

Advanced
Dungeons & Dragons[®]

VAN RICHTEN'S
Monster Hunter's
COMPENDIUM



VOLUME ONE



VAN RICHTEN'S

Monster Hunter's COMPENDIUM

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Dedication:

To two departing members of the Kargat, David Wise and
Cindi Rice, who go to the darkest domain of all—
the business side of the gaming industry.
Good Luck to you both: the Mists already miss you.

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1st Printing, February, 1999

ISBN 0-7869-1447-5

VOLUME ONE

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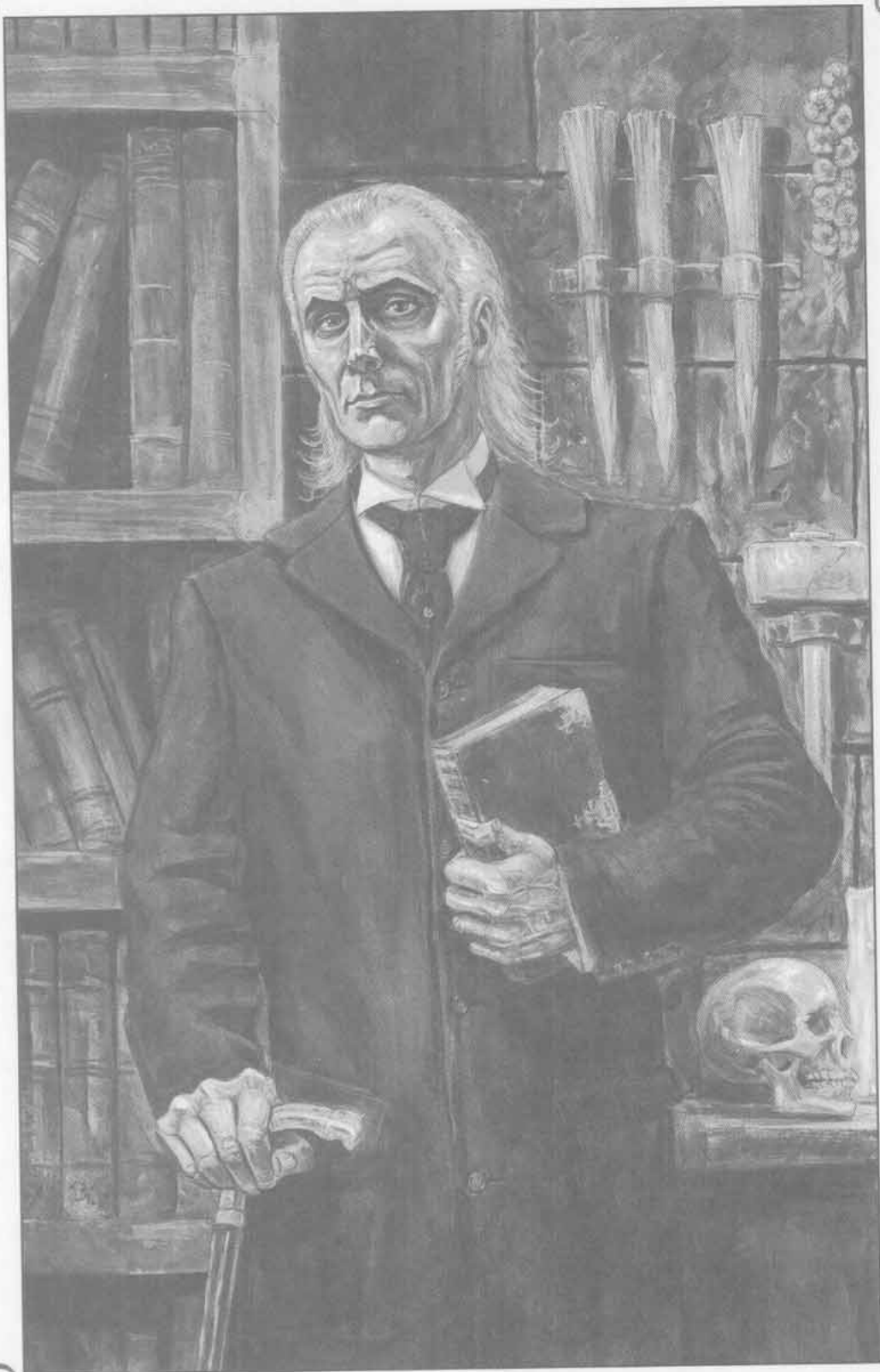
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IN MEMORIAM: DR. RUDOLPH VAN RICHTEN



Dear Reader,

You hold in your hands some of the results of a life fraught with danger, intrigue, and death. I do not speak of my life; mine has been calm enough—too calm in fact, until recently—rather, I speak of the life of Dr. Rudolph van Richten. This man had his life ripped from him, as easily as you or I might rip into a roasted mutton haunch. But I do not intend to tell his story; it's Dr. van Richten's to tell and you'll read it soon enough. No, the reason this book exists is because of what Dr. van Richten did after tragedy struck his life. Through the sorrow and rage, the grief and the loss, the man did not succumb. He endured. He prevailed. He saw what needed to be done and he had the strength to do it. That's why I admire him so, and that's why my sister and I have done what we can (you hold one of the first results on your hands now) to follow in his footsteps.

You see, the amazing thing that Dr. van Richten did was to live on, even after his reasons for living were taken from. The man's intellect and courage drove him to fight the evil that ruined his life, that and all evils like it. He devoted his life to the study, pursuit, and eradication of evil in all these lands. Even moreso, he carefully recorded what he learned, so it could be passed on. While he makes few mentions of it himself in the manuscripts you're about to read, Dr. van Richten risked his life—his very soul—countless times so that others, like my sister and me, and perhaps like you too—could benefit from his daring and bravery and could carry on after Dr. van Richten no longer fought the evils.

You see, not long ago, Dr. van Richten disappeared while on an investigation. We have few details as he took his current journals with him. My sister and I have, out of respect, taken over his herbalism shop and we tend to other matters as best we can, using what Dr. van Richten can teach us to help us survive. Use this book, learn of the evils that exist in our world, and try to live up to the memory of the man who brought this knowledge to us.

—Laurie Weathermay-Foxgrove

Gentle Reader,

As my sister so vibrantly states, the sole reason you are able to hold in your hands these inestimable works of diligence, insight, and true love is because of the good heart and brave soul of Dr. Rudolph van Richten. When he was confronted with evil, he used his mind, his intellect, and his willpower to overcome that evil. He then continued striving to uncover, analyze, and defeat evil in all its myriad forms throughout our lands.

This compilation of three of Dr. van Richten's most important works is, we hope, only the first you shall read. Since Dr. van Richten first penned these treatises and passed them among like-minded individuals, much time has passed. Dr. van Richten's wisdom and sage advice still holds true, however, and we thought that to compile and redistribute Dr. van Richten's works in this manner would bring his hard-earned knowledge to the eyes of many more who may benefit from his years of trial and terror, defeat and victory.

I beseech you, dearest reader, to read what lies herein and learn from it. Pass along that knowledge; it has saved many lives, mine own among them. This knowledge can save still more lives, but it must be learned and used for that to happen. Knowledge is as much a living thing as you or I. Though I too shall someday cease to live, it is my most fervent hope we have preserved the life and learning of Dr. van Richten for future generations to keep alive—and to stay alive.

—Jennifer Weathermay-Foxgrove

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book is a compilation of three volumes previously published as *Van Richten's Guide to Vampires*, *Van Richten's Guide to Werebeasts*, and *Van Richten's Guide to the Created*, three of the most popular RAVENLOFT® products of all time. The problem with popular products is that they tend to go out of print over time. The product you hold is the solution to that particular problem. These documents have not been substantially altered; they have been re-edited and corrected, have all new art to go with them, and a gorgeous new graphic treatment.

Those of you who are not familiar with the Van Richten series of products may still be wondering just what it is you're holding. Very simply, each Van Richten's guide redefines the meaning of a monster in the AD&D® game. The first section of this compilation, for example, is on vampires. Everyone who's read the *MONSTROUS MANUAL™* tome knows about AD&D vampires, right? Not any more. The *Van Richten's Guide to Vampires* examines and explores every aspect of a vampire's life, from how they're created, how they pass the centuries, and how they hunt and feed, to creating servitor vampires, vampire "spouses", and a great many suggestions on how to vary the vampires that appear in your AD&D campaigns. Different powers, abilities, vulnerabilities, and fatal weaknesses can be found herein for the enterprising Dungeon Master who wants to shake up not only the heroes, but the players themselves. Imagine the looks of horror and surprise on the faces of your players when, after tracking the blood-drinking fiend to its lair, the heroes drive a wooden stake through the heart of the vampire as it lies abed in its coffin—only to have the vampire erupt out of its casket, pull the stake out, toss it aside, and say, "You shall count yourselves lucky if *only* death finds you this night."

These books (and hence, this compilation) allows you, the Dungeon Master, to create unique beings, not just monsters, for your heroes to combat. By giving the vampire (for example) in your scenario a background, a history, and a personality, he stops being a mere monster and becomes more of a person with goals, desires, fears, and hatreds. It's villains like these that inspire the richest, most exciting adventures, and they're the foes the players will remember fighting, running from, and battling, until finally, they kill the creature once and for all. It's villains and adventures like these that both Dungeon Masters and players fondly recall months and years later.

What is the RAVENLOFT setting?

The RAVENLOFT campaign is the gothic horror setting for the AD&D game. The essence of the setting is the macabre fear of classic horror tales such as *Dracula*, *Frankenstein*, and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. It suggests, rather than blatantly displays, suspense and terror. When an AD&D player thinks of the Ravenloft setting, a likely image is that of a lonely, mist-shrouded castle high atop a dark moor, lit only by a cloud-obscured full moon. The game is the same, but the mood, the atmosphere, is unique.

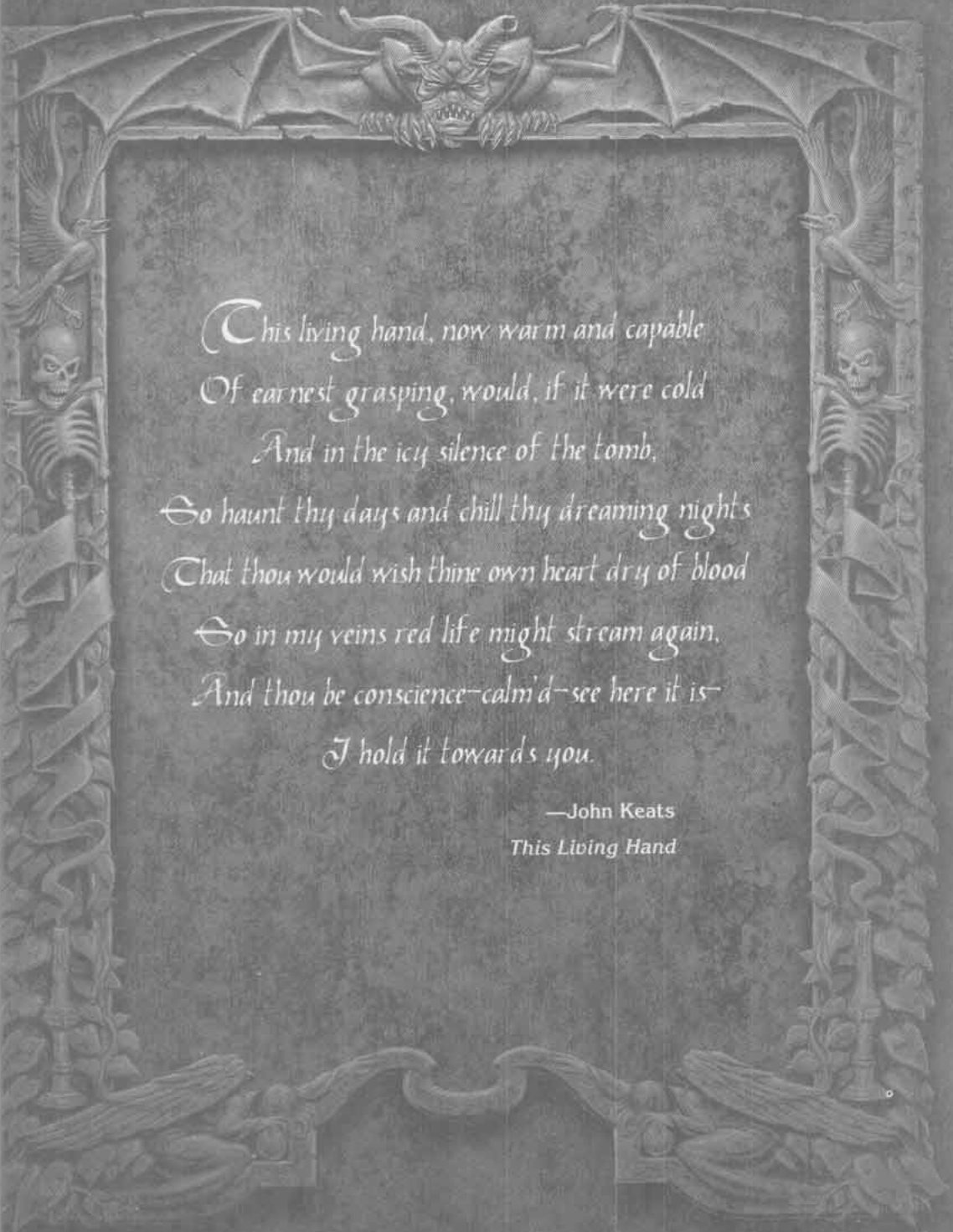
Several key elements define a good RAVENLOFT (horror) AD&D scenario. Perhaps the most important is description. When the player characters are exploring the ruined castle, a talented RAVENLOFT Dungeon Master does not simply list the contents of each room, she describes them. Tell the players how dark the room is, what the heroes hear, smell, and see, but do not make their conclusions for them. For example, never give the name of the creature they're encountering. "A huge dog that warps and shifts until it's a bipedal beast so large that it towers over you all" is much more effective at creating thrills and suspense than simply saying, "The werewolf *shapechanges* into its wolf-man form". By using the game terms "werewolf" and "shapechange", you've broken the suspenseful mood you were trying to create by reminding the players that this is only a game after all: perhaps the worst crime any RAVENLOFT Dungeon Master can commit.

For those interested in learning more about the Ravenloft setting itself, pick up *Domains of Dread* (TSR #02174), the rule book for running full-fledged RAVENLOFT campaigns.

Fear, Horror, and Madness Checks

These are simple, optional mechanics unique to the RAVENLOFT setting. While *Domains of Dread* gives full rules for these checks and their effects, a simpler method follows. When the text (or the Dungeon Master) decides the time has come for a check, have the PC save vs. paralysis. Effects of failure are left for the Dungeon Master to determine, but include fleeing, rage, obsession, and shock. These checks are optional; use them only when the players' roleplaying falters.

Vampires



*This living hand, now warm and capable
Of earnest grasping, would, if it were cold
And in the icy silence of the tomb,
So haunt thy days and chill thy dreaming nights
That thou would wish thine own heart dry of blood
So in my veins red life might stream again,
And thou be conscience-calm'd—see here it is—
I hold it toward's you.*

—John Keats
This Living Hand

SECTION, THE FIRST:

*But first on Earth as vampyr sent, Thy corpse shall from its tomb be rent, Then
ghastly haunt thy native place, And such the blood of all thy race.*

—Lord Byron

INTRODUCTION



My name is Dr. Rudolph van Richten. By my background, I am a scholar and a doctor. As I was growing up in the land of Darkon, I believed it was my destiny to heal people, to treat sicknesses of the body with the herbal cures I learned from my grandmother.

Yet Fate flaunted my beliefs. I suffered a personal loss of such gravity, was forced into an act of such trauma, that my entire direction in life was forever changed. Even though it still pains me to recall, it is important for the sake of what will follow to recount those unhappy events here.

My life in Darkon was placid, enjoyable. I was married to my childhood sweetheart, a golden-tressed girl named Ingrid, and I thought my joy was complete when I learned that my young wife would soon bear a child. I still remember the birth of my son, whom I named Erasmus, meaning “beloved” in a little-known tongue, as one of the happiest days of my life. He possessed the radiant fair looks of his mother, and from me he inherited a quickness of mind and a sense of honor that set him apart from other children.

For fourteen summers Erasmus was my pride and joy. And then, tragically, he was taken from me—not by the arms of death, but by purely unnatural agents. My son was set upon by Vistani—the gypsies who wander the lands and travel the strange Mists—and swept away. When I returned home and found him gone, my panic-stricken wife bewailed the circumstances of the dangerous people who had stolen our child.

I swore an oath to myself that I would never rest until Erasmus was freed from whatever unholy fate possessed him. Leaving my affairs in the capable hands of my understanding Ingrid and committing my future to the search, I set off in pursuit.

The details of my journey are immaterial here. The trail was cold and difficult to find. Suffice it to say that I finally tracked the Vistani caravan to the domain of Barovia. Erasmus was not with them, but I extracted his whereabouts from the gypsy leader. They sold my son, I learned, sold him into servitude, to a local landowner who styled himself “Baron Metus.” I hurried to the home of the Baron and demanded that he return my son immediately.

To this day, I still recall my first glimpse of Metus. He was a tall man, slender and graceful in his movements. His pale face was fine of feature, and his eyes were as black as pools of ink. As he heard my demand, his thin, expressive lips curled in a smile that could only be described as exceedingly cruel. He laughed coldly and turned his back on me. His minions escorted me from his property.

I camped that night just outside the walls surrounding Metus’ land, and darkness and despair enfolded me. But then, around midnight, Erasmus came to me! He had evaded the Baron’s soldiers and climbed the wall. He had something horrible to tell me.

I think that I knew the truth even before he spoke the words, as soon as I saw the ivory pallor of his face under the moonlight, as soon as I glimpsed the dark pits that were his eyes. The words he uttered only confirmed what I already knew.

My son was dead.

Yet still he walked! Life in death, death in life—such was his destiny. The Baron was a vampire, and he had passed on that dark gift to my only son! I wept there in the night, cried the inconsolable tears of a terrified child.

But the worst was yet to come. My son had something to ask of me. The dark gift had only recently been given and his thoughts still ran in the patterns of a mortal mind. He felt more kinship with

me, with the living, than he did with the Baron and others of his kind. But, he told me, he could feel those old patterns of thought slipping away. Soon, he believed, the horror he felt for his condition would fade, and he would forget what it was like to be a mortal. He would become a monster like the Baron!

And so Erasmus begged me to save him from this fate. He begged me to destroy him, right then, that very night. He had even brought with him a sharpened wooden stake and a mallet with which to pound it through his chest!

I doubt that anyone can ever truly understand the torment I suffered. My son was dead; in my mind I knew that to be true. But here he was still, standing before me, speaking to me. How could I find the capacity in my heart to kill him? And how could I not? How could I damn him to an eternity of torment?

For several hours, as the moon sank toward the distant horizon, we talked. We *re-lived together the joyous times we had shared, the poignant memories. We cried together. And then, as the harbinger of dawn tinted pink the sky, Erasmus van Richten lay himself down upon the bosom of the meadow and wordlessly handed me the stake and the mallet. Our gazes met for one last time, then he closed his eyes and composed himself as if for sleep.*

I positioned the point of the stake over my son's heart . . . *and brought down the mallet. With each blow, the agony in my heart could have been no greater if the stake had been sinking into my own breast. When it was done, I lay beside the body of my son and wept again. I wept until the first rays of the sun touched his young body and reduced it to ash.*

It took all the effort of my will to not lie down beside the dust that had been my precious son and slip into the darkness of death. Only the thought of Ingrid, waiting anxiously at home, prevented me from taking my own life. I turned my back on the horror and bent my steps to the weeks-long journey home.

But I found that horror followed me—in fact, preceded me. When I reached my

home, I found my beloved Ingrid dead! There was a note from Metus, stating that matters were now in balance. I had taken something from him that he valued—I can only presume he meant Erasmus—and so he had taken from me something that I valued.

It was at that moment, as I knelt weeping beside the cold, white body of my beloved Ingrid, that my destiny was turned. I had always prided myself on my ability to rid the body of disease or poison. Now I knew that this was as nothing compared to the importance of ridding society of a most evil “disease and poison.” On that terrible day, I swore myself to a new career: the pursuit and destruction of those creatures such as the one that had taken my son and wife from me, that feed on the body of society as a cancer feeds on the body of man. And I swore that my first quarry would be Baron Metus!

It has been almost three decades since that fateful day. Over the intervening years, I have learned much about my quarry, about the enemies that threaten us all.

Today, I feel my advancing age and I can sense the chill wind of mortality blowing through my soul. It is time to pass on what I have learned, so future generations may pick up the stake and mallet when I am forced to lay them down. Thus, I am setting pen to paper in the hope that this tome will preserve what I have learned at such great cost.

Remember: The fight against creatures of darkness is a difficult and often painful one! But it is a *good* fight, and one that *must* be fought. If this work inspires but one person to follow in my footsteps, then I have succeeded and my life's work has not been for naught.

Editor's Note: Game applications of Dr. Van Richten's guide appear at the end of each chapter, in gray-screened text. For example, Van Richten discusses the inhuman speed of vampires in Chapter Two, "Vampiric Powers," so vampire movement rates appear at the end of that chapter within a gray-screened block of text.

SECTION, THE FIRST:

CHAPTER ONE: THE BACKGROUND OF VAMPIRISM



In almost every world, tales of vampirism exist to strike fear in both small children and grown adults. Sensible people generally consider these tales folklore, and indeed it seems that the existence of the living dead is both implausible and impossible. Why then, do cultures so separated by distance and time that they have not even the smallest commonality, share nearly identical tales of supernatural creatures that drink the blood of the living?

I have recorded tales of a place called Krynn, and a race of sea elves who claim that if one of their race is buried on land, it will rise from the dead to seek vengeance on its brothers by drinking their blood. A native of another world, called Toril, tells a tale of a great undead beast that used to be a man. This beast roams the plains and searches for lone people to attack; the tale relates that it eats the internal organs of its prey. From still another place, called Oerth, a man has told me of a family curse that causes the first-born male in every twelfth generation



to rise after death to drink the blood of the family unless the body is burned at burial.

These three worlds, so far from the Land of Mists, that I know them only by story and rumor, share many tales of once-living men walking the land and slaying the living. Can this be coincidence? Rather, it would indicate that these tales can only be the truth, speaking as they do of undead lords who tread upon the domain of the living.

The Question of Origins

How did vampirism begin? If new vampires are spawned by other vampires, as virtually all tales would have us believe, how then was the first vampire created? These questions have plagued sages as long as the undead monsters themselves have plagued mankind. Perhaps the answer lies in Barovia.

The gift—or curse—of immortality was not thrust upon Strahd von Zarovich, Lord of Barovia, by another vampire; rather, he stole it from the lips of death. I quote the following text from the diary of the bard Gregorri Kolyan, who supposedly was captured by Strahd only to be released sometime later with the complete story of the creature. I do not know why Strahd allowed Gregorri to leave with this vital information. Perhaps the vampire felt a need to have his story told after years of exile and secrecy.

September 8, 453: Barovia is a stranger place now, although I cannot exactly put my finger on any changes. There is a physical nature to this change: colors are not as vibrant, sounds not as immediate; but the major change is in the people, in the life-blood of the land. As near as I can tell, the change began about two years ago. I can remember a day when I used to play my songs in the local taverns and people would dance and

sing. Now they seem satisfied just to sit and drink and to talk in hushed whispers. There is a dampness over their souls, like a dreary autumn day.

November 2, 453: I am on to something. It seems that my feelings about the people of Barovia have not simply been my imagination. There is a source, a spiritual suppression if you will, behind the changes. I have no means of verifying this, no magical detection devices that will lead me to it; I have only my heart and my love for the land and its people.

March 29, 454: For nearly five months I have searched for the answer to the puzzle. Barovia is in danger and no one else seems aware of it; I would swear to it. But it is not a danger to which people respond, not a physical enemy at the gates of a city or the border of a land. The enemy is within, within the hearts and minds of the Barovian people. Just last week I purchased some supplies from the market. The merchant packaged the items, handed them to me, and then turned away before I could pay him. It was as if he cared not about being paid. Very odd, almost self-destructive behavior pervades Barovia.

I have many suspicions. Many would call them paranoid, would say that my mind has become unbalanced. On certain days, when the sun warms the land and the birds sing in the trees, I myself doubt my certitude. But then I find my eyes drawn up, up to the castle on the hill.

Castle Ravenloft. What mysteries do its walls hold within them—walls that are tall and unyielding like the secrets of an old man's heart? Strahd von Zarovich has ruled Barovia for over a century and has not been seen in half that amount of time. Each day, the knowledge comes upon me with more certainty: I must learn more about this dark enigma of a man. And I fear I must do the unthinkable: go to the castle itself and investigate its enigma first-hand.

April 8, 454: Fear—cold and dripping, like blood from a hanging corpse—has been my constant companion for several weeks. The closer I get to that accursed Castle Ravenloft, the stronger I feel the grip of terror's icy hand. There can be no doubt now as to the source of Barovia's plight.

April 10, 454: I need search no longer. The object of my quest has not only appeared to me, but sequestered me away within his foul domicile! Late last night, he appeared in my room like some silent apparition from the grave. Ordering me to take up my quills, inks, and parchment, he seized me and leaped out my window to his waiting coach. This confirmed my suspicions that Strahd von Zarovich is other than a natural man, you see, for my window is four stories from the ground!

April 15, 454: For five days and nights I have literally been Strahd's prisoner in Castle Ravenloft. Strange how the castle seems so warm and cozy inside, not the lurking horror its external visage portrays. I have discovered many things about Strahd and may scribe them later in a tome dedicated to such an endeavor. I feel, however, that this task will never be accomplished, for how can this man allow me to live when I know such dark secrets about him. He has shared himself, all his intimate secrets, with me as if I were his dearest friend.

Not a man, Strahd walks the land as a vampire—a once-living creature that now feeds on the blood of the living! Although there are endless details about his actions, mannerisms, and appearance that I wish to portray, in this journal I will pen only one aspect of him: his transformation from living to undead. And I will do so immediately, lest I forget the smallest detail.

It is a great testament to the sleepy, lethargic nature of Barovia that no one

SECTION, THE FIRST:

has questioned the rule of Strahd von Zarovich. He rarely, if ever, shows himself publicly. Hence, it has been puzzling that he has ruled Barovia unchallenged for more than a century. I now know the answer to this riddle, but I am no more comforted.

In life, Strahd was tossed upon a sea of emotion and jealousy. His greatest jealousy was toward his brother, Sergei, who was young and handsome. To add to this, Sergei had the love of a beautiful girl named Tatyana. Envy swept over Strahd like a breaking sea, for he, too, loved Tatyana. As time passed, these natural emotions twisted into grotesque forms. His love became an overwhelming need to possess the object of that love, and envy grew into spite, and eventually into hatred.

At first, Strahd merely intended to frustrate Sergei's plans to marry Tatyana. But then Strahd's mind, apparently already twisted, broke, and he decided that only the death of his younger brother would give him what he wanted: sole possession of Tatyana. He planned this assassination, this fratricide, in private and—so he thought—in silence. But in his overwrought state, Strahd was given to speaking aloud as he strode his chambers alone. An officer of the guard, who was a personal friend to Sergei, walked the battlements just beyond Strahd's window and overheard the elder von Zarovich's plans. Stricken with horror, he knew he had to warn Sergei at once. He turned to leave his post at the battlements, but as he did, the scabbard of his sword struck the stonework.

Strahd heard the faint sound! Immediately, he snatched up his own weapon and hurled himself out the window, onto the battlement. With a curse, he aimed a whistling cut at the guard's head. That officer was a veteran swordsman, however, and parried the blow. Although he had no

desire to harm Strahd, his master, the officer was now forced to defend himself.

By Strahd's account, the battle was fierce and will make for a great song, should I live to compose it. Both men were excellent swordsmen—Strahd from his years as a general and the officer from his constant training. Yet Strahd's madness gave him the edge, and he finally struck down the officer . . . but not before he himself had taken a wound that would have slain a lesser man instantly.

Strahd von Zarovich was as good as dead. In his mind he knew that, but his hatred and rage would not allow his failing body peace. As the lifeblood poured from his body, Strahd made a pact with Death. He reached over, grabbed the dead guardsman, and drank the blood of the corpse.

Strahd would now live free from Death forever, cheating that dark and shadowy figure! But the pact required another act to be complete. He would have to kill his brother Sergei on his wedding day to finally seal the wicked contract.

Strahd hid the guard's body, awaiting Sergei's wedding day. As the time passed, Strahd found his charade more and more difficult to maintain. The daylight hours were becoming increasingly uncomfortable and the naked rays of the sun physically painful to his eyes and skin. He also found it difficult to eat food, which hardly satisfied his hunger. The transformation to whatever creature Death had in mind for him was beginning.

On the day of the wedding Strahd sought out Sergei and instigated a fight, intending in this way to give himself some justification for killing the young man. Strahd expected his young and fit brother to be a challenge to defeat, but quickly found that his physical strength had increased far beyond its previous limit. With but a single, cruel blow Strahd felled his

brother and his pact with Death was complete. Strahd von Zarovich had become a vampire!

No doubt perceptive readers will have noticed the same gaps in this narrative that I spotted when it first came to my attention. For instance, how exactly did Strahd von Zarovich strike a "pact with Death?" As "Death" is merely a cessation of life, what possible manifestation of this natural condition could propose or accept such a pact?

It is questions such as these that force me to doubt the complete veracity of Gregorri's tale. Perhaps this famous bard could not resist the urge to embellish upon the tale told to him by von Zarovich (although the diary entry shows little of the internal consistency and stylistic brilliance characteristic of tales known to have been created by Gregorri Kolyan). More likely is the possibility that von Zarovich lied to the bard for his own reasons. This might explain Kolyan's eventual escape or release: the vampire wished to use him to spread misinformation. Or, in the perhaps most likely interpretation, von Zarovich lied, but not only to Kolyan. Aging humans often color or alter their memories of events that were less than flattering to them. In humans this tendency appears in just a few years. How great may the tendency to embellish be in a creature that has lived for centuries and can expect to live forever? This interpretation raises a major question: how much trust can we put in anything spoken by Strahd Von Zarovich . . . or by any of his unholy kind?

The "Necrology" of Vampires

It should come as no surprise that a vampire's metabolism is not like that of a mortal; in fact, strictly speaking, a vampire has no metabolism

whatsoever. Although all of the biological systems present in a living mortal are also present in a vampire, most of these systems are changed in function. For example, most vampires do not need to breathe, and can function equally well in an airless crypt or in the vacuum of a void. Provided that immersion in water is not deadly to them, they can function unimpaired on the ocean floor. Vampires do retain the use of their lungs, but only for speech.

Because vampires have no metabolism in the normal sense, metabolic toxins and poisons—ingested, inhaled, or insinuated—have absolutely no effect on the creatures. This is not to say there are not certain substances which, when insinuated into the body of a vampire, cause it serious or even lethal damage. These substances, although they may seem to function like poisons, are more like allergens and are usually specific to individual creatures. For example, I myself have dispatched a vampire that was sensitive to holly, and I have heard that the ash of burned alder wood is lethal to another certain vampire.

Some examples of other vampiric allergens are yew leaves, rose petals, salt, rice, silver, mistletoe, and lilies.

The digestive tract of a vampire is greatly modified from that of a living mortal. The stomach is frequently reduced in size, often to the size of a man's clenched fist, simply because no vampire needs to ingest large volumes of solid food.

There is wide variation among vampires with regard to the ability to eat solid food. Some vampires are unable to eat normal food at all, and any attempt to do so results in immediate regurgitation. Others can eat solid food with no ill effects, although they extract no nourishment from the food, and pass the material through their bodies over a course of hours, as mortals do. In the middle

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ground, there are some vampires that can eat solid food, but must regurgitate it within a period ranging from minutes to hours. This issue may seem incidental, but it obviously has significant effects on a vampire's behavior, should the creature try to masquerade as a living creature.

The circulatory system of a vampire is little changed. The heart still pumps blood throughout the vessels of the monster's body. There are some differences, however. Because vampires have no need to extract oxygen from the air, their blood absorbs nothing from the lungs. This renders them completely immune to noxious gases that must be breathed to be effective. A vampire might inhale the gas—that is, draw it into its lungs—but the toxic chemicals in the gas would not cross from the lungs to the blood.

The blood of a vampire is also somewhat different from the blood of a mortal. When viewed normally, it has the same rich, red color as a mortal's blood. When it is viewed by transmitted light, such as when a vial of vampire blood is held up to a light source, it has a distinctive golden color. Blood drawn from an undestroyed vampire can manifest a wide variety of powers. In some cases, the blood is highly caustic, causing severe acid-like damage to anyone who touches it. In other cases, the blood bursts explosively into flame when exposed to sunlight. In still other cases, anyone who touches so much as one drop of the blood with bare skin instantly falls under the mental sway of the vampire. It is impossible to predict beforehand what effects the blood of a particular vampire might have, if any. There is one common factor: at the instant a vampire is destroyed, any samples of his blood immediately become completely inert, and frequently become rancid within seconds.

The sensory organs of vampires become much more sensitive than

those of their living analogues. If they did not already possess the power in life, vampires gain the ability to see in total darkness (infravision), typically with a range of some 90 feet. Their hearing also becomes much more acute, as does their sense of touch and smell; a vampire is exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to surprise.

Because a vampire does not require oxygen and, as is usually the case, must feed only once per day, where does it draw the energy required for the prodigious feats of which the creature is capable? Many sages disagree, but my own belief is that the creature has an innate link with what sages refer to as the Negative Material Plane.

Whatever the reason, vampires are much more resilient and robust than living creatures. They seem generally immune to exhaustion and to the debilitating effects of pain and exposure, and seem able to shrug off the negative consequences of many magical effects. They are totally immune to the effects of *sleep*, *charm*, and *hold* spells, and to other magical or psionic effects which mimic these spells. They are also totally immune to any magical effect that *specifically* causes paralysis. It is important to stress the word "specifically." While a vampire would be immune to the paralyzing touch of a ghoul or the dweomer of a *wand of paralyzation*, it could be affected by a potent enchantment, such as *alter reality* or *wish* that emulated the effect. (Any mage capable of casting such powerful magic would almost certainly choose an effect more significant than *paralyzation*, of course.) Like many other types of undead creatures, vampires sustain little damage from any effect based on cold or electricity, whether caused by spell, item, breath weapon, or even the elements.

Vampires are totally resistant to several beneficial spells as well. The creatures are completely immune to the effects of priestly curative or healing magic, such as *cure light wounds*, *heal*, etc. Because the failure of such spells might well give away the monster's true nature, a vampire masquerading as a mortal will often go to great lengths to avoid exposure to such magic.

A vampire's hair will never turn gray, nor will the creature show any other physical signs of aging unless it already had before death. In general, as long as the creature is well fed and functions according to whatever other restrictions are relevant to its existence, it will never appear any different from the way it did on the day of its mortal death. This does not mean that vampires will flaunt their unchanging appearance, because doing so will certainly attract too much unwanted attention. A vampire that chooses to live within or on the outskirts of the society of men will, in most cases, go to great lengths to masquerade as a normal human or demihuman, pretending to age and even to "die" to remove suspicion. This deception is discussed at length in Chapter Twelve, "The Facade."

Vampires of Different Racial Stock

Most of this guide's discussions about "typical" vampires generally refer to vampires that were (demi)humans when alive. There are some differences between these once-human vampires and those that arise from different racial stock.

Again, as with discussions of human vampires, these paragraphs refer to "typical" cases. A dwarven vampire (for instance) may exhibit specifically dwarven characteristics, may more closely resemble the human vampires, or may show attributes totally different from both. Perceptive readers will

Vampire Blood

Caustic vampire blood causes 1d6 hit points of damage if it contacts bare skin.

Explosive vampire blood (in a vial), when exposed to sunlight, inflicts 1d3 hit points of damage on anyone within 3 feet.

Vampire blood possessing a *charm person* effect has a saving throw penalty ranging from -1 to -5, depending on the age category of the vampire, beginning with Old.

Surprising a Vampire

In most situations, the chance of surprising a vampire is one-half the chance for a normal creature of the race and character class of the vampire while it was alive.

observe that a certain symbolism plays an integral role with most of these vampires. Their weaknesses and strengths are generally highly symbolic of the creatures' natures while alive. For example, some dwarven vampires may be highly reactive to weapons made of mithral, especially if they coveted the metal in life. This kind of symbolic significance is a common feature with vampires of all races and natures.

Compilers' Note: We have determined that, since Dr. van Richten penned the passage above, that each demihuman race does indeed exhibit "uncommon" abilities for vampires. Further, many of these abilities seem consistent within a racial stock; in other words, many dwarven vampires, for example, possess similar powers.

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A fiend we knew him to be, but we believed him to be a fiend of mortal aspect.

Imagine our horror when the first blow, wielded by our stout dwarven companion with his ra-or-sharp axe, merely glanced off our foe's scalp with little effect, as though the weapon had struck a mountain bolde

—From the journal of Aldyn Silvershield

CHAPTER TWO: VAMPIRIC POWERS



aveat: It is important to recall that the following discussions refer to what might be called the “typical” vampire.

Unfortunately, there is no such thing as a “typical vampire.”

Vampires are perhaps the most individualistic of undead. What is true for one is an outright—and dangerously misleading—falsehood for another. The differences between individual vampires typically become more pronounced as the creatures advance in age and power: while most fledgling vampires typically show at least some similarities with each other, the differences between the aged Patriarchs are often so great as to make one suspect that they are completely different types of creatures. The following discussions deal with the most common powers and weaknesses of vampires. Many vampire hunters have died—or worse—through over-generalizing such discussions, however. An assumption that any individual vampire has any particular power or weakness is a dangerous assumption, indeed!

Great is the power of the vampire. These undisputed masters of the undead have an abundance of powers from which to choose, giving them an advantage in nearly every situation. These monsters enjoy significant benefits in nearly every aspect of their being. Their senses, strength, reasoning, and intelligence are all far

beyond human norms. In fact, if not for their special vulnerabilities (which I will discuss later), vampires would be nearly unstoppable.

Although all vampires are extremely powerful, there is a moderating effect on the abilities of vampires, and this is *time*. A newly created vampire (in the vast majority of cases) is relatively weak when compared to those that have been in existence for decades or centuries. On the other end of the scale, a vampire who has existed for a millennium or more is unimaginably more powerful than a newly created Fledgling.

No one knows exactly why this is so. Some scholars believe this progression to be “an innate characteristic of vampiric nature,” which of course is no answer at all. My personal belief is that all vampires are created with the potential to use all the powers available to a 1,000-year-old individual, but that actually using those powers is something that must be learned. Presumably, the more “advanced” powers require more subtlety to control, or are more taxing on the vampire, or perhaps both. To use these greater powers the vampire must practice the precision required and must build the willpower and mental fortitude needed to wield them.

Personally, I hope that my belief is wrong because of the following logical consequence: If all vampires, no matter how “young,” have the potential to use the greater powers, might it not be possible for an exceptional individual to come into being with a natural aptitude for some of the greater powers? The image of a

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one-day-old vampire able to use any of the powers of a millennium-old Patriarch is horrifying to consider. It discomforts me greatly to learn that tales of such "precocious" creatures exist, and apparently they do, although they are, thankfully, extremely rare. It is best to keep this in mind and to realize that the age progression discussed later is merely a rule of thumb and not a law of nature. The well-prepared vampire hunter should expect exceptions.

Such exceptions aside, the age-related progression of powers is perhaps the vampire hunter's greatest ally. A Fledgling vampire is less adept at covering its tracks, less experienced at playing on the weaknesses of those who would pursue it.

Age Categories

Vampires are divided into age categories. Essentially, as a vampire grows older, its power also grows. The creature gains new abilities that it did not previously have and becomes increasingly less susceptible to past weaknesses. In short, the older the vampire is, the more formidable a foe it becomes.

Happily, I know of only two Patriarch vampires in existence. Patriarchs are extremely rare, for seldom do vampires survive this long. As will be discussed later, the strain of immortality is frequently too great for them. I see the hand of Providence in this, because to encounter a Patriarch is almost certain to become totally subject to its will.

Each vampire age category has a title associated with it. The titles and related ages are:

Fledgling:	0–99 years
Mature:	100–199 years
Old:	200–299 years
Very Old:	300–399 years
Ancient:	400–499 years
Eminent:	500–999 years
Patriarch:	1000+ years

These titles are more of academic interest than of practical value; one would not normally refer to a vampire by its title. If someone were addressing Strahd, for instance, who falls in the 400–499 category, he would still call him "Lord Strahd," rather than "Ancient Strahd."

It seems that vampires make use of similar terms when talking to each other. In such cases, however, they are

Powers by Age

Age Category	Fledgling	Mature	Old	Very Old	Ancient	Eminent	Patriarch
Hit Dice	8+3	9+3	10+2	11+1	12	13	14
Str*	18/76	18/91	18/00	18/00	19	20	21
Int*	16	16	17	18	18	19	20
Dex*	16	17	17	18	18	19	20
Cha*	14	15	16	17	18	18	19
Movement **	12	15	15	18	18	21	24
Save vs. Charm	-2	-2	-3	-3	4(voice)	4(voice)	5 (will)
Weapon Needed to Hit	+1	+1	+2	+2	+3	+3	+4
Regenerated Hit Points/Round	3	3	3	4	4	4	5

Vampires, regardless of age, have a Con of at least 18.

* These values are minima; if the vampire had greater ability scores prior to becoming a vampire, the higher score is retained.

** Vampires fly (in bat form) at a rate of 18 (C)

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much more concerned about relative age, and their uses of titles are almost exclusively symbolic and valued only for their psychological effect. For instance, a vampire addressing another that is its senior in age might address it as "Old One," "Ancient One," or even "Eminence," regardless of the senior vampire's actual age category. In this case, the form of address would reflect respect (or, more accurately, fear) for the senior vampire. In the converse situation, an older vampire might address a younger creature as "Fledgling" regardless of the younger creature's actual age, to signify contempt for the junior vampire's weakness.

In most cases, of course, vampires meeting for the first time will not know each other's age. The use of titles in such a situation would depend on the intentions of the creatures involved. They might refrain from using titles to avoid giving offense, or might use them extensively in a game of "one-upmanship."

Spell- and Nonspell-like Powers

Jarmin had asked me to take a walk with him, for he said he had something very important he wished to discuss with me. I have to admit I suspected what his topic would be. After all, we had been spending considerable amounts of time together, and it was only logical that marriage would be on his mind.

We were within the cathedral when the earthquake struck. The ancient stone structure shuddered, and there was a terrible crashing noise from above. With hideous strength, Jarmin flung me aside, just in time to prevent me from being struck by the massive stone blocks that had fallen from the roof

of the apse. Jarmin was not so lucky. The first boulder struck him solidly on the back and smashed him to the ground.

I buried my face in my hands, weeping inconsolably over the loss of my one and only love. And then I screamed in shock as a familiar hand rested on my shoulder, and a familiar voice whispered in my ear! "There will never again be need for tears," Jarmin told me as his lips brushed my neck. "Nothing, not even time, will keep us apart."

—From the journal of Maria Castries

All vampires enjoy certain abilities which, were they possessed by a mortal, would certainly be ascribed to the realm of magic. To a vampire, however, such faculties are quite innate. Some of the powers, indeed, appear to be the result of casting spells, yet others render the creature "superhuman," so to speak. At this point I shall divide these capacities into "nonspell-like" and "spell-like" powers and expound upon each, but I hasten to add that, to the vampire, they are one and the same, and altogether inherent.

Nonspell-like Powers

All vampires are extremely powerful in the physical sense. The reasons for this are unclear. Perhaps the transformation from life to undeath somehow tempers the body physically, making muscles stronger and flesh, bones, and sinew more resistant to damage.

From the moment of their creation, vampires are hideously strong. Unlike mortals, who weaken as they grow older and their muscles atrophy, vampires actually gain strength as the years pass. Patriarch vampires, for example, develop a strength rivaling that of some lesser gods. Vampires gain great benefits from their

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monstrous strength, including both the ability to break through an opponent's guard and to deliver massive damage when a blow strikes home. Although these creatures are very intelligent and will seldom enter physical combat, they certainly have the tools to dominate such conflicts.

Vampires also possess great speed. Fledgling vampires are as fast as a normal human. As vampires grow older, they become faster and faster until they reach Patriarch age, when they can move as quickly as an unencumbered light riding horse! These dark creatures typically use this power to their advantage when facing a priest or someone presenting blessed accoutrements. If the vampire can close and attack before the mortal can attempt the turning or presentment, it can negate the danger to itself.

In addition to an advantage in their speed of movement, vampires enjoy an increase in their dexterity and speed of reaction as well. The process of becoming a vampire seems to imbue them with significantly increased coordination, and this benefit only grows as the years pass. Older vampires can react to events with a speed that is, quite literally, inhuman.

As a vampire grows older its intelligence, too, is enhanced. These creatures are extremely cunning, their actions calculated. Vampires have a keen power of reason and they will frequently achieve their goals through cunning alone, never having to rely on crude force. Do not draw the wrong conclusion from this: these creatures do not fear, loathe, or otherwise shun the direct use of force. They simply view force as one possible tool with which to achieve their aims, and will usually select the tool best suited to the situation. After all, why should a creature put its own "life" at risk when, through guile, it can get everything it wants at no potential risk?

When hunting a vampire, be especially careful to remember the

creature's intelligence. Vampires may, for example, have their lairs ingeniously hidden and laden with many traps and snares to protect it. They can also blend into mortal society, dominating and manipulating the people around them, even going so far as to win unsuspecting allies and even friends. Cunning vampires may have the support, if not the love, of those around them. In short, do not assume that a vampire is a "two-dimensional" monster, interested only in drinking blood and draining life energy. The creature's intelligence is often a more effective weapon than its other innate powers.

If these advantages were not enough, with time most vampires develop an incredible force of personality with which they delude and sway the gullible. This seems to spring from the immense self-confidence that vampires develop over centuries of existence, and from the fact that they have had sometimes more than a millennium to learn the nuances of human behavior. Even taking the monster's seemingly hypnotic gaze into account, conversing with a vampire is incredibly risky because the creature is persuasive enough to convince virtually anyone of anything. This same powerful magnetism makes most vampires incredibly charming characters—"charm" is used here in its nonmagical sense. Vampires are almost always exceedingly adept at gaining the favor of the opposite sex.

The above does not apply to all vampires, of course. While most vampires learn more about how the human mind works, and thus how to pervert its thought processes, there are some who become less attuned to human interests and desires with the passage of time. For these creatures, passing time leaves them more alien and less capable of understanding the motivations of mortals—and vice versa.

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Spell-like Powers

If one were to consider only the innate abilities discussed above, vampires would appear to be lethal enough foes. Unfortunately for those of us who hunt the creatures, they have at their command a formidable array of spell-like abilities as well. These powers seem to be common to most, if not all vampires, and are independent of the spellcasting tradition that a vampire may have followed in life.

Some vampires that were spellcasters while alive do indeed retain their arcane abilities. This occurrence is generally limited to those who were wizards in life. Only very rarely do priests retain their powers, and then only if they served the most vile and evil gods during their lives. This particular section, however, deals exclusively with the innate spell-like powers of vampires. Spellcasting vampires will be dealt with later.

Perhaps the most fearsome and wholly destructive power of the vampire is its ability to drain life energy by touch. These monsters can, by making physical contact with their opponents, drain away the very living essence of those opponents. Contrary to several tales, a vampire need not make actual flesh-to-flesh contact with its opponent to drain life energy. Even if the creature lands a solid blow on clothing or armor, it is capable of draining life force through such obstacles. Some theorists explain this fact through concepts of symbolism and symmetry: if a vampire strikes a blow hard enough to inflict physical damage, then it is also sufficient to drain away the life of its victim. As with many facets of magic, this theory holds that the symbolic force of the attack is more important than the superficial boundaries of armor or clothing. These same theorists are silent when it comes to explaining an additional fact, however: a vampire can drain life force only when it strikes

unarmed. If the vampire uses a weapon, it is incapable of draining energy. For this discussion, metal gauntlets, and "brass knuckles" are considered weapons. Perhaps the open-handed attack symbolizes an action of seizing as much as one of inflicting.

All vampires have the power to charm a mortal at will. This is equal in effect to the wizard spell, *charm person*, except that there is no casting time involved and the victim must be looking directly into the vampire's eyes. The range of this power, technically, is sight. For all practical purposes, however, a vampire would not be able to affect a victim at any range greater than ten feet. This power, as well as having practical combat applications, is highly useful for overcoming a number of vampiric weaknesses. If, for example, a vampire could not enter a prospective victim's home, it could attempt to charm the person into leaving the safe haven of the building. As with a *charm person* spell, the vampire is unable to order its charmed victim to do anything obviously self-destructive, such as jumping off a cliff. The creature could convince the victim that the vampire is his or her friend, however, and that the victim should leave a place of safety to greet his or her "friend."

As these dark creatures get older, their charm-gaze gets stronger. An Ancient vampire can charm simply by the sound of its voice. By uttering soothing words, the creature enraptures its victim. Under optimum conditions, the maximum range of this vocal charm is 40 feet. This range is greatly curtailed under certain conditions such as in a strong wind or loud battle. Most fearsome of all, perhaps, is the charm-gaze of Patriarchs. These great vampires are capable of charming with their powerful will alone. No barrier is capable of blocking this ability. In fact their thoughts are so strong, they can affect a victim even on the other side of

a stone wall. Thankfully, several restrictions apply to this power. First of all, this ability is limited in range to some 40 feet. Second, the charm can be performed only on someone that the vampire knows is present. A Patriarch could not, for example, simply extend its charm-gaze beyond a wall, on the off chance that someone might be there. The creature must know the victim is there by first detecting him or her with its delicate senses.

Vampires have the innate ability to imitate another wizard spell: *spider climb*. They are able to use this power at will, with no limits on duration or frequency. This innate spell-like power operates, in most respects, like the wizard spell except that it requires no verbal, somatic, or material components. Note that a vampire is still subject to all its normal restrictions when using its *spider climb* power. Thus, many vampires cannot climb up a tower and enter a castle unless they are first invited. They could, however, climb up a tower and attempt to charm someone through a window. (These and other restrictions, and weaknesses of, vampires are discussed in the next chapter.)

The ability to climb otherwise unclimbable surfaces enables vampires to situate their lairs in places that mortals cannot enter. A tall tower with no stairs or doors leading up to it would be a perfect place for a vampire to hide its sanctuary. It would be able to climb up the sheer wall of the tower and enter through a window to its waiting coffin.

In Combat

Great magic is required to combat a vampire. These lords of darkness are not subject to attacks from nonmagical weapons. To a vampire, mundane weapons are not even an annoyance. Only lesser magical arms are required to harm a young vampire, but as the creature progresses, ever

more powerful enchantments are required.

If a weapon of insufficient enchantment is used against a vampire, it will simply be ineffective. In some cases, the weapon will simply glance off the body of the vampire, doing no more damage than would a strike from a feather. In other cases, the weapon seems to inflict a wound—albeit a very minor one—but this wound does not discommode the vampire one whit. In still other cases, the weapon seems to pass right through the creature, as though the vampire were simply a mirage.

The only common exception to this discussion is a nonmagical weapon that has been *blessed* by a priest of a good deity. This is not a certain thing, however. *Blessed* weapons are discussed in more depth in Chapter Four, "Vampire Weaknesses."

Even if weapons sufficiently enchanted to cause physical damage are wielded against a vampire, the creature's destruction is still far from assured. This is because the monsters have the innate ability to regenerate physical damage. Wounds close, broken bones reform themselves, even missing limbs regenerate with time. The speed at which this occurs increases with the monster's age. Still, even the lowliest vampire regenerates at an alarming rate.

The physiological (or more correctly, necrological) processes of vampire regeneration remain largely unknown, despite the best efforts of several sages. Symbolically, however, the reason is understandable: a vampire's undead body is somehow locked in its physical condition as it crosses the veil between life and undeath; as aging is halted, so is incurred damage. This has a number of interesting side effects. For instance, if a vampire cuts its hair or nails, they will grow back to the length they were when the vampire died as a mortal, and then cease to grow

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further. A tattoo or other mundane mark placed upon the skin of a vampire after its mortal death will quickly fade, while such a mark that was in place before its death will reappear no matter what the vampire does to eliminate it.

Certain marks inflicted upon the flesh of a vampire by magical means, called *stigmata*, will not fade except under specific conditions. Such marks and *stigmata* are discussed in Chapter Five, "Destroying a Vampire."

Even with the above conditions taken into account, it is still very difficult to destroy a vampire through physical combat. In the majority of cases, once a vampire has suffered sufficient physical damage to "kill" it, it transforms to a gaseous form and attempts to return to its coffin or other sanctuary. After eight hours of complete inactivity, it regains corporeal form with all of its physical wounds healed. For this reason, it is vital that vampire hunters finish the job when they force a vampire into gaseous form! If they do not track the gaseous creature to its sanctuary or prevent it from reaching its sanctuary, they will be faced with the prospect of a totally unharmed vampire rising after only eight hours. This vampire will likely be somewhat "irked" and plan some distinctive kind of vengeance against those who challenged it. (If a vampire forced into gaseous form by overwhelming physical damage is prevented from reaching the safety of its coffin or sanctuary for a period of twelve hours, the creature is destroyed.)

Shapechanging

The bright light I brought forth from my staff was highly effective in driving away the flock of bats that had bedeviled us for so long. In our naivete, we thought we were safe.

In fact, our troubles were only beginning.

The thick mist appeared without warning, seeming to rise from the ground like a foul exhalation. At first we paid it little mind; at night, ground fogs are fairly common. But then we noticed how the fog was moving, swirling toward us even though there was no wind to drive it. What could we do? How can you fight a fog?

It was then that the leading tendril wrapped itself around Batlas, our scout. Poor Batlas screamed, screamed as though his soul was being torn from his mortal body. And then he collapsed lifeless into the mire.

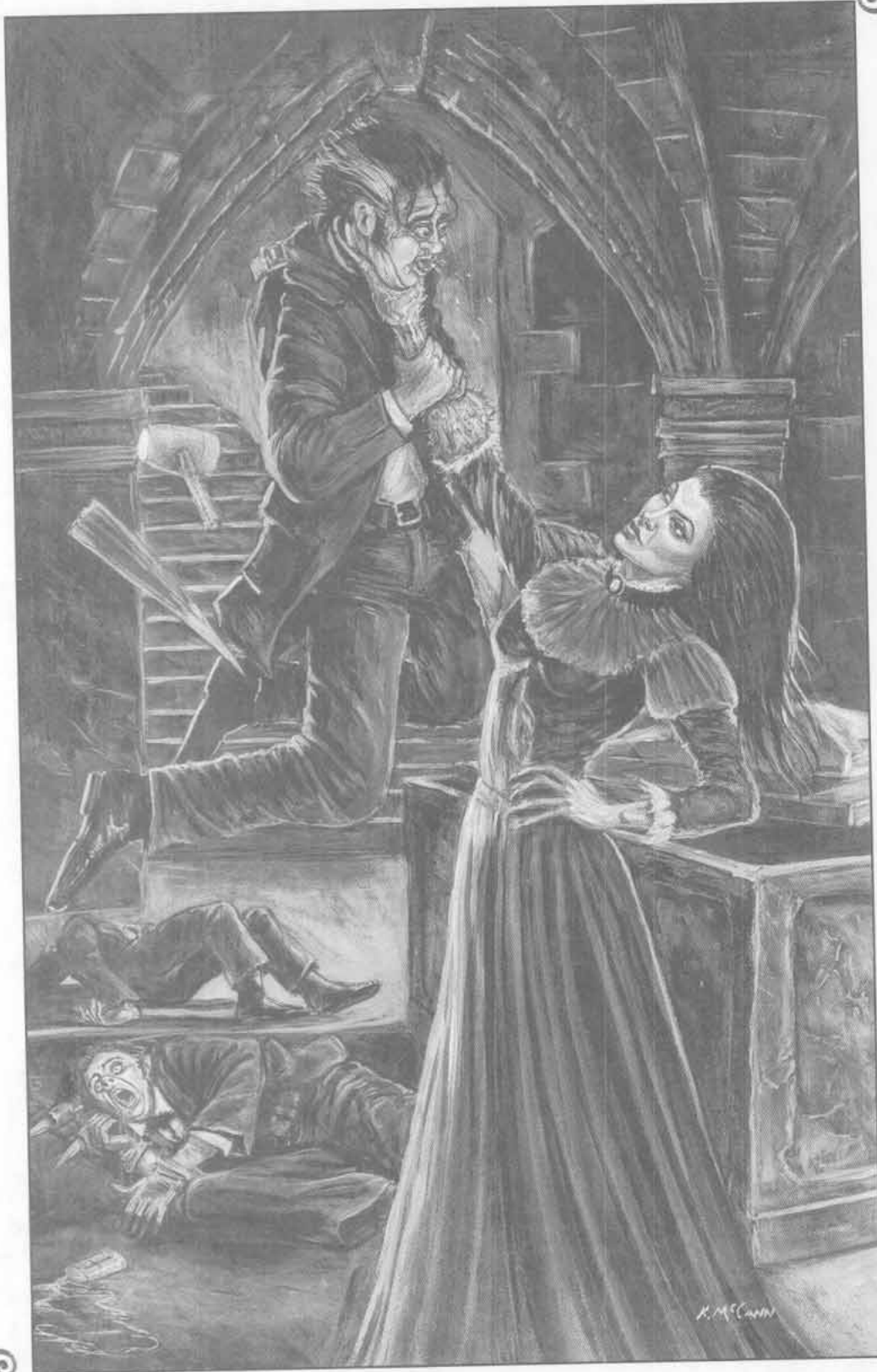
Little did we think we would ever see Batlas again. . . .

—From the journal of
Morgren Dunderlorn

Probably the most visually obvious testament to a vampire's supernatural nature is its power of shapechanging. In order to better protect themselves or combat others, all vampires share a common ability to spontaneously alter their physical forms. The forms presented here are those available to the "typical" vampire. There are many vampires, however, who possess unique powers and can assume an even wider variety of shapes.

Caseous Form

Vampires are capable of intentionally disassociating the physical components of their bodies, turning into a cloud of mist. The transition from physical to gaseous form takes one minute, during which period the creature is unable to take any other action, either physical or magical—including, of course, parrying attacks. While the creature is in the process of changing to gaseous form, it is also fully susceptible to physical and magical attacks.



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A vampire in gaseous form is totally immune to any physical attack. Even the most highly enchanted weapon passes right through the vaporous cloud with no effect. Magical attacks are still effective against *some* vampires in gaseous form; this varies from individual to individual. Some vampires are totally immune to all magical attacks while in gaseous form. There seems to be no way to predict beforehand whether an individual vampire will show this immunity or not. I surmise that the older a vampire is, the more likely the creature is to be totally immune to all attacks when in gaseous form. Some sages see this as evidence that such immunity is an acquired or learned trait; I, however, think it more likely that creatures possessing this immunity are more likely to survive over the long term.

