in a large cave underneath the Old Lighthouse.

On the night of the full moon and the nights either side of it Sean transforms back into a human, and is captured and held by Ulyanov in the dungeons of the Old Lighthouse.

Sean has not appeared to have aged a day since the curse was placed upon him. However, he has all the experience and knowledge of his hundred years. In shark form, however, he has no knowledge of his life as a human, either before the curse, or his three nights of "freedom." As a human, however, he has memories of his entire life. He is tormented by the fear and carnage he causes as a shark.

Because he has been locked up as a human he has no knowledge that Alice exists any more. He believes himself to be the only "Great Beast."

Combat

Sean cannot be killed until the curse is lifted. If reduced to 0 hit points in either form all his wounds close, any blood he has spilt fades and disappears, and he again rises, at full health (maximum hit points), within one round. In his desperation he has tried to commit suicide many times, only to be thwarted by the curse. After the curse is lifted he is treated as a 0-level human, and can be killed normally.

In shark form Sean will attack with his huge sharpness bite. His bulk is sufficient to upset small boats, and he is also willing to ram and hole such craft if it means getting to the food inside. He will never attack Alison Marjory, and cannot get within ten feet of her—a safe zone which characters may be able to exploit. In addition, he will not willingly go within five feet of the *amulet of the beast*, and the Baron uses this knowledge to his advantage.

Alice/Alison Marjory

1st-level Mage, Lawful Good

(Greater Seawolf, Chaotic Evil)

Armor Class	9 (5)	Str	8
Movement	12 (9, Sw 27)	Dex	15
		Con	11
Level/Hit Dice	M1 (9+2)	Int	15
Hit Points	4 (43)	Wis	12
THAC0	20 (11)	Cha	17
No. of Attacks	1	XP	1,400

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PLACES

Damage/Attack	By weapon (3d4)
Special Defenses	Iron, silver or magic weapons to hit
Size	M (L)
Morale	12 (14)
Spells:	<i>charm person.</i>

she may use her tail to knock people off boats into the water. As a seawolf she cannot attack Sean and cannot get within ten feet of him. She has the same aversion to the *amulet of the beast* as Sean.



Current Sketch

Alice is one the second victim of the Lovers' Curse. Her normal form is human, and on the island she is known as Alison Marjory. On the three nights around the full moon she transforms into a greater seawolf, and takes over the job of the "Great Beast," prowling the waters around Carcharodon Isle and harassing the locals.

In human form Alice appears as a very beautiful woman in her early twenties. Her left hand is missing, and she seeks to cover the wrist stump under her shawl or otherwise hide it from view. She lives in a cottage above the town of Mistlington, and keeps to herself. None of the islanders like or trust her, and if prompted are quite willing to tell any nasty story about her they can think of.

Alice is unaware of Sean's presence on the island. She has similar memories, i.e. when she is in human form she knows that she transforms, and can remember everything she does, but in seawolf form she loses all memory of her human life. She thinks she is the only "Great Beast," and has never encountered the shark. She thinks that those fishermen who call the "Great Beast" a shark are mistaken, or are seeking a rational explanation for sightings of herself.

Like Sean, she is unable to be truly killed until the curse is lifted.

Alice's hundred years of loneliness have not been spent entirely idly. As well as working as repairing nets and as a seamstress, she has been actively involved in magic since she developed an interest in the herbs and plants she found on the island (plants which she had never come across as a mermaid). Her skill is limited, given that her lack of a hand has restricted her development, but she has at least a basic knowledge of magic.

Alice has spent a hundred years on the island, and has a very good knowledge of its geography. She has wandered virtually every inch of the place with complete impunity. However, she has stayed away from the Old Lighthouse, and only knows that before Ulyanov arrived (shortly after the curse) it was a ruin and the Baron has since repaired and strengthened it.

Combat

In human form treat Alice as a 1st-level mage. In seawolf form she attacks with her bite. She cannot pass on lycanthropy through her bite, given the special nature of her curse. Her bulk is sufficient to upset small boats, and

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PLACES

KISLOVA

An Alchemical Island of Terror

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Author's Note: Adapted from the novel *Baroness of Blood*, by Elaine Bergstrom.

THE LAND

Kislova consists mostly of mountainous grasslands. It is politically divided into several provinces. The northwestern provinces are called Deneri and Kopem; the richest is Tygelt, which operates the domain's gold mines. The capital is Nimbus Castle, near the town of Pirre. The major industries are farming and mining.

Cultural Level

Medieval.

The Folk

The folk of Kislova generally seem to be cheery and nice folk. However, when they feel betrayed or oppressed, they will fight back with everything they have. Duels of "honor" are not uncommon to settle disputes between citizens. Slightings between people require immediate revenge. There is a growing band of rebels in Kislova dedicated to removing Baroness Ilsabet Obour, whom they believe is poisoning or somehow incapacitating the ruler, Baron Peto.

Native Player Characters

Kislova is a relatively magic-poor domain, so adventurers are mostly warriors and rogues, with a large number of avengers. What few wizards exist in the domain are all alchemists.

Personalities of Note

Sagesse, a third magnitude ghost, lies in a cavern in Tygelt Mt. In life, she was a neutral good seer, giving prophecies of the future for the people of the area. In

Ravenloft, she can tell only of the past (as per the spell *legend lore*) of any person or object in Kislova. She will only answer one question for any one person.

The Law

The rulers of Kislova are Baron Peto and Baroness Ilsabet. Peto has been very ill for many years, so Ilsabet does much of the actual ruling. Peto is much beloved by the folk of Kislova because he freed them from the former baron, Janosk Obour, Ilsabet's father.

Encounters

20% chance per day of natural creatures, such as boars and bears, or a rebel band. 30% chance per night of unnatural creatures, such as ghosts or alchemical vampires (see below).

Lord of Kislova

Baroness Ilsabet Obour

11th-level Human Alchemist Wizard, Lawful Evil

Armor Class	10	Str	9
Movement	12	Dex	15
Level/Hit Dice	11	Con	14
Hit Points	44	Int	18
THAC0	17	Wis	12
No. of Attacks	1	Chr	18(9)*
Dmg. per attack	By weapon or spell		
Special Attacks	Spells (4/4/4/3/3)		
Special Defenses	Spells		
Wild Talent	<i>Spirit Sense</i> (Wis-3, Initial Cost 10, PSPs 20)		

* **Note:** See below.

Ilsabet Obour is a young woman in her early twenties. She is small, no more than five feet tall, with lustrous pale skin, pale blonde hair, and large blue eyes. She tends to dress in expensive, somber clothing that highlights her beauty.

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PLACES

Background

Ilsabet is the youngest daughter and favorite child of Janosk Obour, the former baron of Kislova who had become a brutal tyrant by the end of his reign, crushing a band of rebels that tried to overthrow him and win their freedom. When Janosk tried conquering a neighboring barony for their gold to win his people's affections, he was himself conquered and executed. Before he died, he charged each of his three children with a different task. His son was to submit to Baron Peto, the conqueror, so their family could survive. His eldest daughter was to marry Peto if he asked. Ilsabet was instructed to learn all she could and wait to avenge her family. This she promised with all her heart, and this became her undoing.

The Obour family had held power in Kislova for centuries through the study and practice of alchemy. Janosk's alchemist Jorani taught Ilsabet all he could about poisons and potions and reagents, and she proved to have a talent for it. Her experiments in poisons crippled and killed many rebel prisoners who were to have been released. Eventually, she started to subtly work her revenge. She started by murdering the rebel leader, who had been blinded near the end of the war and was staying in Nimbus. Ilsabet tried working her way into Baron Peto's affections, trying to increase her skills in alchemy as well. In the process, she poisoned and killed her sister and brother, whom she had come to believe were being disloyal to their father's memory. In this period, the dark powers started to notice her.

Also during this time, Ilsabet came across an ancient tome on alchemy (provided by the dark powers) that contained a formula for the creation of undead. Eventually, after honing her skills on dozens of victims and actually marrying Peto and bearing him a son, she poisoned him with a paralytic venom. Her goal was to make Peto's death appear natural so she could rule in his stead. Upon the final dosage of her poison, during which her mentor (and by then true love) Jorani was killed as well, a tremendous storm blew up around Kislova and Ilsabet and her land were drawn into the Demiplane of Dread.

Current Sketch

Ilsabet is highly intelligent, very beautiful, very skilled young woman. She can be very polite and charming, but this masks a scheming dark heart and an almost limitless capacity for rage. If she is crossed, she will plot a subtle and terrible revenge, keeping her victim in Kislova until she has extracted more than just recompense for the slight.

Ilsabet's greatest desires are revenge and to rule. Unfortunately for her, upon entering Ravenloft, she found that both these desires were thwarted. Baron Peto is

alive, but paralyzed, and will remain so for all time. No matter what poison she uses, Peto regenerates to his former condition with every dawn, and no-one remembers that anything was any different. Ilsabet rules Kislova, but only as a proxy of her husband. Since she never rules in her own name, she considers this a poor shadow of true rulership.

If this wasn't enough, Ilsabet gained another strange curse. Because she took such sadistic glee in her poisonings and experiments, she must now feed on pain the way a vampire feeds on blood. If she does not kill someone, or have someone killed within 10 feet of her, once a day in order to feed on their pain, Ilsabet's Charisma immediately drops by half (her original score before becoming domain lord) and she starts losing 1 hit point per turn until she causes pain to some sentient being. Normally she has her vampire guards tear someone apart before her husband in order to feed, not only on the victim's pain, but also on her husband's anguish.

Ilsabet normally has a royal guard consisting of alchemical vampires, a unique type of undead that only she can create. She uses these to patrol the land and look for rebels, insurgents, and visitors to help feed her own appetite for pain. Ilsabet also possesses the ability to sense the presence of ghosts and other spirits, although she is unaware of this, and is in fact afraid of ghosts.

Closing the Borders

When Ilsabet wishes to close the borders of Kislova, the mists surrounding the domain become green and poisonous. Every round spent in the mists causes a person to lose 10 hit points, no save allowed. The damage continues until they return to Kislova.

Combat

Ilsabet is not one to participate in one-on-one combat, preferring to use her enchantments to get an opponent on her side or letting her royal guard do the fighting. If necessary she can use her spells to good effect, and she also carries two vials of contact poison (type N, 1 minute, Death/25) that she can throw on people to inflict damage (like holy/unholy water) or wield a knife for 1d3 points of damage.

Spells:

1st level: *grease, charm person, friends, hypnotism*

2nd level: *scare, glitterdust, pyrotechnics, stinking cloud, flaming sphere, Melf's acid arrow*

3rd level: *suggestion, solvent of corrosion †, displace self †*

4th level: *charm monster, confusion, emotion, vitriolic sphere †, lesser geas †*

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PLACES

5th level: *animate dead* *, *domination*, *feeblemind*, *rusting gasp* †, *vile venom* †, *cloudkill*

† from *Player's Option: Spells & Magic*

* this is a special version of the spell that only creates alchemical vampires. It only works in Ravenloft.

ALCHEMICAL VAMPIRE

Climate/Terrain:	Kislova
Frequency:	Very Rare (4%)
Organization:	Solitary or group
Activity Cycle:	Any
Diet:	Carnivore
Intelligence:	Average (8-10)
Treasure:	Nil
Alignment:	Lawful Evil
No. Appearing:	1 or 10
Armor Class:	0
Movement:	14
Hit Dice:	7+3
THAC0:	13
No. of Attacks:	1
Damage/Attack:	1d4 or special
Special Attacks:	Blood Drain, Poison
Special Defenses:	Hit only by magical or iron weapons, Regeneration
Magic Resistance:	Nil
Size:	M
Morale:	16
XP Value:	7,000

Alchemical vampires are only found in Kislova, creations by the domain lord Baroness Ilsabet Obour. They are similar to nosferatu, but do not gain power as they age. Other differences are below.

Appearance

An alchemical vampire generally retains the appearance it had in life, looking like a normal human being. The only difference is that when not actually interacting with other beings, their faces tend to take on a strange blankness of expression that indicates their lack of true emotion and life.

Combat

Alchemical vampires attack once with sharp fingernails for 1d4 points of damage, injecting a deadly poison into the bloodstream of their victim. An unsuccessful save vs. poison causes 40 points of damage, a successful one only 10 points of damage. Only creatures which have an active bloodstream and are affected by poisons need check for this. Alchemical vampires can also cause a loss of 1 point of Con per round with their bite, like a nosferatu. Unlike their more common kin, alchemical

vampires do not have any ability to transform into mist or animals.

Only iron weapons or ones of magical origin can affect an alchemical vampire. They regenerate from all other weapons too quickly to be affected. Alchemical vampires also regenerate 2 hp per turn while they are away from direct sunlight. If reduced to 0 hit points, they will dissolve into an acidic fluid (which causes 5 hp dmg to living tissue only, no save). This fluid is capable of flowing at the alchemical vampire's full movement rate, and will immediately attempt to find a dark area in which to regenerate.

Alchemical vampires are not affected by sunlight, except the above lack of regeneration. They must rest 8 hours of every day in some dark place away from sunlight or they gradually lose hit points until they are destroyed. An alchemical vampire can be defeated by driving an iron stake through its heart, but that only renders them inert until the stake is removed. To permanently destroy it, the body of the vampire must be dissolved in strong acid.

Habitat

Alchemical vampires live only in the domain of Kislova, where they act as the elite guard of the domain lord. Unless they have been ordered to work as a squad, they tend to work and hunt alone.

Ecology

As undead beings, alchemical vampires have no place in the natural ecology.



THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PLACES

VIN'EJAL

A Chilling Island of Terror

by Bil Boozer

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THE LAND

Vin'Ejal (vin-HAY-jahl) is a wintry, snow-covered domain consisting of a small village at the foot of a towering mountain which rises from a frigid sea. Benada Nameless, the lord of this island, resides in a cavern approximately 300 meters up the west side of Mt. Glacis (GLAY sis). On a clear day, Benada can look down upon Toldun, the village which was once her home, but clear days are few on the island of Vin'Ejal. The sky overhead is continually covered with a blanket of thick clouds, and, except for a brief one- to two-week period each year called the Thaw, snow is always falling on the island.

No birds fly the skies of Vin'Ejal, and, except for the occasional rush of a gust of wind, the domain is abnormally quiet.

At the waterline, the circumference of the island is approximately 10.8 kilometers. The water surrounding the island is filled with large pieces of floating ice, making navigation by ship treacherous. Anyone unlucky enough to fall into these waters must survive the extraordinarily icy water temperature and must also face the danger of encountering hungry sea wolves.

Toldun

The village of Toldun is home to approximately 200 residents, most of whom are either farmers or hunters. Farmers are able to grow a small variety of vegetables and grains in caverns at the foot of the mountain. Here they also keep a small number of livestock primarily to provide milk and wool. Hunters, including fishers, gather the meat for the village. The waters around the island are abundant in fish and crustacean life, and occasionally the hunters manage to kill a polar bear. The hunters are also the bulk of the village's defense against raids by the sea wolves as well as by the yeti who live on Mt. Glacis.

Lord Pallignay Ogfenhauer is the mayor of Toldun. A renowned general, he retired to Toldun and was appointed its mayor less than a year before it became a

part of Ravenloft. The residents of the town are well aware that they have been cut off from the rest of their world, and they are at a loss to explain what has happened. But they are also aware that they have a more immediate danger to worry about, as periodically residents of the village disappear, never to be seen again. Some suggest that sea wolves are responsible and a few point to the yeti, but most everyone agrees that the disappearances didn't start until and must be related to the death of the Eye of Toldun.

Mt. Glacis

Completely snow-covered, Mt. Glacis reaches almost 1200 meters into the air. From a distance, amid the flurries of snow, the sides appear to rise smoothly to its top, but the mountain's sides are textured and relatively easy to scale to those with proper training. The mountain features numerous natural caverns, one of which is the shrine which is now home to the island's lord. Other caverns are the homes of yeti; most of these are on the east side of the mountain, as far away from Toldun as possible, in caves at least 100 meters above the sea level, as the yeti are aware of the dangers of the sea wolves. These yeti are not as belligerent to each other as yeti generally are; they are well aware that their hunting areas have been greatly reduced by the island's disconnection with the old world and that they must live closer together than they would normally prefer. Some leaders of yeti clans have negotiated a nonaggression agreement with Mayor Ogfenhauer such that the humans and yeti will not attack each other. During the months that Vin'Ejal has been a part of the Demiplane of Dread, the yeti have apparently violated this agreement only twice, but representative yeti have quickly offered quantities of meat (fish and bear) to atone for the transgressions of others of their kind.

A few of the caves closer to the waterline provide homes for polar bears, who occasionally enjoy sea wolves for dinner.

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PLACES

Only rarely will the yeti attack the polar bears, preferring to keep the fearsome creatures as a barrier between their homes and the sea wolves.

The Shrine of the Eye

A large cavern on the west side of Mt. Glacis consists of several connecting caves stretching into the mountain. The main cave is the Shrine of the Eye. Beyond the shrine is a small cave which the Eye had used as his living quarters and where Benada now resides. Concealed passages lead to further caves which neither the Eye nor Benada are aware of. Beyond these, in the dark heart of the mountain, is the prison of Appissa.

Thirty years before Vin'Ejal was captured by the Mists, this cavern was discovered by a young man who believed that mountain-climbing would help him find his destiny. Stumbling out of the cold and into the cavern, he realized that it was an ancient shrine. Kneeling at the diamond encrusted altar, the young man had a vision of Appissa, the snake goddess, who called him to be her priest, and he agreed to do so. In return for his service, she granted him the gift of prophecy, and soon people were coming from around the globe to hear the amazing predictions of the Eye of Toldun.

Of course, the Eye required payment for his prophecies—sometimes in gold or gems but more often through a promise of later service. These latter were exacted by Appissa, and the Eye did not fully understand their import; moreover, after a few years had passed, the Eye became irritated that his goddess would give away the services he was performing without his receiving any compensation. He attempted to hide his anger from his goddess, but she knew what was in his heart.

“Go, Eye of Toldun,” she said to him. “Go to Toldun and select the most beautiful woman of that village and take her as if she were your wife, and bring her here to live in this shrine with you for the rest of your days.”

Appissa told the Eye of a potion made of the goddess's own blood which he could use to persuade his intended if she was reluctant to return with him. He found the potion in a coffer hidden underneath the altar; with it was a bone dagger which he started to grab but stopped when Appissa vehemently ordered him not to touch it.

The Eye returned to the shrine with Dillura Ogfenhauer, the daughter of a wealthy military man, who was living in the family's villa along with her younger brother. Per Appissa's instructions, the Eye gave Dillura the potion, and she succumbed to his will. At the end of the week, a party from the village retrieved Dillura from the shrine, receiving with some suspicion the Eye's story that he had rescued her from the slopes of the mountains.

Appissa promised the Eye that Dillura would return and that she was pregnant with his child, so he was appeased.

Dillura bore her child in shame, calling her Benada, that is, “child of (the) ice.” Dillura was repulsed by the child, particularly its queerly colored eyes, and she wanted nothing to do with it. Responsibility for raising Benada fell to Dillura's brother, Ekkim, even though he was only twelve years older than the infant. Early on, he learned that she was no ordinary human, and he helped her learn to use her abilities and years later he took her as his squire when it came time for him to join his father in the Continental Wars.

Cultural level

Medieval.

The Folk

The people of Toldun are of a variety of racial mixtures. Most of them, descendants of the original inhabitants of the area, are pale skinned, fair-haired, and short (no one is over 175 cm tall). The remainder are a mixture of races from throughout the world of their origin. There is a very small number of residents with enough elven blood to be considered half-elves, but no other demihumans came with Toldun when it was captured by the Mists.

In addition to the farmers and hunters, there are a few craftspeople within the village; all of these, however, are the spouses or partners of farmers and hunters. All families are expected to contribute at least one person to maintaining the city's welfare by producing food; however, the people of Toldun are not without compassion and make exceptions for families experiencing hardships, such as the disappearance of a contributing member.

There is a temple in the village devoted to Antar, a benevolent god of knowledge. The temple more resembles a university library than a place of worship; followers of Antar are constantly encouraged to learn as much as they can about the world. Currently, the staff of the temple is trying to determine the nature of the changes that have happened to Vin'Ejal. The chief cleric of the temple provides moral support among the people of Toldun, but in general they are not religious.

Native Player Characters

Player character warriors can be either fighters or rangers; they will have gained much of their training before the domain entered Ravenloft or they will gain it by working along experienced fighters as hunters. Wizard heroes can be either air or water elementalists or arcanists, the latter gaining their initial training from the temple of Antar. Priest heroes must be clerics of Antar and have major access to the spheres of all, divination, guardian,

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PLACES

law, numbers, sun, and time and minor access to the spheres of animal, healing, plant, protection, and travelers. Rogue heroes may be thieves but not gypsies, and native characters may be psionics. The only multiclass option available to half-elven characters is that of fighter/thief.

All native characters gain Survival: Arctic and Mountaineering as bonus proficiencies and gain a +1 Constitution bonus.

Personalities of Note

The Eye of Toldun has become a third magnitude ghost anchored to the Shrine of the Eye. He continues to carry on worship of his snake goddess despite her no longer being able to contact him. He will aggressively protect the shrine from any unwelcome intruders, but he will obey a command from Benada to stop his attacks.

The imprisoned snake goddess, Appissa, is a half-breed yuan-ti who had been held in stasis until the shrine was discovered by the young man who would become the Eye of Toldun. Appissa used her psionic powers to persuade the Eye that she was a goddess, but she is unable to use them on Benada. Appissa had hoped that the prophecies of the Eye might attract a powerful wizard to the shrine, someone who could aid her escape from her lightless cave. Now, she spends a great deal of time trying to reach out to the minds of others to figure out what has happened to Vin'Ejal; however, she can only reach the minds of intelligent creatures who are within the shrine or its adjoining caverns, excluding Benada and the Eye. She cannot voluntarily return to her stasis.

The Law

The arbiter of law in Toldun is Lord Pallignay Ogfenhauer, Benada's grandfather and former general, a man for whom Benada harbors a great deal of respect. Benada has no interest in usurping the mayor's authority at present.

A few of the yeti clan leaders have begun to meet together on a monthly basis; these meetings may evolve into a more formalized governing structure.

Lord of Vin'Ejal

Benada Nameless

8th-level Weresnake Fighter, Lawful Evil
Armor Class 9 (5) **Str** 14

Movement	12 (14)	Dex	11
Level/Hit Dice	8	Con	15
Hit Points	53	Int	13
THAC0	13 (15)	Wis	16
No of Attacks	1	Cha	9
Damage/Attack	By weapon or 1-4 (bite)		
Special Attacks	Poison, psionics (wild talent)		
Special Defenses	See below.		
Magic Resistance	See below.		
PSP: 90			

Clairsentience: Danger Sense, Precognition

Telepathy: Contact, Domination, Empathy, Inflict Pain, Post-Hypnotic Suggestion

Benada Nameless stands 5'10" tall and is a thin, muscular girl. Her skin is pale, almost white, but most remarkable are her eyes: The orbs are as black as the vacuum of space. Benada typically adorns herself in the white coat of a large polar bear not to protect her from the cold, but to make herself seem smaller and weaker than she really is. Benada is immune to magical and nonmagical cold and poisons.

When in her human form, Benada always carries the bone knife with which she killed Ekkim. She believes the knife has some power over Appissa, although she does not understand the nature of that power. The knife has a 15 cm blade, and a smaller shaft, which is wrapped in thin strips of snakeskin.

At will, Benada becomes a four-meter-long white snake. Statistics for this form are given in parentheses above. In this form, she can only be hit by magical weapons or weapons of pure iron, and she is able to use her psionic powers. Because she loses her clothing and jewelry when she becomes a snake, Benada fears that her mind will no longer be protected from Appissa if she makes the transformation within the shrine; she is not yet aware that the dark powers have made her mind-shielding an intrinsic ability.

Changing forms requires one full round; during that time, she cannot attack or use her psionic abilities and her Armor Class is 10. Each transformation heals her of 2d8 points of damage and restores 2d10 PSPs; however, she cannot transform more than twice in a three-hour period.

In making Benada the lord of Vin'Ejal, the dark powers gave her a gift similar to the first-level wizard spell, *chill touch*. Any living creature Benada touches suffers 2d4 points of cold damage and loses 1d3 points of Strength (if applicable). If the victim successfully saves vs. death magic, then the loss of hit points is halved and no Strength is lost. This effect only occurs when Benada is in human form.

Background

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PLACES

Ekkim and Benada returned from the Continental Wars, the former having lost his left leg in battle and the latter a young but experienced warrior and killer. They stayed in an inn in Toldun, as Benada's mother would not let them into the villa. One evening, Benada forced her way into the villa to confront her mother, but she found only her sleeping grandfather. She waited until morning when she spied her mother descending the mountain's face, and then she slithered away.

The following evening, she followed her mother up the side of the mountain to the Shrine of the Eye. There she saw Dillura embrace the Eye and go with him to his chambers. Benada seethed with anger and hid behind the diamond-encrusted altar, thinking she would ambush the lovers when they returned. However, under the altar she discovered the coffer that had held the potion and that still held the bone knife.

Almost without thinking, Benada took the knife and entered the Eye's chambers, stabbing her mother and using her psionic ability to inflict pain on her father until he died. Benada felt no remorse, for neither of them had truly been parents to her, but, as she turned to leave the chamber, the man who had been parent to her appeared in the door. Before she could stop herself, she felt the revulsion and shock foremost in Ekkim's mind, and with tears slithering down her pale cheeks, she gripped the bone knife and killed the only person she had ever loved.

The next morning the residents of Toldun awoke to find their island a prisoner of the Mists.

Current Sketch

Once each month, Benada descends to Toldun to seek out a victim to sate her hunger. Typically, she selects a lone adult male and uses her mental abilities to lure him to a secure location, where she kills him, butchers his body, and then transforms into her snake form and feeds on the fresh meat. Once her feeding is complete, she destroys any evidence of what has happened and disposes of the remains in the sea. She feels her hunger for human flesh much more often than once a month, but she is concerned that eating too many of Toldun's inhabitants too quickly would mean the loss of her food supply, especially if she weakens them enough that they can no longer fight off the sea wolves.

Benada has fed on yeti and sea wolves, but their meats did nothing to abate her hunger. Nonetheless, in her snake form, she occasionally will make forays into the areas inhabited by the yeti to hunt them, although once they are captured within her jaws, she typically lets them go, wounded and often poisoned, as she doesn't care to transform into human form to kill them. Most but not all of these yeti survive this ordeal, although generally with some debilitating effect on their sanity.

Should Vin'Ejal be visited by anyone from outside the domain, Benada will try to lure them to the shrine so that she may interrogate them to find out what lies beyond the Mists. She might enlist their aid in escaping her domain or she might merely select one to feed on once the visitors have left the shrine. Anyone entering the shrine who is not protected by some kind of mind-shielding device or effect may fall victim to Appissa's influence as well; if this happens, Benada may enlist the visitors' aid in defeating the snake goddess, if they can find a way to do so.

Combat

Benada prefers to fight in her human form, wielding a *short sword* +3 in combat. She wears a *ring of protection* +1 on her left hand and a *ring of mind shielding* on her right. The latter protected her from the power of Appissa when she first came to the shrine; as she is unaware that she no longer needs it for protection, she refuses to part with it while in the caverns of the shrine.

In her snake form, Benada she can spit poison at a target up to thirty feet away once every four rounds. On a successful attack roll, the poison hits its target and inflicts 2d10 points of acid damage and paralyzes the victim for 1d4 rounds. A successful save vs. poison halves the damage but the paralyzation effect is unaffected. Typically, Benada will spit at a threatening opponent and then flee into the snow if possible; she believes her snake form to be weaker than her human form and prefers not to engage in combat unless she has arms and legs.

Closing the Borders

Benada has discovered that she can cause hail to fall from the sky, but only over the sea. She can surround the island with a thick hail storm lasting for as long as she wills it. Anyone entering the storm takes 1d8 damage the first five feet into the storm, 2d8 damage the next five feet, and so on. Individuals with protection from water take 1d4 damage the first five feet into the storm, 2d4 the next five feet, and so on. Ships entering the storm are rendered unseaworthy after 2d4 rounds. Foolish individuals who might attempt to travel underwater to escape the domain will find themselves frozen in a block of ice if Benada has closed the borders.

Encounters

Most encounters outside of Toldun and the Shrine will be with either yeti, sea wolves, or, more rarely, polar bears. Some Toldun hunters have reported sighting killer whales in the sea as well. It may well be that there are creatures living on the mountain above the Shrine and the habitations of the yeti; these heights have not been explored.

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PLACES



MASK DOPPLEGANGER

A Deceitful Creature for Ravenloft

by Adam Windsor

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MASK DOPPLEGANGER

Climate/Terrain:	Any land
Frequency:	Very Rare
Organization:	Clan
Activity Cycle:	Any
Diet:	Carnivore
Intelligence:	Average to High (8-14)
Treasure:	B, C, R and T in lair; K and M individually
Alignment:	Lawful Evil
No. Appearing:	2-20 (2d10)
Armor Class:	7 (or 10 or by Armor: see below)
Movement:	12
Hit Dice:	3
THAC0:	17
No. of Attacks:	2 or 1
Damage/Attack:	d3/d3 or by weapon
Special Attacks:	See below
Special Defenses:	See below
Magic Resistance:	Nil
Size:	M (6' tall)
Morale:	Average to Elite (8-14)
XP Value:	975
Chief	1,400
Oratore	1,400

The natural appearance of a mask doppelganger is as an emaciated, greenish-grey humanoid, essentially hairless. It appears to have something reptilian—a snake or lizard—in its heritage, and has large, unblinking eyes. The creature is always covered in a slimy, mucous-like chemical that it exudes from tiny pores in its skin. The flesh is cool and rubbery to the touch, and the creature appears oddly boneless, though in fact it actually has a full skeleton of uncommonly flexible bones. The mouth of a mask doppelganger is wide and thin-lipped, too large for its face. It has dozens of small, sharp, barbed teeth, including a pair of snake like fangs that inject poison into

anyone bitten. Both ears and nostrils are no more than tiny holes in the creature's skin.

Mask doppelgangers are rarely encountered in their natural form, however (at least at first). They possess the ability to use the skins of humans as a shell, appearing to all intents to be a normal person, though they will lack the special abilities of a classed victim. Although the disguise looks close to perfect, mask doppelgangers have difficulty mimicking human speech, both from a lack of command of the language (they usually speak haltingly and carefully, like a novice student of a foreign tongue) and because their mouths are not properly shaped for human speech (their voices have an unnatural cadence and reverberate oddly). As a consequence, they avoid speaking as much as they can and often fake throat injuries or infections. Otherwise the nature of the creature is undetectable from casual inspection, though if the Mask Doppelganger is carefully scrutinized (for any reason) the viewer is entitled to a senses check, success indicating that (s)he notices some oddity about the creature, such as a flap of bloody skin, signs of decay or similar.

Mask doppelgangers exude a preservative liquid from their skin that minimizes decay of the disguise they are "wearing," allowing it to last with only minor signs of deterioration for as much as twelve months. Mask doppelgangers can use weapons and wear armor whilst in these shells (gaining AC normal for the armor type). However, due to the creature's true emaciated, rubbery build any armor it wears will slide off if it adopts its true form. Due to the constraints of needing to fit within a skin, mask doppelgangers are largely limited to human shells: most demihumans are too short or of too slim a build for their skins to be used.

Combat

If exposed as a mask doppelganger or if it so desires, the creature is able to shed its human shell in moments by exuding a chemical that reacts with the normal preservative it exudes. The result is that the human skin melts into pink, fleshy goo in the space of a few seconds.

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

This grisly transformation causes all spectators of less than 3 Hit Dice or levels to be automatically stunned for the first round of combat. Characters of 3 to 5 Hit Dice or Levels must save vs. paralyzation or be similarly stunned. If a witness has 6 or more Hit Dice or levels (s)he is unaffected by the transformation. Mask doppelgangers have a natural AC of 7 due to their rubbery skin and flexible bodies, but if wearing the skin of dead humans as a disguise they become AC 10 unless wearing armor. If using a human shell, the mask doppelganger fights with whatever weapons are at hand (it can thus sometimes be discovered if it forgets itself and uses a prohibited weapon for its shell's Class).

If fighting in its true form, the creature uses two claw attacks per round. These attacks do a mere 1-3 points of damage each, but if both hit the same opponent in one round, the mask doppelganger has grabbed hold of its victim and may also attempt to bite. This bite is deep and painful, inflicting d4+2 damage. More importantly it also allows the mask doppelganger to inject venom into its opponent. This venom affects the victim's muscle control. The bitten character must save vs. poison or (s)he will fall to the ground two rounds later, effectively paralyzed due to being unable to use any voluntary muscles (i.e. the bitten person still gets to act in the round of the bite and the round immediately after the bite). This paralysis lasts 5-15 (2d6+3) rounds. If the character saves then (s)he is still slowed (as per the spell) for 2-12 (2d6) rounds starting two rounds after the bite. Each new bite from a mask doppelganger requires a new saving throw from the victim.

Anyone bitten three rounds in succession must make a saving throw vs. death magic or the build up of venom has become too much for their involuntary muscles: in these cases the victim's heart will stop and they will die. Note that a character who has collapsed after being affected by the mask doppelganger's poison can still see, hear and otherwise sense their surroundings: this makes the grisly fate of those victims who are promptly skinned best left unconsidered.

Habitat/Society

Mask doppelganger clans are most commonly found on the fringes of human society: they are particularly fond of replacing the entire population of a small village, or taking over a noble's summer home. In such cases they usually act under the direction of their Chiefs, who are clever enough to place themselves in relatively inconspicuous roles (see Adventure Ideas below for an example).

Mask doppelgangers may also be found in the service of more powerful evil creatures, particularly those with great magical or supernatural power. In these cases they demand payment in the form of plentiful human meat and

many skins to wear, though they also accumulate gems or artwork, which they appear to value mainly for their beauty. If the group has an Oratore, they will also usually require scrolls as part of their payment.

Any group of mask doppelgangers is 30% likely to have 1-4 young in addition to their determined numbers. These young have only 1 Hit Die and inflict only 1 point of damage with their claws. They lack both the paralytic poison and chemical excretion abilities of the mature mask doppelganger and cannot wear a skin. As a consequence, they are kept hidden by the adults: often near to any prisoners the group may be holding for later consumption.

Ecology

Mask doppelgangers are carnivores. They will stoop to scavenging in particularly difficult times but prefer their meat as fresh as possible. They can draw sustenance from any sort of meat but prefer to consume that of intelligent creatures, often holding raucous debates about the merits of the meat of their various prisoners (usually in earshot of the prisoners). Due to their dietary preference, they have little significant interaction with the more general ecology of an area.