Vampires regenerate their damaged parts normally while in gaseous form. The only exception is if the creature has been physically defeated in battle, in which case it must rest in its coffin or sanctuary for eight full hours to regenerate fully. If a vampire is forced into gaseous form by physical damage and then the creature is pursued to its coffin or sanctuary, it will be found to have reverted to corporeal form within this sanctuary. In the majority of cases, the creature will be totally comatose, unaware of its surroundings and incapable of responding to stimuli, until eight hours have passed. In this condition, it is unable to revert to gaseous form again and is thus highly vulnerable to destruction.

This is not always the case, however. I, myself, have faced a vampire whose behavior was horribly different. I followed the vaporous cloud to the creature's sanctuary and gained entrance. Within I found the fiend, lying there still as death. I prepared my stake and mallet . . . and with a terrible roar the monster sprung up from its bier and attacked me and my colleagues with immense ferocity. At

the first strike from my compatriot's enchanted sword, however, the creature crumbled to ash. This particular vampire could rouse itself from its comatose state and fight, if only until a blow is successfully struck against it.

Returning to the subject at hand, a vampire in gaseous form has considerable control over its characteristics. It can modify its density to range from that of a thick fog to that of a thin, virtually invisible mist. As its density changes, as a matter of course, so does the volume the gaseous cloud takes up. In its most dense form, which is thick, white and opaque, the creature takes up a total volume of six cubic feet. In its thinnest form, it takes up a volume of 36 cubic feet. It can change the actual dimensions of the cloud almost without restriction, so long as the shortest dimension is no less than one tenth of an inch. Thus, in its densest form, a vampire could range from a sphere a little over two feet in diameter to a tendril of fog one-tenth inch in diameter and over fourteen miles long! A vaporous vampire can change the density and shape of its gas cloud at will, and such changes take no more than a few seconds.

A vampire in gaseous form demonstrates an amazing cohesion that even the strongest wind cannot dissipate. The vaporous vampire can totally control its motion, and its movement is unaffected by winds up to hurricane force! If a vampire in gaseous form is caught in winds of hurricane strength, that is, speeds of about 75 miles per hour or more, it is swept along with the wind. Although it is not dissipated, it is totally incapable of controlling its own motion. This failing is of little help to most mortals, I suspect.

Vampires in gaseous form move slower than do creatures in corporeal form, but not much slower, and their speed increases with age. Vampire

hunters should be aware that an "Old" vampire in gaseous form can travel faster than a man on foot. This is very important because successful vampire hunters must be able to follow a vaporous vampire to its coffin or sanctuary and destroy it there. In gaseous form the creature must remain close to the ground; specifically, within ten feet. It can, however, flow up a flight of stairs, although not up a ladder or the wall of a building. The cloud of vapor can pour down a wall or cliff face, regardless of height, without any damage to the vampire, and does so at the same rate of speed as the cloud can travel across flat ground.

The ability to assume gaseous form offers many benefits to a vampire. The most obvious is a means of escape. Many vampire hunters have seen victory slip from their grasp as their infernal foe dissipated into a mist, invulnerable to their attacks. It can escape thusly from locked rooms, prison cells, sarcophagi: in essence, from virtually anywhere a mortal would be imprisoned. As long as there is a gap with at least a dimension of one-tenth inch, the space under a door, for example, the creature can reach freedom. (Remember, too, that with its great strength a vampire can frequently make such a gap.) Conversely, this ability makes it very difficult to forbid a vampire entrance to some place in which it is interested.

For those vampires that must return daily to a coffin or other sanctuary, gaseous form allows them to protect this sanctuary from intruders. As an example, I recall a creature whose sanctuary was a sarcophagus in the catacombs beneath a deserted church. The monster had walled up all the entrances to the catacombs with stonework, and had surrounded the sarcophagus itself with rock, using a *transmute mud to rock* spell. The only entrance to the catacombs was a fissure between the rocks less than half

an inch wide, and the sarcophagus a tiny bore hole no more than one-quarter inch in diameter. The creature was indecently proud of its slyness, fully expecting that no prospective hunters would ever be able to find its sanctuary. As it turned out, its slyness proved to be its downfall. I located the sanctuary and blocked the fissure between the two rocks. Then, when my warrior colleagues inflicted sufficient damage on the creature to drive it into gaseous form, it had no way of reaching its haven and was hence destroyed. (Had the creature shown the forethought to leave *two* entrances to its lair, the story might have turned out differently.)

Animal Form

In addition to the ability to assume gaseous form, a vampire can physically change its form into that of a wolf or a bat. This transformation is always voluntary, unlike that to gaseous form; a vampire cannot be forced to assume animal form. (In other words, a vampire cannot assume an animal form when physically defeated in battle.) The animal form that a vampire assumes will always be slightly larger than the norm, and more menacing. Some experts claim that the animal form of a vampire is always close to the archetype for that creature, the perfect form of the species; others state that the animal form always has the spark of intelligence visible in its eyes. Personally, I believe both statements to say more about the experts than about vampires. A hunter trying to recognize a vampire in animal form should not depend on such subjective measures.

Even behavior is not a foolproof way of determining whether a particular wolf (or bat) is actually a vampire. An animal-form vampire is, of course, completely in control of its own behavior, and hence can act in ways either totally in or out of character for

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the natural animal. Thus, if it suits the monster's purposes, it can blend undetectably with the normal members of a pack of wolves or bevy of bats. Unless the monster commands otherwise, however, the natural members of such a group will consider the animal-form vampire to be the dominant leader of the group, and will treat it as such unless the vampire commands otherwise.

The transition from human to animal form takes one minute, and during the change, the monster is unable to do anything else. Vampires are generally unable to transform directly from animal to gaseous form, or vice versa, but must change to human form as a transitional step. Thus, changing from animal to gaseous form would take the creature two minutes. The only exception seems to be when the vampire in animal form suffers massive physical damage. Then and only then, the creature seems able, indeed forced, to transform directly from animal to gaseous form.

Considering that the transition from human to animal form takes one minute, and that the monster is unusually vulnerable during the transition, why would the fiend choose to change forms at all? The most obvious use for this ability is camouflage, allowing the creature to stalk victims unseen, or to escape detection by those with the temerity to hunt it.

There is another major benefit, too. When a wounded vampire changes form, it often seems to totally shake off all damage it has suffered up to that point. Speaking from experience, there are few things quite so terrifying as to have grievously wounded a vampire in animal form, and then have the monster transform into human shape and show no signs whatsoever of even being wounded! It seems that when the vampire changes form, the new form it assumes is

"perfect;" in this case, free of wounds or other damage. Luckily for all mortals, I have noted that the monsters seem to be able to use this ability only once per day, no matter how many times they change form.

It is important to recall one thing. As I stated at the outset, these observations refer to the "typical" vampire, and there is no such thing as a typical vampire! There are tales of vampires capable of taking the form of dogs, cats, birds (particularly owls or crows), and even in one case, an evil black steed. I have come to suspect that Patriarchs have the ability to assume at least one form in addition to the "standard" wolf and bat, and that this additional form is specific to the individual vampire.

Animal Control

Combating and destroying a solitary vampire is difficult enough. The creature's powers and abilities are enough to strike fear into the heart of even the doughtiest vampire hunter. However, the hunter is almost never lucky enough to face an unallied vampire. The monsters are very protective of their unlife, and will usually surround themselves with servitors or minions of one variety or another. Vampires have the innate ability to summon and control certain species of lesser creatures.

By nature, a vampire is able to completely control all animals whose form the vampire can assume. Thus, because a "typical" vampire can assume the form of a wolf or a bat, the monster is the natural master of all wolves and bats. As with the shapechanging capability, there are probably vampires capable of summoning and controlling many different types of creatures. This could explain recurring, albeit unsubstantiated, rumors of attacks on mortals by huge flocks of crows and other birds. Theoretically, the creatures that can be

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controlled by individual vampires usually relate to the personal nature of the monster, or to the characteristics of the vampiric line. A subterranean vampire might be able to control rats and burrowing creatures, a vampire that once was a woodsman might be the master of all forest creatures, a seaman converted into a vampire might be able to command fish, sharks, or even whales, a vampire from tropical climes might command tarantulas or venomous centipedes, and so forth. The possibilities are so wide-ranging as to be terrifying to dwell upon.

Before proceeding, it is important to note that there is not the same connection between a vampire and its minions as there is between a wizard and its familiar or homunculus. There is no shared life force. Thus, the vampire suffers no ill effects should a minion be destroyed.

Only the rarest of vampires can summon animals in the magical sense; that is, cause the animals to magically appear in the vampire's vicinity. Most vampires, instead, send out a mental call that all animals of the appropriate type must answer. The call seems to have a maximum range of something over one mile. If there are no appropriate creatures within that range, then of course no animal answers the vampire's summons.

A vampire can call upon those creatures three times per day, but the type of animal the monster can summon is dependent upon the surrounding environment. In a subterranean place, for instance, bats or rats will typically be called. In the wilderness, wolves and, rarely, bats will be called. The creatures respond to this magical call and travel as fast as they can to the vampire. The summons fails if the animals are physically prevented from approaching the vampire (for example, by a crevasse, a fast-flowing river, etc.). It is important to remember that

summoned animals do not appear immediately; a wolf one mile away from the summoning vampire will take several minutes to answer the summons.

Once the animals have arrived in the vicinity of the vampire, they are totally under the monster's mental control. (Any such creatures already present also obey the mental commands of the vampire; this does not count against the vampire's three daily uses of its summoning power.) They will fight (to the death if so ordered) or do anything else within their physical and mental capabilities. The vampire is even able to overcome the summoned creatures' normal fears and instincts. For example, it may force wolves or rats to attack foes from which they would normally flee. The length of time the vampire can maintain this total mental control varies depending on the type of animal and (sometimes) on the individual vampire involved.

While a vampire can summon creatures from one mile away, it can issue mental orders only to creatures no more than 50 yards distant. Thus, even though a pack of wolves might answer the monster's call, the vampire could not cause those wolves to attack an enemy more than 50 yards from the vampire.

Summoned bats do not physically attack. Rather, they will swarm around a vampire's enemies, confusing and blinding them. Hence, wolves are perhaps the most fearsome animals that a vampire can control; these beasts are usually hungry and will quickly answer a vampire's call. If the lord of a land calls wolves, they will always be worg wolves, while wolves summoned by a common vampire will always be of the common variety.

Most vampires are unable to communicate bi-directionally with the animals they summon and control. The vampire issues mental orders; the animals obey. In general, there is no

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way the vampire can receive information from these animals. Thus, a vampire typically could not use a summoned bat as a spy to gather information. Of course, this is only true of the "typical" vampire. There are some *unique individuals that can communicate bi-directionally with certain animals, or even "speak" their language.* I must admit I find this a terrifying concept, because virtually any creature of the forest or hedgerow thus becomes a potential spy or scout for a vampire. Nevertheless, as with the spell *speak with animals*, there remain severe limitations on what the vampire can communicate and learn by this means. The minds of lesser animals are very limited, and are focused almost exclusively on the moment-to-moment requirements of survival. Animal communications reflect these limitations. Thus, it would be *impossible to conduct a philosophical discussion with a rabbit, for example, or to instruct that creature to perform complex tasks, those involving judgment and contingencies.* Nor would a controlled rat be able to turn a key, and a controlled wolf would likely be unable

to remove the bar from a door, and so on.

These limitations of communication and control are not sufficient to stop a vampire who can speak with animals from forming close bonds, friendships, as it were, with certain creatures. These animals would consider the vampire a compatriot or a leader, and would obey the monster's commands willingly even after the period of complete mental control ends. Such willing "animal friends" would probably not sacrifice their lives for the vampire, but otherwise would be loyal minions.

Some examples of vampire-controllable animals are rats, bats, wolves, cats, snakes, ravens, vultures, and wasps.

Other Minions

It is an unpleasant point to add that vampires also exercise power over their fellow undead, particularly zombies, ghosts, and the like. Fortunately, they are not omnipotent in these matters, even though they are technically the "kings" of the undead, and many of the more powerful creatures may resist being controlled, particularly other vampires. Because of

Undead Minion Control

Type or level of undead	Fledgling	Mature	Old	Very Old	Ancient	Eminent	Patriarch
1 HD	13	10	7	4	1	*	*
Zombie	16	13	10	7	4	1	*
2 HD	19	16	13	10	7	4	1
3-4 HD	20	19	16	13	10	7	4
5 HD	—	20	19	16	13	10	7
Ghast	—	—	20	19	16	13	10
6 HD	—	—	—	20	19	16	13
7 HD	—	—	—	—	20	19	16
8 HD	—	—	—	—	—	20	19
9 HD	—	—	—	—	—	—	20**

Undead of higher HD (including special) are immune to control by vampires of any age category.

* Automatically controlled (no chance of failure)

* Vampires of any age category are automatically entitled to a saving throw, to resist being controlled

this, the presentment of holy accoutrements can disrupt the vampire's authority. Take not too much heart in this; breaking the vampire's control does not guarantee that the undead will leave you alone.

Salient Abilities

Many laypersons, and even some experts who should know better, cling to the totally false belief that all vampires are virtually identical. I must admit that I can understand this fixation: if one can list, categorize, and completely describe all the attributes and powers of a vampire, the fiend becomes significantly less horrifying. Humans and demihumans find the unknown to be much more threatening than the worst of the known. Consider, then, how much more terrifying is the creature that might have abilities and attributes that are totally unexpected. Clinging to the familiar catalog of characteristics is, thus, intellectual laziness—a refusal to take that first step into uncharted territory. It is also a highly self-destructive behavior, particularly among those who would hunt vampires.

As mentioned earlier, most of the discussions to this point refer to the "typical" vampire, and hence are wrong to one degree or another, because the truly typical vampire does not exist. We could, of course, consider "typical" to refer to a broad category of creatures into which most vampires fall. The majority of vampires will show some similarity with this "main sequence" of *vampirism* (if I may so coin a word). The more unusual vampires, thus, fall outside this sequence.

Even those vampires that do fall near the "typical" classification sometimes exhibit abilities beyond the norm. These otherwise undifferentiated vampires sometimes show one, or perhaps more, unique salient ability or power. Research seems to indicate that

vampires develop such abilities over centuries of unlife. Whether this implies that the salient ability is a learned skill, such as a human's proficiency in some normal endeavor, or that it is merely a gift of prolonged existence, is unknown. Whatever the truth of the matter, salient abilities have rarely been reported in vampires younger than the "Eminent" age category.

In addition, it seems that only vampires who are lords of a domain can develop salient abilities. If, by some magical means, a vampire stops being a lord of a land, it immediately loses any and all salient abilities and becomes once again a mundane vampire.

Once again, I feel it necessary to re-emphasize that the following descriptions are by no means comprehensive, but I hope that I have provided at least a solid foundation for understanding these creatures of the damned.

One particular vampire may exude such control over its undead minions that they become very difficult to turn aside through the presentment of holy symbols. Thus, a common zombie or animated skeleton might continue to assault a cleric who would normally obliterate the walking undead in their tracks. It is almost as if one were trying to turn the vampire itself. Such an occurrence becomes even more dangerous to the unwary vampire hunter because, occasionally, the undead master is not even present: it simply exercises its salient ability over its minions and they carry its power against holy wards with them into battle. And I believe the older the vampire, the more powerful the undead it may so protect.

One of the more alarming aspects of vampires that I have mentioned is their ability to drain the very essence of life from a victim with a touch. Even more troubling, I have heard reports of certain vampires who possess an en-

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hanced capability. Long-experienced warriors and clerics can, at the touch of one of these ultra-powerful monsters, find themselves as weak as novices, and those of limited experience may die with a single touch!

Just as some vampires may have superior life-draining abilities, others may enjoy superior regenerative powers. Imagine striking at a cursed beast with all the might of magic and steel that your party can muster, only to watch the vampire's wound heal a minute later! It is fortunate that such puissant creatures are far and few between.

One particularly unpleasant vampire with whom I have battled was one of such ill temper that, at the end, when we had finally traced it to its lair, it flew into a frenzy of rage and became a blur of lethal blows before us. We were struck, it seemed, from all sides at once by this solitary adversary, and our best-executed blows in retaliation found only thin air where we expected its solid body to be. In its rage it moved so quickly, in fact, that we were forced to retreat until the sun rose, and then had to hunt until almost sundown for the creature's resting-place.

There are a few vampires who were spellcasters in their previous lives, and they frequently retain those abilities as long as they are not clerics whose deities have forsaken them. But there are also a few vampires who, through unknown means (perhaps their master is a spellcaster, perhaps they rest in a magical place; I cannot say with any authority), gain the innate ability to cast wizard or priest spells. The vampiric quality of immortality, alone, makes this type of vampire quite dangerous. Consider the ramifications of an evil being with innate magical powers and an eternity in which to develop them!

While all vampires retain the facility of animal summoning, a few also have the ability to call upon gargoyles. These despicable monsters are often

indiscernible from the ornate architecture which graces many castles, so they may become a sudden and terrible hindrance to vampire hunters who thought they had caught their quarry alone. Gargoyles are so malicious that a vampire need only summon them and they will do the rest, without need of instruction. They seem to sense goodness and delight in torturing it.

I have also mentioned previously the ability of the vampire to charm the unsuspecting. A simple look into the eyes of the creature and an unfortunate hunter becomes the vampire's ally or willing victim. Yet an even more frightening prospect is that of a vampire who can charm you even while it is in gaseous form! There are a few of those, by report, who have charmed their pursuers when they believed it to be helpless and on the run. As the vampire swirled into airy mist, it twirled in hypnotic patterns and left the hunting party dumbfounded, glassy-eyed, and altogether helpless. No matter that it was near death; it convinced its new devotees to follow it off a cliff and was rid of the danger.

Another specific vampire who is particularly dangerous while in gaseous form is the one whose life-draining ability remains intact in that form. I have seen a young warrior cry in triumph upon dealing the blow to the vampire that dissolved it into mist, only to find himself immersed in that mist, swooning and dying before my eyes. He suffered no pain, no injury—only a look of dizziness and then death.

Experienced vampire hunters have witnessed their prey taking gaseous form while attempting to escape or when severely injured, but few have seen the creature simply step through a nearby wall while in solid form. Yet, as I have once seen, there is a unique vampire or two who can do just that. Unlike the wizard spell *passwall*, which, as I understand it, requires the presence of even the tiniest fissure in



the obstacle, these salient vampires may pass through solid objects as if they were not there!

Still another special talent among some of vampire-kind is that for creating extraordinary fear, even beyond the norm. While most vampires must consciously put fear into their enemies, there are a few select monsters that are of such horrifying countenance that their mere presence strikes terror into the mortal heart.

One other salient talent which springs to my mind is that of the lucky vampire who can *disappear* and reappear elsewhere instantly. Such vampires can hardly be fought to the point of dissolution. Rather, at that point in which they consider themselves to be *in trouble*, they simply "pop" out of view. Although I have witnessed this ability only as a means of escape, I imagine that the vampire could also use it to gain a constant surprise upon its adversaries.

In another vein (if you will pardon the expression), some salient abilities are not so enviable among vampires. For example, there are a small number of vampires who have an entirely unquenchable thirst for human blood. Such monsters ravage the countryside, attacking numerous victims every night, creating perhaps even more vampires than they would care to.

Such creatures, fortunately, do not long survive, for they enrage even the lowliest of the masses to hunt down and exterminate them. Those insatiable blood-drinkers are usually the victims of lynch mobs who hunt them en masse and destroy their lair and everything in it. While they survive, though, they create an enormous amount of mayhem and suffering.

A related "especially cursed" vampire is one who is enslaved to bloodlust. The mere sight of blood pitches them into a frenzy that can be satisfied only by the ingestion of that source of blood, virtually at all costs. This is not much of a boon to the vampire if he is attempting to masquerade as a mortal, to live in even the slightest harmony with society. Such a compulsion might be compared to a water-starved man in the desert who stumbles unexpectedly upon an oasis protected by lions—he must have that water, even at the cost of his life. A few unlucky vampires are so affected by bloodlust that they need not even have the sight of it; the simple warmth of the human body unhinges them.

Still other unlucky vampires are unable to mask their true natures. With years of unlife, their skin tone changes perceptibly, becoming waxy or unnatural of color. This infirmity may be concealed with makeup, of course, yet the creature is vulnerable to the inevitable smudge or discerning eye. A rare few become somewhat translucent with time, almost ghostlike, and there is little that makeup can do for them.

Lastly, there are some vampires who become so alienated of nature that their control of animals escapes them. Rather, animals become crazed in the presence of such a vampire, impossible to control, or wont to flee. Occasionally, such animals are so enraged by the creature that they willingly, even anxiously help to track him down and attack him if possible (bless them).

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Age Categories

Although age categories apply to all vampires in or out of Ravenloft (keeping in mind the exceptions discussed above), it is unlikely but not impossible that the most powerful of the vampires will be seen outside the Demiplane of Dread. Quite simply, as a vampire grows older and more evil, the chances of being drawn into Ravenloft increase.

The Use of Weapons Against Vampires

When weapons of insufficient enchantment are used against a vampire, it is up to the DM to choose exactly how such an attack will fail. Inventive DMs can embellish upon van Richten's description of the possibilities. The best choice is the one that will be most dramatic at the moment.

Shapechanging

The movement rate for a vampire in gaseous form is three less than the vampire's normal movement rate. For example, an Old vampire would travel at a rate of 13.

While changing form, a vampire suffers a +4 penalty to Armor Class and a -1 penalty to all saving throws.

Once—and only once—in any 24-hour period, a vampire can automatically heal all damage it has suffered to that point simply by changing form from human to animal, or vice versa. (It cannot heal itself by assuming gaseous form, however.) In other words, when the transition is complete, the vampire is restored to its full hit-point total. If a vampire in animal form has even a single hit point and reverts back into human form, it regains full points from the change. If the vampire in animal form is reduced to zero or less hit points, however, it is forced to assume gaseous form.

The statistics for a vampire's two animal forms are as follows:

Wolf form: Int per vampire; AL CE; AC 2; MV 18; HD per vampire; hp per vampire; THAC0 per vampire; #AT 1; Dmg 3-36; SZ L; ML 16.

Bat form: Int per vampire; AL CE; AC 2; MV 3, Fl 18 (C); HD per vampire; hp per vampire; THAC0 per vampire; #AT 1; Dmg 2-12; SD Special: -3 penalty to opponents' attack rolls (see the MONSTROUS MANUAL tome: Bat, Giant); SZ M; ML 16.

As with the transition to gaseous form, the vampire suffers a +4 penalty to Armor Class, and a -1 penalty to all saving throws during the change into and out of animal form.

Animal Control

Results of Summoning

Type	Number	Duration
Bats	10-100	2-12 rounds
Rats	10-100	1-10 rounds
Worg wolves**	3-18	2-8 rounds*
Wolves	3-18	2-8 rounds*

* will remain in area, free-willed, when this period expires

** can be summoned only in Ravenloft, and only by the lord of the land

A summoned swarm of bats will cover a roughly circular area measuring 20' in radius. Anyone caught in this swarm will be blinded, make all attack rolls at -4, have their armor class reduced by 4, and have their movement rate cut in half. The swarm will move at a movement rate of 18, attempting to envelop the greatest number of people. After 2-12 melee rounds, the bats will disperse. Under most circumstances, the bats summoned will be the tiny "flying mouse" variety. In special environments, larger bats such as flying foxes or fruit bats may respond. From 4-24 of these larger creatures will answer the call.

In tropical climates, vampire bats may answer the summons. If the

vampire summons the bats to bedevil foes who are awake, 10–60 of the tiny creatures will arrive, having the same effect as the “standard” swarm of small bats. Vampire bats frequently carry diseases, and anyone bitten by one of the nasty creatures has a 5% chance of contracting a serious disease.

Controlling Undead

Once undead are controlled, the vampire can maintain its dominance indefinitely. A vampire can simultaneously maintain control over a number of undead whose HD are equal to half the vampire's age. For example, a 137-year-old (Mature) vampire can control up to 68 HD of undead.

Salient Abilities

The use of salient abilities is optional, and DMs should use them sparingly. Their purpose is to create unique and powerful creatures that will keep player characters wary of creatures whose statistics the PCs think they know. Of course, the DM is free to create other salient abilities to suit his or her needs. The following list of abilities can be used for random determination, but powerful NPCs are best shaped by the DM's designs and campaigns, enhancing the story as much as the vampire.

If random determination is required, the procedure is as follows: for every full century the vampire has existed beyond the age of 500, roll 1d10. (Thus, for a vampire that has existed 975 years, the DM would roll 1d10 four times.) For each roll that yields a result of 1–4, the vampire receives one salient ability; roll 3d6 and consult the following list. If the vampire already possesses the ability, follow the instructions given under “Reroll.” Should a previously gained power be rolled a third time, disregard the result and roll again.

(Roll 3d6:) **3. Innate Magic:** The vampire can cast any selected 1st-level spell at will. There is no limit to the number of times per day the vampire can use the power, and it never requires material components. The spell must be selected when the vampire first gains this ability, and it may never change.

Reroll: The vampire may select an additional 2nd-level spell that it may cast at will. As with the 1st-level spell, there is no limit to the number of times per day the vampire can cast the spell, and it need not use material components.

4. Passwall: The vampire can pass through walls at will as if they were simply not there, traveling at the movement rate appropriate for gaseous form (although the vampire is not gaseous while using this ability). Note that unlike the *passwall* spell, the vampire does not actually create a physical hole in the wall. It merely passes through the wall. The duration of the power is 2d4 melee rounds, and it can be used once per day.

Reroll: The power is the same as above except that it can be used two times per day.

5. Transport: Once per day, the vampire can transport itself as by the wizard spell *dimension door*.

Reroll: Once per day, the vampire can *teleport* itself, as per the wizard spell of the same name.

6. Charm While Gaseous: When the vampire is in gaseous form, it can attempt to “charm-gaze” with the same restrictions that apply to its normal charm attack. The mist will begin to swirl in hypnotic patterns, attracting the attention of the victim. This is considered a gaze-type attack. The vampire can use this ability once per day.

Reroll: The victim of the gaseous vampire need not be looking at the creature for the charm to be

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successful. The vampire attempts the charm by "whispering" thoughts into the victim's mind. This may be used two times per day.

7. Bloodlust: The creature has a mad craving for blood and must have it at all costs. If the creature can see an open wound or other source of fresh blood, the sight drives the monster into a frenzy. While in this frenzy, the vampire will do whatever it takes to reach the source of blood and drink it. The frenzy is not so intense that the creature will put itself into a situation that it knows will certainly destroy it. (The DM must adjudicate this carefully. The monster will attack the largest of adventuring parties in its attempt to drink blood because there is a chance that it can defeat them. It will not attempt to ford a river—if running water destroys it—or expose itself to sunlight to do so.) The vampire is sated after having reached the source of blood, and isn't susceptible to further frenzies for 2d6 turns.

Reroll: So strong is the creature's craving that it need not see blood to go into a frenzy. The vampire can smell any exposed blood within 20 feet. If it can either see or smell the blood, but not both, the creature won't destroy itself in its frenzy, as discussed above. If it can both see and smell the blood, however, the frenzy is so strong that the creature will do anything, even something obviously self-destructive, in an attempt to reach its goal. The vampire is then immune to further frenzies for 1d4 turns.

8. Undead Master: Lesser undead under the control of a vampire are turned as if they were the vampire controlling them. The vampire must be in the immediate area directing the combat.

Reroll: The vampire does not need to be present. It need only deploy its minions to a task.

9. Superior Energy Drain: The vampire drains three life energy levels with a hit, rather than the normal two.

Reroll: The vampire drains four life energy levels with a hit.

10. Fear aura: All living things will fear the vampire because it constantly exudes an enchanted aura of fear. Any living thing within 10 feet of the creature suffers the same effects as a dragon's fear aura. (Humans and demihumans with fewer than one Hit Die flee for 4d6 minutes. Characters with fewer Hit Dice than the vampire must save vs. petrification or suffer a -2 penalty on attack rolls against the creature, and will be in constant fear of it. Characters with more Hit Dice than the vampire are immune to the fear.) The vampire can still attempt to charm-gaze a victim normally. If it fails, however, that person is immediately overcome with fear and may not be charmed by the vampire again that day.

Reroll: The fear aura has a range of 15 feet, and even characters with more Hit Dice than the vampire must save vs. petrification or suffer a -2 penalty to hit. In addition, characters with fewer Hit Dice than the vampire make their saving throws with a -3 penalty. So strong is the fear effect that the creature is unable to charm a victim by gaze or by voice. A Patriarch can still charm a victim by will.

11. Vampiric Rage: Once per day, the vampire can fly into a vampiric rage. The rage will last for 2d4 melee rounds, during which time the vampire can make two physical attacks per round. This benefit does not affect spell-like or spellcasting attacks.

Reroll: The vampire not only enjoys double normal attacks while enraged, but its AC is improved by two (AC 1 becomes AC -1). The vampire may use this power three times per day.

12. Improved Saves: The vampire receives a bonus of +1 to all its saving throws (in addition to any other bonuses it might receive).

Reroll: The vampire receives a bonus of +2 to all its saving throws.

13. Superior Regeneration: The vampire regenerates two more hit points per melee round than it would normally.

Reroll: The vampire regenerates four more hit points per melee round than it would normally.

14. Animal Frenzy: Natural (non-monstrous, nonmagical) animals within 50 feet of the vampire sense the creature's evil nature, which drives them into a panic. This makes trained animals skittish, nervous, and nearly impossible to control, and causes wild or untrained animals to flee.

Reroll: So great is the evil nature the vampire exudes that animals are able to track a vampire. Only predatory or hunting animals (such as wolves or dogs) will willingly track a vampire. The base chance for success in tracking the vampire is 50%. The following cumulative modifiers apply:

Each hour since the vampire's passing:	-10%
Tracking over muddy or slushy ground:	-5%
Light drizzling rain:	-5%
Downpour:	-10%
Animal is a trained hunting animal:	+10%

Note that the vampire can assume gaseous form or fly away as a bat in order to avoid being tracked.

15. Skin Tone: Years of undeath have affected the vampire physically. The monster's skin has turned stark white, identifying its nature to anyone viewing the creature. (The creature could still disguise its nature using makeup, of course.)

Reroll: The vampire's flesh is translucent. Any light source of equal or greater intensity than a torch will shine through the creature's skin and flesh, silhouetting its skeleton. As above, the creature can attempt to disguise this with makeup. Masks and clothing remain normal.

16. Gargoyle Control: The vampire can summon and control 1d4 gargoyles. The monsters will arrive in 2d4 melee rounds and will remain in the vampire's control for 2d4 melee rounds. When the period of control expires, the gargoyles will remain in the area as free-willed monsters. There must be gargoyles available to be summoned (within one mile) for this power to be successful.

Reroll: Gargoyles need not be in the area for the summons to be successful. The vampire has the power to transform any native rock in the immediate area (maximum of one mile) into an appropriate number of gargoyles. The transformation takes 2d4 rounds to occur.

17. Energy Drain While Gaseous: The vampire can drain life energy from a victim even when in gaseous form. The monster can affect only one victim per round with this attack. By surrounding the victim, it drains one life level but does no physical damage.

Reroll: The power is the same as above except the vampire drains two life levels from the victim.

18. Extra Feeding: The vampire must feed twice as frequently as normal (see the section on feeding).

Reroll: The vampire must feed three times as frequently as normal.

All vampires with salient abilities are subject to the rules governing mundane vampires unless their special power specifically counters it. For example, a vampire that has gained the transport power cannot dimension door into a sanctified place that it has not received permission to enter.

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I can still remember my first night in this form," the vampire said quietly, "even though it was five centuries ago. It was a mixture of joy and horror as I contemplated both my escape from death and the nature of that escape. I still remember keenly the feel of the chill air on my face as I broke out of the earth into the moonlight, and the raging fire in the pit of my stomach that was my hunger. . . ."

—From the personal journal of Dr. van Richten

CHAPTER THREE: CREATING NEW VAMPIRES

Traditional Methods



According to most tales, a vampire can create another simply by killing a mortal either with its life-energy draining power or by exhausting the mortal of his or her blood supply. If the victim's body is not properly destroyed, it arises as a vampire, under the control of the creature who killed it, on the second night following the burial. As an aside, I pose the question: What exactly does it mean when the victim "arises" as a vampire? When the sun sinks fully below the horizon on the second night after the burial, the victim in the grave "awakens." The occupant of the grave is now a Fledgling vampire with all the characteristics, powers, and weaknesses which accompany that condition. Most vampires remember the instant of their death and the nature of their killer, and understand immediately their new nature. Certainly their new hunger gives them a good idea of what they have become.

They must immediately free themselves from their grave, either by breaking it open from within or by assuming gaseous form and diffusing

out. If this is impossible, the vampire will die in about a week unless it can somehow summon minions such as a pack of wolves to dig it out. Once free of its grave, the vampire's first and only priority is to feed. Only after it has fed sufficiently might it remember to conceal the fact that the grave has been opened and is now empty.

There are several nontraditional processes of creating new vampires as well, but these are much less widely known. One is in the taking of a "bride" or a "groom." I shall discuss that peculiar marriage at length in Chapter Ten, "Relationships Between Vampires." Other methods of proliferation are as follows:

Vampiric Saliva

This method is, thankfully, exceptionally rare. The saliva of certain vampires contains various neurological substances. First among these is a slow-acting but highly lethal poison. A single bite from a vampire can inject enough toxin to kill a robust warrior. Unlike most poisons, however, this toxin does not kill the subject for several days. Few people make the connection between the vampire bite and the victim's collapse, hence the body is quite likely to be buried improperly. Meanwhile, within the dead body of the victim, other neurological agents from the vampire's saliva are having their effect. Several nights after the victim's death, he or she comes to consciousness as a vampire.

Saliva Poisoning

A character bitten by this type of vampire is entitled to a saving throw vs. poison. It is best if the DM makes this roll secretly. If the save is successful, the victim suffers only 2d4 points of damage; should this be enough to kill the victim on the spot, he or she won't rise as a vampire. If the character fails the save, 2d4 days later he or she will suffer sudden heart failure and drop instantly and painlessly dead. Within 1d4 days of burial the character will rise as a Fledgling vampire, under the control of its killer.

Vampiric Curses

Some vampires have the ability to cast a special version of the unique priest spell, *divine curse*, once per day at most (DM's choice). The effects of this curse are always the same. Should the victim fail a saving throw vs. spell, every time the sun rises thereafter he or she loses 1 point of Strength. When the victim reaches 0 Strength, he or she dies and will rise as a vampire under the control of the monster who cast the curse. If the vampire that inflicted the curse is destroyed, the curse comes to an end and the character regains 1 point of Strength per day. This is a particularly unpleasant effect, and

vampires able to use this curse should be few and far between.

Vampires with Surviving "Goodness"

It's entirely up to the DM if a particular newly formed vampire retains some part of his or her mortal attitudes, emotions, and beliefs upon the transition to undeath. For DMs who like concrete rules, try the following:

If a character is killed by a vampire, and the creating vampire is destroyed or leaves the area before the victim rises as a vampire, roll 8d6 and compare the result to the victim's Wis. If the result is equal to or greater than the victim's Wisdom, the newly formed vampire is completely and utterly Chaotic Evil. If the dice roll is less than the victim's Wisdom, however, there's a possibility that the new Fledgling vampire might retain some portion of its previous worldview, possibly including alignment. (See Chapter Eleven, "The Mind of the Vampire.")

Note: This *does not* mean that a PC who becomes a vampire can remain a PC! The only purpose of this "rule" is to give DMs the opportunity to add some roleplaying spice to vampires. To repeat, a PC who becomes a vampire *immediately* becomes an NPC, under the complete control of the DM.

Vampiric Curses

Some of the monsters also have the dread ability to impart vampirism via a curse. With their voice and their gaze they are able to afflict a victim with a terrible wasting disease that drains the body's strength. After a number of days, the victim dies and then rises as a vampire the second night after burial. The only means of saving the victim known to me is to destroy the cursing vampire before the victim finally

succumbs. Of course, the body can be destroyed to prevent it from rising, but this is obviously too late to help the victim. In general, any victim brought to death by any draining effects of a vampire, but not by normal combat or spell damage, is a candidate to become undead.

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I was highly impressed by our neighbor when he stopped by for his first visit. He was a very well-spoken chap, exceedingly polite, and almost over-formal for simple folk such as we. For example, when I responded to his knock on our front door, the gentleman simply stood on the doorstep and conversed, even though I stood back and opened the door to allow him to enter. When I asked why he preferred to talk outside, he responded that his upbringing had indoctrinated him with the belief that one should never enter another's home unless one is specifically and formally invited. So charmed was I by this olden-style formality that I immediately bade him enter. . . .

—From the journal of Vidimus Tansim

CHAPTER FOUR: VAMPIRE WEAKNESSES



A discussion of those few salient abilities that are a hindrance to the vampire seems a natural bridge to the subject at hand: that of their general weaknesses. Do not take too much heart from this chapter! Vampires are among the most powerful of the undead, possessing great strength and numerous magical abilities. Coupled with this is their inhuman tenacity and their undying hunger. Taking all into account, vampires should surely be masters of all they survey, destroying civilization and life as they see fit.

It is very fortunate for (demi)humanity that vampires have a number of weaknesses that can be exploited. Again, those who would hunt vampires should be cautioned. These creatures are of great might and terrible cunning. To confront one is literally to stare death in the face. Not only must the hunter overcome the monsters' strengths, but also must he master his own weaknesses; almost surely the vampire will discover and capitalize upon them.

Some of the most common vampiric vulnerabilities are holy symbols,

blessed accoutrements, sanctified places, mirrors, garlic, and running water.

One thing that the potential vampire hunter should remember is that not all vampires are affected by the same things. The discussions below relate to "typical" vampires—which, of course, is an oxymoron; no vampire is "typical." In practice, there is no guarantee that any individual vampire will suffer from any of the above "standard" weaknesses.

This holds particularly true with respect to uniquely powerful vampires, or the heads or progenitors of vampire lines. (A "vampire line" is defined as "all those 'subsidiary' vampires created by the same progenitor vampire, or by vampires who were created by the progenitor, etc." A progenitor is a vampire whose creator has been destroyed, or one who was not created by another vampire, but came into being by some other method.) These creatures tend to be unusual and will commonly possess strengths and weaknesses altogether different from the "standard" vampire.

This same is true for the original set of vampires created personally by a head of a vampire line. These creatures are referred to as the "first brood" and comprise the progenitor's strongest and best "children."

Typically, a first brood will be approximately five to ten vampires. The first brood will exhibit many of the same qualities as their progenitor, but modified in form. For example, if the head of a vampire line were able to shapechange into the form of a fly, his first brood might be able to summon and command swarms of flies. As another example, if the progenitor were held at bay by anyone reading from a holy book, the sound of such readings might cause physical harm to members of the monster's first brood.

To repeat, any mortal who comes into contact with the head of a vampire line, or other such uniquely powerful creature, should exercise the greatest of caution. Such an encounter may require many months of painstaking research as the hunter attempts to glean some hint as to the vampire's unique weaknesses.

Keeping a Vampire at Bay

Althea kept the mirror between us and the blood-sucking fiend, as we instructed. At first the vampire circled, glaring at us in hatred, seemingly unable to approach the silvered glass that Althea kept always before its eyes. But then suddenly a huge bat swept down from the night sky, claws reaching for Althea's eyes. In her attempt to protect herself, she let the mirror fall, and it shattered on the stony ground. And in that instant, the vampire was among us, and the screaming began. . . .

—From the journal of
Donal Pembroke

Ideally, any vampire encountered should be destroyed, because such evil is corruption in the heart of the land. This, however, is beyond the abilities of most mortals, and the primary goal becomes one of survival. Fortunately, there are a number of ways that might allow mortals to hold a vampire at bay, or even drive it away.

Good Holy Symbols

There is no consensus among experts as to exactly why the holy symbols of good-aligned faiths have such an effect on vampires. No one can argue with the fact that this effect exists, however.

The majority of philosophers believe that the symbol itself is not significant; *it is the faith of the person holding the symbol that is important.* The precepts of any good-aligned faith will classify the vampire as a blasphemer against the gods and against nature. Thus, any pious follower of such a faith views a vampire with righteous outrage. According to these philosophers, it is this righteous abhorrence, of which the holy item is just a symbol, that so affects a vampire.

It should be noted that a holy symbol need not be a traditional one, such as a cross or star, to have power over a vampire. Any symbol of a deity dedicated to the precepts of Goodness will serve the purpose. Again, what seems to be more important than the actual condition or shape of the symbol is the faith and belief of the person presenting it. If the person's faith in his or her god is weak, then the symbol's power over the living dead is also weak. Therefore, good-aligned holy symbols can be used, to limited effect, by laypersons (that is, people who are not priests) or by priests of insufficient experience to truly turn a vampire. This is usually referred to as "presentment," to distinguish it from true turning. Presentment is discussed below.

Evil Holy Symbols

As with other undead, vampires are sometimes subject to control by priests of evil-aligned faiths. Just as a good-aligned priest can use a holy symbol in an attempt to turn or banish a vampire, so can an evil-aligned priest use his symbol in an attempt to control the vampire. In both cases, the priest's faith and willpower are key issues, and the outcome is never certain.

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With lesser undead, should the evil priest establish control, that control is *virtually complete*. Not so with a vampire; a controlled vampire retains its free will, and acts in much the same way as a mortal might when threatened with physical pain. It will obey the letter, but not necessarily the spirit, of any orders it is given, and will always try to pervert the controlling priest's intent so as to break the control. Only if the priest's and the vampire's desires run in parallel will the monster wholeheartedly cooperate. In the vast majority of cases, the vampire will use its cunning and considerable powers to reverse the situation, likely without the priest's awareness, so that the slave will become the master.

There is no equivalent of *presentment with evil-aligned holy symbols*. A vampire is totally unaffected by an evil symbol presented by a layperson or by a priest of insufficient experience.

Turning Versus Presentment

In addition to *priestly turning* as discussed above, many vampires are also subject to the *presentment of a good-aligned holy symbol* by a layperson or by a priest of insufficient experience to actually turn the creature. It should be noted that *presentment of a holy symbol* will never drive a vampire away; it will only keep it at bay temporarily.

As with actual turning, *presentment* depends almost exclusively on the faith and the force of personality of the person presenting the symbol. Even the slightest wavering of faith or dip in confidence can allow the vampire to ignore the effects of a holy symbol. A *presented holy symbol* in the hands of the *most virtuous and pious believer* will force a vampire to remain at least five feet away from the character holding the symbol.

Whether or not the item is actually being used in a turning or presentment

attempt, vampires hate the sight of good-aligned holy symbols. This hatred usually manifests itself in an unwillingness to look at or touch the symbol, or to flinch away from it. A masquerading vampire must exercise much self-control to suppress this natural reaction. Vampires seem distracted and apparently have difficulty concentrating when a good-aligned holy symbol is within their field of vision.

Blessed Accoutrements

In addition to holy symbols, there are a number of other religious items that can be used to exert control over the majority of vampires. Although they are usually not as effective as holy symbols, they can be used in a pinch.

These items, collectively called *blessed accoutrements*, vary in nature and form, depending on the religion or mythos from which they come. Regardless of the mythos, however, to be effective, *blessed accoutrements* must be associated with a faith that *reveres a good-aligned deity*. A priest of that religion must have *blessed* these items. (Note that an item that is not directly associated with the faith, but has nevertheless been *blessed*, does not qualify as a *blessed accoutrement*.) *Blessed accoutrements* can never be used to turn a vampire; only to keep it at bay. Although a priest's *bless* spell normally has a temporary duration of approximately six minutes, a *blessed* holy item remains *blessed*—but only for the purposes of holding a vampire at bay or warding a portal—until something befalls the item that would desecrate it. (Events that would qualify as desecration vary from faith to faith, although there are certain actions that would always fill the bill, all of which are far too unpleasant to discuss here.)

Some examples of *blessed accoutrements* are holy wafers, holy

water, prayer beads, blessed books or tomes, and robes or clothing.

Blessed accoutrements can occasionally be used as weapons uniquely able to mark and harm vampires. This will be discussed in the next chapter, "Destroying a Vampire," under the heading "Stigmata."

Additional Protection

There are three additional items that are useful for keeping vampires at bay. Once again, one must realize that not all vampires will be subject to these items.

The state of undeath offers many powers and abilities denied to mortals. The connection with the Negative Material Plane also causes vast changes in a mortal turned into a vampire. Despite these issues, however, there is one vital fact that can always be used against a vampire: at one time it was a mortal.

It is this fact that likely explains a vampire's negative reaction to mirrors. If a mirror is presented boldly and with conviction to a vampire, the monster will recoil from it. Exactly why is this? It appears that vampires often resent their undead state, and yearn for the warmth of humanity and feeling of being alive. Mirrors, because they do not reflect the image of vampires, remind the creatures in a most painful manner of their undead state.

Garlic also has a strong effect on vampires. The reasons for this are unclear, but some innate quality in the plant causes vampires to cower from it. Some sages believe the reason is simply that vampires find the odor extremely offensive—so offensive, in fact, that a vampire will never approach any significant quantity of garlic, but I find this explanation much too simplistic. Perhaps vampires find garlic to be toxic to their necrological processes, as wolfsbane (actually aconite) is to werewolves. In any case, garlic can be used as a partial

protection against the monsters.

Many legends tell of vampires being kept at bay by running water, and conclude that running water somehow has some warding power over vampires as does garlic and mirrors. As far as I can tell, these tales are probably true with regard to the base events, but totally wrong in their conclusions. It is true that all but the most powerful vampires—generally speaking, Eminent and Patriarchs—are quickly destroyed if they are immersed in running water. Vampires are, of course, aware of this vulnerability, and hence will avoid running water if there is a chance they can be immersed in it. This means that vampires will be particularly wary of bridges, stepping stones, ferries, and other means of crossing running water. (After all, bridges can collapse, ferries can sink, etc.) If the benefit is great enough, vampires will risk such means of crossing running water, but will always do whatever it takes to minimize the risk. If circumstances allow, however, the fiends will shapechange to bat form and fly across a river. Thus it can be seen that an aversion to crossing running water is not a strict prohibition, but merely a rational choice.

There is one exception: a vampire in gaseous form is strictly prohibited from crossing a body of running water that is more than three feet wide.

Compilers' Note: The notes Dr. van Richten used to compose this section have been lost since his disappearance. From the reference above and other notes we do have access to, my sister and I have concluded that the reason for this prohibition has something to do with the vampire's fatal susceptibility to immersion in running water. Whether this prohibition is merely a psychological aversion or a "life-saving" measure on the part of the vampire is not known as this time.

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Myths and legends tell of other items or situations that can drive away vampires or keep them at bay. Among these are wood ash, dove feathers, and the singing of a small child. It is not known if these items are truly effective against vampires. I believe that these tales actually describe idiosyncratic weaknesses of certain individual vampires, which should not and cannot be generalized to the whole of the race.

Sanctified Places

Although the realization caused my gorge to rise, I suddenly perceived the only way I might escape the fiend that pursued me. There was one fresh grave in the graveyard, one that had been closed this afternoon.

In desperation, I cleared away the fresh earth, exposing the coffin. I could hear the unnaturally fast footsteps of the vampire as I climbed into the coffin with its cold occupant and closed the lid. Of course I was unable to re-cover the coffin with dirt, but I prayed, more fervently than I had ever prayed before, that it would make no difference.

—From the journal of
Zylara Windermere

There are certain structures and locales that can strongly influence or prohibit vampires. These structures and locales can best be described as sanctified places. As a general rule, these locations are rare.

In order for a building, structure, or area to be considered a sanctified place and to hold power over a vampire, it must be one of two specific types of establishment.

The first type of safe house from the vampire is one that is expressly owned. An individual or strongly defined group must own the location. If the location is inhabited, it must be inhabited by the owner or by a member of the owning group. The following are examples of locations that meet this criterion:

- ⊙ a house, owned by the residents
 - ⊙ a monastery, owned by the order of priests that dwells within it
 - ⊙ a graveyard, owned by the priestly order that oversees it
 - ⊙ The following locations would not qualify:
 - ⊙ an inn, because the residents staying in the various rooms do not own them
 - ⊙ a public area, such as a village green
 - ⊙ a town's public graveyard, because the area would generally be "owned" by an elected (and hence ephemeral) town council
 - ⊙ a trading coster's warehouse, because the building is owned by a "corporation," which is a legal fiction
- Churches, temples, and the like, even when officially owned and operated by amorphous groups such as a town council, qualify because they are symbolically owned by the deity to which the buildings are dedicated.

The second type of place that is off-limits to a vampire is one that is in some way hallowed. In the case of personal homes, they are the retreat or sanctuary of the owner, and are inherently hallowed. Churches and temples are obviously hallowed by their nature. Note that, in this case, the word "hallowed" does not necessarily mean religious or holy; rather, it means "respected" or "venerated." The following list of structures/areas gives a general idea of what might be considered hallowed ground. As with holy symbols, the types of hallowed ground vary with different cultures and religions:

- ⊙ house or home
- ⊙ church
- ⊙ holy burial sites
- ⊙ hallowed hunting grounds

In general, even the most powerful priest is unable to sanctify a location that does not have some tradition of sanctity or veneration associated with it. Thus, even a high priest could not buy the title to an abandoned estate—

actually the lair of a vampire—and then somehow sanctify it, just to aggravate the vampire if nothing else. Unless the estate had some tradition of sanctity attached to it, the priest would have to establish the building as a temple, attract a body of other priests and a congregation, hold services, etc. Then and only then might the building be considered sanctified. (And if you think the vampire in the catacombs would abide that, then you would not last very long in the Land of Mists.)

Homes

Homes, that is, houses or other spaces where individuals or families have their permanent residence, enforce their own restrictions on a vampire. Homes are not actually sanctified places (except in the most unusual of cases) and so give priests or laypersons no benefits when turning or holding at bay vampires and other undead. They do, however, give those within a unique protection against vampires.

In short, a vampire is completely unable to enter a home unless invited by a resident; the creature is simply unable to physically enter the residence. A few important notes do apply. First of all, to qualify as a “resident” of a home, a person must have been invited to live there indefinitely. This can be the actual homeowner, the spouse, a relative of the owner, a live-in servant, etc. A guest of the owner does not qualify as a resident. Second, the invitation must be overt, stated in words. An implied invitation, such as an open door, is not sufficient. A single invitation to enter a home will allow the vampire to enter that home but once, immediately after the invitation is extended. The sole exception is if the “man of the house”: the oldest member of the household offers the invitation. If it is the “man of the house” who formally offers the invitation to a vampire, the creature is thereafter always free to enter that

home without further invitation. Third, just because a vampire is unable to actually enter a house, those within are not totally protected from the creature’s wrath. A vampire has a number of options open to it. For example, it could attempt to charm someone inside the house, or otherwise convince him or her to officially invite the creature to enter. It could summon minions, who are not forbidden to enter the house. Alternatively, it could burn the house to the ground or otherwise force its potential victims to leave the structure. In short, fleeing to one’s home to escape a vampire offers temporary protection at best.

In the Land of Mists there are a number of exceptions to the above remarks. Strahd von Zarovich is the absolute ruler of Barovia and thereby owns all properties contained in it. This mighty vampire lord can enter any building or structure that he wishes, simply because he “owns” them all.

Graves

Many experts find the statement hard to believe, but it seems that that most vampires, the “lords of the undead,” are unable to physically open the grave, crypt, or other final resting place of another who was interred according to the precepts of the religion the person followed in life. (They can obviously open their own resting-place with impunity.) Although surprising on the surface, when viewed symbolically, this makes perfect sense. An interment site is, in one manner of speaking, the only property owned by its inhabitant, for eternity. And, assuming the deceased was interred with the formality and ritual associated with his or her faith while alive, the interment site is thus sanctified, at least to a degree. For these reasons, a “typical” vampire is unable to enter, break open, or otherwise physically disturb an interment site without the

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express permission of the "inhabitant" (who, obviously, is unable to give it).

This does not prevent a vampire from magically animating the inhabitant of a grave, however, and then having the animated corpse break out

of the interment site. The restriction also does not apply to unfortunates who were interred without benefit of clerical rites and rituals: bodies buried in a mass grave, criminals who were excommunicated, etc.

Holy Symbols

To be effective, a presented holy symbol must be from a Good-aligned religion, and must be presented boldly by a character who is actually faithful to that religion. The DM should adjudicate this according to previous roleplaying. "Sudden converts" to a faith to which they normally just give lip service will find themselves "fang fodder."

The character then makes a Charisma check on 4d6, modified by +1 for every age category of the vampire above Old. This means that a character trying to hold an Eminent vampire at bay must make a Charisma check with +3 added to the roll. If the roll is equal to or less than the character's Charisma, the vampire is held at bay for 2d4 melee rounds. If the DM wishes, some of the modifiers below may be applied:

Modifiers for Turning Vampires

Situation	Modifier
Priest has major spell access to the <i>Sun Sphere</i>	+2
Priest has minor spell access to the <i>Sun Sphere</i>	+1
Priest is using a makeshift holy symbol	-1
Priest is using a <i>blessed</i> or finely crafted holy symbol	+1
This specific vampire has previously caused the hero to fail a horror or fear check (Ravenloft only)	-2
Hero is any Neutral alignment	-1
The player roleplays the turning/controlling attempt in an exemplary manner	+1

In order for a holy symbol to qualify as "finely crafted", it must be made of some precious metal or a material that is sacred to the priest's religion. For example, a priest of the goddess Mielikki (from the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting) would probably use a symbol made of finely wrought wood, preferably still living, rather than of gold or platinum. In any event, the symbol must be constructed by a priest of at least 7th level, and takes a minimum of one week to prepare. If the symbol is a precious metal, it must be of at least 1,000 gold pieces in value. If it is of some other material, it must be of the finest quality possible. For example, the wooden holy symbol would have to be made of some rare and particularly sacred tree and would be difficult to find. A makeshift holy symbol, in contrast, would be something that was hastily put together.

The roleplaying modifier has been included in the interest of colorful game play. This is an optional modifier that allows the DM to reward players who really get into character; for example, if the player stands up at the gaming table and declaims something like, "Profane Creature of Darkness, in the name of Torm I expel you from the domain of the living," if the DM is running a game that is not heavily roleplay oriented, this modifier can be excluded.

A number of other modifiers may be applied to the roll, depending on the personal power of the vampire in question, the priest's faith and willpower at the moment of turning, any prior and unsuccessful conflicts between the priest and a vampire,

and a number of other factors. DMs should feel free to add other modifiers that make sense in their campaigns.

Because the lands of Ravenloft are a physical manifestation of evil incarnate, the effects of sanctified land and structures are diluted as compared to those in other locales. Normally, when in Ravenloft, undead are turned according to the *Turning Undead* tables presented in the *Domains of Dread* rulebook. If the vampire is on sanctified ground, however, the standard *Turning Undead* table from the *Player's Handbook* is used (making it easier for priests to turn the monsters).

Sanctified places also give the following modifiers to related functions (in or out of the Demiplane of Dread):

- presentment of holy symbol: +2 on Cha check
- vampire touching/manipulating holy item: -2 on saving throw
- vampire passing portal warded by blessed item: -1 on saving throw

Players and DMs should bear in mind that keeping a vampire at bay does not negate its ability to attack the person presenting a holy symbol. The creature could hurl objects, attempt to *charm* the character with the symbol, summon minions to deal with the offender, or a host of other actions. A successful presentment simply means the vampire cannot approach within 5' of the holy symbol. (If the vampire is somehow forced to come within five feet of the character, the effect of the presentment ends.) Note that a vampire could attack with a long polearm, such as a spear.

If a Good-aligned holy symbol is within a vampire's field of vision, it suffers a +1 penalty to its Initiative for as long as it can see the item. A vampire seeing a Good-aligned holy symbol will normally show some sign of distaste or hatred—hissing and spitting in anger, flinching away as if

in pain, etc.—unless it successfully saves vs. spell. A successful saving throw means the creature has suppressed its natural reaction. If it successfully saves, the creature can view the item without effect from then on.

Vampires find it very difficult to touch, move, destroy, or otherwise manipulate Good-aligned holy symbols; even covering the item or removing it from view requires a great effort of will. To touch or otherwise manipulate a holy symbol, the vampire must successfully save vs. spell. This save is separate from the roll to see if it can suppress its visible reaction. A successful save means the monster can touch the item this time. Any subsequent attempt to touch or manipulate the item requires another save.

Note that vampires gain a bonus to both the above saving throws as they progress in age. The monster receives a bonus of +1 for every age category past Fledgling. Thus, a Mature vampire gains a +1 bonus, while a Patriarch receives a +6 bonus!

Blessed Accoutrements

The procedure for holding a vampire at bay using a blessed accoutrement is the same as that for using a holy symbol. Use the table for Turning Undead in the *PHB* (or, when playing in the RAVENLOFT campaign setting, use the tables in the *Domains of Dread* book), but with a +2 penalty to reflect the lesser power of a blessed accoutrement. The dice roll is further modified by +1 for every age category of the vampire above Old. If the dice roll is successful, the vampire is held at bay for 2d4 melee rounds at a distance of five feet. If the DM wishes, some of the modifiers from the "Modifiers for Turning Vampires" list above may be applied.

Another common use for blessed accoutrements is to keep a vampire

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from entering a certain place. These evil creatures have great trouble passing through a portal that is adorned or protected by blessed accoutrements. A portal so protected will keep a vampire from entering for 2d4 rounds. After that time, the creature must make a saving throw vs. spell in order to enter. This saving throw is modified by a bonus of +1 for every age category of the vampire beyond Fledgling.

Below is a list of typical accoutrements that are frequently blessed. Keep in mind that these are examples, and the collective list of accoutrements would be as varied as the number of existing religions. Two die-roll modifiers are included with each item. The first is the bonus applied to the Charisma check die roll when someone tries to use an accoutrement to hold a vampire at bay; the second is a penalty applied to the vampire's saving throw roll when it attempts to pass through a portal warded by a blessed accoutrement:

- holy wafer (+2/-2)
- holy water (+3/-3)
- prayer beads (0/0)
- blessed book or tome (+1/-1)
- robes or clothing (-1/+1)

Mirrors

A character can also use a mirror to keep a vampire at bay, in much the same way as a holy symbol, except the Charisma check is made with a +1 penalty. A successful roll means that the vampire is kept at bay for 2d4 rounds at a range of 5 feet, but only if the mirror is directly between the character holding it and the vampire, so that the vampire can see its reflection (or lack thereof). The vampire can avoid the effects by "flanking" the character with the mirror, by shattering the mirror in some manner, or by forcing the character to drop the mirror. As with

other means of keeping a vampire at bay, modifiers from the "Modifiers for Turning Vampires" table can be used.

Causing Damage with Holy Symbols and Holy Water

In order to damage the vampire with a holy symbol, the presenter must make a successful Charisma check on 1d20 and then touch some part of the vampire's skin with the symbol. Generally, this requires a successful hit vs. AC 4, although this can change, depending on the circumstances. If the Charisma check and the attack roll are both successful, the vampire sustains 2d6 points of damage and is kept at bay for 2d4 rounds.

The character wielding the holy symbol must be of Good or Neutral alignment. Vampires suffer no damage from a holy symbol wielded by an Evil character. Below are some optional modifiers to the Charisma roll:

- Character is CN, N or LN: +4
- Character is CG or NG: +3
- Character is LG, but does not worship the deity to whom the holy symbol is dedicated: +2
- Character is a priest who worships the deity to whom the holy symbol is dedicated: -2

Damage inflicted by a thrown vial of holy water, or by any other contact with holy water, is 1d6 + 1 hit points. In addition to taking damage, a vampire will be kept at bay for 2d4 rounds after any direct hit from holy water.

Controlling a Vampire

When an Evil priest tries to control a vampire, use the appropriate Turning Undead table. A success on this table means that the priest has established control over the vampire. As with good priests turning vampires, the optional rule of percent spell-failure can be applied to evil priests attempting to dominate a vampire.

The small boat capsized, and all of us—my colleagues and the fiend—were cast into the torrent. This was our opportunity. As the rocks battered at us and the rapids threatened to drown us, we grabbed at the hissing, screaming monster and struggled to immerse it. Its strength was inhuman, and the wounds it inflicted on us were terrible. But we withstood it as the only certain way of destroying the hideous creature.

We thought we had succeeded when the thing wailed as if in agony, and its body shifted in our grip, but the creature had become a bat. We grabbed for it, but it slipped from our grasp and flew away into the night sky. At that point we knew that even if we survived the upcoming rapids, our troubles were only just begun...

—From the journal of Vraymar Orcbane

CHAPTER FIVE: DESTROYING A VAMPIRE



riving a vampire away or keeping it at bay is quite difficult enough.

Unfortunately, in the majority of cases this will only guarantee that the fiend will approach again, at a time of its choosing and when you are least prepared. The ultimate goal is to significantly damage and then destroy the creature. Unfortunately, this feat is much more difficult to achieve than it is to discuss. However, these creatures are not wholly omnipotent and there are, thanks to all that's holy, some means to strike them down! That, of course, is my intent in committing this guide to parchment.

Of course, the easiest way to destroy a vampire is to be sure that it never rises at all. When a person is killed by a vampire, as I have postulated, it is almost certain that that person will become a vampire as well. The best way to prevent a victim from rising as a vampire is to completely destroy the body rather than bury it. If the body must be buried for religious

or other reasons, there are other ways that it can be prevented from becoming a vampire. The way most certain is to drive a stake through the heart of the body, fill its mouth with a consecrated substance, and cut off its head.

Remember the vampire hunter who relies solely upon tradition is almost certainly doomed to become the thing he hunts!

Wooden Stakes

Folk tales make this means of destruction sound much simpler than it really is. In fact, there are several significant issues that must be addressed. First, the stake must be prepared from wood. Ash is normally the appropriate wood, but certain vampires may be immune to ash, and another wood must be used. The appropriate wood may vary depending upon the individual vampire, and will often be somehow related to the creature's personal history (how it became a vampire, etc.). For example, a vampire who lives in a graveyard might only be killed with a stake of yew wood.

In the night, when a vampire's power is at its height, a wooden stake

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is largely ineffectual. For obvious reasons it is best to confront a vampire while it is unconscious in its sanctuary. Unfortunately, this is not always possible and the vampire hunter must be prepared to face a conscious and active vampire.

If attacking a conscious and unrestrained vampire, the stake must be manually driven through its heart. In other words, the stake must be used like a dagger or a short sword and driven into the chest of the monster, who will hardly remain still while someone positions the stake and prepares to strike it home with a mallet. Even this is harder than it sounds; as evidenced by its inhuman strength, the muscles of a vampire are much more sturdy, perhaps more dense, than their mortal equivalents. Thus, the attacker must have great strength in order to drive the stake into the monster's chest cavity. In addition, it must be remembered that the heart is a relatively small target, and very difficult to hit if the vampire is moving. Even if the vampire is somehow restrained, it is far from a sure thing that the attacker can drive the stake manually through the heart.

If the vampire is unconscious or immobilized, success with a stake and mallet is still not guaranteed; if the stake is ever removed from the vampire's body, the creature rises again. To prevent the monster from ever rising again, the attacker must decapitate the vampire. Otherwise, the possibility of it rising to stalk the lands still exists.

Blessed Weapons

Weapons that have been *blessed* by a priest are a special case: for the duration of the *bless* spell, a *blessed* but otherwise nonmagical weapon can strike a vampire. It inflicts only minimal damage, however, unless wielded by a warrior of exceptional strength.

Running Water

Many tales state that vampires are exceptionally vulnerable to running water. For most vampires this is at least partially true. A vampire that is totally immersed in rapidly flowing water should be involuntarily reduced to gaseous form in a matter of minutes. There are several vital considerations to keep in mind, however. First, the water in question must be rapidly flowing; oceans, creeks, streams, and the like will not suffice. Second, the word "immersed" has a specific meaning in this context: fully three-quarters of the vampire's body must be below the surface of the water, and this portion must include the entire torso, from the creature's waist to its neck. (In essence, the monster's heart must be immersed.) Vampires are as capable of floating or treading water as any humanoid creature. Thus, merely throwing a vampire into a river and waiting for it to expire will probably not work. The vampire must be so held that its entire chest is completely immersed for at least one minute in order to inflict any damage whatsoever upon the creature.

As is so often the case with vampires, this is much easier said than done. The creature is hideously strong and the panic engendered by even partial immersion seems to give the creature additional strength. Often the attacker becomes the attacked.

The monster can also use its many spell-like powers to destroy those who would try to hold it under. Luckily, as soon as the creature is even partially immersed in running water, it is incapable of voluntarily assuming gaseous form. It can, however, shapechange into its form.

If the immersion attempt is successful, the results are quite extreme. Should the creature be kept suitably submerged for only three minutes, it is forced into gaseous form.

which bubbles to the surface, and must flee to its sanctuary.

Sunlight

For this discussion and the following paragraphs, the word "sunlight" refers to the direct rays of the sun or such rays reflected by a mirror.

Most vampires can be destroyed by exposure to sunlight, and even momentary exposures can be lethal to Fledglings. These creatures hate the sunlight with a passion that mortals can't begin to understand. If a vampire is up and about in the daylight hours, then it will always take great pains to shade itself from the sun. With very few exceptions, vampires will never willingly pass into the sunlight. If this means that they must fight a battle to the death, allow a mortal enemy to escape, or make any other such sacrifices, so be it.

As soon as a normal Fledgling vampire is totally exposed to sunlight, it is instantly incapable of using any of its magical abilities. All it can concentrate upon is trying to get into shelter. If at the end of one minute the creature has not escaped the rays of the sun, it is instantly and permanently annihilated.

As a vampire ages, however, it becomes able to sustain brief periods of time in the sun. Older vampires seem to be able to resist the lethal effects of exposure to sunlight for varying periods of time. A Mature vampire might withstand one minute of exposure, for example, while an Ancient might withstand one hour in the sun without being destroyed. During this "period of immunity," the creature is able to use all of its powers normally. The instant this period of immunity expires, however, the creature is stripped of its magical powers, and one minute later is annihilated.

A vampire that has existed for a millennium is no longer susceptible to

the burning touch of the sun. A Patriarch can go forth during the daylight hours with the same freedom as a mortal. (There are also tales of vampires centuries too young to be a Patriarch, who are equally immune to sunlight; the possibility that such a creature can pass this immunity on to a line of vampires is too horrid to dwell upon.)

A vampire could stand in a room with sunlight streaming through the window and remain totally unharmed so long as it did not step into a sunbeam. It is important to here relate the nature of *reflected* sunlight that harms vampires. "Diffuse" reflection, such as that from the floors and walls of a room, is harmless to the vampire, albeit highly distasteful. "Focused" reflection, however, is dangerous. As a rule of thumb, the reflected sunlight is dangerous only if the vampire could conceivably see a recognizable image of the sun in the reflecting surface. The sun reflected in a mirror, a polished shield, or perhaps even a well-cleaned plate would harm a vampire.

Even partial exposure to sunlight can be dangerous to a vampire: "partial" in this case meaning that only a small portion of the vampire's body (such as a hand or arm) is exposed to the direct or mirror-reflected rays of the sun. The vampire's period of immunity comes into play again. If the partial exposure extends beyond this period of immunity, the exposed portion of the vampire is burned as if by direct application of fire.

It cannot be stressed too often: most vampires hate sunlight. Even if a vampire is in the sunlight less than its period of immunity, it takes a massive effort of will for the creature to do anything other than seek shelter. Patriarchs or vampires innately immune to sunlight still dislike being exposed to the direct or reflected rays of the sun although the intensity of this dislike is infinitely less than that exhibited by their lesser kin. Such

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vampires will never show a tendency to flee from sunlight, but they might evidence other symptoms of distaste.

Vampires can sometimes be physically forced or tricked into the sun, but considering the great strength and intelligence of the creatures, this is never a minor undertaking. Usually a vampire destroyed by sunlight instantly crumbles into dust, if in any material form. Sunlight also affects vampires that are in gaseous form in the same ways as discussed above. If a gaseous vampire is destroyed by sunlight, the cloud of gas simply dissipates, never to reform.

Sigmata

In three memorable cases, I have seen a fascinating phenomenon occur when a vampire was caught in sunlight, was struck by a holy symbol, or was splashed by holy water. In these cases, not only did the contact cause pain and inflict physical damage, but it also left a seemingly indelible mark on the vampire. In one case this took the form of a red discoloration, similar to a birthmark, the size and shape of the splash of holy water that struck the fiend. In the others, the mark was a blackened scorch where the sun struck

Wooden Stakes

A single attacker using the stake like a melee weapon must have a minimum Strength of 17; otherwise the blow will not be strong enough to penetrate the heart. To strike the heart, the attacker must roll a successful hit against AC -1. If either condition is not met, the stake does not penetrate the heart, and does no damage to the vampire. Two people, but no more, can cooperate in wielding the stake in melee. The sum of their Strength scores must exceed 17, and they make the attack with a -3 attack penalty because of the difficulty involved in coordinating their movements.

If the monster is totally immobilized, no attack roll is required. Staking the creature takes one round.

Blessing a Weapon

If a priest of a nonevil deity casts a *bless* spell on any weapon (or item that could be conceivably used as a weapon), for the duration of the spell that weapon is capable of striking a vampire. The *blessed* weapon gains no attack bonus, of course. A

successful hit inflicts one point of damage, plus any applicable Strength bonus.

Immersion in Water

If a vampire is partially immersed in running water, it temporarily gains the Strength associated with the next highest age category. Thus, a Fledgling vampire dumped into a river will temporarily enjoy a Str of 18/91, rather than its normal 18/76. This temporary Strength bonus vanishes as soon as the creature is out of the water. In addition, if the monster's arms aren't somehow constrained, it gets a +4 bonus on all attacks against any characters physically trying to hold it underwater. (This bonus represents both proximity and the fact that its foes are concentrating on holding it under.) At the end of each complete round that the vampire has been immersed, it loses one-third of its maximum hit-point score. As soon as it is driven to zero or fewer hit points, it assumes gaseous form.

Example: A vampire has a maximum hit-point total of 60 hit points. In combat with a group of adventurers, the creature suffers 25

the skin, and a brand in the exact form of the holy symbol.

Why is this interesting? Recall that the condition of a vampire's body normally tends toward the condition it was in when the creature died. Old scars, tattoos, and the like will reform, while new scars and similar marks will quickly fade. The marks, which I choose to call "stigmata" (singular, stigma), did not fade until a period of months had transpired in the first case, and several years had passed in the others. Particularly in the case of the holy symbol, the vampire was effectively and visually identified for

what it was, depriving it of a means to masquerade as a mortal. Therefore, it was easier to hunt down the fiend and destroy it.

I have no idea how common a susceptibility to stigmata is among vampires, and it is not the sort of thing easily established experimentally. Tales of stigmata are rare, and if vampire and foe come into such proximity that a stigma can be created, in most cases either foe or vampire ends up destroyed.

points of damage from an enchanted sword, giving it a current score of 35 hit points. To add insult to injury, it is then unceremoniously dumped into a fast-flowing river, with six burly warriors holding it down. At the end of the first round, the creature loses 20 hit points—one-third of its normal total of 60—which drops it to a current total of 15 hit points. At the end of the second round, it loses another 20 points, dropping its total to -5 hp. With a strangled curse, the creature reverts to gaseous form.

If a vampire is immersed in a large quantity of holy water, the creature loses one-half of its total hit points per melee round so immersed. All rules relating to immersion in running water—Strength bonus, attack bonus, etc.—also apply. Even if the monster is not totally immersed, it suffers 2d6+2 points of damage on every round that it is even partially immersed.

Exposure to Sunlight

At the end of every complete melee round that a vampire is partially exposed to sunlight, it suffers 3d6

points of damage. The exposed flesh will often burst into flame, emitting a foul smell.

A vampire exposed to sunlight must make a saving throw vs. petrification, with a -2 penalty to the die roll. If it fails this save, it can do nothing but seek shelter from the sun. If it saves, however, it can act freely during its period of immunity, and can suppress any obvious signs of its discomfort. As soon as its period of immunity ends, however, it must instantly seek shelter from the sun.

If a Patriarch or other sunlight-immune vampire is exposed to direct or reflected sunlight, it must save vs. spell, with a +2 bonus to the die roll. A successful save means that it totally suppresses its innate distaste for sunlight. A failed save, on the other hand, indicates that the creature shows some signs of discomfort, such as painful squinting, etc.

The duration of stigmata is up to the DM.

CHAPTER SIX: MAGIC AND VAMPIRES



vampires are, by their nature, highly magical creatures. Thus it is only logical that their reactions and responses to magic might be quite different in their undead state from what they were while alive. There are two issues to consider: the use of magic on vampires and the use of magic by them. Vampiric spellcasting occurs most often among those creatures who had magic capabilities in life. I shall address that subject in Chapter Thirteen, "Retained Skills." Vampires in general can use magical items, and I shall discuss that briefly at the end of this chapter. First, allow me to consider the issue of the effects of spellcasting on the "typical" vampire.

The Effects of Magic On Vampires

There are a great many spells and spell-like powers available to (demi)human spellcasters, or possessed innately by other creatures. For this reason alone it would be impossible to discuss individually how each different power affects a vampire. Fortunately, the vast majority of these powers can be grouped into representative categories, with most members of a category having a similar effect (or lack thereof) on vampires. I have, therefore, chosen to organize this discussion along those categorical lines, pointing out unique exceptions where appropriate. Note that these categories generally do not equate to schools of wizardly spellcasting or to spheres of priestly magic. They are generally classified by effect.

Before continuing, please note that exceptionally powerful vampires may

well prove immune to spells that are highly efficacious against their lesser brethren. Conversely, vampires with unique heritages might well be subject to dweomers that are totally useless against most of their kin. If the latter is the case, then such vulnerabilities are usually counterbalanced by some surprising immunity.

For example, I have reason to believe that a vampire line exists whose members are all susceptible to illusions, but totally invulnerable to fire magic. Also, before discussing individual categories of magic, one thing must be made clear. Patriarch vampires are categorically immune to spells of low power. This means that the spells of priests and wizards of limited experience will be totally useless against such an ancient creature.

Illusion/Phantasm Spells

Illusions have a more powerful effect on mortals than vampires. Mortals exist inside the delicate walls of their own senses and thence are strongly subject to the effects of illusions. Even the slightest flow of phantasmal magic may be enough to disrupt their carefully maintained mental picture of the world. Vampires, too, generally depend on external senses to learn about the world. These senses, however, are heightened to a literally superhuman degree. This makes the creatures unnaturally adept at perceiving flaws and telltale clues that identify an illusion as such.

Enchantment/Charm Spells

Most vampires are totally unaffected by magic that affects the mind—not only the classic *charm* or *hold* spells, but also more subtle magic such as *fear*, *taunt*, and *scare*. The mind of the vampire is subtly different from that of a mortal, and its mental processes are sufficiently changed to allow them to shrug off such dweomers.

There are certain spells from the enchantment/charm school, however, that do not directly affect the mind. *Enchanted weapon*, *shadow walk*, and *sink* are examples of such spells. Vampires are not innately immune to spells that do not directly affect the mental processes. This should not be taken to mean that such spells are guaranteed to affect a vampire.

Blindness and Deafness

Spells that cause blindness and deafness can effect vampires, but only while the creatures are in forms that use such senses. Thus, a vampire in the form of a human, a wolf, or something similar could be blinded and deafened. A bat, on the other hand, depends very little (if at all) upon vision, so a vampire in bat form will suffer few noticeable effects from a spell that causes blindness. That same bat, of course, would be virtually incapacitated by deafness because the creature uses echolocation in place of vision. In short, a wolf-form vampire affected by blindness could virtually ignore the affliction if it changed to the form of a bat.

A vampire in gaseous form uses arcane senses other than vision and hearing in their classical sense. Magical blindness or deafness cannot affect a vampire in gaseous form because these spells actually target the physical sense organs. A vampire magically blinded or deafened could regain full use of visual and auditory senses by assuming gaseous form.

A gaseous vampire would still be affected by magical *silence*, of course, because this spell actually suppresses the physical characteristics of sound, vibrations in the air or another medium, and no sensory apparatus can detect vibrations that don't exist. The same argument holds for vampires within the area of a *darkness* spell.

Magical Imprisonment

Spells of magical imprisonment have varied effects on vampires. Some of these effects are related to the special supernatural powers of the vampire itself, and still others are results of the strange and evil magic at the heart of the land.

There are basically two types of magical imprisonment: those that physically impede movement and those that capture the life essence or soul of a being. The various *Otiluke's spheres* are examples of the former and *trap the soul*, *magic jar*, and *maze* are examples of the latter. Speaking generally, the former spells are effective against vampires (assuming the creature is affected by the spell at all). The latter, however, are much more problematic.

The "soul" or life force of a vampire seems to exist on both the Prime and Negative Material planes. Other creatures generally do not enjoy this duality; their life forces are on the same plane as their physical bodies. To trap or imprison the soul of a "dual-planar" creature like a vampire, a dweomer must trap that portion of the life force that is on the same plane as its physical body and then draw the remainder of that life force from the Negative Material Plane into the trap.



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Even if the vampire's physical body is on another plane, this "double trapping" is an exceptionally difficult task. The chance that the spell will be effective is much less than normal, and the duration of the imprisonment is drastically curtailed.

Bless Spells

As might be expected from the creatures' responses to holy symbols, vampires find a *bless* spell cast on them by a priest of a good deity to be highly disturbing, having the general effect of a *curse* spell cast upon the living. A *curse* (that is, the reverse of *bless*) cast by a priest of a good deity has no effect.

A *bless* or *curse* spell cast by a priest of a neutral deity has no effect on a vampire, either positive or negative. A *bless* or *curse* cast by a priest of an evil deity seems to *benefit* the foul creature in some inexplicable way, however.

Polymorph Magic

Because vampires have innate shapechanging abilities, it should come as little surprise that *polymorph other* and similar spells have abnormal effects on the fiends. If such a spell even affects the creature, it will involuntarily remain in its new form for no more than a minute. Then it will revert either to the form it was in when the spell took effect, or into any other form that the monster is able to assume. Spellcasting vampires can cast *polymorph self*, *shape change*, or similar spells on themselves and these spells operate normally.

Necromantic Magic

The use of necromantic magic against vampires can be highly dangerous. The vampire's connection with the Negative Material plane affords it an advantage over mortals that is difficult to overcome. Casting a necromantic

spell upon a vampire is like to attempting to break a stone with a pitcher. For instance, I have seen a wizard attempt to drain life energy from a vampire, only to feel the effects of his spell rebound upon him, wither him to decrepitude, and invigorate the fiend in return. Therefore, I advise against the use of necromantic magic on vampires.

I must add, against my better judgment, that I have also seen a very effective use of this particular brand of magic against the lords of the undead: a spell that would reincarnate or otherwise bring life back to a mortal can destroy a vampire outright! However, if one attempts a spell of this nature and fails, the consequences can be tragic.

Effects of Magical Items Used by Vampires

As horrible as the concept may be, it must be accepted that vampires can use magic items often more readily than they can be affected by them. The vast majority of vampires can use only those items that are usable by most mortals. Happily, if these vampires touch or attempt to use items that are specifically attuned to particular professions or nonevil persons, they generally suffer twice as much damage as mortals.

Vampires who retain magical skills from their former lives (discussed in Chapter Thirteen) can use items specific to the professions they practiced while alive, as well as those nonspecific items discussed above, so long as those items are not protected by Goodness.



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Saving Throws and Magic Resistance

To be affected by magic, the vampire must fail both its magic-resistance roll and its saving throw. Vampires suffer half damage (rounded up) from any magically damaging attacks. If a victim of the attack is normally entitled to a saving throw for half damage, a vampire would also be entitled to a saving throw. If the vampire saves successfully, however, it suffers no damage whatsoever from the attack.

Patriarch vampires are totally immune to all 1st- and 2nd-level wizard spells, regardless of the level of the character casting the spell.

This ruling might force the DM to make judgment calls regarding certain spells. The pertinent issue is whether the spell is intended to have an effect on the vampire itself. First, some obvious examples: spells like *magic missile* are totally ineffective against a Patriarch. Likewise, a Patriarch vampire can see through the effects of an *alter self* spell.

An *armor* spell will provide no protection against a Patriarch's melee attacks, but it will improve the subject's AC against a missile weapon hurled by a vampire. Likewise, a *shield* spell will provide a wizard with AC 2 against missiles hurled by a Patriarch vampire, and AC 3 against arrows fired by the same creature, but will provide no additional protection against a melee attack from the Patriarch vampire.

Using these guidelines, DMs can adjudicate how this immunity will work in other situations.

Gaseous Form

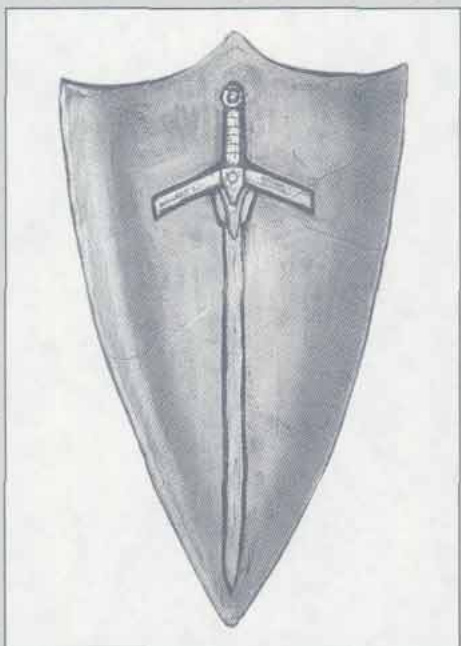
Vampires may or may not be vulnerable to magical attacks while in gaseous form; it's up to the DM. Some vampires may be partially

susceptible to magical attacks while in gaseous form, but suffer only half damage, or may enjoy saving-throw bonuses from +2 to +4.

Bless Spells

If *bless* is cast upon a vampire by a priest of a Good deity, the creature receives its normal magic-resistance roll to resist the spell's effects. Should the creature fail this roll, it suffers a -2 attack penalty for the duration of the spell. The creature also must save vs. spell or be held at bay for 1d3 rounds, and be unable to shapechange for the entire duration of the spell. The only exception to this is if the monster is reduced to zero or fewer hit points, at which time it is forced to assume gaseous form.

If *bless* or *curse* is cast on a vampire by a priest of an Evil deity, however, it automatically gives the creature a +1 attack bonus for the duration of the spell, whether or not the priest wants to so benefit the monster.



Polymorph Magic

If the vampire fails both magic resistance and saving throw rolls, it is *polymorphed* into the form desired by the caster, but retains this form for only one round. When the round is up, the creature can choose which of its normal selection of forms it will assume.

Magical Imprisonment

On the Demiplane of Dread, this type of spell is totally useless. That portion of the vampire's "soul" that resides in the Demiplane is protected by the magical nature of the Demiplane itself. Thus, while within Ravenloft, vampires are totally safe from having their souls trapped in any fashion whatsoever.

Necromantic Magic

The use of *energy drain* opens a channel to the Negative Material Plane, which is home to at least part of the vampire's *life force*. If this spell is used against a vampire in Ravenloft, the *caster* immediately loses 1d4+1 experience levels, and is stunned for 1d4 rounds. In addition, the vampire gains 1 HD, plus concomitant combat benefits, etc., for 2d4 rounds; during this time, all damage to the vampire is taken from these "temporary" hit points first. Outside the lands of Ravenloft, the vampire does not gain the additional Hit Die. The *caster's* loss is permanent, until regained through adventuring.

Raise dead, *reincarnate*, and *resurrection* can have a devastating effect on vampires. If one of these spells is cast on a Fledgling or Mature vampire, and the creature fails its magic-resistance roll and saving throw, it is instantly destroyed. If it makes its saving throw only, it suffers 3d12 hit points



of damage; if it makes its magic-resistance roll, it is totally unaffected. If the spell is cast on a vampire of Old or greater age, the possible results are as follows: 3d12 hit points of damage (magic-resistance roll and saving throw failed); 1d12 hit points of damage (only saving throw made); or no effect (magic-resistance roll made). At the DM's option, a *resurrection* or similar spell cast upon a vampire (who makes both a successful saving throw and magic-resistance roll) may reverse and rebound upon the *caster*.

Magical Items Used by Vampires

If the penalty for touching or using a certain item is loss of experience points or experience levels, then a vampire is unaffected, but is totally incapable of using the item in question. Unless otherwise specified, vampires suffer normal (not double) damage from touching or attempting to use items that are inappropriate to their class. They still suffer double damage from items that are specific to certain alignments.

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The fiend had its arm casually draped around the shoulder of the unfortunate woman, who was looking into its face with an expression of what could only be called lustful desire. I screamed my frustration at the sky, but was unable to break the arcane bonds in which the fiend had bound me. It lowered its lips to touch the woman's alabaster throat, its eyes all the time fixed on mine and sparkling with inhuman enjoyment.

The woman's eyes rolled up in her head, and she moaned with pleasure. As the creature bestowed its kiss, I saw the woman's youthful beauty begin to fade. Her skin dried and stretched over the bone structure of her face, wrinkles deepened around her eyes, and her lustrous black hair began to gray. I closed my eyes in soul-sick horror.

—From the personal journal of Dr. van Richten

CHAPTER SEVEN: LIFE-BLOOD: VAMPIRE FEEDING HABITS



For obvious reasons, the aspect of vampirism most important to mortals is that of their feeding habits.

Vampires must gain sustenance by feeding upon the living. If they do not do this, they suffer terribly and eventually die.

Mechanics

Vampires prefer to drink blood directly from the living body of a victim, preferably one of their former race. The most efficient method of doing this is to use their prominent eyeteeth to open a wound in a major blood vessel of their victim. In (demi)humans, major vessels are closest to the surface in the throat. Because the neck is also one of the least protected parts of the body (even when the victim wears armor) this adds to the desirability of this target area. Sometimes vampires will choose another major blood vessel such as the femoral artery, on the inside of the

thigh near the groin, if circumstances make this possible. One advantage of tapping this artery is that the marks left by the feeding are rarely seen by others.

Some tales describe the eyeteeth of the vampire as hollow, and claim that the creature drinks blood through them as through a straw. In no case that I have studied, however, has this been the case. The teeth of a vampire are identical in structure to normal human teeth, albeit somewhat enlarged and often angled almost imperceptibly outward. My observation is that the vampire simply uses its teeth as implements to open a wound in the victim. It then sucks or laps up the blood using its lips and tongue, much as a babe drinks its mother's milk.

In the vast majority of cases a vampire will open only a small wound that will quickly heal, through which it can drain only a small amount of blood. "Small" is a relative term here; the debilitating effect is related to the robustness of the victim. While a battle-hardened warrior might shrug off a single feeding with no ill effects, the same blood loss might kill a weaker victim through shock.

Vampires usually feed through such small, survivable wounds because they do not want to kill their victim. Any (demi)human killed through blood lost to a vampire will of course rise as a vampire itself, subservient to the creature that killed it, unless the body is decapitated or destroyed. In most cases, vampires do not want to create subservient vampires, for reasons that will be discussed later.

If a vampire does not care whether its victim survives, it can open a massive wound in the throat. This wound will kill its victim as would a dagger drawn across the throat. So fast is the blood flow from such a wound that the creature probably cannot drink it all. It can usually ingest enough to sate its hunger, however. Such a victim is not necessarily raised as a vampire, unless the vampire is somehow able to drink all of his blood.

Vampires usually feed only from unresisting victims, which includes victims that have been gaze-charmed or victims that are immobilized in some manner. In order to drink the blood of its victim, the vampire must be undisturbed for a period of at least one minute. Thus, a vampire in the heat of combat cannot feed.

Signs of Feeding

Even a relatively small and survivable wound left by a vampire causes notable trauma to the flesh of the victim. There is not only the wound itself, which is often less than half an inch in length, but also discoloration caused by bleeding below the skin. This appears as a bruise that is usually an inch or so in diameter. The wound is easy to spot.

It causes no pain to the victim, however, and is not sensitive to the touch. This may be the result of some unknown component of a vampire's saliva, or could arise from some other cause entirely; I have no way of knowing. Thus, victims might be

totally unaware of the wound until they see their image in a mirror, or until someone else brings it to their attention. The victim may feel some weakness that arises from blood loss, and may appear somewhat pale.

Sources of Blood

Vampires almost exclusively insist on the blood of living creatures; (demi)humans are preferred as victims, and members of the same species as the vampire above all. Why is this? It could be a physiological issue whereby, for example, blood from a human is most restorative to a once-human vampire. Or it could simply be symbolic: the evil creature holds within its heart a great hatred for the species to which it once belonged, and wishes to wreak the maximum amount of havoc on its erstwhile fellows.

Vampires prefer healthy victims, but can also draw blood from those who are mortally wounded and sinking into the final coma (characters who are below 0 hit points, assuming the optional "Hovering on Death's Door" rule is in effect; see the DMG index under "Combat, death"). The amount of blood that can be drained from such a victim is usually limited because



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generally it was severe physical damage (hence blood loss) that put the character into that condition in the first place.

Vampires can also feed from the corpses of freshly slain characters. Blood spoils rapidly in regards to serving as a foodstuff for vampires, so the corpse must have been killed within four hours of the vampire's attempt to feed. Because the heart of the corpse is not pumping, the vampire is drastically limited in the amount of blood it can drink from the body, and this amount decreases with time.

In time of dire need, I believe that a vampire can feed on the blood of animals, although the creature will find this foodstuff bland and unsatisfying, and it may leave the vampire ill. (When drinking from a rancid pool becomes a question of survival, then tainted water is better than none.) Because vampires are masters of all creatures whose form they can assume (generally wolves and bats), in regions where such creatures dwell a vampire will never starve. The subservient creatures will obey the commands of their undead master even to the death, and so will offer their lifeblood to preserve their master's unlife.

The Experience of the Victim

I shake in horror to think about it now. But at the time, as the fiend spoke, I felt its velvet voice thrilling through my body. So seductive were its words that I gladly opened the collar of my coat and bared the skin of my neck, and then stood trembling as I awaited the approach of the dark figure.

I gasped aloud with pleasure as its lips touched my flesh, and its hands grasped my shoulders. Then came an instant of pleasure so piercing it was like pain—or pain so

sweet it was like pleasure. I could hear the throbbing of my heartbeat in my ears, and also a deep and distant thudding that must have been the beating of the vampire's heart. The drumbeats synchronized until the sounds were one. I cried out from the ecstasy of it. . . .

—From the journal of
Alatheia Greenbough

How can a vampire charm a victim into submitting to having his or her blood drunk? Surely the very nature of a *charm*, which cannot force its recipient to put itself in imminent danger, prevents the subject from accepting a command so obviously self-destructive. Then again, the vampiric charm-gaze is not the *charm* spell.

This is one of the most insidious factors in the nature of vampirism. It would seem that there is some deep and dark desire within the psychology of (demi)humans that makes submitting to a vampire's "kiss" somehow attractive. Vampires are often portrayed as creatures with an intense sensual appeal. This, it seems, allows charmed victims to believe that offering their throat to a vampire is not the self-destructive nor even suicidal act that it is.

In addition, some victims who have survived the attentions of a vampire report that the experience was highly pleasurable, much as this may fly in the face of reason. They felt no pain as the beast opened the wound in their flesh, and described the actual sensation of the feeding as one of "voluptuous pleasure." (I find my gorge rises when I consider this, but I have heard it from so many sources that I cannot disregard it.)

I have also heard the words used by a vampire while attempting to charm a victim into allowing it to feed. The monster seems to instinctively perceive a desire to submit that lies in

the dark recesses of the human mind. It plays upon this desire, talking about "the gentle joy of surrendering," of "opening oneself," and of "experiencing the unequalled bliss of total sharing."

Vampires often feed from sleeping victims. If the victim is not awakened when the vampire makes the wound, he or she remembers nothing of the experience when they awaken normally. At the very most, the victim recalls that he or she experienced a dream of intense and sensual pleasure.

Philosophical Considerations— Why Blood?

Why must vampires drink blood? Even those few "atypical" individuals who do not drink it require sustenance that is in some way an equivalent to blood. (Note: "atypical" is certainly as subjective a term as "typical" when referring to vampires.) As with so many facets of vampirism, the answer is likely symbolic. Generally speaking, vampires are creatures of undying evil who hold an implacable hatred for the living. Even those who do not actively hate the living consider them to be somehow meager reflections of vampires, and "cattle" whose sole purpose is to act as victims and tools for the vampiric "elite." This belief system carries with it the implication that vampires feed upon the living in both a spiritual and metaphorical sense. It would be appropriate, then, that vampires should also feed on the living in a physical sense as well.

Where does this symbolic equivalency arise from? Some sages believe that it is a jest of the ancient and evil deities who originally set vampires loose upon the worlds of the universe. Others hold that a parallel arises from the very nature of reality; in other words, we know that evil preys upon good, and vampires vindicate this axiom on the supernatural level.

Alternative Forms of Sustenance

The variety of "foods" on which "atypical" vampires may subsist is staggering, and particularly disgusting. I personally know of some vampire-like creatures who feed on cerebrospinal fluid, draining this clear liquid through holes that they punch in their mortal victims' skulls or spines. Obviously, such wounds are much more immediately debilitating to the victims, and much slower to heal. Similarly, there is reputed to be a line of vampires that subsists on lymphatic fluids drained from the glands of their victims. Recurring but unsubstantiated rumors also tell of creatures who drain the aqueous and vitreous humors from the eyes of (demi)humans, rarely if ever killing their victims through this feeding, but always leaving them blind.

There are also known to be vampires that "feed" upon life energy directly from their victims via touch, without the intermediary of blood. These creatures feed upon the actual life experiences of victims, who will eventually perish if they are completely depleted of their acquired memories and skills. Other creatures feed in ways that are more arcane or symbolic, tapping their victims' intelligence, willpower (Wisdom), Strength, Dexterity, force of personality (Charisma), even physical vigor (Constitution). Some can drain these characteristics simply by striking a target in melee; others, and thankfully, the more common monsters, can feed only from willing or immobilized victims, and do so through a "kiss." Still others drain vigor from their victims by inflicting physical damage, seeming to draw their sustenance from the pain they cause to their prey (they absorb hit points directly when they strike a victim in combat).

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Most feared by spellcasters, there are even some who seem to feed on the magical power that flows through the body of a wizard, or even a priest. A touch from such a creature causes the victim to forget spells that have been memorized, and—in one extreme case of which I know—allows the vampire to cast the forgotten spell at the level of ability possessed by the victim!

Being of extremely high intelligence, a few vampires are sensitive to natural balances, albeit in a sense warped by their undead state. Thus, they may occasionally depart from their usual diet of blood in order to avoid depleting the neighboring village of all life.

Here allow me to summarize some of the possible dietary items:

- ⊙ Blood
- ⊙ Spinal fluid
- ⊙ Heart (eaten)
- ⊙ Brain (eaten)
- ⊙ Bone marrow
- ⊙ Body water
- ⊙ Body salt
- ⊙ Life energy levels
- ⊙ Abilities (Con, Int, etc.)
- ⊙ Memories (spells or proficiencies)
- ⊙ Bodily health (hit points)
- ⊙ Mental disciplines (psionic strength points if used)

Physical Effects of Feeding

When a vampire feeds, its body shows various physical signs. Its skin, normally cool and pale, becomes warmer and takes on a healthy, almost ruddy tinge. In addition, the creature's levels of energy and activity seem higher.

In contrast, when a vampire has gone without feeding for a period of time, the reverse effects occur. Its skin becomes colder and paler, sometimes inhumanly so. The creature also becomes more sluggish. (Do not misunderstand this: the monster is still capable of incredible feats of exertion

when necessary. The "sluggishness" relates more to its preferred level of activity than to its capabilities. A sluggish vampire is very much like a sluggish shark: to consider either of them to be weak is a dangerous error. These symptoms become even more pronounced if the creature has been unable to feed sufficiently, as discussed in the following section.

Note that the above comments refer to "typical," blood-drinking vampires. Vampires that depend on other sources of sustenance may exhibit similar changes, but it is foolish to depend on these signals in any way.

Frequency

How often must a vampire feed? Sages everywhere have debated this question for years, perhaps centuries. The following comments are based on my own research, and are not guaranteed to be true. Other reputable researchers might have different answers.

Generally speaking, a "typical" vampire must feed once in any 24-hour period. Not doing so causes the vampire to grow weaker until, with prolonged denial of sustenance, the creature is destroyed. It may be surprising, but it seems to be the case that a vampire's need for food decreases as it ages. Perhaps this is a result of its growing connection with the Negative Material Plane, from which it draws much of its unnatural energy. The vampire's hunger for blood increases with age, however. A Patriarch can subsist on much less blood than can a Fledgling, but the ancient creature has the desire to drink much more blood than its youthful kin. Should its source "dry up," so to speak, it can subsist on "starvation rations" much better than can the Fledgling creature, however.

Victim Limits of Blood Loss

Generally, a vampire will drain enough blood to inflict 1d4 hit points of damage to a victim per round of feeding. If the victim's throat is torn open, a vampire can drink up to 12 hit points worth of blood from such a wound. If the victim has fewer than 12 hit points, however, the vampire can drink only as many hit points of blood as the victim possesses, remembering that -10 hit points is dead. For example, if a mortally wounded, comatose character is at -8 hit points, a vampire could drain only 2 hit points worth of blood, and this drain would immediately kill the victim.

The maximum amount of blood that can be drained from a corpse is the equivalent of 4 hit points. This decreases by 1 hit point per hour that the subject has been dead. Thus, a vampire cannot feed from a corpse that has been dead for more than 4 hours.

If the victim is willing, *charmed*, or otherwise completely immobilized, the vampire does not have to make an attack roll. It can automatically open the type of wound it wants, small or catastrophic, and drink for as many rounds as it wishes, provided it is left undisturbed.

The sensation created as the vampire opens the wound is often enough to cause a sleeping victim to wake. A sleeping victim is entitled to a saving throw vs. poison. A successful save means the victim has awakened; a failed save means the victim remains asleep and the vampire is free to feed for as long as it likes.

A victim will feel weak after the vampire has fed only if the vampire has drained one-quarter or more of the victim's current hit-point total. The damage caused by blood loss heals normally; the lost hit points can be restored through curative magic.

Frequency

A typical Fledgling vampire must drink 12 hit points worth of blood in every 24-hour period. The source of this blood is immaterial; it can come from living victims, fresh corpses, animals, or even sealed "caches" of chilled blood. This requirement is decreased by 1 hit point for every age category beyond Fledgling. Thus a Patriarch could subsist on only 6 hit points worth of blood every day, but would be unwilling to do so without good cause.

For each day that a vampire does not feed sufficiently it loses 1 HD, with all concomitant losses of THACO, saving throws, etc. In addition, it "regresses" in power with regard to Strength, magic resistance, and period of sunlight tolerance as if it had lost one age category for each day it fed insufficiently. As an example, a Patriarch on the first day of starvation loses 1 HD (decreasing to 13). In addition, its Strength drops to 19, its magic resistance to 25%, and its period of sunlight tolerance drops to 1 hour. If it doesn't feed enough the next day, it loses another Hit Die (decreasing to 12); its Strength remains at 19, but its magic resistance drops to 20% and its period of sunlight tolerance to 3 turns.

A vampire cannot "regress" below Fledgling with regard to Strength, magic resistance, or period of sunlight tolerance. It does continue to lose 1 HD for every day on which it does not feed adequately.

Vampires quickly regain the HD and abilities they have lost. On each successive day that a vampire feeds sufficiently, it regains 1 lost HD and one age category.

If a vampire is ever reduced to 1 HD, the creature becomes a raging beast, incapable of doing anything but attacking any source of blood.

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If the Victim is Other Than (Demi)Human

Within Ravenloft, vampires cannot take sustenance from any creature other than a demihuman. Outside of the Demiplane, such emergency feeding is possible.

If the vampire feeds from creatures that are roughly man-sized or larger, the rules for vampiric feeding remain unchanged. It can drink 1d4 hit points of blood per round from a small wound (up to the victim's hit-point total, of course), or up to 12 hit pints of blood from a catastrophic and immediately lethal wound.

Smaller victims are more problematic. If the victim has less than 1 HD, a survivable wound is impossible and the vampire has no

option but to kill the creature. It can then drink as many hit points worth of blood as the creature possesses.

Experience of the Victim

Unless the subject of the charm-gaze has some concrete reason to believe that the vampire will kill him or her out of hand, submitting to feeding is not a self-destructive act within the parameters of the charm spell effect.

Drained attribute points will typically regenerate at a rate of 1d3 points per day of rest. Hit points drained by a vampire heal at the same rate as normal damage. The effect of having a spell drained is just the same as if the spellcaster attempted to cast the spell, but failed. He or she is free to rememorize the spell the next day.



It was the closest of close-run things. We knew that, outside the old castle, the blood-red sun was less than a finger's span above the western horizon, and that we had but minutes to do what was necessary. The vampire's resting chamber was cunningly trapped, as we expected, but my nimble-fingered colleagues were able to disarm the devices without mishap. I held the stake and the mallet as we approached the ornately carved coffin that must have been the fiend's resting-place. My companions threw back the lid....

The coffin was empty!

That was when the hissing laughter—from nowhere and ever-ypwhere around us—filled our ears. "Unfortunate," chided the harsh voice. "So close. But the day has ended, my friends, and now so do your lives."

—From the journal of Mordent Zachariah

CHAPTER EIGHT: THE SLEEP OF THE DEAD



Vampires can instinctively sense when dawn is approaching, and feel an overriding urgency to retire to a safe place to sleep. As sunrise draws near, they feel a growing panic if they are not within their sanctuary. Once they are safely sequestered away, they can feel, deep in their bones, the moment at which the sun first appears over the horizon. Their reaction at this moment varies from creature to creature.

Depth of Sleep

There are basically two groups of resting vampires: those who truly sleep, that is, become fully unconscious, and those who merely become partially dormant. In human terms the difference is between a deep sleep, where the sleeper is totally oblivious to his surroundings, and a light doze where he is at least partially aware at all times.

I will first discuss those vampires who fall into a deep sleep. At the moment of dawn, such a creature sinks into a state of complete oblivion, and cannot be roused by any means before the moment that the sun touches the western horizon. These creatures are obviously highly vulnerable because they have no way of sensing the approach of a hunter or the touch of the stake's point before the first blow of the mallet. However, at the instant that the sun sinks below the horizon, these creatures awaken and are instantly in full command of all their powers. This means there is none of the disorientation felt by many (demi)humans upon first awakening.

Vampires who only "doze" are much more dangerous quarry. They are always peripherally aware of what is going on around them. Depending on the circumstances, it may not be possible for hunters to sneak up on a dozing vampire without rousing it. Loud noises or bright lights will definitely wake the creature. If the creature is within a coffin or sarcophagus, it will awaken the instant that this vessel is opened (if it has not already been roused).

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It is important to remember that vampires are incredibly cunning. Just because the *dozing creature* has been awakened by the approach of hunters does not necessarily mean that it will immediately leap to the attack. If circumstances warrant, it may prefer to "play dead," and lure its would-be killers to their doom. Vampires that doze also wake instantly and without disorientation at the instant the sun sinks below the western horizon. If such a creature is awakened while the sun is still above the horizon, however, it does suffer some moments of disorientation, and is unable to use some of its abilities for some time.

Note that the depth at which a vampire sleeps will have a great effect on the sanctuary it chooses, and how it protects its resting-place. Vampires that sink into deepest oblivion at the moment of dawn recognize their immense vulnerability and thus go to the greatest lengths to hide their sanctuaries and attempt to make them totally impenetrable to mortals who might be hunting them. Any traps that they place will be as lethal as the creature can possibly make them because it knows any hunter who gets through the traps will almost certainly end the vampire's existence.

Vampires who doze, however, might make different decisions. They, too, are vulnerable during daylight hours, but nowhere near as much as their deep-sleeping kin. While they will generally be as careful about hiding and warding their sanctuaries (why take chances, after all?), they will be less concerned if circumstances prevent them from taking all the precautions they might want. They will probably set lethal traps, but also tripwires and other warning devices to alert them to the approach of attackers.

Soil from the Homeland?

Many tales pertaining to vampires claim that the creatures must sleep in vessels that contain soil from their homeland, or even soil taken from their own graves. If they do not do so, these tales tell, they are destroyed. As with so many such tales, the truth varies from individual to individual, and from place to place. And, of course, with vampires there are always exceptions to the rules. However, these creatures at least believe the presence of such an item to be an absolute requirement, and will go to any lengths to ensure that it is present. I use the word "believe," simply because I have never heard any substantiated report of a vampire being destroyed through not having the required item present during sleep. Vampires believe they will be destroyed if an appropriate element is not present, and so will make sure that it is present. But is this belief based in fact?

Personally, I find myself drawn to the idea that this "requirement" is actually a baseless superstition, perpetuated and believed by vampires as well as mortals over the centuries. I am convinced that a vampire forced to sleep without a symbolic tie to its mortal life will not be destroyed. Of course, proving this experimentally is somewhat problematical. Vampires will obviously not test my hypothesis because, if I am wrong, they will be destroyed. And vampire hunters are understandably more interested in destroying the creatures than in experimentally examining their limitations. Still, it is an interesting concept to consider.

Vampires Without Sanctuary

What happens to a vampire that is prevented from reaching its sanctuary before the moment of sunrise? The consequences vary widely.

Some creatures—particularly, it seems, those individuals that sleep deeply—fall unconscious the instant the sun appears above the horizon. They are totally insensate, and totally vulnerable. If the light of the sun falls upon their bodies, they are destroyed (although not always instantly, as in the case of older vampires). They are also vulnerable to anyone with a stake and mallet. It seems that Fledgling and Mature vampires most likely fall into this category.

Others can remain conscious past sunrise, but their first and only priority is to reach their sanctuary so they can fall asleep. Most of these creatures lose their ability to shapechange or voluntarily assume gaseous form as soon as the sun appears above the horizon, whether or not the rays of the sun actually fall on the creatures' bodies. (It is knowledge of this weakness that adds to their panic as dawn approaches.) These creatures have only a few (1d3) hours in which to reach sanctuary and sleep, or they are irrevocably destroyed. Old, Very Old and Ancient vampires most likely fall into this category.

Finally there are those creatures who retain all their powers after sunrise so long as they are not exposed to the direct rays of the sun. Sleeping is still of the highest priority to these creatures. However, they have more time in which to reach their sanctuary and fall asleep. In fact, these creatures can remain active—if so forced—almost the whole day. If, however, they have not yet reached sanctuary and fallen asleep by the moment of sunset, they are irrevocably destroyed. Such vampires that have been kept from sleep for several hours do not wake instantly at the moment of sunset. Instead, they continue to sleep for a number of additional hours equal to the time they were kept awake beyond sunrise. This could well make it impossible for a vampire to feed sufficiently, and hence weaken the

creature. Eminent and Patriarch vampires are most likely to fall into this category.

It is virtually impossible to predict beforehand how an individual vampire will react to being prevented from reaching its sanctuary. I have faced a Fledgling vampire, no more than two years undead, that was virtually undismayed at being prevented from sleeping for several hours. Conversely, I have heard tales of an Eminent vampire that fell unconscious at the instant of sunrise, no matter the danger it faced in doing so.

Exceptions

Predictably, there are exceptions. There are some vampires that seem not to need sleep at all. Or if they do, they are more like mortals in that they can delay sleeping for hours or days, should it be necessary, and suffer relatively little as a consequence. When these creatures are also immune to the rays of the sun, they become hideously dangerous foes. They can easily blend with human society, moving equally freely by day or by night. It is lucky that these creatures are very rare!

When Traveling

The dual requirements of sleeping and avoiding the rays of the sun make traveling long distances somewhat problematic for vampires. Short trips are relatively simple because the creatures can travel by night—on horseback or via other normal transportation, or in animal form—and hide out in makeshift sanctuaries during daylight hours. Vampires that must sleep on soil from their homeland or with some item symbolic of their mortal life are more limited than others, of course. They must find some way of carrying the soil or suitable item with them. This usually precludes travel in animal form unless minions

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have previously arranged suitable sanctuaries along the way and at the final destination. For vampires masquerading as mortals in civilized lands, this is relatively easy to arrange, of course. Representatives of the vampire can purchase or rent suitable buildings and furnish them with art and objects that have symbolic significance to the vampire. Who, after all, would suspect vampiric activity if a wealthy businessman were to send ahead and have a country manor decorated in a style reminiscent of his childhood home?

Vampires will sometimes arrange to have suitable sanctuaries carried with them. (This is usually required if the vampire plans an extended voyage.) For example, a creature could travel in a coffin that is supposedly carrying a dead body "home" to its final burial place. The people charged with transporting the coffin could be servitors of the vampire or could be simple tradespersons hired to do the job. The vampire could stay within the coffin, never emerging, and suffer the effects of also starvation. Alternatively, the creature could sneak out of its coffin

at night to hunt. (Obviously, this second option represents a grave risk, particularly in a closed environment such as a ship at sea.) The smartest alternative would be to arrange for a cache of stored blood, if the requirement for low temperature could somehow be met.

While a coffin is almost traditional as the portable sanctuary of a vampire, virtually anything else large enough could serve. The major advantage of a coffin, from a vampire's point of view, is that most people are somewhat unwilling to open it up to confirm its contents. This is particularly the case if the body within is said to have died of some contagious disease.

Vampires are exceedingly cunning, and will show great creativity in the precautions they take. When hunting the travelling vampire, I suggest that you attempt to eliminate places that it could not hide, and consider every other possibility a good one.

With very few exceptions, all vampires have to sleep sometime. The exceptional, sleepless vampires that van Richten describes still lose 1 HD for every day that they do not sleep. They regain all lost Hit Dice the first time they sleep for a whole day (from sunrise to sunset).

If awakened during daylight hours, a "dozing" vampire is stunned and unable to take any action for one round. Thereafter, it can't shapechange or voluntarily assume gaseous form for an additional 4d4 rounds, although it can cast any spells it has previously memorized.

With few exceptions (DM's choice), all vampires require dirt from their graves to be in their resting-places. Within Ravenloft, vampires do not necessarily need to sleep on soil from their homeland or from their grave because of the Demiplane's proximity to the Negative Material Plane. There remains some symbolic truth to the tale, however, in the case of numerous vampires. These creatures often must have within their sanctuaries, and in contact with their bodies while they sleep, some item that is symbolic of either their origin or their mortal life. This item can be virtually anything, from a piece of clothing, to a gift from a relative or friend, to an object that is somehow related to their homeland.

I once interrogated a vampire as to how it felt to hibernate. The creature described a condition of "sleep but not sleep," where thoughts are sluggish as thick honey and take months or years to flow. Where dream images intertwine with true memories. Where sounds and sometimes smells from the surface find their way into the sanctuary, but disturb the mind no more than a rose petal falling on a still pool of water. Time has no meaning; hunger has no meaning. There is no future, there is no past. There is just the endless now.

—From the personal journal of Dr. van Richten

CHAPTER NINE: HIBERNATION



Vampires are by nature immortal. Why then are there so few vampires of advanced years in existence? In any given year, there are probably dozens if not scores of new vampires created. Logically, then, there should be a considerable number of Very Old and Ancient vampires.

In fact, there appears to be surprisingly few of these creatures. Why? What is it that limits the practical longevity of these creatures?

It seems that after a century, or maybe several centuries, insanity sometimes takes them (see Chapter Eleven, "The Mind of the Vampire"). Also, vampire hunters may destroy them. Or perhaps the creature, in a despair that mortals can never know, ends its own wretched existence.

With so much going against them, the longevity question turns upon itself and we ask, "How do any vampires reach Patriarch age?" I conclude that this is the main purpose of "going to ground," or hibernation. When the weight of the years grows too much for a vampire, when fatalism and bleakness set in and the creature starts to fear for its sanity, the creature is advised to go to ground. As do mortals after a good sleep, I suspect that

vampires usually arise from hibernation with their minds clear of worries.

Vampires have the unique ability to hibernate for periods that may exceed a century. In addition to combating despair, the creatures may do this if circumstances are such that they are currently unable to feed sufficiently, or if they believe that they are in imminent danger from vampire hunters.

Entering Hibernation

A vampire must consciously decide to go to ground; hibernation cannot be forced upon an unwilling vampire. The vampire does not have to "fatten itself up" for hibernation as other creatures do, but the monster must feed twelve or fewer hours before it actually goes to ground.

The location in which a vampire chooses to hibernate is very important. First, it must be exceptionally secure because a hibernating vampire is exceedingly vulnerable. Obviously, it must be where sunlight can never reach. Second, the site must be surrounded on all sides by rock or earth to at least several feet of thickness. A catacomb beneath a deserted temple would serve, or a cave, as would a common grave (hence the phrase, "going to ground"). Some vampires will excavate a resting and hiding place for themselves

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several feet below the occupant of a grave.

Hibernation differs from normal vampiric sleep. Once the vampire has made the decision to hibernate and has sequestered itself away in its sanctuary, it slips into a state in which it is nominally and intermittently aware of its circumstances and of the passing of the years around it. It is difficult for the creature to rouse itself from this condition at will. Only in the fullness of time, when the cycle of hibernation draws to its close, can the vampire rise from this state of "sleep but not sleep." A hibernating vampire exercises little control over how long it stays in this dormant condition, cannot "preset" a time or date to revive and cannot predict beforehand how long the hibernation will last. Left unmolested, a vampire generally will not awaken until forty years or more have passed, and there are tales describing vampires that have hibernated for more than one and a half centuries.

Hibernating vampires are not absolutely oblivious to their surroundings while dormant. They can sense danger, should anyone break open or enter their sanctuary, and will struggle to rouse themselves. This enforced arousal is quite damaging; in fact, there is a chance that the trauma of the awakening will instantly destroy the vampire.

Effects of Hibernation

The time that passes during hibernation is not physically kind to a vampire. Its condition deteriorates steadily; the monster loses strength and stamina while in the dormant state. Vampires that were weakened through starvation before going to ground sometimes never emerge from dormancy, instead just fading away into oblivion. The physical appearance of a vampire is horribly changed as well. The creature's flesh and muscle mass atrophies, its skin dries and tightens, and sometimes its skeleton even shrinks marginally. A vampire that has been in hibernation for more than fifty years looks very much like a mummified corpse: wizened, dry, and very brittle. The creature's fragility is very much an illusion, of course. The overconfident vampire hunter may find himself at a distinct disadvantage against a newly awakened hibernator.

Rising from Hibernation

When the cycle of hibernation comes to a close, waking from dormancy is not instantaneous. It takes the vampire days, sometimes many days, to rise from the depths of semiconsciousness. The condition of the creature is dependent both upon its condition before it went into the ground and upon the amount of time it has hibernated. A vampire who was weakened by starvation and then has spent a century in the ground is a vulnerable creature, indeed, and is unable to shapechange or voluntarily assume gaseous form for several days after waking. It is also much more susceptible to magical attacks. The creature quickly regains most of its normal powers as soon as it feeds sufficiently during the days after its arousal. Thus, the highest and often only priority for a newly awakened vampire is to hunt and to feed. Needless to say, the monster will be ravenous to the point of recklessness.

If a vampire has "atrophied" to the point where it has 6 HD or fewer remaining, the creature cannot hibernate. If it attempts to do so, it will continue to lose 1 HD per day and will eventually be destroyed. A vampire that wishes to "go to ground" must drink at least 4 hit points worth of blood no more than 12 hours before it begins to hibernate. This blood can be from any source.

The length of time that a vampire will remain in hibernation is determined randomly. Hibernation lasts $40 + 6d20$ years. For every 20 years (or portion thereof) that a vampire remains in hibernation, it loses 1 HD, and temporarily regresses one age category in terms of Strength, magic resistance, and period of sunlight tolerance. A vampire cannot regress below Fledgling, although it continues to lose 1 HD every 20 years. If the creature is reduced to 0 HD, it is irrevocably destroyed and its body crumbles to dust.

It takes $2d8$ days to shift from hibernation to full wakefulness. The creature gains 1 HD and one age category (with respect to powers) for each day that it is able to feed sufficiently (12 hp worth of blood). Also, for a period of $2d4$ days after awakening, it can't shapechange or voluntarily assume gaseous form (although it can be forced into gaseous form if reduced to zero or fewer hit points), and it suffers a -3 penalty to any and all saving throws.



Premature Awakenings

If a vampire is awakened prematurely, by someone opening its crypt, for example, there are several issues to consider. First is the length of time the creature has been in the ground. In addition to lost HD from hibernation, it loses 1 HD for the trauma of being awakened prematurely. If this reduces the monster to 0 HD, it is instantly destroyed and crumbles to dust. If the monster survives the shock of being awakened, it is still stunned and unable to take any action for 1d4 rounds. In addition, the monster is unable to cast any spells for 2d6 hours after awakening. Finally, it suffers the inability to voluntarily shapechange and a -3 penalty to saving throws for 2d4 days.

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I lie to my offspring," the vampire told me with a smile. "It is really that simple. A new fledgling knows little about the world, about itself. In general the only information it has is what it remembers from folk tales and legends, often pure falsehood."