Chief

Mask doppelganger Chiefs have 4+1 Hit Dice. Chiefs always have a 12 Morale, as do any mask doppelgangers fighting alongside them (without a Chief these creatures have a Morale of only 8). Mask doppelgangers groups have one Chief per six normal mask doppelgangers (for example, 6-11 = 1 Chief, 12-17 = 2 Chiefs, 18-20 = 3 Chiefs).

Oratore

Mask doppelganger Oratores have 3 Hit Dice. Oratores have a 14 Morale, as do any mask doppelgangers fighting alongside them. It is 70% likely that a group of mask doppelgangers will have an Oratore. This chance increases to 100% if the group has two or more Chiefs. There will never be more than one Oratore in a group.

Oratores have the spell-casting ability of a 3rd-level priest and a 3rd-level wizard. They have access to the wizard schools of Alteration, Enchantment/ Charm, Illusion/ Phantasm and Invocation/ Evocation. They may use any spell from the priest spheres of All, Charm, Divination, Protection and Thought. They also have access to any scrolls the mask doppelganger group has accumulated.

Adventure Ideas

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

The player characters arrive in a small village at a crossroads (little more than three or four homes clustered around an inn). The locals are friendly, though they have odd accents. Each home has a small vegetable garden, though these appear anemic and ill-tended at best. Any of the villagers will quite readily explain to the heroes that although the village's position means that many people pass through, few stay due to the poor quality of the land in the area (thus explaining the poor state of the gardens). If asked why they stay, the local shrugs "This is where I live, and there are travelers enough to provide business to support us." If any hero thinks to ask, there are no children to be seen in the village, though given how small the community is, this is not entirely unlikely. In truth of course, all the "locals" are mask doppelgangers, preying on travelers who pass through.

Exactly how the mask doppelgangers approach the issue of capturing the heroes is up to the Dungeon Master, but they may well poison the food at the Inn with some sort of sleeping drug, or attempt to separate individual heroes with a suggestion of romantic dalliance.

This adventure can be especially effective if a new player character is to be introduced during the session: by having the player portray one of the mask doppelgangers (probably one masquerading as a guest at the Inn) prior to revealing his true character (who is probably being held prisoner for food) the Dungeon Master can allay the other heroes' suspicions about at least one person in the village and thus more fully bring them the horror of sudden betrayal by someone they trust.

The leaders of the mask doppelganger clan will tend to avoid prominent roles within the community, preferring to operate from the shadows: the boisterous Innkeeper's mousy wife might well be the Chief or Orator of the group, whilst the innkeeper himself is just a normal mask doppelganger. The timid old woman who leaves flowers on the grave of "her husband" and nervously crosses the street to avoid the rough-looking heroes or even particularly surly "locals" might also be one of the group's leaders, but the expensively dressed young man who smilingly ingratiates himself with the heroes is not likely to be.



THE ECOLOGY OF THE POLTERGEIST

As Transcribed from the Personal Journal of
Dr. Rudolph Van Richten

by Jon Winter
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As a doctor, I see many strange and horrible things. As a hunter of dark creatures I see many more. Yet few are more curious than the cases of the poltergeist or *esprit frappeur* which occasionally surface. I remember one investigation many years ago took me to the site of a most peculiar haunting...

It was the blackest hour of night when I arrived at the manor's massive iron gates. Clutching my cloak tightly around my neck, I heaved my weighty baggage from the carriage and thanked the driver. With the slightest of nods and a tug on the reins he was away, no doubt headed for a blazing hearth and warm bed. I tucked my purse into a pocket protectively—it had cost me dearly to persuade the man to ferry me at this late, or rather *early* hour. I would have waited until sunrise had the message not been so insistent.

Shaking droplets of thick rain from my hood, I pushed on the gates. Protesting, they slowly swung open. Unlocked—as the message had said. My feet crunched down the wide gravel path towards the manor house. From this distance the stone building watched me, windows as its eyes. The wind tugged at my cape and threatened my lantern, which flickered wildly.

Oaken doors loomed over the porch, and raindrops spattered heavily around me as I reached for the bell-pull. A distant ring echoed, and several shivering moments later the doors swung inwards. I glimpsed the dimly-lit hall beyond, hung with fine tapestries and gilt-edged portraits, then a dark form blocked my view.

“Greetings, Doctor.” The butler's voice was chilling, yet a welcome relief from the drumming rain. “The Mistress is expecting you.”

The tall man took my coat and lantern in one hand, and gracefully ascended the stairs, a damp trail from my

coat marking his passage. I followed with my battered leather briefcase, and was forced to hurry to keep pace.

The stairs were both numerous and plushly carpeted; I marveled at the opulence of the manor house. I had been told the Baroness Blackheath bemoaned her empty coffers to Count Strahd, the Lord of this land and collector of taxes. I had thought she lived alone, yet it seemed she dwelt in luxury.

As I and my well-dressed guide moved swiftly through room after room of finery, towards where I knew not, I pondered the reasons for my urgent summons. The message I received, scribed by the hand of a scholar, was most imploring that I should arrive this eve, no matter what the time. I was to bring with me my trade, the missive had said. I must admit, it was largely curiosity that aroused my attention.

Playful shadows chased around the corridor at the lantern's feeble glow. The butler stopped abruptly at a paneled door, and rapped sharply. No answer. He twisted the handle, pushed open the portal, and ushered me inside. I waited for him to follow, but the door was closed behind me. No doubt gone to hang up my coat, I thought, while I wait for the Baroness.

Mildly annoyed at the abruptness of the servant, I examined the room, in anticipation of a long wait. I was in a bedroom of some kind. Fine silks hung from a magnificent four-poster bed, and lavish paneling graced the walls. Candle flames danced in a golden chandelier, illuminating oils and watercolor paintings. Although I am no connoisseur, I recognized several as famous pieces. By all appearances, this was a lady's bed-chamber. It seemed most inappropriate for a guest to be left here. The door clicked quietly, but my attention was elsewhere. Absent-mindedly I set down my case.

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

Then I heard the sobbing. A muffled whimpering sound emerged from the covered bed. Clearing my throat, suddenly very self-conscious, I parted the drapes.

The light was dim indeed, and my eyes took some time to adjust. A woman cowered under several heavy, adorned blankets, shivering in her nightgown. Her face was pale and drawn, and her eyes wildly staring. As I reached towards her slowly, she shrieked a barely-recognizable “Go away!” and hid under the blanket.

I was surprised, to say the least. Summoning my most doctoral voice, I demanded she show her face. The blankets were lowered furtively, and her fearful eyes briefly met mine. She looked tired and vulnerable—and then broke down into my arms. Thoroughly perplexed, I soothed her as best I could and gradually, coaxed her story out.

It seemed that she wrote to me in desperation. Baroness Blackheath told me she was a poverty-stricken woman. The mansion was little more than a collapsing ruin of a once-stately home, and she had no servants or maids at all. I obviously doubted her sanity, for her mansion was one of the finest I had ever seen, and she clearly did possess at least a butler. Still, I listened on, more to humor her than anything, while I pondered my next move.

However, in between fits of sobbing and paranoid glances around the room, the tale gradually began to make sense. Each and every month, on the thirteenth day, a horrible occurrence wrought itself upon the estate. What was old and rusty became new and fine. Her tumbledown castle was transformed into a magnificent chateau, and servants appeared throughout the house. To onlookers, it appeared that the Baroness was a wealthy woman indeed. But this was not so.

Everything fine which I could see was an illusion; a phantasmal image which my mind believed. She alone could see its falsehood, as hollow images and translucent shapes. The phantasms taunted are threatened her, ultimately scaring away any who would try to help. Such as myself.¹

¹ This phenomenon is called a ‘phantom shift.’ In my experience, these are relatively rare occurrences, and are connected only to sites of great evil, selfishness or suffering. In all cases I have observed, the phantom shift is like a play, with the spirits of the dead as actors who faithfully perform the events which led to their death, unless they are disturbed by mortals. Living beings can interact with the phantasmal scene, and the poltergeists summoned by it also react to their actions. I believe it to be similar to a waking dream, with a background based in history.

I have heard some tales that the simplest way to end the illusion is to attack the poltergeists. This is false, and those who attempt this should be warned the result may be to anger the gathered spirits. Likewise, those who say the illusion is harmless to mortal observers are similarly misled; the phantom

Had I not met magic of this ilk before I doubtless would have laughed at her story, but having known wizards of no small power I knew that this effect was possible, if not easy, to reproduce.²

“But why would such a thing happen?” I asked.

“A foul curse,” was her bitter reply. I was shocked.

Apparently, many years ago, the Baroness was a rich and popular woman. With the untimely death of her father, she inherited a huge and valuable estate, complete with servants and animals. Yet, unlike her father, the young Baroness was not generous with her money. She hoarded it and coveted more and more. Such was her greed that often the cellars were empty of food and the servants went hungry. The buildings fell into disrepair, and folk shunned the miserly spinster.

One evening, in the midst of a fearsome storm, came a knock upon the doors. A gypsy girl, one of the Vistani, sought shelter and food for the night. Her horse had bolted and the girl herself barely escaped when wolves attacked. Suspicious, due to the reputation of gypsies as thieves and too mean to give any money to the girl, the Baroness threw her from the mansion’s steps. The girl ran away into the night, sobbing. Not long after, screaming was heard from the woods, followed by the howling of wolves. As the moon rose above the mansion, the Baroness did not feel any guilt.

That night, she had the most terrible dream. She was the girl, being chased through the forest by a howling

shift is a highly dangerous occurrence, not least because so many poltergeist participants can be involved.

While attacking a phantom shift may shatter the illusion in some lands, in the land of Mists no such easy respite can be gained. As Van Richten observes, the most likely effect will be to anger the spirits involved in the shift.

² I have seen an illusionist acquaintance of mine duplicate a similar effect to the one mentioned in the tale above. He called the phantasm ‘hallucinatory terrain,’ and I must admit I was thoroughly convinced by its veracity. My mind was so fooled that I found myself able to sit on chairs which were merely figments of my imagination. While victims of a phantom shift may be able to disbelieve the event, I myself have never found the courage to do so. Besides, the poltergeists drawn by the shift are most certainly real.

Should a character experience a phantom shift and attempt to disbelieve it, a saving throw versus spells may be made. Penalties to the save may be imposed by the Dungeon Master according to the strength of the phenomenon. Success indicates the character has seen through the illusion and is no longer affected by it. However, poltergeists themselves cannot be disbelieved, since they are real. In a combat situation, the poltergeists being disbelieved automatically gain initiative that round and gain one free attack each.

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

pack of wolves. The trees clawed at her skin, the roots tripped her. The very land seemed to be against her. Suddenly she realized she was surrounded. As the wolves closed around her, she could see the gypsy girl sitting in a tree, safe above her. The woman cried out for help, but the girl laughed callously.

“As you did to me, shall be done unto yourself. You hoard your riches like a miser. Coin by coin, your gold shall go, your wealth slip from your grasp. But you will constantly be reminded of it and your selfishness.” The curse had been invoked.³

Waking from her dream, the woman was afraid. Fearing the worst, she sent her servants to hunt for the girl, to bring her back and remove the curse. The wolves must have feasted well that night, for none returned . . .

While the old woman rambled on, I became aware of baying from outside the window. Parting the curtains, I spied dark creatures slinking between bushes and prowling the driveway. Then I saw the girl. She was gaunt and ghostly, dressed in a thin white fabric like mist. She cowered on the mansion’s doorstep. Feeling this was the moment to act, I returned to the woman’s bed and roused her from her waking nightmare.

“Come with me to the door,” I urged, tugging at her limp, cold hand.

“Leave me here, I care no more. Let me die,” she replied, her voice heavy with years.

I pulled her from her bed and towards the door. It was locked! The Baroness shrugged hopelessly—this had happened before. I considered force, but being only small and the door particularly sturdy, I pushed that option aside. Reaching into my briefcase, I withdrew a

metal pick. A brief probe with the implement soon bypassed the lock and I pulled the heavy door inwards.⁴

We left the dark room, tentatively at first, then more quickly along the corridor. Through the small eyelet windows I could still see the girl, with night-grey wolves circling ever closer.

Down the stairs we flew, the Baroness’ nightgown catching upon the banisters. The butler leered wickedly as he approached us up the staircase, seemingly gliding over the steps. The old lady stifled a shriek, and I saw to my horror the man held a gleaming knife.⁵

Backtracking immediately, we ran back up towards the landing. The dark-clad butler slid silently after us. Along another corridor, into a finely-furnished billiard room. I secured the door behind us, turning the key in the lock and jamming a chair under the handle.

In all my journeys as a doctor and lorist of the Undead, I have never since made such an error. In my haste, I forgot that spirits were not hindered by physical objects. When the knife hurtled right through the solid door, I remembered. A painfully near miss stapled my shirt to the wall, and a sickening sensation of cold swept through my bones as the butler passed through the door.⁶

³ As with any curse in this land, the cause must be justified. Curses usually result in an affliction of some kind upon a person — one such as this where an area is affected is more rare. This is the only case of a phantom shift induced by a curse I have encountered, though doubtless more exist. The more usual initiator for these phenomena are events of great emotion, and shifts tend to occur spontaneously.

Not to be confused with the phantom shift are creatures called ‘phantoms.’ They have similar origins, and are residues from particularly violent or senseless deaths. They, however, cannot attack physically. The danger they present is from the terror they can inspire in witnesses. They do not act freely; their actions are dictated by the event leading to their death. To continue the play analogy, phantoms are actors who cannot change their scripts. I believe a phantom shift is merely a larger-scale phantom. Much of what I have learned about the phantom shift can be applied to the phantom itself; indeed, the shift may be a collection of many phantoms to which poltergeists are drawn and somehow anchored to a site.

For example, in the tale above, I would classify the girl as an individual phantom, the ghostly staff of the Baroness as poltergeists, and the altered mansion as a phantom shift.

⁴ A phantom shift is not entirely centered in the mind of the observers, however. Particularly powerful shifts also affect reality. In the tale above, the Baroness’ door was actually locked; the poltergeist butler had mustered enough psychic energy to manipulate the key in the lock. Ghost hunters beware! I have encountered a poltergeist which set real fires with a ghostly candle, and another which tipped deadly poison into the ale kegs of a particularly cruel innkeeper.

Poltergeists frequently possess psychokinetic wild talent psionic powers. The Dungeon Master should determine which, if any, a given poltergeist should possess. Appropriate powers from the Complete Psionics Handbook include Project Force, Telekinesis, Animate Shadow, Animate Object, Ballistic Attack, Control Flames, and Control Wind. Other may also be encountered. An anchored poltergeist may (rarely) possess more than one of these powers, wandering spirits will not have more than one, if any at all.

⁵ Poltergeists are capable of carrying small material objects like daggers or swords, and the most powerful are as strong as any human. Thus, they can move heavy furniture, push over bookcases, throw knives or rap on windows.

⁶ Being attacked by a poltergeist is a most terrifying and horrible experience. While the objects they throw never actually seem to hit their victims, they often come perilously close, and that is enough to scare one witless. I have seen many more dangerous ghosts, but when I encountered those in the tale above an unnatural fear overwhelmed me. I can only assume it was connected with the strong psychic aura of the manor. While poltergeists are perilous to any living mortal, they are especially hateful to any being somehow connected with their

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

His face was contorted into a mask of hatred and anger as he pointed a skeletal finger at the Baroness. To this day, I sometimes awake from sleep with his cry in my ears “It was your fault! Your selfishness drove us to our graves.”⁷

As the spirit advanced, others followed him through the door and walls; maids, servants, the stable boy. All were dressed as the night they had died. Many bore

deaths. They often seem to attack such beings on sight, unless they can think of a better way to terrify them.

Whether poltergeists desire to inspire fear out of sheer malice, or whether they have some darker desire, I know not. Possibly the infusion of fear in others pacifies the restless spirits, or perhaps they feed off terror in mortal beings. Whatever the explanation, the fear I felt in the mansion was no less than when I faced several more deadly spirits in my research for my *Guide to Ghosts*.

Due to their insubstantial nature, poltergeists cannot be harmed by most normal means. Silvered or magically enchanted weapons are required to affect them, although I have heard tales of spirits injured by objects they were close to in life. Holy water is relatively useless against them; while these spirits cannot cross a line of blessed water, it does not harm them if splashed onto them. Holy symbols can be used by a priest to turn these creatures; however, they are notoriously difficult to banish in this manner.

Each successful attack (i.e. terrifying near miss) by a poltergeist requires a fear check (or a saving throw vs. paralyzation if the Ravenloft fear and horror rules are not being used). Failure has the usual fear effects of dropping held objects and fight in blind terror. A particularly horrible phantom shift will be ample cause for a horror check as well. Poltergeists attacking someone they particularly hate gain a +2 on attack rolls.

Anchored poltergeists are turned as ghouls, but wandering spirits are easier to dispel; they are affected as if they were skeletons. Phantom shifts are not affected by either holy water or holy symbols.

⁷ Wandering spirits are more rare, and weaker than anchored spirits. The former are free to roam where they wish, whereas the latter are confined to a small radius about the site of their death, not more than a few hundred feet across. An ancient legend claims that to be rid of a wandering poltergeist for good he must be led to a crossroads and destroyed there, else it will reform at the next anniversary of its death. I am not sure if this is true.

Why some spirits are anchored while others are not is hard to tell. I believe the explanation may depend upon what is done with the poltergeist’s body after the spirit departs it. If the corpse remains in the same place from the time of death until the poltergeist first manifests itself, the spirit will become anchored to its place of death. If the body is moved before the poltergeist can manifest, then the spirit will wander eternally until it can once again be reunited with its body. This assumes the poltergeist exists to defend its remains; there is also the distinct possibility it has returned to torment its killer.

grievous wounds, fang marks, severed arms, or were stained crimson with their own blood.⁸

Paralyzed with horror, I could do naught but watch. The Baroness must have regained some of her mind however, for she roughly pulled me towards a small door I had not previously noticed. My shirt tore as I pulled free from the dagger. As I stumbled after her, the cries of the spirits became more plaintive. They called for her blood, for vengeance and sacrifice. As one, they drifted across the room, through the green baize table and towards us.

The Baroness slammed the small door shut, and we scuttled like mice down the servant’s stairs. The kitchen stood cold and eerily empty, but I was relieved by its loneliness. Above us, the moans and wails grew louder. Gritting my chattering teeth, I led the way towards the main porch. Huge black doors loomed once more in the entrance hall. Behind us, I knew the Dead marched down the stairs, but I did not want to turn and see them.

Mustering all my strength, I heaved on the doors. My heart beat in my mouth as the Baroness’ breathing became more desperate. With a protesting creak, the doors yielded inwards. Despite myself, I gasped as I saw the young girl on the doorstep. Her spectral eyes were filled with anguish, but held no malice or judgment. Bonnet in hand, the girl knelt and spoke in a quavering voice.

“Please, Miss. My horse has run away and I’m all alone in the woods. Will you help me?”

I bit my lip and wondered what callous person could turn away such an innocent face. A tear rolled down her girl’s pale cheek. Behind her, the wolves snarled and growled, hungry for her ghostly flesh. I started, for these were no apparitions, but real flesh-and-blood monsters. Behind us, the spectral horde grew closer. I could feel their presence washing over me in chill waves.⁹

⁸ Poltergeists are often invisible, and merely allow the effects of their haunting to be observed by mortals. In my experience, however, they do seem to be able to become visible at will for maximum terrifying effect, usually appearing as they did at the time of their death. Some magical spells revealing invisibility are able to locate their incorporeal forms.

Invisible phantoms can be seen with *detect undead*, *detect evil*, *detect invisible* or *true seeing* spells. Psionicists using the powers of Aura Sight, Spirit Sense and Sensitivity to Psychic Impressions are also able to see poltergeists. Mortals with the latter power are especially prone to fear caused by phantom shifts, and the poltergeists connected with these events will seek to terrify them above all others.

⁹ One major peril not frequently connected with phantom shifts is the danger that some of the scene being observed is actually real. At the Baroness’ manor, the wolves who stalked the phantom girl were very much real. I consider this unusual, though not inexplicable. Wolves in Barovia are known for their

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

The Baroness seemed to know what to do. Fighting back her fear, she knelt in front of the small girl. She embraced the girl, whispering, “Of course I’ll help you, my sweet thing. Come inside and we’ll get you warm.”¹⁰

A hand clawed at my neck, drawing blood in a stinging line. I cried out, turning about quickly, and shielding my face with a hand. Thinking we had at last been caught, I was shocked as the ghostly staff grew faint and dissipated into the brooding air. As I looked about the hall, the tapestries became frayed and faded, the marble floor chipped, and the walls cracked and crumbling. The Baroness was clothed in little more than rags as she knelt on the steps and wept. The girl too had vanished, leaving behind only a battered rag-doll.¹¹

evil natures, and perhaps they gained some satisfaction from watching the shift unfold. Perhaps they were the very wolves responsible for the death of the servants, and they had come back for another meal. Or perhaps they chased the phantom girl to the manor thinking she was also real. I cannot know their true motives, but the fact remains creatures of darkness and evil are frequently drawn to phantom shifts.

¹⁰ This selfless act on behalf of the Baroness (who I know at that point was at least as terrified as myself) could have been the trigger for the end of the phantom shift. I believe that by repenting and welcoming the little gypsy girl into her house, the Baroness caused the curse to end. This is why the shift collapsed. As many of these phenomenon are not caused by curses, I doubt this tactic will yield the desired result in all cases.

¹¹ One very dangerous falsehood often bandied about concerning poltergeists is their inability to cause physical harm. This is simply not true! A powerful poltergeist can manifest itself sufficiently to harm mortals. Their touch chills the flesh, causing painful cuts and scars to appear. Note that wandering spirits are seldom capable of causing physical harm; it tends to be the more powerful anchored poltergeists which have this ability.

The most fearsome account I have heard of a poltergeist haunting related to a half-mad painter whose wife had died under mysterious circumstances. Besotted by her even in death, he kept the corpse in his attic, where he would talk to her for hours. Apparently, paranormal events began to occur around the house; plates flew through the air and smashed by themselves, pictures would fall from their wall-hangings, and visitors would tell of awful smells and an ominous presence.

Finally, the wife’s restless spirit manifested itself during one of the poor man’s attic sojourns, accusing her devoted husband of her murder. Although she was unable to physically harm him (being only a weak spirit), the painter was literally frightened to death. The unfortunate man was found dead some days later, an expression of terror etched into his face.

My research leads me to believe this story is true. While the restless wife was merely a poltergeist, the artist was so deeply involved that his imagination seized control of his body.

This possibility leads me to a further conclusion. The creature known to many as a ‘haunt’ seems to possess many

The doors creaked alarmingly on their old hinges, and ancient paint flaked off them. Outside, the grounds were overgrown and unkempt. As the phantasm was gradually dispelled, I could feel the atmosphere of the place draining away. No longer was the coldness unearthly, it was simply the chill of the night. Thin strands of mist tugged at my clothes, and the dark shapes on the drive were already loping off in search of easier prey.¹²

A wave of pity consumed me. Kneeling beside me, crying like a child was a once-rich woman, who had lost everything to her greed. Although she had nothing, she no longer lived with guilt. Perhaps she could begin afresh, and that was payment enough for me. I gave the old lady enough gold for food and clothing, and assured myself she would be safe until morning. Then I began the long journey back home . . . ☠

traits similar to those of both anchored and wandering poltergeists, along with the added danger of possession. Could the haunt be a similar manifestation, only one with more power? I have not encountered such a creature at the site of a phantom shift before, but surely the possibility exists. And if a haunt can be drawn to a shift, then what of more powerful spectres? The idea is chilling, but I am sure it is quite plausible.

A powerful poltergeist is able to cause 1d4 points of damage when it touches a mortal. This requires a conscious effort by the poltergeist, and it can only summon the strength to do so once per round. An attack roll with a THACO of 20 is required.

A poltergeist closely bonded with a mortal can indeed invade his mind. Unless the victim succeeds in a saving throw versus spell, he is struck by the equivalent of a *phantasmal killer*.

¹² When a phantom shift ends, for whatever reason, the illusion it creates simply fades away harmlessly. Unless it has been permanently dispelled, it will occur again at the next anniversary of its creation. Anniversaries can be every year, once a month, every full moon, or rarely they repeat themselves endlessly; as soon as the shift ends, it begins all over again.

THE FOUL RAT

A Loathsome Creature for Ravenloft

by Adam Windsor

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FOUL RAT

	Adult	Young
Climate/Terrain:	Any	
Frequency:	Rare	Very Rare
Organization:	Pack; see below	
Activity Cycle:	Night	
Diet:	Scavenger / Carnivore	
Intelligence:	Low (5-7)	(Semi (2-4)
Treasure Type:	C(x2) in lair	
Alignment:	Neutral Evil	
No. Appearing:	1-4 (1d4)	see below
Armor Class:	7	
Movement:	12 (Sw 5)	
Hit Dice:	2	1-4 hp
THAC0:	19	20
No. of Attacks:	1	
Damage/Attack:	1d4	1d3
Special Attacks:	see below	
Special Defenses:	see below	
Magic Resistance:	Nil	
Size:	S (2'-3' long plus tail)	
Morale:	Unsteady (7); increases to Steady (11) if young are present	
XP Value:	270	

Foul rats (also called Dire or Night Rats) are the vilest and most easily identifiable of the verminous rodents. Larger even than the largest giant rat, with powerful haunches and jaws, the foul rat is covered in bristled, jet-black fur that takes on a leprous green sheen in torch light. The creature's eyes glow dull red and specimens have displayed considerable cunning and frightening intelligence in coordinating the attacks of lesser rodents, which they seem able to control.

Combat

The foul rat is a cunning and dangerous opponent, but also a somewhat cowardly one. They lurk just out of combat, directing the attacks of the lesser Rats they have gathered to serve them. Only if an enemy specifically

seeks to engage them do they fight, proving vicious and quite deadly if forced to combat.

The foul rat attacks by biting with its yellowed rodent incisors. Though quite painful, the flesh wounds caused by these teeth are not the greatest danger the creature's bite represents. Foul rats carry the same debilitating diseases as the giant rat, and any opponent bitten by the creature must make a save vs. poison or develop a serious disease over the two or three days following the bite. A separate save is required for every bite received (and the victim may thus contract several illnesses from these diseased creatures).

One documented disease caused by foul rat bites is a feverish, hallucinatory semi-coma. A good dose of the appropriate antidote (about 20 pulpy, gold-colored berries from a plant known as Callum's Gift) will cure this in about eight hours. A smaller dose will lessen the fever and allow the character to operate "normally" for eight hours, though infrequent hallucinations will continue. As an interesting side effect, this state also renders the character partially able to perceive invisible creatures (only -1 penalty to hit) . . . unfortunately, companions of the character tend to treat this perception as more hallucinations, until strong evidence mounts to the contrary.

This disease is fatal after 72 hours if not *Cured* by spell or the berries before this time.

The foul rat's thick, bristly fur and natural agility make it very difficult to lay meaningful blows on the creature. Unless the weapon used has been *blessed* by a priest of good alignment (in which case it has full effect), all blows striking the creature inflict minimum damage. Thus a +2 Long sword in the hands of a specialized fighter with 17 Strength would always inflict 6 points of damage (minimum damage roll of 1, plus bonuses for magic, specialization and Strength).

Though not especially harmed by it, foul rats fear fire and bright lights. If not protected by at least 10 lesser rodents, foul rats must make a Morale check whenever in the area of effect of any spell or mundane attack that incorporates either of these two effects (Dungeon Master's discretion). A failed morale check indicates that

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

the foul rat retreats somewhere it believes the fire or light using attacker cannot follow.

Habitat/Society

As stated previously, foul rats draw lesser rodents to serve them. One adult foul rat attracts 4-40 normal rats and 2-12 giant rats as guards and servants. For each additional adult foul rat a further 2-20 normal and 1-6 giant rats are gathered.

If there are two or more adult foul rats, there is a 50% chance that they will have 1-2 young as part of their pack. Statistics for the young are shown in parentheses and italics above. In addition to having a slightly less powerful bite attack, young foul rats are somewhat less diseased than adults. As a consequence, victims get a +2 bonus to their save vs. poison to avoid contracting a disease from the bite of a young foul rat. Young foul rats enjoy the same immunity to normal weapons as adult foul rats and exhibit a similar, though reduced fear of fire and bright light (Morale is Steady (11)). Note that adult foul rats are less likely to be panicked by fire or bright light if young are present and thus also use this improved Morale score in those cases.

The foul rats are unmistakably in charge of the lesser rodents that gather to them and use their servitors to gather food and valuables, which the creatures value for their bright appearance. Although they will defend their lair and treasure with cunning and a fair degree of tenacity, the foul rats' fear of fire and light and instinctive drive for self-preservation are stronger. They die in the defense of their treasure only if trapped without an escape route.

Ecology

Foul rat packs occupy the same ecological niche as normal Rat packs but exhibit a more aggressive and organized pattern of behavior.

Adventure Ideas

Foul rats make formidable foes for low-level adventurers, capable of leading their verminous brethren in simple tactics and traps. Adventurers hired to clear an ancient mansion of an infestation of rats may find more than they bargained for if foul rats are present. Even high-level adventurers can be threatened by these foes if they have little magical weaponry to protect themselves with: Prisoners attempting to escape through ancient tunnels beneath their cells might find themselves harried and chased by red-eyed rats that seem immune to the stones and clubs the escapees are armed with.



THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

DOOM LOCUSTS

A Prophetic Plague for Ravenloft

by Christopher Dale Nichols
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Author's Note: The doom locusts are derived from *Apocalypse* by Nancy Springer and from the Revelation of St. John of Patmos. Generally, the doom locusts are a plot device to herald a major event in a campaign.

follows is not caused by the doom locusts, but by an outside source, be it famine, war, or other form of destruction. The doom locusts are not the cause of doom, but rather, the symptom.

DOOM LOCUSTS

Climate/Terrain:	Any
Frequency:	Unique
Organization:	Swarm
Activity Cycle:	Any
Diet:	Omnivorous
Intelligence:	Very (11)
Treasure:	Nil
Alignment:	Neutral
No. Appearing:	1d10 x 200
Armor Class:	4
Movement:	6 (Fl 18)
Hit Dice:	1
THAC0:	16
No. of Attacks:	2
Damage/Attack:	1d4+2 / 1d2
Special Attacks:	Swarm attack
Special Defenses:	Blind, Charm
Magic Resistance:	90% (25% against fire magic)
Size:	T (approx. 1')
Morale:	Champion (15)
XP Value:	Variable

Doom locusts, also called hungerbabies, are harbingers of doom and destruction that appear throughout the lands of Ravenloft. They have the form of large locusts with the features of small children and wings of stained glass. Their heads are those of infants with compound eyes and powerful mandibles. They have six legs, two of which are the withered arms of young children, and the remainder being thorned, insectile legs. Individually, the call of a doom locusts sounds very much like the weeping of children, but collectively, these cries unite as a great voice chanting "Doom, doom." These creatures descend in great swarms upon places that are doomed. The destruction that

Combat

Doom locusts always travel in swarms, and never attack singly (typically 5-10 locusts at a time). Rather, they attack in groups, literally covering a person and biting them to death. Additionally, when doom locusts are close enough to a person to bite, they inflict an additional 1d2 points of damage by clawing and scratching their victims. Twice a day, the entire swarm may descend upon and attack a single creature. Surrounded by a screaming whirlwind of locust-things, the focus of the attack must make a saving throw vs. wands or be stripped to the bone by the ravenous host. Should the roll succeed, the target breaks free of the swarm suffering 4d6+2 damage from the feeding swarm. Also note that because the doom locusts can bite through metal and stone, they treat all Armor Classes are two levels lower than normal.

The wings of doom locusts are highly reflective, resembling sections of stained glass. In bright conditions, lights shining off their wings has a 25% chance to blind a random opponent every other round. In addition to this form of defense, the hungerbabies have a more unusual defense—a highly specialized charm ability. Should any female attempt to harm a doom locust, she is affected as by a *charm* spell. Those affected will believe that the doom locust has the face of her child, regardless of whether she actually has any children. There after, she will refuse to allow harm to come to the hungerbabies.

Doom locusts are vulnerable to magical fire. In addition, individual doom locusts can be turned as though they were mummies. However, the swarm can not be driven away unless the doom they presage is averted. If the coming doom is not averted by midnight of the night the last doom locust is destroyed, the entire swarm will resurrect and continue to plague the region.

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

Habitat/Society

The doom locusts are harbingers of doom that plague the lands of Ravenloft. It is believed that a single swarm exists as no records of simultaneous swarms exist. The doom locusts descend upon a place approximately one week prior to the doom that is to befall. Once there, they settle in the outskirts of the region and for a single day do nothing but cry their mournful song. As the last doom locust stills its voice, the graves of children open throughout the area, releasing a new host of doom locusts. Then, the doubled host of locust-things proceed to feast upon the doomed site, devouring plants, dirt, animals, wood, stone, even metal and people. Oddly, the damage is rarely as bad as that of a natural locust plague. The night prior to the devastation, the locusts fly into the darkness. With the new day, the area is destroyed but the prophesied doom.

Tales of the doom locusts are found throughout Ravenloft, often in religious texts. Reports of hordes of giant locusts who carried off children flourished prior to the Grand Conjunction. Similar accounts cropped up in Darkon immediately before the Grim Harvest. G'Henna is known to be frequently visited by the doom locusts as are the Burning Peaks.

Ecology

The doom locusts are unnatural creatures, giving nothing to the land, bringing destruction in their wake. When doom locusts are slain, they burst into flame and melt into puddles of black and toxic sludge. Many scholars claim that doom locusts are a unique type of undead.

Gothic Earth

In Gothic Earth, doom locusts are mentioned in certain texts. With sufficient research, documents could be found linking their presence to wars, plagues, and other great tragedies. For instance, a diary of a soldier at Shiloh during the American Civil War might mention them, as might a manuscript concerning the Black Death. They are almost certainly agents of the Red Death.



VAN RICHTEN'S NOTES ON THE RAVENKIN

As Discovered in the Van Richten Library

by Lincoln "swoon" O'Brien
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FOREWORD

You all know me, Doctor Rudolph van Richten. You all know my sad tale, and how I came to leave my simple life as a herbalist and walk the dark path that I am now on. To save you the time and me the heartache, I will not go into my story again.

Together we have fought evil in all its forms in this forsaken land. Many of our brave comrades in this struggle have succumbed along the way. Most died battling the forces of evil, defending the few flickering lights of goodness and purity left in this realm. Some, however, have turned to evil and embraced it, and in turn, have become my sworn enemy.

Most of you, I am sure, are familiar with my written work describing the foul creatures against whom we struggle, and how best to stop them. I write these guides not only to assist others in their fight against the darkness, but also as a record of my life.

This volume, however, is unlike my previous work as it details one of the few forces of good within the Land of the Mists. Whilst I was pondering the topic for my next Guide, I came to the realization that, in order to assist my comrades in their endeavors, not only should I be writing of the evils in this land—but of the tireless forces of good, as well.

Many of my previous works have earned me the hatred of a number of foul creatures; I have been hunted by packs of lycanthropes because, in my *Guide to Werebeasts*, they felt I had exposed far too many of their weaknesses. The same applies for more than a few undead horrors such as ghosts, vampires and lichens. For that reason, this work has been delivered secretly only to you, the comrades whom I have fought with and whom I

know I can trust. Of equal importance, is the fact that the secret forces of good detailed in this book, must be kept that way—secret.

The Ravenkin

I first met a member of this strange, ancient race after one of the most daring escapades of my life. I had penetrated Castle Ravenloft, home of the evil Count Strahd von Zarovich, lord of Barovia, to its core. I spent most of the day in the Count's inner sanctum, and it was here that I found the vile beast's personal journal. I read most of this book and learned the Count's dark history.

Immediately after the *I, Strahd* novel.

As I fled the castle it was already growing dark. I cursed my oversight in staying at the castle far longer than I had intended. By the time I was halfway down the winding road that leads to the village of Barovia the darkness was thick, and the mists had risen from the damp ground. The full moon was just beginning to rise when I heard the first howls. Quickening my pace toward the distant lights of the village, I pressed on through the darkness.

Suddenly, in the moonlight, on my right I saw a form—dark fur and blood red glowing eyes. The beast leapt and before I could react had collided with me bodily and sent us both sprawling into the bushes on the side of the road. The wolf creature was on me in a flash fixing its huge, slobbering jaws into my shoulder. I screamed in pain as its curved claws raked my belly and chest. I felt the hot flow of my own blood.

Then, just as I began to lose consciousness, I felt a thump, and heard a squawk, like that of some giant bird. The wolf creature whimpered and withdrew its teeth.

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

Another squawk and the wolf beast was gone—running through the underbrush. Weakly, I looked up and saw what looked like a huge black raven standing over me. Thinking my time had finally come, I closed my eyes and waited to see my beloved wife and son.

I woke some time later on a soft litter of leaves. My wounds had been tended and were bandaged and covered in a sweet smelling herbal poultice. I surveyed my surroundings and found that I was inside a massive hollowed out tree. Only then did I notice that watching me were around a dozen of the giant raven creatures.

One of the creatures stepped forward and said in perfectly understandable common, “I am Pasheeka Sixtysummers, and we know who you are, Doctor Van Richten.”

I stayed with the Pasheeka’s Ravenkin family for more than a month, and as my wounds healed I learned a great deal about the Ravenkin—whose existence, up until this point, I had been totally unaware of.

Description

Ravenkin look much like huge versions of the common raven with a wingspan averaging around ten feet in width. When standing upright they are around four feet tall. Ravenkin are totally covered in shiny jet black feathers and have long, straight beaks. When they wish to set themselves apart from normal ravens they will often wear bright, sparkling jewelry.

Ravenkin are highly intelligent and speak their own language which consists of a series of shrieks and squawks typical of birds. However nearly all Ravenkin are fluent in the common tongue of Barovia, as well as many other native languages. Generally the last names of Ravenkin will indicate their age, e.g. Pyoor Twohundredsummers. The older a Ravenkin is the more respect he/she commands.

All Ravenkin are magical by nature and many can be powerful wizards, druids or clerics. They are able to command normal ravens and frequently use these as scouts and guardians. They are a long lived race and it is not unheard of for a Ravenkin elder to be more than two hundred years old.

The History of the Ravenkin

Eventually, I was able to speak with Pyoor Twohundredsummers, (see: *The Keepers of the Black Feather*, below) the oldest living Ravenkin and it was from him that I learned the history of this mysterious race. Legend has it that centuries ago the Ravenkin lived peacefully in a vast forest on some long forgotten world.

The realm in which they lived was called Barovia. This land was ruled by the von Zarovich family. (I have surmised that when Strahd von Zarovich committed his

evil acts his castle and the surrounding lands were transplanted from that world into the Land of the Mists.) During this time an exceptionally powerful and ancient Ravenkin leader, Binaaka Twohundredand-fiftywinters, had a premonition of the evil that Strahd would commit, and the curse that would befall him and his whole domain.

Binaaka told the rest of his family of this dream and together they decided on a course of action. The Ravenkin are not militaristic in any fashion, however, they are extremely intelligent and it was decided to assassinate Strahd von Zarovich before he could condemn the entire land! Though this was obviously an evil act, the reasoning was that it was the lesser of two evil acts, and I believe that had I been in their place, I would have made the same choice.

Binaaka retreated into his private aviary and did not emerge once for three weeks. When he did finally come out he explained to the other Ravenkin that he had been in a mystical trance for the three weeks, and that during this trance he was shown how he could destroy Strahd. He told his family that one of Strahd’s own lieutenants, a man named Leo Dilisnya, was secretly an evil Ba’al Verzi assassin.

This Dilisnya was waiting for an opportunity to murder Strahd and take his place as ruler. Binaaka’s vision also showed him that there was only one person who knew Leo Dilisnya’s secret identity. This man’s name was Wilhelm and he was another of Strahd’s trusted aides. Wilhelm, however, was loyal to Strahd, and planned to expose Dilisnya. Binaaka stated that Wilhelm would have to be removed to allow Dilisnya to assassinate Strahd.

A Ravenkin named Shareek Thirtysprings was chosen to murder Wilhelm, the only way the man could be permanently removed. Two nights before Strahd’s killing spree which bought his realm into the Land of the Mists, Shareek flew to Castle Ravenloft. He used a scrying spell and found the Wilhelm on sentry duty. Steeling himself, Shareek swooped down on Wilhelm in the darkness, grasped the man in his talons and flung him from the walls of the great castle. Thus, Shareek with the blessing of his entire family, had committed the first willful murder in Ravenkin history.

Two nights later, as Leo Dilisnya’s plans failed, and the Ravenkin’s plans failed as well, the mists rose and transported the entire domain to the Land of the Mists.

Binaaka again sought answers in a meditative trance. To his horror he discovered that, with the murder of Wilhelm—a good, loyal man—he had condemned the Ravenkin to live eternally in the Land of the Mist, living in the shadows, struggling against the darkness.

Ecology

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

Ravenkin live in a highly organized, family oriented society. The oldest member of the family unit being the leader and decision maker. A typical family will consist of ten to fifteen individuals, and in a usual community there would be around ten families. A family will live in a specially prepared hollowed out tree, mostly in the center of thick, relatively deserted forest. Using their druidic and clerical magicks, the Ravenkin are able to keep these trees from dying, indeed the trees will flourish and be indistinguishable from surrounding trees.

Omnivores by nature, Ravenkin usually forage for berries and edible plants, but enjoy the taste of slightly rotted meat and occasionally bring down forest deer or the like.

Ravenkin have been living in the Land of the Mists for almost two centuries and as such have developed a number of abilities which mimic those of human mages, druids and priests to protect themselves and their homes.

All to a maximum of 6th level. Ravenkin have no need for spellbooks or for praying to their gods to receive spells. They must simply meditate for the equivalent number of hours as the same level mage/priest/druid to receive their spells.

While good-hearted creatures, Ravenkin are reluctant to become involved the troubles of adventurers or travelers. This is because they realize that they are vastly outnumbered in this land of evil, and are generally content to live out their lives in as much peace as possible in their forest aviaries, contributing a few small good acts here and there.

Most Ravenkin are neutral good, some chaotic good. Despite this, it is the curse of the Ravenkin to feel that no matter how much they struggle against the evil that surrounds them, they can never accomplish any major good deeds.

However, it is not unknown for a group of brave Ravenkin to come to the aid of wounded or outnumbered adventurers, especially if these adventurers have shown respect for their forest. Had it not been for a courageous Ravenkin such as this, I would not be here to complete this book, I would be a pile of bones outside Castle Ravenloft.

Known Ravenkin Groups

Though there are a number of scattered Ravenkin communities in the Land of the Mists, there are two

known Ravenkin groups with whom I have battled evil in the past—The Keepers of the Black Feather are possibly the bravest and most helpful.

The Keepers of the Black Feather: The Keepers are a secret society within one of the most terrible lands—Barovia. This group is dedicated to one of the loftiest missions I have ever known—the destruction of Barovia’s ruler, the vampire lord Count Strahd von Zarovich. This group has two major bases of operation—‘The Nest’ so secret that even I, a trusted friend of Pyoor Twohundredsummers, do not know of its location. Probably, it is best that I never know.

The Nest is located under the Blood o’ the Vine inn in the village of Barovia; see *Domains of Dread*, or *Forbidden Lore*.

Their second headquarters is located in a dense copse of oak trees in northeastern Barovia, near the border of Nova Vaasa. This base is usually run by Pasheeka Sixtysummers the very same Ravenkin who saved me the night after my assault on, then flight from, Castle Ravenloft. Pasheeka is one of the Ravenkin’s most powerful mages, and with his mate Karoona Fiftysprings, a priestess of no small import, has destroyed many of Strahd’s evil creations.

I have imparted my knowledge of Strahd gleaned from his journal, and the Ravenkin have accepted me into their group. Whilst not nearly strong enough to mount an assault on Castle Ravenloft, with our shared knowledge we have been able to put a stop a number of von Zarovich’s minor plans without exposing our identities. The Ravenkin have been infiltrating the village of Barovia with human agents, who are sympathetic to their cause. Also aligned with the Ravenkin are a number of Were-Ravens.

If you brave adventurers ever need the assistance of the Keepers you will be able to spot members of their society in the village of Barovia as they will all be wearing a black raven feather in some form or another. The group number approximately 150 members.

Conclusion

There you have it. A group of benevolent creatures, generally unknown to us, yet struggling against the same evils. The Keepers of the Black Feather know of this writing and have been more than helpful in supplying information that could save many lives. Yet I urge you all to be most careful with this information. Were it ever to fall into the wrong hands it would spell certain doom for our Ravenkin allies. For that reason, seek the aid of the Ravenkin when necessary but do not draw the undue

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

attention of the forces of evil who are just waiting for the opportunity to destroy a powerful force for good such as our Ravenkin brethren.



THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

WAR WRAITHS

Interlopers from the Gray Realm

by John W. Mangrum
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WAR WRAITH

Climate/Terrain:	Special
Frequency:	Very Rare
Organization:	Pack
Activity Cycle:	Night
Diet:	Special
Intelligence:	Very (12)
Treasure:	Nil
Alignment:	Chaotic Evil
No. Appearing:	Special (1d6)
Armor Class:	4
Movement:	12
Hit Dice:	5+3
THAC0:	15
No. of Attacks:	2 or 1
Damage/Attack:	1d6 + Special
Special Attacks:	Whispering
Special Defenses:	Special
Magic Resistance:	Nil
Size:	M (6' tall)
Morale:	16
XP Value:	1,400

These unnatural entities may be some of the Demiplane of Dread's rarest horrors, for they have only been seen in the aftermath of large battles. They haunt the fields where the wounded lay dying, and do not linger long once they arrive. Some who speak of war wraiths claim they "may only walk upon soil still wet with the blood of war." To date, they have only been sighted haunting the battlefields where Necropolis borders Falkovnia, although the occasional Tepestani legend can be heard telling of war wraiths haunting Arak in the days after all life was scoured from its surface.

From a distance, a war wraith appears only as an unearthly, misty light, easily mistaken for a will o' the wisp. However, when within 90' they can be seen more clearly, appearing as a spectral skeleton still clad in tightly-stretched, paper-thin skin. The skeleton seems to be that of a human, but with subtly fiendish features. Although war wraiths look insubstantial, as if made up of

nothing but a dimly glowing, silvery mist, they behave like solid creatures. (Van Richten would classify them as corporeal manifestations.) More disturbingly, anything they touch comes away smeared with blood.

Combat

War wraiths carry a weapon in each hand. Common lore has it that this is the weapon which ended the wraith's mortal life. Thus, war wraiths are most often seen carrying the weapons of battle: two long swords, two battle axes, etc. War wraiths may attack with each weapon in a round. No matter what sort of weapon the war wraith appears to be wielding, all their attacks do 1d6 points of damage per successful strike.

In addition, if the first attack hits, the victim loses one point of Strength. If the second attack hits, the victim loses one point of Constitution. If either score drops to 0, the victim dies and, according to legend, joins the ranks of the war wraiths.

War wraiths can only be harmed by spells or magical weapons of at least +1 enchantment. Some claim that war wraiths can be harmed by "unblooded" weapons, those that have never been used in combat. Others dismiss this tale, while still others guess that such weapons could only strike a war wraith once before being "blooded" and thus useless.

War wraiths also enjoy all the standard undead immunities, although they may not be truly undead.

If a victim cannot defend himself, as many of the wounded left moaning on a battlefield cannot, a war wraith uses a far more nightmarish tactic. Choosing not to attack with its weapons, the spirit will crouch down and whisper a long litany of unspeakable secrets into its victim's ear. What insidious secrets does a war wraith tell its victim? None can say, for no one has ever survived to tell. Although the whispering causes no damage, the victim does lose one point in both Wisdom and Charisma each round as his soul simply surrenders the will to live. Victims of a war wraith's whispering may make a save vs. death magic each round to avoid this effect, but they must keep making this saving throw every

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

round the war wraith continues to whisper. The wraith will not end its litany until its victim dies or it is interrupted, either by other defenders or the coming of dawn. War wraiths have never been known to use their whispering attack on victims able to defend themselves; the evidence indicates they cannot.

Should a victim of whispering be rescued in time, he will have only vague memories of the war wraith's litany: quickly forgotten fragments concerning duty, damnation, and the inevitability of the grave. Although dimly remembered, these secrets still compel the survivor to make a madness check.

Ability scores drained by any of the war wraith's attacks return at the rate of one point each per day.

Habitat/Society

The basic truth is that no one knows where war wraiths come from, or why they haunt the bloodied fields of Ravenloft. The people of Necropolis claim they come from the Gray Realm, the land of the dead, here preparing for the day when the dead shall reclaim their kingdom. Although most people of Necropolis don't believe in war wraiths, thinking them the fearful tales of old soldiers or, at most, embellished tales of will o' the wisps, a saying has started to pop up around the domain: "Beware the shadows of Necropolis, those dark stains where the dead outnumber the living." Supposedly, in these shadows the war wraiths walk.

War wraiths are attracted by sites of terrible violence; for every hundred people killed, 1d6 war wraiths will appear. The war wraiths will only haunt the area until the last of the wounded have been healed or have died, and the last of the dead buried. So long as a single body remains exposed on the field of death, the war wraiths will linger on.

Curiously, war wraiths seem bound by a strict code of behavior which they do not appear to follow willingly. They may only attack the wounded, those who have injured or killed another person since the last dawn, or those who attack the war wraith itself. If a war wraith encounters someone who falls into none of these categories, it will immediately put on a menacing display, hoping to intimidate the victim into attacking it. Once the victim has taken a swing at the war wraith, he becomes fair game, and the war wraiths will pounce.

War wraiths also only appear from dusk to dawn. At the sounding of the cock's crow, all war wraiths simply boil away into the morning mist, not to reappear until the sun sets again.

Citizens of Necropolis still tell tales of these creatures around their hearths at night, although no one seems to agree on their true nature or purpose. Some liken them to the bussengeist, explaining that if those dread apparitions are the omens which warn of impending disaster, then war wraiths are the carrion crows which follow after.

Other folk of Necropolis claim that these dread beings are recruiting soldiers for the armies of the dead, while still others claim that the spirits are the angry Falkovnian dead, seeking to drag comrade and foe alike into the grave with them.

Among the Kargat, it was whispered that war wraiths must call the Mists themselves their master, for apparently not even Azalin could bend them to his will. ☠

Ecology

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

VOODAN ZOMBIE

Truly Living Dead for Ravenloft

by Bil Boozer
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VOODAN ZOMBIE

Climate/Terrain:	Souragne
Frequency:	Rare
Organization:	Nil
Activity Cycle:	Any
Diet:	Omnivore
Intelligence:	Semi- (2-4)
Treasure:	Nil
Alignment:	Neutral
No. Appearing:	1-6
Armor Class:	10
Movement:	6
Hit Dice:	1-1
THAC0:	20
No. of Attacks:	1
Damage/Attack:	1-4
Special Attacks:	Nil
Special Defenses:	See below
Magic Resistance:	Nil
Size:	M (5'-6' tall)
Morale:	Unreliable (2-4)
XP Value:	0

Voodan zombies are grey-skinned, haggard-looking humans who are often mistaken for common zombies. However, Voodan zombies are not undead: Rather, they are living humans who have been mentally enslaved by a Voodan houngann (shaman), typically as punishment for having committed some heinous crime against the Voodan people.

Because they are alive, Voodan zombies typically are not missing limbs or flesh as are common zombies. Their gaunt and haggard look is a result of the process they underwent to become a Voodan zombie, and this appearance will remain with them even if they are later cured of their zombie enslavement.

Combat

Voodan zombies will not obey a command to attack and do not have enough strength of will to attack on their own. If they are attacked, they may attempt to defend themselves, attacking their attackers. Like common zombies, Voodan zombies always attack last during a combat round. More often, however, they will simply try to evade their attacker, moving slowly away from their attacker if possible. Because they are not undead, Voodan zombies do not share the common zombie's immunity to mind-affecting spells and to poison. Voodan zombies can be turned or controlled by priests, but a priest attempting to do so must subtract the level of the houngann who created the zombie from his or her own level of experience before determining if the attempt to turn is successful. Voodan zombies cannot be commanded by zombie lords or harmed by holy water.

Habitat/Society

Transforming someone into a Voodan zombie is the ultimate form of punishment among the Voodan people and is used only for the most heinous crimes, such as betraying Voodan secrets to outsiders or destroying a benevolent loa (animalistic spirit). The victim is given a poison created by the Houngann which puts the victim into a comatose sleep resembling death and lasts 6 to 7 days. The victim is mourned as dead and, after the appropriate time, buried in a grave outside of a cemetery. Eight days after the poison is administered, the Houngann returns to the gravesite and exhumes the victim, who has already awakened and who, as both a result of waking up buried alive and an effect of the Houngann's poison, been drained of most of his or her Intelligence and Wisdom. The victim is now a Voodan zombie completely under the Houngann's control. He or she will follow the Houngann's simple commands except for obeying a command which the zombie recognizes as a threat to his or her life.

Voodan zombies are shunned by Voodan humans, including the victim's family and former friends. This shunning is cultural, as essentially the zombies have been exiled from life and are no longer privileged to partake of

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

the life they once led. They are also constant reminders of the proximity of death. It is important to realize that a Voodan zombie is not evil, nor, generally, is the Houngann who created and controls the zombie. Killing a Voodan zombie should be considered a brutal murder if the zombie is aware that it is about to be killed and as a nonbrutal murder if the zombie is unaware of the threat to its life.

Rarely will a Houngann transform someone who is not of the Voodan people into a Voodan zombie. Should an outsider commit a crime that would be deserving of such a punishment, he or she is typically cursed or killed instead of transformed into a zombie. There are rumors of evil Houngann who live outside of Voodan society and worship malevolent loa; if this is true, then these exiles might be inclined to enslave outsiders as Voodan zombies. It is currently not known if demihumans can be transformed into Voodan zombies.

Ecology

Voodan zombies must eat and drink as normal humans, although they often must be reminded of this fact by their Houngann. They must sleep at least six hours out of every 24, and, unless instructed to do otherwise, will typically fall asleep wherever they are an hour after sunset. Voodan zombies cannot speak, but they can understand any language they knew before they became zombies. They can provide answers to questions they understand by using gestures, although these gestures are not always easy for the observer to interpret.

Voodan zombies often provide manual labor for the Hounganns who control them, the type of labor depending on where the zombies are found. Those encountered in the swamps of Souragne under the control of Hounganns there are usually used to gather plants and food for their masters. The lord of this island, Anton Misroi, has noticed the infrequent burial of living persons by the Voodan, but he has not yet been inclined to act upon it.

A Voodan zombie can be cured of his or her condition. Magical spells and psionics which cure insanity can restore lost Intelligence and Wisdom but the victim regains none of his or her memories from before becoming a zombie. A treatment of 7 to 12 months of intensive therapy in a psychiatric care institution can restore lost Intelligence and Wisdom as well as previously held memories. Success depends on the quality of the institution and of the attending physician; partial success may result in the victim's regaining only some of his or her Intelligence and Wisdom and/or memories. No matter what means is used cure the zombie, his or her Alignment remains Neutral until he or she makes efforts to change it.

Gothic Earth

Although most scoff at such tales as legendary and exaggerated, there are stories of Voodan zombies to be found on Gothic Earth in areas where Voodan is practiced, including Haiti, New Orleans and other areas along the U.S.'s Gulf coast, Venezuela, and Brazil. The poison used to create Voodan zombies differs slightly in each area, as its ingredients are gathered from the surroundings. As a side effect of the poison used in Brazil, a third of the male Voodan zombies are permanently blind when they are retrieved from the grave. It is not known why women are never blinded in this fashion or if poisons from other areas have side effects of their own.



WEAPONS OF SACRIFICE

As penned by Migas Ollum, Arcanist

by Paul Fox

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Not a single weapon, but actually consisting of several different weapons with the same qualities, *Weapons of Sacrifice* can be a boon to some and a curse to others. The weapons themselves were at one time the property of Jax Stormguard. Before his arrival in the Demiplane of Dread (approximately 625), Jax was a Paladin for the Gods of good. He used his divine abilities to seek out and destroy supernatural evil. It was pursuing such a crusade that ultimately led him to Ravenloft. It took several years (and the consultation of several sages) before he began to finally grasp the scope of the situation he was in.

Supernatural evil seemed to abound in this new land and yet his gods seemed so distant. In desperation, Jax turned to a practitioner of magic in for assistance in enchanting his weapons. Unfortunately while the mage could indeed enchant his weapons, he lacked the proper spells and abilities to seal the magics permanently. Jax asked the mage to cast the enchantments anyway. All during the nights and the weeks that followed while the mage worked his magics, Jax prayed. Petitioning the gods to grant this one request and seal the enchantments upon his weapons. And on the last day in the last moments of the mage's work, Jax swore that, should the gods grant his request, he would give his life using the weapons to defeat the evil of the land. It is not truly known who or what it was that granted his request; the Gods offering what minor aid they may, or the dark powers hoping to corrupt another with their double edged deals.

It is known that the enchantments did hold... sort of. And it is also known that, true to his word, Jax Stormguard gave his life using his weapons hunting the evil of the land. Over the years the weapons have become dispersed and lost. There were only three known weapons created by Jax Stormguard during that particular ceremony, but some speculate there may have been more. Those known to exist are; a Dagger, a Footman's Mace, and a Long Sword.

The weapons only radiate a faint aura of magic if some form of magical detection is used. If wielded

against normal creatures they act as a normal weapon of their type (normal damage, weight, etc.). When brought to bear against a supernatural creature resistant to normal weapons, the weapon can hit the creature as if it were of the appropriate magical level. The weapon also gains the appropriate bonus to hit and damage. The wielder has no control over these bonuses. The weapon may simply strike any creature with a magical defense up to and including +5. Of course, all of these abilities come with a price. Anyone wielding the weapon must sacrifice part of his life force for the magic to function. Each time an opponent is struck the wielder is drained a reflective portion of his hit points.

Monster can only be hit by	Weapon Att/Dam bonus	Wielder hit point drain
+1	+1	2 hp per hit
+2	+2	4 hp per hit
+3	+3	6 hp per hit
+4	+4	8 hp per hit
+5	+5	10 hp per hit

Hit points drained in this manner are treated as normal wounds for purposes of healing, but no outward signs of damage or trauma is apparent. Additionally, once combat is engaged with an evil supernatural creature it becomes difficult to disengage and the wielder has to make a saving throw vs. spell to do so successfully (i.e. stop attacking with the weapon). If the saving throw is failed then the wielder will continue to attack with the weapon and may take no other actions (cast spells, withdraw, etc.) until either the opponent or the wielder is defeated. At this time if other supernatural evil creatures are within the wielder's visual range, then he/she is entitled to another saving throw. If that is failed then he/she will press the attack onto the new opponent. If the saving throw is successful then the wielder is free to take any normal combat options including withdrawing at his/her convenience. However, each time the wielder switches to a new opponent he/she will need to make another saving throw.

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

Example: Korvan (a cleric) and party are facing a wraith and a werewolf. Korvan, wielding a Mace of Sacrifice, engages the wraith while the rest of the party attempts to hold the werebeast at bay. As Korvan attacks and makes his first hit he rolls his damage, deducts 2 hp from himself, and makes a saving throw vs. spell. He made it. He decides he should back down for now and switches his focus to the more weakened werewolf. Since he is attacking a new creature he makes another saving throw when he hits and deducts another 2 hp. This time he fails. He may now do nothing but fight the werewolf. Luckily, he defeats the foul beast, but the wraith is still up and he must save again to attempt to throw off the sacrificial rage he is in. If he fails he will find himself once more facing the wraith, this time unable to withdraw.

Saving Throw Modifiers	
Modifier	Condition
+? / -?	Magical defense adjustment (Wisdom bonus).
-1	For each level of enemy's magical defense.
-4	If wielding two weapons of sacrifice.

Notes

- ❖ As a result of the energy consumed by the weapons, various forms of regeneration (ring of regeneration, vampiric ring of regeneration, etc.) will lie dormant during combat when a weapon of sacrifice is being used.
- ❖ The weapons are not cursed and may be freely left behind.
- ❖ Weapons of Sacrifice define supernatural evil as any evil creature which can only be struck by enchanted weapons. The weapons will also affect neutral Ravenloft golems, elementals, or undead being manipulated by an evil master. Other neutral or good supernatural creatures remain unaffected by them.
- ❖ When the Dungeon Master utilizes the optional "Hovering on Death's Door" rules (*DUNGEON MASTER Guide* pg. 75), a character in a sacrificial rage will continue to fight on until reaching -10 hp at which point he/she dies. If the fight ends before reaching -10 hp, but after passing below 1 hp, then the character will collapse into an unconscious state.



THE TAROKKA DECK OF MANY THINGS

A Magical Item for Ravenloft

by Andrew Hackard
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BACKGROUND

This item was the personal tarokka deck of Madame Raina, a Vistana raunie of great power. One day she entertained a dark thundercloud of a man, who demanded to know his fortune. Madame Raina laid out the cards, and there was not a bright spot to be found; the man's futures were all equally bleak. Committed to the truth, she told him this.

"Damn you and damn your card tricks!" he cried, drawing his sword and running her through.

Madama Raina had, of course, foreseen this as well, and she had enough strength to spit out her final words: "May you live long enough to discover how true my cards speak, yet never profit from the knowledge!" The curse, sanctified by her dying breath, took root in her cards, giving them wildly different but equally malevolent powers.

No history, but many legends, tell of the fate of this mysterious stranger; it is known, however, that he traveled far and wide seeking to rid himself of the curse, the deck growing stronger with every attempt, until he finally succumbed to its power.

He was only the first victim, of course . . .

Rationale

Why the hell not?

Err . . . allow me to elucidate. The "standard" Deck of Many Things doesn't fit the Ravenloft atmosphere at all, and since we already have the Tarokka deck, I thought it might be nice (well, "nice" isn't precisely the right word) to rework it using the Tarokka. I immediately rejected the thought of using *all* the cards, and in fact

decided only to use the crown deck and the four archetype cards.

In keeping with the Ravenloft spirit of "No gift comes without a price," and "Darkness is its own reward," there are no purely good cards. Every benefit carries a hindrance with it as well. Many of the bad cards, however, are without redeeming benefits. No need to point this out to your players, of course . . .

The deck itself is more capricious than most. It is completely immune to divination spells except for detect magic, which reveals this as an alteration item of awesome power. When a card is drawn, the Tarokka of Many Things has a flat 5% chance to disappear. Furthermore, the natural ability of some classes (wild mages and jesters, for instance) to control random items does *not* work on the ToMT. Full-blooded Vistani, however, have a 50% chance to control the draws even if they are not the ones drawing (and this ability extends to darklings); half-blooded Vistani have a 10% chance. Vistani will always recognize this deck for what it is.

The ToMT only activates when a character, even jokingly, pulls a card to test the future. (Cards drawn just to draw cards do not activate unless a character is already aware of the nature of the ToMT, but unlike most decks, are not blank.) The cards from the ToMT affect the character whose fortune is being foretold, which may or may not be the actual drawer of the card. (This makes this a potent weapon in the hands of the Vistani indeed!)

This item carries a mild curse, which compels a character who carries it for a day or more to save versus Wisdom (Willpower) to keep from drawing a card. Each failed save causes a -1 penalty on the next save and also encourages the character to draw more cards. These cards do not have to be for himself, though they certainly may be. Voluntary draws from the ToMT do not cause a save penalty, and transferring ownership of the deck negates penalties at the same rate, but does prevent the

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

character from having to make more saves unless he comes back into even momentary possession of the deck.

A character who tries to negate the magic of the ToMT by carrying a card from the deck will be affected as if he had drawn that card if he holds it for an hour or more, and the card will then return to the deck. If the card is discarded or passed from character to character (or even “destroyed”) it will still return to the deck in one hour, without affecting anyone. It is not possible to separate the cards in a ToMT for longer than one hour under any circumstances.

The Tarokka of Many Things is usually found in a velvet bag or wooden box; this container will be decorated with Vistani runes which hint at great power within. (The individual runes don’t say anything, but the overall effect is recognizable by any Vistana—note that mere understanding of the Vistani runes does *not* confer this gestalt sensation.) The cards are usually made of thin wood, but may be of any substance, even paper; the magic of the ToMT prevents them from decay. They may appear to be decaying, however (this *is* Ravenloft).

An especially nasty Dungeon Master might mix the ToMT with the missing cards of the low deck, which will gain no magical abilities but *will* tend to disguise the effect of the ToMT. I would *never* suggest that you do something so sneaky and underhanded, of course. A mixed deck radiates only mild alteration magic, tinged with divination.

Here are the cards and their effects:

The Wizard

Gain two points in Intelligence, lose one in Strength.

The Rogue

Gain two points in Dexterity, lose one in Wisdom.

The Priest

Gain two points in Wisdom, lose one in Charisma.

The Warrior

Gain two points in Strength, lose one in Intelligence.

(Note that these gains will not allow a character to exceed racial maximums.)

The Horseman

The character may, twice a day, run at up to three times normal speed, for a number of minutes equal to his Constitution (Fitness) without suffering any penalties after. His toenails grow together and spread over the front half of his feet, to look rather like hooves. Clipping these nails has no effect; they grow back overnight.

The Broken One

The character is instantly feeble-minded. Psychic surgery, a clerical heal or restoration spell, or a wish may restore most of the character’s intellect, but 1d4 points of Intelligence and Wisdom are irrevocably lost.

The Hangman

In the next town or settlement the party enters, the character will be accused of a murder. There will be evidence to point to his guilt, and (within 2d4 days) the character himself will believe he is guilty. It is up to his party members to somehow prove his innocence. (Note to the Dungeon Master: great adventure hook!)

The Beast

The character will become hairier (interesting for female characters!), grow elongated canines, and generally take on the classical aspects of a werewolf. He is *not* infected with lycanthropy, but do not let the character know this at first. It will help if there are unexplained killings around the full moon and the character has no memory of where he was (asleep, somewhere, but why spoil the fun?).

The Ghost

The character ages 5d4 years instantly. This aging is irreversible.

The Marionette

The character is taken over by an odem.

The Raven

The character’s eyes turn jet black, his skin pales, and his effective Charisma drops by two. Further, wherever he goes, death seems to follow; even plants he tends wither and die within a week. The character gains the ability to foretell the death of strangers; anyone he sees with a raven on his shoulder (which no one else can see, of course) will die within 48 hours. This ability disappears if the character is somehow able to prevent such a death, but the physical effects remain forever.

The Esper

The character immediately gains a wild talent from the telepathic school (though not a psionic attack or defense form). He must use this talent at least once a day, or it starts to “switch on” randomly and at inconvenient times (like when you’re fighting a lich). (If you aren’t playing with the psionic rules, substitute the *ESP* spell as an innate ability.)

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

The Innocent

The character automatically passes his next powers check. (OK, one freebie with no nasty side effect.)

The Donjon

Just as in the regular Deck of Many Things, the character is instantly imprisoned ...somewhere. His gear, clothing, and effects remain behind, but there is no clue where he himself went. The Tarokka of Many Things does not disappear (unless the Dungeon Master rolls that 5% chance).

The Mists

Exactly what it seems to be. The Mists roll up and around the affected character, then just as quickly burn off...but the character is gone. (This can be a problem in the middle of the adventure, so it's suggested you don't cause the character to wander too far. Of course, between adventures, he can go anywhere . . . and it's a nice way to motivate the party to travel.)

The Darklord

The character immediately suffers the effects of one failed powers check. Further, the darklord of the current domain is aware of the character's location. What he does with this knowledge is, of course, up to the Dungeon Master.

The Temptress

The character is automatically *charmed* by the next person of the opposite sex he sees (or the same sex, or just the next person; I'm not going to tell you how to run your game).

The Artifact

The character is immediately granted a powerful magic item (but one with a history and, one hopes, a substantial curse). Good ideas are found in *Forged of Darkness*, but any powerful item will work. A Dungeon Master who doesn't know how to turn this against the party needs to hang it up!



INTO THE MISTS

Player Character Kits for Ravenloft Campaigns

by Jon Winter

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INTRODUCTION

T read with care, for the mists listen to your every footstep. Unseen eyes watch from the billowing clouds, and vaporous tendrils beckon. Dare you follow, into the mists?

The Mists of Ravenloft are ever-hungry for new victims, drawing many innocents from many worlds. These poor unfortunates are engulfed by the evil of the Dark Domain, never to see the light of their own stars again. But what of those who were born in the Lands of Ravenloft? Surely heroes must exist among their folk.

Indeed they do. Seven of these brave—and less brave—character types are presented below, in kit format; one for each character class, and one far stranger kit. These Ravenloft kits are most appropriate for the gothic settings found in that most macabre world, and are not really suitable for other lands. Should the Dungeon Master wish to adapt them for other campaigns she may have to alter many of their special powers.

As is the style of gothic horror, each of the kits favors role-playing over brute strength, although the kits are not without special abilities. Players are left to create interesting personalities for their characters, and suggestions are given within the text. The author assumes the optional proficiencies system is being employed. * indicates a non-weapon proficiency from the *Complete Thief's Handbook*, ** from the *Complete Psionics Handbook* and *** from the *Complete Bard's Handbook*. All other nonweapon proficiencies are from the *PLAYER'S HANDBOOK*.