The vampire chuckled and settled itself more comfortably. "So I tell my offspring that their existence is inextricably linked with mine," it continued. "'If I am destroyed,' I tell them, 'then so are you. Your existence is as long as mine, no longer.'

"They usually believe me," it added complacently. "Or, at least, they fear to test the truth of what I tell them. This is a kind of loyalty; they will do whatever is in their power to protect me from harm, believing that the moment of my destruction is also the moment of theirs."

"So they not learn otherwise?" I asked.

"They would," the creature admitted, "in time. But I always destroy them before that time comes. After all, I gave them unlife, so I am entitled to rescind my gift. Is that not true?"

—From the personal journal of Dr. van Richten

CHAPTER TEN: RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN VAMPIRES



y nature most vampires are solitary and territorial predators, whether competitively building their power and amassing influence or just jealously defending a personal hunting ground. This rapacious, ruthless, and competitive nature sometimes brings vampires into conflict with each other.

Although vampires generally much prefer to compete through minions and champions, or even through more intangible means such as influence-peddling and rumor-mongering, the creatures do sometimes come into physical contact. Unsurprisingly, physical contact often leads to physical combat.

A few individuals apparently enjoy interacting with others of their kind and form social microcosms of their own. This usually occurs only with vampires of considerable power and maturity that have existed long enough to pass beyond a stage of blind competition and jealousy. When such vampire "societies" form, they can become frighteningly powerful, frighteningly fast, and there is virtually nothing that can stand in their way.

It is lucky, then, that these societies are usually relatively short-lived (although in this context that may mean they last as long as a century or two). Over the centuries vampires may learn patience and cooperation, but only to a degree. At their core they are still selfish and evil monsters, and this nature will almost inevitably resurface. Initially a society of vampires may appear stable and united, but soon enough one vampire and then the

others will develop their own hidden agendas. What may begin as solidarity will eventually degrade into the mere semblance of cooperation, with each vampire conniving to gain power, prestige, or wealth, to the detriment of its "colleagues." Societies sometimes break up when the participants finally choose to go their separate ways, but most societies are torn apart by infighting, both figurative and literal.

Some vampires know better than to form societies with others of their kind. Instead, they form shifting and temporary alliances with other vampires in positions of power. Vampires that choose this route will be as careful in their dealings with their kin as thieves are with their fences: the deals will be so constructed that both sides gain and neither party comes under the sway of the others.

Younger vampires, such as those below the age category of Ancient, will almost never reach any level of cooperation. They are almost exclusively loners, and the only other vampires they will consider coming in contact with are the slave creatures that they, themselves, have made. Some of these "master" vampires use their slaves as food gatherers, sending the servant creatures forth to feed in the world, take the concomitant risks, and then return to offer their necks to their controller. But this is a significant risk: should the master vampire's care and control slip even in the slightest degree, the servant creatures could accidentally or purposely lead hunters to the master's lair.

Of course, vampires well know the bitterness and the hatred that their servant creatures feel toward them, and so are aware that their servants will turn on them and destroy them should the chance ever arise. For this reason, master vampires usually destroy their servants long before they become powerful enough to challenge for their own dominance.

Combat Between Vampires

How can one vampire harm another? First, so great is the enchantment that surrounds a vampire that one creature is able to strike and physically damage one of its own kind. The one exception is in the case of Patriarchs: only another of its own age category can strike a Patriarch.

Second, there is always the possibility of spell usage. Spellcasting vampires might well have powers capable of harming, even destroying their kin. (Note that one vampire is incapable of charming another, however, due to the monsters' innate resistance to "charm attacks.")

Although a blow in melee from one vampire can inflict physical damage on another, it should be noted that one beast is unable to drain energy experience levels from another. Why? The likelihood is that the creatures are not alive, and have no life energy to drain.

Vampires that drain other attributes through a strike in combat can drain them from another vampire, however. I, myself, have seen two of the creatures locked in mortal combat—hands locked like vices around each other's throats, hissing and spitting like cats! As they struggled, horrible wounds opened in the flesh of one vampire. Meanwhile, the other grew progressively more feeble until it finally collapsed to the ground, whereupon the victor tore the defeated's head from its body. As the victor stood above its vanquished foe, howling its elation, the wounds on its face and body closed with the unnatural speed typical of vampires. I speculate that the conqueror was actually sapping the fundamental strength of the conquered, while the conquered was only able to drain the health (hit points) from his better.

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Kin-nectar

The majority of vampires can feed only from a willing, charmed, or otherwise immobilized but living victim. Can one of these creatures feed from another vampire? Apparently, yes. The following discussion will concentrate on those creatures who drink blood, because these are the most common. Similar conditions apply for other types of feeders.

One vampire can drink the blood of another. In fact, vampiric blood, described by one vampire as "kin-nectar," is a better source of sustenance than the blood of mortals at least in one sense. Vampires need to drink much less kin-nectar than they would mortal blood in order to meet their food requirements.

Yet few vampires enjoy drinking kin-nectar, it seems; they vastly prefer the taste of blood sipped from the vessel of a living (demi)human. It may be that there are some vampires that prefer kin-nectar, and perhaps one or two who require it. These creatures are in the unenviable position of depending upon other vampires for their survival: not a particularly secure position in which to be.

If one vampire drinks the blood of another, the creatures enter into a close relationship: for several (1d3) hours following the feeding, the two creatures' minds are so intimately linked that they can communicate telepathically as easily as by speaking. This telepathy persists regardless of distance or intervening matter as long as both vampires are on the same plane. One vampire cannot "overhear" thoughts not intended as communication, however.

In addition, the vampire who drank the blood has a significant level of control over the vampire who provided the blood for as long as the telepathic link exists. The creature who fed can issue orders telepathically and the second creature must obey them,

within reason. Most vampires will find this interconnection distasteful and, in the case of the creature who was fed upon, downright dangerous, so the monsters usually shun kin-nectar. Most will only participate in this kind of feeding on either side if they totally trust the other participant (which is very rare) or if they simply have no choice in the matter.

It is nearly impossible for two vampires to feed exclusively from each other for a protracted period of time. They can do it for the short term, but it will become debilitating to both creatures in the long term. Such "mutual" arrangements would be incredibly rare in any case, because both vampires would in turn make themselves vulnerable to the telepathic orders of the other.

Progenitor and Offspring

Conventional wisdom is categorical on one point: newly formed vampires are slaves of the creatures that created them, with no free will of their own. Even one of the most reputable tomes on the subject repeats this: "Once they become undead, the new vampire is under the complete control of its killer."

But how true is this? And what constraints are there on the control that does exist? For the first days or weeks of a fledgling vampire's existence, it is highly susceptible to the orders of its creator—so I have discovered from my research. If there is no telepathic bond between creator and created, then the master vampire must be in the vicinity, and must be willing to communicate with its offspring.

How, then, do vampires keep their slaves under their control beyond this period? They do so in much the same way that mortals dominate others: through intimidation. The fledgling is new to the vampiric world, and at least partially ignorant of its own abilities. Its

creator can, if it is careful, create the perception in its offspring that the master is immensely more powerful and knowledgeable than the newly created vampire, which it may in fact be. Through simple intimidation and by playing on the offspring's natural doubts and fears, the master can create a situation enabling it to "rule" for decades.

The reader may realize that this situation is totally different and much more unstable than the "traditional" picture of the master and its unquestioning slaves. Offspring vampires may have considerable free will from the moment of their creation, although they do have an "inborn" propensity to bow to the will of their creator. After several years have passed, however, this propensity wears off.

The journal entry that opened this chapter indicates the risks that accompany creating an offspring vampire. The "master" must keep the intimidation level high and discipline tight. If the offspring senses weakness in its master, it may consider challenging for dominance or simply fleeing. As time passes the offspring vampire learns more about its own strengths, and probably more about its master's weaknesses. As soon as the offspring believes that it may be able to defeat its master, the two creatures will almost certainly come into conflict. Of course, the majority of vampires destroy their offspring before this point is reached. Some, however, send them away, officially granting them their freedom. (This is merely another psychological trick. If an offspring vampire is "freed" before it realizes it can depose its "master," it may feel some gratitude toward its creator.)

The vast majority of vampires view their offspring simply as disposable tools, to be used and then discarded. Yet there are some, it seems, who feel some kind of empathy for their "children." These rare creatures will

"raise" their offspring, teaching them all they need to know to survive in the world, and then send them forth to "live their own lives." Gratitude is an uncommon thing among vampires, however, and offspring of such sentimental creatures generally view this "care" as weakness. Vampires who care for their offspring are most often destroyed by those very offspring.

Vampires differ in their motivations when creating offspring. Some fledglings do it accidentally, not yet understanding the consequences of killing a foe. Others do it to create slaves for themselves. Some few seem to need contact with members of their own kind and so create companions. This latter group are more likely to become the sentimental "parents" described above, and are hence most likely to meet destruction at the hands of their offspring.

When a vampire is destroyed, all semblance of control over its offspring immediately vanishes. Most offspring will immediately go about their own business. I have heard of some rare creatures who have sought the destroyers of their creator and wreaked vengeance on them. I find this somewhat hard to believe because it implies a sense of loyalty, even love of a kind, between vampires. Still, stranger things have proved to be true.

Vampire Brides and Grooms

I truly loved her," the vampire admitted quietly, pain showing on its normally stoic face. "Would you believe that? I loved her. I would have given anything, even the rest of eternity, if she had loved me in return."

It paused, and I thought for an incredible moment that the monster might cry. But then it seemed to rally its strength, and its chill gaze nailed me to my chair.

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"I misjudged her totally," the vampire continued, its voice now virtually emotionless. "I thought she would retain the innocence I so loved in her as a mortal, but no. I misjudged her, and it was my greatest mistake. She saw me not as a protector, but as a rival, as a slave master. And she dedicated herself to freeing herself from my yoke." It chuckled mirthlessly. "It is so obvious now, but for all those decades I fooled myself. I suppose—" and its voice almost broke, for all the creature's superhuman control. "I suppose I had the love in my eyes, so that I was unable to see what was right in front of me.

"The first clue I actually paid attention to," it continued after a moment, "was when the hunters arrived in my sanctuary. Can you imagine my horror, my humiliation, my degradation? The only way they could have found me was through my bride, my love," and it spat the last word with undying hatred.

"I killed them all, of course," it went on. "My beloved did not know all my strengths. And then I hunted her down. Not difficult, really. Then I dissolved the bond." It bowed its head in remembered pain. "I dissolved the bond and I tore her traitorous body apart. And do you know? I think the pain that I felt was greater than hers. . . ."

—From the personal journal of
Dr. van Richten

An especially rare and unique relationship between vampires is in that of the "Bride" or "Groom." Actually, considering that the fact all vampires were once mortal, it is almost surprising that this phenomenon is not more prevalent. No matter what changes undeath has wrought, some vestiges of mortal thoughts and aspirations still survive, I

am sure. Eternity can weigh heavily on the spirit—even the spirit of a vampire. Of all the burdens of immortality, perhaps the greatest is loneliness. To whom can a vampire bare its soul and admit its fears? With whom can the vampire vent some of the intense sensuality that seems to pervade its breed? From whom can it receive consolation for the past, comfort for the present, and hope for the future? An eternity of solitude can be an eternity of pain.

It is no wonder, then, that vampires sometimes long for a special companion. Fortunately for these tortured souls—and unfortunately for their mortal victims—vampires are capable of creating such companions. These special minions, if such a term truly applies, are known as "Brides" and "Grooms." These terms may seem inappropriate, carrying with them as they do the emotional "baggage" of love and marriage. While marriage is not an issue, a form of love, or at least of emotional bonding, is involved, so the terms are not as inappropriate as they may seem at first.

Creating a Bride or Groom

Creating a bride or groom, although seemingly a simple process, requires an exhausting exercise of much power by the creating vampire. For this reason, only vampires of advanced age and capability can even assay this procedure. A bride or groom can be created only by a vampire of age category Ancient or greater, and not even all of those are capable of doing so.

The first step requires that the vampire find an appropriate mortal to be the bride. (Note: With apologies to the feminine gender, I shall use the term "bride" and the pronouns "she" and "her" to refer to both brides and grooms. Unless otherwise specified, there are no restrictions or differences in the procedure based on the sex of

either vampire or victim.) (Usually this problem solves itself. Very rare is the vampire who decides in isolation, "I will make a bride," and then seeks out a mortal to fill the bill. In the vast majority of cases, the process occurs in the reverse order. The vampire is drawn emotionally to a mortal and decides, because of the strength of this emotion, to make her his bride.

The nature of this emotion can vary widely. It may simply be hormonal lust (after all, the physiological systems related to such effects in mortals are still present, and sometimes still functional, in vampires). It may be an obsession dating from the days before the vampire became what he now is, as is the case with Strahd von Zarovich's obsession with women who resemble his lost Tatyana. In these cases, the vampire creates its bride in cold blood, for the sole purpose of satisfying its own desires.

Sometimes, however, the emotion may be close to what mortals classify as love. The happiness of the vampire becomes tied up with the prospective bride, and its well-being depends on hers. In these cases, the vampire might actually believe it is bestowing a gift when it turns the mortal into its bride—the gift of freedom from aging and death.

To actually create the bride, the vampire bestows what is known as the "Dark Kiss." It samples the blood of its mortal paramour—once, twice, thrice—draining her almost to the point of death. This process causes the subject no pain; in fact, it has been described as the most euphoric, ecstatic experience, in comparison to which all other pleasures fade into insignificance. Just as the subject is about to slip into the terminal coma from which there is no awakening, the vampire opens a gash in its own flesh—often in its throat, wrist, or chest (being near the heart)—and holds the subject's mouth to the wound. As the burning draught that is the vampire's

blood gushes into the subject's mouth, the primitive feeding instinct is triggered, and she drinks hungrily at the wound, enraptured. With the first taste of the blood, the subject is possessed of great and frenzied strength (Strength 18, if the character's isn't already higher), and will use it to prevent the vampire from separating her from the fountain of wonder that is its bleeding wound. It is at this point that the creator-vampire's strength is most sorely tested. He is weakened by his own blood loss, and also by his own rapture as the "victim" of a dark kiss. Overcoming the sudden loss of strength and the inclinations of lust, the vampire must pull her away from its own wound, hopefully without harming her, before she has overfed. Should the subject be allowed to feed for too long (more than 2 rounds), she is driven totally and incurably insane, and will die in agony within 24 hours.

Once the subject has stopped feeding, she falls into a coma that lasts minutes or hours (2d12 turns), at the end of which time she dies. Several (1d3) hours later, she arises as a Fledgling vampire and her creator's bride. Her vampire creator must be present to teach her the requirements and limitations of her vampiric existence. Otherwise, she might not understand the necessity of feeding, and might even wander out into the sunlight and be destroyed.

The first moment that the bride realizes the ugly truth about her new nature can be highly traumatic, unless her creator takes steps to ease her acceptance. Even if her creator is sensitive to her emotional pain and gentles her into realization, only the most strong-willed person can come through that moment of understanding with sanity totally unshaken. The simultaneous acts of love and hatred, of taking a bride by murdering her, create an emotional paradox that is often impossible to resolve. In some cases, perhaps a majority, the

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knowledge of her fate totally unseats the bride's reason, and she becomes wildly and irrevocably mad. If this occurs, most creator vampires will be forced to mercifully destroy their brides—in the prescribed manner, as described later—and end their suffering. Of course, some cruel creatures will simply allow her wander off to meet her own fate.

The actual process of creating a bride inflicts some limited damage on the vampire. Even the small amount of blood the bride drinks weakens it for some time.

Any vampire can have only one bride or groom at a time. A vampire is physically incapable of creating another bride or groom while it has a companion already bound to it in this relationship. If the vampire wishes to create another bride or groom, it must either destroy its current bride or groom or follow the ritual described later to dissolve the bond between them.

The Relationship

Although there are some folk tales that describe the bride of a vampire as its slave, in much the same way that offspring are slaves, a bride is free-willed from the moment of her creation. The creator vampire does have great influence over the bride, however, although this control is totally nonmagical. When a vampire is created in the traditional manner—that is, when a victim's life energy is completely drained away—the new Fledgling instinctively understands much about the vampiric way of unlife, and about its own strengths, weaknesses, and needs. Not so the bride.

Newly created brides are generally ignorant of their own capabilities. If in life they heard folk tales and myths about vampires, they might have some vague conception, but often these tales are totally wrong. The bride is totally dependent on her creator to learn how

to survive as a vampire. This obviously gives the creator great power over the bride. By lying to her or bending the truth, he can convince her that she must obey his every order or suffer horrible consequences. With time, and through experimentation, the bride might find out the true level of control her creator has over her: that is, none. She is still in a very inferior position, of course, because she is a Fledgling and her creator is at least an Ancient. Some creator vampires, particularly those who created the bride out of love, will be totally honest with their creation, depending on loyalty, friendship, and even reciprocated love, to stop the bride from trying to bring about their destruction. This is probably the most beneficial situation for both vampires, because two creatures cooperating are much more effective than two creatures involved in machinations against each other. A vampire and bride who truly love and trust each other make a team that is exceptionally difficult to defeat!

Communication

One of the reasons "married vampires" are so difficult to defeat is that a vampire and its bride share a telepathic communication that has a range measured in miles. Regardless of intervening terrain or obstacles, the two vampires can communicate instantly and silently as if they were speaking together in the same room. It is important to note that this communication is very much like silent speech. One vampire cannot read the other's mind against the subject's will, so the bride cannot pilfer secrets from the mind of her creator. As the sole exception to this statement, one member of the pair can sense incredibly strong emotion in the other's mind. (This could be equated to hearing a vocalized gasp of surprise or fear.) Only extreme fear, pain, surprise, sadness or exaltation can be sensed in this manner.

Love and Jealousy

No matter how close and honest the relationship between a vampire and its bride, the bride is still a vampire, with the selfish, ruthless, and rapacious characteristics that implies. Relationships between a vampire and its bride are rarely idyllic, and are often stormy enough to make a civil war seem like a garden party in comparison. As the bride grows in power and knowledge she will probably start acting in her own best interests, rather than in those of her creator, and begin to gratify her own desires. Her creator will frequently respond to this selfish behavior with intense and raging jealousy. Many of these relationships have ended with the two vampires at each other's throats, tearing each other apart. (The bride usually loses such a conflict, of course.)

Negative Consequences of the Bond

While the bond is in existence, there is a strong metaphysical link between the two vampires' "unlife" forces. (No doubt this link explains the telepathic communication the creatures share.) So close is this link that the destruction of one member of the bond inflicts grave damage to the other member.

Dissolving the Bond

The bond that joins the bride and her creator is eternal, unless the creator takes measures to break the bond. Although the bride must participate in this ritual, either voluntarily or

otherwise, she cannot instigate it. The ritual must be performed at the will of the creator.

To break the bond, the creator vampire must first open a wound in its own body and allow a quantity of its blood to spill on the ground. It must then open a similar wound in its bride, and allow her blood to mix with his own in a puddle on the ground. At this point, the bond between the two vampires is terminated and can never be re-established. The telepathic link between the vampires is also ended. Perhaps most importantly, the consequences of one vampire suffering upon the destruction of the other will now not take place. One of the two vampires is free to destroy the other—if it so wishes and can do so—without any repercussions.

Other Remarks

Traditionally, a female vampire creates a male groom, while a male vampire creates a female bride. This is not always the case, however. There have been cases reported where male vampires have created male grooms, while female vampires have created female companions. There are no restrictions whatsoever concerning this, apart from the vampire's own tastes and proclivities. (It horrifies me to dwell on it, but I believe to this day that my son Erasmus was not transformed into a vampire in the traditional way. I surmise that Baron Metus—may his soul rot forever in the deepest pits of the Nine Hells—turned my only son into a vampire's groom.)

"Kin-nectar"

The restrictions on orders given by one vampire who has drunk the kin-nectar of another are the same as for a *suggestion* spell. The vampire gets

no saving throw to resist the orders, and its magic resistance does not apply.

A vampire feeding from another requires only half as many hit points worth of blood (rounded up) as it

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usually does to meet its food requirements. On the other hand, the vampire fed from loses twice as many hit points as the other vampire drinks. For example, a Fledgling need drink only 6 hit pints worth of blood, but the donor vampire loses 12 hit points. These lost points represent a special case: the creature cannot regenerate these points normally. To regenerate hit points lost to feeding, the vampire must feed sufficiently to meet its daily requirement, and must do so upon mortal blood (whether from an animal, a demihuman, or from a cache of stored blood). Immediately after the feeding is complete, the donor vampire can begin to regenerate the hit points lost to feeding. (If the vampire feeds in turn from another vampire, it cannot regenerate those lost hit points.)

Progenitor and Offspring

For the first 4d4 days of the Fledgling vampire's unlife, any order given to it by its creator has the effect of a *suggestion*, against which the Fledgling receives neither saving throw nor magic-resistance rolls. After this initial period the automatic susceptibility of the Fledgling to its creator diminishes. The offspring still has some propensity toward following the instructions of its master, but this propensity is considerably less than it was initially. This state lasts for several years.

For the first 1d4 years of its unlife, the offspring vampire will react to its master as though under a *charm* spell. This isn't strictly a spell effect, however, so the offspring doesn't receive regular saving throws to shake off the effect. If the master instructs it to do something that is dangerous to the offspring, but not suicidal, the offspring receives a

saving throw vs. spell. If it successfully saves, it refuses to follow that order, although in general the charm stays in effect.

Vampire Brides and Grooms

"Donating" blood to the prospective bride or groom inflicts 3d8 hit points of damage on the creating vampire. This damage—and only this damage—does not begin to regenerate until the first sunset after the bride is created. All damage inflicted on the vampire by other means regenerates normally.

If one vampire in a bride/creator relationship is destroyed, the other vampire instantly suffers 6d6 points of damage. There is no limitation in range to this effect, because the psychic shock propagates through the Negative Material Plane, to which all vampires have a strong connection. Even if the two vampires are on different planes, the survivor will sense and suffer from the other's destruction. The creature is unable to begin regenerating this damage—and only this damage—until the next sunset. In addition, it cannot shapechange or voluntarily assume gaseous form for 24 hours, and is unable to create another bride or groom for 3d6 years thereafter.

The range of telepathic communication created by this union is one mile for each age category of the bride or groom. The age category of the creating vampire is immaterial.

To dissolve the bond, the amount of blood that both vampires must spill is enough to inflict 2d8 points of damage on each creature. They cannot begin to regenerate this damage—and only this damage—until the next sunset after the ritual is complete.

"So vampires fear death?" The fiend echoed my question with a laugh. "Death? No, we have already died." Then its expression sobered. "Nonexistence? Yes, that we fear above all.

"Think of it from our point of view," the creature proposed in the most reasonable of tones. "You, as a human, fear death. But you are—what—fifty? If you were to die today, what would you lose? Twenty years of life, perhaps thirty at the most, and the last decade or more racked with pain and tortured with the humiliation of failing faculties. Bah! Nothing."

The vampire leaned forward, intense, as though it mattered vitally that I understand, that I be convinced. "I, as a vampire, fear nonexistence," it said quietly. "I have lived ten years for every one of yours. And if I were to be destroyed today, what would I lose? Eternity!"

It slammed an iron-hard fist onto the table. "Thirty years? I could spend thirty years studying a well-written book or a finely wrought painting. I have time enough to think, to experience the changing of the world." The monster sat back and viewed me from beneath hooded eyes. "Now," it purred, "do you understand why your deaths—and I knew it meant the death of mortals—mean nothing to me?" It paused. "... And mine means everything!"

—From the personal journal of Dr. van Richten

CHAPTER ELEVEN: THE MIND OF THE VAMPIRE



The logical first step to eliminating a vampire is understanding it, which is probably why you are reading this guide now. Of course, it is vital for the successful vampire hunter to acquaint himself with the strengths and weaknesses of the monster in question, and to consider the variations of the theme. Understanding what their mortal vulnerabilities are is obviously prerequisite, as well. But I am of the opinion that understanding the psychology of the vampire is your

greatest weapon. Knowing how the creature thinks may give you critical clues as to how and where it will be at its most vulnerable state. It can also save your life if you know what to say (and not to say) in the presence of a vampire.

The Psychology of Immortality

Philosophically speaking, immortality is probably the greatest difference between mortals and vampires. Mortals know that their time in the world is tightly bound; no matter how long the road may be—and for elves and other such creatures it can be long, indeed—death inescapably waits at the other end. This, of necessity, affects the way mortals view life.

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"Time is precious," "time is slipping away," "time is fleeting," "time, the subtle thief of youth": these are the proverbs and truisms of mortality. So many facets of (demi)human psychology and philosophy can be understood when viewed through this lens.

It should come as no surprise, then, that the psychology of vampires is very different, in some very profound ways, from that of the mortal races. Having already died, vampires little consider the specter of death as mortal do. Provided that they can avoid accidental destruction or annihilation at the hands of foes, these fiends could theoretically continue to exist to the (hypothetical) end of time!

One must not forget, however, that vampires were once mortal creatures. Although the transition to undeath drastically affects the body, its effects on the mind and on thoughts, beliefs, and philosophies are much less predictable and generally more subtle.

Before discussing the psychology of immortality in more detail, it is necessary to distinguish between the three "classifications" of vampires, based on their origins. The first classification includes those who became vampires because of "deadly desire," like *Strahd von Zarovich*. The second comprises those who became vampires as the result of a curse, whether laid by a mortal or by an evil deity. The third and final category is the most numerous: those unfortunates who became vampires as a result of the attack of another vampire.

The first two categories have one major factor in common: in almost all cases, these vampires were evil while they were alive. The transition to undeath never affects this, except, in some cases, to intensify their evil.

The final category is a totally different case. Victims of vampires have no commonality with regard to ethos, moral strictures, philosophy of life, care toward others, or any other

factor. The victim of a vampire could be a saint or a sinner, a paladin or an assassin, a compassionate healer or a ruthless alley-basher.

The fact is that the vast majority of vampires are chaotic and evil in the extreme. How does this come about? In most cases, it seems, the transition to undeath itself works this grim change on the mentality of a vampire's victim; the Fledgling's previous world view is largely irrelevant.

There are some fascinating exceptions, however, some documented cases of Fledgling vampires that managed to cling to some of the attitudes and beliefs they had while alive—for a time, at least. What set these exceptions apart? Was it, as some sages suggest, a characteristic of the vampire that created them? Or was it something within them? My own theory is this: the victim must have an immense strength of will, and the vampire that killed the victim be prevented in some way from implementing the innate control that such creatures have over "secondary" vampires. (This can happen if the creating vampire leaves the area or is destroyed between the time of the victim's death and the night the victim first rises as a vampire.)

Some of the most fascinating examples of this sort of "carry-over" were recorded by a sage, whose name has been tragically lost, in a treatise whose title I have borrowed (with thanks) for this chapter: *The Mind of the Vampire*. Two samples follow:

A young, naive man, raised in a sheltered and privileged family, was slain by a vampire passing through the neighborhood. At first, he was unaware of his true nature (or unwilling to accept it), believing that his "death" had been only profound sickness and that his "premature" burial had been a mistake by his overzealous family. Evidence of his vampiric nature soon became apparent, however, but the poor wretch was unable to fully

renounce the life he left behind. He took to "haunting" his old home, watching from the darkness and trying to pretend he was at least peripherally part of mortal life. He would seem a totally pathetic figure had it not been for his vicious attacks against anyone who tried to take away from him the semblance of his former life.

An intrepid vampire hunter was slain by one of the creatures she so tenaciously hunted; her colleagues immediately destroyed the monster that killed her. For whatever reason, these colleagues neglected to take the precautions to prevent the woman from rising as a vampire. The trauma the woman suffered when she realized her vampiric condition was almost—but not quite—enough to drive her mad. She had taken up her life's pursuit as a moral duty, to rid the world of the scourge of vampirism, and now she had become what she had always hated! She set the trauma aside, however, and decided to play out the hand that Fate had dealt her. She dedicated her unlife to continuing the work she had started as a mortal: to use her newfound powers to help her track down and destroy others of her kind. Unfortunately, she soon confused her mission with a quest for power, and was destroyed by Strahd von Zarovich.

A Question of Alignment

The "typical" vampire is described as having an alignment of Chaotic Evil. There are some philosophers who believe this fact says more about (demi)human perceptions than it does about vampires. Chaotic, holders of this theory point out, means simply that vampires consider their personal interests over those of others, or of "the many." While they do not go so far as to condone this stance, they do consider it to be understandable because vampires are immortal. Evil, strictly speaking, is defined as "holding

life in low regard." How, these philosophers ask, could a creature be classed otherwise, that must feed on living victims to survive? The point that these philosophers proceed to make in their heavy-handed and pedantic fashion, which I have abbreviated here, is that describing vampires as Chaotic Evil actually conveys very little information about the creatures' behaviors and attitudes.

But this thesis raises a fascinating question: if I set aside the matter of feeding habits, could a vampire exhibit other behavior patterns that could be described as "good"? The answer is "theoretically yes," and I can even cite one short-lived example. A man of good alignment was killed by a vampire, and became a vampire himself under the control of his dark master. When the master vampire was destroyed, the "minion" vampire became free-willed. Even though undead, he still held the beliefs and attitudes that, while alive, had categorized him as Good. Now, in secret, he decided to use his powers to at least partially set right the damage that he and his master had done. In fact, for some decades he was a secret benefactor to his home town.

Unfortunately, things changed with the passage of time. At first, the undead benefactor wanted no thanks, and kept his identity and nature inviolably secret. He lived in a cave on the outskirts of town and saw no living soul. After a decade, however, it seems that he began to resent the fact that the townsfolk showed no signs of gratitude for his largesse. He began to leave behind notes, asking for some kind of "concrete appreciation," generally money, in return for his efforts. (He had no need for the money, of course; the coins were purely symbolic of the thanks he thought he deserved.) His demands became progressively higher until the townsfolk decided the requests from their secret benefactor were too great.

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When they ceased to pay, the vampire's feelings towards the townsfolk turned to hatred and he fell upon them like a scourge until some intrepid adventurers destroyed him.

I have a theory that explains what happened in this example. Eternity is a long time. As the years passed, the vampire's feelings began to change. Slowly he lost his sense of kinship with the living, and put his own desires, even when those desires were somewhat irrational, before theirs. Finally, he came to believe that their very fates were petty things, unworthy of his consideration.

I strongly believe that this attitude shift happens, in time, to all vampires. With some individuals, it occurs almost instantly, while with others it may take decades. Although I have no firm evidence on which to base this conjecture, I would guess that no vampire can retain a nature other than one of Chaotic Evil beyond the Fledgling age category.

Psychological Progression

Most vampires are unique personalities, as are mortal (demi)humans. Individual (demi)humans may go through a "psychological progression," themselves. Commonly, the young of all (demi)human races are rather foolhardy, simply because the concept of death has yet to become real to them. They then enter a stage of experimentation, but usually temper their curiosity with at least some caution. This is followed by a period of more conservative activity, particularly if they are starting a family. Then, as the first chill winds of mortality begin to blow through the soul, they will often temporarily relive the wild and joyous exuberance of youth. When this phase has passed, they frequently return to conservative pursuits. And finally, in the twilight of their years, they become introspective, trying to extract the underlying meaning of their lives. Certainly

(demi)humans are individuals, but still a substantial number of them pass through most if not all of these stages.

Why, then, should it be surprising that vampires also show a psychological progression? Certainly, the stages are somewhat different and the time scale involved is vastly changed, but in the "life" of even the most individualistic vampire, at the very least an echo of this progression can be detected.

The first stage is usually characterized by the creature feeling a dark joy in its new powers. It is overwhelmed by the sense of power engendered by its strength and its supernatural resilience. Newly formed vampires will often assume animal form for the pure and simple-minded joy of flitting as bat over the forests of the night or running, seeming tireless, with a pack of wolves. Some of the creatures gain great satisfaction from testing the limits of their powers, often for the sheer joy of the experience, even if its actual exploits are basically meaningless in the grand scheme of things. (There are recurring rumors that could be interpreted as examples of vampiric "pranks"—trivial events that nevertheless required great strength or other supernatural abilities.) This experimental stage of a vampire's unlife is usually over quite quickly. Some vampires go through this phase in a few weeks or months while others continue for more than a year.

The first attitude shift usually begins when a vampire comes to recognize it is not in fact invulnerable. This can occur through stupidity, as when a Fledgling chooses an inappropriate sanctuary and is burned by the sunlight. More frequently it comes when a vampire in its foolish revels has attracted unwanted attention, and the first vampire hunters come after it.

The first party of hunters represents a turning point for the vampire. For the first time it cannot ignore the fact that

there are those in the world who would like nothing more than to destroy the "blood-sucking fiend." It hardly seems to matter whether this first group of attackers actually manages to harm the vampire or not. The simple fact of their assault triggers the change because it forces the vampire to fight to defend itself. In many cases this is the first time the new vampire kills (demi)humans. The vampire will usually draw two conclusions from this event. The first is that some (demi)humans wanted to destroy it, and thus all (demi)humans are potential foes. The second is that the vampire is a phenomenal fighter, a virtual killing machine.

These two conclusions generally trigger the next phase. During this stage, many vampires become rampaging fiends, killing for the pure joy of it, sometimes feeding from several victims in one night, even after they are totally sated. Vampires will often create their first "servitor" vampires during this phase, before they realize the consequences of their actions. This phase can last for several years, and in some vampires it ends only when the creature is destroyed. For most creatures, however, this stage will last no more than twenty years.

Usually the next stage is one of boredom. The "innocent" joy the creature derived from exercising its powers is gone as the monster becomes accustomed to those powers. Even the thrill of the hunt frequently begins to pall after a decade or two. In short, the prospect of an eternity of unlife becomes bleak when all the creature has to look forward to is its next kill. There is also a great sense of loneliness.

At this point, vampires typically diverge into two groups. There are some who try to interact once more with (demi)human society in one way or another. With varying degrees of success, these creatures will try to take on the mask of mortality, to "play

the grand facade," to borrow a phrase once used by a vampire (I will discuss this concept at length, later). If the creature fails in its first attempt to "assimilate," it will rarely try again. If it enjoys some measure of success, however, this is usually the path the monster will follow for the rest of its existence. It will become one of the "shadow people" (to use another vampire term), always existing more or less on the periphery of (demi)human society, moving through it when necessary, and secretly preying upon it.

Vampires who decide against dabbling in society, or those who fail in their first attempt, usually deal with the boredom and loneliness in a more destructive way. To add interest to their bleak existence, they often escalate in cruelty. Rather than killing one person, they kill a caravan of merchants. Rather than terrorizing a small village, they bully an entire county. Creatures in this phase often put much energy and imagination into new ways to spread destruction over the land. Obviously this phase is most likely to attract the attention of vampire hunters. Conspicuous behavior coupled with relative weakness has spelled the destruction of many vampires during this stage. For one reason or another, vampires rarely continue in this mode of mass destruction beyond the transition to the Mature age category. (Either they "grow out of it," or are destroyed.)

One definition of "maturity" in (demi)humans is the ability to emotionally accept one's mortality. Conversely, in vampires, one definition of maturity might be to emotionally understand the consequences of immortality. Usually after about 100 years of existence, vampires will come to realize that they could truly never cease to exist . . . if they are careful. At this stage vampires come to realize, sometimes for the first time, just what they have to lose.

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This brings about several changes. The most noticeable is that the conspicuous destruction of the preceding phase comes to an end. The creature recognizes how much of a risk this behavior represents. Not only will it eventually bring down upon it the vengeance of an individual or group powerful enough to destroy it, but it might also stumble upon such a group or individual in one of its violent forays, and thus hasten its doom.

The second change is that the vampire starts to take more precautions to protect itself. It is usually at this stage that vampires begin to set up multiple sanctuaries for themselves, all hidden and warded to the best of the creature's (considerable) abilities. If it lives in the wilderness it seeks out and summon animals and monsters to serve as guardians (and food sources in times of dearth). If it is "playing the facade" it hires and *charms* guardians, and begin to establish layers of protection around itself. Vampires at this stage may consider creating servitor vampires, but will be very careful to keep them under complete control to ensure that the servitors do not attract unwanted attention, and to destroy them before they grow powerful enough to challenge their master.



Security, to be worth anything, must be security against all dangers, and perhaps the greatest danger to a vampire is boredom. Thus at this stage, vampires will often go to great lengths to ensure that they have diversions open to them. They may engage in physical activities, either in human or animal form, such as hunting purely for pleasure. They may surround themselves with things of beauty. As their intelligence grows sharper with age, they may entertain themselves by learning new languages, and by working their way through the libraries of humanity. So great may be their need for company and companionship that they create a "groom" or "bride" a vampire with which they have an intense bond and kinship. (Grooms and brides are discussed in Chapter Eleven: "Relationships Between Vampires.")

This stage of maturity can last for several centuries. Indeed, many vampires never progress beyond it. For them, security and sources of diversion are all they need.

For other vampires, however, these two factors are required, but not sufficient. They need something more. This "something more" is often found in a hunger for power. This is something of an echo of the earlier stage where they tried to spread their range of destruction over larger and larger areas. Now, however, it is their sphere of influence that they wish to expand.

The nature of this sphere of influence depends on the personality of the vampire. The most obvious manifestation of power hunger is the desire to rule, but a vampire-king is soon faced with a quandary: what do the people of the land think when their king has ruled for fifty years? One hundred? One thousand? Sooner or later, the vampire's true nature will be revealed.

Therefore, I surmise that most vampires in this ambitious

psychological stage either put a mortal "figurehead" on the throne while they rule from behind the scene, or they participate in a more insidious manifestation of power hunger: in the vast majority of societies, rulers can come and go—even despots and tyrants—and "power brokers," the buyers and sellers of information and favors, retain their places of power (and their heads) regardless of law or morality. I am sure it is in this shadowy stratum of society that those vampires prefer to operate.

Still other vampires display their hunger for power through a fixation with the magical arts. Those that were wizards (or even priests) in life will sometimes pursue their magical endeavors in unlife. With immortality, a vampire can amass a treasure trove of old tomes, laboratory equipment, and magic items. But even more valuable is the time they can dedicate to their studies. If a particularly powerful spell will take ninety years of research, what of it? A vampire has eternity to invest in the results that it desires.

I believe this cannot be overstressed! Vampires capable of casting spells have literally unlimited time in which to research and develop new or "customized" versions of familiar spells. The nature of these idiosyncratic abilities depends on the vampire's personality. One thing is certain, however: Those who would hunt a spellcasting vampire—even one "only" several centuries of age—should be prepared to face magic of a nature and lethality that can hardly be imagined by mortal mages.

Many humans and demihumans become "arrested" at particular stages of their psychological development—so too do vampires. Other events can later reverse this "arrested development." For this reason, there is no direct correlation between the psychological stages discussed above and age category. Particularly intuitive vampires might progress to the stage

of power hunger within a mere century or two; others might never even reach this phase. As a general statement, however, a vampire who manages to achieve the age of Patriarch will have reached the pinnacle of psychological development.

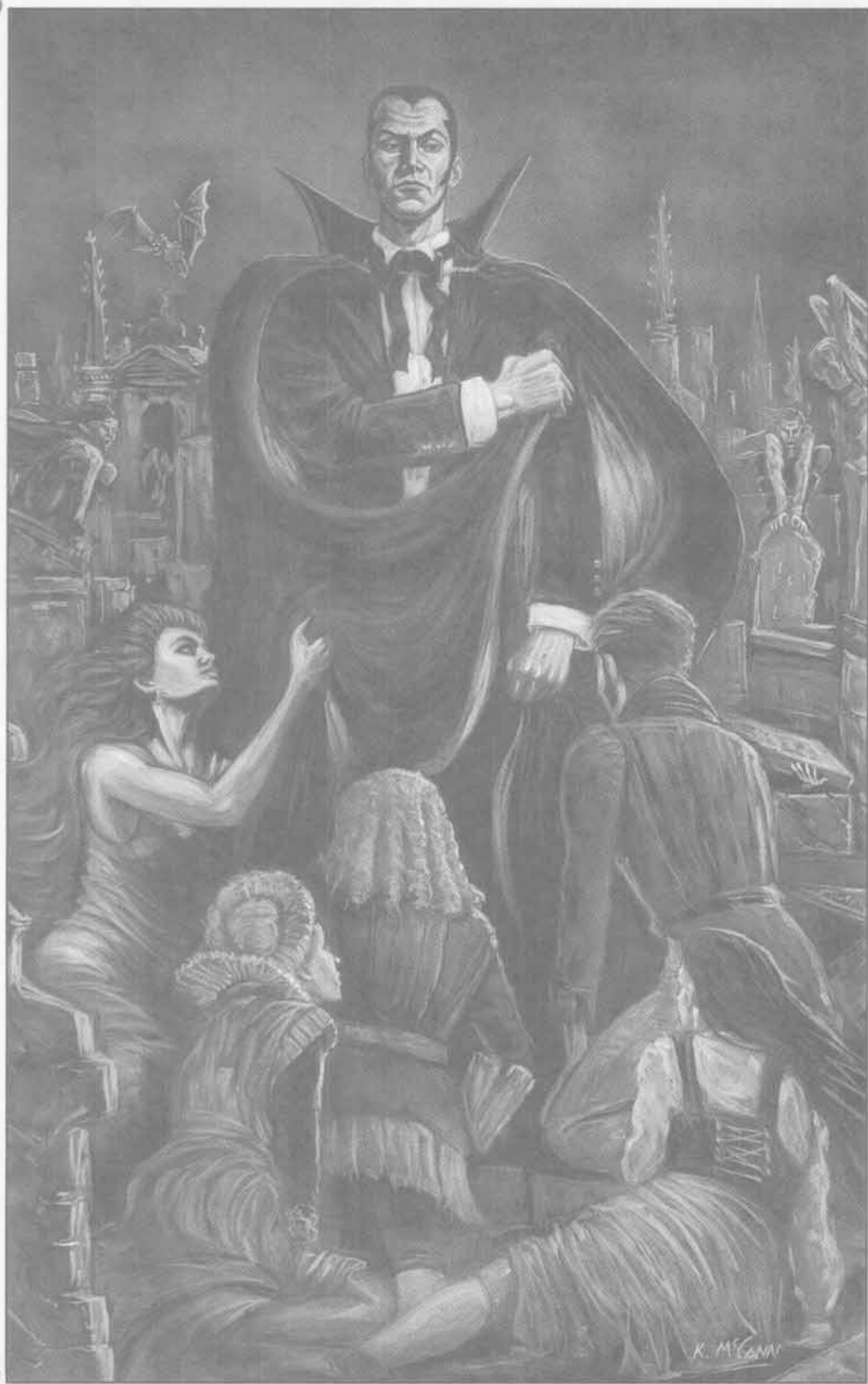
Ego

Mortals are cattle," the vampire said without animosity. "You supply us with food primarily, but with much more as well. You are our tools, you ephemeral, posturing fools. We use you as pawns in our ongoing plans." The creature leaned forward to fix me with its icy stare. "That is the only significance to your existence: You serve us."

—From the personal journal of
Dr. van Richten

One consideration that does not seem to correlate with a particular phase of a vampire's psychological development is ego. Virtually from the outset, a vampire will have an exceptionally strong ego and sense of self-importance. A major consequence of this is the belief that mortals are basically unimportant. Should a mortal, an "insignificant creature," challenge it in any meaningful way, a vampire is very likely to respond with disbelieving fury and overwhelming vengeance. For this reason, among others, injuring a vampire is a dangerous thing. One should destroy the creature or not challenge it at all! There is a positive aspect to this inflated ego, however: vampires frequently underestimate the risk that mortals pose, believing that the "obvious superiority" of immortals to such ephemeral creatures means that all mortals are incapable of harming it. A wily vampire hunter can sometimes play upon this overconfidence.

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Insanity

Throughout the "life" of a vampire, there is always a grave risk of insanity. Perhaps it is the enforced separation from the community of mortals that unseats the creature's reason, or perhaps it is the prospect of the eternity that stretches before them. Perhaps it has a more physiological reason, based on the changes that occur in the brain on transition to undeath. Whatever the reason, a significant proportion of vampires become insane.

Sometimes the transition from sanity to insanity is hard to spot. As a result of the creatures' immortality, they will often engage in plans that might take centuries to reach fruition. The creatures' day-to-day actions, when viewed without the long-view of immortality, might make little or no sense. The transition to insanity is *insidious*, subtly more complicated as the vampire engages in more and more intricate plans—"wheels within wheels within wheels," to quote one vampire—and more labyrinthine plotting. Eventually the creature's day-to-day actions make no sense to the creature itself, but it follows through with them anyway.

In other cases, the transition to insanity is more obvious. As the vampire grows older its behavior becomes more psychotic, more paranoid as it begins to grow tired of its way of life. The tiny part of it that is still mortal yearns tenaciously for the things it had in life, while the part of it that is a vampire scorns those pleasures of the flesh. Eventually, the



strain of the creature's dualistic nature becomes too great. Soon after, the vampire becomes subject to fits of rage and insane behavior.

This easily identified kind of vampiric insanity will usually draw unwanted attention and eventually destruction upon the vampire. If the insane individual is the *minion* of a more powerful creature, the master vampire will almost always destroy the servitor at this point. In a similar vein, I have heard that, in a far-away city, there were three vampires who had totally integrated themselves into the upper crust of society. These creatures were renowned businessmen, patrons of the arts, and even *ex officio* members of the city council. Unfortunately, one of the creatures went insane. In order to protect their own positions; the other two immediately destroyed it.

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To this day I cannot remember what first aroused my suspicions. But suspicious I was: I believed that there was something unethical or illegal about how the young Berron Labras inherited the ancient estate from his grandfather, Jonat Labras. (I admit it: I suspected that Berron had slain Jonat just to acquire the estate.)

I began to investigate. I found that the estate had been in the Labras family for five generations. I also found that each time the estate changed hands, the current owner died or disappeared and a young relative appeared from abroad to take over the property. On a hunch, I examined samples of handwriting from all five owners of the estate. To my horror and shock, the writing samples—spread over a period of two centuries—had undeniably come from the same hand. . . .

—From the journal of Fastil Merryvane

CHAPTER TWELVE: THE FAÇADE



In addition to hibernating, discussed earlier, another way in which vampires can minimize the risks of madness and detection is to “play the grand facade”: to take on the guise of mortality and assimilate, at least partially, into mortal society. A vampire might continue this charade for weeks, years, or even decades. If it takes the precautions described in this chapter, it can continue the pretense for centuries. The vampire might imitate a noble or a peasant, or anyone in between. In any event the impersonation will usually be flawless due to a vampire’s uncanny ability to imitate human gestures.

Exactly why the assumption of a mortal life aids a vampire in survival of the ages is unclear. Some sages believe that all vampires yearn for the mortality that they once had. By pretending to be a mortal and by being accepted as kin by mortals, a vampire can at least partially relive what it has lost. Others simply seem to enjoy

contact with mortals, for a wide range of reasons, and seek it out almost from the start. Still others see the facade as a vital tool in achieving their goals, whatever they may be.

Whatever the reason, all vampires who decide to “play the facade” must face a similar set of problems. The ingenuity shown by these creatures in overcoming these problems is, at times, astounding.

The Roles of the Vampire

When the murders began, I realized at once that there was something familiar about the methods used. At the time I had no opportunity to dwell on it, however. The city council was breathing down my neck—understandably, because the first four victims had been city council members—and I had important skins to protect.

It was only several weeks into the reign of terror that I realized why the methods were so familiar. I had read about them in a local history book. I found the volume in

the constabulary library quickly enough. The reference was two hundred years old, from when this great city had been nothing more than a tiny fishing village. But there was no mistaking the handiwork of the killer. It was the Spider, Ancient Assassin, back in business after a hiatus of 200 years. . . .

—From the journal of Superintendent Bryndan O'leary

The first question that must be asked by a vampire who wishes to assume the role of a mortal is, what kind of mortal? Specifically, what position in society will the vampire hold?

This is not a trivial question, and the answer will depend largely on the vampire's goals when entering society in the first place. If the intention is to garner power, then the role chosen will be different than if the vampire simply wants to stave off boredom.

Vampires will usually shun the lowest rungs of the socioeconomic ladder. There are many logical reasons for this. Obviously it is very hard to rise to a position of power from the peasantry. The risk of detection is, perhaps surprisingly, greater should the vampire mingle with the lower castes. Deviations from the norm are less tolerated than higher up the social scale, where differences can be reframed as "charming" eccentricities. Superstition is more prevalent, and people are more likely to suspect vampires in their midst. And finally, if the vampire's goal is simply to enjoy its stay in mortal society, the abuse generally heaped on the poor will quickly diminish this enjoyment to nothing.

No, it is much better for the vampire to insinuate itself into the middle or upper echelons of society. Here the creature can minimize the chance of detection by insulating itself, to whatever degree it sees fit, from casual contact. For example, a rich merchant

who owns a trading coster is expected to be somewhat limited in his contact with others. Equally, a patron of the arts can be forgiven for limiting personal contacts with others to specific occasions. In addition, the upper classes are much more likely to accept odd behavior as eccentricity than are the lower classes (speaking generally, of course).

The other major benefit a vampire gains from entering the upper class or aristocracy (if possible) is proximity to power. By insinuating itself into the social whirl of a nation's capital, a vampire can learn many things that will aid it in its own climb toward dominance (if such is its goal, of course).

Vampires are uniquely suited to insinuate themselves into society. Certainly, there is the requirement for some degree of wealth, if only as "stage dressing," but vampires have many ways with which to acquire this wealth. On the personal level they are unmatched at quickly earning the trust, respect, and friendship of mortals. This is a result of both their unusual force of personality (*Charisma*) and judicious use of their charm-gaze. With careful work vampires can position themselves to become power brokers: dealers in information and misinformation, disseminators of rumors, and the center of a network of interlocking favors and obligations. From this position they can start to amass wealth and power, should this be their aim.

Some vampires shun the upper-class haunts of the wealthy, preferring to enter a different form of society: the criminal underclass. Here urbanity and suave conversation take a back seat to violence and determination. The criminal leaders and rulers of this dark underworld reach their exalted positions through a combination of cunning and ruthlessness, both traits of which vampires have an abundance. Many of the powers possessed by a

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vampire would make a mortal thief sick with jealousy: the ability to shapechange, the ability to assume gaseous form, the monster's natural *spider climb* power. A vampire can quickly rise through the ranks of criminals by beating thieves at their own game and by openly eliminating rivals, eventually reaching the pinnacle of success. I have reason to believe that *vampires hold positions as grandmasters of various thieves' and assassins' guilds* throughout the Land of Mists and elsewhere as well. An interesting question to which I have never found an answer is whether the subordinate members of these guilds know that their leader is a vampire, and if they truly care. I would suspect that some guild members know the nature of their leader, but could not care less as long as the guild continues successfully.

Another fascinating role that a vampire may assume is that of the "gentleman adventurer." This compelling figure would be as much at home in polite society as he would be outside it (often far outside it). This is the perfect role for a vampire to take on. An aloof manner and a very daunting reputation may keep others so distant that they never suspect the adventurer's true nature. And the character's propensity for going off on

adventures provides a perfect cover for the vampire's "hunting trips."

In all of these roles there is one issue that the vampire must address, and that is feeding. Usually this is not a major problem. In a town or city of any size there are enough poor and destitute to sate the hunger of an army of vampires. The creatures would rarely, if ever, kill, choosing instead to drink small amounts from numerous victims. Even if the vampires did kill, few citizens would miss a destitute *beggar or two*.

Disguise

To successfully infiltrate society, a vampire must *disguise*, or draw attention away from, those characteristics that set it apart from mortals. This often requires great cunning, yet these fiends usually have a surfeit of that characteristic.

Physical Traits

The most obvious traits that identify a vampire are physical. For instance, the skin of a vampire is typically pale and cold. While this alone is not enough to identify the creature's true nature, when combined with other clues it can be damning. Vampires who wish to survive in society must avoid even the slightest risks.

There are two ways to handle the issue of skin color. One is to change it, either through makeup or magic. The other is to leave it alone, but simply provide a convincing rationale for it. A "gentleman adventurer" vampire might blame his cold and pale skin on a "jungle fever" he suffered some years ago and, in the absence of any reasons to suspect otherwise, he could reasonably expect everyone to believe him. Skin temperature cannot be disguised by makeup, but a vampire could simply devise an excuse for not physically touching anyone. A life-long phobia, a religious requirement, or something similar would serve.

One physical characteristic impossible to explain away is a vampire's absence of an image in a mirror. Obviously the creature's only choice is to avoid mirrors and other polished surfaces. Thus a vampire's home will have no mirrors or highly waxed floors. If the vampire should go abroad in society, it will always be on the lookout for reflective surfaces and avoid them. This is a ticklish point, and the vampire must be very careful that mortals do not realize it is avoiding mirrors, because this can be almost as damning as the lack of a reflection itself. Vampires are exceptionally cunning, however, and will frequently find some way of worming out of this problem.

Other physical characteristics that can give a vampire away are its resistance to physical damage and the inhuman speed with which it heals. This is easily solved, of course. The vampire simply has to avoid being drawn into combat or into situations where it might be harmed.

Or, if it is drawn into combat that it cannot avoid, if challenged to a duel, for example, it has merely to slay its foe before that unlucky soul even has a chance to strike the vampire. Considering a vampire's physical strength, quickness, and magical abilities, this is usually very simple to arrange.

Behaviors

Vampires are cursed with certain behavior patterns that can give away their true nature to careful observers. The most notable of these behaviors are discussed below.

As was mentioned in Chapter Seven of this treatise, some vampires are able to ingest normal food and drink, and to keep it down for at least some period of time. But individuals unable to do so must either disguise or explain the fact that they do not eat or drink.

The easiest solution is simply never to enter a situation that involves public eating—dinner parties and the like. The vampire may simply claim a prior engagement. Alternatively, it could explain that its religion forbids it from eating and drinking in public, or even that it is allergic to many types of foods and must adhere to a very specialized diet. (This latter is something of a risk because obliging hosts might offer to meet whatever dietary requirements the individual has.) In social gatherings among the upper class, wine often flows freely. Fortunately for the vampire, it is easy to claim an aversion to alcohol based on any number of reasons (religious prohibitions, personal taste, allergic reaction, etc.).

More difficult to explain away is the creature's aversion to holy accoutrements. These are rarely in evidence at social or business gatherings, however, because religion is a personal matter and few people would risk offending guests of other faiths. The vampire would have to build a reputation as either a complete atheist or as a devotee of a faith that requires private worship, and in this way avoid being invited to temples or chapels. The greatest risk to a vampire is casual or purposeful display of holy



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symbols. For example, a visiting prelate might well be invited to the same social gathering as the vampire, and the prelate would almost certainly wear the holy symbol signifying his or her office. The vampire would either have to decline the invitation or otherwise avoid the prelate, or trust to his or her abilities to suppress signs of distaste brought on by the holy symbol.

If suspicion has built up to such a point that someone tests the vampire—by trying to turn it, by demanding that it grasp a holy symbol, by splashing it with holy water—the vampire has stayed around much too long. No vampire in its right mind will let things get to this level, of course. It is much safer to simply drop out of sight and reassume the facade in another guise after years or decades have passed.

Fortunately for the vampire, the vast majority of social events in the upper strata of society occur after dark. This is not as true in the lower levels of society—another reason why vampires usually take on upper-class personae. Peasants, shopkeepers, even middle-class businesspersons must work during the day, and one who does not will attract unwanted attention. Among the “idle rich” and the aristocracy, however, few care how others spend

their days. A vampire moving in these circles can simply accept only those invitations whose events take place after sunset. If necessary, the vampire might provide an additional explanation: perhaps he suffers from a “childhood malady” that makes the eyes painfully susceptible to bright lights.

In criminal society there is less risk of detection, because so many of this underclass’s activities naturally occur at night.

The Extended Façade

The body of a vampire shows no sign of aging. Even after a millennium or more of unlife a vampire looks little changed from the day on which its mortal body died. In the short term this is not an issue. If a vampire wishes to continue its masquerade over a period of years or decades, however, this longevity is something that must be addressed, especially among the short-lived races, such as humans.

A vampire playing a prolonged facade must take care to simulate the effects of aging. This can be done through makeup or by magic. Both represent risks, of course. Even the best disguise can be penetrated, and magical alterations can be detected, arousing suspicion, and they even can be dispelled. Powerful magical items such as a *hat of disguise* can assist the vampire in keeping up the charade of mortality, but the risk remains.

Many vampires minimize this risk by keeping their affectations short-lived, or by changing locations and identities every decade or so. A vampire might “pack up shop” in one city and disappear, only to resurface with another identity on another continent.

If the vampire is looking to gain nothing more than diversion from the facade, there is no problem with this



kind of relocation. If the goal is wealth, however, the vampire must find some way of transferring its accumulated possessions to its new locale. It must be very careful in doing so because shipping manifests and such represent a way by which hunters can track it down.

If the vampire's goal is power, the situation becomes even more problematic. In essence, the creature is stuck in one location because power is rarely portable. Vampires seeking power must either take great precautions to hide their agelessness or isolate themselves by working only through trusted intermediaries. (Few vampires feel totally comfortable with this, of course, because trust does not come naturally to these creatures.)

Vampires playing a long-term facade will sometimes go to the extreme of faking their own death, and then appearing as a "young heir" to take over the "dead benefactor's" property and wealth. This can be risky, however, because both the vampire's disguise and the details of the "inheritance" must be able to withstand scrutiny.

"Shadow People"

Vampires have a term for those of their kind that feel the need to spend prolonged time in facade. The term is "shadow people."

To many vampires it is a pejorative term. Those individuals despise the facade, considering it to be a grotesque lie. "Vampires are what they are," these individuals claim, and should revel in their true nature rather than trying to assume the mantle of "lesser creatures".

More mature and intelligent vampires tend to view the facade as a great game, a challenge. They recognize the benefits of partial assimilation into mortal society, and respect those of their kind that are particularly expert at the facade.

Finances

Why do I need all this?" The vampire waved a hand negligently around, indicating the beautiful works of art that surrounded us. "In truth, I do not need it at all. But I enjoy it, much more than you are capable of understanding. Do you see that statue over there?" It indicated a figure carved from smooth black stone. "I can see the grain structure of the rock, details much too small to be detected by your mortal eyes," it told me, "so I can experience another level of beauty from that statue which is forever beyond your grasp. And, after all," the creature said with a satisfied sigh, "I was not in a position to enjoy luxury while I was alive. Why not take advantage of the opportunity afterward?" It smiled grimly. "Many mortals talk about an afterlife, an existence after death and how much finer it is than earthly life." It sat back complacently. "Well, this is the afterlife," it said, gesturing around it. "And I find it to be very fine, indeed."

—From the personal journal of
Dr. van Richten

Vampires who play the facade need money if they wish to minimize the risk of discovery. At least some level of wealth is needed to insulate oneself from the press of (demi)humanity. A home must be purchased, servants hired, the other trappings of mortal life acquired. If the vampire has chosen to enter the upper classes, then maintaining the appropriate lifestyle—with regard to entertaining and such—is vitally important, and extremely expensive.