THE GRAVE ROBBER

Class: Thief

Character Portrait: Grave robbers are thieves specializing in stealing from corpses, unconscious victims, graves or tombs. They are shunned by most civilized societies, who view their activities as

disrespectful, heretical or downright evil. Such is superstition in most parts of Ravenloft that alongside the dead, valuable items, trinkets and mementos are usually buried. The folk, in their fear, leave these items with the corpse in the hope that it will not return from the grave to wreak vengeance upon them. They see grave robbers as endangering their pact with the dead, and quite rightly fear retaliation from the undead. Quite often their nightmares are true, and the dead ones disturbed by looters return to the realms of the living.

Grave robbers quickly harden to the sight of corpses, and indeed must have a strong and insensitive will to be able to do what they do. Most justify their acts by claiming the dead have no need for these items, and they should be put to good use in the hands of the living. Grave robbers may not be of good or lawful alignments. They are well suited to the adventuring life, and indeed many turn to such pursuits. Companions often find them rather cold, calculating individuals, caring little about the lives of others.

Weapon Proficiencies: Any allowed to thieves.

Non-Weapon Proficiencies: *Bonus:* Looting*. *Recommended:* Alertness*, Appraising, Intimidation*, Observation*, Trailing*, Tumbling.

Skill Progression: Grave robbers find their pick pockets/loot dead and move silently/play dead (see below) skills the most useful, along with open locks and find traps. They receive a +5% bonus on pick pockets and a -5% penalty on climb walls checks.

Equipment: Grave robbers cannot function well without spades or stout bars, for forcing doors. Many also carry crude symbols intended to ward off undead, should they be disturbed, including the infamous garlic, candles and rabbit's feet. Whether they actually work or not depends upon how true the legends are.

Special Benefits: **Loot Dead**—The Pick Pockets ability of grave robbers functions also as a new skill called Loot Dead. A successful roll, at the same percentage as the pick pockets roll, indicates that the grave robber will find everything of value upon the body being searched within 1d4 rounds. A failure means that

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PC RULES

something has been missed, or if there is little of value, a worthless item has been mistaken for being valuable.

Play Dead—Furthermore, the Move Silently skill also becomes Play Dead. On a successful roll, the grave robber can pretend to be dead so effectively that viewers will believe the thief to be a recently-dead corpse unless magical detection is used. Failure means that careful examination reveals the thief is alive.

Their dealings with death make grave robbers more resistant to horrific scenes. They receive a +2 bonus on horror checks, and a +1 bonus on fear checks.

Special Hindrances: Grave robbers are shunned by society in general. Any moral or superstitious character who knows the thief's true profession will react with a -4 penalty on reaction rolls. Others react with a -1 penalty, for the mere presence of grave robber makes them feel uneasy.

The dark powers watch grave robbers with interest. Each time a corpse is looted, the Dungeon Master should roll a 1% powers check. Whenever a grave or tomb is breached to get to a corpse the powers check becomes 4% (modified further at the Dungeon Master's discretion). Results of failed checks are left to Dungeon Masters to create.

Races: Grave robbers may only be human. The demihuman races are simply too respectful of their dead to embark upon this profession.

THE SOMNIOMANCER

Class: Psionicist

Character Portrait: The somniomancer is a psionicist with special strengths in the areas of dreams, nightmares and the sleeping mind. Their skills are strange and often powerful, stemming from the shadowy realms of dreams. Somniomancers are bizarre characters, enjoying peace and solitude but finding themselves strangely drawn to highly populated areas. Superstitious folk believe the somniomancers feed upon the dreams of others.

Somniomancers tend to have questionable morals, for attacking a sleeping mind is somewhat akin to knifing a sleeping victim. However, the skills of somniomancers extend further than sleeping victims, since enemies can not always be caught in this vulnerable state. The somniomancers have therefore extended their talents to attacking awake minds as well, with a myriad of telepathic powers.

Since they have such potential for sneakiness and manipulation, somniomancers make excellent villains as well as heroes. They have no additional ability requirements.

Chosen Disciplines: *Required:* Telepathy.

Recommended: Clairsentience, Psychometabolism.

Sciences/Devotions: *Bonus:* (PsyP dev) Dream travel, Slumber (see below). *Required:* (Tele sci) Mindlink, (Tele dev) Daydream, False sensory input. *Recommended:* (PsyM sci) Shadow form, (Tele sci) Domination, Probe, (Tele dev) Daydream. Most powers in the telepathic discipline are useful to somniomancers.

Weapon Proficiencies: Limited to those usable by wizards.

Non-Weapon Proficiencies: *Bonus:* Hypnosis**. *Recommended:* Astrology, Harness subconscious**, Reading lips, Rejuvenation**, Religion, Ventriloquism.

Equipment: No special equipment needs.

Special Benefits: The somniomancer's abilities are acquired as higher levels are attained.

At 1st level, the somniomancer learns the psychoportive devotion dream travel for free, even though he does not have access to this discipline. Since the somniomancer knows the sleeping mind better than any other psionicist, any telepathic power checks against sleeping victims receive a +2 bonus. Furthermore, the psionicist learns the ability to unleash soothing tendrils of relaxing energy, causing creatures to become drowsy and fall into deep sleep. This power is only available to somniomancers.

Slumber

(telepathic devotion)

Power Score: Wis 0 **Preparation:** 0

Initial Cost: 8 **Maintenance Cost:** 3/turn

Range: Line of sight **Area of Effect:** One creature

Prerequisites: Somniomancer kit

Creatures with 5 HD or less will collapse into deep slumber lasting until the psionicist ceases to pay the maintenance cost, or the creature is woken by a physical blow or loud noises. Creatures with more than 5 HD are unaffected. Any creature with which the psionicist has contact can be sent to sleep more easily, costing just 4 PSPs.

At 4th level the somniomancer learns another unique power for free:

Dreamscape

(telepathic science)

Power Score: Wis 0 **Preparation:** 0

Initial Cost: 6 **Maintenance Cost:** 2/round

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PC RULES

Range: 1 mile **Area of Effect:** One sleeping creature
Prerequisites: Contact, somniomancer kit
Using this power, the somniomancer enters the dreams of the sleeping character. Not only can the character view the dreams as they occur, but she is able to influence them to any effect desired; nightmares, omens, 'divine' messages, etc. If the somniomancer creates a fearsome nightmare and the victim fails a fear check, then all the victim's proficiency checks and attack rolls the next day suffer a -1 penalty due to lack of sleep. The psionist has the option of waking the character when the power ends, which usually causes them to remember the dream all the more vividly. The targets are free to interpret their dreams as they wish when they wake, but the somniomancer has the option of planting a post-hypnotic suggestion in the target's mind, at no extra PSP cost.

Finally, at 7th level the psionist acquires another unique free power:

Walking Nightmare

(telepathic science)

Power Score: Wis -3 **Preparation:** 1
Initial Cost: Contact + 30 **Maint. Cost:** 10/round
Range: 1 mile per level **Area of Effect:** One creature
Prerequisites: Contact, level 7

Walking nightmare delves deep into the target's subconscious, pulling forth its most horrific fears and phobias, and shaping them into a creature. Only the victim can see this creation, since it is entirely imaginary. The creation might be a monster, person, event or any combination of these factors. Whatever it is, the victim must make a save vs. spell at a -6 penalty to see through the psychic illusion, otherwise she believes it to be real and will cease all other actions, concentrating solely on the nightmare.

The victim must stand and fight, use magic or anything she believes will allow her to escape the nightmare, but will not actually move in real life since any event which occurs is solely in the victim's mind. Running away is no good, since the monsters in nightmares always run faster. The victim must fight in single combat; for allies stand aside in the nightmare, unable to help.

The Dungeon Master must assign specific statistics to the creation according to its form, but the general range should be HD 8 to 10, AC 5 or lower, THAC0 15 or better, #AT 2 or more, Dmg 1d6/1d6 or better. No experience is gained from defeating the creature. Should the creation win, the victim will die. Should the victim triumph, then he will regain any hit points, spells or magical items lost, since the battle was just a dream.

Should a player character fall victim to this psionic power, the Dungeon Master should take the player aside and try to role-play the battle inspiring as much fear as possible. Change the scene, make it creepy—it's all in the mind, anyway! Some possible walking nightmares include illithids, golems, were-creatures, undead and similar nightmare creatures, scenery like caverns, graveyards, and well-known places which are subtly, and dangerously different.

Special Hindrances: Somniomancers themselves suffer from problems of fearsome nightmares and horrible dreams, caused possibly by Ravenloft itself. Each time they sleep or meditate, they must pass a saving throw vs. death magic with a +2 bonus to escape the effects of these terrible visions. Failure means they are gripped by terrifying nightmares, and recover PSPs only at half the usual rate that night. Furthermore they become tired, snappy and irritable the next morning (-1 penalty on reaction rolls and surprise checks).

It is rumored that the somniomancer has mysterious links with those creatures known as 'bastellus.' Powerful evil psionicists are said to be able to summon and control the foul monsters, but more somniomancers are terrified of the creatures, for the bastellus seek to enter their dreams more than anything.

Races: Humans, half-elves, elves and halflings may all become somniomancers.

THE STORYTELLER

Class: Bard

Character Portrait: Often of Vistani blood, the storytellers of Ravenloft are keepers of lore and artists of language. Few folk can read in the Dark Domain, and it is the storytellers who pass on legends from generation to generation, always improving and adding their own details. Many an adventuring party has been inspired by this tale of treasure or that fable of hidden magic. The truth behind these tales is sometimes questionable, but storytellers are such masters at their craft that they seem to bring even the most predictable story to life.

Storytellers are also minstrels, wandering the beautiful countryside of Ravenloft, stopping in villages and towns to earn a few silver coins. In remote areas, storytellers are the bringers of news from other realms, telling of events happening far across the land.

On their travels, storytellers meet many folk, adventurers and merchants among them. Their many and varied talents stem from their ability to learn and retain facts; the use of a sword, perhaps, or a simple magical spell. Contact with rogues and rich people teaches arts of

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PC RULES

thievery, and stealth, and long, often dangerous journeys lead to ample time for practice.

Storytellers have no ability requirements save those of any bard.

Weapon Proficiencies: Any.

Non-Weapon Proficiencies: *Bonus:*

Information gathering*, Local history, Ventriloquism, Voice mimicry*. *Recommended:* Acting***, Ancient history, Animal noise*, Crowd working***, Disguise, Fast-talking*, Fortune telling*, Heraldry, Languages (modern), Observation*, Reading lips, Singing.

Equipment: Storytellers carry with them musical instruments to accompany their tales, along with much of the equipment a rough-sleeping traveler would need.

Special Benefits: **Lore of the Land**—

Storytellers know much about Ravenloft, its darklords and its secrets. The legends and lore ability of the true bard can be used to learn information about objects, places and people of the Dark Realms. The Dungeon Master rolls the dice, and a successful attempt may reveal interesting information.

Note to Dungeon Masters: Never mention game statistics, or anything so vitally secret that revealing it would spoil the atmosphere or adventure. If in doubt, use cryptic riddles or rhymes instead. There is nothing to say that the information learned is true, just that the storyteller has heard it somewhere.

Influence Reactions—This ability to influence the mood of a crowd using amusing or inspiring tales functions in the same way as that of a true bard.

Gift of the Gab—Storytellers practice the mimicry of voices and similar vocal skills, to add excitement and humor to their performances. They receive a +2 bonus on ventriloquism or voice mimicry proficiency checks, and are able to combine the two skills to use ventriloquism in a particular person's voice (two checks must be successful, each at +2 bonus). Storytellers with the acting, fortune telling or fast-talking proficiencies receive a +1 bonus on these checks.

Ears to the Ground—Finally, the storyteller has an astute ear for gossip and details. After spending just a 1d6 hours wandering around a town or in a tavern, a storyteller has a good idea of the current gossip, rumors and intrigues of the area. When with friendly or talkative NPCs, this time is reduced to 1d3 hours. What to do with this information, which will most likely be a jumble of lies, downright lies, and a little bit of truth, is entirely up to the player.

Special Hindrances: Storytellers are true wanderers. They have an uncontrollable urge to explore, gather tales and spread them around. As such, they love to visit new places, but don't like hanging around. They may therefore never buy land, buildings or other stationary property, nor own anything which they cannot

carry along with them. A caravan, horses and basic equipment is usually all a storyteller owns in the world.

Races: Humans and half-elves may be storytellers, and halflings may become demi-bard storytellers, able to advance to 10th level. Elves, gnomes and dwarves have different oral traditions, and do not rely upon storytellers.

THE VAMPIRE SLAYER

Class: Warrior

Character Portrait: The vampire slayer is a heroic and intelligent fighter who defends the living from the ravages of the undead; tracking, hunting and slaying the foul creatures. The most hated adversaries of vampire slayers are the dreaded vampires themselves, for they are cunning, evil and deadly opponents.

There have been many famous vampire slayers in the history of Ravenloft, but most of them met with unpleasant deaths. As any good 'slayer knows, strength of mind is just as important as strength of body, since the undead of Ravenloft are a wily and well-protected bunch.

Many vampire slayer have been paladins, although warriors and rangers may also take this kit. Vampire slayers must have a minimum Intelligence and Constitution of 12, for they must be quick-witted and healthy to survive long. Vampire slayers must be of good or neutral alignments.

Weapon Proficiencies: Any.

Non-Weapon Proficiencies: *Bonus:* None.

Recommended: Ancient history, Blind-fighting, Local history, Observation*, Religion, Set snares, Tracking.

Equipment: Most 'slayers carry the items said in legends to have power over the undead; mirrors, salt, garlic, holy symbols and water, blessed items and much more. Whether they will find the right item for the right creature is another matter entirely.

Special Benefits: **Undead Lore**—The vampire slayer is well-versed in literature concerning the living dead, and can frequently use this learning to an advantage. Upon passing a successful Intelligence check, the Dungeon Master may reveal to the player a piece of privileged information about the weaknesses of such a creature, usually in the form of a cryptic clue. It will, of course, be more difficult to find information on rare or unique undead. Dungeon Masters are reminded that many undead have different powers in Ravenloft, not all of which will be known to novice vampire slayers.

Due to their own skill and perhaps some measure of divine protection, vampire slayers gain a +2 bonus to saving throws vs. any attacks from undead creatures. This does not include spells cast by liches or other intelligent undead, however.

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PC RULES

Special Hindrances: Any intelligent undead creature can sense the presence of a threat, but not its direction, if a vampire slayer is within a 90 foot radius. Vampires also sense a strong threat if a vampire slayer touches its coffin. Darklords who are undead can sense the presence of a vampire slayer in their domain to the nearest mile, but no closer.

Races: Humans, elves, dwarves and half-elves may all become vampire slayers. Note that demihuman races may know more about demihuman undead and less about the more common undead created from human remains. Halflings and gnomes are too timid to actively seek and wish to destroy the undead.

THE WERE-WIZARD

Class: Mage

Character Portrait: The were-wizard is a mage whose magical prowess is affected by the phases of the moon. Believed to be distantly descended from werewolves and their ilk, the were-wizard is not necessarily a lycanthrope, but some strange magic has certainly rendered their kind sensitive to lunar cycles. Sages have claimed that the full moon acts upon them almost like a drug; during the nights when it wanders across the sky the were-wizards become excited and agitated. This is the time when they are most powerful. Conversely, when the moon is new, the were-wizards weaken. These periods of weakness are feared by the were-wizards, who try to avoid being in dangerous situation at these times.

Were-wizards have no additional ability requirements, and can possess any alignment. Wild mage characters are particularly suitable for this kit, although any mage or specialist wizard could be a were-wizard. This kit cannot be abandoned, since its benefits and hindrances lie in the basic nature of the wizard. The were-wizard's sensitivity to the moon cannot be cured with any magic.

Weapon Proficiencies: As normal wizard.

Non-Weapon Proficiencies: *Bonus:* None.

Recommended: Astrology, Any other proficiencies suitable for the campaign.

Equipment: No special equipment is required.

Special Benefits/Hindrances: The true nature of the were-wizard only comes to light when night has fallen and the moon is in a special phase. At all other times, during the day or any time when the moon is waxing or waning the were-wizard functions normally. Magical spells are not able to trigger the were-wizard's change; only the moon. Were-wizards are affected by the moon whether they can see it or not.

Period of the Full Moon: The special powers of the were-wizard manifest themselves on the three nights each

month when the moon is full. (For realism, the Dungeon Master may wish to keep track of lunar phases in a small calendar, or this job could be delegated to a player). When the moon is full and the sun has set, the were-wizard gains one level. This applies in the form of bonus hit points, saving throws, THAC0, casting level, and the number of spells which can be memorized. If the were-wizard has access to higher-level magic and the bonus experience level grants a new level of spells then these may also be learned during the day, but only cast when night has fallen. At dawn, all of these benefits are lost, although higher level spells may be memorized during the day to be cast at night.

Other physical changes occur when the moon is full. The hair of a were-wizard grows darker and the eyebrows meet in the middle. In male were-wizards the voice becomes deeper and hands more hairy. In females, the eyes are tinted with red and fingernails grow longer. Observant viewers may notice these signs, possibly believing the were-wizard to be a werewolf or other creature of darkness. Such viewers will react with a minimum -3 reaction penalty.

Period of the New Moon: Conversely, when the moon is new, the were-wizards become pale, anemic and weak. The time of the new moon is feared by were-wizards, for it renders them more vulnerable to attack. During the nights of the new moon, the were-wizard drops one level, losing hit points, THAC0, spell casting level and possibly even the highest level of memorized spells. A 1st level were-wizard will lose all spellcasting ability, but lose no hit points.

When the moon is new, the skin of the were-wizards looks pale and bloodless, and their body cools. Their canine teeth become slightly elongated, and their hair lighter in hue. Observant witnesses could mistake were-wizards in this phase for vampires or other undead creatures, and will react accordingly.

Races: Only humans and half-elves may be were-wizards. It is believed that elven blood does not freely mix with that of lycanthropes, since true elves are never were-wizards.

THE WITCH HUNTER

Class: Priest

Character Portrait: The witch hunters are fanatical priests, inspired by their religion's hatred of sorcery and witchcraft. The tenets of their faith declare all practitioners of wizardry as heretics; those who should be killed. Witch hunters are fully supported by their churches, and in Ravenloft religion holds power. As most villages and towns have churches from only one religion, those who do not attend are viewed with great suspicion. Villagers with strange eccentricities, those who live alone,

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PC RULES

and those who are ugly are most at risk from witch hunters, who can accuse almost any citizen of sorcery and be believed, innocent or not.

The 'witches' they hunt are not just mages with the witch kit, but commonly include psionists and necromancers. More superstitious folk would include enchanters, conjurers and illusionists, and the most fanatical will brand all users of magic and most priests of opposing religions as evil and heretical.

Witch hunters may not be of good alignment, although they may belong to religions of good with no penalty. A Charisma of 13 is necessary to be a witch hunter. Priests with this kit also make excellent Ravenloft villains.

Weapon Proficiencies: Any blunt weapon.

Non-Weapon Proficiencies: *Bonus:* None.

Recommended: Ancient history, Crowd working***, Etiquette, Fast-talking*, Fire-building, Forgery, Intimidation*, Languages (modern), Religion, Spellcraft.

Equipment: Most witch hunters have access to gallows, stakes for burning and other mediaeval instruments of witch-destruction.

Special Benefits: **Accusation**—On a successful Charisma check, witch hunters can persuade a mob, or anyone who is superstitious and dislikes magic that any individual is a witch worth burning. Should the Charisma check fail, the witch hunter will need to present some evidence to bring the mob to a witch-killing frenzy. It will be difficult to convince anyone that well-respected members of the community are sorcerers, although should they fall from grace for some reason, or the village need a scapegoat, this may be possible.

Witch Testing—Witch hunters know all the religious rituals and arcane tests for witches; for example burning and drowning (if the accused witch dies, she was innocent, if she lives she is a witch and must be killed), boiling oil (if the witch's hands come out unscarred when thrust into boiling oil then the gods have protected her and she is innocent), etc. It can clearly be seen that there is little hope of an accused witch being proved innocent without being maimed or killed.

Ferocity—When fighting witches in hand-to-hand combat, witch hunters gain a +1 to hit and damage due to their intense ferocity. This only applies if the witch hunter is sure that the target is really a witch of some sort.

Special Hindrances: Witch hunters are disliked by all wizards, suffering at least a -2 reaction penalty from such characters. The 'real' witches, ie. psionists, necromancers, enchanters and those of the witch kit fear and hate witch hunters, who suffer a -6 reaction penalty.

Accusing the minion or favorite of a darklord can be very dangerous. Should one of these denizens ever be subjected to a witch trial the domain lord will instantly know where and who is trying to murder its subject. The

darklord may take any action appropriate within its character. The dark powers of Ravenloft also find witch hunters worthy of attention. Whenever an innocent is killed by a witch hunter, a 4% Powers check must be made. Should the witch hunter have known all along that the 'witch' was in fact innocent the check becomes 10%.

Finally, the religion of the witch hunters dictates that its priests may never use any magical item which has been enchanted by a wizard, and they must destroy one wizard-made magical item each experience level they attain. It is left for Dungeon Masters to decide whether magical items found are wizard- or priest-made (a rough 60-40 mix is suggested in favor of wizardly items).

Races: Only humans may be witch hunters. Elves, half-elves and gnomes are themselves magical, and while dwarves dislike magic they do not view its use as evil, just cowardly. It is certainly not unheard of for witch hunters to track down and execute demihumans as witches, playing upon the prejudices of their human followers.

THE JINX'D

Class: Any or none

Character Portrait: Not so much a kit as a role-playing aid, the jinx'd are characters who have been somehow punished by Ravenloft. Evil-doers are cursed; enticed to a path of evil, but the jinx'd are innocents, never having committed a wrong so great as to deserve the punishment they received. There is much speculation as to the reason why the jinx'd are so troubled, from the belief they have been punished for the evil of previous generations, mistakenly cursed, or that Ravenloft has created them for its own perverse pleasure. The last seems most likely.

A jinx'd character is one who suffers a bizarre affliction, one which seems trivial at first glance, but in practice causes a great deal of trouble. It is not a curse, as such, and there seems to be no way of relieving it. The jinx'd were born as they are, and cannot be cured by magic or otherwise.

The jinx'd kit can be combined with any other, or used alone. It is recommended only for those players who love to role-play and relish intrigue and horror, for it bestows no benefits. It can also be put to great use by Dungeon Masters for innocents who seem to be what they are not.

Weapons, Proficiencies, Equipment: As standard for character class.

Their Curse: All jinx'd characters have been cursed from birth with a bizarre deformity or appearance, and it is this which causes them to be shunned by most folk. The superstitious believe that the jinx'd bring bad

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PC RULES

luck, and inviting one of their kind into your house is asking to be cursed yourself. This is just superstition, of course.

The jinx'd appear perfectly normal apart from their curse, and if this is not noticed then the character will be suspected of nothing. A few examples of curses from an ancient text follow:

. . . T here was one of the village who they said cast no shadow when she walked, as the vampyres do, and that she would bring ill fate to any who would talk to her . . .

. . . T he hermit was possessed of hair on his hands, but on both sides. F olk did say he had made pacts with the wolves . . .

. . . T hey whispered to me of a man whose tongue was forked when he spoke, and they told me that when the moon was full he did drink the blood of sheep . . .

The jinx'd face persecution and hostility should their secret be discovered, so many take to the life of a hermit or a monk to escape the ignorant peasants. Other may become adventurers, or remain with their families who know of their curse but will look after and protect the jinx'd one. Many a family has been split over the jinx'd, and fearful siblings may betray the deformed one to an angry and fearful mob of villagers.

Races: The jinx'd can be human, or of any demihuman race.



THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PC RULES

BEASTS AT HEART

Rules For Creating Lycanthropic Player Characters in Ravenloft

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SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

Why create these rules? As a Dungeon Master, I don't really feel that the Ravenloft setting is screaming for "monstrous" player characters. Keeping the setting in the right mood can be difficult, and done poorly a "monster player character" campaign can degrade into a gothic take on the superhero genre.

But there is material to be found here. In *Requiem: The Grim Harvest*, TSR presented rules for undead player characters. These heroes have great power compared to their mortal comrades, but must constantly battle against the unavoidable influence of the Negative Energy Plane.

Werebeast heroes are assumed to be struggling to maintain their humanity in the face of their own bestial, savage soul. As with the typical Ravenloft hero, lycanthropic player characters should be forces of good, struggling against the oppressive evil without and within. Playing evil lycanthropic characters who can and do fearlessly tear through every villager they come across is not recommended.

My original "inspiration" for these rules was *Van Richten's Guide to Werebeasts*. Of all the "gothic" monsters, werewolves are my favorites, but this tome disappointed me. Other guides in the series did a wonderful job of opening up the possibilities of these creatures, adding special powers and flaws, all with the intention of changing these "AD&D monsters" into fully fledged individuals. *Van Richten's Guide to Werebeasts*, on the other hand, seemed content to explain the basic biological functions of these creatures. Not only did it add precious little to Ravenloft's lycanthropic lore, it actually restricted a Dungeon Master's possibilities! There are creatures (such as the loup du noir) and NPCs (such as the lord of Saragoss) who cannot exist within the limits imposed in *Van Richten's Guide*. It appears that the esteemed doctor may have rushed this tome to the printer's a touch prematurely.

Originally, I was trying to think of a way for an infected lycanthrope to gain control of his curse. Not as a way to easily increase a character's power, but to show the threat of letting the Beast into one's life. As my example, in the movie *The Howling* anyone infected by a werewolf gains the ability to control their changes. However, they are also deeply, darkly altered, no longer truly the individual they were before infection. I struggled to create a system to handle this for quite some time.

There have been other attempts to create lycanthropic PCs, usually as a character class. These systems didn't impress me; they seemed a little inflexible for something as fluid as a shapeshifting curse. Then *Requiem* was released, and if nothing else, it presents some very intriguing rules for undead PCs. I used *Requiem* as a guideline, and ended up with the rules presented here.

Credit Where Credit Is Due

These rules are based heavily on the **Requiem** character creation system, although they aren't identical. I have also relied heavily on three other sources; in fact, I have relied so heavily upon these sources (including quoting), that it might be fair to say that I did not so much write these rules as compile them.

- ❖ **Van Richten's Guide to Werebeasts:** Rules on NPC werebeasts in the Ravenloft setting.
- ❖ **Night Howlers:** Rules on werebeast player characters for D&D rules.
- ❖ **Pin Back Their Ears!:** (*DRAGON* #198) An article on werebeast heroes for AD&D rules. Although I liked what was presented in this article (and utilized it here), the article doesn't cover as much as I'd hoped for.

SECTION II: CHARACTER CREATION

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PC RULES

These rules will let players create player character lycanthropes for the Ravenloft setting. This is a proficiency-based system, which allows for maximum flexibility. Lycanthrope heroes in Ravenloft can enjoy a great deal of power compared to their comrades, but they pay for it in the hunger of the Beast and the subtle pull of the dark powers on their souls. These rules are designed to create **True Lycanthropes** (those born as werebeasts) and **Maledictive** lycanthropes (those who have brought the curse upon themselves). There is also a section of optional rules for handling **Infected** werebeasts, the victims of a lycanthropic attack.

As a note, I went for a mix of game balance, flexibility, and simplicity in these rules. A werebeast created with this system may not be exactly identical to the same werebeast in the *Monstrous Manual*. *Van Richten's Guide to Werebeasts* covers certain areas of lycanthropic life quite well; I've tried to avoid simply repeating concepts presented there, and reading that book can add many great insights into roleplaying a lycanthrope.

Terminology

To keep things straight, I'm going to use some specific terminology throughout these rules. These terms are taken from *Van Richten's Guide to Werebeasts*; if you've read that guide you'll be familiar with these terms.

- ❖ **Aspect:** The shapes a lycanthrope is capable of taking. Throughout these rules, “aspect” and “form” are interchangeable. In other words, “animal form” is the same thing as “secondary aspect.”
- ❖ **Primary Aspect:** This is always humanoid: human, dwarf, what have you. It can also be considered the “true form;” lycanthropes revert to their true form when they die. I may also refer to the primary aspect as “human form.”
- ❖ **Secondary Aspect:** Always resembles some sort of natural animal, be it wolf, shark, giant rat, etc. Although legends claim it may be different in other lands, in Ravenloft such animals are always predators (or at least scavengers), and are usually mammalian. A werebeast in this form is generally large for its species, but not unnaturally so. A werewolf in secondary aspect would be difficult to pick out of a pack of normal wolves.
- ❖ **Tertiary Aspect:** A horrid cross of man and beast. Typically, it retains most of the animal's features, but walks upright. It retains the secondary aspect's attack forms, but gains the use of human hands. It is up to the player to decide just what

mixture of man and beast makes up his PC's tertiary aspect.

- ❖ **Bloodline:** A chain of lycanthropic infection. All bloodlines start with a true lycanthrope, the creature which started the chain. This werebeast is called the **Progenitor**. This true lycanthrope infects others, making them infected lycanthropes. These cursed victims may then infect others, passing on the dread disease and lengthening the bloodline. All the infected lycanthropes who can trace their bloodline to a given true werebeast are the **Progeny** of said true lycanthrope.
- ❖ **Phenotype:** A “species” of lycanthrope. In simple terms, what kind of animal does your PC turn into? A wolf? Then he's a werewolf phenotype.

Ability Scores

Generate ability scores as you would for any other hero. There are no ability requirements to be a lycanthrope, nor are there any modifiers. If you really like ability modifiers, though, you can consider this optional rule: -1 Wisdom; +1 to *either* Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution. Although the player can choose which physical ability in which to place the extra point, it should reflect the hero's phenotype. In other words, a wererat should take +1 to Dexterity, a werebear +1 to Strength, etc.

Character Race

The werebeast can be of any human or demihuman race, although most werebeasts are “human.” Some lycanthropes may be restricted to certain races, however. For example, all werebadgers are dwarven. This will be listed in Section IV under each phenotype. The hero has all the special bonuses, penalties, ability modifiers, requirements, class level limits, etc., of the race they pick.

Keep in mind that the hero's race is his primary aspect.

Character Class

Lycanthrope heroes can choose any class available to their primary aspect (race). In other words, a werewolf who can take human form can take virtually any class, while a dwarven lycanthrope cannot be a mage.

There are a few additional restrictions:

- ❖ Lycanthropes tend to be a chaotic, impulsive lot, not suited to spending long hours in quiet study or deep contemplation. Therefore any lycanthropic player character needs an extra 10% XP to advance in level in any spellcasting class (including psionicists).
- ❖ A lycanthrope's alignment may change during the course of a campaign. Players should know that if

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PC RULES

their character's class requires certain alignments (such as rangers, psionicists, or specialty priests) they may be forced to give up that class.

- ❖ No lycanthrope can be a paladin.

As with any other player character, class determines hit points, THAC0, saving throws, etc.

Alignment

Hero lycanthropes can be of any alignment. However, they may not keep this alignment for long. Each time a lycanthrope kills a sentient, intelligent victim, he must make a saving throw vs. polymorph. If the hero fails the saving throw, his alignment shifts one step towards Chaotic Evil. The player may choose which half of his character's alignment to shift.

For example, a Neutral Good werebear fails his save. The werebear's player can choose whether to change his hero's alignment to Chaotic Good or True Neutral.

If a lycanthrope player character becomes evil, it becomes a matter of Dungeon Master' judgment whether the player can still play his character. If the character becomes Chaotic Evil, he automatically becomes an NPC.

Note that this rule only applies when a lycanthrope kills for food or other, non-life-threatening reasons. Even in Ravenloft, werebeasts aren't punished for killing in self defense.

SECTION III: LYCANTHROPIC POWERS AND VULNERABILITIES

Typical lycanthropes share certain general powers and weaknesses, with which most AD&D players are familiar. Lycanthropic heroes can have a little more variety, and there's nothing stopping a Dungeon Master from using these rules to create unusual lycanthropic NPCs.

Werebeast heroes need to split their time between the human and animal worlds, and it takes a great deal of time and training for a true lycanthrope to gain total control over his "heritage." Thus, lycanthropic heroes must buy *all* of their powers with proficiency slots. They may spend both weapon and/or non-weapon proficiency slots to buy powers as they see fit. A few powers become more potent as the hero allocates additional slots to them. Heroes get *no* powers for free; they must spend proficiency slots to acquire each power they want.

Werebeast heroes also have certain weaknesses which they must automatically take. These **Required**

Weaknesses do not provide any additional proficiency slots. There are additional weaknesses which a lycanthrope can take; each **Optional Weakness** taken earns the hero an additional slot which can be used to acquire lycanthropic powers. A hero may never take more than 1d4 optional weaknesses.

Lycanthropic Proficiencies

Proficiency	Cost	Stat	Modifier
Animal Summoning	1	Cha	-
Communication	1	Int	-
Damage Healing	1	-	-
Damage Immunity	4	-	-
Damage Resistance	2	-	-
Fearful Howl	1	Cha	-
Ferocity	1	-	-
Magic Resistance	*	-	-
Power of the Blood	*	-	-
Progeny Control	*	Cha	-
Regeneration	*	-	-
Savage	1	-	-
Sharpened Senses	1	-	-
Transformation	*	Con	*

* **Note:** Cost varies; see listing below.

Required Weaknesses
Bloodlust
Chemical Vulnerability
Dietary Requirement
Weapon Vulnerability

Optional Weaknesses
Additional Vulnerability
Allergen
Allergen Ward
Animal Repulsion
Animal Years
Mark of the Beast
Token

Proficiency and Weakness Glossary

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PC RULES

Additional Vulnerability

Most lycanthropes can instantly regenerate most forms of damage but retain certain vulnerabilities: kinds of attack which can cause them real damage no matter what their form. A hero taking this weakness adds another vulnerability to that list: a form of damage which normally would not harm him. This could be poison, suffocation, an additional weapon or chemical vulnerability, etc. The player chooses the vulnerability with the Dungeon Master's approval, but it must be natural (i.e. non-magical) and fairly common. Use the vulnerabilities (listed later under Phenotypes) as guidelines. This weakness may be taken multiple times.

Allergen

All lycanthropic heroes have both a weapon and chemical vulnerability. However, the typical werewolf can adorn himself in as much silver as he wants, or wear a sprig of wolfsbane in his hair, for all he cares; until someone wounds him with it, the allergen causes no harm.

Heroes with the Allergen weakness are a bit more vulnerable. Essentially, these lycanthropes have an allergic reaction to the dangerous material. The werebeast finds the material uncomfortable to the touch, and takes 1 hp of damage per turn spent in direct physical contact with the substance.

For example: Alicia is a werewolf with an Allergy to silver. Her unwitting suitor presents her with the gift of a silver necklace. The jewelry feels loathsome in her hands, but she puts it on to appease her suitor. However, ten minutes (one turn) later, she rips it from her throat, unable to stand the itching any longer. Where the necklace touched her skin, angry red welts have appeared (and she's taken 1 hp damage). I don't think the relationship, or the suitor, will last long.

Allergen Ward

The hero finds the object of its chemical vulnerability utterly disgusting and vile; the creature cannot stomach its presence, much like a vampire with garlic. For example, a werewolf may not be able to bear the overpowering stench of wolfsbane (which no one else around it can even smell).

When the hero is presented with its allergen, it must make a successful fear check to avoid fleeing the area. Even if the check is successful, the creature is unable to approach within ten feet of the offensive substance.

In some cases an allergen can be used to create a barrier which the lycanthropic hero cannot cross. For example, powdered wolfsbane could be poured in a circle to keep out a werewolf with this weakness.

Animal Repulsion

Natural animals can sense the beast within. Whenever the hero with this weakness comes within one hundred feet of an animal, that animal will become nervous and skittish. If possible, the animal will flee from the hero as quickly as it can. If prevented from retreating, the animal will become increasingly more frantic until, when the hero comes within twenty-five feet, the animal becomes panicked.

If the animal is still prevented from fleeing, its behavior will depend on its nature. Hunters, like dogs, wolves, or great cats, will attack the hero. Less aggressive creatures like horses, cattle, or deer, may injure or even kill themselves in their wild drive to escape.

It is impossible for the hero to mask his true nature, even with the aid of magic. Spells may fool common folk, but the senses of animals are far keener. As a note, animals of the same phenotype as the hero (such as bears with werebears) do not react strangely to the hero's approach. If anything, their behavior may be unusually friendly.

Animal Summoning

Werebeasts with this power are able to summon a specific type of animal, typically the same species as their phenotype. The number of animals is determined by the Hit Dice (level) of the creature summoning them. A number of animals with total Hit Dice equal to three times those of the summoning hero will appear 2d6 rounds after they are called. Of course, this assumes that the animals being called are native to the area. An attempt to summon tigers in Har' Akir would simply fail.

Once the summoned animals arrive, they will act according to their natures, although some direction from the summoner is possible. The animals will consider the werebeast their leader, the "alpha" of the pack. Normal morale rules apply, and the summoned animals will not take any action that is contrary to their nature or obviously suicidal.

To use this power, a hero must be in his secondary or tertiary aspect.

Animal Years

Some say the candle which burns brightest, burns most quickly. Others say that every passing year for humans is equal to seven dog years. The hero's powerful metabolism burns quickly through the years: the hero's lifespan is reduced by 1/3. In other words, a human werebeast will reach adulthood by the age of twelve, and hit middle age at thirty. This also affects maximum age, but has no effect on magical aging attacks. For obvious

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PC RULES

reasons, a hero may not have both this weakness and the 2nd level of the **Power of the Blood** ability. This is not a common weakness, although it is found inordinately frequently in werebadgers.

Bloodlust

The call of the wild is strong in the werebeast. Bloodlust is perhaps the most fearful element of the lycanthrope, one which even the werebeast himself may fear. Briefly, the hero may fly into a berserker rage whenever exposed to freshly spilled blood; fresh, raw meat; or physical pain. The werebeast will seek to kill the nearest foes and prey, and then to sate its hunger. It will continue to attack anyone it sees until it snaps out of bloodlust.

Whenever the hero is exposed to a stimulus for bloodlust, the werebeast must save vs. polymorph. This saving throw suffers certain situational penalties:

Condition	Penalty
Other werebeast(s) nearby already in bloodlust	-2
Each day beyond 4 of food debt (see below)	-1
Werebeast tastes blood	-1
Werebeast suffered 25% damage	-1
Werebeast suffered 50% damage	-4
Werebeast suffered 75% damage	-7
Infected werebeast	-3

These penalties are cumulative.

Lycanthropic heroes are normally candidates for bloodlust only when in secondary or tertiary aspect. If they are reduced to less than 50% of their total hit points while in human form, however, they must save vs. polymorph at -2 or enter bloodlust. If they do succumb to bloodlust, they will immediately transform to either of their other forms.

This is a Required Weakness.

- ❖ **Effects of Bloodlust:** A lycanthrope in bloodlust will attack the nearest living creature in a wild attempt to slay it. During this berserk rampage, it gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls and damage; however, its AC is decreased by two steps (AC 4 becomes AC 6, etc.). The bloodthirsty lycanthrope cannot retreat from battle.
- ❖ **Shaking Off Bloodlust:** Once a character in bloodlust has consumed enough flesh to satiate it urges *and* killed all foes in sight, it must again save vs. polymorph. All previous modifiers are eliminated, except for any relating to damage suffered. In addition, the character gains a +2 bonus. The character must make this saving throw each round until he succeeds. Once he makes the save, he shakes off the bloodlust and regains full control of his actions.

Chemical Vulnerability

All lycanthropic heroes have a chemical vulnerability, a natural material which to them is deadly poison. Specific chemical vulnerabilities will be listed with each phenotype. If the chemical is placed in the hero's food and is consumed by the creature, the hero must make a save vs. poison or die instantly. However, a lycanthropic hero about to consume such poison has a flat 75% chance to detect it before any harm is done.

If the substance can be used to coat a weapon blade, that weapon can damage the werebeast normally for 1d6 successful hits, at which time the substance must be reapplied.

This is a Required Weakness.

Communication

Basically, this is a language proficiency. The werebeast learns the forms of communication of its phenotype animal. For example, a werewolf who takes this proficiency can communicate with wolves. If there are similar subspecies, the Dungeon Master may rule the hero can communicate with them as well. In our example, the hero may be able to understand dire wolves and worgs as well. Although the werebeast can understand the animals' messages in any form, the hero must be in secondary or tertiary aspect to express ideas to his bestial kin. Such communication will of course be limited to simple concepts.

Damage Healing

Whenever the lycanthrope transforms, it heals 1d6x10% of all damage taken *since the last time the hero changed shape*. This power will not heal damage taken from armor constriction.

Damage Immunity

The hero is immune to all normal damage, including falls, drowning, poison, attacks from normal weapons, etc. Such non-wounding attacks heal as quickly as they are inflicted when the werebeast is in secondary or tertiary aspect. When in human form, the attack may *appear* to cause harm, but such wounds are purely cosmetic; no hit points are lost and the character suffers no ill effects. The cosmetic wound fades over the course of about an hour.

The werebeast can still be damaged by its weapon and chemical vulnerabilities, magic weapons of at least +1 enchantment, spells, acid, fire, or creatures with at least 4+3 Hit Dice.

Damage Resistance

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PC RULES

The werebeast can be harmed, but never killed, by normal weapons and attacks. If the creature is reduced to -10 hp or less (or to 0 hp if you don't use the Death's Door rule) in this manner, he reverts to human form and enters a "death-coma." To all eyes he will appear quite dead. The lycanthrope remains in this death-coma, slowly regenerating, until he reaches 1/3 of his total hit points, at which point he wakes. Until the moment the hero wakes, he still appears dead; he does not breathe, his heart does not beat.

How long it takes the hero to recover from normal-weapon damage varies. If the hero is in secondary or tertiary aspect, he regenerates at the rate of 3 hp/round. In human form, the character heals quickly, at the rate of 1d8 hp/day. Severed limbs are considered to have grown back when all hit points have been recovered.

The hero is not entirely immune to normal weapons, however; any lycanthrope with Damage Resistance that is decapitated is instantly killed and will not regenerate.

Note that the hero will not regenerate in this manner damage caused by any of its weapon or chemical vulnerabilities, magic, acid, or fire. If it survives such attacks, the werebeast must heal from such wounds at normal rates.

Dietary Requirement

Lycanthropes have powerful metabolisms, and engines which run so hot require great amounts of fuel. Furthermore, all lycanthropes are strict carnivores. Although they *can* eat fruits and vegetables, and may possibly even enjoy their taste, werebeasts derive sustenance from only one source: flesh. Each phenotype must consume a given amount of meat each day, listed later. As a note, Good-aligned lycanthropes require only half the listed amount.

Although werebeasts can subsist on older flesh, they greatly prefer fresh meat; still bleeding, if at all possible. Cooking meat lessens its sustaining value by half. For example, two pounds of cooked meat feeds a werewolf as well as one pound of raw meat. Note that (unlike vampires) werebeasts are not required to feed from sentient creatures; it's just that many lycanthropes find the taste of sentient victims particularly succulent.

For each day beyond four that a lycanthrope goes without enough food, the creature loses 1/8th of its hit point total (rounded up). This hp loss can be avoided if the hero makes a save vs. polymorph. However, this save must be made each day the hero doesn't get enough meat. For example, a werebat who normally has 24 hp is forced to go without food. For the first four days it suffers no ill effects. On the 5th and each subsequent day it must save vs. polymorph or lose 3 hp.

A hero cannot gain hit points lost to starvation by changing shape or through regeneration. However, so

long as the werebeast eats *something*, clerical magic can heal this damage. (A hero could theoretically subsist on bread, water, and the ministrations of a caring priest, although it would continue to accumulate starvation points.) The creature recovers all starvation points as soon as it eats *all* of the meat it should have eaten up to that point.

Progressive starvation also increases the chance that the character will enter Bloodlust (see above). This penalty vanishes as soon as the creature makes up for all the time it's gone without food. If a werebeast hero grows hungry enough, he may well start looking at his companions "in a new light."

This is a Required Weakness.

Fearful Howl

Simply by throwing back its head and loosing a bone-chilling howl, roar, or shriek (whatever is appropriate to the phenotype), the character can force everyone within fifty feet to make a fear check. In a combat situation, this counts as the creature's action for the round. To use this power, the hero must be in secondary or tertiary aspect.

Ferocity

When in secondary or tertiary aspect and using natural attack forms (when fighting tooth and claw) the lycanthrope can use the warrior's table to determine THAC0, regardless of the character's actual class. Obviously, heroes who actually are of the warrior class have no use for this proficiency.

Magic Resistance

A few creatures are imbued with a natural resistance to the powers of magic. Every slot allocated to this special ability gives the hero 5% magic resistance. Thus, the allocation of three slots would provide 15% MR.

Mark of the Beast

Any lycanthrope who takes this weakness exhibits certain subtle hints of its bestial nature even while in human form. Many of these marks, such as joined eyebrows or hairy palms, are well-known among the superstitious. Of course, many people who have these features haven't a drop of lycanthropic blood in their bodies. The typical "enlightened" person living in Ravenloft's cities may think nothing of these features, but fearful peasants and would-be werebeast-hunters will quickly pick the character out as suspect. Typical Marks are listed later with each phenotype.

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PC RULES

Power of the Blood

Lycanthropy can be a wretched curse, but it can be seductive as well. The Beast is powerful, and sometimes having a werebeast's blood flowing through one's veins can grant a portion of the creature's strength. The taint of the werebeast can keep a body strong and healthy. (Indeed, legends tell of desperate individuals who sought the Dread Disease specifically to escape the effects of a deadly ailment.)

- ❖ **One Slot:** The character receives immunity to all normal diseases (but not to mummy rot or other magical ailments). Wounds heal well, and only the most dire injuries will leave scars.
- ❖ **Two Slots:** The character receives a prolonged youth: a werebeast's flesh can resist the siege of time. Starting in adulthood, the character's aging slows so that his apparent age is about 2/3 of his actual age. This can delay the penalties associated with aging, and push back the hero's maximum age. However, this power grants no protection against magical aging attacks. Rumor has it that several members of the Timothy clan enjoy this power . . .

Progeny Control

The hero can control the actions of his progeny. This control is tenuous; the controlling lycanthrope can direct his minions only in general terms. He can prompt an attack against a certain target, or prevent one. He can keep his progeny quiet, or send them ravaging forth in a fury. This control is not telepathic; the progeny must be able to hear the commands.

The amount of control the hero has over his progeny is determined by the number of slots allocated to this power:

- ❖ **One Slot:** Both the controlling lycanthrope and the progeny in question must be in secondary or tertiary aspect.
- ❖ **Two Slots:** The hero can control his progeny even when he is in human form. The progeny must still be in their bestial form; the hero still has no control over his victims while they are human.
- ❖ **Three Slots:** The hero gains the insidious ability to trigger his progeny's transformations at will. Forcing someone to change into a werebeast is an evil act, worthy of a Powers check. To use this power, the hero must be able to see his progeny; he then simply wills the change, and it occurs.
- ❖ **Four Slots:** The hero gains the ability to Charm his progeny even when they are in human form (as per the spell *charm person*). The victim is still entitled to a save vs. spell, and any additional protection (such as that enjoyed by elves) still counts. Even if

the progeny makes the save, they will feel a certain, inexplicable kinship towards their progenitor. The hero may attempt to *charm* any given progeny no more than once a month.

Regeneration

Some werebeasts are able to heal wounds incredibly swiftly. For every **2 slots** allocated to this ability, the hero heals 1 hit point of damage except acid or fire. An important note: if a werebeast hero is killed by his vulnerabilities or magic, he will *not* regenerate. He has died the true death. If, however, he escapes the battle with so much as 1 hit point remaining, he may be back in prime condition in a matter of minutes.

Savage

The lycanthrope can enter bloodlust at will! However, while in Bloodlust the hero suffers all effects, good and bad, and can only leave bloodlust via the rules given above. Obviously, this is a double-edged sword.

Sharpened Senses

The hero has an animal's sharpened senses even in primary aspect. In game terms, this has two effects: first, the character has a +1 bonus against being surprised. Second, if the hero takes the Tracking proficiency, he does not suffer the -4 penalty applied to non-rangers. If the lycanthrope is a ranger, he receives a +1 bonus to his Tracking checks.

Token

The werebeast possesses some sort of magical item which he requires to use the Transformation ability. These tokens often take the form of pungent salves or articles of clothing, such as a belt or a cloak. One known type of lycanthrope dons the specially prepared hide of a wolf to effect the change. These lycanthropes have usually gained their occult powers through dark curses or unholy rites. While transformed, the token typically melds into the werebeast's body. If the hero's token is stolen, he cannot transform until it is recovered. Should the token be destroyed, the hero knows how to create another, although this process should be difficult and time-consuming. A hero has a strong mystical link to his token, and may never have more than one at a time.

Transformation

This is *the* lycanthropic power. All heroes start out with only a primary aspect. To be able to transform into their other aspects, they must allocate slots to this ability. The

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PC RULES

more slots they allocate, the greater the control they have over their power.

- ❖ **One Slot:** The hero gains the ability to change into their secondary aspect. While in that form, they gain any special attacks or movement forms of that phenotype. They also lose the use of human hands and the ability to speak. Spellcasting is obviously impossible.
- ❖ **Two Slots:** The hero gains the ability to take tertiary form, that of the man-beast. In this form, they retain the special attack and movement forms of their phenotype, but can keep the use of their hands. They can usually speak, with effort, but the result is rumbling and slurred. Spellcasting is possible only with a successful Dex check; if the check is failed, the spell is fumbled. While in this form, the lycanthe's Str and Dex change to new levels, listed later.

It takes a full round to transform from any one aspect to any other aspect. During this round, the hero may take no other action, and any attacks against him enjoy a +4 bonus. Those attackers usually must first succeed at a horror check, however.

- ❖ **Three Slots:** The hero has gained so much control over his transformations that he can effect only partial changes; he can give his face a more feral cast, or cause his eyes to reflect baleful yellow light, for just two examples. Most shapechangers consider this sort of display akin to a parlor trick, useful for intimidating their human prey.

This can also have uses in combat. Instead of spending the entire round changing, the werebeast can simply grow fangs in his mouth or sprout claws; in these cases, the character uses one attack to effect the partial change. He may use any attacks remaining to him in the round to do battle, and his foes do not receive the +4 attack bonus.

Fangs or claws in this nearly-human form do one smaller die's worth of damage. In other words, if a werebeast's bite normally did 1d6 hp damage, in this form it would do 1d4. If its claws normally did 1d3 hp damage, in this form they would cause 1d2 hp damage. (The same as a fist, but not temporary damage.)

In order to change shape, the character makes a proficiency check. The relevant ability for this power is Constitution, but there is a situational modifier:

Time of Day/Month	Modifier
Night of Full Moon	+4
Day of Full Moon	+3
Night of Gibbous Moon	+2

Day of Gibbous Moon	+1
Night of Half Moon	—
Day of Half Moon	-1
Night of Crescent Moon	-2
Day of Crescent Moon	-3
Night of New Moon	-4
Day of New Moon	-5

The hero may attempt to change once every round, but whether or not he succeeds, the attempt to transform must be his only action in the round.

It is possible that a player may choose to play a lycanthropic hero, yet allocate no slots to Transformation. These heroes are considered Latent Lycanthes, which are covered in Section V.

Weapon Vulnerability

All werebeasts are vulnerable to a certain type of material. When weapons are fashioned of this material, those weapons can cause the lycanthe real damage. Folklore proclaims that weapons of silver can harm any lycanthe; although several types of werebeast do share this vulnerability, other creatures can scoff at a silver long sword (perhaps fearing cold iron instead). Specific vulnerabilities will be listed with phenotypes.

SECTION IV: PHENOTYPES

What follows is a list of lycanthe phenotypes. Players may choose any phenotype they want for their characters, but should be aware that the more powerful phenotypes also have powerful appetites (see Dietary Requirement in Section III). For some of these creatures, feeding may become a full-time job.

For quick reference, these are the phenotypes offered:

Werebadger	Werebat	Werebear
Wereboar	Werecocodile	Werefox
Werejackal	Werejaguar	Wererat
Wereraven	Were seal (seawolf)	
Weretiger	Werewolf	

Each phenotype is listed in the following format:

Werebeast Phenotype

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PC RULES

WV: Cold-forged iron **CV:** Belladonna
MB: Large, stout physique; Thick hair growth; Rumbling voice

Wereboar

AC: 4 **MV:** 12
#Att: 1 (gore)
DAM/ATT: 2d6
Size: M (5' — 6' tall) **DR:** 20
Str: 19 **Dex:** 15
WV: Oak (spears) **CV:** Camphor
MB: Stocky, muscular physique; Short, stiff hair; "Piggish" nose; Rolls of fat; Vulgar demeanor

Werecocodile

AC: 1 **MV:** 3, Swim 12
#Att: 2 (bite/tail slap)
DAM/ATT: 2d6 / 1d8
Size: L (8' — 12' long) **DR:** 50
Str: 20 **Dex:** 14
WV: Flint **CV:** Mandrake root
MB: Dark, leathery skin; Constant grin; Sharp features; Long nose and chin; Noticeable overbite
Notes: Werecocodiles can only bite foes to their front or sides. They can only use their tail slap against foes to their sides or rear.

Werefox (Foxwoman)

AC: 2 (fox) 4 (vixen) **MV:** 24 (fox) 18 (vixen)
#Att: 1 (bite)
DAM/ATT: 1d2 (fox); 2d6 (vixen)
Size: S (fox); M (5' tall) (vixen) **DR:** 5
Str: 18/76 **Dex:** 18
WV: Canine bone **CV:** Juniper berry
Restrictions: All werefoxes are female, thus the name "foxwomen." Only females are susceptible to infection. Also, the primary aspect should be elven; no matter what the race of an infected woman, over the course of 1-2 years her body slowly transforms into a shapely elven form.
MB: Silver or silver-streaked hair; Widow's peak; Extremely vain
Notes: The man-beast form is often called a "vixen." It is essentially unchanged from its elfmaid form, save that the creature's body is covered in silvery fur, it has the head and tail of a large fox, and has slightly vulpine feet. It is thus capable of taking tertiary aspect without tearing through its clothes (or armor). It is also quite graceful and retains the ability to speak clearly.

Werefoxes are barren, part of their curse. Thus, all foxwomen are actually infected lycanthropes. 3 days after infection, a woman becomes a "true" werefox.

Foxwomen are known for their bewitching beauty. A foxwoman hero can increase her Cha by 1 point for every proficiency slot allocated, to a maximum of 20.

Werejackal

AC: 5 **MV:** 15
#Att: 3 (claw/claw/bite)
DAM/ATT: 1d6 / 1d6 / 1d10
Size: M (6' tall) **DR:** 20
Str: 18/00 **Dex:** 17
WV: Copper **CV:** Fennel
MB: Surly, insulting personality; Long, dark nails

Werejaguar

AC: 4 **MV:** 15
#Att: 3 (claw/claw/bite)
DAM/ATT: 1d3 / 1d3 / 2d4
Size: M (6' — 7' long) **DR:** 20
Str: 18/00 **Dex:** 19
WV: Ebony **CV:** Mercury
MB: Hair is sandy and streaked with black or vice versa; Movements fluid and graceful.

Wererat

AC: 6 **MV:** 12
#Att: 1
DAM/ATT: by weapon (see below)
Size: S-M (3' — 6' tall) **DR:** 2
Str: 18 **Dex:** 19
WV: player's choice **CV:** player's choice
MB: Thin, wiry build; Short stature; Darting, beady eyes; Nose and mouth twitch when excited; Followed about by normal rats and mice
Notes: Wererats have no effective natural weapons, but they have learned that by smearing their blades with their own saliva, they can still spread their dread disease.

Wereraven

AC: 6 **MV:** 1, Flight 27 (C)
#Att: 1 (peck)
DAM/ATT: 2d6
Size: M (5' tall) **DR:** 1
Str: 18 **Dex:** 17
WV: Silver **CV:** choose
MB: Beak-like nose; Smooth, silky black hair
Notes: The wereraven's secondary form is that of a huge raven; the stats here reflect the man-beast form. In this form, the wereraven's arms have grown into mighty

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PC RULES

wings. The wereraven can fly in tertiary aspect, but cannot use its hands. It can grasp objects with its feet.

Wereseal (Seawolf)

AC: 6 (animal) 7 (man-beast)
MV: Swim 30 (animal); 12, Swim 12 (man-beast)
#Att: 1 (bite) or 3 (claw/claw/bite)
DAM/ATT: 2d4 (animal) or 1d2/ 1d2/ 1d4 (man-beast)
Size: M (6' — 7' long) **DR:** 50
Str: 20 **Dex:** 16
WV: Whale bones or teeth **CV:** Amaranth
MB: Thickly muscled; Tiny ears; Long hair that covers head and shoulders like a mane; Webbed digits

Notes: Like wereravens, anyone infected with this form of lycanthropy becomes a “true” seawolf. Anyone the wereseal infects becomes a true wereseal over the course of 2-5 days. Once the last night falls, the transformation is complete. Unlike wereravens, seawolves can also breed naturally.

The seawolf’s secondary aspect (referred to as “animal” above for brevity) looks like a frightful melding of wolf and seal. The tertiary aspect is similar to a wolfman, but its fur may be more matted.

Wereseals breathe air. Underwater, they can hold their breath for 1d8+16 rounds while in secondary or tertiary aspect.

Weretiger

AC: 3 **MV:** 12
#Att: 3 (claw/claw/bite)
DAM/ATT: 1d4 / 1d4 / 1d12
Size: M (man-beast) or L (tiger) (6'—9' long) **DR:** 50
Str: 21 **Dex:** 18
WV: Obsidian **CV:** Ginseng
MB: Sleekly muscular; Taller than average; Roll their “r’s.”

Notes: In their secondary aspect, weretigers can leap 10 feet straight up or 30 feet forward from a standstill.

Werewolf

AC: 5 **MV:** 15
#Att: 1 (bite)
DAM/ATT: 2d4
Size: M (6' tall) **DR:** 25
Str: 19 **Dex:** 16
WV: Silver **CV:** Wolfsbane
MB: Eyebrows which meet; Index finger as long as middle finger; Hairy palms

Notes: Werewolves have one advantage none of the other phenotypes can really claim: thanks to Verbrek, there is a place where werewolves can “be themselves” in the company of their own kind, without the worry of interfering humans. On the other hand, there are some

domains where werewolves are more at risk than the humans around them!

SECTION V: SPECIAL RULES

P

resented here are some optional rules to cover specific situations which may arise in play: Latent lycanthropes and infected (pathologic) lycanthropes.

Latent Lycanthropes

It is possible that a player could choose to create a lycanthropic hero, yet allocate no slots to the Transformation ability. First of all, make sure this isn’t just an oversight. On the other hand, if the player did this on purpose, that’s fine. Officially, the hero’s lycanthropy is **latent**; although the hero is a true lycanthrope, he has not integrated the human and bestial parts of his nature. This could be explained in two ways:

- ❖ The hero was not raised by lycanthropic parents (perhaps an orphan), and simply doesn’t suspect his true nature.
- ❖ The hero is aware of his bestial nature, but it horrifies him and he has always sought to be rid of it. He has done all he can to repress the Beast. Again, this is more common when a lycanthropic child is raised by “mundane” parents.

The rules are handled the same way in both cases. The hero cannot be totally rid of the beast; it is as much a part of him as his human side, and he cannot be “cured.” The hero has access to any of the other powers he took, but he is also subject to all of his weaknesses, including Bloodlust. In fact, the only time the hero can change is when he is affected by Bloodlust. The hero remains in bestial form for as long as the Bloodlust episode lasts. After it wears off, the hero can change back whenever he wants, but is then stuck in human form again (until the next time Bloodlust strikes).

Eventually, most players will find this a frustrating situation, and will spend a slot on the Transformation power. Any lycanthrope, whether they are a true werebeast or an infected fool trying to master his curse, must learn to control the art of transformation. When a hero first takes the Transformation proficiency, they go through a brief, frightening period where they learn to control their changes. This period lasts 1d3+1 days. During this time the lycanthrope changes aspect every 1d6 hours. For each change, randomly determine which aspect it assumes. Each time the hero changes shape, he must save vs. polymorph at -2 or go into Bloodlust. At

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PC RULES

the end of this initial period, the hero must make a saving throw vs. polymorph. If he succeeds, he has gained some control over his changes and this phase ends. If the save fails, the phase lasts another day. The hero must continue to attempt the save vs. polymorph each day until he succeeds.

Any hero who puts at least one slot into Transformation during initial creation can be assumed to have already passed through this ugly process.

Infected Lycanthropes

During the course of a campaign, a hero may be infected with the Dread Disease. Rather than seek a cure, the player may choose to have his character learn to control the beast, turning the curse into a source of power. Can it be done? Van Richten wrote that this was impossible. Yet, there are a very few lycanthropes in Ravenloft who claim to have accomplished just that. (Notably, the lord of Saragoss.)

First of all, each Dungeon Master should decide for himself if such a feat is possible in his campaign. After all, the loss of control, the betrayal of one's self, is central to the horror of the Gothic lycanthropic curse. If the Dungeon Master decides it isn't possible, ignore the rules that follow. On the other hand, a player might want to explore the struggle of souls going on within him, and may wish to play out his hero's eventual failure in that struggle.

Even if the Dungeon Master decides such a goal can be attained, any player seeking this path should still be dissuaded, for two reasons.

First, if the hero thinks he's learning to control the beast, he's wrong. Some would claim just the opposite: that the beast is learning to control the man. At the very least, those who integrate the curse into their spirits change for the worse. They become more emotional, more prone to violence. Their tastes grow coarse and primal.

Second, it's no coincidence that the very few lycanthropes who have learned to control their curse are caught up in the dark powers. In effect, such an individual has weighed salvation (the cure) and damnation (control), and willingly chosen to follow the path of damnation. This is exactly the sort of person the dark powers watch very closely.

So what does this mean in game terms? Let's consider an infected hero as a werebeast hero who has allocated no slots to any lycanthropic powers. Infected lycanthropes typically gain all the Lycanthropic Powers and Weaknesses of the creature that infects them. For quick reference, a "standard" infected lycanthrope would have the powers of **Damage Healing**, **Damage Immunity**, and 1 level of **Transformation**. It would also have the four Required Weaknesses. An infected

lycanthrope must also take another Required Weakness: **Infected Lycanthrope**.

Infected Lycanthrope

The hero has been infected with lycanthropy. While in werebeast form, the hero gains the powers and weaknesses of the werebeast which infected him. However, while in human form, the hero has access to none of these powers. On the other hand, while in human form, the hero is not affected by any of the werebeast's weaknesses, including Bloodlust or alignment shifts (discussed above).

The hero has no control over the werebeast. He only changes when influenced by his Trigger. Whenever the hero changes shape involuntarily (such as when he is affected by his Trigger), the player temporarily loses control over his character. The hero werebeast (now an NPC) takes on the alignment of the creature which infected him, and is largely concerned with sating its hunger. When the hero changes back, he has no memory of his actions while transformed.

So how does the hero gain control of the curse? The hero can start buying lycanthropic powers, just like a true lycanthrope hero, by allocating proficiency slots to lycanthropic powers as they become available to him. There are restrictions and drawbacks to this process. First, the hero must "buy off" all the powers he has in beast form. He must pay for all of these powers before he can buy any new lycanthropic abilities. (Think of it as a hero who has given up a kit which provided non-weapon proficiencies.) As the hero pays for each power, it becomes available to him while in human form.

Each time the hero allocates a slot to lycanthropic powers, he must make a series of die rolls, indicating the true peril in which he's placing his soul. First, he has to make a saving throw vs. polymorph. If he fails, the hero's alignment moves one step towards Chaotic Evil, as discussed in Section II.

The second check is also a saving throw vs. polymorph. If this save is failed, the hero has crossed a watershed mark; the Beast has truly sunk its talons into his heart. This "watershed" event has both good and bad side effects. On the downside, he becomes subject to all of the werebeast's weaknesses even while in human form. This includes Bloodlust and alignment shifts. On the other hand, each weakness which suddenly takes effect earns the hero 1 slot to spend on powers. As a special rule, even Required Weaknesses provide slots, so the hero will gain at least 4 slots to spend. These slots can be used to buy off any powers, but the hero may not buy more than one level of a given power while at any given XP level.

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PC RULES

Lastly, the hero *must* take one step down the path of Corruption, automatically failing a dark powers check. No lycanthrope can ever be “Pure.”

An example is needed. Yuri seeks to gain control of his lycanthropy. He goes up an XP level, gains a proficiency slot, and spends it on a lycanthropic ability. He fails the crucial save vs. polymorph, and is suddenly awash in lycanthropic power. He is now subject to all of the Beast’s weaknesses: Bloodlust, Dietary Requirement, and the two Vulnerabilities. Each of these earns Yuri 1 slot, for a total of 4 extra slots he can allocate to lycanthropic powers immediately. Yuri allocates 2 slots to buy off his Damage Resistance power. Yuri has not put any slots into Transformation, and he places one slot into this power to gain the ability to take on secondary aspect at will. Although he would like to, he can not put another slot into Transformation, since this would increase the power’s level and grant new abilities. And, since he has allocated a slot to a lycanthropic power, he automatically fails a powers check.

Also, remember that when the hero first spends a slot on the Transformation power, he goes through the dreadful period described under latent lycanthropes, above.

The infected lycanthrope remains subject to his Trigger until such time as he pays for *all* of the powers he gained at infection, and has at least 2 slots in Transformation. If and when the hero finally buys off all his powers, he is considered to have gained full control of his curse. At any rate, he is now considered a True lycanthrope; he breaks the Bloodline, becoming the Progenitor of his progeny (instead of a simple link in the chain). Also, he can never be cured. For that matter, by the time a hero gains control of his curse, he may well have long since been turned into an NPC, perhaps even earning his own pocket domain.

As you can see, the process is lengthy, difficult, and offers no guarantee of eventual success. It’s possible that the hero could start down this path, spending a few slots on powers, before deciding to go for the cure. Spending slots on Lycanthropic Powers affects the chance of that cure’s success. In essence, by learning to control the curse, the hero has strengthened the werebeast’s grip on his soul. This translates into a -1 penalty to the save vs. death magic (required by the ritual) for each slot allocated to lycanthropic proficiencies.

As a final option, particularly sinister Dungeon Masters may want to use these rules to simulate the increasing taint the lycanthropic curse leaves on an infected victim’s soul over the years. Using this optional rule, an infected hero *must* spend half of his proficiency slots on Lycanthropic Powers, with all the necessary side effects.

SECTION VI: QUICK REFERENCE

Here are a few final concepts that anyone playing a lycanthropic character should keep in mind. They are covered in more detail in the *Van Richten’s Guide to Werebeasts* and in *Van Richten Monster Hunter’s Compendium I*, but the basics are presented here in case readers do not have access to that book.

The Bloodline

For the werebeast hero, starting a lycanthropic bloodline can be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, the hero may have control of his progeny, the makings of an unnaturally loyal army. On the other hand, the more victims he infects, the better the chances one of those progeny may come hunting for him someday. Remember: in Ravenloft, for any of the hero’s progeny to be cured, the hero himself must die.

Infection

All lycanthropic heroes are capable of spreading the dread disease whenever they attack a human, demihuman, or most humanoids with their natural weaponry. In Ravenloft, there is a flat 2% chance per point of damage caused with natural weapons that the victim is infected, becoming one of the werebeast’s progeny.

The Trigger

As a true lycanthrope, the hero is immune to the dread disease. The moon will never force him to change against his will. In fact, as a natural shapeshifter, he even has a certain immunity to being polymorphed: like other natural shapechangers, if he is polymorphed he is trapped in the new form for one round. After that round, the hero can change back into one of his natural forms at will. The only spells which may break this rule are those specifically aimed at controlling lycanthropes.

That said, the player still must choose a Trigger, the stimulus which causes an infected lycanthrope to change into the beast. Why? Because, although it will never affect the hero, it will affect the victims the hero infects. The player and Dungeon Master should decide on a trigger when the hero is first created. Although the full moon is the single most common trigger, it is by no means a majority. *Van Richten’s Guide to Werebeasts* presents an ample list of possible triggers.

Constriction Damage

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PC RULES

Lycanthropes tend to avoid wearing heavy armor. The reason is simple: When a werebeast changes shape, its contorting physiology tears through anything it is wearing. If a lycanthrope is wearing armor, it may be temporarily crushed by this armor before eventually bursting free. This injures the werebeast, and since the damage takes place as part of the transformation, the Damage Healing power cannot repair it. For quick reference, the heavier the armor, the greater the damage taken. In all cases, the armor is ruined.

Armor Type	Damage
Leather/ Padded	0 or 1
Studded Leather/ Ring Mail	1d2
Scale Mail	1d3
Chain Mail	1d4
Splint/ Banded Mail	1d3+1
Plate Mail	1d4+1

✕

THE MAKING OF MEN

Broken Ones as Ravenloft Player Characters

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"It is a man," the voice repeated. "He comes to live with us?"

It was a thick voice with something in it, a kind of whistling overtone, that struck me as peculiar, but the English accent was strangely good.

The Ape Man looked at me as though he expected something. I perceived the pause was interrogative.

"He comes to live with you," I said.

"It is a man. He must learn the Law."