Of course, many vampires relish wealth for its own sake. This is not

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necessarily a result of greed. Many of the creatures seem to enjoy opulence and surround themselves with beautiful objects of art. As do many mortals, they enjoy wealth for what it will buy them in the way of comforts and diversions.

Also, a wealthy vampire can acquire and outfit a number of sanctuaries within its "territory" and elsewhere. The more sanctuaries a vampire has, the greater its security. The vast majority of vampires understand this and will amass wealth for this reason if for no other.

Sources of Wealth

Vampires are generally denied the sources of great wealth open to mortals. For example, how could a vampire possibly claim an inheritance? Or earn its own fortune working its way up from a common laborer? Or, for that matter, even keep possession of whatever wealth it had while alive?

Most vampires acquire their "starting capital" through theft of one kind or another. Depending upon the personality of the individual vampire, and upon the location, the nature of this theft can vary wildly. For example, in unpatrolled areas a vampire could become a fiendishly effective

highwayman, robbing unguarded travelers and merchant caravans with relative impunity. Perhaps a "lone adventurer" might join a party on a treasure hunt, only to murder his associates when the prize is achieved. In a town or city the vampire might indulge in mugging, or in breaking and entering. In any case the creature's abilities would give it a massive advantage over mere mortals. A vampire might also hire itself out as a lethal assassin.

One of the most interesting options open to a vampire in need of starting capital is also one of the most risky. It is possible for a vampire to kill a wealthy person—perhaps the owner of a manor—and temporarily take that person's identity, thus playing a very specific kind of facade. This would usually involve a magical disguise of some kind to handle the physical resemblance, but the other facets of the impersonation—voice, gestures, movements, and so forth—would be remarkably easy for a vampire to create. The risk of detection would remain relatively high unless the vampire made sure to limit contacts with the outside world, by claiming a virulent illness, for example.

The impersonation need not last long, of course. The vampire would need only sufficient time to orchestrate a convincing excuse for shipping away some measure of the unfortunate victim's wealth, and then could make its escape. With at least some portion of the victim's possessions converted to untraceable form, the vampire could vanish and resurface elsewhere with a "nest egg" on which to build.

After a vampire has generated starting capital, it can build that money into a fortune, just as a mortal might do. The vampire, however, has a major advantage: time. The creature can spend a "paltry" one hundred years building a business empire, then liquidate and get on with its real plans.

Suspicion had been building in my mind that the self-styled Countess Abalia was actually a vampire. In fact, I had totally convinced myself that she was a fiend. You will understand my stupefaction then, when on that evening I saw her primping and preening in a little hand mirror she held before her face. With most unseemly haste, I positioned myself behind her and looked in the mirror... to see her face, smiling archly at me. It was only later, after my inaction had led to so many deaths, that I understood what had happened. The Countess Abalia was not only a vampire, but also a wizard of considerable skill. Both the mirror she held and the reflection I saw in it were nothing more than magical illusions....

—From the journal of Melnor Melabbey

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: RETAINED SKILLS



o quote from a respected bestiary, "In most cases, vampires do not lose the abilities and knowledge which they had in life

when they become undead. Thus, it is possible for a vampire to have the powers of, for example, a wizard, thief, or even priest." Thankfully, this is not always the case, as the transition to vampirism sometimes seems to wipe the victim's mind clean of most or all previously held skills.

Priests

Only those priests who worshiped evil deities during life can retain the ability to cast spells after death. The reason for this is simple: priest spells are bestowed by the priest's deity or by its minions. Deities dedicated to Good will certainly not bestow spells upon vampires because these creatures will always use those spells for evil purposes. And some evil deities may refuse to bestow spells or, perhaps, only bestow *certain* spells upon vampires.

The process that a vampire-priest must follow to attain spells is the same as for a mortal priest. In other words,

the creature must meditate and pray to receive the powers. Vampire-priests seem to be much more skilled at casting spells from the necromantic sphere than are mortals, and less adept with spells from the sun sphere.

Turning or Commanding Undead

Vampire-priests who followed nonevil deities while alive retain none of their mortal abilities to turn or command other undead. Priests who worshiped evil deities sometimes retain this ability after death and, in fact, often wield it with an aptitude they never had in life.

Wizards

Individuals who were wizards or arcanists while alive can retain their spellcasting abilities regardless of their previous alignment, and seem to retain the ability to cast all spells they were able to wield while alive, with much the same effect. The fact that vampires can develop inhumanly high levels of intelligence gives some creatures the ability to cast sometimes many more spells than they could while alive.

Vampire-mages must memorize spells as they did while alive. The same holds true for gaining access to new spells. Vampire-mages must have spell books, like mortal wizards. These undead wizards are particularly adept

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at casting spells of the necromancy and illusion/phantasm schools.

Arcanists retain their ability to either turn or command undead, as these powers stem from an innate understanding of how undead work. Like priests, they often use this ability with a much greater aptitude than in life.

Thieves

Of all professions, it seems that thieves gain the most from their transition to vampirism. Not only do vampires skilled in the thieving arts often retain these abilities, but many seem to be even more proficient after passing through the veil into undeath. As has been stated before, vampires are stronger, faster, and more dexterous than the great majority of (demi)humans, and their senses are significantly keener than those of mortals.

When one couples these improvements in physical skills with the spell-like abilities of a vampire—such as shapechanging, assumption of gaseous form, and the ability to *spider climb* at will—it becomes obvious that a vampire-thief is the ultimate nightmare for anyone concerned about security. The only positive factor is that the vampire-thief will probably be

unable to enter a private dwelling without invitation (although the creature's charm-gaze can frequently make up for this).

Bards

The skills of the bard and the gypsy seem to suffer the most from the transition to vampirism. Of course, a *vampire-bard* or *vampire-gypsy* gains similar enhancements to its roguish skills as does a normal thief, but bards who could cast wizard spells while alive invariably lose this ability when they become vampires. Opinions are divided on why this is. I believe it is because bards, unlike true wizards, rarely if ever understand exactly why their spells work, casting them only by rote. Changes occur with the transition to vampirism, and the bard understands too little of magical tradition to properly alter the spell's components and cast it as a vampire.

An even greater change occurs in the bard's ability to inspire and sway the opinions of mortals. Vampire-bards always lose this ability. This may, on the surface, be very surprising. It is true that a vampire's ability to mimic behavior allows the creature to play instruments, to sing, even to recite poetry with superhuman virtuosity. But there is something missing from the vampire's performance that forms the core of a similar performance by a bard: the understanding of the thoughts, fears, hopes, and desires of the mortals in the audience. The transition to undeath so distances the vampire-bard from the emotions of mortality that it is incapable of forming the emotional connection with its audience that a mortal bard can create instinctively. Thus, while the musical performance of a vampire may be technically perfect, it lacks "soul;" the performance of a mortal bard may be less perfect, but it touches the emotions. Of course, the creature's enhanced force of personality



(Charisma) and charm-gaze can somewhat make up for this lack.

Paladins

Unsurprisingly, all of the exalted and magical abilities of a paladin are lost, should the unfortunate soul become a vampire. The creature is considered to be a simple vampire-warrior. If the former paladin had a war horse, the mount will immediately turn against the vampire and try—vainly, of course—to destroy the abomination that its rider has become.

This discussion, of course, refers to PCs and NPCs belonging to specific character classes. The DM decides whether any individual character turned into a vampire retains his or her character class abilities. As a general rule of thumb, the DM could assign a 65% chance that the character retains class abilities.

Priests

Vampiric priests who worshiped evil deities retain whatever level of experience they had at the time of their death, and retain access to the same spheres they had as mortals. As with living priests, the DM must adjudicate what spells are bestowed, based upon the vampire-priest's actions and the nature of its deity. For example, if a vampire-priest worshiping the god Cyric prays for and receives a *flame strike* spell, and then uses it to kill some followers of Cyric, then Cyric would be unlikely to grant the vampire-priest more spells until the creature had atoned for this indiscretion. Priests who worshiped Good deities in life will naturally lose their spellcasting powers. Anchorites that become vampires also lose their spellcasting abilities.

Vampire-priests advance in level much more slowly than mortals; each time the creature attains a new age

Should, by some extreme chance, the paladin ever be brought back from vampirism, the poor individual will no doubt be forced to undertake quests of extreme rigor to be atoned in the eyes of his or her deity, for the evil taint of vampirism.

Rangers

Vampire-rangers retain their tracking abilities, and their skills at hiding in shadows and moving silently. In fact, these abilities benefit from the creature's enhanced sensory acuity. It

category, it has a 35% chance of advancing one level in spellcasting ability. For every 500 years that a Patriarch exists, it has a 50% chance of advancing a level. Vampire-priests cast necromantic spells as if they were priests one level *higher* than they actually are, and sun spells as if they were one level lower.

If a vampire-priest worshiped an evil deity in life, there is a base 50% chance that the creature will retain the ability to command other undead as a vampire-priest. Should the creature retain this ability, it commands other undead and turns paladins as if it were 3 levels higher than its actual level. As mentioned above for spellcasting, a vampire-priest has a 35% chance of advancing a level for each age category it achieves, and a 50% chance of advancing a level every 500 years it exists as a Patriarch.

Wizards

Vampire-mages and vampire-arcanists retain whatever level of experience they had at the time of their death, and retain access to the same schools they had as mortals. They advance in level much more slowly than mortals. Each time the creature attains a new age category, it has a 35% chance of advancing one level in spellcasting

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ability. For each 500 years a Patriarch exists, it has a 50% chance to advance a level.

Vampire-mages cast necromancy and illusion/phantasm spells as if the mages were one level higher than they actually are. In addition, any mortal who is the target of a necromancy or illusion/phantasm spell cast by a vampire-mage suffers a -1 penalty to any saving throw against that spell.

An arcanist has a 50% chance to retain the ability to turn or command undead. Should the vampire-arcanist retain the ability, the power functions as if the vampire-arcanist were three levels higher than its actual level.

Thieves

A thief that becomes a vampire gains some significant bonuses. First, a vampire's Dexterity increases with age to a maximum of 20; the vampire-thief enjoys the normal bonuses to its thieving skills for exceptionally high Dexterity. Second and most importantly, the vampire gains an additional experience level upon its transition to undeath. This represents the improved coordination and sensory acuity described by Dr. van Richten.

Vampire-thieves advance in level more slowly than mortals. Each time the creature attains a new age category, it has a 45% chance of advancing one level in thieving ability. For every 500 years that a Patriarch exists, it has a 55% chance of advancing a level.

Bards

Upon its transition to undeath, a vampire-bard or vampire-gypsy advances one level of experience, but only with regard to its thieflike abilities and its power of identifying the purpose and function of magical items.

Vampire-bards and vampire-gypsies have a 10% chance to advance one

level each time they achieve another age category. Patriarchs have a 25% chance of advancing a level for every 500 years that they exist.

Rangers

Rangers automatically gain one level of experience when they become undead, to reflect their hypersensitive senses. Vampire-rangers have a 25% chance of gaining a level whenever they achieve a new age category. Patriarchs have a 30% chance of gaining a level for every 500 years they exist. Vampire-rangers never attract followers.

Psionicists

These characters lose all psionic abilities other than those of the telepathic and clairvoyant disciplines. These retained powers are much more potent for the undead; vampire-psionicists gain a -2 bonus when using powers from these two disciplines.

Vampire-psionicists advance much more slowly than the living. Each time the creature attains a new age category, it has a 45% chance of gaining a level as a psionicist. For every five centuries that a Patriarch exists, it has a 65% chance of advancing a level.

Combat

The following comments refer only to vampires that were warriors (including avengers) in life (unless the DM decides otherwise). In undeath, the creature uses whichever THAC0 is better (lower): the THAC0 appropriate to a monster with its number of Hit Dice, or the THAC0 appropriate to a (demi)human warrior of the creature's level. For example, a 9th-level warrior becomes a Fledgling vampire (8+3 HD). An 8+3 HD monster has a THAC0 of 13 and a 9th-level warrior has a THAC0 of 12. Thus, the

vampire-warrior's THACO is 12. When the vampire advances to Mature, it becomes a 9+3 HD monster, with a THACO of 11.

Weapon proficiencies are retained after death in many cases. Vampires may use weapons with which they are proficient with no penalty. The nonproficiency penalty for a vampire is -3. Warriors who had specialized in weapons while alive may retain the specialization as vampires (+1 attack and +2 damage bonus with melee weapons; +2 attack bonus at point-blank range with bows and crossbows). Vampire-warriors gain one new weapon proficiency slot for every four levels they advance after death.

Vampire-warriors have a 25% chance of advancing a level each time they reach a new age category. Patriarchs have a 35% chance of advancing a level for each 500 years that they survive. No matter how far a vampire-warrior may advance, it never automatically attracts a body of followers.

Nonweapon Proficiencies

Characters have a base 75% chance of retaining nonweapon proficiencies when they become vampires. For each age category after Fledgling that a vampire attains, it gains 1d4 nonweapon proficiency slots, modified by the bonus proficiency slots granted for high Intelligence. (For example, an Eminent vampire achieves Patriarch status. The monster gains 1d4 nonweapon proficiency slots. However, the transition to Patriarch also increases the monster's Intelligence to 20. Referring to the Intelligence table from the *Player's Handbook*, an Intelligence score of 20 bestows an additional 9 nonweapon proficiency slots, bringing the creature's total of new slots up to 1d4 +9. The DM should also be careful not to assign a vampire with proficiencies that are

contradictory to the creature's nature (such as animal handling or cooking, for example).

Why Not PC Vampires?

To put it bluntly, it is strongly recommended that DMs rule PC vampires to be categorically impossible unless using the rules from the *Requiem* boxed set. As soon as a character has become a vampire, the player must turn his or her character sheet over to the DM.

Why? The most important reason is play balance. Even a typical Fledgling vampire has powers and abilities that puts the creature far beyond the capabilities of most mortal characters, except those of the highest level. And, if the PC party contained high-level characters, then the PC who became the vampire will probably have been high-level himself, and might well retain his character class abilities in addition to his vampiric powers.

Why does a player want to portray a vampire character? The answer is probably, "To kick butt!" At one time or another, all players will feel the temptation to portray a character who's virtually unbeatable. But most players will quickly realize that the pleasure gained from running such a character is fleeting.

There's another issue as well: by definition the vampire is an evil creature, or it has a strong tendency toward evil. At the very least, the monster must drink blood and survive—an activity that hardly could be described as "good." The DM should consider what effect a blood-sucking evil PC is going to have on his or her campaign. How will other PCs react? Certainly paladins and priests who worship good deities aren't going to be overjoyed at having a "cursed monster" with them.

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loses forever its ability to cast spells and its adeptness with trained or untrained animals. (The only exception to the latter is with animals whose form the vampire can take.)

Psionicists

Effects on psionicists are dependant upon the powers these beings had before death. Vampire-psionicists are able to retain most "psychic" powers that they had while alive. All other types of psionic powers are lost when an undead state is assumed.

Combat Abilities

Vampires who have had no mortal experience with *melee* are yet lethal foes in combat; this I know from painful experience. It seems that a previously unskilled vampire can pick up a sword or even a bow and use it, albeit with less facility than he boasts when attacking bare-handed.

How much worse is a vampire who, in life, was a highly skilled warrior! The weapon skills learned by an experienced fighter or avenger are frequently retained when the creature becomes undead, including specialty training.

A vampire wielding a two-handed sword or a heavy crossbow can be a daunting sight. Nonetheless, it is better to face an armed vampire than an unarmed one because the creature can drain life energy only when it strikes a foe with a bare hand. Thus, while a two-handed sword in the hands of a vampire can cause hideous damage, there is not the associated risk that anyone killed by the attack will rise later as a vampire.

Nonweapon Proficiencies

Many vampires also remember skills they learned while alive that are not directly related to the profession they followed. These skills may relate to their childhood environment or to hobbies they took up at a later date.

The main impediment most mortals find in learning new skills is time. For an immortal vampire, time is hardly an issue. Thus, should it strike the creature's fancy, a vampire *could* gain proficiency in a huge number of skills over the years. This is aided by the fact that the monster's enhanced intelligence eases the process of learning new skills. Such ease with the acquisition of noncombat enhances the assumption of a facade. It is also an almost certain bet that the creatures can turn even the most harmless-seeming skill into a weapon against their foes.

APPENDIX FOR THE DM

This section discusses applying the various elements of vampirism Dr. van Richten covered by creating an example of a vampiric creature. In this case, a variant of the "common" vampire known as the nosferatu is the topic. This creature serves to illustrate how DMs can create their own unique, exciting vampiric creatures for their own campaigns.

Definition

Let's say I want to create a variant vampire for my RAVENLOFT campaign. What kind of a creature do I want? Well, I was never happy with the fact that AD&D game vampires could drain life energy with just a touch of their hands. I prefer the more seductive image of the vampire who must gain the victim's trust in order to bite the victim's neck and to feed that way. Therefore, I decide "my" vampire must literally drink blood to survive.

Powers

Once I've decided that blood is the key to my vampire's survival, I consider just what *inherent weapons this kind of a creature* would possess. The vampire's *charm* ability becomes paramount for this creature, as he must get very close to his victim in order to feed. Since I also like the image of a past victim being forever susceptible to the vampire, I give the nosferatu the power to communicate telepathically with any surviving victim of the creature's bite. That's a powerful ability, so putting a definite range limit on that ability would be a good idea to keep the creature from becoming too powerful. After all, while I want to challenge the players and their PCs, my intent is not to create a creature that will simply slaughter them all. I'll remember this long-distance *charm* of past victims when I fully detail the nosferatu.

Next, I need to somehow quantify how the victim is affected by the loss of blood the nosferatu drains away. Since blood is symbolic of life and vitality and Constitution is symbolic of vitality in the game, I decide the victim of a nosferatu loses a small number of Constitution points rather than life-energy levels from the creature's bite.

Weaknesses

I need to balance the strengths of my creature with a weakness or two. Taking my cue from Dr. van Richten's discussion of a vampire's feeding habits, I decide that the nosferatu must feed each and every night or it begins to lose strength. Also, I make the nosferatu susceptible to bloodlust if it goes too long without feeding.

Similarly, I decide that the nosferatu must rest in a coffin with a layer of soil from its original gravesite (rather the creature's homeland, as the nosferatu may have been buried far from the home of the person it once was). Further, I determine that the nosferatu must get "proper rest" every day or it loses strength as it would from not feeding. Finally, I decide a nosferatu drops in a deep coma during the day, making it *vulnerable to hunters who track to its lair in the daylight*.

Magic

Since the nosferatu doesn't have any potent magical attacks similar to the common vampire's life drain, I think canny nosferatu would be likely to find and use magical weapons with which they can defend themselves from would-be hunters. Exceptional nosferatu also could retain skills such as weapon proficiencies and magic use that they possessed while alive.

Hibernation

My nosferatu is coming together nicely, and I think that too many changes from the "standard" vampire template would be bad for my creature as I still want him to be able to play into the traditional image of the charming stranger, luring the innocent to their doom. Therefore, I decide that nosferatu follow the normal rules for hibernation as outlined earlier.

Conclusion

I'm almost finished with "my" new vampire, the nosferatu. As noted above, I don't want to make this creature so different from standard vampires that the nosferatu can't make use of the common vampiric archetypes. So I note that in all ways except those already mentioned, nosferatu follow *the same rules as common vampires*.

VAMPIRE, NOSFERATU

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Ravenloft/Any
FREQUENCY: Very rare
ORGANIZATION: Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE: Night
DIET: Blood
INTELLIGENCE: High to Genius (13-18)
TREASURE: F
ALIGNMENT: Any evil
NO. APPEARING: 1
ARMOR CLASS: 1
MOVEMENT: 12 F 18 (C)
HIT DICE: 8+3
THACO: 11
NO. OF ATTACKS: 1
DAMAGE/ATTACKS: 1d6+4
SPECIAL ATTACKS: Con drain, *charm* gaze
SPECIAL DEFENSES: magical weapons to hit
MAGIC RESISTANCE: Nil
SIZE: M (6' tall)
MORALE: Champion (15-16)
XP VALUE: 2,000

During the nighttime hours, a nosferatu looks like a normal member of its race, though its skin is unusually pale. At sunrise, however, the nosferatu falls into a death-like coma. If it has fed within the previous two hours, its skin appears slightly flushed. If cut or stabbed at this time, the creature bleeds as would a living being. As the day wears on, the body loses its fresh appearance. By the following nightfall, the face is gaunt and the flesh a pale gray.

Nosferatu retain knowledge of all languages and skills (including magic, if any) that they possessed in life.

Combat: While the common vampire drains life-energy levels to gain sustenance and survive, the nosferatu drains Constitution points from its victims instead, via the victim's blood. Except as noted, nosferatu possess all the strengths and weaknesses of common vampires.

Many nosferatu fight empty-handed; they should be considered proficient in this mode of combat (no attack penalties, in other words). Its great strength (18/76) gains it a +2 attack bonus and a +4 damage bonus. Those nosferatu with access to magical weapons typically keep them close at hand, ready to use. Exceptional nosferatu also may retain PC-class skills that they possessed while alive.

Nosferatu typically feed from only weakened or *charmed* prey. To drain Constitution points, it must bite the victim—on the neck normally—and drink the victim's blood. If the victim actively resists this, the nosferatu needs a successful attack roll to drain Constitution points. Armor protects a victim normally (dexterity bonuses also apply), but shields offer no defense (and no AC adjustment).

Once a nosferatu has bitten a victim, Constitution draining happens automatically in

subsequent rounds. Usually, the nosferatu drains 1 point of Constitution per round (the better to savor the victim's agony), though it can drain up to 3 points per round if it wishes.

While draining a victim, a nosferatu's only possible other action is its *charm* gaze. It can, of course, elect to cease draining the victim at any time. The victim, assuming he or she survives, regains lost Constitution points at a rate of 1 point for every two days. Those who perish from the bloody kiss of the nosferatu rise again as a half-strength nosferatu under the control of the nosferatu that created it. As noted elsewhere, this control is often transitory.

Using a unique form of *telepathy*, a nosferatu can *charm* from afar any person it has bitten. Once so *charmed*, the victim is subject to the nosferatu's will for the rest of the victim's life or until a *remove curse* spell is cast on the victim by a cleric of at least 14th level. This telepathic communication is one way; the victim cannot read the thoughts or influence in any way the nosferatu. The nosferatu can telepathically instruct its *charmed* victim as long as the two are within 360 feet of each other.

Habitat/Society: Most nosferatu live in cemeteries, crypts, mausoleums, or other abandoned-by-the-living locales. They hunt at night and return to their coffins at dawn. Nosferatu most often have coffins in several locations throughout their "territory" to prevent them from being easily caught (and destroyed) by the morning sun.

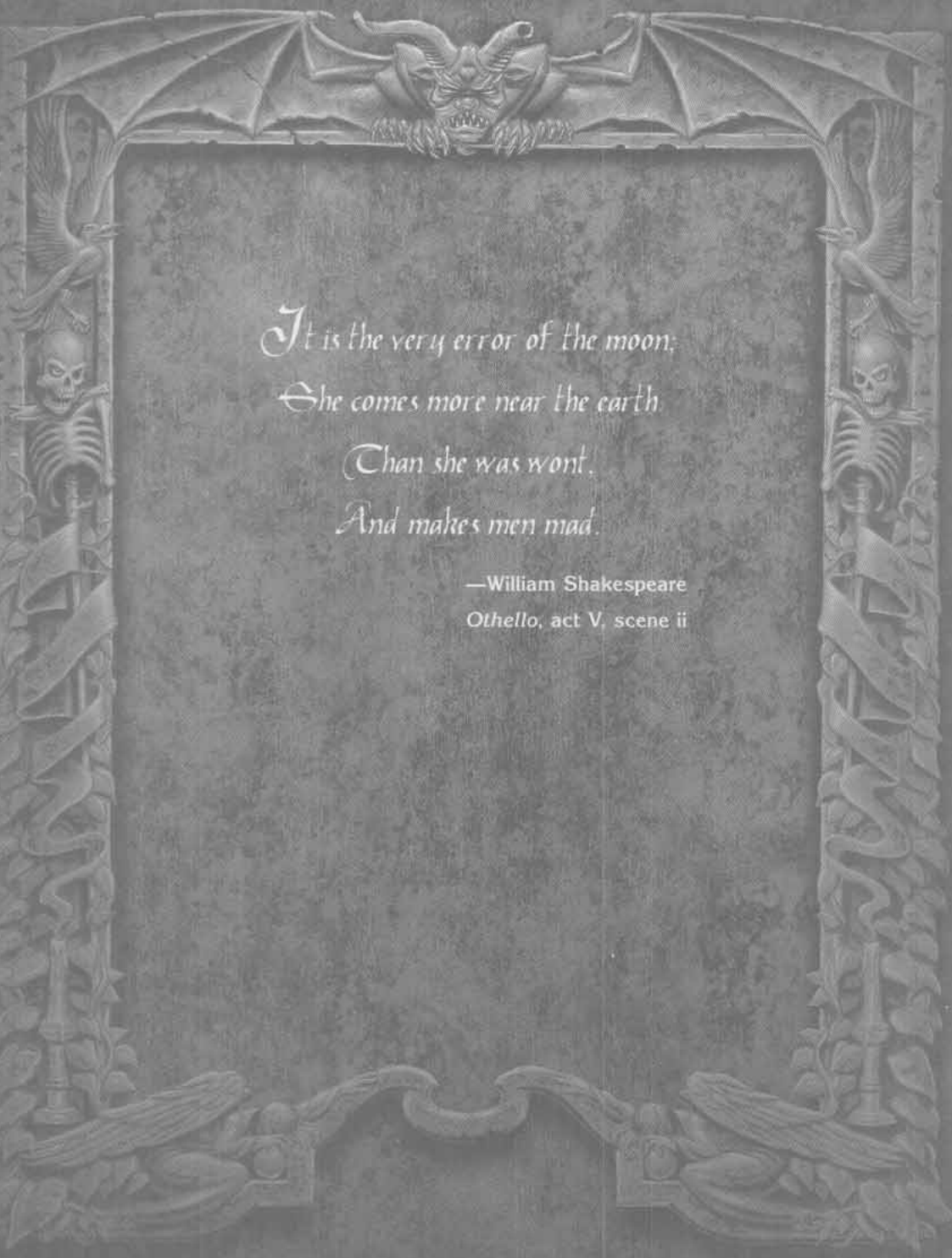
Ecology: Unlike the common vampire, nosferatu need the blood of (demi)humans to survive. Unless the creature drains 3 Constitution points each night, the nosferatu loses 1 HD. This loss is cumulative until the nosferatu drains sufficient Constitution points to make up for all it's missed (if a nosferatu doesn't feed at all for two nights, on the third night it must drain 9 Constitution points to regain its full strength) or until the nosferatu reaches 4 HD. If the creature is reduced to 4 HD, no further degradation occurs, but the nosferatu enters bloodlust (as defined in this tome) if a viable victim is within 40 feet of the creature.

Nosferatu can survive on the blood (and Constitution points) of animals if need be, but such feedings, no matter how frequent, leaves the creature 1 HD below normal.

Nosferatu also need sleep. They lose 1 HD per night without proper rest (8 hours in a coffin on soil from its original gravesite). A "tired" nosferatu can regain 1 HD per day of proper rest, provided it has drained at least 6 Constitution points during the previous night.

Nosferatu age as do common vampires and grow more powerful over the centuries. Consult the charts and rules in Chapter Two for details.

Werebeasts



*It is the very error of the moon,
She comes more near the earth
Than she was wont,
And makes men mad.*

—William Shakespeare
Othello, act V, scene ii

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In the heart of every man hides the soul of the beast. In this way, we are not so different from the Shapeshifter.

—*Speculations, Marth Venn*

INTRODUCTION

Tales of the lycanrope—of the shapeshifter, the beast in man's form—are common to every society, human and demihuman alike. There is a certain universality to the concept, which is understandable. The symbolism is so potent, so immediate: A man becomes the beast, and the beast masquerades as a man. Does this not perfectly encapsulate the duality of human nature? In many accounts, the *metamorphosis* is beyond the shapeshifter's control, signifying the bestial rage that can well up within the mildest of souls. And the fear engendered by the presence of the shapeshifter—the suspicion that any stranger or even a friend may turn out to be the beast—is a reflection of the grim truth that no man may truly know what is in his fellow man's heart.

Yes, the shapeshifter is a powerful symbol. And when I was young, I felt certain that this creature was *purely* symbolic. One did not have to believe in the existence of the shapeshifter to understand the innate truth of such



wild tales, for that central truth had nothing to do with monsters or bestial nightmares, but with the psychology of humanity (or so I believed).

How naive was I then. While tales of the shapeshifter may be symbolic, they also reflect a substantive reality. I know now that shapeshifters *do* exist. Once, I discounted the werebeast as a superstitious folly, as something no more significant than an old wives' tale. But I had overlooked the obvious: those so-called "old wives" frequently remember the ancient truths....

A Welcome

Greetings, fellow scholar. I am Dr. Rudolph Van Richten—erstwhile healer, herbalist, chronicler, husband, father. It seems to me now that I have lived many lives, pursued many careers. How could all of my experiences, all I have learned, be encompassed by a single life span?

Yet that is definitely the case. I was born nearly threescore years ago in the land of Darkon. Although the tales and rumors may say otherwise, Darkon is not a place of unrelieved terror, death, and destruction. Certainly, those who live within its boundaries must make certain . . . *adjustments*. . . to their *manner of life*. There are particular regions where one travels only at the greatest of need, where one invites only trusted friends across the threshold, and where the windows are always shuttered and barred after sunset.

Yet during the daylight hours, Darkon—or that region where I spent my childhood, at least—is a beautiful land. For me, few places can rival the allure of its rolling hills, deep primeval forests, grassy glades, and meadows

ablaze with a profusion of wildflowers. Before the chill of night sets in, the breezes are gentle, carrying with them the whispers of the trees, and the perfumes of myriad flora.

I find that now I can look back on those days of youth with pleasure, and can relish their richness. Such was not always the case. Once, the slightest reminder of the past would rack me with pain and grief. For I had been sundered from those innocent, joyful times by a chasm that no living man could ever cross.

In what now seems a previous lifetime, I had a family I loved, a profession I cherished. I was a simple healer leading a simple existence. Then a wretched, blood-sucking horror took my wife and child. My simple existence died with them, and I came to follow a path very different from the one I had chosen for myself.

Today I am driven not by my own needs and whims, but by a central cause: to rid the world of the Accursed, those unnatural and supernatural predators who threaten the lives and happiness of all. I speak, of course, of those beings which some have imprecisely classed as "monsters;" the various forms of undead, the shapeshifters, and other fiendish beasts who feast on sorrow and pain.

Some who know of my cause believe me to be driven by vengeance. Not so. This *once* was true, of course. After the loss of my beloved wife and son, desire for vengeance burned brightly within me. It shames me to admit it, but I took great pleasure in sending the fell beast who had destroyed my family down into the blackness of true death. The realization that I had *enjoyed* my act forced me to re-examine my motives, however, and to scrutinize the very shadows in my soul.

It was that intense personal scrutiny which redirected my efforts. From that moment forward, I no longer sought the destruction of such foul creatures for personal benefit or desire for

vengeance. Today my central motivation is to spare others the torture and heartache that I myself have suffered. If I go to my grave knowing that I have saved only one person from the torment that I was forced to endure, I will count myself a lucky man and judge my life to have been of worth.

The House on the Hill

As I have stated, once I did not believe the legends of the shapeshifters, the werebeasts. It was in my thirty-ninth year that I discovered my mistake. By that time, I had traveled the length and breadth of Darkon in my quest to eliminate the unnatural predators which threatened the populace namely, the undead. I was near Varithne, a village too tiny to appear on most maps. It lies in the north of Darkon, where the terrain is rugged and the populace sparse. As was (and still is) my habit, I stopped at the local tavern at day's end, seeking a glass of brandy and a bit of conversation.

That night, Varithne's tavern was crowded. Nearly all who filled the room were talking of strange disappearances. Simply by listening, I discovered their plight.

Over the past fortnight, seven men had gone missing. The first two were shepherds. As it was the season for doing so, they had led their flocks into the hills to graze. Neither shepherds nor sheep ever returned. Scant days later, a pair of professional hunters joined the ranks of the missing. The people of Varithne had hired these two men to provide meat for the village. Their hunting expedition was to last only a day or two, but like the shepherds they failed to return.

The latest to disappear were three travelers who claimed they hailed from a land called Sembia. These adventurous men took it upon themselves to locate the shepherds and hunters. Again, none returned.

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At first I paid little heed to the rumblings in the tavern that night. Certainly I understood the villagers' concern, but there are many *natural* predators in the hills of Darkon, and I assumed that the seven unfortunates had fallen victim to such creatures. Wolves, bears, or the like could easily have killed the seven men. I was not then, and am not now, a hunter of normal, living creatures.

I had emptied my brandy and was about to leave the tavern when I *overheard something that changed my mind*. Two villagers began to exchange tales of a strange howling they had heard. The sound had been carried on the night winds that blew down from the hills. I asked them to elaborate. This was not the howling of a wolf, the pair assured me, but something quite different. My curiosity was piqued. Not long before, I had discovered and destroyed several unusual ghostly creatures, apparently examples of a hitherto unrecorded subtype of wailing spirit. Those hauntings had been characterized by a nocturnal howling very much like that described by the villagers. Assuming that the orchestrator of Varithne's torment might be one of these spirits, I decided that I would put to rest this accursed creature as well.

The next day I set forth into the hills, equipped with several vials of sanctified water, which had proved quite effective against the other wailing spirits. I was confident that I could recognize the sanctuary of my ectoplasmic quarry and then dispatch the creature with little ado. For one of the first times in my life, overconfidence possessed me, and truly led me astray. Not simply in a symbolic sense, mind you. I admit it openly: I became lost. Although a bright morning sun had greeted me when I left the inn, by midmorning that sun was hidden behind slate-gray clouds and a thick mist clung to the



hills. Visibility decreased to little more than a stone's throw. I fear I wandered in circles for hours, until the day—already twilight-dark under the clouds—began to darken still further.

As the damp chill of the mist leeched the warmth from my body, fear washed over me. It was not the darkness I feared, however. It was disorientation. In fact, there was still light enough for me to see, even though the sun had already sunk below the horizon. As in other regions of Darkon, the rise and fall of the hills was traced by a faintly shimmering, blue-green luminescence. Many call it "gravelight." This light might still have allowed me to return to the village safely—if only I had known in which direction the village lay.

It was then I heard the howling: a high-pitched, prolonged ululation. It hung upon the cold wind, fading and then renewing itself again and yet again. My ear perceived the sound, and my soul understood its meaning. It spoke of hunger, solitude, and ferocity. And, cliché though it seems, it spoke of inhuman glee. No mere wolf had ever uttered such a sound—that I knew at once. Nor did the hideous cry precisely match my memories of the wailing spirits. But, in the emotion of the moment, I discounted the difference.

I was lost, but I knew the direction from which the heart-numbing howl had come. If I could not find the village this night, at least I could complete the task to which I had set myself and hunt down the wretched spirit. I strode determinedly through the mist.

The wailing spirits I had previously destroyed always lurked within some human-constructed building: a deserted house, a desolate warehouse, or (by preference) an abandoned church. Thus, when I saw a small stone house set atop a nearby hill, I thought my trek was at an end. Surely this was the sanctuary of the unquiet spirit I believed I was hunting. Preparing my holy water and other accoutrements, I advanced stealthily toward the building.

Great was my surprise and embarrassment when the front door swung open, silhouetting a burly figure against the light. No spirit this, but a red-faced, jolly-looking man around his fiftieth year. He was tall and broad, as muscular as a blacksmith, yet with the weather-tanned face of a farmer. When he set his eyes on me, upon a comparatively little man skulking toward his home like a thief, he threw back his head and laughed. Of course, this only added to my humiliation.

"Come in, come in," he called boisterously. "No need to steal an invitation to shelter when it's freely given. Get yourself in out of the night."

I felt my face burning as I returned my vials of sanctified water to my pack and slid my silver-bladed knife back into its sheath. "My apologies," I began abashedly, but he cut me off with another booming laugh.

"Ne'er mind that now, friend," he said, and sup with me. Unless ye'd prefer to sleep in the gravelight, o'course."

I did not have to be invited twice. Though I was confused—for surely the wailing spirit must be *somewhere* nearby—I welcomed the invitation. This man was undeniably among the

living, and no joy of life such as he displayed could coexist with a wailing spirit. Perhaps this burly fellow could direct me to the ectoplasmic horror's true sanctuary . . . on the morrow, of course.

He gestured for me to enter and I stepped into the cozy little two-room structure. My host's face was wrinkled in a jolly smile, yet it was curious: I sensed some kind of undertone, some submerged emotion, beneath his jocularity. Was it tension? A well-concealed effort or strain? I quickly forgot this little mystery, however, as he maintained a continuous flow of words. At first, I tried to follow my host's rambling conversation, but before long I realized that he was talking for the sake of speaking rather than to communicate anything of value. His must be a lonely life, I decided. My visit represented a rare opportunity for conversation, for which the man was both eager and out of practice.

Still, I did not mind the man's chatter. There was a fire in the hearth and a kettle of stew hanging over it. The transition from a bone-chilling cold to such cheery warmth seemed to numb my mind like a strong herbal sedative. When he bade me sit near the hearth, I did so with a will. It was only moments before I felt my head start to nod with the onset of sleep, and I began to fade away.

Then the man said something that drew me out of my reverie.

"Welcome I said, and welcome I meant, Dr. Van Richten." He was standing behind me, near the front door. His tone was still friendly, but the words that came next were not. "Your name is known to me, for your fame has spread far. So fine it'll be to feast on a man as famous as yourself. . . ."

With that I turned, disbelieving. I simply could not have heard him say what I *thought* I heard.

The scene that unfolded shocked me into stupefaction. The man had

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stripped off his shirt and he was *changing*, undergoing what I now call the *transfiguration*. As I watched in dumb horror, I saw his bones shift, bend, and lengthen. His skull warped as though made of clay. His mouth and nose become a bestial snout, and his forehead sloped sharply back above his eyes—eyes that were suddenly bloodshot and glaring. His muscles, too, shifted beneath his skin. The sight would have been enough to nauseate me even without the accompanying sound: a wet, grisly squashing and crunching reminiscent of the noise made by tearing apart raw chicken. His hair, previously shoulder-length, had shortened and become more like a mane or a dog's hackles, traveling along the path of his spine. And a gray pelt had sprung into being, covering his exposed skin.

The transition was over in only a heartbeat or two, yet to my fevered mind it seemed much longer. Then the beast stood before me: half man, half animal, with a predator's smile. Saliva dripped from its lips. Now, almost too late, I realized what had invited me to dine.

Then it repeated its blood-chilling howl and pounced!

I was fortunate. As I have now come to learn, it was but a weak example of its kind. Had it been one whit stronger, it would have devoured my flesh and sucked the marrow from my bones. As it was, I narrowly managed to defeat the creature. Its claws and teeth scored me a dozen times, but my silver ceremonial dagger proved an efficacious weapon. Eventually, the thing lay dead, pierced to the heart with my nine-inch blade. As I withdrew the weapon from the corpse, the creature underwent a reverse metamorphosis, returning to its human form. Once more I gazed at the broad, jolly face of the farmer. This time, however, it was truly at peace, without the hint of tension I had sensed earlier.

A werewolf! I thought. I searched the rest of the building, both in fear that it had a fellow and in grim suspicion that I would find the final resting places of the missing villagers. I was right in my guess. There is no need to go into a description of what I discovered; some things are best left undescribed. Suffice it to say that I was not the only one who had been invited to dine with this fellow and then found himself on the menu. For obvious reasons, I was unable to remain in that house that night. I set out across the hills once more, and by sheer luck I stumbled across a road that led me back to Varithne.

The creature's death did little to ease my terror. I remained in mortal fear for weeks—not for my life, as such, but for my humanity. I had heard many of the legends describing werewolves, although I had paid little enough attention to the details. I feared that the wounds inflicted by the creature would ensure that I would suffer the same dire curse—that I would, upon the next full moon, become a ravening monster myself.

Yet no such grievous fate overtook me. To this day, more than a decade later, I have suffered no ill effects. Perhaps the wounds that the monster inflicted were not serious enough to convey the contagion. Or perhaps my natural resistance to disease provided some protection. Perhaps the fact that I used cold silver to slay the beast was the reason for my good health.

Or perhaps I was simply fortunate.

From that day forth, the insidiousness of the werebeast's threat has not been far from the forefront of my mind. From that day forth, I have numbered the werebeast among the nemeses of mankind.

The blood of my parent's runs through my veins . . . with all that this kinship implies. Is this blood that we share cursed, tainted? Or is it blessed, somehow sanctified by a power greater than that of humanity? My father would have me believe the latter—that our kinship marks us as far above the bustling hordes of humanity as they are above the cattle they slaughter for food.

Yet in these latter days, I have trouble believing that. I hear their screams as we fall upon them and I have to believe they are not so unlike us. We, too, are kin in some sense—humanity, and that which my blood tells me I am. They consider my kind monsters, and sometimes I wonder whether they are right.

But when I feel the fierce elation of the metamorphosis come upon me, then how can I not consider myself blessed, as one small step below the gods?

—Excerpt from a Werebeast's Journal

CHAPTER ONE: AN OVERVIEW OF LYCANTHROPY



Since my encounter with the werebeast in the hills near Varithne almost two decades ago, I have endeavored to learn all that I could about its foul kind. This has proved to be difficult, although not for the same reasons that my research into the nature of other supernatural beasts was so challenging. No, the degree of variability between two werebeasts sharing the same animalistic form is far less than the variability shown by vampires, for example.

The difficulty of the research stems more from the fact that the werebeast is such an emotionally evocative symbol. So many descriptions, tales, and legends that refer to werebeasts incorporate purely symbolic material. It seems, in fact, difficult verging on impossible to find any discussion of werebeasts that sticks entirely to the unembellished truth. While understandable, as a researcher I find this highly irritating. Nevertheless, I

have been able to separate—to some degree, at least—the truth of the matter from the symbolic elaborations.

There are, of course, many *phenotypes* of lycanthropes: werewolves, wererats, werejaguars, even weredoggers, to name but four I have encountered personally. (The word “phenotype” was introduced to me by a sage from a mysterious and distant land. I find it more descriptive than “species.”) I shall outline the characteristics of each phenotype in a subsequent chapter. In this section, however, I shall concentrate on the two basic classifications of werebeasts: *true* lycanthropes, who inherit their condition, and *infected* lycanthropes, who acquire their affliction through a werebeast's attack. Because the latter condition more closely resembles a disease and can be cured (albeit through extraordinary means), I have dubbed it *pathologic* lycanthropy. There is a third classification as well, which is curse-induced, or *maledictive*, lycanthropy. However, examples of this class are so rare, and their characteristics so diverse, that I shall only touch briefly upon the subject.

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Finally, at the end of this chapter I shall share with you my theory on how lycanthropy arose.

Heritable Lycanthropy

This is the archetypal form of the scourge that is lycanthropy. Often called true lycanthropy, it is an inherent, self-sustaining condition that can neither be cured nor contracted by others. If one is not born a true lycanthrope, then one can never become one. If one *is* so born, then it is impossible to alter or cure the condition, much as it would be impossible to cure an elf of the condition of being an elf.

True lycanthropes have their own society as well as their own rules of conduct. Although they may move through normal human society, they are not *of* that society. This is discussed in considerably more detail in Chapter Three. For the moment, suffice it to say that when it comes time to choose a mate, most true lycanthropes select another of their kind. The offspring of such a union will always prove to be heritable lycanthropes themselves.

Sometimes, for whatever reason, a true lycanthrope will breed with someone who does not suffer the scourge. If it is the male who is the true lycanthrope and the female who is free of the contagion, I estimate a simple 50 percent chance that any offspring of the union will be a true lycanthrope. If the offspring does not inherit true lycanthropy, it should be completely free of the taint (although the father may well come back at some later time to transmit the contagion through an attack, thereby infecting his own child).

If it is the mother who bears the scourge of true lycanthropy, however, the offspring cannot be so lucky as to escape the taint. There is still a 50 percent chance that any offspring will be a true lycanthrope, inheriting the

full form of the condition. If this does not come to pass, however, the child is not completely spared: instead of becoming a true lycanthrope, it becomes an *infected* one. Thus, every offspring of a lycanthropic mother will suffer one form or the other of the scourge.

Transfiguration

Transfiguration is the term I apply to a werebeast's ability to change forms, or *aspects*. With few exceptions, a true lycanthrope has three aspects, any of which it can adopt at will. In contrast, an infected lycanthrope normally displays but two forms (to the best of my knowledge). Furthermore, the true lycanthrope is generally unaffected by the triggers that initiate transfiguration in infected lycanthropes. Thus, a true werewolf need never fear that the full moon will trigger an unwanted transfiguration.

It is important to stress that the actual process of transfiguration is not typically a rending, burning agony for true lycanthropes, but it is often so for the pathologic variety. In fact, many of the true lycanthropes with which I have spoken (before destroying them) have claimed that the experience is one of transcendent ecstasy.

Furthermore, true lycanthropes retain all of their mental faculties while in any of their forms. At no point do they forget what occurs when not in human aspect, nor do they lose control of their actions. In addition, they always retain their immunities and most of their abilities.

Primary Aspect

The first aspect of a true lycanthrope is human (or demihuman, of course), and the human aspect is characteristic of the individual. In other words, when in human form, it will always look the same. A werebeast cannot use the transfiguration to alter its human appearance or create disguises.

To an astute observer, certain characteristics of the true werebeast's human form can provide hints of the individual's *inhuman nature*. Almost invariably the human form shows one or more bestial features: slightly pronounced canine teeth, unusually bushy brows which meet above the nose, slightly pointed ears, abnormally pronounced body hair, hair on the inside of the wrist and on the palm, or perhaps exaggerated finger- or toenails, for example. Furthermore, many true lycanthropes have overly long forefingers, equal in length to the second finger of each hand.

Of course, it should be pointed out that none of these physical traits is sufficient to incontrovertibly label a subject as a werebeast. I have personally met folk who have never so much as seen a lycanthrope, yet they themselves exhibited one or several of these telltale signs. In truth, I feel somewhat uncomfortable over having listed these apparent signs at all, since they can be (and *have been*) misused to accuse innocents of being werebeasts.

Secondary Aspect

The second form that any true lycanthrope can assume is that of the beast. In this aspect, the individual appears as an animal. Again, the type of animal and the specific details of its appearance are characteristic of the individual. Details such as eye color, pelt markings, and other distinguishing features do not change, which makes it possible for an astute observer to distinguish between individuals, just as an owner of hounds can tell the difference between two members of the same breed.

A true lycanthrope's animal aspect is usually larger than average, when compared to normal animals of the same type. Remember, however, that there is a wide variability in sizes among *natural animal populations*.

While it is true that lycanthropes in animal aspect are larger than the average for that species, it is *not* always true that werebeasts are larger than all other specimens. If a werewolf is leading a pack of timber wolves, the lycanthrope need not automatically be the largest creature in the pack.

(Wererats pose a special case: their secondary aspect resembles a *giant rat*, not a normal rodent. With that caveat, my remarks above still hold, with wererats frequently appearing as larger-than-average giant rats.)

Many tales and legends claim that lycanthropes in their secondary form can be distinguished from natural animals by their sense of intelligence, unnatural wisdom, and anomalous watchfulness. This can be true in some cases, but only when the werebeast *wants* the observer to discern its true nature. True lycanthropes in their animal aspect retain their full intelligence, which makes them much more intelligent and aware than natural animals that may surround them. Yet the monsters are also in touch with their animalistic nature—the beast *within*—in the form of natural senses and instincts. They can, if they so wish, allow these senses and instincts to overshadow their human intelligence and thus behave identically to a natural animal. This knack for subterfuge makes it exceedingly difficult to distinguish a werebeast from a normal animal.

It is important to point out the fallacies in some legends and tales. While it is true that lycanthropes in animal aspect can still *understand* the languages of mankind, it is *not* true that they can speak them. The anatomy and physiology of animals precludes this. For example, the throat and mouth of a rat is incapable of human speech; thus, so is a wererat in animal aspect. (The wererat *would* be able to both speak and understand the limited communication of natural rats, however.) Similarly, while in animal

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aspect most werebeasts have neither hands nor fingers, and thus cannot easily manipulate their environment. Accordingly, those tales which describe werewolves in wolf form opening intricate locks or latches are most obviously fantastical.

It seems obvious that natural animals can distinguish a werebeast in animal aspect from one of their own kind. Natural animals' responses to werebeasts vary quite widely, however. Pack-oriented or herd-oriented creatures will usually cede dominance of the group to the werebeast. Thus, wolves will almost always signal their submission to a werewolf in their midst and allow the lycanthrope to lead the pack. Trained animals such as domesticated dogs will be more likely to react with unease or even distress if a werebeast is in the area. Naturally solitary animals will usually respond by avoiding werebeasts in animal aspect.

As an aside, there are many tales in which faithful house pets detect the inhuman nature of true lycanthropes in human aspect, and react by growling, whining, or even attacking. I can neither support nor deny these contentions. I have seen no evidence on either side of the issue.

It was a travesty of justice, of course. While I can well understand the townsfolk's fear over the wereboar's predations, I could never sanction their response to that fear.

That response was hysteria, pure and simple. They needed someone on which to vent their rage and their terror. They selected the hermit who lived on the outskirts of the village. Nicknamed the "terrible old man," he was actually a harmless soul, cursed by diminishing mental faculties. Encroaching senility made him something of a curmudgeon, and he had earned the enmity of many of the villagers. His appearance was unkempt; his hair

was wild, his clothing ragged, his teeth discolored and crooked. All in all, his appearance could well be described as feral, and that was all the villagers needed.

Their response was brutal in its immediacy. To this day I blame myself for not acting fast enough to stop it. But before I even knew what was happening, the old man was writhing in terminal anguish, impaled on the sharpened stake the villagers had set up in the square.

It did not take the villagers long to realize their mistake. The night after the old man's grisly end, the wereboar was on the hunt again. . . .

—From the personal journal of
Dr. Van Richten

Tertiary Aspect

The true werebeast's third aspect—half man, half beast—is indeed the most dreadful. This is the form most commonly associated with true lycanthropes in tale and legend. The man-beast has the features of both human and animal forms, creating a horrifying, unnatural blend.

The actual details of the man-beast aspect vary from phenotype to phenotype, and even from individual to individual within a single phenotype. Any given individual will always look the same in his or her tertiary aspect, however.

In general, the body's overall form is humanoid, although there may be noticeable differences in musculature. The head closely resembles that of the animal, but with some disturbingly human features. The eyes are typically human in appearance, albeit frequently bloodshot and glaring—malignant intelligence seems to gleam within them. The entire body is usually covered in fur, which is similar in color and texture to that of the natural animal. The pelt is typically thicker

around the head and shoulders, especially at the back of the neck. Hands and feet usually sport elongated nails—not quite claws, but definitely reminiscent of them, and capable of inflicting gruesome wounds.

The tertiary form always has characteristics symbolic of the phenotypical animal. Thus, if the natural animal type is powerful, then the man-beast form based on it will also be powerful, as in the case of werewolves for example. If the animal type is exceptionally agile, then the man-beast form will reflect this, too, and thus wererats are slender, fast-moving things. It is interesting to point out that this characteristic is based more on symbolism than anything else. If the animal type is symbolic of some attribute, whether it actually possesses it, then the man-beast form will incorporate that attribute into its appearance.

True lycanthropes in man-beast aspect retain the ability to use language. Their voices are usually harsh and growling, however. The creatures also retain their full dexterity in man-beast form, and thus can manipulate their environment easily.

Pathologic Lycanthropy

This is the dreaded disease described in hundreds of folktales, the cursed affliction that turns an innocent victim into a ravening beast. No race or sex is immune; it is a plight to which every man, woman, and child is susceptible.

Unlike true werebeasts, infected lycanthropes are not born with their affliction. Their condition more closely resembles a disease, in that it can be contracted and passed on. If the victim is very fortunate, it can even be cured, though *not* as any ordinary disease might be (see Chapter Four: The Pathologic Scourge for a more in-depth discussion of cures). This form of lycanthropy can be acquired through contact with the saliva, blood,

The chance of a character contracting lycanthropy in the Domains of Dread is 2% per hit point of damage suffered from a werebeast's attack. (On other planes, the chance is only 1% per hit point.) The damage must be inflicted by the "natural weapons" of the werebeast: teeth, claws, or (in human or demihuman aspect) unarmed attacks. If the werebeast uses a weapon, damage inflicted by that weapon is not taken into account when determining whether the victim is infected or not.

To minimize bookkeeping, DMs may decide to include damage inflicted by weapons in the total, on the rationale that such wounds decrease the victim's systemic resistance to infection. Note that infection is possible, under this rule, only if the lycanthrope's natural weapons have inflicted at least one point of damage.

Further, other types of "close contact" may pass the infection on. If a werebeast's blood or other fluids were to enter a living human's eyes, mouth, or open wound, there's a small chance (2% to 8%, for example) that the lycanthropic infection will be passed on. A kiss, for instance, is unlikely to pass on the infection, but more intimate contact could do just that.

or other secretion of either a true werebeast or another infected werebeast (and perhaps even that of a maledictive one).

Compilers' Note: It seems that, once again, Dr. Van Richten's theories have proved to be the truth. My sister and I have found evidence that supports the Doctor's position that maledictive werebeasts can indeed infect hapless innocents.

GWF

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Simply touching a werebeast or its blood will not transmit the contagion, however. Conventional wisdom—which I have found little evidence to discount—is that the infective agent must be insinuated into the bloodstream of a victim through some wound. (A handful of legends suggest that more intimate contact *may* convey the affliction, but this is beyond the range of my expertise.) The chance of a victim succumbing to the scourge seems to be proportional to the severity of the wounds inflicted.

As described in a subsequent chapter, infected lycanthropes are (initially at least) unaware of their affliction. When in nonhuman aspect, they have the mentality of an animal, a ravening beast. Thus, infected lycanthropes cannot have the same kind of distinct society enjoyed by true lycanthropes.

The offspring of a father who is an infected werebeast does not automatically suffer the same affliction. Remember, there is no genetic or heritable component to this form of the scourge. However, a child born to a mother who is infected with lycanthropy *will* be similarly blighted. This is because the intimate, nourishing bond between the mother and her unborn child. The offspring does not, strictly speaking, inherit the affliction; rather, he is infected before birth. This distinction makes little difference to the innocent child, except that a cure is still possible. If the infected mother is cured of her lycanthropy before the child comes to term, the poor offspring is still susceptible to the affliction. In my estimation, such a child must undergo its own cure if it would be rid of the scourge.

Transfiguration

While most true lycanthropes have three forms, an infected lycanthrope has only two: human or demihuman,

and either animal or hybrid. Further, unlike the true lycanthrope, an infected werebeast has no control over its transfiguration. Each infected individual has a characteristic “trigger”—an event, circumstance, or set of circumstances that initiates the transfiguration. The archetypal trigger for werewolves is, of course, the full moon, but there are many more possibilities. Sometimes extreme emotion triggers the change—usually anger or fear, but sometimes (tragically) even love. In other individuals, the trigger is physical pain or proximity to violence. And for some particularly unfortunate victims, every sunset or sunrise may bring about the metamorphosis.

For an infected werebeast, the experience of transfiguration is usually one of tearing, rending agony. Such is the nature of the affliction, however, that the victim almost always suppresses all memories of this agonizing pain.

Primary Aspect

This is, of course, the natural and original form of the infected victim. According to many folktales, the same signs by which a true lycanthrope can be identified—the long forefinger, slightly bestial features, etc.—also mark the victim of infection. My own studies neither support nor contradict this contention; in truth, I have found little evidence on one side of the issue or the other.

Certainly, a few of the infected lycanthropes I have encountered have shown progressive development of bestial features. Yet I am not convinced that this progression was actually a result of the lycanthropy itself. Outside my study of lycanthropes, I have seen the appearance of an individual begin to change as his or her heart darkened through crime or sin. Perhaps that person's actions or desires attracted the attentions of some malign agency,

which in turn caused the physical alteration. Or perhaps one's body can truly become a mirror of one's soul.

At any rate, if such physical changes can occur among those who are *not* lycanthropes, it seems quite possible that it could hold true for an infected lycanthrope as well. For this reason, I cannot embrace the widely held belief that infected lycanthropes will always, in time, display some physical manifestation of their curse. More likely, such a notion is no more than a feeble attempt at self-reassurance. And the disturbing truth is that one *cannot* directly detect the taint of lycanthropy until the transfiguration is actually triggered.

Fortunately for those who hunt the lycanthrope, other clues sometimes exist, pointing at the fearful truth. Most notably, infected lycanthropes often return to their primary aspect bearing wounds, bruises, or abrasions . . . which they cannot remember sustaining.

Secondary Aspect

The secondary aspect of an infected lycanthrope can be either a normal animal or a man-beast similar to the true lycanthrope's tertiary form. Each infected individual has a characteristic secondary aspect and always assumes this form when the trigger condition occurs. There seems no way of predicting beforehand (that is, before the lycanthropy is acquired) what one's secondary aspect will be.

Compilers' Note: Further "researches" on our part have shown that, in about two of three cases, the infected lycanthrope will gain the secondary aspect of the werebeast that infected it. Also, in at least 4 of 5 cases, this secondary aspect is the animal form.

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If the secondary aspect is an animal, it largely shares the features

discussed for a true lycanthrope's animal form. Thus, it is larger than average for the animal type and frequently becomes the leader of a pack of like creatures. A man-beast secondary aspect also largely conforms to the description provided earlier.

The important difference between infected and true lycanthropes is that the former *do not* retain their normal mentality when in their secondary aspect. Instead, they take on the personality—if that is the correct word—of a ravening, predatory animal. The beast within comes to the fore, taking control and suppressing all elements of the human character. The new personality incorporates elements of the phenotype's behavior. Thus, wereboars tend to be blindly aggressive, while wererats show more low cunning. In any event, the major elements of the secondary aspect's persona are aggression and hatred. The werebeast will kill anyone or anything it encounters, initially to feed, although it may still attack even if its appetite is totally sated.

It has frequently been stated and seems to be true that the preferred victims of an infected lycanthrope in secondary aspect are those individuals closest and most important to the werebeast when he is in human form. In other words, loved ones are the *most likely* to be harmed by the beast. This tragedy seems to confirm the old saw that love and hate are closely related emotions.

When he returns to his natural form, the werebeast rarely remembers any details of his actions while in his secondary aspect. If he *does* recall anything at all, it will have a hazy, indistinct, cast to it, much as a nightmare is vaguely recalled upon waking. In fact, many infected lycanthropes believe at least initially that such memories *are* nightmares. Only when they find that reality matches elements from their dreams

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might they realize what is happening, and not all individuals understand (or admit that they understand) even then. Humans have an almost infinite capacity for self-delusion.

Maledictive Lycanthropy

Maledictive is the term that I have coined to describe those unfortunate victims who suffer from lycanthropy as the result of a curse. While powerful magics such as a *wish* might also induce lycanthropy, such maleficent enchantments are fortunately very rare. On the other hand, a curse that somehow summons the beast within is not so uncommon that it can be ignored.

In the lands with which I am familiar, maledictive lycanthropy is a very real risk of which all residents and visitors must be aware. While I have heard travelers speak of distant lands where curses generally are not strong enough to cause this affliction, I myself have never visited a place.

Three general forms of curse exist, each of which may result in lycanthropy. These can cause a condition that is indistinguishable from the pathologic form of lycanthropy with one exception: the victim of such a curse may or may not be able to infect others with his contagion.

Self-Induced Curses

This is an incidence of a dark desire, where an individual lusts for some power or boon, and that lust is acted on in a transport of terrible evil. In effect, this situation is a kind of cry for help, which some mysterious and malign agencies will sometimes grant, but always in a way that causes suffering and despair in the long run

for the recipient.

I know the details of only one curse of this kind (which is not to say that other cases do not exist, of course). The curse's recipient was a man named Talbot, the servitor of a petty noble in Darkon. Talbot was a soft-spoken, sensitive man who seemed cowed by every circumstance, and particularly by the reactions of others. He appeared incapable of standing up for his own rights; an impotent sort who could not defend himself against the anger of others. If blamed for an act he had not committed, he typically hunched his shoulders, turning in on himself. In other words, he acted as though he were crippled with guilt for acts he had never performed.

In contrast, his master Lord Meritu was a verbal and emotional bully. Meritu verbally abused Talbot at every opportunity, and while virtually any other person would eventually have responded with anger, Talbot simply endured the torment. The servitor seemed incapable of expressing the natural anger (and even hatred) that Meritu would certainly engender in another man.

Eventually, a tremendous internal conflict arose between Talbot's self-effacing mien and his unquenched rage, which ultimately led to a tragic conclusion. Rather than facing the author of his misfortune, Meritu himself, Talbot vented his fury upon Meritu's young children. In short, Talbot poisoned these innocents and then ran off to the countryside.

Although Talbot never expressed it, his actions were the result of a desire to express his indignant wrath. Apparently some dark agency responded to this unspoken cry for help by turning Talbot into an infected lycanthrope. He became a wererat, in fact, with sunset as the trigger of his transfiguration. Now, every evening when the sun goes down, Talbot is finally able to express the rage within him. Unfortunately, however, he has no control over who becomes the victim

Both the *divine curse* and *ancient curse* spells can be found in *Domains of Dread*, pp. 177-178.

of this rage. . . .

Curses of Vengeance

The fact that infected lycanthropes frequently turn on those they love makes this affliction the logical result of a curse of vengeance. Although I have yet to personally encounter such a case, I have heard of almost a dozen incidents, all of which follow similar lines. An individual kills or seriously harms the loved ones of another, and in a transport of hatred this other cries out for a curse to fall upon the killer. The killer, in a form of divine justice perhaps, is then blighted with lycanthropy. In all of those cases, among the first victims of the new werebeast were his or her loved ones. However, in three rather unusual episodes, the person who brought down the curse eventually fell victim to the werebeast as well; such is the ironic justice of curses.

Mystical Curses

Magics such as a *wish* spell or the more specific *divine curse* and *ancient curse* spells also can inflict lycanthropy. As many spellcasters know, the intent of a *wish* is frequently perverted in some dire manner. Thus, when a *wish* causes lycanthropy, it is quite likely that this outcome was not what the caster intended.

Neither the *divine curse* nor the *ancient curse* spell suffers the same risk of perversion of intent. However, for the curse to take effect, the casting priest's deity must approve it. Only the most malignant deities would countenance the infliction of lycanthropy on anyone.

Removing the Curse

Most curses of vengeance and magical curses include some kind of escape clause. If the action in this clause is performed, the victim is freed of the taint of lycanthropy. This is not

necessarily the case for others who have contracted the dreaded affliction from the original curse victim. The fate of these secondary victims depends in large part upon the details of the original curse. Their own affliction may end the moment the curse is lifted from the original victim. If the original curse is particularly powerful, however, this may not happen. Once the original victim is free of the curse, all secondary victims can potentially be cured, just as if the original source of the affection had been slain.

Other Characteristics

Most maledictive lycanthropes resemble infected lycanthropes in all particulars. Otherwise, no set of characteristics is typical of the maledictive class; each curse can be unique. For that reason, and because maledictive lycanthropes are comparatively rare, I shall confine my discussions in subsequent chapters to heritable and pathologic lycanthropy.

Shapechangers and Lycanthropes

Lycanthropes are men and women who assume the shape of animals. They are not to be confused with other shapechangers such as wolfweres and jackalweres, which are animals that can masquerade as men and women. Despite their superficial likenesses, both types of creatures are profoundly different. All of the discussions in this volume concern lycanthropes.

Animalistic shapechangers do enjoy some magical benefits similar to those shown by lycanthropes. For example, jackalweres are harmed only by enchanted weapons or by those forged from cold iron. They also have the ability to change at will between three (or, in some rare cases, only two) aspects. Surely, some sages argue, this makes them kin to werebeasts.

Not so, I suspect. The major

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distinction is that shapechangers pass on no contagion to victims of their attacks. It is impossible to contract lycanthropy from a jackalwere, and that is the vital difference between the creatures.

I believe that there might, once, have been some kinship between lycanthropes and other shapechangers. Many centuries ago, it may be that a union between a lycanthrope in animal aspect and a normal animal gave rise to these beastweres. Unfortunately, there are few means to test and validate my hypothesis.

Origins of Lycanthropy

How did the blight of lycanthropy first come into the world? Many sages and scholars have addressed this problem. And many more legends—most quite literally incredible—have proposed more or less far-fetched answers.

One theory, embraced by many true lycanthropes, is that the creatures naturally evolved from normal, nonlycanthropic humans and demihumans. The symbolism incorporated into this view is compelling, if not totally convincing. First came the beast, in the form of proto-humanity, the precursors from which humankind arose. Then came humanity itself, in which the beast still exists, yet is suppressed and driven deep into the subconscious. And finally comes the lycanthrope, in which the beast and the socialized human are united in a balanced form. The beast is no longer denied or suppressed; instead, it is accepted, welcomed, cherished . . . *utilized*. Instead of conflicting duality, there is now unity. How this can *not* be considered progress and evolution, the proponents of this idea argue.

Then there are scholars, many of a theological background, who argue very much the opposite. Lycanthropes are the result of devolution, these sages propose. If progressing from animal to socialized human was evolution, how could releasing the

suppressed beast be anything but regression?

I find myself unable to fully accept either proposition. The latter position argues from ethics and morals, and hence is somewhat suspect. Not that I discount morals and ethics; quite the opposite, I consider them to be of overreaching importance. Yet morals and ethics are based on individual choice. They are not laws of nature, and the path from unethical or amoral action to what we consider civilized behavior is not a natural or pre-ordained progression.

The former position also lacks empirical substance. In my view of evolution, the next logical step for humanity would be a super-race, in which the beast is not present at all.

The beast is loose. It prowls the night around my village. At first it fed only on livestock, but now its tastes have—matured. In the past fortnight, full seven of my friends and neighbors have fallen to the beast, their throats torn out by its ripping teeth.

And yet, the nighttime landscape is not the only place the beast prowls. It haunts the internal landscape of my dreams as well. Is there some mental link between me and this fell creature? I must accept that there is, since my dreams seem to echo with details of the foul murders—details I could not know were our minds not somehow linked.

Yes, that must be the answer. . . .

—Anonymous

The Parasitic Theory

After considering the facts and speculations, I hold that true lycanthropy, that form which is genetically heritable, arose originally as an infection similar to the

pathologic lycanthropy we see in the world today.

I believe that the infective agent involved was a magically active parasite—perhaps akin to the tiny, unseen entities to which some sages attribute the spread of disease. I imagine, although I have little enough evidence for my position, that this parasite arose naturally, although perhaps in a time and place where the magical influx was somehow greater. It infected humans and demihumans alike, causing behavioral symptoms similar to those of hydrophobia, or rabies, which in effect unchained the beast within its victims. Yet since it was also magically active, it had other, more pervasive effects. In the manner of sympathetic magic, as the beast was released from within the victim, so did his body alter to reflect his symbolic nature.

At first I imagine that the destruction and suffering caused by those initial victims was great in the extreme, for in the first flush of its rage the beast cares little for others. In its earliest form, I believe that the infective agent proved to be a generally unsuccessful parasite, in that it caused the death of its hosts—not in the way of most other diseases, where sickness causes systemic damage that eventually proves fatal. Rather, the parasite led to death by forcing those around the victim to slay him in defense of their own lives.

Yet parasites adapt, given time. The lycanthropy agent probably did so, possibly by lessening the intensity of the bestial rages it caused. It allowed its victims to retain some of their intelligence, or perhaps mere animal cunning. At this point, I imagine that the victims of the parasite began to form small communities of their own, analogous to wolf packs or hunting groups.

This allowed the infectious agent to undergo its most significant and pernicious adaptation. Up to this point, I envision that the parasite was passed on in much the same way as today's

pathologic lycanthropy: through the saliva or perhaps the perspiration or other secretions of a lycanthrope, insinuated into the bloodstream of a victim. Now, however, a new vector of infection presented itself. The infected victims were able to breed.

Initially, the blight of lycanthropy was passed on from mother to offspring, due to the mixing of blood in the womb. In essence, progeny of lycanthrope parents were infected before birth by this time.

This, too, changed with time, or so I believe. Eventually the infective agent, the parasite, became incorporated into its victims (now its hosts). Eventually it became incapable of existing in its true form, separate from the host. In essence, it became a natural, innate characteristic of its hosts, passed on from generation to generation, now according to the laws and patterns of heredity and not of infection, much as are hair color and other attributes.

At this point, I believe that the various phenotypes of true werebeasts split off from the human and demihuman races. Werebeasts, regardless of their ability to assume human or demihuman form, are *not* human or demihuman. They have become totally distinct races. Some taxonomists consider them as distinct species, but I do not fully share this approach. True werebeasts *can* interbreed with humans and demihumans, producing fertile progeny, which implies that they are not distinct species after all.

Such is my belief, at least. It seems to me very unlikely that the truth of this theory will ever be determined. Not even the deities have been of assistance; in fact, they have been singularly unforthcoming when I have questioned them via commissioned spells.

In practice, of course, it hardly matters how lycanthropy first arose. The fact that it exists, and that it remains quite disturbingly prevalent, is sufficient for most people.

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Some important distinctions can be drawn between lycanthropes that exist on the Prime Material Plane and those that are born or infected specifically in the Demiplane of Dread.

First, the victim of a Prime Material lycanthrope has various options by which he or she might avoid the affliction. As described in *MONSTROUS MANUAL* tome, if the victim eats belladonna within an hour of the attack, there's a 25% chance that this will cure the affliction (or, more precisely, stop it from occurring in the first place). This possibility of reprieve isn't available to victims of RAVENLOFT werebeasts. Victims of such a monster's attack can certainly eat belladonna (and suffer the 1d4 days of incapacitation that this poison inflicts), but there's exactly *zero* chance that it will prevent the onset of lycanthropy, should the die roll (2% per point of damage suffered) indicate infection. The PCs don't have to realize this, of course.

Furthermore, *curing* lycanthropy is considerably easier outside Ravenloft. Outside the Demiplane of Dread, all that's required is the casting of a *remove curse* on the night of a full moon (or on the night preceding or following a full moon). If the infected character makes a successful save vs. polymorph, the curse is broken.

Not so within the Demiplane; the process is much more involved. First, the original source of the contagion, the true lycanthrope that infected the victim or started the chain of contagion, must first be destroyed. If that creature is not destroyed, *no* cure of its victims (or its victims' victims) is possible.

Once the master lycanthrope is dead, the victim must perform a ritual of piety and penance to cleanse himself. The specifics of this ritual are left to the DM, to be determined by the circumstances and character in question.

Next, the victim must assume his bestial form (this form must somehow be triggered). While in this form, a priest must cast the following spell upon the victim: *atonement*, *cure disease*, and *remove curse*. During this time, the victim's player must make a saving throw vs. death magic (due to the excruciating pain). Success indicates the cure is complete. Failure means that the victim is likely doomed to the dual existence of a lycanthrope for the duration of his life. In many cases, this life is fortunately brief, as the priest or other attendants commonly slay the victim on the spot. In death, the victim regains his human form on final time.

Additionally, 10th-level rangers have the ability to create an herbal draught that has a chance to cure lycanthropy. This ability is defined on page 251 of the *Domains of Dread* book and may be used to supplement or replace the rules above.

Furthermore, there's more variability among RAVENLOFT werebeasts than in those found elsewhere. Not all lycanthropes are triggered by the full moon, and not all are vulnerable to silver. Certainly each infected lycanthrope has a trigger, and each werebeast (regardless of classification) has a nonmagical vulnerability. However, in the Demiplane of Dread it's much harder to predict what these elements are.

Finally, infected lycanthropes in Ravenloft are much more likely to choose friends and loved ones as their victims. Outside the Demiplane, werebeasts target either personal friends or enemies, making no distinction between the two. (As stated in the *MONSTROUS MANUAL* book, all that matters is the strength of the love-or-hate-binding werebeast and victim.) Such is the dark, horrifying nature of Ravenloft that friends, family, and lovers are much more likely to suffer.

I never knew my natural parents. My guardians never spoke of them, never seemed to know anything about them, never even showed any curiosity. Thus my own curiosity was never satisfied. I dreamed—as most adoptive children do—that my birth parents were a great lord and lady, perhaps a king and queen. I dreamed that they would one day find me, take me away from my humdrum life, and anoint me as prince of a distant land.

I always thought I was different from the other children around me. I was faster; stronger, and fiercer sometimes. I felt more of a kinship with the village dogs, particularly the mayor's vicious hunting dogs, than I did with human children.

Even then, at the age of ten, I had the inescapable belief that my mysterious heritage would set me apart from those around me. Three years later, with the onset of puberty, I realized I was right.

How I wish that I had been wrong....

—Anonymous

CHAPTER TWO: A BIOLOGICAL SURVEY

Werebeast Phenotypes



Werebeasts come in a staggering number of phenotypes, each distinguished by its animal form. During my travels, I have personally encountered evidence of a baker's dozen, from the common werewolf to the enigmatic wereraven. If that were not enough, I have heard credible rumors of roughly another half-dozen varieties. This does not include the scores of more-or-less fantastical tales which describe everything from werefrogs to were-elephants.

I have determined certain guidelines as to what animal forms are viable. In my experience, there is only one strict prohibition: a lycanthrope *never* has a pure herbivore (plant-eater) as its animal aspect. To my knowledge, this

prohibition has never been broken, and anyone who claims to have encountered a wererabbit or a werewolf has almost certainly been hallucinating, perhaps after an extended visit to the local tavern.

For the vast majority of lycanthropes, the beast within is a carnivore, a creature that subsists on the flesh of other animals. This category includes werewolves, weretigers, werejackals, and the like. Though less common, certain lycanthropes do assume the form of omnivores, creatures whose diet comprises both plants and animal flesh. Examples include werebears and wererats.

Whatever their diet, the majority of animal aspects are mammals—furred, warm-blooded, air-breathing, and viviparous. This is not a hard-and-fast rule, however. Several nonmammalian creatures are worthy of note, including the wereraven, the weresnake, the werecrocodile, and the dreaded wereshark.

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Whatever their form or phenotype, werebeasts in the RAVENLOFT setting share a common ability: they can see in the dark as well as any character with infravision. Further, when the moon is full, werebeasts can see as well as they do in broad daylight.

For the record, I have personally encountered lycanthropes with the following animal forms: wolf, bat, boar, rat, tiger, badger, bear, fox, shark, crocodile, raven, seal, and jackal. Other phenotypes which I believe to exist, although I have not seen them myself, include cats, snakes, coyotes, lions, jaguars, walruses, and—may the gods help those who sail the seas—killer whales!

Vulnerabilities

Lycanthropes of all types are daunting foes. Magical weapons [of +1 or better enchantment] can strike them and inflict damage normally, but most other weapons are useless against a lycanthrope in its animal or man-beast form; the wounds caused by a non-magical weapon heal almost instantaneously.

When in human form, an infected lycanthrope is as vulnerable to attack as any normal man or woman. Though this is not so for the true lycanthrope. In my experience, a true lycanthrope in human form may appear to sustain a wound from an ordinary weapon, but in reality suffers no ill or lasting effects. The apparent wound fades quickly, sometimes in an hour or so, but the change is not instantaneous. In this way, true lycanthropes can maintain a ruse of being normal humans. (Perhaps this is for the best. I shudder to imagine the ignorant hunter who might stab one innocent after another, looking for the one who fails to bleed profusely.)

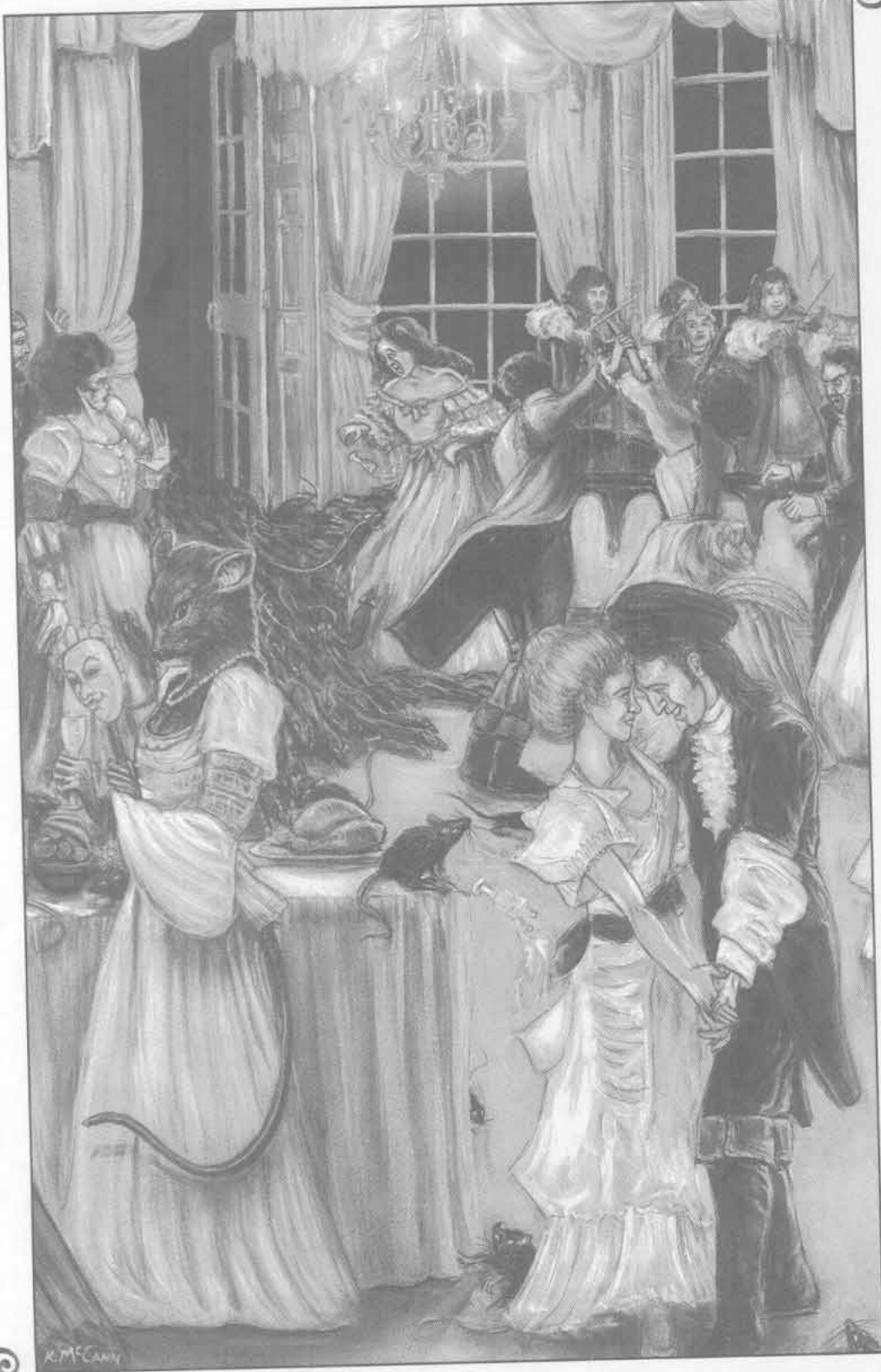
Yet the situation for a would-be

hunter of lycanthropes is far from hopeless. Every werebeast has at least one nonmagical vulnerability, one item or substance which can bring about its death. If common lore is to be believed, no lycanthrope is immune to silver weapons. While that may be true in some mythical or distant realm, it is not true in any land I have visited. Rather, the vulnerability varies from phenotype to phenotype, and less frequently, from individual to individual within a single phenotype. The werebeast hunter who relies solely on a silver weapon will inevitably face his own grisly death, or worse.

Most phenotypes are susceptible to some herbal concoction or naturally occurring element (even those who *can* be harmed by silver weapons). While some of these compounds are poisonous to humans, their effectiveness against specific lycanthropes is unmatched. The slightest trace of the appropriate compound, whether ingested or insinuated into a wound, may be enough to slay a susceptible werebeast instantly. Most lycanthropes find the smell of their chemical nemesis distasteful, although this reaction is not so strong that an individual cannot suppress it if circumstances so warrant.

A werebeast has a 75% chance of detecting any trace of its chemical nemesis in its food. If a piercing weapon is coated with this substance and subsequently wounds the creature, the beast is allowed a save vs. poison to avoid the fatal effects of the substance.

It remains for the DM to determine werebeasts' susceptibility (if any) to "common" poisons; those substances that are poisonous to human beings such as belladonna or arsenic. One possible default rule is that all werebeasts gain a +4 bonus to their saving throws against these substances.



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Below I have set out what I have managed to learn about the vulnerabilities of different phenotypes. (While I recognize that other werebeasts exist, I have not been able to gain such information about them.) Note that infected lycanthropes share the same vulnerabilities as the creature who infected them. Also note that none of my statements below is categorical; it would be unwise to bet one's life on this information.

Werebat: The vast majority of werebats are vulnerable to weapons made of silver, as are werewolves. One rationale I have heard put forward is that the color and nature of silver represents the full moon, which is a frequent trigger for lycanthropes. (Since not all lycanthropes have this as their trigger, I am not totally convinced of this, but I have nothing better to propose.) Also note that many werebats are vulnerable to the herb skullcap.

Werebadger: I have encountered only a few of these creatures, so I must emphasize that my experiences may not be representative of an entire phenotype. However, those I battled proved vulnerable to silver weapons. Upon the advice of a Vistana (which I followed only with the greatest reluctance), I tricked one werebadger into ingesting poppy seeds. This substance proved fatal to the werebeast.

Werebear: Most werebears are vulnerable to a cold-forged weapon, provided the weapon is made of the purest iron. The symbolic rationale for this vulnerability seems to be that cold-forging iron requires great physical force, a characteristic that also applies to werebears. In addition, many werebears are susceptible to belladonna, or "deadly nightshade."

(Regarding cold-forged iron: According to the armorers I've consulted, most ordinary weapons are made of low-grade steel. Pure iron is rarely used, for it is softer than steel, it

takes less of an edge, and it is less resilient. Thus, a would-be hunter desiring a cold-iron blade must commission a blacksmith to create it. Furthermore, most weapons are forged—beaten into shape—when the metal is red-hot and pliable. In contrast, cold-forged weapons cannot be heated. The iron must be beaten into shape while it is cold. Obviously, this is a much more difficult procedure.)

Wereboar: In general, wereboars are vulnerable to spears made of sharpened oak. The entire spear must be free of any metal or stone reinforcement; a metal spear point renders the weapon ineffective. Natural boars are sylvan creatures, and they are most frequently hunted with spears (thus the expression, "bleeding like a stuck pig"). This seems to be the symbolism for this vulnerability. As for an herbal bane, many wereboars are susceptible to camphor.

Werecocodile: Perhaps because they are relatively primitive creatures, werecocodiles are vulnerable to primitive weapons. The majority can be struck normally by cutting, piercing, or bludgeoning weapons made of flint. Flint weapons may have wooden or other handles, so long as the actual cutting edge, piercing point, or place of impact is unreinforced flint. Mandrake appears to be the herbal nemesis of most werecocodiles, though I am uncertain whether any singular part of the plant is responsible.

Werefox: Surprisingly, most werefoxes are vulnerable to bludgeoning or piercing weapons formed from the bones of any canine creature (dogs, coyotes, wolves, or jackals). I am intrigued by the possibility that this is a form of symbolic magic, since fox hunts using dogs to chase and kill the prey are common in several regions I have visited. In addition to the weapons described, many werefoxes seem vulnerable to juniper berries.

Summary of Vulnerabilities

Creature	Weapon Vulnerability	Chemical Susceptibility
Werebat	Silver (piercing)	Skullcap
Werebadger	Silver	Poppy seeds or oil
Werebear	Cold-forged iron	Belladonna
Wereboar	Oaken spear	Camphor
Wrecrocodile	Flint	Mandrake
Werefox	Canine bone	Juniper berry
Werejackal	Copper	Fennel
Wererat	Varied	Varied
Wereraven	Silver	Unknown
Wereseal	Whalebone, whale tooth	Amaranth
Wereshark	Petrified wood or silver	Mangrove
Weretiger	Obsidian	Ginseng
Werewolf	Silver	Wolfsbane (aconite)

Weapon Effects

1d10 Roll*	Weapon	Type Consequences
1	Cold-forged iron	-1 to hit
2	Wood (choose a specific type)	-1 to hit, -1 to damage
3	Flint	Weapon breaks on attack roll of a natural "1" (piercing or cutting weapon only; -2 to hit; -1 penalty to damage)
4	Bone	-1 to damage (bludgeoning weapon); weapon breaks on attack roll of natural "1" (piercing weapon)
5	Copper	-2 to hit, -1 to damage
6	Bronze	None
7	Lead	Bludgeoning weapons only
8	Silver	None
9	Obsidian	Cutting weapons only
10	Gold	-3 to hit

* To determine a new werebeast's vulnerability at random, roll 1d10.

The special weapons used to combat lycanthropes present their own set of difficulties. For example, characters who attack with cold-iron weapons incur a -1 attack roll penalty. That's because cold iron can't hold an edge as well as steel. Copper is even softer, increasing the attack roll penalty to -2 and carrying a -1 penalty to damage. Since these weapons are custom made, their cost is whatever the blacksmith wishes to charge (i.e., "as much as the market will bear").

Spears or other piercing weapons made of pure wood, without metal or stone tips or reinforcement, have an attack roll penalty of -1. Such weapons also carry a -1 penalty to damage.

Flint weapons have fragile edges and points. They carry a -2 attack roll penalty and a -1 penalty to damage. Furthermore, each time a character uses a piercing or cutting weapon of flint, a natural 1 on the attack roll means the weapon has broken, and is useless. This rule does not apply to bludgeoning weapons, however.

Bones are lighter than the materials normally used for bludgeoning weapons. Large bones can serve as clubs, but they carry a -1 penalty to damage. Bones also can be sharpened and used as piercing weapons. They're brittle, however, and will break if the player rolls a natural 1 on the attack roll.

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Werejackal: Weapons made of beaten copper are effective against most werejackals. This soft metal is rarely used for normal blades, so copper weapons must be custom-made. I do not understand the symbolism of this vulnerability. As for other banes, some werejackals seem extremely vulnerable to fennel.

Wererat: These fell creatures show the greatest variation in their vulnerability. Some are susceptible to silver weapons, others to weapons of cold iron, still others to implements of wood or stone. This variability makes these, perhaps the least powerful of werebeasts, quite difficult to destroy. They show similar variability with regard to chemical susceptibilities. There is no single chemical which can be depended upon to harm any significant proportion of wererats.

Wereraven: Most of these creatures are vulnerable to weapons made of silver, possibly for the same reasons described for wererats. If these creatures have an herbal bane, I have not discovered it; wereravens do not appear susceptible to any chemical poison.

Wereséal (Seawolves): Weapons made from the bones or teeth of whales are particularly efficacious against most wereseals, since carnivorous whales are among the natural enemies of this animal aspect. In addition, these fell creatures are usually susceptible to amaranth.

Wereshark: The majority of, but certainly not all, weresharks are vulnerable to silver weapons. Most others are susceptible to weapons made of two materials: petrified wood (whether the petrification occurs naturally through age or magical intervention) and flint. (Like werecrocodiles, weresharks are primitive creatures, and this is reflected in their vulnerabilities.) I know only of one herbal nemesis for weresharks: mangrove leaves. Unfortunately, it does not appear to be

equally effective against all members of this phenotype.

Weretiger: Weretigers are frequently vulnerable to cutting and piercing weapons made from obsidian, a resilient volcanic glass which can take a lethal edge. If there is a symbolic reason for this vulnerability, I do not know it. In addition, many weretigers are said to be susceptible to ginseng.

Werewolf: Most, but not all, werewolves are vulnerable to weapons made of silver. Solid silver is not required; even a weapon coated with a thin layer of this metal will usually suffice. In addition, some werewolves are highly susceptible to wolfsbane, also known as aconite, a highly toxic relative of horseradish.

The Transfiguration

The transfiguration is the process by which lycanthropes change from one form (or aspect) to another. It takes approximately one minute, during which time the creature is unable to take any action whatsoever. It cannot move, attack, or defend itself. It is aware of its surroundings, however, and can act appropriately the instant the transfiguration ends.

During the transfiguration, the creature's body is racked with convulsions as its skeletal structure

During the round in which it transfigures, a werebeast loses any Dexterity bonus to its AC. Furthermore, it cannot use a shield. Characters who attack a transfiguring werebeast gain a +2 bonus on attack rolls.

The sight of a werebeast undergoing a transfiguration is so dreadful that anyone witnessing it is subject to a horror check. If the creature is transfiguring into a particularly powerful beast or man-beast form, a fear check might also be required, at the DM's discretion.

Infected lycanthropes must save vs. death magic to avoid dropping anything they are carrying.

and musculature shift into their new orientations. Observers can see the bones and muscles shifting around under the skin, a process which is accompanied by a wet, tearing sound. For true lycanthropes, the transfiguration usually is an experience of transcendent joy. For infected lycanthropes, however, it is one of mortal agony. Because of this, true lycanthropes are quite likely to hold on to any objects or equipment they happen to be carrying during the transfiguration while infected lycanthropes are more likely to drop whatever they hold.

Clothing and Armor

While the transfiguration changes the form of a werebeast's body, it obviously does not transform the creature's clothing or equipment. In most cases, the man-beast form is larger and more heavily muscled than the human aspect. Depending on the particular phenotype, the metamorphosis from human to animal form may involve *either* an increase or decrease in overall size. For example, a wererat's animal aspect is smaller than man-sized, while a werebear's is larger. This size differential will determine what effect the transfiguration has on any clothing or armor worn by the creature.

If the transfiguration decreases the creature's overall size, then clothing and equipment pose little inconvenience. Elaborate clothing or a complex suit of armor might momentarily limit a much smaller aspect's freedom of movement—a two-foot-long rat is almost caged in a suit of plate mail, for example—in all but the rarest instances however, the werebeast can quickly free itself from

such impediments. [At the DM's option, this may take an additional round.]

But what if the new aspect, the one into which the creature is transfiguring, is larger than the one that donned the accoutrements? With all but the most robust and confining clothing, there is little problem. The force with which the skeletal and muscular changes occur is almost always sufficient to burst any clothing at the seams. This happens so fast that the creature is not discommoded, since the torn fragments simply fall away.

Such is not the case with all armor, however. Suits of armor are obviously more robust than normal clothing; they are designed to withstand abuse as well as to resist being torn away. So resilient are most types of armor that they can cause significant harm to a werebeast unwise enough—or unlucky enough—to change into a larger aspect while wearing them. Generally speaking, the more protection a suit of armor provides,

Calculations for constriction damage caused by armor are optional. Damage occurs during the round in which the transfiguration takes place. (Note that this damage is *not* healed during the transfiguration.) At the end of that round, the armor falls away; straps and the like tear, or the armor bursts asunder at the seams. There is no saving throw against this damage.

Constriction Damage

Armor Type	Damage (hp)
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

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the more damage it can inflict on the werebeast wearing it.

When a werebeast changes back to human form, it will almost invariably be naked. The experience of returning to one's self, naked, bruised, and in a strange place, is often the first clue to an infected lycanthrope of his affliction.

Damage and Healing

The transfiguration is a process by which the entire body modifies itself to conform to a different pattern or standard. Since this standard describes an unwounded, whole body, it should come as no surprise that the transfiguration can effectively cause cuts and contusions to vanish.

Whenever a lycanthrope changes form, it heals a significant proportion of any wounds it has suffered in its previous aspect. In other words, if a wererat in rat form suffers a laceration, it may be able to heal that wound, at least in part, simply by changing to its human aspect.

I have heard tell that lycanthropes in certain distant and mysterious lands can heal by transfiguration only that damage which they suffered while in animal aspect, in other words, by changing from animal to human form. However, in the lands I'm familiar with, any transfiguration will have salutary effect. Note that lycanthropes will be cautious when it comes to transfiguring while in combat, even if they could benefit from healing, because the process briefly leaves them at the mercy of their foes.

Memory Loss and Retention

True lycanthropes suffer no memory loss due to the transfiguration. Their personalities are unchanged and their memories unaltered, regardless of their current aspect.

As mentioned earlier, they are even totally aware of their surroundings during the transfiguration itself. Would-

Each time an infected lycanthrope returns to human form, it heals 10% to 60% (1d6 x 10%) of any damage it has suffered since its last transfiguration. The same rule applies to true lycanthropes whenever they assume a different aspect. DMs who wish to avoid a little extra bookkeeping may rule that the transfiguration heals 10% to 60% of any outstanding damage, without regard to when it was inflicted.

Note that reversion to human form upon death is not the same as transfiguration, and hit points are not regenerated when this occurs.

be werebeast slayers who count on a moment of disorientation or shock immediately after their foe's transfiguration are bound to be sorely disappointed.

The situation with infected lycanthropes is more complex. As I have discussed previously, an infected lycanthrope in human form will remember his actions in secondary aspect vaguely at best. Those memories will have the surreal, indistinct characteristics of a nightmare incompletely recalled upon waking. Without other, more tangible clues such as inexplicable wounds, few victims of the dread affliction will believe those memories are anything but nightmares.

Further, even the transformation itself cannot be clearly recalled. For the present purposes, one should consider an infected lycanthrope to be in its secondary aspect from the moment the first transfiguration starts to the instant the second one ends. Thus, he will not remember clearly the torment of shifting to animal form or back again . . . although faint echoes of these agonies might be part of his "nightmares."

For infected lycanthropes, memory loss is unidirectional. In other words, a werebeast in human form will not

The DM decides whether a deity withholds spells from an infected priest as punishment for the actions of the beast within.

recall what he has done as an animal. However, while the werebeast is in animal form, he *will* remember virtually everything that he knows in human form, though bloodlust colors his attitudes and sensibilities. This is how an infected werebeast successfully hunts down loved ones and enemies alike; it recalls all pertinent facts about its prey. Such knowledge includes any precautions, tricks, and traps that the prospective target may have mentioned to the marauder while the latter was in human aspect. Further, the ravening beast recalls any precautions that he himself might have taken while in human aspect whether or not the human suspected that his own dark side was a thing to be feared.

I recall one particularly fateful case in Darkon. Unbeknownst to anyone, including herself, a well-known and well-loved merchant was an infected wererat. When a mysterious, marauding beast started to slay this merchant's closest friends and associates, the survivors asked for her aid in protecting them. She helped them design cunning tricks and traps that should, by all rights, have kept even the shrewdest intruder out of their homes. Then the marauder penetrated these security precautions as though it knew everything about them . . . which of course it did.

Eventually, the merchant began to suspect the truth. So she set snares and traps around the periphery of her own home, hoping to trap herself while in the form of the beast as she left the building for her nightly rampage. Although a cunning ploy, this also failed, since her beast form remembered all of the precautions she had taken while in human aspect. Eventually, she had no choice but to

voice her suspicions to her neighbors and ask them to lock her up at night. Fortunately for all concerned, that was when I came upon the scene. After having tracked down the true wererat that originally infected the woman, I was able to arrange for her cure.

Effects on Character Skills

Some victims of pathologic lycanthropy have learned specific skills before they contracted the dread affliction. For example, they may have acquired prodigious weapon skills. Or they may have learned how to wield the powers of magic. How does the transfiguration affect these skills?

As long as a victim of pathologic lycanthropy is in human form, the affliction has little effect on his skills. He can wield his sword or cast his spells as effectively as he did before he acquired the infection.

While I have heard that certain specific attributes are altered, this seems to be rare. For example, those skilled woodsmen known to some as "rangers" frequently show unusual degrees of animal empathy, being able to calm wild beasts with their very presence. This ability may evaporate if the ranger is infected with lycanthropy.

Priests of the more beneficent gods may find that their deities become somewhat unresponsive. Once the lycanthropy has started to manifest itself—that is, once the individual has transfigured for the first time—a priest may find himself unable to acquire and use the more potent types of clerical magic. I suspect that this arises more from the actions of the person while in secondary aspect than from the simple fact of his infection, however. Any priest who acts against the tenets of his faith will be punished, and the actions of a transfigured lycanthrope will almost certainly be against the tenets of all but the most bloodthirsty religions. Certain deities, especially those who follow the precepts of

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In general; all class-related skills will be lost on transition to animal form: a rogue's lock-picking and climbing skills, for example, or a warrior's combat skills. An infected lycanthrope in animal form has the abilities and immunities of the werebeast that infected him. This means his THACO, AC, damage, saving throws, hit points, and special attacks and defenses are those of the werebeast.

It's up to individual DMs as to which nonweapon proficiencies a lycanthrope retains in animal form. In general, active skills—those that require some degree of dexterity—are lost, while passive skills involving knowledge and perception are retained.

forgiveness, might not exact such penalties on their priests. I do not know this for sure, however.

What, then, about skills acquired through training and experience? Does an infected lycanthrope retain these special abilities even when he becomes the beast?

In general, the answer is no. In animal aspect, a lycanthrope's ability to attack and to defend itself are those of the aspect itself. It matters not whether the victim is, in human form, a sickly peasant or the mightiest warrior in the world. In animal aspect, both of these folk have the same physical strength and combat skill (assuming both are transformed into the same phenotype, of course).

An infected lycanthrope does not retain its human mentality when in animal aspect. While knowledge of facts is retained, all skills depending on mental outlook and philosophy are lost with the transfiguration. Thus, the animal aspect of a spellcaster *cannot* wield the powers of magic.

As noted, memory is maintained in animal aspect, albeit possibly in a modified form. (Otherwise the beast

would not be able to evade traps set by itself in human form, and could not track down its victims using knowledge of their habits and whereabouts.) It thus seems logical to me that skills based largely on *factual* knowledge will be maintained in animal aspect. For example, if a woman skilled in heraldry becomes infected with the scourge, she will retain her ability to recognize coats of arms even while in animal form.

What about true lycanthropes? Since they were born as werebeasts and surely will die as such, they have no "previous skills" to lose. The issue of what special skills a werebeast can acquire is discussed in Chapter Three.

Diet

Infected and true lycanthropes differ significantly in their eating habits and dietary requirements. Thus, I shall deal with each type of lycanthrope separately.

Infected Lycanthropes

While in human aspect, victims of pathologic lycanthropy experience no significant change in their need for food; it remains just as it was before they contracted the contagion. Although their preferences alter somewhat, leaning more toward rare cuts of meat, they can still subsist on normal diets, and can extract sustenance from fruits and vegetables.

As soon as infected lycanthropes assume the shape of a beast, however, things are very different. The creatures will immediately try to eat their fill of fresh, raw flesh. The amount required varies by phenotype and matches the requirements set out for true lycanthropes below. (For example, when an infected werewolf assumes its animal form, it will start hunting for 20 pounds of fresh meat.) Very few infected lycanthropes maintain their secondary aspect for more than eight to twelve hours, however, so the

Type of Creature	Estimated Requirement (Daily in pounds)
Werebat	2
Werebear*	50
Wereboar**	20
Wrecrocodile**	50
Werefox	5
Werejackal**	20
Wererat **	2
Wereraven **	1
Weresael	50
Wereshark	75
Weretiger	50
Werewolf**	25

* Note that such a creature may also be quite creative in fulfilling its dietary requirements. I once observed a bear who literally subsisted on thousands of moths each day!

** Indicates scavenger.

chance of starvation is slim. Once the beasts become human again, their need for flesh is diminished. Nonetheless, infected lycanthropes that retain their animalistic form for extended periods could conceivably starve if opportunities for killing were limited.

True Lycanthropes

Regardless of phenotype, all true lycanthropes must eat meat to survive. Although they *can* eat vegetables and fruit (and will do so to bolster their masquerade while in human aspect), they gain little nourishment or enjoyment from doing so.

Some phenotypes can subsist on previously killed prey, on flesh that has been dead for hours or even days. This ability matches the natural feeding habits of the base phenotype. If the animal form resembles a creature that is naturally a scavenger—for example, wererats, werewolves, and werejackals—then the werebeast can eat older flesh. If the animal aspect is naturally a hunter—weretigers or weresharks, for example—the werebeast can gain sustenance only

from flesh that is freshly killed.

Regardless, *all* werebeasts vastly prefer freshly killed prey.

A wary hunter of werebeasts does not confuse the need for a fresh kill with the inability to stomach cooked or aged meat, however. Even a weretiger could enter an ordinary household and dine heartily on a venison stew. While the creature would gain no sustenance from the meal, and might have to feign any enjoyment, it would not be harmed by the experience.

For werebeasts who assume the form of animal scavengers, the restrictions on what meat they can and cannot eat is very similar to the requirements of normal humans. Thus, if meat is in a state fit for humans to eat without serious risk of sickness, a scavenger lycanthrope can also eat it.

Scavenger lycanthropes can and do preserve flesh, using techniques similar to those used by humans, that is, spicing and salting. Such techniques decrease the nutritional value of the flesh, however, by a factor of two. Thus, scavenger lycanthropes must eat twice as much preserved meat as normal. Even scavenger werebeasts can *never* extract sustenance from cooked food. Cooking instantly and irrevocably destroys the nutritional value of meat for a werebeast.

As a general rule, a true lycanthrope must eat an amount of flesh roughly equal to the amount necessary to sustain a natural specimen of its animal aspect. For example, a two-foot-long giant rat would eat perhaps two pounds of food each day. This means a wererat must eat two pounds of raw flesh each day to sustain itself. Food other than raw flesh—or, in the case of nonscavenger werebeasts, other than fresh raw flesh—does not count toward this total. Thus the wererat would still have to eat two full pounds of flesh, no matter how much fruit, bread, and vegetables it otherwise consumed.

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Van Richten's estimates for dietary requirements are quite accurate, but he fails to answer several key questions. For instance, how much flesh can a werebeast glean from the average man? From a goblin? For a simple solution, use the following guidelines in play: On average, a man-sized victim yields 100 pounds of flesh (including skin, marrow, and organs). A creature classified as "large" yields 150 pounds, while a creature that is size "small" yields 50.

For each day beyond four that a lycanthrope goes without sufficient food, the creature loses *one-eighth* of its hit-point total (rounded up). Each day, it receives a saving throw vs. polymorph to resist the day's loss. Note that the loss is of one-eighth of the creature's *total* normal hit points.

For example, a wererat whose hit points usually add up to 24 is forced to go without food. For the first four days, it suffers no ill effects (except, perhaps for an increasingly foul mood). On the fifth day, and on each

subsequent day, it must save vs. polymorph or lose 3 hit points (one-eighth of its total).

Note that a werebeast cannot regain hit points lost to starvation simply by changing form. (The reverse is also true; obviously, a werebeast cannot heal combat damage simply by eating a square meal.) Although magic can restore the points lost to starvation, the mere passage of time has no effect. The creature regains all starvation points as soon as it devours *all* of the flesh it should have eaten up to that point.

Progressive starvation has another consequence. A starving werebeast has an increased chance of suffering bloodlust. (Bloodlust is discussed in more detail on page 150.) For each day beyond four that the creature goes without sufficient food, it suffers a -1 penalty to its save vs. polymorph to avoid bloodlust. This penalty vanishes as soon as the creature makes up for all the time that it's gone without sufficient food.

From my own research and encounters, I provide the following estimates of food requirements for different phenotypes. I must stress that these are estimates; variation between individuals may exist. Also, this does not take into account the possibility that certain werebeasts may *prefer* to eat more than others.

The figures above represent my best guess at *average* requirements. A true lycanthrope can go for up to four days without suitable food before it begins to suffer any ill effects. This assumes, however, that it eventually makes up for the food it has missed.

Note that even the wererat discussed above will probably slay one animal (or person) every day (or couple of days, at least). Since it prefers fresh meat, it will probably make a kill just to get its two pounds of flesh.

All lycanthropes appear to prefer human and humanoid flesh to that of animals. This preference is not so strong that the creatures cannot override it when necessary, however. They can derive sustenance from *any* form of flesh (keeping in mind the restrictions I have set out above, of course).

Life Span and Lifecycle

Unlike the undead creatures I have studied, werebeasts follow a natural cycle from birth to death. They are born, they mature to adulthood, and they eventually die of old age. As noted below, however, this pattern varies between infected and true lycanthropes.

Infected Lycanthropes

When a person contracts pathologic lycanthropy, his or her natural life span is unchanged. Thus, a human blighted with lycanthropy will rarely live past 75 or 80, while an elf with the similar affliction might have to suffer it for half a millennium or more.

To the best of my knowledge, regardless of the age and maturity of the victim, the animal aspect is always that of a mature creature in the prime of its life. (This quite obviously puts the lie to that off-quoted folktale that an infected werewolf must only put up with the affliction for 15 or so years, after which time the *wolf within* will have died of old age.) Whether the victim is a youth or a centenarian, the animal aspect is always powerful and vigorous.

Does this mean, then, that an infant—perhaps infected with the blight while in the womb—may undergo the transfiguration the first time it experiences its trigger? Could a baby, on the occasion of its first full moon, become a ravening werewolf? Such is not the case. In my experience, infected lycanthropes will not undergo the transfiguration until they have reached puberty (at whatever age that occurs for the species in question). Up until this time, they do not react to the trigger stimulus.

Why is this? I believe that the infective agent insinuated into the bloodstream requires its own trigger—something to make it active. Presumably, the vast physiological changes of puberty provide such a trigger.

According to many tales, infected children do respond to their trigger conditions in subtle ways. Rather than transfiguring into the beast, they exhibit a strong or inappropriate emotional reaction to the trigger. Thus, a child who will one day become a wolf when the moon is full may respond to a full moon with rather

Statistics measuring the Strength and Dexterity of common werebeasts in hybrid form are listed on page 138. These figures, and the accompanying notes on aging, apply to any creature in man-beast form, pathologic or infected.

bestly behavior. In short, the child may exhibit a monthly lunacy. As of yet, I have found no direct evidence to support this notion, however.

Other aspects of the life cycle—sexual maturity, senility, and the end of fertility—are all unaffected by the blight of lycanthropy. Victims of this dread affliction reach all these signposts of life at the same ages as others of their race.

It should be pointed out, however, that the *animal aspects* never reach such signposts. No matter how old the human aspect, the beast form will never grow senile, nor will it suffer other visible or physiological effects of aging.

Of course, some infected lycanthropes have a hybrid as their secondary aspect. (They take the form of a man-beast.) In that case, the hybrid form shows the same outward signs of aging as the werebeast's primary form.

True Lycanthropes

The overall life span of a true lycanthrope seems to be approximately that of the race which its primary aspect resembles. Thus a werebeast that can appear human will have a life span of about 70 years, while a creature that seems to be an elf can live for over half a millennium.

I have been led to understand that, in certain distant lands which I have never had the chance to visit, the offspring of true lycanthropes mature quite differently from normal children. (For example, wererat offspring reach maturity in about two years.) This does

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not match my personal experience, however.

Everywhere that I have had occasion to visit, the offspring of true lycanthropes always appear to be normal human infants. Some, but not all, exhibit some of the subtle bestial characteristics described in a previous section (see Chapter One), such as slightly elongated forefingers. Otherwise, children who inherit lycanthropy grow and mature at the same rate as others of their apparent race or species.

Like infected children, the immature offspring of true werebeasts cannot change shape. The transfiguration is beyond their grasp, and they remain in human aspect. When they reach puberty, however, the situation changes rapidly.

At some point early in puberty, the child undergoes its first transfiguration. The exact moment cannot be predicted, nor can the metamorphosis be halted or controlled. Even the aspect assumed is uncertain; the child may become either the animal or the man-beast (assuming the phenotype exhibits all three aspects). Once transformed, the child cannot predict how long the change will last. For a period measured in days, the child has absolutely no control over its body, which changes from aspect to aspect randomly.

This period of uncontrollable change lasts for $1d3+1$ days. During this time, the lycanthrope changes aspect every $1d6$ hours. For each change, randomly determine which aspect it assumes.

Each time the lycanthrope assumes its animal or man-beast form, it must make a successful save vs. polymorph with a -2 penalty to avoid bloodlust. (Bloodlust is described in detail on page 150.)

Without direct training from an adult lycanthrope of identical phenotype, there's only a 50% chance that a young werebeast will learn to control its shapeshifting. If it fails this die roll (it only gets one chance), its random changes occur every $1d6$ days (not hours). It still has no warning when a change is going to occur or which of its aspects it will assume.

Understandably, this period is terrifying for the young lycanthrope, even if its parents have told it what to expect. When in secondary or tertiary aspect, there is a very real risk that the creature will fly into bloodlust.

For obvious reasons, the parents of a young true lycanthrope will find some excuse for separating the youth from human society before the onset of puberty. In some secure location, they will monitor the progress of their offspring, helping it gain control of its transfigurations. This training period may last for days or weeks, depending on the personality of the child, and the care with which its parents try to teach it [in other words, DM's discretion]. At the end of this time, the creature will have full control of its shapeshifting ability, and will rarely (if ever) undergo transfiguration without actively willing itself to do so.

What about young lycanthropes who are separated from their parents, or those who may even be unaware of their true nature? (I have known one such case, an unfortunate child whose adoptive parents were forced to slay him when he became a wererat and tried to kill them.) Without guidance, it is possible that even an orphaned child could learn to control its transfiguration. The learning process takes much longer without suitable guidance, of course, extending from days or weeks to weeks or months. Some individuals can *never* learn how

to control their transfigurations, however. With time, the random shifts become less frequent, but they never completely vanish. For obvious reasons, these *individuals* cannot successfully masquerade as humans. Neither are they accepted by their own kind, and thus are doomed to solitary (and usually short) lives.

Aging and True Lycanthropes

True lycanthropes never assume the form of immature animals. Nor, in my experience, is there such a thing as a child-beast hybrid. When the first change comes upon the creature, its other aspects are fully mature in all characteristics. This to not say that time does not touch the true lycanthrope, however. Unlike their infected brethren, true lycanthropes appear to age in *all* their aspects.

In *animal* form, the changes wrought by age are largely cosmetic. The fur on the animal's ears and muzzle becomes whiter, the teeth discolor, and the eyes become steadily more rheumy and bloodshot. Such aging reflects the relative age of the creature's human form. (For example, assume that the primary aspect is a human with a life span of 80 years, and the animal aspect is a wolf, with a life span of 20. When the creature is 40 years old, its animal aspect will resemble a 10-year-old wolf.) Looks are deceiving, however. The animal's actual speed and strength seem to change only slightly with age, if at all.

The man-beast aspect also appears to age at a rate which is proportionate to the human aspect's condition. In time, patches of gray will appear in its pelt, and the hair may even start to thin. The eyes will become more bloodshot. In this case, appearances are correct. The man-beast's strength, dexterity, and other characteristics are affected by age, in much the same way as the *primary* aspect.

Procreation

While I probably know more about this fascinating subject than any other expert, even my knowledge is incomplete. Like most other creatures, lycanthropes consider their procreative behavior to be intensely personal, and not a topic for public discussion.

Infected Lycanthropes

While in human aspect, infected lycanthropes will engage in the same procreative behavior as uninfected individuals of their own race. Fertility, incidence of multiple birth, gestation period, and similar factors are *unchanged*. As mentioned in the previous chapter, if the father of a child is an infected lycanthrope, the child will not automatically suffer the affliction (unless the father subsequently infects it through normal means, of course). If the mother suffers the blight, however, so will the child. It will share the same phenotype and trigger condition as its mother.

It is interesting to point out that infected females who are with child become immune to their normal trigger condition during the last third of the gestation period. This seems to be an adaptation designed to protect the unborn child. Human females, then, will not undergo transfiguration—no matter what the stimulus—during the final three months of pregnancy. As though to make up for the lapse, the first transfiguration after giving birth may be particularly violent, and it will *always* lead to bloodlust.

The woman automatically flies into bloodlust on changing into her secondary form, and must eat twice her normal amount following her first post-partum transfiguration. If she survives this episode, she reverts to her normal behavior thereafter.

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The effective Strength and Dexterity of many man-beast forms are listed below. Note that some infected lycanthropes may acquire a man-beast form as their secondary aspect (rather than an animal). The rules stated here apply to such infected creatures as well.

As the man-beast ages, Strength and Dexterity decline. Table 11 in the *Player's Handbook* presents three categories for characters past their prime: middle age, old age, and venerable. When a werebeast shifts to a new category, its Strength and Dexterity drop one ranking (see Table 1: Strength, in the *Player's Handbook*). Thus a "venerable" werewolf has an effective Strength and Dexterity three notches below normal: 18/76 and 13, respectively.

The Man-Beast in Ravenloft

Creature	STR	DEX
Werebadger	18/91	16
Werebat	18/01	19
Werebear	19	15
Wereboar	19	15
Werecocodile	20	14
Werefox	18/76	18
Werejackal	18/00	17
Wererat	18/51	19
Wereraven	18	17
Wereseal	20	16
Wereshark	21	14
Weretiger	21	18
Werewolf	19	16

The Armor Class value commonly given for each creature reflects the benefits of the Dexterity shown above. Any bonuses listed for attack rolls or damage do not reflect the figures above. Note that the man-beast's natural weapons (claws, teeth, etc.) are not affected by Strength and Dexterity.

Although it would seem logical that a female werebeast's first target after giving birth might be her own offspring, this does not seem to be the case. Probably as the result of a pro-survival adaptation, female werebeasts in their secondary aspect seem to consider their own children off-limits . . . so long as those children are also infected lycanthropes. Children born before their mother's infection, who do not share the lycanthropic scourge, often do become targets of her bestial predations. (Of course, this willingness to attack one's own offspring can also be observed in infected males whose children do not share their affliction.)

True Lycanthropes

There are some significant differences in procreative behavior between true lycanthropes and the human or humanoid species they resemble. Gestation period is unchanged; thus, a female werebeast whose primary aspect is human will carry a child for about nine months. Many other characteristics of procreation are different, however.

For example, werebeasts reach sexual maturity earlier than most members of their "primary species." This difference is not so great as to be remarkable (as it would be if a young werewolf were sexually mature at age three, for example). However, if this early maturity were allowed to become known, it would qualify the offspring as sexually precocious. True werebeasts also tend to be more fertile than members of the race they resemble. And they have a slightly higher incidence of multiple births. However, none of these differences is great enough to alert any but the most meticulous (and suspicious) researcher.

The offspring of a male and female true lycanthrope will always be a true lycanthrope of the same phenotype, whatever conditions apply. I have

heard strange tales of werebeast societies in which males and females only seek out their mates in hybrid form, but I cannot confirm such reports. Such behavior may be ritualistic. Or perhaps it reflects a societal perception of sexual attractiveness. (Do not normal men and women put their best face forward to attract the opposite sex?) At any rate, I know of no reason why any aspect of the true lycanthrope should be infertile, since each form is but a natural extension of the same being.

As dreadful as it may seem, true lycanthropes do sometimes court normal, uninfected humans or demihumans. Such a union can lead to the birth of a child. (It is for this reason that I have characterized each variety of lycanthrope as a phenotype rather than a species.) The lycanthropic condition of their offspring is discussed in Chapter One.

Those who are well acquainted with werebeast lore have no doubt heard an occasional tale of the union between two distinct phenotypes—a wererat and a werewolf, for example. I have seen scant evidence of such aberrant pairings; fortunately, true werebeasts appear to have an aversion to such behavior. I firmly believe, however, that offspring will be produced only if the corresponding animal species—in the example above, a rat and a wolf—would produce young under normal circumstances. Thus, only similar phenotypic species can reproduce, werejaguars and weretigers for example, or werejackals and werewolves. The offspring of such a union would reflect a mixed heritage in all three aspects. Note that such offspring would themselves be infertile; they could not produce young of their own.

Gestation and Birth: During the first quarter of the gestation period, female true lycanthropes are free to transfigure into any of their three aspects without any risk to their

unborn child. After that, however, they will not change into animal aspect unless the only other alternative is death. (I do not know categorically what effect this change would have on the unborn, but I suspect that it might lead to a stillbirth.) During the latter three-quarters of pregnancy, the female limits her transfigurations to human and man-beast aspects exclusively. Dietary needs change as the pregnancy progresses; after the second month, the mother's appetite is increased by one-quarter to one-half.

True lycanthropic mothers usually give birth in the same form in which their children begin life: human. However, I have heard tell that the pain of labor may induce a spontaneous transfiguration into the man-beast aspect. [The lycanthrope must save vs. paralysis to prevent this.] Perhaps for this reason, many true lycanthropes prefer to bear their offspring in private, lest a midwife learn of their true nature. (On the other hand, they may simply slay the midwife after the birth.)

Lycanthropes recover from the rigors of birth much faster than do normal humans. They could be up and around, fully functional, within minutes of the birth, if this were necessary. Most lycanthropes will feign the post-partum weakness (and sometimes depression) exhibited by humans, however, merely to maintain their masquerade.

Rearing Young: True lycanthropes show a somewhat schizophrenic outlook with regard to their young. If they can do so without personal risk or significant hardship, they will usually nurture their young until the offspring have reached puberty and can control their transfigurations. At this point, all contact between parents and offspring usually comes to an end. Before puberty, the parents—predominately the mother—will protect and educate the children. Most werebeasts are

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stricter, more severe parents than are the majority of humans. The difference is rarely great enough to attract overmuch attention, however.