—H. G. Wells
The Island of Dr. Moreau

In a way, role-playing settings are defined by the races players can assume. The elves and dwarves of the typical AD&D setting put those worlds in the mold of fantasy. The unusual aranea and turtles of the Savage Coast emphasize the exotic nature of that land. The mighty half-giants and sturdy muls of Athas demonstrate the harsh lands under the Dark Sun. The fantastic tieflings and modrons of Planescape put the majesty of the multiverse into the very hearts of its players.

Although the populace of Ravenloft is largely human, or at least appears to be so, the lands of Mist have their special player races, too. Up to now, players have been given guidelines for playing characters with Vistani blood; the *Requiem* set has offered rules for playing the undead; there have even been guidelines for player characters trapped in the bodies of the Created. Previously, I wrote "Beasts at Heart" to give players the

option of playing as lycanthropes. All of these races reflect the dark, gothic nature of the Demiplane of Dread, and now another has asked to join the ranks of the Races Macabre.

Broken Ones are twisted abominations, painfully unnatural meldings of man and beast. They are base animals forced to assume the appearance and responsibilities of man, or men reduced to the status of animals. They are objects of both horror and pity. Most Broken Ones spend their tortured existence in the vain hopes of pleasing the cruel master which created them, but some are lucky or brave enough to escape or outlive their tormentors. These special few may travel the Land of Mists, perhaps seeking a remedy for their condition, perhaps simply seeking to survive. These Broken Ones may become player characters.

Like the *Requiem* rules, this simple system can be used to create a Broken One player character from scratch, or may be used to convert a pre-existing hero into one of these miserable creatures. If the hero is being made from scratch, there is a good chance that the Broken One was created from a natural animal (or perhaps some giant version of an otherwise normal beast). If the hero is being converted, he was obviously changed from a "normal" person into his current state. The choice is up to the player, and does not effect these rules.

All Broken Ones, at their best, are assumed to be obviously inhuman in appearance, best hidden from public view. That said, they have a bipedal stance, the ability of speech, and the use of (near-)human hands. They range in height from 4' to 7' tall, and their actual appearance varies widely from individual to individual. (In fact, the appearance of an individual may change with the passage of time, as you will learn below.) Their dietary requirements will be determined by the species of animal used to create them. (Some Broken Ones may be entirely vegetarian, others entirely carnivorous.)

Ability Scores

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PC RULES

If the character is being created from scratch, roll 2d10 for Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution. Roll 2d6 for Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma. Optionally, the Dungeon Master may allow players to roll 3d10 and 3d6 respectively, dropping the lowest die in each roll.

If the Broken One is being created from a pre-existing hero, use the following system. The change into a Broken One is a drastic one both in body and spirit, so roll for new ability scores as above. However, the ability scores the hero previously had will affect these new scores. For each ability, consult the following table:

Previous Score								
3	4	5	6	7-14	15	16	17	18
-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4
Modifier								

Find the character's previous score for each ability and apply the listed modifier to the new score. Even after applying modifiers, neither Strength, Dexterity, nor Constitution may be higher than 20. Neither Intelligence, Wisdom, nor Charisma may be higher than 12. No score may be lower than 2.

As an optional rule, the Dungeon Master may allow Broken One heroes the chance to be able to pass for human, equal to 10% per current point of Charisma.

For Example: Skar was once human, with a 15 Strength and a 6 Charisma. For his new scores, he rolls a 16 for Strength and a 5 for Charisma. Applying the correct modifiers, Skar's new, final scores are 17 Strength and 4 Charisma. Skar has only a 40% chance of passing himself off as human.

Base Movement Rate: 9

Hit Dice: As Class.

Alignment

Affected by their bestial natures and the cruel conditions set by their masters, most typical Broken Ones are Neutral Evil. Broken One heroes may be of any alignment, although most will be Neutral in some aspect.

Available Classes

Fighter, Avenger, or Thief. The unimaginable pain of the procedure which created them leaves Broken Ones too simple-minded to wield spells, they lack the social skills needed to be a bard, and as unnatural abominations they do not make acceptable paladins or rangers.

If the Broken One is being created from scratch, the character has a level limit of 12 in any available classes. If the Broken One is being created from a pre-existing hero, use the level limits for that hero's original race.

Broken Ones may be neither multi-classed nor dual-classed.

Weapon Proficiencies

Broken Ones may wield any weapon allowed by their class. All Broken Ones also have a natural attack form. While the exact nature of this attack (be it bite, kick, claw, sting, etc.) will be determined by the character's animal half, the damage done is standard for all: 1d6. The character must spend a weapon proficiency slot on this attack form or suffer the non-proficiency penalty of his class.

This damage can be increased by allocating additional weapon proficiency slots. If a total of 3 weapon proficiency slots are spent on the attack form, the damage done is 1d8. If a total of 5 slots are allocated to this attack form, the damage done is 1d10. This is intended to represent not only an increase in skill, but fangs, claws, etc. which are physically larger and more lethal than those of their kin.

Special Abilities

All Broken One heroes have one special ability in common: Only the most fit specimens can survive the surgical process of their creation, and that very process heightens their healing abilities. Thus, all Broken One heroes share the ability to regenerate 1 hit point of damage per round. This ability cannot regenerate damage caused by acid or fire, and the Broken One will not continue to regenerate if killed (taken down to 0 hp, or -10 hp if you use the Death's Door optional rule).

Each player may also pick *one* salient ability from the list below for their Broken One hero. These are abilities granted by the Broken One's animal side. Unless otherwise noted, there are no limits on how often these abilities may be used. If you know what sort of animal your Broken One is melded with, you should pick a power which reflects that species. If you don't know what sort of beast the character is yet and are feeling a bit chaotic, you could just roll 1d20 to select a power and choose a species which would reflect that ability.

- 1: Armored Hide.** Be it thick and leathery skin, a chitinous exoskeleton, or an actual shell, the hero has a natural Armor Class of 7.
- 2: Beastspeak.** The character has learned to communicate with the type of animal it was carved from. (Thus, a Broken One created from a bear could communicate with bears.)
- 3: Berserk Frenzy.** When injured, the character goes into a frenzied rage. It can continue to fight until reduced to -7 hp. (All other Death's Door rules still apply.)

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PC RULES

- 4: Charging Attack.** If the character can move at a run straight at its opponent for at least 40', it can make a charging attack with its natural attack form. This may be in the form of horns, antlers, a form of trampling, etc. Further rules for charging attacks may be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.
- 5: Gills.** Obviously created from some manner of aquatic creature, the character can breathe underwater without difficulty. This ability does not help in cases of poison gas, being buried alive, or other suffocating situations.
- 6: Glide.** Stunted wings or large skin flaps give the character the ability to fly 2' forward for every 1' dropped.
- 7: Gnawing Teeth.** The character can use its large, strong teeth to chew through 1" of wood every 2 rounds.
- 8: Heat Sensing Pits.** Most likely grafted from some manner of serpent, these organs give the character an ability effectively identical to infravision with a 60' range.
- 9: Keen Hearing.** The character has particularly sharp ears. It receives a +2 bonus against being surprised.
- 10: Keen Smell.** The character was created from a species which relies on scent. The hero effectively has the Tracking non-weapon proficiency. However, since the character tracks by scent, the only modifiers which need be applied to Tracking rolls are those stemming from time and/or water.
- 11: Keen Vision.** Thanks to hawk-like eyes, the hero's vision ranges are effectively doubled. (These ranges are listed in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.)
- 12: Mighty Leap.** Likely created from a great cat or some manner of giant toad, the character can jump 10' straight up or 20' forward from a standstill.
- 13: Natural Camouflage.** Thanks to the character's natural body coloration, if it remains motionless against natural settings others must succeed at an Intelligence check to see it.
- 14: Night Vision.** Created from a nocturnal creature, the character can see well in darkness. It may apply a +2 bonus to offset any penalties stemming from low light.
- 15: Pack Animal.** Perhaps created from some manner of hoofed animal such as an ox or mule, the character can measure its encumbrance as if its Strength was 2 points higher than it actually is.
- 16: Padfoot.** The character can move with catlike stealth, applying a -3 penalty to opponents' surprise rolls.
- 17: Powerful Lungs.** Likely created from some sort of aquatic mammal or reptile, the character can hold its

breath for a number of rounds equal to its Constitution.

- 18: Quills.** Most of the hero's body is covered in stiff, sharp spines. Any creature which successfully attacks the character with natural weapons (bites, claws, etc.) takes 1d2 damage itself. This does not reduce the amount of damage done to the character in the original attack.
- 19: Special Movement Form.** The hero can move through one special terrain condition at its normal movement rate. This could be climbing, swimming, swinging from tree to tree, etc.
- 20: Venom.** Created from some manner of poisonous reptile or insect, the character's natural attack form (either bite, sting, etc.) injects venom. The victim must save vs. poison or suffer an additional 1d6 points of damage.

Special Penalties

The most obvious drawback in being a Broken One is that the character is, in a very true sense, a monster. Their misshapen bodies are pained, unnatural mixtures of man and beast. They are caught between two worlds, and belong in neither. Broken Ones will have difficulty finding clothes or armor which fit properly (doubling the costs of armor would be appropriate), and any clothing found will be ill-fitting and uncomfortable, but this is the least of their problems.

The folk of Ravenloft are a suspicious lot. If they encounter a Broken One, they may think it some sort of monster or fiend; a fear or horror check may be called for. If the player character was once (demi)human, even his former comrades may be forced to make horror checks when they discover what dire fate has befallen their companion.

Be warned! The fear and loathing of others is not the only difficulty a Broken One faces! Their most persistent threat comes from within; the threat of regression.

Regression

Can you imagine language, once clear-cut and exact, softening and guttering, losing shape and import, becoming mere lumps of sound again? And they walked erect with an increasing difficulty.

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PC RULES

Though they evidently felt ashamed of themselves, every now and then I would come upon one or other running on toes or fingertips, and quite unable to recover the vertical attitude. They held things more clumsily; drinking by suction, feeding by gnawing; grew commoner every day. I realized more keenly than ever what Moreau had told me about the "stubborn beast flesh." They were reverting, and reverting very rapidly.

—H. G. Wells
The Island of Dr. Moreau

Broken Ones are trapped in half-human bodies, to be sure. But even more important than the body is the mind. A Broken One retains his humanity only so long as he strives to do so. If the Broken One behaves like a beast, a beast he will become. If the character was originally a simple animal, this is simply the forces of nature trying to restore his original shape. If the hero was originally human, then the catastrophic change into a Broken One has unleashed the powerful influence of primal instincts. The animal and the man are struggling to claim body and soul, and the animal is stronger.

The player rolled up scores for Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma above. These scores will change, and change often. Indeed, the player should not think of the numbers he rolled as the actual scores for his mental abilities; instead, he should think of them as *maximums*. The actual numbers will be in a constant state of flux.

The system to measure this fluctuation is quite simple, although it does require a wee bit of paperwork for the Dungeon Master. Below is a list of "Beastly Behaviors," which are opposed to "Human Habits." These are suggestions of what sort of actions define an idealized man or animal. The Dungeon Master must keep a running tally of the character's behavior. The simplest method would be to simply divide a piece of paper into two columns, one for each category. Whenever the player of a Broken One has his character perform something beastly, put a mark in that column. When his character behaves in a human manner, note that in the second column.

At the end of each game week, the Dungeon Master should add up the number of marks in each column and compare the totals. If the character behaved more beastly than human, he has regressed. Regression means that the

hero's Intelligence and Wisdom scores each drop by one point. This symbolizes the softening of the mind, as human reason is slowly replaced by primal instincts. Charisma also drops by one point; this represents the hero's physical reversion into an animal. Its shape will become less human; walking on two legs will become ungainly; and the physical act of speech will become more difficult.

If the character behaved more like a human than a beast, then 1 point is regained in each of the three scores. This represents the character clawing its way back toward the ideal of humanity, an ideal it can sadly never fully attain.

In the off chance of a tie, the ability scores remain as they are.

Once the totals have been tallied and ability scores altered, the columns are emptied and the character gets to start the next week with a fresh slate.

A few special notes:

If either Intelligence or Wisdom drops to 1, the Broken One has effectively lost the struggle and becomes an NPC, a simple-minded beast. The other two mental ability scores will automatically drop to 1, each at the rate of one point each week. When all three scores have dropped to 1, the Broken One has reverted entirely into an ordinary animal, although its mind and body will always bear the scars gained during its fiendish creation.

At any time that a Broken One looks like he is going to lose the struggle of his humanity and doesn't trust himself to stop the process, he can always turn to a much more... *drastic* method of regaining his humanity. A *surgical* method. Markov and the illithids of Bluetspur are only the most notorious of those who mingle the natures of men and beasts. There are others, less feared but no less wicked, who possess the skills of vivisection necessary to impose the human template on an animal's flesh. If one of these individuals, perhaps even the character's very creator, could be coerced to help the hero, then the problem becomes one of "modern medicine."

If the Broken One hero is subjected to the knife again and succeeds at a saving throw vs. death magic, then all three mental abilities are restored to their maximums (the original scores rolled). If the saving throw is failed, the pathetic creature does not survive the procedure. Perhaps that is for the best, since most Broken Ones react to the threat of the surgical tables with abject terror. (It is recommended that Broken One characters be subject to a horror check whenever presented with any sort of surgical procedure.)

Another important point: if any of the character's mental ability scores drop to 1, the simple animal mind will no longer be able to retain any semblance of the skills or identity of the "man" which existed before. Even if restored to full scores through the above procedure,

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PC RULES

they will have no memories of anything before their “creation.” They must be re-taught all their skills, and begin again as 1st level characters. Only the cruelest of “friends” would impose such a rescue on their companion; better to leave him a beast and let him roam the wilds forever.

Beastly Behaviors	Human Habits
Killing Men or Animals	Defending Men or Animals From Harm
Eating Flesh or Fish	Eating Plants
Chasing Men	Rational Debate
Succumbing to “the Passions”	Marriage
Going Without Clothes	Wearing Appropriate Fashions
Going on All Fours	Dancing
Sucking Up Drink	Using Proper Etiquette
Clawing the Bark of Trees	Engaging in Proper Grooming
Baying at the Moon	Singing Proper Songs, with Proper Melody and Proper Lyrics
Slurring Speech and Growling	Reading and Writing with Proper Grammar



OUT OF THE MISTS

The Villains of Ravenloft

by Jon Winter
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"As I wandered in my sleep I spied a place where the mists were thick and dark. Then the fog parted, revealing a wondrous land which I did not know. As I drifted through the breathtaking dream-scenery, the sun set below the hills, and the land became dark. Even while I watched, the place began to change. What was beautiful became fearsome and ugly, as if a false masque had been ripped from the realm with the passing of day. Shadowy things lurked, and I could sense the evil of the land itself, as if it were alive. I turned to leave, but found that the mists had stolen me away from my bed, and I was prisoner.

"I awoke, and the dream shattered. I know what I had seen was real, and do not desire to experience it again. Bewarned, I have visited a place best left unknown."

—**Ramblings of Old Raoul,
Gypsy Seer of Sembia**

The Mists of Ravenloft beckon, and you shall follow. Welcome to the lands where terror stalks by night.

Herein find revealed some of the villains of Ravenloft, presented as kits for all types of character. Unlike other kits, these are not allowed for player characters, and players should respect their Dungeon Master by not reading them. They are solely for villains which the Dungeon Master may wish to bring to life in Ravenloft, for each have the distinct elements of tragedy and evil suited for gothic horror. Find below the unholy corruption of the beyond, the murderous seductor, the insane genius and the treachery of the dark clowns and false ones.

Character Portrait combines both a description and the role of the kit, and outlines some of the possible events which led to the formation of such a villain. Guidelines for secondary skills and non-weapon proficiencies are not given, for such details are of more use to player characters. Dungeon Masters running colorful villains have more important things to consider than their proficiencies, but are free to choose such skills as required. Alignments and statistic requirements are generally not given, and are left for the Dungeon Master to assign as desired. Unlike monsters, (demi-)humans with villain kits can be tailored to fit the party's capabilities by simply changing their level. Adventure options outlines possible adventure ideas using villains of these kits.

Beware, for Ravenloft nurtures its chosen few. Anger them, and you had best be prepared for the consequences.

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PC RULES

THE BEYOND

Class

Psionicist.

Character Portrait

The beyond was a psychic who attempted to learn too much. Once a normal psionicist, the beyond felt compelled to experiment with forbidden and twisted powers, powers which could destroy the minds and bodies of others. The dark powers of Ravenloft watched and rewarded the beyond with a new form, one that the psionicist had striven to inflict upon others. Now the beyond has many dark and powerful psionic abilities, but its life has been twisted into death, for the beyond is one of the undead.

Appearing as a gruesome parody of the living, the beyond is humanoid in shape, male or female, but purely evil in spirit. Twisted facial features and talon-like fingers reinforce the bestial nature of these sinister characters. On the brightest day, shadows hang around them like cloaks.

It would be easy enough to avoid them if this was how they always appeared, but the beyond are far more cunning. They possess a strange psionic-illusion ability which allows them to appear as humans in the minds of others, and using this ability they have infiltrated villages and murdered at their leisure. Many are minions of the domain lords, but more work for their own evil ends.

Weapons and Equipment

The beyond may use any weapon allowed to psionicists. They have no special equipment requirements.

Chosen Disciplines

Primary: Psychometabolism. **Others Favored:** Telepathy.

Psionic Powers

Bonus: (PsyM sci) Death field, Life draining, (PsyM dev) Aging, Double pain. **Recommended:** (PsyK dev) Animate shadow, Control body, (PsyM sci) Shadow form, (PsyM dev) Body control, Body equilibrium, Cause decay, Cell adjustment, Ectoplasmic form, (Tele sci) Domination, Mass domination, Mindwipe, Psionic blast, Switch personality, (Tele dev) Aversion, Awe, Contact, Invincible foes, Life detection, Phobia amplification, Repugnance, (Meta sci) Split personality, (Meta dev) Psychic drain.

Special Benefits

Being undead confers many special advantages. Firstly, the beyond need never sleep, eat, breathe or tire again. It will never die from age, although it can be destroyed by physical damage. Its alignment is hidden by the dark powers from prying eyes, its mind is shielded by a wall of false thoughts, and it cannot be magically detected as an undead creature.

The most sinister ability of the beyond, however, is its psionic ability of life draining. The beyond must touch its victim after initiating the power, but once the victim is touched a permanent scar is left. 1d10 hit points per round can be drained by the beyond and added to its own total, but one hit point per touch is permanently lost by the victim. Nothing can remove the scar or restore the lost health short of a wish or restoration spell.

Still more dangerous, is the fact that the link between beyond and victim (called a soul binding) is not severed when the touch is broken. If the beyond is reduced to 0 hit points or less, it does not die. Rather, it lies dormant for 1d6 rounds or more. When it wishes to bring itself back to undeath it calls upon its soul binding with the last three living creatures it touched, draining energy from these victims to restore itself to health. When draining health, it gains three hit points per round, at the cost to each of its victims of one point per round (this damage is not permanent).

Past victims of the beyond will certainly be horrified when agonizing wounds tear through their bodies for no reason and their life force is sapped. The beyond will drain health until it is sated, and then be at full health once more. The only known way to sever a soul binding (bar a *wish* spell, the victim's death, or escaping Ravenloft) is for a victim who has been previously drained to kill the beyond, upon which time the beyond will fall dormant indefinitely. The victim need not fight the creature alone, but must strike the killing blow. It is not sufficient for the character to destroy the beyond's body after its death if the killing blow was not struck. The beyond will pretend to be dead, and just restore itself to health when the first safe opportunity arises.

Special Hindrances

The ability of a beyond to appear as human is limited in several ways. Although all intelligent creatures have the assumed image of the beyond projected into their minds psionically—and have no way of disbelieving or detecting this illusion as false without true seeing, animals are not so affected. Because they are unintelligent, they see the beyond as what it truly is; a shambling corpse. So while the beyond may be charming folk with sparkling good looks and elegant dancing, animals will growl, refuse to go near, or flee from the foul creature.

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PC RULES

The beyond may appear as any of the following: itself before death, any of the victims with which it has a soul binding, or its true, dead form. Most choose the former, to avoid meeting its own image in the shape of one of its victims.

However, not only animals see the beyond for what it is. Mirrors and pools of water are also unintelligent, and reflect the true form of the beyond. Therefore, a careless beyond standing near a mirror can be seen for the horror it truly is. Beyond have a similar dislike of mirrors that vampires and their kin share.

Finally, the beyond may be turned by a priest as undead with hit dice equal to their experience level. Unless used in a turning attempt, holy symbols hold no danger to the beyond.

Adventure Options

There are many possible uses for beyond characters; from a vampire ‘substitute’ (to surprise and terrify jaded vampire hunters), to a traitorous party member, or a scheming character in control of a village or castle.

Races

All beyond used to be human or half-elven, but are now raceless undead horrors.

THE DARK CLOWN

Class

Bard.

Character Portrait

The dark clown is a chilling and evil villain indeed. Once innocent entertainers and jokers, dark clowns are cursed to hate those who love them most. Although still maintaining a facade of friendliness, the mind of the dark clown has been twisted to that of a madman and murderer. Dark clowns are always male and usually chaotic and evil in alignment.

What is most disturbing about the dark clown is that by day he is a happy, fun-loving character, playful with children and always amusing—but when night falls, he stalks the streets, killing his favorite prey; the very children who flock around him. Their lifeless faces are painted with make-up into a grotesque parody of a clown’s smile.

Such horrible events may occur several times before the dark clown moves on to another village, where the killing begins again. Few suspect the innocent smile of a fool, but should you look carefully, under the face paint, a wicked glint can sometimes be seen in his eye as he plans the coming night.

Weapons and Equipment

Weapons favored by assassins, like the garrote, dagger, knife, blowgun, short sword and hand crossbow are most common, although the dark clown may use any weapon. Dark clowns frequently use poison to carry out their gruesome work, and all have special costumes. Most are sewn from white cloth, decorated with bells, but the suits they wear at night are black. Many still sew bells into their costumes, which jangle quietly and ominously as they walk.

Special Benefits

The evil dark powers of Ravenloft especially enjoy the killing which the dark clowns perpetrate, and grant them special favor. Since they have already embraced evil, there is no need for the Land to offer them enticements, and dark clowns need never make powers checks. They are already beyond hope, for the dark clown is a creature of Ravenloft.

The dark powers of Ravenloft have granted the dark clown the ability to backstab opponents, causing damage as a thief of the same level, and he can influence reactions as the true bard. The dark clown may also cast a powerful version of *Tasha’s uncontrollable hideous laughter* spell once per three levels of experience, per night. The hideous laughter which the victim experiences causes such pain that 1d4 points of damage are caused per round. This version of the spell lasts for 1d4 rounds. This ability functions in addition to other spells the dark clown may memorize.

They are also able to charm any child during the daylight hours (as per charm person), and persuade their willing victims to do anything they wish, including steal, kill or spy. There is one drawback, however, in that the child must be killed by sunrise the next morning.

Special Hindrances

All dark clowns must suffer a curse in return for their power. They are condemned by Ravenloft to a life of entertaining and then killing innocents. While the small spark of goodness still left in their soul dearly loves the children and wishes they could be saved, the pure bestial evil which controls the dark clown by night is merciless. Each dawn, the dark clown must live with what he has done, and each dawn the pain becomes worse. To make their torment complete, the dark powers of Ravenloft have made it impossible for the dark clown to kill himself, either by wounding himself or allowing another to wound him; compelling him to fight for his life if threatened.

Adventure Options

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PC RULES

A town or village-based adventure with a dark clown as the central villain could be chilling and macabre indeed. Since they work alone, it is recommended that the level of the dark clown should be significantly higher than that of the player characters. A dark clown could also associate with doppelgangers or were-creatures who form a circus troupe, perhaps, stealing away the children of the town.

Races

Humans perverted by the evil of the land and its lords are those who most often become dark clowns. Halfling entertainers have occasionally been known to be twisted into dark clowns, but those of other races are strangely unaffected by Ravenloft's perverse whims.

THE FALSE ONE

Class

Priest.

Character Portrait

The false ones are priests of evil deities, who worship their foul masters in secret, while masquerading as ministers of good religions. Since so few churches exist in the Misty Lands the common folk are usually taken in by this evil practice, and attend services regularly. They utter prayers in strange ancient languages, unknowing that they are lending their hearts and souls to the dark powers who oversee Ravenloft.

False ones typically preach a message of humility in the sight of their deity, causing the common folk to fear the wrath of their chosen god. They spread the seeds of conflict with their sermons, telling their parishioners that foreigners and non-humans are not to be trusted. The peasants eagerly accept this, for they believe they have suffered heavily because of these outsiders. The real truth is that it is the false ones and their evil denizens who destroy the peasant's crops and kill their animals for their own unholy practices, but lay clues pointing to elves, dwarves, or folk from other lands. Worse still are the witch hunts that occur when harmless old women are dragged from their homes and burned, in the name of religion, for being witches. Most frequently they are simply folk who cannot afford the extortionate tithes and taxes the church demands.

Weapons and Equipment

False ones are not restricted in the weapons they can use, for their dark gods enjoy death and murder greatly.

Special Benefits

The rewards for faithfully following the dark powers are great, but so are the risks. False ones are granted access to the following spheres of priest magic:

Major Access: All, Chaos, Charm, Divination, Necromantic, Summoning, Weather, War.

Minor Access: elemental, healing, protection, sun (reversed only), time.

To further augment their powers for evil, the dark powers have granted false ones access to the wizardly school of necromancy. These necromancy spells are prayed for and cast just like priest spells. The powers can grant up to seventh-level necromancy spells.

Special Hindrances

As one may have guessed, Ravenloft does not give something for nothing. All false ones suffer a deadly curse, a weakness to a certain object. As a vampire cannot stand garlic, so are false ones repulsed and weakened by these special items. Each false one possesses a special weakness, such as the inability to drink wine, touch a dagger, walk upon white marble or extinguish a candle, etc.

Should a false one be subjected to this weakness the villain must save vs. death magic or crumble to dust, else suffer 2d8 points of damage. Fortunately for the false ones, it is impossible to divine weaknesses without powerful magic, very careful observation of the priest's habits or the help of a Vistani seer. Because of this, false ones hate and fear the Vistani.

Adventure Options

A false one church could become an ongoing nemesis for a party of player characters who become embroiled in sinister doings and seek aid from the church. Only gradually should they realize that the church is the root of their problems, by which time it may be almost too late to prevent the dark plots of the false ones from coming to fruition.

Races

Only the cruelest humans are evil and shameless enough to become false ones. The religions of the demihuman races do not lend themselves to this sort of masquerade, and besides, it is the demihumans that false ones enjoy persecuting the most.

THE GENIUS

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PC RULES

Class

Wizard.

Character Portrait

Little can be as tragic as he whose soul is imprisoned in an insane mind, for such is the fate of the genius. Once possessing a brilliant brain, the genius excelled in learning and science, eager to learn and master more and more demanding skills. This very lust for knowledge proved their downfall.

Craving for more and more knowledge, the genius learned things no-one was ever supposed to learn, things too horrific for their minds to contemplate. Driven insane by the sheer horror of what they had discovered, the genius nonetheless retained a cunning mind. Desperate to overcome this affliction and correct what went so horribly wrong, the genius became more and more single minded, creating experiments ever more destructive and dark.

The dark powers of Ravenloft watch, amused, helping the genius to create more and more horrors, and thwarting at the last second any attempt to restore sanity. The genius has entered a downward spiral, from which there is no hope of redemption.

Weapons and Equipment

Geniuses rarely use weapons, since their creations defend them. Most precious to them, however, are their laboratories, where the experiments are conducted and hideous creatures constructed. Most are filled with expensive or specialized equipment, painful-looking machines and blood-stained knives. Even more terrible are those labs with little equipment, where crude tools are used to create the most horrific abominations.

Special Benefits

Each genius has a specialty; a monstrosity which they can construct quickly and efficiently. Flesh and zombie golems and mongrelmen are the most common, although all sorts of horrid abominations may be found, of the Dungeon Master's own devising. Such specialty creatures can be constructed in less than half the usual time, and for far less cost.

A genius will usually have about ten times his level in hit dice of creatures, although many of these will not be able to attack. Otherwise, the genius will use her magical talents to great effect, for all have carefully worked-out strategies in their insane minds. It is never easy to do away with a genius, for they always seem to have contingency spells and similar protective magic hidden all around their lairs.

Special Hindrances

Power has its drawbacks, and in the case of the genius it is insanity. Lost completely within horrible experiments, the genius is all but oblivious to other outside events. Only when her work is directly threatened will the genius find time to defend herself and her creations. Such is the nature of insanity that the genius will never stop creating or mutilating until the 'secret' is discovered. None have ever even come close to learning what the secret is, for there likely is none at all.

The monsters the genius creates are not so obsessed. Unless caged, they will wander the laboratory, castle or tower of the genius aimlessly, growing ever more bitter and angry. Some try to strike back at their creator, but many more will try to escape captivity and enter the wilderness. Here they may terrorize and murder, or live less violently, scavenging what they can and defending themselves when attacked.

Adventure Options

Heroes could be called in the mid a village of the evil which plagues the surrounding woods, and find the trail eventually leads to an 'abandoned' castle high in the hills. But it is not so abandoned, for down in the dungeons an insane genius lurks, creating abominations beyond belief in search of eternal life.

Races

Human, elves and half-elves have the necessary lust for knowledge and power to become a genius. An infamous example of a genius in Ravenloft lore is Dr. Mordenheim, the insane creator of the monster 'Adam.'

THE SEDUCTOR

Class

Bard.

Character Portrait

When one of beauty turns to evil, it is a great shame. When such a one of beauty uses their charms for evil they become dangerous indeed. Such is the seductor, or the seductress. Many more call them the Vain Ones.

Born with beauty, the vain ones were greedy for more. They coveted the good looks of others, believing they themselves should be the most attractive. Such was their envy and their conceit that Ravenloft itself seduced them into a dark pact. With the murder of a beautiful innocent, the seductress became truly wondrous in appearance, able to charm even the hardest heart.

What Ravenloft gives, it steals in kind. While the seductors became lovely, they lost the ability to feel love

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PC RULES

themselves. And when one is loved but cannot love in return, evil flourishes.

Seductors frequent with only the highest of society, those cities in Ravenloft where the upper classes dominate, and it is in these neighborhoods that they prowl. Friendly with all, the seductor's only goal is to lure victims into false love, then steal their very hearts away from them. Legends whisper that the seductor's pact involves sacrificing innocents to Ravenloft, and feeding on their hearts.

A seductor has been endowed by the dark powers with a Charisma of 19, reflecting her great physical beauty and charming personality (at least on the surface).

Weapons and Equipment

The seductor dresses only in the finest silks and satins, for such garments are necessary to impress would-be lovers. The only visible weapons many carry are their disarming smiles, although all carry concealed daggers, knives or swords—often envenomed.

Special Benefits

Seduction: The sheer beauty of the seductor is enough to turn heads, should the bard so wish, but the seductor's most dangerous ability is reserved for victims. When the seductor so wishes, his gaze acts as a *charm person* spell. Victims must save vs. spell or become enamored of the villain, wishing only to defend and protect the seductor from harm. The scheming seductor is then able to pursue the romances of the victim at will, gaining evil pleasure by acting with passion, then aloofness, causing jealousy and conflict between the victim's former friends and companions. This may continue for many nights before the seductor finally tires of the victim and strikes, sacrificing them to Ravenloft and devouring their heart. The horrible cycle can then begin once again. Usually, only one victim at a time is targeted, but there is not believed to be a maximum number of charms a seductor can use at one time.

Such is the nature of the *charm*, however, that the victim always feels their relationship with the seductress is special, and must remain secret. Those who see a seductress can never describe her to others, and cannot even remember meeting her unless trying very hard.

Seductors may also influence reactions as with the true bard, using their charm and wit to either inspire friendship or jealousy in others.

Special Hindrances

Not only may seductors never feel love, which is enough of a hindrance in itself, but they must feed on at least one heart a month or starve, and be damned for eternity. Further, Ravenloft has made them true creatures of the

night. Their unearthly charm only exists during the dark hours, from dusk to dawn. During these times, the seductor appears beautiful and is able to charm. But as soon as dawn rises, this magical beauty is shattered, and the seductor becomes a scarred, ugly peasant.

No matter what fine clothes they may wear, or how much they wash, they still appear dirty and unkempt. Seductors hate the daylight hours, for their vanity cannot stand their form during these times. Yet this could be why they escape detection for the horrible murders they commit at night, for nobody would suspect a drab peasant of being a dashing, attractive seducer of rich folk.

Only true daylight can affect this change; magical light of any sort has no affect, and seductors do not fear light as vampires do. Their forms by day and night are non-magical and cannot be detected even by *true seeing*.

Adventure Options

A cruel seductress is preying upon high society in one of Ravenloft's richer cities. Nobles are being slaughtered, their hearts ripped out, but no valuables stolen. In every case nobody can remember anything about the assailant. The heroes become embroiled when one of their friends or associates begins acting strangely, then disappears and is soon found dead. Can they solve the mystery before the killer strikes again, possibly at one of them?

Races

Humans, elves and half-elves have the necessary charm to become seductors.

THE WITCH OF THE MISTS

Class

Wizard.

Character Portrait

It is said the witches of other lands gain their powers by pledging loyalty to masters from the lower planes. Of Vistani blood, the witches of Ravenloft have done something far more horrible; merged in essence with Ravenloft itself. They draw their power from its misty fingers, and as if in symbiosis, it seems to feed from their evil energies. Only the most corrupt and power-hungry would willingly give their souls to the Dark Domain, but these faithful few are granted great powers indeed.

Where witches dwell, so do the mists gather. When night falls the witches are said to ride the mists, stealing away innocents to feed to their incorporeal allies. The witch's lairs are well-hidden, shrouded by dense fog banks and protected by all manner of misty creatures.

THE BOOK OF SOULS: RAVENLOFT PC RULES

Vistani hate and fear the mist witches, as they are called, for they used to be their own kin. As a gypsy race, the Vistani have strange ties with Ravenloft, but for one of their kind to willingly bond with the dark powers is something the Vistani find terrifying. More disturbing for the Vistani is that mist witches return their hatred, multiplied many times. Vistani and mist witches, so alike in many ways, are mortal enemies.

Weapons and Equipment

Witches of Ravenloft require magical components for their spells, a cauldron in which to brew potions and summon misty creatures, and Tarokka cards with which they tell fortunes. Witches also often have familiars, strange and evil creatures called cloud cats by peasants; grey and black felines with the ability to shift their form to that of dark mist.

Special Benefits

All witches of the Mists have the ability to tell fortunes, as Vistani do, but witches never use their powers for others. They can only predict events which will happen to themselves in the future, never to others. It is this ability which allows witches to foresee the attacks of enemies, and be prepared for them. Mist witches also retain the ability of the Vistani to lay curses upon people and places which offend them.