It is important to note that few lycanthrope parents will tell their offspring the "facts of life" until the children are old enough to understand the importance of concealing their true nature. Since the parents are hunting throughout this period, it is not uncommon for lycanthropic children to be orphaned before they learn what they are.

The attitude of werebeast parents toward their children seems directly tied to the parents' own security. Most true lycanthropes I encounter are living within (or at least on the outskirts of) human civilization, masquerading as normal humans. Typically, no one suspects their true nature. Cunning lycanthropes can maintain this facade for years or even decades—possibly not in the same locale, but by moving on to a new village or town when the focus of suspicion turns in their direction. However, if suspicion does start to focus upon them, true werebeasts with young children will, without a qualm, arrange it so that their offspring are the next victims of the "mysterious monster." This will usually divert suspicion, at least for a time, since few humans want to believe that parents of *any* species could so cold-bloodedly sacrifice their children. Such is the nature of werebeasts, however.

Even if children merely represent a hardship, true lycanthropes are quite likely to abandon or sacrifice their young simply to make their own lives easier. This may occur if the presence of children hinders the parents' ability to hunt or otherwise feed themselves, or—if traveling is necessary—when offspring would limit the parents' mobility. This willingness to contemplate and perform infanticide is perhaps the most horrifying facet of the lycanthropic personality, and the

fact that most distinctly sets these beasts apart from humans.

The preceding paragraphs focus on lycanthropes that masquerade as humans and thus infiltrate society. Within the limits of my personal experience, such creatures are in the majority. However, there are also werebeasts who prefer to exist in the shadows beyond normal human society. These creatures spend much of their lives in man-beast or animal aspect, assuming human form only temporarily—when it would benefit them on the hunt, for example. How do creatures of this feral ilk handle their offspring? Remember, such offspring are born in human aspect, and they cannot change form for more than a decade.

Based on my personal knowledge, lycanthropes of this kind use two main strategies. One is simply to raise their offspring themselves, carrying them around in the wilds, succoring them and educating them in the ways of *their own savage lifestyle*. I believe that immature lycanthropes raised in this way are at the heart of many legends of children who were raised by wolves or other creatures.

The second strategy is simply to abandon the offspring on the outskirts of human settlements. In most cases, of course, the foundlings will be adopted by members of the community who are unaware just how feral such children really are. I have no doubt that the true parents of these monsters enjoy many a cruel laugh at the humans who behave so generously. For that generosity will, in all likelihood, eventually be rewarded by a savage and lethal attack.

If the lycanthropes choose not to follow either of these options, they seem no less willing to practice infanticide than true werebeasts who lead (or feign) a more civilized existence.

Lairs

As I have hinted earlier, many true lycanthropes dwell within human or humanoid civilization or on its outskirts, acting as societal parasites. Some, however, choose to live in the wilds, or perhaps in secret lairs beneath the streets walked by unsuspecting humans. And even werebeasts that do reside within human society may maintain secret haunts elsewhere; lairs to which they can retreat should their true nature be in danger of discovery, or simply because they need time alone. Infected werebeasts do not typically alter their habitat once they have acquired lycanthropy, but they maintain a home in the fashion of others of their race. Thus, the following discussions relate primarily to true lycanthropes.

Town Lairs

Although they are not what most people think of as lairs, the houses or apartments occupied by werebeasts within human society are worthy of some attention. In general, a lycanthrope's personality will be largely influenced by its phenotype (see the following chapter for further detail). Since an individual's home will usually be an outgrowth of his personality, it follows that a lycanthrope's town lair will reflect its phenotype.

In large part, or at least symbolically, a lycanthrope's town lair will resemble the kind of lair the phenotypic animal would have in the wild. (In other words, the town lair of a werebadger will symbolically resemble the lair of a real badger.) Other facets of the creature's psychology might also be reflected. For example, a wererat will almost certainly have one or more secret escape routes. And, if at all possible, it will also have arranged access to the sewers or the local equivalent.

Despite such nuances in individual taste, several characteristics are common to werebeast lairs regardless of the owner's phenotype. First, most lycanthropes create at least one concealed access to their town lair. Werebeasts must frequently go out to hunt. However, few are daring enough to use the front door of their homes each time they leave and return. At any time, an observer might correlate the creature's late-night jaunts with killings or disappearances and suspect the werebeast's true nature. A secret passage helps eliminate this risk. However, even a cautious lycanthrope will sometimes leave by the front door to embark on a hunt—quite openly in fact, with some *believable* excuse. In this way, it will avoid suspicious patterns.

Storage is a common concern. Those creatures who subordinate their preference for fresh meat to the *convenience of having a supply* must create a larder. This larder must be concealed; otherwise a visiting busybody, with no suspicion of the werebeast's true nature, might find the half-eaten remnants of a vanished neighbor. The werebeast also must make provisions to prevent the supplies from spoiling, which would both render the food inedible *and* give the werebeast's secret away with the smell of corruption.

A town lair will typically be laid out so the lycanthrope can negotiate the doors, rooms, and hallways regardless of what aspect it currently holds. (This is more important for creatures like werebears than for wererats, of course.)

Allow me to describe the lair of a werebeast I faced in Port-a-Lucine, a town in Dementlieu. This individual, a wererat, had resided in this town for almost half a decade without anyone growing wise to his true nature. In fact, he held a position on the town council. (Readers from Dementlieu may well recognize the individual of whom I

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write, although for personal reasons I will not refer to him by name.)

Compilers' Note: And against my better judgment, I'll accede to the wishes of the good doctor and my sister and leave this vermin anonymous despite later events the doctor describes herein.

LWF

This individual had commissioned his small house to be built on the Widow's Walk, the wide thoroughfare that ringed the natural harbor. Although the werebeast's human aspect was slightly above average size, the house's doors and corridors were surprisingly narrow, and the ceilings unusually low. The heads of most visitors would brush the ceiling, while the owner himself had to stoop. I believe the reason for this was psychological. As a wererat, he was innately used to cramped, labyrinthine warrens. Perhaps he even relished them. Thus, the wererat built his house in a fashion that made him feel most at home.

Although the individual was relatively wealthy, he had little interest in the finer things of life. His house was far from empty, however. Instead, it was full of knickknacks, predominantly small and shiny things, items

that were of no discernible monetary or aesthetic value. While the individual seemed to enjoy being surrounded by these items, he evinced little emotional attachment to specific objects.

Unbeknownst to the builders, the individual had located his house directly over an abandoned branch of the storm-drain system that ran beneath much of the town. In his private chapel, he had installed a concealed trap door that gave him direct access to this network of underground drains. It was via this route that he left his home to hunt. It was also this storm drain that he used as his larder.

Although the wererat had no true religion, he had persuaded the townsfolk that he was a fervent follower of a particularly introspective religious tradition. This tradition, he explained, required him to practice long hours of meditation and self-examination in the chapel included in his house. He would always make a big show of returning home for his devotions as soon as the sun had set. In fact, of course, he was preparing to hunt.

For most individuals, this alibi would have been sufficient, but this wererat's cunning took it one step further. He constructed a mannequin that resembled himself, kneeling in prayer. Every time he left his house at night to hunt, he placed this kneeling mannequin before the altar in his chapel. Should any of his neighbors spy in his window, they would see a reverent man in rapt devotion.

Although I hesitate to boast, I must admit that it was I who discerned this individual's true nature. On the request of certain townsfolk, I agreed to seek out the source of the mysterious depredations that had been bedeviling the place for years. After much research, I determined that the only way the ravaging creature could have reached its prey was through portions of the storm-drain system thought to

have collapsed. Returning to ancient records describing the system, I found where the unused section ran. Lo and behold, the only building that could possibly have access to that section was the house of the council member. Proud though I am of my detective work, the story did not end well. I found myself in a face-to-face confrontation with the werebeast, one which I survived only through good fortune. The beast escaped with its foul life, and could well have since set up housekeeping elsewhere.

Wilderness Lairs

Lycanthropes that eschew human society make their lairs in the wilds. "Socialized" werebeasts may choose a wilderness setting as well, albeit for other reasons (such as pleasure, a place to hunt, or a place to mate and raise offspring).

Like town lairs, wilderness lairs reflect the nature and psychology of the phenotypic animal. The psychological element is frequently more pronounced in wilderness lairs, since the werebeasts are most commonly in animal or man-beast aspect while using them.

We had ridden forth, my friends and I, for an enjoyable day of hunting boar. We had our horses, we had our beaters to drive the quarry before us, and we had our weighted spears.

The weather was perfect, and luck seemed to be with us. We had been in the saddle for less than an hour when the beaters called that they had seen signs of a fine boar in the woods ahead of us. My companions and I readied for our sport.

We heard the cries of the beaters, then a crashing from the underbrush before us. The boar burst into the clearing where we

sat—a fine, muscular creature, larger than any I had ever seen. It lowered its head and charged directly at the legs of my horse. Calming my mount with whispers of encouragement, I steadied my spear.

It was a perfect thrust, I swear it. The keen point should have sheathed itself in the beast's flesh, just behind its shoulder—a killing thrust indeed.

Yet, for some reason, the spear point turned on the creature's pelt, with the shaft wrenched from my fingers by the impact.

And then the terror began. . . .

—From the journal of
Lord D'Arcy Penspot

Finding a suitable location for a wilderness lair is often an exercise in compromise. It must be at least somewhat removed from human habitation. (Otherwise, why have a wilderness lair in the first place?) Yet it must also lie close enough to suitable sources of food (that is, near humans or humanoids, for most werebeasts at any rate). Wererats seem to have the easiest time in meeting both these criteria. They often make their wilderness lairs beneath the streets of a town or village, in the sewers or storm drains. Despite the fact that they are within the limits of a town, I qualify these as wilderness lairs anyway because they are distinct from human habitations.

Security is also a major concern. Most lycanthropes have little to fear from normal hunters. If an unfortunate woodsman encounters a werewolf, it will probably be the last creature he ever sees. Yet one day such an interloper may survive and inform others that a werebeast is close at hand, and those others may be quite capable of harming the lycanthrope. Even within the most depressed and fatalistic cultures, few villages would

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shy away from taking action against a lycanthrope that had constructed a lair nearby. For this reason, most lycanthropes seek to conceal the entrances to their wilderness lairs in some manner. This is obviously much easier for werebeasts with relatively small animal aspects (wererats, for example). While the interior of the lair could well be large enough to accommodate the creature in human aspect, the actual entryways may block anything larger than the phenotypic animal itself.

Some lycanthropes, it seems, build their lairs to resemble the lairs of natural animals of their phenotype. (Thus, a werebear's lair might, at first glance, be indistinguishable from the den of a real bear.) This has both advantages and disadvantages for the creature. On one hand, it will draw little attention from adventurers or investigators who may be looking for evidence of lycanthropic activity. On the other, it might draw unwanted attention from hunters who would normally track and slay the phenotypic animal, either for food or sport. Many werebeasts disguise their lairs as something else entirely—an overgrown cave entrance, for example.

An easy means of entering and escaping the lair is very important. Most lycanthrope lairs have a main entrance, which is large enough to admit the beast regardless of its aspect. In addition, the lair features several other escape routes, usually well concealed. Depending on the phenotype in question, some of these routes may be accessible to the creature only when in certain aspects. Obviously, creatures with animal aspects that are smaller than man-sized can benefit the most from this technique.

The interior of a lair can vary dramatically. Some that I have seen are bare of any adornment and free of any humanlike comfort. They are

nothing but bare-walled caves, resembling the dens of ordinary bears. Other lairs look almost like human homes in their décor—at least when one is beyond the concealed entrance. Such lairs may have simple furnishings and carpets made of woven grass. Only rarely does a wilderness lair have more elaborate furnishings, such as ornately carved woods or artwork on the walls. Lycanthropes who enjoy such human-style luxury usually establish it in town rather than in the wilderness.

Like town lairs, many wilderness lairs have some sort of storage area for food. However, most wilderness lairs have no provisions that can preserve raw flesh for any significant length of time. Thus, even the best-stocked larder will not significantly decrease the frequency of a lycanthrope's hunting.

Certain self-styled lycanthrope hunters claim that traps of unsurpassed cunning and lethality protect all wilderness lairs. Judging from my experience, such claims are nothing but self-aggrandizement, designed to make the hunters' own actions seem more dangerous and hence more valuable. This is not to say that traps are *never* found, however. I have personally visited lairs that were protected by deadfalls, concealed pits, and other rudimentary traps. Only one was protected by anything more sophisticated—in this case, mechanical and magical traps of disturbing efficacy. However, the werebeast in question was atypical, having learned the rudiments of the mage's art. Just as few humans have the skill to set up complex tricks and traps, so too do few lycanthropes. A few werebeasts with greater proficiency have somehow learned the skills of the thief, the mage, or the priest (which is discussed further in the following chapter).

I had always thought—perhaps because I'd been told—that werebeasts were nothing more than kill-crazy monsters. No intelligence worthy of the name, just low cunning and evil intent. No greater goals than ripping up a few innocents and eating their flesh. That's what I was expecting when I joined the group tracking down the werewolf terrorizing travelers on the Old Svalich Road. I figured for a nasty battle at the end of our hunt, sure, but I was ready for it. I was armed for a stand-up fight against a foe tougher than any werewolf could possibly be.

It didn't take long to re-evaluate that thought when people started dying: people I respected, people I figured would make it through with nary a scrape. What's more, it wasn't the werewolf what was killing them, not directly anyway. What I'm saying is, they weren't killed by claws or teeth.

They were killed by dropped rocks, and pits, and sharp stakes and other such traps. They were led into ambush and slaughtered. And I came to realize this was no dumb beast we were hunting. . . .

—From the journal of Zef Merrigan

CHAPTER THREE: A PSYCHOLOGICAL SURVEY

Moral and Ethical Outlook



In some distant lands, I am told, certain types of lycanthropes exhibit moral and ethical outlooks that are more or less benign.

For example, travelers have claimed that were-bears have exhibited concern for the general weal. Further, though these creatures champion individualism above all else, they oppose those who spread pain and suffering. Judging from still other tales, there are werebeasts in some climes that run the gamut of behavior, from beneficent to indifferent to malevolent.

Such is *not* the case within the realm of my experience. It is my

considered opinion that virtually all lycanthropes are highly malign (although I must admit the actual nature of their malignity can vary somewhat). To be ever truthful, of course, the nature of my business is such that I am unlikely to encounter any werecreature of a less than cruel nature. As such, I must allow that “good” werebeasts can exist, though I have yet to meet them.

Why are lycanthropes such creatures of evil? My own guess is that they are subject to the same strange agencies that pervert magical wishes and twist the spirits of those who transgress the unwritten laws of moral behavior. Lycanthropy is a dark, malign disease—a perversion of the way life should be—and hence it is somehow akin to evil itself. When someone willingly kills a sentient creature, this is, in my view, an act of evil. Because such acts will ultimately corrupt the mind of those who perform

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them, so will a lycanthrope's killing slowly warp him into a malign form, whatever his original inclinations.

It has been my experience that lycanthropes native to the lands with which I am familiar (that is, Darkon, Dementlieu, and the rest) are malign in the extreme, regardless of phenotype. If they are born into lycanthropy, they exhibit their malign outlook regardless of the form they take. (This does not mean that a werebeast cannot *pretend* to have a different moral outlook when in its human aspect, of course.) Such lycanthropes are likely to exhibit a range of ethical attitudes, however. For example, a werebear will be aggressively independent and selfish, while a wererat may be more amenable to group interaction.

The infected lycanthropes I have met in my travels retained their original moral and ethical outlook when in human form. However, when they transfigured into their secondary aspect, they took on the moral and ethical stance appropriate to their

Dr. Van Richten's zealotry to rid his world of evil is laudable, but his bias against lycanthropes is colored. He believes that all true werebeasts must ultimately be evil. This is not so in game terms. A werebear in Ravenloft may still have chaotic good tendencies, whether it is born in the Demiplane of Dread or is swept there via the mists. The same is true of other lycanthropes. Dr. Van Richten is correct, however, in the assumption that, given time, the dark powers of Ravenloft itself may corrupt even a lawful-good werecreature.

Please note: Dr. Van Richten's references to "moral outlook" equate, in game terms, to good and evil alignments; "ethical outlook" equates to the lawful and chaotic alignments.

phenotype. In my efforts to rid the world of these menaces, I have often been placed in an uncomfortable predicament. Believing a human is good, yet knowing his wereform is evil is a paradox that I have had to resolve within my own heart. Unfortunately, many infected lycanthropes resist all efforts to cure them, for their hearts have been claimed by their dreadful curse. As such, they too must be destroyed.

When infected werebeasts first enter such lands as Darkon or Dementlieu, they retain the personality they had before their journey—or so certain sages insist. In all too short a time, however, these blighted people grow progressively immoral and depraved. Sages claim that this change does not affect the creatures' ethical stance—that is, whether they value the common good higher than individual freedoms—but only their moral outlook.

This process is not instantaneous. Some lycanthropic individuals seem capable of resisting the siren song of depravity for a considerable period of time. Eventually, however, nearly all succumb to the fell blandishments of corruption. Werebeasts born to their malady who wish to resist this change seem able to postpone the inevitable by limiting the number of times they kill sentient creatures. This *seems* to imply that it is the slaying of intelligent, self-aware victims, and *not* a simple fact of lycanthropic nature, that causes the progressive decline into depravity.

Goals and Desires

Many believe that lycanthropes are dumb, ravening beasts, with only a modicum of animal cunning and certainly no real intelligence. This is true in enough instances that the belief has become firmly rooted in the minds of man. Yet it is definitely not the general case.

Each time a non-evil lycanthrope hunts and kills a sentient victim, it must save vs. polymorph. If it makes this save, its alignment remains unchanged . . . this time. If it fails, however, the component of its alignment moves one step toward evil. (For example, a chaotic-good werebear is transported to Ravenloft. Each time it hunts and kills intelligent prey, it must save vs. polymorph. The first time it fails this save, its alignment permanently changes to chaotic neutral. The second time it fails, its alignment becomes chaotic evil.) This rule applies equally to infected and true lycanthropes.

This progressive change in moral stance affects true lycanthropes in *all* their aspects. Infected lycanthropes, however, become more malign only in their secondary aspect. When in their primary human aspect, their personality remains unchanged.

Note that this rule refers only to incidents where the lycanthrope kills an intelligent quarry for food. Even in Ravenloft, lycanthropes aren't punished for killing in self-defense.

Unless the DM rules otherwise for special cases, a victim is "sentient" if it has an intelligence of "Low" or greater.

Why does this misconception persist, when anyone who has had personal experience with a lycanthrope can testify to this fallacy? I believe that the misconception is, perhaps, an attempt to *minimize* the danger represented by werebeasts—that is, to deny that they are as significant a threat as they undoubtedly are. It is less daunting to consider lycanthropes as unintelligent, albeit still powerful, animals. How much more terrifying they become when one factors in human-level intelligence. . . . As I have discovered many times in my travels,

humanity shows a remarkable capacity for self-delusion.

Infected Lycanthropes

In their secondary form, that of the beast, *infected lycanthropes* come closest to the stereotypical view of ravening monsters—particularly during the first few times that they transfigure. When a newly infected lycanthrope changes shape, its overriding desire is to find food. While it may show some level of animal cunning in hunting down its prey, it will rarely exhibit anything akin to true intelligence. Its hunger is simply too vast—its sense of freedom too overwhelming as the beast within is released from captivity—to allow it sober judgment.

The issue of bloodlust, too, is something that comes into play here. As discussed in more detail later in this chapter, newly infected lycanthropes are *highly* likely to be overcome by this fiendish urge. Thus, the lack of intelligent planning during early kills and the greater propensity to enter bloodlust ensures that an infected werecreature is likelier to be detected at the beginning of its "career" than later on. Based on rather infrequent encounters, I can only hazard that this condition pertains to the first five or six times an infected lycanthrope undergoes *transfiguration*. Needless to say, the goals and desires of a recently infected werebeast differ from one that has adjusted to its new lifestyle.

If the creature can avoid being detected and destroyed, after the seventh transfiguration or so it begins to show a little more intelligence and restraint in its behavior. Its chance of entering bloodlust also decreases at about this time. Hunger and the lust to hunt are still its dominant desires, but now the creature seems able to analyze and act upon these motivations a little more dispassionately.

While a newly infected werebeast will hunt quite openly (which is, I

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might add, the most opportune time to track and kill these creatures), one that has survived numerous transfigurations will be more cunning. It will make the effort to cover its tracks and to keep its true nature secret. For example, a newly infected werebeast is quite likely to attack its prey—often, sadly, a loved one—in a relatively public place, rending him or her within clear sight of others. An “experienced” (if I may use that term) werebeast is more likely to sneak into the house of its prey at night and drag the victim into the woods. In a private, secluded place, it will devour its quarry with vicious glee, knowing that his or her screams will never be heard.

Obviously, if an infected lycanthrope has survived its first six or so transfigurations, the chances of its continued survival dramatically increase. Once the werebeast begins to apply its intelligence to the problem of survival, the difficulty of hunting it increases tenfold. For this reason, it is vital to start the hunt as soon as a werecreature has claimed its first victim. If the culprit is a newly infected lycanthrope, the chances are much better of successfully hunting it if the effort is made immediately.

True Lycanthropes

There is a wide variation in the goals and desires of lycanthropes that inherit their condition. Initially, when I first became aware of the existence of werebeasts, I suspected that this variation was based along phenotypic lines. In other words, I believed that lycanthropes of the same phenotype shared an overall set of behaviors and views. Over the intervening years, however, I have found that this is not true—or, at least, not universally true. Certainly, there are similarities between lycanthropes of the same phenotype. But, quite often, the variability *within* a phenotype is greater than that *between* phenotypes. The inescapable

conclusion is that lycanthropes are individuals first and foremost. Indeed, they show much the same disparities and similarities as do humans and demihumans.

The central aspect of any lycanthrope's philosophy is survival. Since survival requires the creature to eat raw meat, and since its preferred food (regardless of its origin or moral outlook) is humanoid flesh, hunting intelligent prey is at the heart of all its behaviors. However, this does not mean that a lycanthrope that has inherited its illness will be the conspicuous, ravening beast that newly infected werebeasts often are. (Certainly there are some true lycanthropes that seem to enjoy openly terrorizing humans and thus attracting attention to themselves, but they are rare. I postulate that this is particularly true because such creatures would bring down the wrath of every werehunter in the region. As such, these lycanthropes are few and far between.)

It is possible to argue this point by analogy. Humans must eat to survive. (Granted, they do not have the dietary restrictions of lycanthropes, but set that consideration aside for the moment.) Does this mean that a human's every waking moment will be spent concentrating on finding his next meal? Does this imply that humans think of nothing but food? Of course not. The same logic holds true for lycanthropes, whether hereditary or infected ones that have adjusted to their disease.

Indeed, for many werebeasts the greatest motivation in their lives is that of continuing the deceit that they are normal humans or demihumans. I have personally encountered several lycanthropes that have crafted such cunning, complete masquerades that maintaining them interfered with their ability to hunt. They would undoubtedly have found it easier to feed if they had relaxed their attention to detail in their ruse. Yet they did not do so.

It has been posited that lycanthropes maintain a human facade to assure continued access to convenient sources of food. In the numerous cases I studied, this theory did not hold true, for the cost of maintaining a deceit frequently proved detrimental to acquiring food on a regular basis. Thus, these creatures must have been enjoying some other benefit gained from their deceptions. I believe this benefit is a kind of personal satisfaction, a knowledge that they are capable of deceiving—and thus proving they are smarter than—the humans surrounding them. So important to such werereatures is this satisfaction that they will suffer obstacles to their hunting to maintain it.

This kind of demonstrated “superiority” over humanity seems to be a common motivator among werebeasts. Yet it is by no means the only one. Some of these fell creatures seem to share many of the same drives as humans and demihumans: wealth, comfort, power. Such lycanthropes tend to pursue wealth and comfort in much the same ways as mankind, through means honest or criminal. If they choose the latter, their unnatural powers provide them with significant advantages over merely human thieves.

It is interesting to note that true lycanthropes’ definitions of wealth and comfort vary depending on phenotype. For example, werebears or weretigers relish a large house, with lots of space and privacy. Wererats, in contrast, prefer small, labyrinthine dwellings, cluttered with shiny baubles. In terms of artwork and other aesthetic elements, the items chosen by lycanthropes often reflect their underlying personality. Thus, the art preferred by a werewolf might well seem brutal, almost cruel, to humans. (One must not forget that most werebeasts are intelligent enough to understand this and will subvert their aesthetic tastes to maintain a facade, if they desire.)

Lycanthropes define “power” in either much the same way as humans do or quite the opposite. I have learned of werebeasts who pursued (and attained) public office. I have also encountered others who led human bandits, and still more who organized thieves’ guilds, surrounding themselves with followers who were unaware of their leader’s true nature.

One surprisingly cunning individual—a wererat—accrued great influence in a village by leading the locals’ efforts to counter the depredations of the “mysterious beast” that was terrorizing the region. Although these efforts neither identified nor destroyed the beast (which was, of course, the wererat itself), they did minimize its impact on the citizenry, merely because the wererat scaled back its attacks as soon as it gained the position of power it had sought. Fortunately, few lycanthropes seem to be quite so cunning and enterprising. Unfortunately, most lycanthropes simply take the guise of a “mysterious ravening monster” to remove anyone who attempts to block their advancement.

Regardless of phenotype, the vast majority of true lycanthropes have as a major goal the spreading of fear, pain, and suffering. Werebeasts seem to derive pleasure from tormenting mankind. While some werebeasts are quite blatant in this and go so far as to instigate “waves of terror” in which many innocents are slaughtered, others enjoy more subtle machinations. Through carefully escalated acts that start with mildly disturbing events and end with out-and-out atrocities, lycanthropes can create an environment of growing fear and paranoia, paralyzing and eventually destroying an entire community.

I suspect that some werebeasts consider this kind of terrorism to be the highest form of “art.”

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Bloodlust

I alluded to this topic earlier, and I include it here to present a counterpoint to the two previous sections on lycanthropic outlook and goals and desires. Bloodlust is the characteristic of lycanthropy perhaps most familiar to the average person,

and it is by far and away the most frightening one. It is an uncontrollable rage into which a lycanthrope can fly when hungry, or when presented with the sight and smell of freshly spilled blood or fresh, raw meat.

Lycanthropic bloodlust can be compared to the rage of a berserker or a feeding frenzy among sharks, where

Entering Bloodlust

Whenever a lycanthrope is exposed to a stimulus for bloodlust, the creature must save vs. polymorph. This saving throw suffers certain situational penalties as noted in the following table.

Bloodlust Saving Throw Penalties

Condition	Penalty
Other werebeast nearby already in bloodlust	-2
Each day beyond 4 of food debt	-1
Werebeast tastes blood	-1
Werebeast has suffered 25% damage	-1
Werebeast has suffered 50% damage	-4
Werebeast has suffered 75% damage	-7
Werebeast is infected lycanthrope	-3
Werebeast is "new" infected lycanthrope*	-9
Werebeast is a true lycanthrope undergoing puberty	-3

* "New" means the creature has assumed animal form six or fewer times.

Hereditary lycanthropes are normally candidates for bloodlust only when in animal or man-beast form. If they are reduced to less than 50% of their total hit points while in human aspect, however, they must save vs. polymorph at -2 or enter bloodlust. If they do succumb to bloodlust, they will immediately transfigure into either of their other forms.

Effects of Bloodlust

A lycanthrope in bloodlust will attack the nearest living creature in a wild attempt to slay it. During this berserk rage, it gains a +2 attack bonus and a +2 bonus to damage; its AC, however, is decreased two steps (that is, AC 4 becomes AC 6). If multiple targets are equally close, it will usually attack the weakest creature, unless the DM decides this leads to a ludicrous situation (a lycanthrope faced by three warriors attacking a nearby rabbit, for example).

Shaking Off Bloodlust

Once a lycanthrope in bloodlust has consumed enough flesh to satiate its urges, it must again save vs. polymorph. All previous modifiers are eliminated, except for any relating to damage suffered. In addition, the creature gains a +2 bonus. The lycanthrope must make this saving throw each round until it succeeds. Once it makes the save, it leaves bloodlust and regains control of its actions. Its subsequent behavior will, of course, depend on the situation.

the creatures lose all inhibitions and forget all caution in the desire to feed. During bloodlust, werebeasts lose all inhibitions. They fly into a rage that is horrifying to behold, *falling with incredible fury upon anyone and anything unfortunate enough to be in the vicinity.* During bloodlust, all lycanthropes become the heartless, ravening monsters from folktales—and then some. They will attack and attempt to slay anyone nearby, regardless of whether it is prospective prey or an erstwhile ally. They will fall upon that person and then feed to satiation. If the werebeast in bloodlust is well fed (that is, if it has been eating its normal food requirements over the past few days), it will eat only its regular amount . . . plus, perhaps, a little extra. If it has been denied food over the last several days (if it is suffering from progressive starvation or food debt as described in Chapter Two), it will eat enough to eliminate this food debt totally . . . and again, perhaps a little extra.

The primary stimulus for bloodlust is proximity to a source of food, combined with the sight, smell, or taste of fresh blood. Hunger, predictably, exacerbates the problem, as does the proximity of any other lycanthrope that has already entered bloodlust. The chance of losing control is also increased if the werebeast is seriously wounded; apparently, *pain diminishes the creature's self-control.* There are other aggravating factors: puberty (for true lycanthropes), and the unfamiliarity of the lycanthropic state (for newly infected werebeasts).

Infected lycanthropes can enter bloodlust only when they are in their secondary form. True lycanthropes are much more likely to enter bloodlust in their secondary or tertiary form, although if they are severely wounded they may also succumb while in their primary human aspect.

Once it has entered this state, a lycanthrope will remain in bloodlust

until it has eaten its fill. Then it will slowly regain control. This effort may be immediate or may take several minutes. If the bloodlust continues after the creature has eaten its fill, it will not gorge. Instead, it will continue its slaughter, but it will not feed on the bodies of its victims.

Obviously, bloodlust is a hideous thing to witness. Lycanthropes—intelligent ones, at least—fear its onset, since it can easily destroy years of effort in building up a subterfuge. I shudder to write this, but I have heard that certain lycanthropes have learned how to initiate bloodlust *willingly.* I do not know how much credence to put in this claim, having never personally encountered a werebeast capable of this act. Having witnessed—and barely survived—a bloodlust engendered by a young lycanthrope, I can only cringe at the idea of confronting a wily, adult werebeast that chooses to enter bloodlust. [If DMs decide that this is possible, the ability to initiate bloodlust at will should be very rare indeed.]

Relationships Between Lycanthropes

Speaking generally, infected lycanthropes are *solitary creatures*, looking out for their own individual interests. (The only exception to this rule seems to be when they come under the influence of a true lycanthrope.) Werebeasts that are born to their disease, however, can be quite social creatures.

Within a Single Phenotype

In general, a lycanthrope's outlook toward others of the same phenotype will depend on its ethical view of the world. Thus, some werebeasts will be solitary, while others will be more social. Most, perhaps, will fall somewhere in the middle. Let us

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examine, for example, creatures at the two extremes: werebears and wererats.

Werebears have a highly individualistic outlook on life. They are more concerned with their own freedoms and prerogatives than they are with the rights and concerns of others. They are naturally solitary creatures, not given to seeking the companionship of their own kind except when it is time to mate. *Werebears are extremely territorial and will frequently resist the incursion of others into their domains.* (Werebears are also highly intelligent, so one masquerading as a human in a village will certainly not automatically respond to the arrival of another werecreature by changing form and attacking.)

In direct contrast, wererats are highly social, gregarious creatures, with respect to their own kind, that is. They demonstrate this enjoyment in ways that seem strange to most humans. The creatures are almost continuously in competition with each other: for mates, for standing within their community (and their "adopted" human community as well), for wealth, and for other tangible benefits. By human standards, this competition is not friendly; it is more sly and conniving than anything. Most humans would describe multiple wererats living a ruse in the same community as enemies, or at the very least ardent rivals. Yet, to the wererats themselves, this behavior does not illustrate any ill will; quite the opposite, in fact.

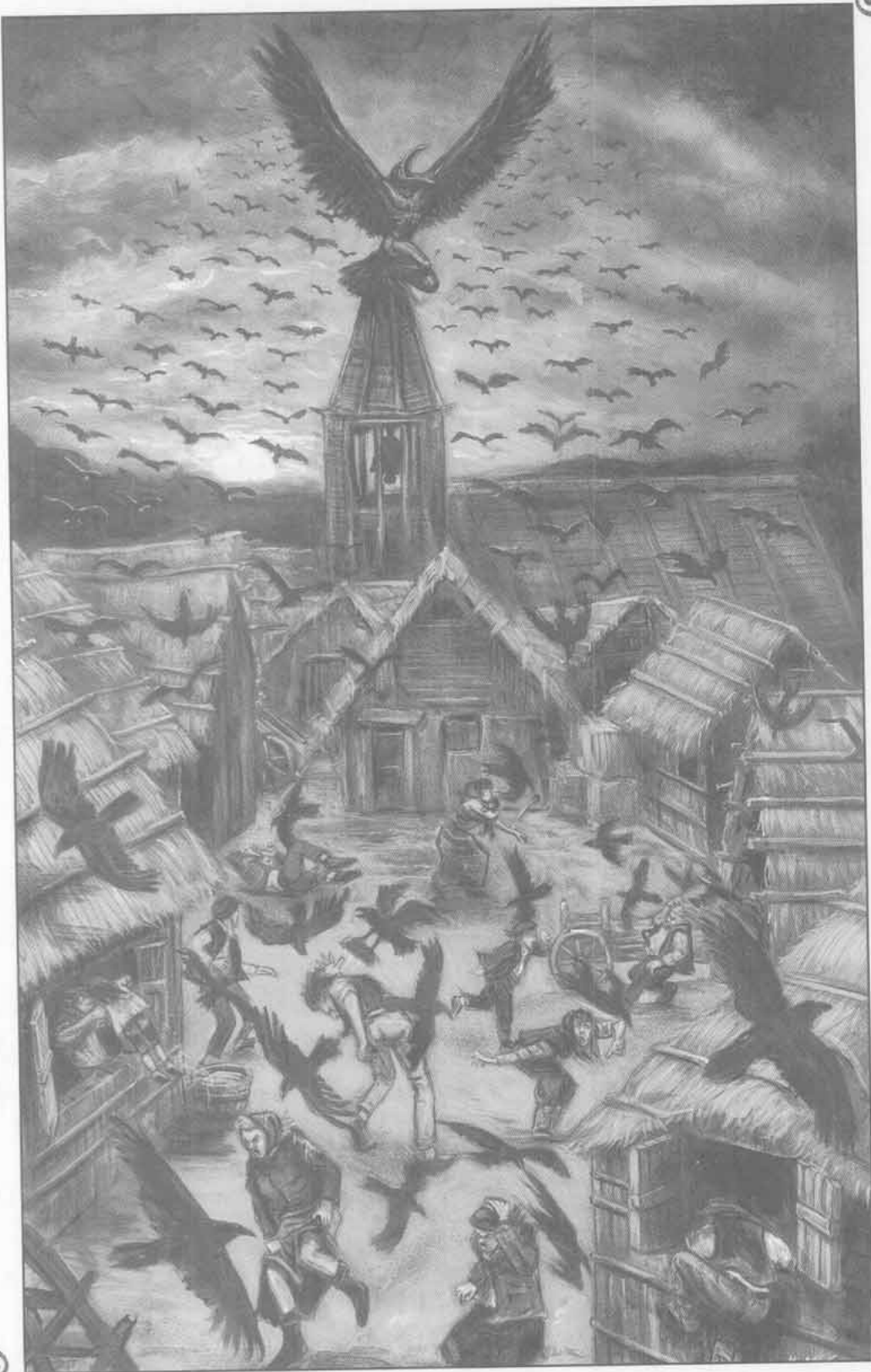
Weretigers and werewolves are examples of lycanthropes that fall in a middle ground. The former phenotype forms strong bonds within a "pride," or extended familial group. A pride will establish a territory and consider other weretigers that enter this region as rivals or even enemies. Interlopers are occasionally invited to join a pride, at which point such rivalry ends.

Werewolves are, generally speaking, loners. Yet under certain conditions they evince strong social behavior. For example, like their natural lupine cousins, werewolves can form packs (extended familial groups, generally larger than weretiger prides). Members of a pack will usually forget personal differences and work together if the pack is threatened, whether through the actions of locals or through the invasion of another pack. Yet, when *there are no such direct threats, a werewolf pack is characterized by machinations, politics, and backbiting that makes most human political maneuvering look tame by comparison.*

The leader of a pack is the strongest individual, usually judged through personal challenge and combat in animal or man-beast form. Other positions of authority fall to those who have the wherewithal to take them and hold them. Challenges and internecine squabbles within a pack are occasionally fatal, but this does not diminish the vehemence with which individuals pursue them.

It is important to note that characteristic behaviors hold true no matter what form the werebeasts involved are in. For example, two werewolves who are both masquerading as human merchants *might extend their pack—based rivalry into the marketplace and engage in vicious price wars.*

It is vital to realize that the above discussions are generalities *only*. Lycanthropes are individuals; even though they may be genetically predisposed to certain behaviors, they have the freedom to choose their own paths. Thus, though most wererats are social creatures, it is not impossible to encounter a solitary example of its kind. Similarly, atypical werebears may form a tight-knit social group. It is my belief that one who blindly trusts to trends and generalities is as foolish as one who categorically ignores them.



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Between Phenotypes

Generally speaking, lycanthropes of one phenotype tend to shun those of another phenotype. They are liable to ignore the others' actions unless those actions would bring direct harm or disadvantage to themselves.

This said, I must again stress the unreliability of generalities. Some werebeasts show extreme antipathy to lycanthropes of different phenotypes (whether they act overtly on this antipathy is another question, of course); others show the opposite behavior and actively seek them out. It is impossible to predict the behavior of any individual werebeast. Further, there seems to be no phenotypic correlation with this behavior range; in other words, no phenotype is more or less likely to diverge from the norm. In this matter, then, phenotype is of no significance, while individual personality is of paramount import.

I have sometimes thought that collaboration between lycanthropes of different phenotypes would be beneficial, perhaps even favoring natural selection, and thus likely to become more common. While this has not proved to be the case over the decades I have studied lycanthropy, I am not yet ready to discard my hypothesis. Perhaps the increase in interphenotypic collaboration is so slow that I have been unable to measure it. Or, more disturbingly, perhaps collaboration is so successful that, where it occurs, the werebeasts involved are never detected and thus never destroyed. . . .

Even when lycanthropes feel the strongest of antipathies toward each other, they will rarely abandon their own subterfuges to act on their hatreds. Even the most virulently hate-filled werebeast might suffer the presence of another, simply because taking action against the intruder would put itself at unacceptable risk. In all but the rarest cases, lycanthropes

are highly pragmatic: they are practical enough to put enlightened self-interest ahead of any personal animosity.

From my experiences, most lycanthropes seem able to recognize and identify others of their ilk, regardless of what forms they take. This explains, perhaps, why werecreatures who meet in man form in, say, the local market, do not react and attack. Perhaps this recognition is based on smell; yet, then, why would dogs not detect the difference? Or it could be visual cues too subtle for men to recognize. Most likely, however, is the supposition that lycanthropes exude a kind of "psychic taint" that others of their kind can detect. After all, in so many other ways it seems that Evil recognizes its own.

A resident werefox I once knew sensed that a newcomer to town was actually a lycanthrope in disguise. I admit to believing the werefox was in error, for I had detected nothing out of the ordinary from the stranger. But not only did the werefox know the man was an interloper, she knew too that he was a weretiger of excessive cunning. Sadly, I still did not believe the fox, and she paid for my disbelief with her life when the weretiger decided to invade her territory. By then, of course, I believed my confederate. Try as I did, however, the weretiger eluded all my attempts to hunt and kill him. He escaped one night, and I have never seen him since.

Compiler's Note: This off-hand reference to the werefox poses many questions. For some reason he doesn't mention, Dr. Van Richten obviously knew of this werebeast's existence, but did nothing to eliminate the threat. Perhaps he only discovered the werefox's true nature when it came to him with news of the weretiger, and the werefox was killed by the second werebeast before the good doctor could act on his own.

GWF

That was my first glimpse into understanding how keen the senses of werereatures must be in order to recognize someone not quite of their kind, regardless of what form they are in. On more than one occasion, this belief has been upheld and even fortified. Yet, on others, the creatures have seemed absolutely unaware of another's presence or specific phenotype. Does this mean that some werebeasts have the power to make the determination while others do not? I cannot say, but I maintain that this ability is a highly dangerous quality for, if a lycanthrope is able to detect the presence of others of its kind, how unlikely is it that it will *not* be able to detect a werhunter?

Relationships Between Lycanthropes and Humanity

In its most basic terms, the relationship between lycanthropes and humans (or any humanoid race) is one of hunter and the hunted, predator and prey. Yet there are some interesting twists and complexities to the relationship that belie this apparent simplicity.

First and foremost, all lycanthropes I have encountered consider themselves undeniably superior to other races. As discussed in Chapter One, most of these creatures consider themselves to be the next logical step in evolution beyond humanity. Even those who do not fully embrace the evolutionary view believe that their ability to change shape and their immunity to nonmagical weapons make them definitely superior.

Still, many lycanthropes evince a need for mankind as more than handy prey. These are the werebeasts whose goals and desires extend beyond finding their next meal. Those lycanthropes that do feel a need beyond that of food are hardly ever creative; they can produce nothing, neither works of art nor items of

practicality. Their rapacious natures inhibit, distort, and finally destroy whatever finer impulses might run through their veins. Instead, they must depend on humanity to provide for their material needs. Similarly, those werebeasts that desire repute and notoriety are dependent on humans simply because they need a means to achieve that end.

Werebeasts that infiltrate human society generally do so for multiple reasons. The first, of course, is to surround themselves with a food source. The second, however, relates to security. A lycanthrope that successfully maintains its subterfuge is safer from hunters than is one living in the wilderness, or so I have concluded. If the disguised werebeast has properly infiltrated the society, it will have a group of "supporters." These people know and deal with the lycanthrope, yet are unaware of its true nature; they will, consciously or unwittingly, help defuse any suspicion that their associate is actually a ravening monster. A lycanthrope that has successfully infiltrated a village or town will use its neighbors to defend it from threats, particularly if a group of werhunters arrive in the region. Note that the longer a werebeast has been living in society, the less likely the locals will be to entertain suspicions against it. Although there are other reasons for this, one of the central motivations is that few people like to entertain the possibility that they may have been very wrong about someone. This unwillingness to consider the unpleasant has caused the death of more than one hapless villager.

Werebeast-led Groups

Although it is attractive and reassuring to think so, werebeasts have no monopoly on evil or ill will. There are those individuals who would not hesitate to knowingly throw in their lot with a lycanthrope. Fortunately, this

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situation is rare. But, when the condition does arise, the suffering and woe it can promote is considerable.

I am thinking specifically of a small settlement that used to exist in northern Nova Vaasa, a large village known as Mel Fira. Some decades ago, an ambitious wererat moved into the village disguised as a human merchant. Over a period of months, he picked out those residents of Mel Fira who were evil of heart, who were willing to bring woe to others to satisfy their own desires. To these individuals, the wererat revealed its true nature. If these individuals would work with it, the werebeast promised, they would enjoy wealth and personal power beyond their imagining. According to my sources, only one person out of the dozen approached refused the offer; of course, the lycanthrope killed her on the spot.

The wererat's band quickly took control of the village. The government was already corrupt, but this band raised matters to new heights of depravity. Throughout this period, the wererat brought more of its kind, also masquerading as humans, to Mel Fira. Apparently, none of the members of the creature's original band knew the true nature of these "new arrivals," believing instead that they were other human comrades of the wererat.

Although the townsfolk were unaware that there were wererats in their midst, they did not long remain ignorant of the presence of lycanthropes in the vicinity. Mysterious disappearances and deaths were on the rise, and various witnesses reported seeing twisted, almost-human shapes that could only be werebeasts. The wererats were careful, however, sharing the kills they made. Each creature needed only about two pounds of meat a day, and enough prime flesh to sate several wererats could be "harvested" from even the smallest human victim. The werebeasts were also careful not to

spread their lycanthropy, which would undeniably prove the nature of the threat to the town.

The village government, under the sway of the wererats by this time, constantly acted to sow dissension and confusion, to allay people's fears, to cast doubt on the belief that the deaths were the acts of lycanthropes, and to prevent the villagers from taking any concerted action. Any strong leaders who arose among the uncontrolled populace "coincidentally" fell victim to the "mysterious monster" threatening the village.

Finally, someone suspected what was occurring and managed to get word to a small band of adventurers who were currently traveling through the region. This group, which included several magic-armed warriors, quickly saw the true situation and identified the original wererat and its human followers. They did not suspect that there might be more of the creatures in Mel Fira, however.

The hour of transformation is at hand. . . . I feel the bite of my own teeth as my mouth distorts and fangs emerge between suddenly hard lips. My hands tremble as they twist and curve into claws that make a mockery of human fingernails. My skin prickles and crawls with an unholy fervor as bristles of jet hair emerge across my body.

And—O!—the stench of it all! The choking, putrid smell that is beyond description! The charnel smell of dried blood and burnt hair corrodes my nostrils as my face contorts into that of a werewolf. The rank smell of transformation haunts my waking hours, and it invades my dreams as well. I cannot rid myself of the fetid odor: It is driving me mad.

The waxen moon rises above the line of trees surrounding, sheltering

me, and I fall to all fours. The hour of evil is at hand, and I must succumb to what is now my nature, I know now the shape of madness, of ravening insanity, and it is me!

—Anonymous

The final act of this tragedy took place in a general town meeting, at which the visiting adventurers accused the central figure of being a wererat. Rather than denying it, the creature transfigured into its man-beast form. Simultaneously, some eight or so other "townsfolk" also transfigured, causing absolute panic. The ensuing chaos culminated in a fire that virtually razed the village. Many townsfolk died, as did several human associates of the wererat, a couple of lycanthropes, and all but one or two of the adventurers. Most of the wererats escaped into the surrounding wilderness, but not before attempting to infect as many innocents as possible with their dread affliction. Mel Fira effectively ceased to exist that night and has never been rebuilt. The region where the village used to stand is considered one of ill omen, if not cursed. Although I have no firm evidence, I fear that the wererat that started the entire debacle escaped with its life. It may well be repeating its actions in another village.

The point of this story is to illustrate the vulnerability humans possess. Most men revere, and will gladly follow, any creature that proves itself more powerful than they. This theory also applies to demihumans and those of humanoid origins. Since a wereboar, for example, is considerably more intelligent and powerful than an average goblin, the lycanthrope would have little difficulty taking over leadership of a band of the small humanoids, should it so desire.

Lycanthropes typically consider humanoids to be even lower forms of

life than humans, which are already inferior to themselves. There is no reason, however, why they cannot suppress their distaste and condescension if it suits their purposes. Humanoid followers do not offer the same potential for cunning and guile as do human devotees, but they *do* represent excellently expendable troops that can be used (and used up) in combat.

Infiltrating Society

It is sad but true that it is almost more difficult for a real person to become an accepted member of a town than it is for a werebeast to infiltrate the same society. Most townsfolk or villagers are highly suspicious of strangers. Initially, both "candidates"—a real human and a werebeast in human form—are on an even basis. Few normal humans are as socially adept as most true lycanthropes are, however. A human expresses his own personality, and it is a fact of life that not everyone is going to *like* that personality.

Lycanthropes, too, have their own personalities . . . but, almost from birth, they have learned to *suppress* their true manners and emotions. They have learned to watch the reactions of the humans around them and to tailor their delivery to make those reactions as palatable as possible.

A werebeast dissembling as a human might make an ambiguous comment about elves to the human farmer it meets. When the farmer expresses distrust of all nonhumans, the werebeast echoes the sentiment, tailoring the intensity of its opinion to match the emotional climate of the farmer. Since werebeast and farmer now have something in common—bigotry toward nonhumans—the lycanthrope is well on the way to earning the farmer's trust and even friendship. Obviously, this technique must be used in a subtle manner, particularly in group situations, where

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not everyone will share the same outlook. The basis remains the same, however. Lycanthropes are masters of this skill.

One characteristic I have noted among natives of more remote locales is the tendency not to ask questions whose answers might be disturbing. These people prefer not to reflect upon mysteries, the bases of which might be too frightening to contemplate. (Frankly, this is an attitude I find altogether frustrating and impossible to understand.) This tendency to shy away from "things man was not meant to know," to paraphrase what one old man shouted at me once, easily works to the benefit of lycanthropes. Once an individual—human, lycanthrope, or something else—has earned a level of superficial trust and acceptance, it is frequently free of any subsequent suspicion. People will not pursue nagging doubts, preferring instead to ignore them. An annoying, and often deadly, human trait I'm afraid, but one that the werehunter must keep in mind when dealing with townfolk.

It is, perhaps, fortunate in some ways that there are always new arrivals to Darkon and other lands. Most of these new souls have not learned this tendency to shy away from unpleasant possibilities. Without such individuals who still maintain a natural level of curiosity, lycanthropes would have an even easier time infiltrating human society than they do already. Perhaps their fresh outlooks can excite the jaded townfolk into a higher regard for safety and life.

Obtaining Skills and Abilities

Perhaps the most successful lycanthropic infiltrators in society have the ability of which I am about to describe. Apparently, or so I have been told, certain true lycanthropes have been able to learn the skills and abilities normally allotted only to those

people who have dedicated themselves to pursuing an adventuring career. In other words, certain lycanthropes have learned the skills specific to trained warriors, rogues, mages, and perhaps even priests.

This possibility terrifies me, I must admit. I draw solace only from the fact that I have yet to encounter such a skilled werebeast, which leads me to believe this potential is exceptionally rare. I pray that my thinking on this is clear and not clouded by the human tendency to ignore unpleasanties.

"You call us the beast," the lycanthrope said, stroking its handsome human face. "You say we are dark, twisted reflections of you. Is that not so?"

I had to nod in agreement.

"Yet we see things differently," the creature continued, musingly. "We see ourselves as the next logical progression, the next step above humans. Tell me," it said, leaning forward, "you have the beast, the rage within your soul, do you not?" It waited not for my answer. "Of course you do," it stated. "'Overpowering rage,' is that not a common human phrase? That describes when the beast within you is beyond your control.

"Such is not the case with me. I am the beast, the beast is me. And thus it is always my will, not an inadequately leashed beast, that is in control." He smiled.

"Now, for example," And with that, the creature began the transfiguration. . . .

—From the personal journal of
Dr. Van Richten

Character Class Skills

Generally speaking, no more than 5% of true lycanthropes—and possibly a lower percentage than that, at the DM's option—should be able to learn any character class skills. Of those that can learn these skills, the most common character class is warrior (note that werebeasts can't become specialized subclasses, except in the rarest of circumstances). The rationale is that these creatures are physically fit and highly aggressive, two of the prime characteristics of good warriors. Some lycanthropes lean toward the rogue class (most notably wererats) since the characteristics of this class fit in well with their sly and manipulative nature.

Certain lycanthropes could conceivably become wizards or priests, but this should be *exceptionally* rare; perhaps only one-tenth of those lycanthropes capable of learning class skills. Both of these classes require much more introspection, cerebration, and self-discipline than the majority of werebeasts could muster. Lycanthrope cler-

ics will, obviously, devote themselves to deities whose precepts match their own outlook on life. Good lycanthropes are likely to be priests of forest deities or guardian deities. Evil lycanthropes would be priests of storms, destruction, rage, or war.

Psionicist lycanthropes are likely to be even more rare an occurrence than the mage or priest werebeast. If the Dungeon Master is willing to permit these creatures into his or her campaign, they are only allowed to study the psychometabolic, psychokinetic, and telepathic disciplines.

Note that lycanthropes can use their character class skills when they are in human or man-beast form *only*.

The following table lists the character classes open to the most common types of werebeasts, along with the maximum level the creature can attain. If a particular class doesn't appear for a creature, it is incapable of learning that class. The order in which the classes appear indicates their relative frequency. DMs can also use the information in the table to extrapolate for additional phenotypes of lycanthrope.

Allowable Character Classes

Phenotype	Potential Character Classes (Maximum Levels)
Werebadger	Warrior (3rd), priest (2nd)
Werebat	Rogue (4th), wizard (3rd), psionicist (2nd)
Werebear	Ranger (3rd), wizard (3rd), priest (3rd)
Wereboar	Warrior (3rd), druid (2nd)
Wecrocodile	Warrior (4th), priest (3rd)
Werefox	Rogue (2nd), bard (6th), illusionist (4th), psionicist (3rd)
Werejackal	Warrior (3rd), wizard (2nd)
Wererat	Rogue (6th), wizard* (3rd), psionicist (2nd)
Wereraven	Ranger (3rd), wizard* (6th), psionicist (4th)
Weresael	Warrior (3rd), rogue (2nd), psionicist (2nd)
Wereshark	Warrior (3rd), priest (4th)
Weretiger	Warrior (6th), priest (4th), druid (4th), illusionist (5th)
Werewolf	Warrior (3rd), wizard (2nd)

* These werebeasts can become specialist mages.

None of the lycanthropic phenotypes listed in this table get the THACO or Hit Dice size advantages for their class. However, they do get the best of both saving throw values, proficiencies (weapon and nonweapon), and other specialized class skills (such as spellcasting).

All werebeasts pay twice the normal Experience Point values to advance in levels. This reflects the fact that the self-discipline required for training doesn't come easily to these creatures.

Individual DMs can decide whether dual-classed or multiclassed lycanthropes are possible. If so, they should be even rarer than lycanthropic wizards, priests, or psionicists.

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She was a charming lady, to be sure, and not at all the shy creature we had expected our old friend Edward to marry. Even though she was expecting, and very near her term, she showed me an extraordinary degree of hospitality. Still, some memories of that visit were quite unsettling.

Here is one such example: You have no doubt heard that women who are with child may experience cravings for strange foodstuffs—pickled vegetables and the like. I was still surprised, however; when one night, unable to sleep, I was walking the house and found the lady, my hostess, in the kitchen, gnawing hungrily on a haunch of raw meat!

—From a letter penned by Rasten Fefoeg

CHAPTER FOUR: THE PATHOLOGIC SCOURGE



athologic lycanthropy, the form acquired through a werebeast's attack, is a blight unequaled in its horror. In this chapter I shall focus on the nature and stages of this accursed condition, from its contraction to (the gods be willing) its cure.

Susceptibility

Though I have used the word "human" to describe the primary form of werebeasts, it is well known that the so-called demihuman races also may contract the scourge of lycanthropy. Specifically, elves, half-elves, gnomes, halflings, and dwarves are all susceptible to the fury of the beast. But what about other races? Can they, too, acquire this heinous affliction? It is an interesting question, and one that allows for no simple, straightforward answer.

In theory at least, any living, fully mammalian, intelligent creature that matches the humanoid body form can succumb to the dreaded lycanthropic affliction. This is not to say that *any* intelligent creature with two arms and

two legs may be stricken. In my estimation, creatures who are a great deal larger than humans (such as giants) do not acquire lycanthropy. Further, creatures who are inherently and highly magical seem immune, as do beings whose biochemical processes differ significantly from our own (thus presenting a hostile environment to the contagion). Of late I have begun to study certain fiendish and otherworldly creatures who truly are the stuff of nightmares, come to haunt us in the day. They, too, appear to be completely immune to lycanthropy.

Compiler's Note: Please see future volumes of Dr. Van Richten's compiled texts for these discussions.

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This immunity does not extend to any of the more common humanoid races, however. If my research is correct, the following races are indeed susceptible to lycanthropy: orcs, goblins, hobgoblins, kobolds, ogres, bugbears, gnolls, and even the dark-natured elves, who dwell far below our surface world.

These humanoid races do not appear to be *uniformly* susceptible to all werebeast attacks, however. To a human or demihuman victim, the phenotype of the werebeast who

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transmits the contagion does not affect the viability of the disease. (A human attacked by a werewolf is no less likely to acquire lycanthropy than a human attacked by a werewolf.) In contrast, other humanoid races appear more likely to acquire lycanthropy from just

one or more particular phenotypes, while infected folk representing other phenotypes are unknown to their race. Often, the humanoid's own lore and beliefs support this theory. Kobolds, for example, are particularly fearful of werewolves. In my opinion, this fear is

The following table lists one or more phenotypes to which a major race is vulnerable. (Note that these entries encompass racial varieties, such as derro [dwarves], aquatic elves, etc.) If a member of the race is wounded by such a lycanthrope, the odds of infection are as usual: 2% per hit point of damage sustained.

The table also provides a "resistance percentage." This applies if a member of the race is wounded by a lycanthrope *not* of the phenotypes listed. The DM should roll 1d100 and compare the result to this percentage. If the roll is equal to or less than the stated percentage, the usual process is used, based on a 2% chance of infection per hit point sustained. If the roll is greater than the stated percentage, however, the victim is immune to this particular lycanthrope (the individual attacker, *not* the entire phenotype).

Susceptibility by Race

Race	Infective Phenotypes	Resistance Percentage
Bugbear	Werewolf, wereboar	75%
Drow	Werebat	95%
Dwarf	All	-
Elf (non-drow)	All	-
Gnoll	Werefox, werewolf	70%
Gnome	All	-
Goblin	Werebat, wererat	90%
Half-elf	All	-
Half-orc	All	-
Halfling	All	-
Hobgoblin	Wereboar, wererat	80%
Human	All	-
Kender	All	-
Kobold	Werebat, wererat	95%
Ogre	Werewolf, wereboar, werewolf	65%
Orc	Wereboar, wererat	70%
Sahuagin	Wereshark, wereseal	55%
Troll	Werewolf, werewolf	50%

Example: Two trolls are attacked by werewolves—*not* a phenotype to which trolls are specifically susceptible. The resistance percentage for trolls is 50%. Each troll is attacked by one werewolf. The DM rolls 1d100 for "Troll A," with a result of 45. Troll A is susceptible to the specific werewolf attacking it, and its chance of contracting lycanthropy is 2% per hit point of damage suffered. For Troll B, however, the DM rolls 70. This troll is totally immune to infection from the werewolf currently attacking it. Should the werewolf attacking Troll A switch its attention to Troll B, however, the DM would have to roll d100 again for Troll B.

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not unfounded, but it is the result of actual experience. While I have never seen a kobold take the shape of a wolf, I have indeed seen several fall prey to a werebat's assault.

Vestiges of Race

Somewhat predictably, an infected person's race can affect the appearance of the werebeast's secondary aspect. For example, lycanthropes of races that possess certain special abilities or characteristics might retain those characteristics even after transfiguration.