Further, witches of the mists are able to bend the billowing vapors to their will, effectively sealing off their lair, and the one mile radius surrounding it, from the domain outside. Although most are not actually darklords, the witches of Ravenloft are able to override commands to the mists given by the domain lords of Ravenloft, with the exception of Count Strahd. Mist witches can only control mists, not other barriers sealing off domains, however.

Mist witches are able to summon the foul creatures known as vampiric mists. Originally from Oerth, these parasitic creatures are also common in Ravenloft. From 1-4 vampiric mists will come when called for by the witch, within 1-6 rounds. Not more than one per level of these mists can be summoned per day, and all are under the complete control of the mist witch who summoned them. (See the *GREYHAWK® MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM Appendix* for more details.)

At fifth level, mist witches are able to summon and control mist horrors (*RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM Appendices I & II*). One may be called per day per three levels of the witch, and each summoning requires one round. The horror appears within 1d6 rounds, and again is under complete control of the caster.

At eighth level, mist witches are able to summon their most powerful allies: crimson deaths. Only one may be called forth per week, and the summoning requires

three rounds. The crimson death appears within 1-6 rounds, but is not necessarily under the control of the witch, for these are dangerous and powerful adversaries. The witch must pass an Intelligence check to gain control over the crimson death, which is then forced to do what the witch requires until she is satisfied. Should the witch fail to control the creature, it may act as it pleases, but is unlikely to attack. (See the *FORGOTTEN REALMS® MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM Appendix* for more details.)

Special Hindrances

Ravenloft, delighted with its evil toys, has chosen to render the mist witch vulnerable to just one thing. Mist witches are formidable opponents on their own, excelling in spells of concealment, cunning and death, but with their vaporous allies they are truly lethal.

Strangely, the witches are most vulnerable to the thing which should cause them least harm; the innocents. The only way to truly destroy a mist witch (for they have a nasty habit of returning when they should be dead) is for an innocent to kill the foul sorcerer. Should an innocent, being one who has never taken the life of another sentient being, draw the blood of a mist witch, the witch will collapse into a pile of bones and be forever dead.

This obviously causes mist witches to fear innocents greatly, and most would do anything to avoid them. But the Land has other ideas, for if the witches wish to retain the ability to summon misty creatures, they must capture and sacrifice innocents. Why the Land places its chosen few in such peril is unknown, but few folk live to tell of the witch's vulnerability.

Adventure Options

Young children are being stolen from their beds by some unknown creature. The mists have been particularly heavy the last few weeks, and the village burgomeister believes one of the dreaded mist witches is prowling. Maybe a friend or child of one of the heroes has been snatched away. Can they find the innocent before something horrid happens, or could the burgomeister himself have something to do with the disappearances?

Races

Ravenloft, for its own strange reasons, allows only human females to take control over its misty borders. ☠

THE BOOK OF SOULS: INTERLUDE

October 31st, 751.

NECROPOLIS.



Bleary eyed, Ludvig von Eislund tossed the dusty tome to the floor. Roaring in frustration, he lashed out at a shelf piled with books, sending them tumbling to his feet. The spectral librarian's head merely clucked its disapproval.

"Tsk, tsk, sir. I have to clean that up, you know."

Ludvig glared at the ghost, anger burning brightly in his eyes. Reaching out to either side of the aisle, Ludvig clamped his strong hands on the bookshelves, straining against their weight.

"Spirit," Ludvig hissed through clenched teeth, "I came here in service to my mistress, to discover Azalin's true fate in Il Aluk. You have given me *none* of the information I seek. If you do not tell me, right now, what became of our master, I'll do much more to your precious books than knock them on the floor."

The head's eyes hardened, and its lipless mouth curled in a frown. "That would be most unfortunate, von Eislund."

For a minute, the two servants merely glowered at one another in silence, Ludvig's glaring gaze meeting the librarian's glassy stare. The librarian was the first to speak.

"Very well. Come with me and I'll show you the book you *really* need to read, von Eislund."

Ludvig sneered. "It's about time, librarian."

The librarian's body tucked its head in the crook of one arm, and turned to lead the Kargatane from the stacks. After leading Ludvig around several turns, the spectral servant stopped at the end of an aisle, sliding to one side and gesturing for Ludvig to continue into the open area beyond.

Ludvig stormed past the ghost, holding his lantern high, only to stop short when he saw what the librarian had brought him to. Before him, a massive book stood open and upright. Its open pages were half filled with scribbles; as Ludvig slowly approached the tome, he saw that these were names. Between Ludvig and the tome was a table covered with a chaotic pile of books. Several of the books lay open, although they appeared to be blank. One book, however, was filled with writing; in

fact, even as Ludvig neared, a quill pen filled in the last lines of the last page. Unsupported by any living hand, the quill then floated to the mighty tome, added another name to the list, and floated to the next open book. Immediately it began writing, filling page after page at incredible speeds.

Ludvig was awed and confused. "What is this? Does this tome tell of Azalin's fate?"

The librarian responded, still lingering by the stacks. "No. The books you seek would be Azalin's research journals, and those are not kept in places I may venture."

Ludvig turned to peer back at the ghost. Irritation started to creep through his confusion once more.

"What? Do you mean you cannot tell me Azalin's fate?"

"Sir, you could burn every tome in this chamber, destroy the very meaning of my existence, and I still could not tell you where to find what you seek."

Ludvig slumped. "Then I must brave the keep once more."

"I would not recommend that, sir," the librarian advised. "As we speak, the castle's guardians linger at the doors to this chamber. This is the house of Azalin, and every servant knows their place. None would dare disturb a haven for quiet contemplation such as this. But were you to try to leave, you surely would not get more than ten paces before your destruction."

Ludvig stared at the librarian in mute horror. The librarian continued. "I can assure you, sir, that you will never leave this room alive."

The color drained from Ludvig's downcast face, but after a few minutes of silent thought, he steeled himself once more. "At least I shall die for the cause, in loyal service to the Kargatane and my mistress Kazandra."

"Ah, yes," mused the librarian. "Kazandra. If I may guess, you were alone in Martira Bay several months ago. No friends, no home, family all dead. Then Kazandra plucked you from the streets, and gave you a home. A family. A purpose for your life."

Ludvig recoiled from the librarian's words. "How... how could you know that?"

The head smirked faintly. "The Tome can be predictable, at times. So can Kazandra."

THE BOOK OF SOULS: INTERLUDE

Ludvig slowly turned to stare up into the huge, upright tome. Looking more closely at the open pages, he spotted his own name written near the top. Ten names below, he saw Cyrise as well. “What... *is* this book? Why is my name in there? Why is Cyrise in there?”

“If I’m not mistaken, sir, you’ll find *all* of your companions in recent pages. Kazandra has a habit of pruning the freshest weeds.”

“But what *is* this book?” Ludvig turned to face the librarian, who was gliding towards him, head in one arm, dusty book in the other.

“One of the most prolific authors of fiction in all the land, sir.” As the librarian passed Ludvig, he handed the Kargatane the book he carried. “If you want to read the truth, Ludvig von Eislund, you’ll find it in these pages.”

His hands trembling, Ludvig opened the cover and read the first line of the first page. “What is this? This says I was born in Lamordia... I’ve never been to Lamordia!”

The librarian was now between the mighty tome and the table full of books. “If you read on, sir, I believe you’ll find you also have a wife and son waiting for you in Neufurchtenburg.”

Ludvig looked up at the librarian, his eyes helpless. “I... I don’t understand.”

“Of course you don’t sir. But all will be made clear. Since we serve the same master, I shall do you a favor.” The librarian plucked the scribbling quill from midair. As he did so, Ludvig was sure he could hear the air around the pen shriek in agony.

The librarian placed the twitching quill on the “L” in Ludvig’s name in the massive tome. “I’ll let you die as the man you were, not as the man you are.”

When he slashed the quill across the name, Ludvig’s screams reverberated to the highest towers in Avernus.



OCTOBER 31ST, 1898. LONDON.



The gentleman tenderly closed the cover of the handwritten manuscript and pinched the bridge of his nose, squeezing his eyes shut while he carefully considered his next words. Eventually, he opened his eyes and ran his fingers down his face, brushing through a full, neatly-trimmed beard.

The man sat behind a small, ornate table in a large, yet cramped room filled with all sorts of lively paraphernalia; mastheads, furniture, painted flats, and all other manner of scenery. He delicately placed the weighty manuscript upon the table, and strummed his fingers across its dark leather cover.

“What do you think, Mr. Stoker?” asked the proper young woman with the implacable accent.

Bram Stoker considered his visitor closely. The young woman, half his age at best, had presented herself here, at the rear of the Lyceum theater, claiming to be an aspiring author of macabre tales who desperately wanted him to evaluate her manuscript.

“I know I’ve been dreadfully forward, but I am so very fond of your novel *Dracula* . . .” the young lady continued.

Ah, yes. She liked *Dracula*; that was why Bram had chosen to review her manuscript. It was rare enough to find someone who didn’t consider his novel “blasphemous;” to find someone who actually enjoyed the book was a rare pleasure! Alas, had only that pleasure lasted through reading the manuscript itself . . .

At last, a word came to the tip of Bram’s tongue, lingering there for a moment before he finally spit it out.

“... Azalin?”

The young lady crinkled her brow, but Bram continued.

“Psionics? Demiplanes? Karka- what was that one? Kargatane? My dear, please take this as the constructive criticism it is meant to be, but all these nonsensical names, these outlandish creatures—it’s all gobbledygook!”

The woman started. “*Gobbledygook!* Are you saying that these tales are not to your liking?”

THE BOOK OF SOULS: INTERLUDE

Bram wrestled with his words. “My dear, I don’t mean to dissuade you from your craft. It’s just that, if you wish to truly terrify your reader, Mother Goose is not the best place to start! Look . . . ah . . . you know, I don’t believe you’ve told me your name.”

The irritated young woman supplied it, accompanied by an indignant tone. “Call me Rose.”

“Well, Ms. Rose, you’re very young, and—”

“—I’ll have you know Mary Shelley was only nineteen when she wrote *Frankenstein*.”

“Quite true, madam, but not everyone can be a Mary Shelley. Why, I myself did not publish a story until I was twenty-six! What I’m trying to say is that you have plenty of time to hone your craft; I’m positive that your talent will grow as you continue to write. But let me give you a bit of advice. If you want to evoke true terror, you’re wasting your time with these fanciful tales; the reader simply can’t connect himself to them. Horror should be based in a setting familiar to you. Write about what you know, or at least do the proper research.”

Bram stood up. “Come follow me, my dear. I want to show you something.”

Bram quickly led Rose from the storage room, through the convoluted halls of the old theater, soon arriving at his office. Bram offered Rose a chair in front of his desk, then took his seat behind it.

After a few moments of rummaging through the drawers of his desk, Bram produced a large album and placed it on the desktop, facing Rose.

“The simple truth is that you can find all manner of macabre events right at your own doorstep.” Bram opened the album, and Rose saw that it contained dozens of newspaper articles. Quickly looking at the headlines and subjects, she realized these clippings had come from newspapers and journals all over the world, even a few of London’s own infamous penny dreadfuls.

Bram continued. “Any one of these mysterious happenings could easily be turned into an eerie tale! Why, just look at some of the articles by this fellow right here . . .”



THE BOOK OF SOULS: GOTHIC EARTH PEOPLE

HARRY KIRKLAND

A Troublesome NPC for Masque of the Red Death

by Joe "darkelf" Bardales
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HARRY KIRKLAND

3rd-level tradesman (Journalist), Chaotic Neutral

Armor Class	10	Str	9
Movement	12	Dex	9
Level/Hit Dice	T3	Con	14
Hit Points	8	Int	12
THAC0	19	Wis	12
No. of Attacks	1	Cha	8
Damage/Attack	By weapon		
Age	35 (born 1865)		

Weapon Proficiencies: Navy pistol, Derringer pistol, Pocket knife

Nonweapon Proficiencies: (slots/spent)
Journalism(1/0), Photography(1/1), Academician(2/4), History(1/1), Open Locks (1/3), Language, Modern (Spanish)(1/1)

Equipment: Photographic kit, folding camera, photographic plates, binoculars, pencils, pocket notebooks, typewriter, suitcases, cigarettes and matches, box of ammunition(navy), box of ammunition(derringer)

Harry Kirkland is a contemptible American journalist who always seems to be around looking for a story when the heroes are investigating something supernatural. He is the overseas correspondent for *The Ghastly Ghoulie*, a sensationalist and disreputable American magazine. A graduate of Columbia University with a degree in English, Harry is a native of New York City, but now his travels for the magazine take him all over the globe. He is more of an annoyance and a nuisance than anything else. Harry has a despicable personality that even the most tolerant of heroes should find annoying. He is a good test of the heroes' abilities to keep their cool (stay within the constraints of a lawful society) when they deal with him. He dresses in an ugly brown suit that looks as if he has slept in it. He frequently complains about the poor quality of a cup of coffee outside of the United States. He is the prime example of the "ugly American" abroad.

The first encounter the heroes have with Harry will not be pleasant, but he will only come across as a typical nosy reporter looking for a story in their initial meeting. In the public interest, the heroes may even try to prevent him from discovering what they have uncovered during their investigation since most people of Gothic Earth could not handle the knowledge that these horrors truly exist. The heroes will realize the truth about Harry when they read the next issue of *The Ghastly Ghoulie*. Even if they successfully prevented him from learning anything about their investigation, he will publish a fictional account of the affair anyway. They may be seen as unsound eccentrics based on what he has written about them, and their appearance in a Harry Kirkland article might reflect poorly on them in the eyes of more reputable sources and authorities such as academicians and the police. In fact, individuals they might require as resources in the future may scoff at them, deeming the heroes to be charlatans or laughingstocks. In any event, these individuals will certainly not want their names and reputations associated with the heroes.

Subsequent encounters with Harry Kirkland will reveal the lengths to which he will go when he wants a story. He will attempt to bribe cab drivers, hotel workers, train station employees, and any others who are privy to the heroes' whereabouts or comings and goings. When Harry isn't shamelessly following them around, he will break into their rooms while they are out and snoop through their belongings. Sometimes he will beat the heroes to the punch, and already be present when they arrive at their destination. He will compete with them for resources when necessary, and occasionally he will grab a unique antiquarian book with vital information or an ancient parchment containing the only map to an antediluvian location before the heroes can get their hands on it. No dirty trick is beneath him in this endeavor. He will shamelessly sabotage the wheel of their coach, cancel their travel reservations, or tamper with their equipment. All of these kinds of things throughout the course of the campaign should cause the heroes to despise him more and more. It is important to note that while Harry sometimes breaks the law when

THE BOOK OF SOULS: GOTHIC EARTH PEOPLE

hunting for a story, he will never attempt these things if he perceives a good chance of getting caught and prosecuted.

Harry's stories for *The Ghastly Ghoulee*, however, are sometimes closer to the truth than he knows. He assumes that the supernatural is a bunch of hooey and those who seriously study it are loony. But the stories sell and they pay the bills.

THE GHASTLY GHOULEE

The Ghastly Ghoulee is published out of New York, and distributed throughout the United States and Great Britain. The magazine contains stories about the supernatural presented as fact, but they are either greatly exaggerated or pure fiction. The magazine is aimed at less intelligent members of society, but copies may be found in university dorm rooms on both sides of the Atlantic, purchased by students with a sense of humor. Many a paranormal investigator's reputation has been ruined by an appearance in *The Ghastly Ghoulee*, usually without their consent.

Forbidden Lore

The Ghastly Ghoulee is in fact published by minions of the Red Death as a deliberate attempt to discredit reputable researchers and investigators of the supernatural. Most of their reporters, including Harry Kirkland, are unaware that this is the case.

✕

THE MYSTERIOUS STRANGER

A Shadowy NPC for Masque of the Red Death

by Joe "darkelf" Bardales
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THE MYSTERIOUS STRANGER

Game Statistics Unknown

The Mysterious Stranger is an NPC who shows up to put the heroes on the right track, to provide vital clues, and occasionally to thwart them when their interests don't meet his own. Sometimes he is seen as a help, sometimes as a hindrance. The heroes do not know his name, and assume that he is a man (but could be a woman, or not even human!). He has an uncanny ability to avoid the heroes confronting him directly (they will never corner him and "unmask" him). They can never find out anything about him. For example, if they ask a hotel desk clerk, "did you see a man in a dark hat and cape go upstairs to our rooms?", the desk person will deny ever having seen the Mysterious Stranger enter the building.

The Mysterious Stranger will at first leave the heroes notes, send them mail, and wire them telegrams. They may even see a mysterious figure leaving their building that they can never catch if they decide to chase him. They only catch brief glimpses of what appears to be a man in a black hat and cape. Later on in the campaign, they may get to talk to him briefly, and receive information he wishes to pass on. He will always approach the heroes and initiate the contact. They will never find him if they try to look, or get instructions from him to meet him somewhere.

If The Mysterious Stranger wishes to find them, he will. When he approaches them in person, it will always be in some dark, abandoned, or deserted area. He will always seem to vanish into the fog, disappearing without a trace, when he has finished his business with them. Something will distract the heroes attention while they are

talking to him, a sound in the distance that breaks the silence, for example, and when they turn their attention back to the Mysterious Stranger, they find that he has disappeared. If the heroes state that they will deliberately keep their attention on him, then a fog cloud appears or a mist from the sea will suddenly obstruct their view and he will make his escape, or perhaps the lights will suddenly go out. When the heroes do meet The Mysterious Stranger face-to-face, the details of his face will never be clear—the brim of his hat will shadow his face for example.

The Mysterious Stranger can be used as a tool to fix things in play by the Dungeon Master, but should not be distracting from the main adventure. He is not necessary in every adventure. He can make a planned appearance in an adventure as a plot device, or be spontaneously added to the plot if the heroes are just not getting some vital piece of the adventure puzzle (and the Dungeon Master feels particularly generous.) The Mysterious Stranger seems to know much more about the heroes than they know of him. Possible identities for the Mysterious Stranger: Sir Lancelot as some undead (or cursed to live forever) trying to right wrongs that lead to his demise and current state; The Prince of Wales (Edward); Mycroft Holmes or other representative of the Diogenes Club; a werebear loner (chaotic good) who fears discovery of either himself or his clan of true lycanthropes and death at the hands of those who might assume all lycanthropes are evil; a fiend trapped on Gothic Earth; A fallen angel (deva aasimon) trapped on Gothic Earth; other. Player character speculation as to the identity of the Mysterious Stranger might be fun to role play.



THE BOOK OF SOULS: GOTHIC EARTH PEOPLE

WILLIAM KEMMLER

A Minion of the Red Death for MotRD

by John W. Mangrum
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Author's Note: Based on an idea by Andrew Berrigan.

BACKGROUND

William Kemmler was a fruit peddler and resident of Buffalo, NY, the famed “Electric City of the Future.” Indeed, electricity would figure into Kemmler’s future in a most gruesome way. On March 29, 1889, William Kemmler used a hatchet to murder his common-law wife, Matilda Ziegler. In May of that year, he was sentenced to death for that dire crime, and it is here that he enters history.

At this time, electricity was just being introduced, and powerful men were struggling to define its future. Thomas Alva Edison, famed inventor of the light bulb, saw that his Direct Current electric system would be surpassed by Alternating Current, the creation of George Westinghouse and Nikola Tesla. Knowing he couldn’t defeat AC on economic grounds alone, he and his researchers decided to convince the world that AC was inherently more dangerous than his DC. Beginning with a long series of public displays where Edison and his researchers would publicly electrocute animals, they then developed the electric chair using Westinghouse’s AC generators (much to the horror of Westinghouse himself). What better way to prove to the world that AC was lethal than to use it to execute criminals?

Here is where the common killer and the famed inventor crossed paths. Kemmler was sentenced to execution via the electric chair, a fate he desperately feared. Westinghouse also sought to avoid this, if perhaps for different reasons, and funded Kemmler’s appeals on the grounds that electrocution was cruel and unusual punishment. With testimony from Edison and his partners in support of the state, the appeals were denied. Thus, on August 6th, 1890, William Kemmler was the first man to ever face the electric chair.

The execution took place at New York state’s Auburn Prison. Kemmler was strapped to the chair and a supposedly lethal charge was sent through his body.

Which he survived. A second, much longer shock was applied, in which Kemmler was virtually burned alive; blood appeared on his face, and his flesh and hair were singed. The executioner’s assistant was quoted as saying, “The man never suffered a bit of pain!” Others had differing opinions. The *New York Herald* said of the execution’s witnesses, “Strong men fainted and fell like logs on the floor.” George Westinghouse himself described it succinctly: “They would have done better with an axe.”

Torturous as it was, the axe murderer William Kemmler had met his end, as far as the world was concerned. But the Red Death was not yet done with him. The Red Death had already wormed its way into Kemmler’s heart by the time he murdered Matilde, and it simply could not ignore his hideous demise.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

The dead keep their own time, so this adventure could take place at any point in the 1890s. The tale begins with a grisly article in a New York newspaper: a prison guard is found murdered in a locker room at Auburn Prison. The modus operandi is quite ghastly; the man was killed with a fire axe taken from a nearby wall and then apparently burned, although exactly how he was burned remains a mystery.

The deaths continue, one by one, and it seems someone is tracing a deadly path through the state of New York, seeking out employees of Edison’s labs and the General Electric Company, and murdering them in a most horrible manner. After the guard’s death, all are clearly killed in the same manner—electrocution—even though some bodies are found miles from the nearest source of electrical power.

The heroes are called in, perhaps through a connection to the Brotherhood of Alchamæ, as those investigating these murders discover that the mysterious, brutal killer is winding his way towards West Orange, New Jersey: the home of Thomas Edison himself!

THE BOOK OF SOULS: GOTHIC EARTH PEOPLE

WILLIAM KEMMLER

Revenant, Chaotic Evil

Armor Class	10	Str	18
Movement	9	Dex	10
Level/Hit Dice	8	Con	12
Hit Points	50	Int	12
THAC0	13	Wis	9
No. of Attacks	1	Cha	0
Damage/Attack	2-16 (plus shock)		
Special Attacks	Electric shock		
Special Defenses	See below		
Magic Resistance	See below		
XP Value	4,000		

CURRENT SKETCH

The Red Death brought Kemmler back as a revenant with a particularly deadly salient ability: a powerful electric charge continually runs through his body. Kemmler appears as he did at the moment of his death: bloody and smoldering. Wherever he goes, he leaves the sharp stench of ozone, and whenever he looks at one of Edison's underlings, his eyes flicker with a blue-white, inner glow. Kemmler is in fact a ghost, not a walking corpse, and would be classified as a preserved, corporeal manifestation.

Kemmler blames Thomas Edison for his horrendous demise, and so treats that man as his "killer." On his way towards murdering Edison, Kemmler has made sure to take care of any of Edison's flunkies he might come across.

Soon after Kemmler was brought back into the Gothic Earth, he was spotted by a prison guard; Kemmler killed the man with a handy axe out of old habit, and in doing so discovered the lethal energy surging through him. Since then, he has dispensed with weapons, allowing his electric charge to kill for him. Kemmler now attacks by strangling his victims; if he attacks successfully, he does 2d8 points of damage per round until his grip is somehow dislodged or his victim is killed. This damage does not include his electric charge: Kemmler's touch is the equivalent of a *shocking grasp*. This charge is running through Kemmler constantly, and he couldn't turn it off even if he wanted to. Confronting Kemmler in melee combat is thus extremely dangerous; the electric charge will travel through most weapons, so those attacking Kemmler with metal weapons or bare hands are subject to the same damage as if he had attacked them. The electric charge also carries through water, so anyone standing in a puddle with Kemmler would also be subject to the effects of the *Shocking Grasp*.

Kemmler has all the undead immunities, and unlike most revenants is also immune to fire damage. Since he

is a spirit, his limbs cannot be severed, although he does still take damage from normal weapons. Also unlike most revenants, Kemmler cannot normally regenerate damage. To regenerate damage, Kemmler must be in physical contact with a source of electrical power. If Kemmler is touching such a power source (such as a generator or a live power line), he regenerates 3 hp per round, and once per turn is capable of throwing out a deadly arc of electricity with the charge of a *lightning bolt*. If Kemmler is ever reduced to 0 hp, he will vanish, forced into an entirely ethereal form, invisible and intangible. However, so long as Edison is still alive, Kemmler will always reform with the next thunderstorm.

Should Thomas Edison himself, as Kemmler's "killer," ever look into Kemmler's flickering gaze, he must succeed at a fear check or be paralyzed with fear for 2d4 rounds.

Kemmler's great weakness stems from his lethal power. The charge flowing through his body is powerful, but finite, and not under Kemmler's control. It will travel along any conductive surface, and if Kemmler's power is spread too thin, he will be dispersed. Thus, Kemmler's great weakness is the easiest way to disperse him: water. Sparks fly and arcs of crackling energy writhe across Kemmler's body whenever he is in contact with water, although merely dousing him will do him no real damage. If, however, Kemmler is somehow completely immersed in water, his energy will be spread evenly throughout. If he is immersed in a large enough body of water (such as a river, lake, or the sea), his charge will be spread so thin as to be unnoticeable. As a word of caution, in the round Kemmler is dropped into the water he will release a burst of electrical energy equivalent to casting *lightning bolt* underwater.

Once Kemmler is dispersed, he is essentially destroyed. To bring him back would require the ability to draw his energy from the water. But don't worry; it will be *years* before hydroelectric dams are common!



THE SENTINEL ORDER

A Gothic Earth Qabal for All Good Alignments

by Joe "darkelf" Bardales
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Organized in England in 1650 by good adepts who survived the witch trials, members of The Sentinel Order keep an ever vigilant watch for manifestations of the Red Death. Agents of the Red Death masterminded the witch scares of Europe in an attempt to destroy the loosely organized bands of good adepts known and feared as witches by the ignorant people of the day.

Today, The Sentinel Order is composed of special, gifted individuals who continue to stand guard and take action against the Red Death, wherever and whenever its influence rears its ugly head. The Sentinel Order is also known as the Legacy of the Sentinel.

SYMBOL

The symbol of The Sentinel Order is a witch's cauldron with an eye above it. Members are required to carry this symbol to identify themselves to other qabal members. Most wear this symbol in the form of a signet ring.

MEMBERS

The original members of this group were adepts who escaped the European witch trials engineered by agents of the Red Death. These adepts were formerly a loosely organized force and not a qabal in the true sense. Organization became necessary to better protect themselves from the Red Death and thus continue to protect the world from this great evil. Today, members are invited to join from all walks of life (all classes and kits). The criteria for membership includes such things as displaying ability in wizardry (adept magic), mysticism (mystic magic), or psychic talents (psychic nonweapon proficiencies). In this way, The Sentinel Order can help protect these gifted individuals from being corrupted by the Red Death. Others without these abilities are invited to join if they show an interest in and an aptitude for fighting the minions of the Red Death. This includes scientists whose ideas and inventions are ahead of their time. By taking these intellects into the fold, The Sentinel

Order gains access to their knowledge and expertise while preventing the Red Death from getting its hands on their innovative work. In general, anyone of a good alignment who has survived at least one encounter with a manifestation of the Red Death and actively fought against it might be asked to join the qabal.

HISTORY

In the aftermath of the witch trials of Europe, The Legacy of the Sentinel was founded by an adept named Ferrin Crowther. Crowther recognized that he and other so-called witches needed to organize a secret society for their mutual protection. Inherent in this was the realization of a great evil presence in the world interested not only in the adepts' demise, but the corruption and destruction of the entire human race.

After the Sentinel Order became established, the original members were able to put a name on this great evil as they uncovered accounts of its manifestations throughout history from their own investigations, and from contacts with other qabals like Die Wächtern. The qabal also recognized the potential for corruption inherent in their use of adept magic, and reached out to others who showed a talent for wizardry to bring them into the fold before the Red Death could destroy them. Soon after, this expanded to individuals showing inclinations toward mysticism, and those with rare psychic and paranormal abilities.

As history progressed, the Sentinel Order's protection of those with special gifts expanded to encompass individuals who showed great aptitude for intellectual pursuits in science and technology. Some famous people who became involved with the Sentinel Order include Charles Babbage, the Countess Ada Lovelace, Jules Verne, and H. G. Wells. Many such individuals proposed theories, inventions, and applications of science that were way ahead of their time. It is little known to those outside The Sentinel Order that they have in fact put some of these ideas into practice, and their inventions and innovations are at the disposal of the qabal. ☞

GOTHIC NEW YORK

An Atlas of Gothic Earth Addendum

by Joe "darkelf" Bardales
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The major cities of Gothic Earth have been fairly well covered in the *Masque of the Red Death* boxed set ("Chapter VII: An Atlas of Gothic Earth" in *A Guide to Gothic Earth* by William W. Connors), and "Mysterious Cities: Beyond the Atlas of Gothic Earth" (article by James Wyatt in *DRAGON* #240). These two sources provide the Dungeon Master with a wealth of prior history, current background material, and adventure ideas for a campaign set in the 1890s. Somehow, one of the most important cities of Gothic Earth (and home to this author) was overlooked in these works. This article attempts to remedy that oversight.

NEW YORK

Located on the island of Manhattan in the mouth of the Hudson River, the city of New York is the most important seaport in America. From the start, New York has been a cosmopolitan melting pot of people from different cultures, religions and ethnic backgrounds. A continuous flow of immigrants continues to arrive in America through New York at the end of the nineteenth century, contributing to the continued prosperity of the United States. It seems inevitable that New York will one day replace London as the capital of the world.

HISTORY

The first inhabitants of the land that would one day become New York were the Native American Algonquin tribe. The Old World's discovery of the island of Manhattan was made by Italian Giovanni da Verrazano in 1524, but it was Englishman Henry Hudson who first thoroughly explored the area in 1609 for the Dutch East India Company. It was the Dutch West India Company that founded the settlement of New Amsterdam in 1625, and in 1626 the entire island of Manhattan was purchased from the Native American inhabitants for the equivalent of \$24 in trinkets. The settlement was a financial success, which attracted the attention of the British who seized the

area in 1664, renaming the colony New York. During the Revolutionary War, British troops controlled New York for most of the conflict.

From its onset as a Dutch colony, New York has seen a continuous stream of immigration. Conditions in Europe during most of the nineteenth century lead to mass migrations. In 1890, Ellis Island off of Manhattan opened as a federal immigration processing center. Immigrants were greeted on their arrival by the Statue of Liberty, a gift to the United States by the French government and erected in New York Harbor in 1886. Unfortunately, the next sight these new arrivals most often see is their new life in the slums.

The nineteenth century was also a time for mass fortunes to be made in New York. Men like John Astor, Andrew Carnegie, J. P. Morgan, and Cornelius Vanderbilt became millionaires many times over. The acquisition of great wealth, however, did not guarantee social standing in New York. The "old money" families, lead by the legendary Mrs. Astor, turned their aristocratic noses down on those with "new money," most notably the Robber Barons who made their fortunes from railroad empires, and the working class.

The influx of people and wealth into New York lead to constant expansion of the metropolis. New York was first settled at the southern end of Manhattan, and continued to grow upwards. The "grid pattern" of numbered streets and avenues was established in 1811. Broadway, however, follows the path of what was originally an Algonquin trail. The lower tip of Manhattan maintains the maze-like pattern of the streets of the original colony. Wall Street, for example, lies where a Dutch fortification defended the settlement's northern front. The buildings of New York, like its people, are also a melting pot. Examples include Federal style, Greek Revival, Italianate, Renaissance, and most recently, Gothic Revival. In 1868 the first elevated trains went into service, and in 1870 the first subway was constructed. Electricity became available from Edison Electric as early as 1882. In 1898, the City of New York will become known as Greater New York, incorporating the surrounding boroughs of Brooklyn, the Bronx, Queens,

THE BOOK OF SOULS: GOTHIC EARTH PLACES

and Staten Island with Manhattan to form one municipality.

While New York is a booming metropolis at the close of the nineteenth century, it is still rife with social problems. Poverty, corruption of police and government, and criminal elements run rampant in the city. While there is definitely a pronounced gap between the haves and have-nots, New York is still the place to be to have any chance of improving one's station in life.

Since New York is an amalgam of cultures where thousands of immigrants arrive each day, it is no surprise that any type of minion of the Red Death not mentioned here might be found within the city. Even though the presence of the Red Death in the New World has been relatively brief, New York City serves as proof that it has nevertheless managed to gain a strong foothold in short order.

xe

Forbidden Lore

New York is home to the ghosts of those who came before. The spirits of early Dutch settlers and their African slaves slaughtered by the invading British haunt the lower end of Manhattan. The restless spirits of the original Algonquin inhabitants also walk the island, seeking vengeance for the desecration of their once woodland paradise. Spiritualism is quite the fad in the parlors of the wealthy, who remain ignorant of how dangerous their occult parlor games truly are.

Like most of the eastern North American coast, New York Harbor is also the home to numerous wereseals (sea wolves) who hide amongst the native harbor seals. New York has always been a seaport, and tales of Jolly Rogers and sea zombies are common in the sailors taverns along South Street. These same seafarers also speak of a race of fish men called sahuagin who live in a city at the bottom of Long Island Sound. Ancient Algonquin legends seem to support this.

The twisting and turning dark lit streets of Manhattan's lower end can play tricks on the mind. Individuals have been known to get lost for hours, days, or perhaps forever. While in most cases those that disappear are most likely the victims of a brutal crime, rumors persist of a powerful undead lich using illusion magic and living somewhere in the area. This lich is believed to have once been the mortal adept named Axel Van Der Maark, an original settler of the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam who fled Europe to avoid charges of witchcraft and heresy.

Other monsters and supernatural creatures can be found in and on the many buildings of New York. Gargoyles are believed to hide amongst their non living counterparts on the faces of elaborate Neo-Gothic buildings throughout the city, and lesser known varieties of gargoyle (archers, spouters, stone lions, and grandfather plaques — see *Monstrous Compendium Annual Volume Three*) are also found. A former night watchman at the American Museum of Natural History (who went mad with fright and is now confined to Bellevue Mental Hospital) swears he saw the skeleton of a Tyrannosaurus Rex dinosaur walk across the exhibit hall of its own accord, but this has not been confirmed.

THE SPEAR OF DESTINY

A Relic for Gothic Earth

by Kevin Webb

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HISTORY

The Spear of Destiny is said to have mystical powers. The spear was once used at the Crucifixion to wound the side of Christ, by a Roman Centurion by the name of Longinus.

The Red Death saw this as an opportunity to mark the darkest moment in humankind.

Longinus was then cursed to walk the Earth until the time of the Apocalypse. The spear was then taken from Longinus by agents of the Red Death and hidden.

The curse for Longinus can be broken if the spear was used by another to slay him; only then may he rest.

According to legend, possession of the Spear would bring its owner the power to conquer the world, but losing it would bring immediate death.

The Red Death has allowed the spear to be owned by a succession of powerful European rulers down through the centuries, all to their downfall.

The Red Death used the spear's power to destroy good men throughout history, but eventually it came to be in the possession of the Watchers' qabal in Vienna where it rests today.

DESCRIPTION

The Spear is a hasta, (long spear), with a wooden shaft of oak 12 feet long, and a tip made of iron. These weapons were used by Roman centurions at the time.

STATISTICS

Spear Type: Long **Damage:**
Weight: 8 lb. **One Handed:** 1d8 / 2d6
Size: Large **Two Handed:** 1d8+1 / 3d6
Type: P **Speed Factor:** 8

MYSTIC POWERS

- ❖ The spear is a +5 to hit and damage and acts as a Sword of Wounding.
- ❖ The owner of the Spear of Destiny will become immortal while in possession of the Spear.
- ❖ The owner's Charisma is increased to 18.
 - ❖ The owner of the spear regenerates 1 hp per round.
 - ❖ Once a day the owner of the spear can cause *fear* in a 120' radius, (save vs. spell), when holding the spear. This includes creatures not normally affected by fear, (undead, lower planar creatures, etc.). Those who fail the save are affected for 24 hours.
 - ❖ Once a week the owner of the spear can cause a permanent *charm* over any one creature, (save vs. spell), including any creature not normally affected by *charm*, (undead, lower planar creatures, etc.). If the victim fails the save then he, she, or it is permanently *charmed* by the owner of the spear.
 - ❖ Once a month the owner of the spear can cast a *holy word* spell at a 300 foot radius, that will affect all that oppose the owner of the spear regardless of alignment.



CURSES

- ❖ The owner is immortal but will continue to age normally with all of its effects on aging.
- ❖ Once a month the owner of the spear will experience dreams of random prophetic visions. These dreamscapes are controlled by the Nightmare Court and are of Gothic Earth's most tragic future and past events.

After these dreams the owner of the spear must make a fear check; if it fails then the owner suffers from fear effects until the next dream.

The next dreamscape will be more intense and the dreamer must make a horror check with a -2 penalty; if the horror check is failed then the owner is affected by horror until the next dreamscape.

THE BOOK OF SOULS: GOTHIC EARTH THINGS

At this time the dreamscape is so powerful the owner must also make a madness check with a -4 penalty, and if this save also fails then the owner is affected by a permanent random madness result.

If a save is made all the affects of the fear and horror are lifted; only the madness remains permanent. After the madness sets in, the next month the process starts again; this can cause multiple permanent madness results.

- ❖ If the Spear is ever lost, stolen or surrendered, the former owner will suffer from the affects of a reverse of a *Resurrection* spell.

SUGGESTED METHODS OF DESTRUCTION

- ❖ Trampled under the hooves of the “Four Horsemen.”
- ❖ Bathed in holy water from the “Holy Grail” then broken by a saintly priest.
- ❖ Pierce the heart of Longinus, allowing him to die with the spear.



THE ARCHAEOLOGIST

A Tradesman Kit for Masque of the Red Death

by Joe "darkelf" Bardales
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ARCHAEOLOGIST

Class:	Tradesman
Ability Reqs:	Int 14
Prime Req:	Dexterity
Hit Die:	d6
Attack as:	Tradesman
Save as:	Tradesman
Advance as:	Tradesman
Exc Strength?	No
Spell Ability?	No
Exc Constitution?	No
Starting Cash:	4d6

Proficiencies

Weapon Slots:	3
Additional Slot:	4
Nonproficiency Penalty:	-3
Nonweapon Slots:	6
Additional Slot:	3
Available Categories:	General, Educational, and

(choose one) Wilderness or Rogue

Bonus Proficiency: Archaeology

Recommended Proficiencies: Academician, History, Survival, Ancient Language, Climb Walls, Find/Remove Traps, Savoir-faire

DESCRIPTION

The Archaeologist is a scientist who specializes in the discovery, reclamation, analysis, and interpretation of the material remains of past human cultures and civilizations. Archaeologists are romantically viewed by the public as the discoverers and explorers of ancient ruins, temples, tombs, and treasures hidden for centuries in exotic locales such as jungles and deserts. In addition to the ruins of settlements and buildings, Archaeologists study artifacts made and used by ancient man such as utensils, tools, weapons, and ornamental and artistic objects. While field excavation is an important part of their work, they spend most of their time identifying, classifying, dating, and

interpreting their discoveries. From this information, they are able to make inferences about the culture producing these antiquities. Archaeologists may be associated with either a museum or an academic institution.

ROLE~PLAYING

The Archaeologist may be portrayed as a dashing adventurer, a scholar, or a combination of both. Often they are equally at home in the wilderness or in the halls of the institution which supports their work. Some, however, prefer life in the field at the site of a dig to the bustle of the civilized world. While most Archaeologists on Gothic Earth are driven by the scholarly pursuit of knowledge, a few are motivated by financial gain from selling the artifacts they recover to wealthy collectors.

SPECIAL BENEFITS

Ancient and forgotten languages such as Egyptian Hieroglyphics are an important tool to the Archaeologist. Whenever an Archaeologist purchases an Ancient Language from the Arcane category, he may do so without having to pay an additional one slot penalty. In addition, the Archaeologist is allowed to pick a third nonweapon proficiency category as Available, either Wilderness or Rogue.

SPECIAL HINDRANCES

As a scientist, the Archaeologist is not inclined to place any credence in supernatural phenomena. Therefore, whenever an Archaeologist purchases a nonweapon proficiency from the Arcane category other than Ancient Language, he must pay two additional slots.



THE BOOK OF SOULS: GOTHIC EARTH PC RULES

THE ANTIQUARIAN

An Adept Kit for Masque of the Red Death

by Andrew Hauptman

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ANTIQUARIAN

Class:	Adept
Ability Reqs:	Int 14
Prime Req:	Intelligence
Hit Die:	d6
Attack as:	Adept
Save as:	Adept
Advance as:	Adept
Exc Strength?	No
Spell Ability?	As Adept
Exc Constitution?	No
Starting Cash:	3d6

Proficiencies

Weapon Slots:	2
Additional Slot:	5
Nonproficiency Penalty:	-4
Nonweapon Slots:	5
Additional Slot:	3
Available Categories:	General, Arcane
Bonus Proficiency:	Archeology
Recommended Proficiencies:	Academician,

Geology, Mountaineering, Navigation, Survival, Ancient Language, Ancient Religion, Read Languages, Spellcraft

DESCRIPTION

Antiquarians are adepts who started out as professional archaeologists. Unlike many other adepts, the antiquarian discovered his spellcasting power quite by accident while studying ancient runes and symbols found on artifacts recovered on digs from lost civilizations. Once found, such knowledge is not easily ignored, often driving the antiquarian to seek more (and more dangerous) forbidden lore.

EXCERPT FROM THE *London Times*

The archeological community was stunned by the recent discovery of King Ankhtepot's tomb in Egypt this past month. The tomb and its lost artifacts were discovered and explored by the famed British archaeologist, Prof. Brighton James. James first achieved fame and favour with the discovery of the remains of a lost Viking colony in the Amazon River basin in the late 1880s. While details of James' find are not currently available due to protective security measures provided by Her Majesty's Secret Service, the esteemed professor hinted that some of his findings "would forever colour our view of Egyptian history and how it has affected our world." Bully for you, James!

ROLE~PLAYING

Like archaeologists, antiquarians love to delve into objects and artifacts of the past. This pursuit, however, is driven by the lust for the lost secrets of magic, a power that has been tainted by the Red Death for over three thousand years. Such characters walk a fine line of morality as they sink deeper and deeper into the study of magic, sometimes falling into the embrace of the Red Death. As his power increases, even the most virtuous antiquarian must guard against temptation and corruption by the forces of evil.

SPECIAL BENEFITS

Antiquarians are expert linguists, though not quite as proficient as tradesmen with the archeologist kit. Each proficiency slot spent on Ancient Languages allows the character to learn two languages instead of one. In addition, Antiquarians gain a +2 bonus on Spellcraft checks to learn new spells, but only if those spells are derived from a source written in an ancient language. It is up to the Dungeon Master to determine the language of any spell source discovered during an adventure.

THE BOOK OF SOULS: GOTHIC EARTH PC RULES

SPECIAL HINDRANCES

At first level antiquarians must spend half of their starting nonweapon proficiency slots (rounded up) on language skills (either Modern, Ancient or Read Languages). Proficiency slots gained at later levels may be spent on any proficiencies the player desires.

Antiquarians delve into long forgotten, and often profane, secrets of magic that were lost (perhaps buried?) in the past. As a result, they are more prone to corruption than other adepts, suffering a -1 (-5%) penalty on all powers checks.



THE ALIENIST

A Tradesman Kit for Masque of the Red Death

by Joe "darkelf" Bardales
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Author's Note: Special thanks to Charles Brown for his input.

scoffed at by many, Alienists are often forced to work on criminal cases in secret.

ALIENIST

Class:	Tradesman
Ability Reqs:	Int 14, Wis 14
Prime Req:	Intelligence
Hit Die:	d6
Attack as:	Tradesman
Save as:	Tradesman
Advance as:	Tradesman
Exc Strength?	No
Spell Ability?	No
Exc Constitution?	No
Starting Cash:	3d6

Proficiencies

Weapon Slots:	3
Additional Slot:	4
Nonproficiency Penalty:	-3
Nonweapon Slots:	6
Additional Slot:	3
Available Categories:	General, Educational
Bonus Proficiency:	Psychology
Recommended Proficiencies:	Criminology,

Medicine, Mesmerism

DESCRIPTION

The Alienist is a psychologist or psychiatrist (if the Medicine nonweapon proficiency is purchased) specializing in the diagnosis and treatment of diseases effecting the mind. The Alienist may be called upon to aid the authorities in apprehending criminals by creating a personality profile of the criminal based on evidence found at crime scenes for the purpose of predicting future behavior. Because psychology is a relatively new field on Gothic Earth, and forensic psychology is an even more radical concept

ROLE~PLAYING

Alienists are in a sense pioneers: the first men and women to practice their profession. They have risked reputation and livelihood by devoting their time and research to a field that is still in its infancy. While the public at large has not accepted their work as legitimate, they continue to strive diligently to bring status and respect to their profession. Because of this, they tend to be consummate professionals. Even though some Alienists become embittered at having to work in secret, most accept this as a necessary prelude to wider acceptance, realizing that the work they are doing now will be the very proof they need to exonerate their theories.

SPECIAL BENEFITS

Mesmerism can be a valuable tool to the Alienist, who is more inclined to accept hypnosis as a valid science. Therefore, the Alienist may purchase the Mesmerism nonweapon proficiency from the Arcane category without spending an additional one slot penalty. Additionally, the Dungeon Master may provide the Alienist a contact in local law enforcement who is sympathetic to the character. However, this NPC may occasionally call on the PC to assist in ongoing investigations at any time.

SPECIAL HINDRANCES

Since psychology is a new and emerging field on Gothic Earth, the public tends to view the work of the Alienist with skepticism. The Alienist's belief that adult behavior can be affected by childhood environment is widely opposed, especially by religious establishments, because it goes against the tenet that people are morally responsible for their actions and their crimes. Therefore, the Alienist must often work in secret, especially in matters of law enforcement. To reflect this, anytime the Alienist must deal with an NPC aware of his profession and who does not accept his beliefs, the Alienist suffers a

THE BOOK OF SOULS: GOTHIC EARTH PC RULES

-4 Reaction Adjustment (cumulative with any Charisma penalties or bonuses) and a -2 penalty to any Ability check or Nonweapon Proficiency check while dealing with this individual. The Dungeon Master determines the NPC in question's feelings towards the Alienist's beliefs.



THE JEWEL THIEF

A Tradesman Kit for Masque of the Red Death

by Joe "darkelf" Bardales
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JEWEL THIEF

Class:	Tradesman
Ability Reqs:	Int 12, Cha 14
Prime Req:	Dexterity
Hit Die:	d6
Attack as:	Tradesman
Save as:	Tradesman
Advance as:	Tradesman
Exc Strength?	No
Spell Ability?	No
Exc Constitution?	No
Starting Cash:	3d6

Proficiencies

Weapon Slots:	3
Additional Slot:	4
Nonproficiency Penalty:	-3
Nonweapon Slots:	6
Additional Slot:	3
Available Categories:	General, Rogue
Bonus Proficiency:	Appraising
Recommended Proficiencies:	Climb Walls,

Find/Remove Traps, Hide in Shadows, Move Silently, Open Locks, Tightrope Walking, Savoir-Faire

Special Notes: Jewel Thieves may be of any non-Lawful alignment.

DESCRIPTION

The Jewel Thief is a different person by day than he is by night. He appears to be nothing more than a Dandy to his associates, living the lifestyle of the rich and famous, and enjoying all the leisure and luxury life has to offer. At night, however, he procures the money to pay for his extravagant lifestyle by breaking into the homes of his high society friends and robbing them of their jewels and money. Most of these aristocrats never even suspect him of the crime, and remain unaware that their overtly charming guest was actually "casing the joint". Variations on this theme could include a thief that

specializes in art (valuable paintings and other works of art), antiques, rare books, or any other items the thief might be able to appraise and attempt to obtain.

ROLE~PLAYING

The Jewel Thief presents an image similar to that of a Dandy. In fact, he may even keep his true profession hidden from the other player characters. He comes across as well-bred, charming, sophisticated, and witty. An interesting twist to this kit would be to play the role of a Jewel Thief who has been reformed of his roguish ways (of his own choice or by time served in a correctional facility), and now uses his skills to benefit society and his fellow player characters.

SPECIAL BENEFITS

If the Jewel Thief is caught in a compromising position by an NPC, such as trying to break into a safe, sneaking about a room he doesn't belong in, or with the goods in his hands, he is entitled to an ability check using Charisma with a +4 bonus to charm his way out of the situation. He may attempt to use a Charisma ability check this way at any time, but he may only take advantage of the bonus once a day. A successful check means the Jewel Thief has managed to convince the NPC that no wrong doing was taking place (for example: he became lost in the house, or was simply looking at the item).

SPECIAL HINDRANCES

If a Jewel Thief fails to charm his way out of a compromising position, the proverbial jig is up. He will no longer be able to move freely in the society circles of the NPC who caught him in the act. This NPC will not alert the authorities right away, but will ask the Jewel Thief to immediately leave the premises and never show his face again. The Jewel Thief then has 24 hours to do what ever it takes to drop out of the social circles he traveled in with the NPC (for example, relocate, change his name, or cover his tracks; depending on the size of the

THE BOOK OF SOULS: GOTHIC EARTH PC RULES

community, this could involve skipping town completely, or just laying low for awhile).

If during this 24 hour period he avoids contact with the NPC who caught him, contact with the NPC's immediate circle, and any location the NPC or members of the NPC's circle might frequent, then there is only a 25% chance that the authorities will come looking for him to place him under arrest. (Success or failure in the hero's endeavor to cover his tracks and avoid contact is up to the Dungeon Master). Avoiding arrest on this percentage role indicates that the NPC decided not to report the Jewel Thief to the authorities to avoid a public scandal. If the Jewel Thief does not succeed in avoiding situations that might alert the NPC to his continued presence, the NPC becomes enraged that the Jewel Thief would dare show his face again in high society, and decides to report the criminal anyway. Treat this situation as if he rolled a natural 20 on the Charisma Ability check (see below). The Dungeon Master should determine if the Jewel Thief has taken the proper amount of precautions on a case-by-case basis. Remember, rumors and scandals travel fast through high society circles.

If the Jewel Thief fails with a natural 20 on the Charisma Ability check described above, the NPC will immediately alert the authorities to the Jewel Thief's illicit activities at the earliest possible convenience. If the PC leaves the scene, there is a 100% chance the authorities will come looking for him, regardless of whatever precautions he takes to cover his tracks. It is up to the PC to decide if he wants to attempt to escape, surrender to the authorities and take his chances, or "silence" the individual who caught him. In the heat of the moment, the choice made might not entirely depend on the alignment of the Jewel Thief, which could make for some interesting situations (like murder!) that would require powers checks or punishments for an alignment change.



THE BOOK OF SOULS: GOTHIC EARTH PC RULES

OCTOBER 31ST, 1898.

LONDON.



The rear door of the Lyceum theater opened, spilling light into the night's thickening fog. Rose stepped outside, her manuscript clutched tightly in the crook of her arm, and a pouting frown marring her young face. Stoker stepped out behind her, lingering in the doorway.

"Are you sure you don't want me to walk you to your home, madam?"

Rose turned to look at Bram, a thin smile peeking through her irritation. "No, sir, that's quite all right. My home is quite a distance from here, and I have a coach waiting just at the end of the lane."

Bram nodded. "Very well, madam. Just remember to practice your writing, and I'm sure you will improve. . . . By the way, I don't mean to be forward, but I can't quite place your accent. Are you from the Continent?"

Rose stared blankly back at Bram for a moment, then smirked. "Yes . . . the Continent. But London is my home now."

Bram smiled after Rose as she began to walk away. "Then perhaps we'll meet again, Miss. . ." Bram frowned, then called to the departing woman. "Excuse me, madam, but I don't believe you ever told me your last name!"

Rose stopped, looking back at Bram over her shoulder. He could still see embarrassment crinkling her brow, but she smiled pleasantly all the same.

"Madrigore. Rose Madrigore."

And with that, Rose slipped into the shadows of the alley.

Bram sighed and slumped against the doorjamb, taking a moment to massage his temple. "Demiplane of Dread indeed," he chuckled, and stepped back inside, closing the theater door behind him.

Still in a huff, Rose continued to walk down the alley. When she heard the door shut, she paused to glance back in its direction, then continued on her way. With each step, her frustrated demeanor melted away, replaced by a haughty stride. She marched to the end of the alley, where her transport stood waiting for her. Two bone white horses stood still as statues, harnessed to an enclosed coach of deepest ebon. The coachman was bundled in layers of clothes, and the harsh shadows cast

by a nearby sputtering gaslight completely obliterated any hint of his features. Neither coachman nor horses offered the slightest notice of Rose's approach.

Rose walked to the coach's right-hand door, peering through the open window into the shadows within.

A pair of crimson eyes peered back from the darkness. Those eyes glowed with an unholy light, flickering with infernal flames. The voice which accompanied them similarly lacked any connection to humanity.

"Well? What did he think of my little book of tales?"

Rose smiled. "He thought they were foolish fairy stories. He doesn't know anything." She laughed. "In fact, I'd say he knows even less than that fool who freed us!"

The Thing in the darkness shared her laughter and leaned forward to open her door, its baritone chuckling quickly shedding its unearthly tones to acquire a simple Scottish brogue. As the thing opened the door for Rose, the streetlight momentarily bathed its face in light. The face was entirely human, a bit plump and not much older than Rose herself. The eyes too lost their flame, although even while human they remained wide and staring.

"That is very good news indeed, Rose. If what I have been told is truth, then if he has heard no tales of our former prison, then no one in this world will know of it!"

Rose climbed into the coach, letting a private chuckle slip past her lips.

Her companion raised an eyebrow, frowning. "Is there something more you wish to tell me, small one?"

Rose took her seat, placing the manuscript in her lap. "Mr. Stoker also critiqued your writing style, master Drigor—"

The man's hand shot out and clamped down fiercely on Rose's throat. The man brought his staring eyes close to Rose's suddenly flushed face. As she struggled for air, he hissed commands at her, the inhuman tones returning to his voice. "That name does *not* come with us to this new world, small one! Names have *power*, Rose, and I will *not* have some pathetic insect publishing my name for every greedy little larva that can draw a circle to use for its rituals! It took me two hundred years to find and

THE BOOK OF SOULS: GOTHIC EARTH PC RULES

destroy every copy of that accursed text! *It will not happen again!*”

With that, the man released his iron grasp, leaving Rose to gasp for breath.

“For that matter, small one, the name of Madrigore must be shed as well. Once I have fully established myself in this fool’s body, I will see to creating a new identity for you as well.”

Rose managed to sputter out a few apologetic words. “Th-thank you, Great One . . . and I am sorry for reminding you of such embarrassment.”

Drigor glowered for a bit, but then recovered the hint of a smile. “You are forgiven, small one. It is distant history for your ephemeral kind. The fault of your ancestor, not you, and a crime long since punished.”

Rose continued to cough, rubbing her throat and looking to her companion ruefully.

Drigor offered her a grin, ignoring his previous outburst. “Please, small one, don’t let me interrupt you. Do tell me, what *does* that lowly creature think of my tales?”

Rose recovered her calm, and she shared her companion’s wicked grin. “He said that if you wrote more,” her grin widening with every word, “you might get better at it.”

Drigor blinked, stunned into silence. After a pregnant pause, he burst into throaty laughter, filling the coach with his reverberating chortles. As Drigor howled with laughter, Rose noticed several sheets of parchment on the bench beside him.

“H-have you begun a new tome?” Rose asked, somewhat timidly.

Drigor’s laughter subsided, but the humor remained in his voice as he plucked up the parchments.

“No, small one, not yet. This is just some of the rubbish I’ve been offered by those worms in the Order . . . just listen to this addle-coved nonsense: ‘Hermes and Hathoor are opposites on the Qabbalistic Tree of Life, yet when reconciled, they become a potent force in Yesod, which is perfected in Tiphareth . . .’ What pathetic babble! Do these miserable larvae *truly* believe that their stunted minds can grasp the truth of the Great Ones with *this* gibberish? It seems I must take up the pen once more, Madrigore! I must explain the bleakest truths of the yawning abyss which is their world, and I must do so in some simplistic manner these creatures are capable of understanding!”

Drigor’s face darkened; his grin evaporated as he peered out the window, staring back down the alley at the Lyceum. “But first, I have a critic who needs to be taught a lesson.”

The man’s staring eyes once again flickered with infernal flames, flames which were immediately answered by dancing licks of fire which raced across the Lyceum’s

eaves. As the blaze spread, Drigor leaned back into his seat, grinning foully.

“Do they not know? Must I teach them something so basic? Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law!”

Rose returned her companion’s grin, and in the dancing light of the flames it was nearly as foul as his own. “Purest poetry, Great One. Your words shall surely live to the end of time . . .”

The man’s glaring, grinning eyes glanced at Rose, then returned to watch the flames. In the flames’ glow, he saw his own reflection in the glass of the coach window, and he studied his own features with perverse pleasure.

“Aleister Crowley,” the fiend mused to his reflection, “truly you *are* the Great Beast!”

Barking with laughter, Crowley banged his cane against the coach’s ceiling. “Drive on!”

The ebon coach lurched into motion, rumbling down the lane and fading into the nighttime fog, leaving only the sound of the horses’ hooves against the cobbles, and Crowley’s howling laughter. Then that faded as well, leaving only a heavy silence to press upon the alley.



THE BOOK OF SOULS: CREDITS

John Baker

The Unauthorized Biography of the Marquis Stezen D'Polarno

Well, other than learning to paint before learning to cook, I wouldn't say that I actually identify with Stezen, but when I first read his description in *Darklords*, I was very much pleased with him. Then I thought, what exactly was his curse? He was already cursed before coming to Ravenloft. Why should the food be tasteless? Wouldn't it make more sense for there to be no color, if the painting was the most important part of his curse? And why would he be completely ignored by the other darklords, unless that was where his curse truly lied?

I hope you enjoy the results.

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Joe "darkelf" Bardales

Kargatane

Harry Kirkland ☠ Mysterious Stranger The Sentinel Order ☠ Gothic New York Archeologist ☠ Alienist ☠ Jewel Thief

The appearance of *Masque of the Red Death* on the roleplaying scene created a stir of excitement for me that I hadn't felt since my first dungeon crawl when I was 12 years old. Gothic Earth magically appeared from the mists, bringing me the AD&D gaming world I had always dreamed about. Sure, I loved Ravenloft proper from the start, but I always felt like something was missing. My eternal thanks to William W. Connors for supplying that missing something. Now I'd like to give something back with these humble submissions inspired by his work.

Here's how my submissions were inspired into creation. The Sentinel Order exists because I wanted a Qabal of my own that would be minimally effected by published TSR material, and was inspired by a **SHOWTIME** television series that just might be

familiar to some of you: *Poltergeist: The Legacy*. Harry

Kirkland is an amalgam of several fictional and factual reporters, most notably Jack McGee from the old *Incredible Hulk* television series. The Archeologist exists because of my sister's persistent desire to play one in my *MotRD* campaign. The Jewel Thief came about after my umpteenth viewing of *To Catch A Thief* and my realization that I would never be as suave as Cary Grant, so why not roleplay him? The Alienist is a tribute to Caleb Carr's book of the same name, and his memorable character, the revolutionary Dr. Laszlo Kreizler (Special thanks to my fellow Kargatane members, especially Charles Brown, for helping me tighten this kit up). Last but not least, the Mysterious Stranger, a staple in my campaign, a good friend, a little bit Deep Throat, a little bit Cancer Man, perhaps even a little bit Gentleman Caller, thanks for not letting even me

know who you really are!

joe@kargatane.com

Bil Boozer

Vin'Ejal ☠ Voodan Zombie

Vin'Ejal is dedicated to my parents, who would never abandon me no matter what my eyes looked like. The Voodan Zombie is dedicated to Darren Nowell, who led me to rediscover AD&D after a far too lengthy hiatus.

bilboozer@gsu.edu

Charles "IGiveIn" Brown

Kargatane

Charles Brown has spent most of his life avoiding the real world. His favorite diversions include superhero and horror roleplaying games (and his first published work, *Demons Rule* <<http://www.herogames.com>>, was an attempt to marry these concepts), and is a frequent visitor to the Land of Mists. He joined this project from the Ravenloft mailing list at the TSR Web Site <[http://www.tsrinc.com](http://www TSRINC.COM)>. Currently, his physical body resides in Chicago where he is studying to be a Network Engineering Manager while teaching himself Web publishing, and being a general nuisance to others.

charles@kargatane.com

Eric C. Daniel

Kislova

Mr. Daniel prefers to remain respectfully mysterious...

Strahd4037@aol.com

Paul Fox

Weapons of Sacrifice ☠ Illustrations

As a RAVENLOFT DM, my tendency is to rarely give much in the form of permanent magical items. Even a simple +1 dagger will be rare and have a history or background in my campaigns. Consequently, the lack of weapons began to utterly frustrate my players. In response I created the first Weapon of Sacrifice and inserted it into my campaign. I thought that the lack of the "traditional curse" (i.e. you touch an item and cannot get rid of it) made it an even more tragic item. Its power stems from its user, and once it starts

flowing, it is not always easy to stop.

Cantonkd@ix.netcom.com

THE BOOK OF SOULS: CREDITS

Andrew Hackard

Tarokka Games

Tarokka Deck of Many Things

To the designers of the Ravenloft setting, the members of the RAVENLOFT mailing list, and all my players over the years who have gotten a look of abject terror whenever I mention Ravenloft.

andrew@kargatane.com

Andrew Hauptman

Antiquarian

I was working on ideas for new *MotRD* kits (files which someday I'll locate again!), and I consulted the 5th Edition *Call of Cthulhu* book for inspiration. One of the archetypes I read about was the Antiquarian, and I realized that such a delver into forbidden lore would be a PERFECT character kit for *MotRD*.

I didn't feel right about making money from the kit since I swiped the idea from another source and developed it myself, so I offered it for a free fanzine I helped create called *The Gaslight Gazetteer* which is dedicated to *MotRD* articles. When the Ravenloft Netbook came around, I could hardly refuse the opportunity to have my work stand among some of the greatest authors outside the gaming industry. So please enjoy my kit and make use of it in your *MotRD* campaigns! Anyone who wants to contribute to future issues of *The Gaslight Gazetteer*

can send e-mail to my address. Microsoft Works 4.0 or text format is preferred.

Quistar@aol.com

Quistar@aol.com

Geoff Kimber

Carcharodon Isle

The pocket domain is based on the location of the adventure of the same name, which appears at Stu Turner's Ravenloft site,

Welcome to the Mists of Ravenloft:

<<http://www.ozemail.com.au/~sgturner/rav/rav.html>>

That adventure has its origin in my desire to bring established characters from another campaign world into Ravenloft, introducing many elements of gothic horror into play while retaining elements of the fantasy role-playing genre. With a mist-shrouded island, razor-toothed hunters, an evil Baron, an isolated lighthouse, and a century-old curse, who needs dragons?

GKimber@email.dot.gov.au

Jarrold R. Lowe

Donavan Kaiser

I'd be a liar if I didn't say the terrific movie *The Usual Suspects* had something to do with the creation of this character. I loved how in the movie Kaizer Soze infiltrated the group of crooks and eventually turned on them, it was priceless. I am a huge movie fan and loved Kevin Spacey's Oscar winning performance. If you've not seen the movie I'd suggest it strongly. Donavan Kaizer, my character, was created to infiltrate my band of PCs in the current Ravenloft campaign I'm running. They were originally introduced to a gentle, pure of heart warrior named Sir Russell Canteburry, who helped them out when they were lower levels. Canteburry was actually the fiend Donavan Kaizer, getting closer to my PCs in order to use them in one of his devilish plots. The series of adventures set in Port-a-Lucine was very successful & turned Donavan into the biggest enigma in all of Ravenloft. My players have taken on the *X-Files* slogan "Trust No One" since their encounter with Donavan Kaizer. I hope he brings as much mystery, intrigue & looking over your shoulder action that he brought to my campaign. Happy hunting.

jrlowe01@morehead-st.edu

John W. Mangrum

Kargatane

The Realms Beyond ☠ Keepers of the Coil

Celia Whitmoor ☠ War Wraiths

Beasts at Heart ☠ The Making of Men

William Kemmler ☠ Framing Tales

This book was a beast! I don't know how the Kargat pull it off every month. I should dedicate my articles to the Ravenloft mailing list and the Kargatane especially; if it wasn't for the creative energy I siphoned from there, most of the above would never have been written. Most of the articles I've written here found their inspiration in a brief, obscure reference in some other work; I've always felt I was best at taking a few jumbled bones and grafting enough flesh onto them to make them into a living creature. Blame all the years spent studying conspiracy theories, I guess.

Just to plug myself, those who find the War Wraiths intriguing might like to know that they will feature in *The March of Doom*, a trilogy of Ravenloft modules I'm writing whenever I'm not bogged down in other matters.

Of course, I'd also like to thank the Kargat for giving us so many juicy ideas to cannibalize, Cindi Rice for giving me my opportunity to rub elbows with those Kargat, and Steve Miller for forcing a little coherence into the Mists.

I am the Renfield to his Count.

iggy@kargatane.com

Matthew L. Martin

Saga of the Mists: Appendix

Saga of the Mists: Appendix was created to incorporate

THE BOOK OF SOULS: CREDITS

some of the new material from *Domains of Dread* and save Narrators who want to run a *RAVENLOFT SAGA* game a lot of tiring conversion work. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank three people whose names didn't make it into the credits of the original article: Steve Miller, a (probably unwitting) mentor to me in all things role-playing and Ravenloftian; William W. Connors, who helped me get rid of some of the really bad ideas in the first draft; and above all, Dave Gross, whose encouragement and patient and thoughtful suggestions helped turn the article from a jumbled list of suggestions into what you see today.
mlmartin98@aol.com
mlmartin@coe.edu

Francis Montenegro

Katarina

To Steven, since it is his daughter, and to Kelsey Backels, for being the only person in the world who might know what that means.
SoulNomad@aol.com

Christopher Dale Nichols

Kargatane

Art in the Land ☠ Burke & Hare Prof. Abelhous Nicholisi ☠ Doom Locusts

These articles are the product of the Kargat at TSR who produced one of the greatest game settings ever, all my friends on the *RAVENLOFT* Mailing List, especially the Kargatane and many failed madness checks. I only hope this proves useful to all the *RAVENLOFT* DMs and players out there. Much thanks for all the horror, madness, inspiration and occasional silliness.
chris@kargatane.com

Lincoln "swoon" O'Brien

Van Richten's Notes on the Ravenkin

Mr. O'Brien chooses to let his article speak for itself...
swoon@synflux.com.au

Barry Trevelyan

Kargatane

After several hundred e-mail messages and several thousand words of submissions *The Book of Souls* has finally been

completed. I hope it will serve as a source of inspiration and ideas for everyone. I'd like to thank all the authors for allowing us to consider their work for inclusion, the members of the *RAVENLOFT* Mailing List for continuously coming up with a supply of chilling ideas and, lastly, the Kargatane for all the hard work and dedication they've put into this project.
lgymbmt@nottingham.ac.uk

Stuart Turner

Kargatane

The Patchwork Bride La Société de Legerdemain

Both of my submissions to *The Book of Souls* are taken directly from my own *RAVENLOFT* campaign, and have provided much enjoyment (and frustration!) to our group. My players have been chasing that Bride for almost two years real time, so I hope you find her as entertaining as we have!
As one of the Kargatane, it's been an absolute pleasure to help put this book together. Thanks go to the rest of the Kargatane (particularly Chris Nichols, who got us started on this in the first place), and to the Kargat, who have provided a setting that has consumed my thoughts and time for the past 5 years.
I'm already looking forward to the *Book of Souls II!*
sgturner@ozemail.com.au

Kevin Webb

The Spear of Destiny

The Spear is based on a real item. The Spear has been used in the video game *Spear of Destiny* and has appeared in the **FOX** TV show *Roar*, but the real Spear of Destiny is in a museum in Vienna, I believe. It was said that Hitler believed so much in the legend that the Spear is the first thing he took when he took over Austria in W.W.II. There is a lot of stuff out there on it.
FRODIE69@aol.com

Adam Windsor

Mask Doppelganger ☠ Foul Rat

The Mask Doppelganger is dedicated to Mack & Jean, who helped make the debut of these creatures a game to remember. Though perhaps they'd rather forget...
The Foul Rat is dedicated to William: I guess next time

THE BOOK OF SOULS: CREDITS

you claim to see an Invisible Stalker the other
guys might just listen...
s339890@student.uq.edu.au

Jon Winter

The Ecology of the Poltergeist.

Into the Mists ☠ Out of the Mists

All three of my articles were written for *Dragon* magazine, originally. I've had four articles published there already, but these three were among many that were rejected. "Into" and "Out of the Mists" were written way back in 1993, when I was having a "character kit" phase. There wasn't anything particularly suited for the Demiplane of Dread, hence "Into." I think the third RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM had just been released too, and I figured the NPCs should have kits too, hence "Out of." I imagine the bad guy kits could be used for PCs too, though they're all rather evil and over-powered for my tastes as a DM... but as NPCs they work just fine. "The Ecology of the Poltergeist," from 1995, was supposed to be a Hallowe'en piece, in the style of a Van Richten handbook, for the poor cousin of the ghost. I was kind of pleased with that one; I certainly preferred it to my Neogi Ecology, which *did* get published (*Dragon* 214). Ah well, that's the way it goes I guess. ☺
mimir@geocities.com