Below, I have set out what little I have learned about this topic. Note that these observations are far from exhaustive, and far from categorical. I may well be mistaken on several of the points raised, or perhaps the situation is more variable than I currently believe it to be.

Bugbear: To the best of my knowledge, infected bugbears have no unusual characteristics in animal or hybrid form.

Drow: It would seem that drow lycanthropes retain something of their resistance to magic, regardless of form.

All drow lycanthropes have an innate 25% magical resistance while in animal or hybrid form. In drow form, they have the standard magical resistance described in the *MONSTROUS MANUAL™* tome (50% plus 2% per level).

Dwarf: Lycanthropic dwarves retain their ability to detect sloping passages, regardless of the aspect they hold.

They also retain their bonuses to saving throws vs. magic and poison (if any), per Table 9 of the *PHB*.

Elf: In any form, infected elves appear highly resistant to *sleep* and *charm* spells.

Regardless of their aspect, infected elves are 90% resistant to *sleep* and *charm* spells.

Gnoll: No "gnollish" traces are apparent.

Gnome: The animal or hybrid form of an infected gnome is generally slightly smaller than the average for a particular phenotype. This size differential seems not to exceed the natural variability of werebeasts, however.

Lycanthropic gnomes also retain their saving-throw bonuses (if any) vs. magic, per Table 9 in the *PHB*.

Goblin: Like gnomes, goblins infected with lycanthropy tend to exhibit a smaller than average animal or "gnome-beast" form. Again, this differential is within the natural variability among individuals.

Half-Elf: Nothing distinguishes the infected half-elf from others of the same phenotype.

Halfling: Halfling-based lycanthropes are generally smaller than the average for a particular phenotype. However, this slight difference is not a telltale sign of race.

Lycanthropic halflings retain their saving-throw bonuses (if any) against spells and poisons, per Table 9 of the *PHB*.

Hobgoblin: No special hobgoblin traits are apparent after transfiguration.

Human: Human lycanthropes have no unusual characteristics (since this is the race against which all others are compared).

Kender: Kender-based lycanthropes are generally smaller than the average for a particular phenotype. As with gnomes and goblins, this differential falls within the natural variability among individuals.

Kobold: Among members of a particular phenotype, the animal or

hybrid form of an infected kobold is always smaller than average. This size differential is slightly greater than natural variability.

Ogre: An infected ogre in animal or hybrid form tends to be slightly larger than other members of the same phenotype. The ogre werebeast also seems considerably more resilient and more resistant to damage.

Infected ogres gain an additional Hit Die in their secondary aspect.

Orc: Lycanthropes based on orcs appear to have no unusual characteristics in their secondary aspect, except, perhaps, an unusual propensity for drooling.

Sahuagin: I've observed no unusual racial traits.

Troll: Troll lycanthropes are generally larger than average for their phenotype when in animal or hybrid form. Also, they seem at least partially able to regenerate damage inflicted by weapons to which the creatures are vulnerable. Thus, wererunners might face the daunting spectacle of a troll-based werewolf *spontaneously healing* wounds inflicted by magical or silver weapons.

Infected trolls regenerate 1 hit point per round while in animal or hybrid form. When they are reduced to 0 hit points, however, they are dead. (Their regenerative ability isn't that good.) In primary aspect, the normal rules apply. Thus, they regenerate their normal 3 points per round, and can be slain only by fire or acid.

Conservation of Phenotype

The vast majority of victims infected with lycanthropy will match the phenotype of the creature that infected them. I have heard, however, of the occasional "sport"—a case where this "conservation of phenotype" is not upheld. For example, a person infected

by a werewolf might transfigure into a werefox, or into a wererat, or into another phenotype altogether.

Several explanations for such flukes are possible. First, the number of cases is so small (fewer than one in several thousand) that this could well be a mistake in observation. Second, it is possible that the victims were actually infected by two different lycanthropes. (This is discussed under "Multiple Infections" below.) And third, perhaps the maledictive form of lycanthropy was involved.

Conservation of Triggers

A person who acquires lycanthropy from another infected werebeast will share the same trigger condition as the monster that defiled him. This is common knowledge.

What, then, about the victims of *true* lycanthropes? True werebeasts traditionally have complete control over matters of *transfiguration*, and thus have no trigger condition. Where, then, do their victims' triggers come from?

I propose that each and every lycanthrope, whether true or infected, has an innate trigger condition associated with it. However, this trigger is exhibited, or "expressed," only by infected werebeasts. It is a fact that victims infected by a particular true lycanthrope will share the same trigger condition, which argues to me that the infecting creature passes it on as part of the affliction.

Furthermore, true lycanthropes who are siblings pass on the *same* trigger condition to their victims. This does not mean, however, that a person infected by a true lycanthrope can expect to suffer the same trigger as victims of that lycanthrope's parents. The litter of two true lycanthropes may carry the father's trigger, the mother's trigger, or an entirely new trigger. It seems inescapable, however, that with any pairing of true werebeasts, all resulting offspring will transmit the same trigger condition.

Multiple Infections

Though rare, it is possible for a single victim to be attacked by—and be infected by—two or more werebeasts of a different phenotype. Personally, I know of five such cases. For example, both a werebear and a werewolf might infect a person. What is the result of such multiple infections? What animal aspect does the victim assume upon transfiguration?

It is interesting to note that virtually no folktales or myths discuss this matter, and those few which do mention the issue provide little detail. I know of only two exceptions. Both tales originated from the same region (Kartakass), but each presents a different solution to the puzzle. The first story claims that a multiple infection results in a deranged lycanthrope of mixed phenotype (an unholy blend of bear and wolf in my preceding example), which immediately and invariably flies into bloodlust upon transfiguration. The other tale asserts that the phenotype of the last lycanthrope to infect the victim is dominant, and that the afflicted person will always transfigure into this phenotype, regardless of the time elapsed between infections.

My own research has proved to my satisfaction that the second tale is closer to the truth. Even so, there are complexities that are not even hinted at by this story.

The fate of a person infected by more than one phenotype appears to hinge on a single factor: whether or not the victim has undergone his first transfiguration. If he has not, the *last* contagion to enter the victim's system becomes dominant. Specifically, it determines the phenotype of the victim.

Let us imagine, for example, that a man is first infected by a werebear. Soon thereafter, before the man has ever changed shape, a werewolf attacks and infects him. The unfortunate will take the form of a wolf (or man-wolf hybrid), not that of a bear.

This does not mean, however, that the contagion transmitted by the werebear has no effect whatsoever. Though the man will never resemble a bear, the trigger condition carried by the werebear does apply. Instead of causing a change to bear shape, however, the trigger brings about the transfiguration into a wolf (or man-wolf hybrid). Thus a victim of multiple infections will be susceptible to *all* the triggers associated with the lycanthropes that infected him, though he will assume only the shape dictated by the most recent infection. (Again, this situation occurs only if the multiple infections were acquired before the victim's first transfiguration.)

And what if the victim is infected *after* his first transfiguration? Once I deemed such multiple infections impossible. In the overwhelming majority of cases, an infected lycanthrope simply cannot acquire another version of lycanthropy after the beast within has been unleashed. I have recently encountered an exception, however. A werewolf first attacked the unfortunate involved, and he became a wolf at the next full moon. Thereafter, he acquired a second infection from a wereboar, with the equinox as his trigger condition. The victim responded to that trigger too, becoming a boar, which was subsequently slain with an oaken spear, ending the boy's misery.

Note that an individual infected multiple times need only be cured once to be free of lycanthropy. It does not matter how many times he was infected. This is fortunate, considering how arduous the curative process is, and considering the unlikeliness of its success. All lycanthropes that infected the victim must be destroyed as part of this curative process.

Infecting a True Lycanthrope

In my travels, several people have asked me whether a true, or

pathologic, werebeast attacked by another lycanthrope would suffer any effects akin to the infection that humans suffer. It is an interesting question, and one to which I do not have a categorical answer.

In all likelihood, such an infection is not possible. I believe that any lycanthrope who attacks a true werebeast will inflict physical damage, and that is all. Yet, from time to time, folktales spark my interest in the subject. I have heard several stories concerning true lycanthropes that *do not* have complete control over their transfiguration. Like other true werebeasts, these creatures can change aspect at will. But sometimes they also will transfigure *against* their will, in response to some external trigger condition. They can regain whatever form they wish—if not immediately, then within a score of heartbeats—yet even a momentary shift can destroy a life-long masquerade.

Are these creatures true lycanthropes that have been partially infected by *other* lycanthropes, contracting their attackers' trigger conditions? I cannot say for sure. Perhaps the loss of control stems from another cause entirely. Yet, it is an interesting hypothesis, and one that I intend to investigate over the next several years.

Triggers

I have made something of a small study into the conditions, or triggers, that cause transfiguration in infected lycanthropes. Such triggers typically fall into two large categories, which I have dubbed "symbolic" and "physiological."

Symbolic triggers are events that have some allegorical or figurative connection to the nature of lycanthropy in general and to the transfiguration itself. Physiological triggers are events that cause some change in the lycanthrope's body—a change which in turn could reasonably be expected to initiate a more drastic physical alteration. Below I

shall describe each category, as well as those exceptional triggers which refuse to comply with either definition.

Symbolic Triggers

Many of the so-called "symbolic" triggers define or represent change. They symbolize a transition, often drastic, from one state to another. So powerful and so magical is this symbolism that when some facet of the environment undergoes a change, so too does the infected lycanthrope. An archetypal example is a sunset or sunrise—the transition from day to night or from night to day. Sleep is another symbolic trigger, for it represents an altered state of consciousness and the journey from reality to the realm of nightmares.

However, not every symbolic trigger represents a clear change from one strictly defined condition to its antithesis. Other symbolic triggers reflect a more general change or transition. For instance, in most lands the changing phases of the moon serve to measure the passage of time, and the moon itself has often come to symbolize passing time. Thus it should come as little surprise to learn that a particular phase of the moon acts as trigger for many werebeasts. According to popular legends, the full moon is the archetypal trigger. I have found, however, that virtually every phase of the moon, from new to full, through one-quarter waxing through three-quarters waning, successfully triggers certain werebeasts.

In like manner, other conditions symbolic of passing time can act as lycanthropic triggers. Some werebeasts respond to changing seasons. Others respond to astronomical events, such as eclipses or the movements of wandering stars. Even the first snowfall or another "weather landmark" may trigger a particular creature.

I must emphasize that in the previous examples, the victim need not

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actually witness the symbolic trigger for its effect to take hold. In other words, the stereotypical werewolf does not have to see the full moon to become a ravening beast; the simple fact that the moon is full triggers the change. Thus, a werewolf could not prevent disaster by locking himself in a windowless basement for three nights each month—unless, of course, those locks were exceedingly secure.

Symbolic triggers also include conditions or events which somehow represent the death and destruction left in the wake of a lycanthrope. Such triggers are comparatively rare, however (that is, few infected lycanthropes respond to them). Examples include seeing the color red, which is symbolic of blood, or black, which represents death. Other examples are as follows: being plunged into total darkness, which is again symbolic of death; seeing or smelling blood; seeing combat or other overt violence; witnessing or experiencing *emotional* or covert violence; and passing through or by a graveyard.

I recognize that some of these triggers could alternatively be classed as physiological events. For example, is the scent of blood a *symbolic trigger*, or does it stimulate the hunger of the beast *within and thus qualify as physiological*? And is being plunged into darkness *symbolic*, or is the natural surprise and fear it enjoins the actual trigger? I do not have all the answers. Ultimately, however, such distinctions do not appear as important as the recognition that such triggers exist.

Physiological Triggers

Compared to symbolic triggers, these conditions or events are more direct, less metaphysical, and hence easier to understand. Many of them engender strong and clearly defined changes in the body, even when that body is *not* infected with lycanthropy. For example, both extreme fear and

extreme anger are common physiological triggers. Even among normal humans, both conditions bring about profound changes in the way the body functions. Muscles tense, pupils dilate, and the heart quickens its pace. Breathing becomes shallow and rapid, and blood is redirected toward specific muscles or organs. In essence, the body undergoes *significant changes* to prepare itself for fight or flight.

It seems to me quite logical that such profound changes can and do trigger the *transfiguration* in some werebeasts. Perhaps one of the natural chemicals which flood the bloodstream reacts with the infective agent, causing it to initiate a *metamorphosis*. If my interpretation is correct, then the action of such triggers can be explained solely in chemical and biological terms.

Let us look at several other common physiological triggers. Strong emotions of any kind, as well as what we may euphemistically label "intense passion," cause noticeable physiological changes in the body. According to some sages, injury or even intense physical pain causes the body to release certain natural painkillers into the blood. I see no reason why any of these chemical changes could not trigger the *transfiguration*.

Perceptive readers will ask themselves a question that counts heavily against my arguments above: Why does each lycanthrope generally have only one trigger?

I fear I have no answer. If, as I have argued above, predominately chemical processes trigger the *transfiguration*, it would seem logical that *all* such processes would trigger *all* lycanthropes. In other words, since fear and anger have such similar physiological effects, why are some lycanthropes triggered only by one and not the other? Why are so very, very few triggered by both? Obviously, there may be much more to the matter of triggers than simple chemistry and biology.

DMs can specify that any event acts as a trigger, from reading a book to being kissed, from hearing a thrush chirp to being struck on the head with a mallet. However, in the interest of game balance, Dungeon Masters should keep the following points in mind.

First, if a trigger event is very common (a sunset) or involves large numbers of adept people (mass combat), it's not likely that a lycanthrope will survive for very long, unless it's exceptionally powerful. For example, if the local blacksmith becomes a werewolf every time he touches iron, it won't take the local folk long to realize that something's amiss and to do something about it.

Second, if the infected lycanthrope is a player character, it's doubly important not to saddle the PC with a trigger that occurs too often or can't be avoided. Remember, each time the PC transfigures, the player loses control of the character. Frequent trigger conditions can get frustrating very fast.

As a guideline, triggers for infected PCs should probably occur no more than once or twice a month.

bolism involved in a wererat transfiguring when it sees a sea gull (as was the case with a merchant in Souragne)?

Similarly, if a lycanthrope were triggered by a musical melody that had great emotional significance for him (perhaps bringing back happy or sad memories of childhood), that would be a physiological trigger. Yet I met one unfortunate fellow who became a raging boar each time he heard Vistani violin music, despite the fact that he had never heard such music before his first transfiguration!

Lycanthropic Control

There are many folktales describing how a true lycanthrope automatically enjoys a form of innate control over all those infected lycanthropes it creates. These tales tell of ravening packs of werebeasts marauding through the countryside under the control of their true lycanthrope master.

Although tales attribute this power to all true lycanthropes, my own research indicates that it is far from universal. Certainly, some true werebeasts seem able to enslave, or at least guide the actions of, those infected victims they create. But by no means all, and perhaps not even the majority, enjoy this dark ability.

For those lycanthropes that can control their "infected progeny" (if I may use such a term), there seem to be several universal characteristics of this power. First, the true lycanthrope can control its progeny only when they are in secondary aspect. The creature has no influence whatsoever on their behavior while they are in human form.

Second, the controlling werebeast must itself be in its own secondary or tertiary aspect—that is, animal or man-beast—to effect such a control. I can only guess why this might be true, a matter of perceived kinship perhaps, but it seems to hold in all cases I have investigated.

Other Triggers

I have recorded some trigger conditions that do not fit easily into either the symbolic or physiological groups. Some examples follow: seeing a particular animal, plant, or object; hearing a particular sound, word, phrase, or snatch of music; or casting or being the target of a particular class of magical spell (frequently healing magic).

To focus on specific instances, if a lycanthrope were triggered by sighting its own phenotypic animal (for example, a werewolf sighting a wolf), that would qualify as a symbolic trigger. However, not all animal-related triggers are so cut-and-dried. Where is the sym-

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Third, the control seems very tenuous. The controlling lycanthrope can guide its progeny's actions only in very general terms. It can prompt an attack against a certain target, or prevent one. It can keep its progeny quiet and calm, or send them ravening forth in a fury. Any more precise control appears to be beyond the true lycanthrope's abilities. As an analogy, the controlling werebeast has about as much control over its pack of progeny as a trusted leader has over a mob of humans. While such a leader can direct broad, unfocused responses, anything more specific is impossible.

These are the elements that all examples of control have in common. Now I shall discuss the factors that can differ from case to case.

In some cases, the true lycanthrope and its progeny can somehow sense each other's presence. As soon as a progeny creature transfigures into secondary form, it can sense where its creator is (as long as the werebeast is within some reasonable range, such as a handful of miles) and will head toward its master at its best speed. Similarly, the true lycanthrope can sometimes sense when its progeny have undergone a transfiguration, and roughly where they are within the same range limit. This ability obviously makes it easier for the progeny to gather into a pack. I would estimate that this occurs in perhaps twenty-five percent of cases where control exists. In an additional five percent of cases, this "locator sense" is unidirectional, not bi-directional (in other words, the progeny can sense their creator, but not vice versa; or the creator can sense its progeny, but not vice versa).

In certain rare cases, progeny will feel a kind of inexplicable kinship with their creator while *both* are in primary human aspect. Even though the victim does not know why, he will feel a propensity to trust and like the lycanthrope who infected him. Note that this is a propensity only; unless

the creator behaves in an appropriate manner, the tendency will vanish over time. I have heard of one case where this propensity for trusting the creator werebeast was as strong and wide-ranging as a *charm* spell. This is based entirely on hearsay, however, and could well be incorrect.

Further tales describe how certain lycanthropes can trigger the transfiguration in all their progeny. The way most tales describe this ability, the true werebeast must be in the presence of its progeny, and then it simply has to *will* them to change. I have come to the conclusion that this is totally incorrect. No werebeast that I have studied can mentally command its progeny to transfigure. I can understand, however, where these tales come from.

Most true lycanthropes are intelligent, or at the very least, cunning in the extreme. It would not be difficult for a werebeast to discover what condition triggers its progeny. (Recall that each true werebeast seems to imbue all of its infected progeny with the same trigger condition; this was discussed earlier on page 163.) When it has learned what this trigger is, it can certainly use this knowledge to its best advantage. If the trigger happens to be something it can orchestrate, such as hearing a particular sound or phrase of music, it could arrange a nasty surprise for a village by organizing a concert to which its progeny are invited and then making sure the trigger occurs!

Even if the creature has no desire to cause such a catastrophe, knowing the trigger it imbues might well come in handy should it ever be hunted. After all, who has better motivation to hunt down and destroy a werebeast than one of its infected progeny? (Refer to the section "Exterminating the Root" below.) Again, if the trigger is something it can orchestrate, it can turn one of its most fervent foes into an ally. (Hunters who are infected lycanthropes are well advised to take precautions against this stratagem.)

Defecting Infection

For those who have recently suffered a werebeast attack, or believe they have, a single question becomes of great importance: How do I know whether I've acquired lycanthropy? The question is pressing, for no one wants to learn of his affliction *after* the first transfiguration, when the only signs may be the steady loss of family members.

Unfortunately, I can offer little help to such people. To the best of my knowledge, there is no outward sign of infection. Some infected lycanthropes report having experienced a swelling around their wounds immediately following a werebeast's attack. This suggests that their bodies might actually have been fighting the lycanthropic infection. However, not all infected victims experience this inflammation. More often, in fact, the individuals who experience such initial swelling never exhibit lycanthropy. I have therefore concluded that this inflammation is a symptom of some other infection, or some other mundane condition which may have been transmitted by the werebeast. (Werebeasts are, after all, often filthy, and quite capable of hosting vermin.) It even may be possible that these lucky individuals' bodies actually destroyed the taint of lycanthropy within them.

Folktales and myths are full of tests for lycanthropic infection. Some make a modicum of sense. For example, some people swear that dousing a werebeast-inflicted wound with holy water is telling; if the victim experiences intense pain, then he has indeed acquired lycanthropy. Other tests seem totally nonsensical, however. For example, I once saw an old hermit pass a red hen over the prospective victim's head, to see whether this would make him sneeze. My personal research has confirmed my initial suspicions; none of these peculiar tests has any efficacy whatsoever.

It is said that some powerful forms of divinatory magic can determine whether a victim has been infected. This seems to be a real hit-or-miss affair, however. Certain spells allow the caster to commune with his deity; yet, since in my experience only malign deities can be contacted, so any information gained by such a communion is immediately suspect. I have heard that powerful magics such as a *wish* may sometimes determine whether a victim is afflicted with lycanthropy. Yet, since the intents of *wishes* are so frequently perverted, again the information so gained is highly suspect.

Not all tests regarding a victim's condition are fruitless, however. Though it is difficult, it is not impossible to determine what event or condition triggers an infected lycanthrope's transfiguration, provided the first such change has already occurred. Once the individual has transfigured for the first time, some might ask, is the trigger not apparent?

I would say not. If a character's trigger occurs largely when he is alone—in

If the DM decides that, for story purposes, the condition of a victim should remain unknown, then so it remains. The enigmatic dark powers of Ravenloft may block any and all attempts to learn whether the victim is infected.

Alternatively, the DM can rule that the dark powers of the Demiplane somehow "release" the information, should it enhance the story at hand. Ravenloft is, after all, a place of great despair. If knowledge of one's condition brings about suffering—especially when that suffering is deserved—then the pivotal knowledge may be gained. Note that such "deserved suffering" usually involves a domain's lord, or a character whose greed or shortcomings have somehow led to the infection.

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the middle of the night, for example—then it's likely that nobody will be there to witness the transfiguration, and he himself will lose all memory of the event. (Such is the nature of the transfiguration; see Chapter One for a more detailed description.)

Also, even if the trigger occurs in public, the precise condition need not be obvious. Many environments and situations are complex, with multiple events and conditions occurring simultaneously. Which of these multiple stimuli is the actual trigger?

Let us take two examples. An infected lycanthrope encounters a large spider and transfigures to his animal aspect. The obvious conclusion is that his trigger is the presence of large spiders, particularly if this happens several times. Yet, some time later, he encounters a ghost and transfigures again. It now becomes apparent that the trigger was not the spider itself, but in all likelihood the fear he felt on encountering it (assuming he indeed has a phobia of spiders). What's worse, neither spiders nor fear may be the trigger, either.

Here is another example. Imagine a lycanthrope who, so far, has transfigured only during combat. Does this mean that combat is the trigger? Not necessarily. In just such a case, the infected character later changed shape when someone egregiously insulted his heritage. It became apparent that the trigger was not the combat as such, but the rage that combat initiated in the character's soul.

In general, the constraints for divining whether the infection is present also apply to determining a trigger condition. Yet it would seem that the agencies responsible for such matters are less loath to reveal information on trigger conditions. Divinatory magic may still yield lies, half-truths, or evasions; yet there seem to be fewer obstacles to finding the truth in this lesser investigation.

Curing the Affliction

Curing an infected lycanthrope of its affliction is an extremely arduous task. Travelers who claim they hail from distant lands sometimes say the curative process is less taxing in those lands. Never having visited these places, I can say nothing to support or contradict their statements (except, perhaps, that I often view such claims with a healthy dose of skepticism, for I have met no shortage of lost, deluded souls in my travels). At any rate, in every land I have visited during decades of research, the curative process comprises three distinct phases, which are outlined below.

Before there is even the slightest hope of curing an infected lycanthrope, it is necessary to hunt down and slay the true werebeast that ultimately started the chain of infection. If a true werebeast attacked the infected lycanthrope who is to be cured, then that chain has only two links, and it is sufficient to slay the attacker. Unfortunately, given the infectious nature of the scourge and the difficulty of a cure, the chain is usually much longer. An infected lycanthrope passes its contagion to other victims, and those victims pass it to still others. The person at the end of this horrid chain cannot be cured unless the true lycanthrope who originated the terror is found and slain. Unfortunately, since intermediate links may be killed, this task is never easy.

Tracking down that originator, which I shall refer to henceforth as the progenitor, requires a clever detective. Painstaking research is essential, and quite often, so is luck. The victim himself, and all those who know him, must be closely questioned to determine exactly when and where the person was initially infected. One must then track down the creature that infected him, and determine if it is a true werebeast, or itself an infected victim. If the latter, then the process must be repeated.

The task gets progressively more difficult as one approaches the progenitor. By definition, that creature is aware of its condition, as all true lycanthropes are. It can be expected to protect itself, initially from detection and eventually from destruction.

Even if the progenitor is unaware of the attempts to track it down, the sheer length of the chain can be obstacle enough. If only one of the links is something of a traveler—an adventurer, perhaps—then the progenitor could be located great distances from the individual to be cured. If one or more of the links has died in the interim, the chances of success are diminished drastically. The longest chain of contagion I have ever tracked to its conclusion comprised only three links, and that endeavor took several months of unrelenting effort. Ironically, when I eventually identified the progenitor, I discovered that the beast had already been destroyed several days before the individual to be cured had come to me for help. Although I had not known it, I could have proceeded directly to the next step of the cure without hunting the progenitor at all.

This irony brings up a very important point, however. It is *vital* to ensure that the progenitor has in fact been destroyed before attempting the next stage of the cure. An afflicted victim has but one chance to escape the blight. If any step has been missed, or imperfectly completed, then the cure will fail and the victim will be doomed to live out the rest of his days as a lycanthrope. There is no recourse, no second chance.

Individuals infected by multiple werebeasts pose a special problem. It is true that an infected victim need only be cured once; the successful cure removes all taint from his blood and soul. Yet the question remains: which beast (or beasts) is the progenitor? I believe that, for the purpose of the cure, *the* progenitor is the werebeast that last infected the

victim before his first transfiguration. It is this beast—the one that determined the victim's phenotype—that must be destroyed. (Of course, if that creature was an infected lycanthrope itself, it is this beast's chain of contagion that must be tracked to its source.)

This is my belief about multiple infections, at least. While some evidence bears me out, I have no actual proof, since controlled experiments are out of the question. On both occasions where I have been involved in curing someone with a multiple infection, I assumed that my definition of the progenitor was correct. In one case the cure worked; in the other, it was a failure, although I attribute that catastrophe to another cause (specifically, a failure of will in the victim himself). Was I correct in my definition? I may never know for certain. In the former case, perhaps *each* werebeast that had infected the victim had to be destroyed for a successful cure . . . but only the one I defined as the progenitor still existed at the time of that cure. In the second case, perhaps it was the continued existence of *another* progenitor, and not the victim's weakness of will at all, that led to failure.

To be totally safe, then, one should theoretically hunt down and destroy *all* lycanthropes that infected the victim (or the originators of each chain of contagion). This obviously complicates matters considerably.

Revitalizing the Tarnished Spirit

The victim himself must perform the second stage of the cure. He must perform *some* kind of atonement for the evil he has caused while in secondary aspect. The exact nature of this atonement will vary from case to case.

Those individuals who are faithful followers of some religious tradition are often in a better position than others, in that their religion might specify a form of penance. Perhaps their faith

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has a pious ritual that is always used to atone for wicked acts. If not, then it is my belief that the act of atonement should fit the crime (or crimes) in nature and severity. For example, making provisions to support the children of a man the werebeast has killed would be a good start.

Note that the clerical spell *atonement* cannot be used to speed this process. (The spell must be used separately in the third portion of the cure.) So profound is the curse of lycanthropy that there are no shortcuts on the road to a cure. The victim must determine what is necessary for atonement, and perform it himself. (Certainly others can provide input and even guidance, but the responsibility for success or failure lies solely with the one who would be cured.)

The requirements for atonement will depend on the amount and severity of harm wreaked by the werebeast. A lycanthrope who has suffered under the affliction for decades may have to spend several years atoning. Perhaps he will choose to seek out the surviving relatives of his victims and tend to their material needs while doing everything else in his power to wipe away the emotional and psychological damage he inflicted.

There is no means of determining categorically whether the required amount of atonement has been completed. To the best of my knowledge, no magic, divination or otherwise, will yield a solution. The only place an answer may be found is in the heart of the one who would be cured. If he truly *knows* that he has done everything in his power to correct the evil he has done, then the atonement is likely complete.

It is vital to point out, once again, that each victim of lycanthropy has only one chance to remove the contagion. If the cure fails because the victim has done too little to atone for his fell acts, then his punishment is to remain a lycanthrope for as long as he

lives. Because of this, it is much better to overestimate the degree of atonement required than to underestimate it.

Removing the Blight

The third and final stage of the cure is the most demanding. It is also the most dangerous, and cannot be accomplished without the aid of others. The actions required severely tax the infected subject and all others involved, both physically and emotionally.

In order for the blight to be lifted, the subject must first assume his secondary form. Thus, the assistants who are actually performing the cure must await, or orchestrate, the subject's trigger condition. (Orchestrating a trigger condition may in itself be quite difficult or dangerous, and may carry with it certain regrettable consequences.)

What constitutes atonement for an infected player character? DMs should decide this matter based on the character's thoughts, beliefs, and emotions, as well as on the character's actions. A PC who cynically goes through the motions of penance is not really atoning for his actions.

DMs might decide beforehand what degree of atonement is required, then leave it entirely up to the player to decide when the character has done enough. If the DM judges that the character has met the criteria, then the cure can proceed; otherwise, the cure will fail. Alternatively, the DM can collaborate with the player—in effect roleplaying the character's conscience—to figure out a suitable penance.

The key issue is that characters shouldn't escape the blight too easily. Lycanthropy is a big deal, particularly in Ravenloft, and curing the affliction might turn into a full-fledged campaign all on its own.

Despite the subject's intense desire to be cured, his assistants will gain little cooperation once the transfiguration is underway. A subject in secondary aspect takes on the mentality of the beast . . . and the *last* thing the beast wants is to be "cured!" As a result, the subject should be suitably restrained before the next steps are undertaken.

Assuming the beast within is now the beast without, a priest must next cast three spells on the subject: *atonement*, *cure disease*, and *remove curse*. The spells must be cast in quick succession. (If necessary, more than one priest can cooperate in casting the magic.) The order of spells is symbolic, and hence significant. *Atonement* completes the spiritual revitalization described in the preceding section. *Cure disease* rids the body of the infective agent. And *remove curse* erases the contagion's intangible effects.

The moment the *atonement* spell is complete, the subject's mentality returns to normal, even though he retains his secondary aspect. At this point, he must be freed from all restraints. In addition, he must remain totally motionless until the cure is complete. If he moves so much as one limb, then the cure fails, his animal mentality returns, and he is doomed to remain a lycanthrope until his death.

The *cure disease* spell can be cast without difficulty. As soon as the priest begins the *remove curse* spell, however, the subject's body is racked with agony as he begins a slow metamorphosis, returning to his normal human aspect. Regardless of the alterations which his body is undergoing, and regardless of the burning pain, he must remain completely motionless. This requires exceptional fortitude and strength of will.

If the subject conquers the pain and remains motionless, the transfiguration eventually completes and he is fully human once more. The affliction has been banished.

If the subject cannot adequately control himself however, and moves,

Van Richten states that the victim must remain motionless when the final transfiguration occurs. In game terms, the character must save vs. death magic. There's no way to alter or avoid this saving throw, either magically or pharmaceutically.

As always, the DM is encouraged to add customized prerequisites for effecting a cure, based upon the phenotype, the crimes committed, the individual campaign, and so on. The cure for lycanthropy should never be as simple as looking up the answer in a book, whether it be this or any other.

then his human mentality flees, the beast within takes over, and the subject's body retransfigures into its secondary aspect. The werebeast immediately enters bloodlust. Its first act will probably be an attempt to slay the priest who was inflicting such hideous pain on him (or so the werebeast will interpret it).

What if some earlier portion of the cure was not completed correctly? Everything will appear to proceed normally until the final transfiguration begins. At this point, however, the pain will continue to increase until it becomes totally unbearable. No matter how strong-willed the character is, he cannot withstand the agony. Eventually he will move, and the cure will fail as described above.

I must stress that the agony of the transfiguration is an integral part of the cure, and must be experienced by the subject in its totality. There are certain magics and herbal concoctions that can lessen or even eliminate the sensation of pain. If any of these are used, the cure will automatically fail. The pain will increase sufficiently to overpower the magical or chemical precautions, and the subject will be totally unable to withstand it. For similar and obvious reasons, the subject must be fully conscious during this process.

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Before I came to this fell place, this land called Sarovia, I considered myself a skilled hunter. In the hills surrounding my home, I have successfully hunted all of the naturally occurring predators—bears of various sizes and ferocity, dire wolves whose packs terrorize the local shepherd's flocks, even the great wyvern that wings over the peaks. Yes, I considered myself well versed in the art of the hunt. There was no beast that could get the better of me.

Or so I thought until I was engaged to lead that ill-starred hunting trip.

Was there any clue, any omen, that should have warned me that what I hunted was no ordinary bear? No, looking back on the events I have to say there was no indication. None, that is, until the members of the party began to die, and I realized that I was not the hunter, but the prey!

—From the journal of Darzin Morcantha

CHAPTER FIVE: ON THE HUNT



Knowing the mind of the werebeast is the first rule of the hunt. Both forms of the lycanthrope—true and infected—are equally deadly. However, each has its own mindset, its own view toward mankind. Hence, recognizing which is which can be crucially important.

Pursuit of a true lycanthrope is as much a battle of strategies as it is a contest of blood; the true werebeast has lived with its mutable nature all its life, is accustomed to its predatory nature (if not comfortable with it), and remains ever cognizant of its nature. In contrast, tracking the infected lycanthrope is far more subtle, more cerebral on the hunter's part. The infected creature is either unaware of its bestial aspects or desperately concealing its murderous double life. As a result, seeking one of these pitiable creatures may seem like hunting two separate prey at the same time. To complicate matters, this lethal creature is curable.

If the two, contrasting mindsets of

these monsters were not enough to muddle the hunter's strategy, I must pause and re-emphasize the fact that werebeasts are no more "typical" than vampires or ghosts or liches. Each lycanthrope has its own strengths and weaknesses, both of which are often quite subtle. Hence I return to the axiom by which I began this chapter: *Knowing the mind of the werebeast is the first rule of the hunt.* If this treatise can be of service to that end, so much the better, but the study of my work is not nearly sufficient to arm even the doughtiest enemy of darkness against the task at hand. Those who hope to survive such a quest *must* search out every report of the creature and follow up every clue. Werebeasts are some of the most violent and ruthless beasts to prowl the land of the Mists. No matter how powerful you are, and no matter how typical the werebeast may seem, failure to seek at least some inkling of the monster's strengths and weaknesses will deprive you of your throat and quite possibly your very humanity!

Enough said; on to observations regarding the two basic stages of a successful hunt: identification and entrapment.

Identifying the Beast

Knowing a werebeast when one sees it may seem obvious enough, especially if the monster occupies either its hybrid or animal form, but the mutability of the creature, plus its intelligence which is sufficient to counter-strategize, forces us to reconsider this issue.

Hybrid Form

Certainly the man-beast form, under normal circumstances, is unmistakable, if not singularly horrifying. Even the charming and seductive werefox is terrible in her beauty, alluring yet cruel and sadistic. When the werebeast reveals itself in this form, blood is almost sure to follow whether the creature is a true or infected lycanthrope. In this aspect the monster entertains no thoughts of stealth, and in this shape it is the most effective killer it can be, calling upon the powers of both its forms to achieve its deadly objectives. In short, when one meets a werebeast in hybrid form, one should prepare to kill or be killed—the beast most certainly will.

Indeed, the hybrid aspect seems to be the form in which the lycanthrope most often kills. By far the predominant report of those who have survived an attack by a lycanthrope is that the creature resembled man *and* beast, and was thoroughly horrifying to look upon.

I have conferred with several sages on this matter, and I have arrived upon a few reasonable speculations as to why the lycanthrope might prefer to kill in hybrid aspect. Certainly the man-beast is a more efficient killer, for it enjoys the advantages of both human and animal forms, as I have already stated. Its claw and bite attacks are more instinctive and, thence, more accurate than the swing of a sword, and it can employ multiple attacks in the place of only one. The inhuman creature also threatens its adversaries with a fell disease, which

is, or should be, fairly intimidating to even the most courageous hero. Meanwhile, the hybrid aspect has fingers and an opposable thumb, which are necessary for opening doors, jimmying locked windows, climbing trees and roofs, and wielding a weapon if it proves to be the most effective means to the creature's ends.

In spite of all these legitimate arguments for preferring the hybrid form, though, I think that the real reason lies below the surface. I have the chilling belief—not a certainty, quite, but close—that the beasts prefer this form because of the terrible fear it strikes into the hearts of their prey before they die. The beasts might relish this terror out of some unholy, sadistic joy, or perhaps they, like cats that play with mice before eating them, enjoy or even crave the taste of fear itself. Whatever the reason, I must return to my previous warning before proceeding: When you meet the hybrid werebeast, prepare for battle.

The DM can generate more fear in the PCs by withholding their interaction with the hybrid form until the climactic battle. Whether the creature dramatically transforms before their eyes or leaps out of the shadows in all its terrifying glory, for optimum horror save this aspect's role for last.

Animal Form

I do not believe it is practical to seek to identify a lycanthrope in the company of natural animals. If the creature differs in size or coloring from its natural counterparts, readily recognizing it is not beyond the scope of observant hunters, and most werebeasts realize this, including the infected ones, who are little more than beasts when the curse overcomes them. Conversely, if the lycanthrope is not readily discernable from its natural cousins, then a hunting party might be

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forced to kill entire populations of natural animals in order to ferret out the monster among them; this is plainly unacceptable, as any ranger or druid will angrily point out.

If the lycanthrope is pathologic, it is possible that the monster could lose so much of its conscious identity that it might actually believe it is a wolf or bear or badger while occupying that particular form. These poor creatures, who may be wholly ignorant of their ailment while they suffer from it, can be easy targets for those who hunt them. Any hunter with the ability to magically speak with, befriend, or control animals may quickly learn through any number of approaches which beast is the monster. However, I hasten to add that most infected lycanthropes retain enough consciousness to understand that they are *not* natural animals, so it is highly unlikely that the hunters will ever find a werebeast lounging carelessly among its distant relatives, heedless of discovery.

Knowing that the werebeast can and does take the form of an animal still has its advantages, though. Werebeasts commonly surround themselves with their natural counterparts and take that form while they do so. Hence, any ranger or druid who can track a animal can also lead a hunting party to the trail of a lycanthrope. That is often as good as place to begin the search as any.

Human Form

Ironically, this lycanthropic aspect is by far the most dangerous. Recognizing the true nature of a werebeast in human (or demihuman) form is frequently accomplished in hindsight, too late. Survivors of a close encounter with a werebeast sometimes observe that they should have noticed the elongated forefingers or the abnormally hairy eyebrows before, and the common failure to do so leads all too often to bloody mayhem, as well

as the spread of a cursed affliction and unbridled evil.

The hybrid form may be the more efficient killer and the animal form may move faster, but the human form is the beast among us; it is privy to our plans, a wolf in sheep's clothing, and as capable of killing in this aspect as any. Anyone, be they strange or familiar, friendly or hostile, may suddenly change to a terrifying monster before your unsuspecting eyes, or worse, when you are not even looking.

As the physical signs of lycanthropy are always there, visible to those with foresight as keen as their hindsight, an objective search for these features may prove invaluable. Certain features of the animal breed—the beady eyes of the wererat, the feral grin of the werewolf, the piggish nose of the wereboar, and so on—are inescapable to the human form. If the hunting party knows the phenotype of the lycanthrope, body traits can do much to eliminate some suspects and indict others. Even so, I hasten to add that these features are often subtle in the extreme, and no one can be blamed for missing them even when actively looking for them.

Perhaps the most important key to recognizing a lycanthrope in human form is to return to the first rule of the hunt and determine whether the creature is born or fallen to its condition. True lycanthropes tend to formulate evil agendas, while infected ones live in ignorance or shame of their other selves. The former takes the human aspect as a disguise, while the latter simply remains human until some circumstance beyond control sweeps him or her into a nightmare world where nightmares are reality. The reasons for occupying the human form are diverse, and therefore the means of identifying the two types are different.

True Lycanthropes: Born a monster, the hereditary werebeast's awareness of its identity and actions in any form enables it to use its mutability to

The lycanthrope's shapechanging ability results in a preponderance of scenarios involving identification as a primary factor in the hunt, and many players expect this. The DM must, therefore, seek ways to muddy the trail without destroying it altogether. Van Richten suggests a number of methods by which the werebeast may be recognized, but the DM can easily use these tests to confuse the PCs or send them toward a secondary goal. For example, what if a young man were to leave town in search of his fortunes, become infected with lycanthropy, return home covertly, and begin to kill the members of his true family, even though nobody knows he is back? Or what if an unidentified true lycanthrope managed to convince the PCs that the werebeast in question was an infected one by killing off a family, one by one, in order to implicate one of its members?

If the lycanthrope has no idea of its bestial nature, there still may be some other NPC who knows the truth and becomes involved in the scenario for any number of reasons. He or she may be protecting the creature (out of love or evil plans), or the NPC may be using the monster to distract or occupy the PCs while other plans work themselves out. In other words, the lycanthrope doesn't even have to be the arch-adversary in the adventure.

deadly advantage. These creatures are more likely to spot the hunting party before it spots them. A true lycanthrope in human form engages in psychological warfare. Therefore, the hunting party must respond in kind.

If the true lycanthrope is aware of its enemies, the clever hunting party can turn this vulnerability to its own advantage. An alert hunting party should pay attention to people around

them and note who is perhaps unreasonably interested in helping or hindering them. Watch for casual on-lookers who turn up wherever the party goes, and most especially beware of people who offer a "sure way to kill a werebeast." They may be sincere or they may be agents of the monster, if not the beast itself.

Pathologic Lycanthropes: These poor fools are often completely unaware that they become monsters when conditions are right (or should I say *wrong!*). Others have made the painful connection between the blood they find on their hands when they awaken and "last's night murder by an animal of some kind"; these sorry creatures are torn between the shock of committing actions over which they have absolutely no control and the consequences of a crime of which they have no memory. In either case, the afflicted werecreature generally lives in effective denial of its bestial nature and, in all likelihood, lives its human life as if it has no other.

If the affected person has no knowledge of his or her acts, a hunting party cannot depend upon suspicious behavior to identify the monster. Neither the werebeast itself nor any associate is likely to play any form of "cat and mouse." In fact, I know of a few infected lycanthropes who have noticed the subtle emergence of telltale physical traits of lycanthropy (a narrowing of the nose, excessive facial and body hair, etc.), considered them a cosmetic nuisance resulting from growing older, and took steps to hide them without ever realizing that they were protecting their inner beast from the outside world. In short, werebeasts who are ignorant of their bestial nature may be even better at hiding their identities than true lycanthropes.

I'm afraid that the most efficient way to identify an infected lycanthrope is also the most tragic: by drawing a connection between the guilty party and its circle of murdered loved ones.

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If a predator targets prey who are all members of a single family or social group, the odds are good that the hunter is a lycanthrope and a member of that same circle. Unfortunately, this kind of identification depends on the beast establishing a pattern of victims, which means that a number of innocents must meet their deaths before the pattern is established.

Tracks

Unless the werebeast you hunt possesses the capability of flight, it is unlikely that the monster can help but leave a trail (and even avians must land sometime). After all, how does a wolf pass without a trace as it lopes through the forest with the rest of its pack?

The rules of tracking werebeasts are much the same as those for hunting natural animals. Here are a few pointers for those who do not enjoy the company of rangers or druids:

- Naturally, you must find some tracks before you can follow them. There are always some particular places in the woods where tracks are much easier to see than in others. Once the trail of a lycanthrope is undeniably identified, it can be traced through some of the most adverse conditions if the tracker's eye is keen and heart is patient.
- Study the track at length, get to know it. Many hunters discover, too late, that they lost one set of tracks and picked up another. Suddenly, they closed in upon a beast that was *only* a beast while the monster they sought came upon them from behind. . . . One druid suggested that hunters sketch the footprints they wish to follow. Doing so does not necessarily provide an incriminating picture of the track, but it does force the drawer to make note of many nuances that might otherwise go unnoticed.
- If possible, it is best to track the beast either early or late in the day.

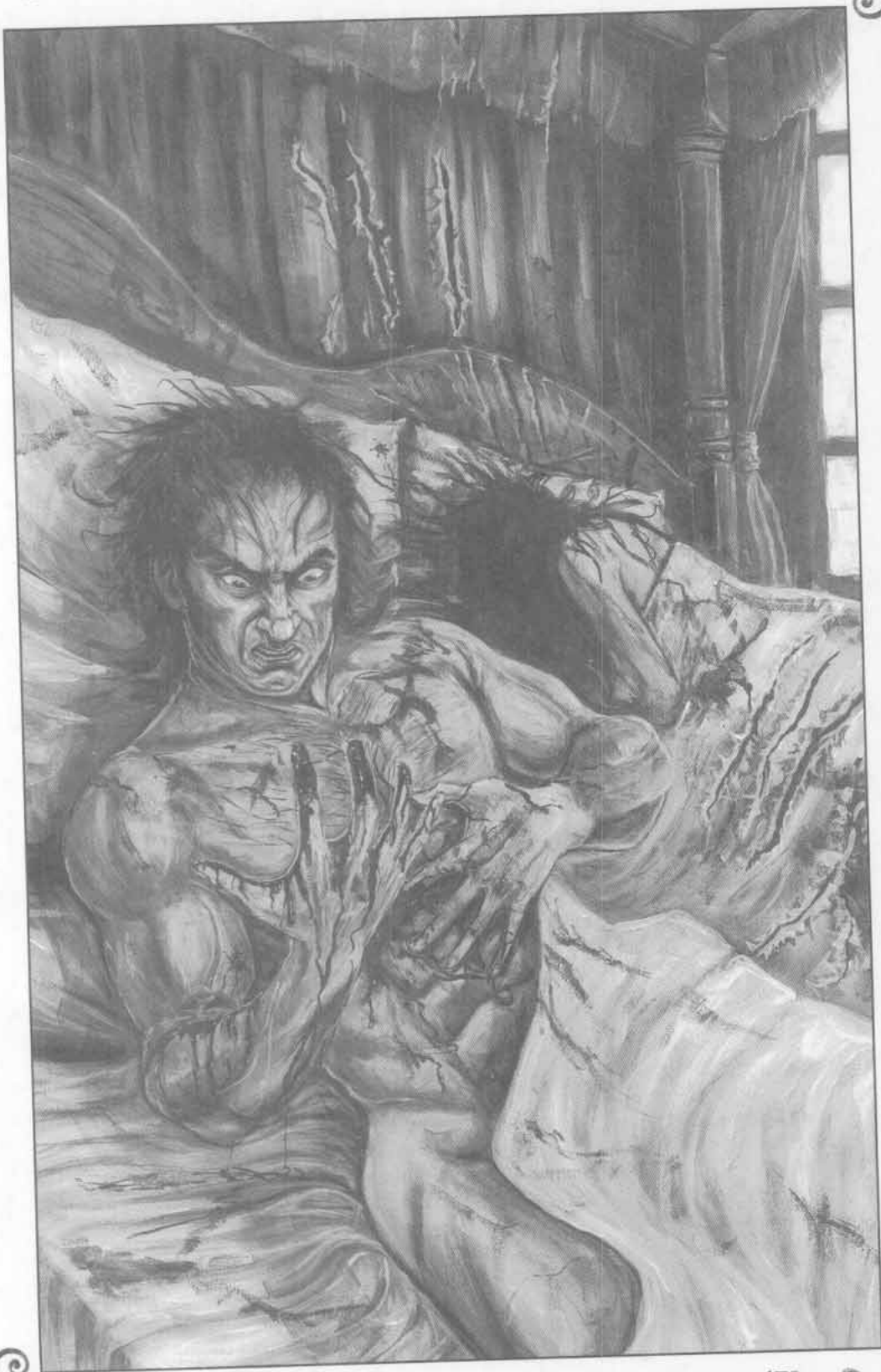
Even the trail of the largest lycanthrope may be shallow, and shadows cast by the sun will help the hunter find it.

- Take note of all signs of the creature's passing, not just its tracks. Broken twigs, bent branches and grass, even displaced pebbles can tell the alert tracker that the prey has been here, as well as which way the creature is heading. If the hunter is lucky, tracking a lycanthrope can be easier than tracking a natural beast. Since the size of the lycanthrope is often larger than that of a natural animal, so are its footprints. I myself have once successfully followed a trail of bear tracks virtually twice as long, wide, and deep as those of a grizzly (which did *not* result in a feeling of victory, believe me!) Unfortunately, most werebeasts' footprints are not nearly as dramatic as this, and some are not distinct from the natural animal's footprints at all, but those skilled in the arts of tracking still provide an invaluable service to the hunting party. Following such a lead may not always reward the hunters, it can still provide a fresh start when more esoteric trails have gone cold, and it can at least tell you where the monster has been.

As an aside, I would think that even a novice woodsman could recognize the footprint of a werebeast in hybrid aspect. Typically, such a mark is possessed of the padlike "toes" of the animal form, but the print is longer and narrower, in the manner of human feet. These tracks are most often found on and near sites of death.

Gory Leavings

Sadly, a lycanthrope may be tracked by more than its footprints. The beast leaves carnage in its wake, and such brutal evidence of its passing as would render a mad butcher sick to his stomach. In the company of its natural



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When the hunt is just beginning, or when the clues have run dry, the PCs can always pick up the trail in the woods. DMs can use the werebeast's trail either to lead the PCs to their next important encounter or to false ends. True lycanthropes might even play games with PCs, leading them on a wild and lethal goose chase.

To track a werebeast, a PC should have the tracking proficiency. However, if no one in the adventuring party has it, the DM can still leave telltale footprints that provide bridges to the next encounter; the PCs simply won't be able to follow them for long. Be sure to consult Table 39 in the *PHB* for tracking modifiers.

Discovering the body of a lycanthrope's victim is definite cause for a horror check, with ascending modifiers proportionate to the extent of the mauling and the length of time before the body is discovered. However, the victim can be a convenient source of some important clue as to the monster's identity or whereabouts.

For example, the lycanthrope may have worn a chain that did not fall away when it assumed animal form, and the victim could pull it free as he was murdered. Or perhaps the victim carried some map or letter on his person which the animalistic lycanthrope left behind, soaked in blood. Of course, diabolical werebeasts (and the DMs who run them) might plant false clues upon the bodies of victims, too.

Identifying the evidence of a lycanthropic attack on a corpse can be considered a function of the animal handling, animal lore, healing, or hunting proficiencies. If the check is successful and a lycanthrope's involvement is indicated, it may be assumed that the PC had to conduct a very unappealing probe of the body, with horror checks are appropriate.

fellows or alone, the werebeast abandons a corpse terrible to behold. And more horrible yet is it to search that disfigured mess for some clue that may lead to the murderer!

Even so, examination of the werebeast's victim is important for two reasons: First, he or she may reveal something important from his or her possessions, position in death, state of decay, or any number of other things. Second, many other creatures (natural or monstrous) may leave a body in shreds upon the road. The conscientious lycanthrope hunter must be sure of exactly what caused the fatal wounds or risk tracking the wrong killer.

The bite marks of a lycanthrope are wider and deeper than those of natural beasts, and I also have observed a certain *viciousness* in the making of the wounds, as if were not enough to simply bring down the victim and then eat of it. Agony and terror are often quite visible in both the eyes and the crimson, gaping rips of a werebeast's kill; it is not a sight that can be objectively described, but you will definitely know it when you see it, and I apologize in advance for insisting upon it.

The Lair

Uncovering the lair of the beast certainly advances the identification process (especially if the monster is at home), but it also may provide some crucial insight into the beast's strengths and weaknesses. The best way to approach this den of death depends upon whether you seek a town or a wilderness lair, and I shall briefly address those two issues here. Note that I speak of the abode of a true lycanthrope in either case, since infected werebeasts do not normally maintain a lair as such.

Town Lairs

In the case of the town lair, finding the residence of a werebeast is mostly a matter of confirming the hunter's suspi-

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cions. When the search is narrowed to a short list of suspects, it's a good idea to penetrate the living quarters of those people and look for evidence. I am *not* suggesting that the intrepid hunter find a way to break into the home of anyone who was not accounted for the last time the lycanthrope made an appearance. When criminal activity is justified by the virtue of its intent, then the line between good and evil is lost and we quickly find ourselves *hard* in the company of those we despise. Rather, I am suggesting that the hunter enter into a, shall we say, *diplomatic* form of pursuit.

Pose as a delivery clerk, drop by unexpectedly for tea, even boorishly invite yourself into the suspect's home under the pretense of using the facilities, but find some way to insinuate yourself into the suspect's quarters, if only to take a quick look around. It's not necessary to find the meat larder in order to confirm your hunch. If you have reason to believe that someone is a werebeast, then a simple scan of their living room can *condemn* them. Do not look for overt signs of violence and cannibalism, but for subtler clues that fit into the puzzle you have already been piecing together. Observe the suspect's taste in decoration, for example. A dark and disturbing painting often reflects a similarly disposed character. Or seek objects lying about that link the person to the scene of a crime, like a possession of the deceased. I once identified a wererat when I coincidentally observed a shiny brooch on its coffee table that had belonged to a friend of mine, recently murdered.

Wilderness Lairs

My discussion of the wilderness lair assumes that the hunting party has already found it—whether they have followed a set of tracks to the monster's doorstep, convinced a natural animal of the beast's phenotype to lead them there, or bungled upon it by sheer luck.

Discovering the residence of the beast is a step in the process of both identifying the beast and learning a bit about it. If you are lucky, you may find some *insight* into the monster's habits, and maybe a record of what the lycanthrope knows about you. But best of all, a hunting party that locates the lair of a werebeast has just located the ideal place to set a trap!

When the place in question is located, first search it for all its entrances and exits and all its hidden nooks and crannies. Then learn what you can about the beast's domestic habits—where it sleeps, stores its food, hides if necessary, and so on. Finally, *design* a trap that will blend into the surroundings, avoiding the disturbance

A great way to turn a simple hack-'n'-slash adventure into a detective mystery is to very subtly wave clues of the lycanthrope's identity under the PCs' noses. Introduce objects or sounds or smells that readily blend into innocent backgrounds and then challenge the PCs by linking them to the murders, later on in the adventure. Sometimes the tiniest clue is the key that breaks the mystery wide open, and the werebeast's lair is the ideal place to plant it.

If and when the PCs discover the lair of a lycanthrope, particularly the wilderness location, the DM should pay close attention to how carefully they approach and search the area. Most animals can easily tell if their lair has been compromised, without even entering it, and the best-laid plans may be wasted by one PC footprint.

Always give the PCs a chance to find every secret door in the lair, but seek ingenious ways to keep them from turning the creature's home into a death trap; this is the monster's home turf, after all, and should not be easily used against it.

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of so much as a pebble if possible. Don't forget that you yourself leave a scent wherever you go, which most werebeasts can detect as easily as a shark smells blood in the water. (Most druids and rangers are highly adept circumventing these problems—I highly recommend engaging the services of one of these folk before attempting to infiltrate a wilderness lair.) Remember, true lycanthropes are as cunning as they are lethal; suspicion is second nature to them, especially if they know they are being hunted.

Beware the sudden arrival of the werebeast while you inspect its domicile. Such forays are necessarily clandestine, especially when one seeks to prevent the monster from detecting the intrusion, so bringing along a complement of warriors for protection is impractical. If you are caught, know well that no fury can match that of the beast whose "safe haven" has been compromised.

Multiple Monsters

Most of the creatures of darkness I have studied are more solitary than the lycanthrope, and more careful about multiplying their numbers. Vampires, for example, are careful not to create another of their kind with each feeding, if for no other reason than to assure that the general blood supply is not depleted. Liches consider the existence of even one other of their kind to be an affront. On the other hand, werebeasts, in their native savagery, are not nearly so concerned with their own numbers. Indeed, some of them actively seek to infect as many people as they can in the hope that they may command entire legions of *murderous creatures*. I have heard a tale of an entire city of lycanthropes which grew in leaps and bounds as its army, organized under a king who was himself the lycanthropic trigger, spread across the lands, killing and devouring every living being in its path.

Hunting parties who are attempting to learn the identity and type of a lycanthrope should consider the possibility that they are hunting any number of monsters. An intelligent pack of werebeasts may confound the most astute and scientific of hunters. I can say from personal experience that there is no shock as sickening as that which comes from learning you are surrounded when you believed that you were hot on the trail of a single monster!

Witnessing the Transfiguration

Perhaps the surest way to identify an infected lycanthrope is to catch it in the act of transforming. The secret to this is in learning what triggers the change, which comes from careful observation of objects and conditions that are repeatedly associated with the monster. Perhaps a pattern of killings emerges in conjunction with a time of day, or the lycanthrope's victims are repeatedly found in a patch of wild flowers. Discovering what triggers the change of an infected lycanthrope without actually witnessing the agent at work is but a slim possibility, but any prospect is worth considering.

If the catalyst is something that the hunters can manipulate, so much the better. However, be prepared for a singularly negative reaction if your hunch is right and your trigger device is effective. The hunter who forces a werebeast to change form becomes both a witness and an enemy with a deadly power over the monster; nothing short of murder will satisfy the lycanthrope's fear and indignation. Also be warned that some of these creatures can fight the change, if only for short periods of time, averting suspicion and removing any advantage of knowledge that the hunter may have enjoyed.

Stalking the Werebeast

The hunter of werebeasts faces a moral dilemma: If the monster suffers

from a disease that was thrust upon it through a bite or scratch, then its condition is, first, not its own fault and, second, most possibly curable. What is the lycanthrope hunter's responsibility in this case? Should he or she slay the beast outright, and thereby prevent any further attacks by the creature? Or should he attempt to entrap the beast and effect a cure, even though such action may leave the door open for further destruction?

There is no simple answer. Certainly, if a victim is willing to *undergo* a cure, then every effort must be made to assist that person. If the victim is unwilling, however, destruction of the beast may be the hunter's only recourse.

Trapping the Beast

Whether the lycanthrope is born to its condition or acquires it, trapping the creature should be the ultimate goal of the hunting party. Unless the monster has special abilities, it cannot take gaseous form like a vampire or teleport away like a lich. As long as the bonds of a trap are strong enough, the captured beast may remain captured. This procedure is particularly recommended if the werebeast is a cursed one that may be cured. The method of trapping depends largely, of course, upon the form of the creature, and various parties might lay a snare for any one of the three aspects.

If the hunting party seeks to trap the animal form, it should probably mimic the traditional methods of trapping natural animals. I might recommend this approach if the monster in question has shown a definite predilection for its animalistic side. When such is the case, the creature tends to practice the habits of its normal cousins. These include following regularly traveled paths, frequenting a dependable source of prey, revisiting favored watering holes, and practicing predictable defensive patterns. Sometimes the hunters may find a commonly used path and then simply

A hunting party of good alignment should seek to cure an infected lycanthrope rather than kill it. This creates a challenging and exciting adventure while it demands more roleplaying from everyone, including the DM. It is sweet irony that the ideal resolution to a scenario involving one of the most violent of monsters is to avoid the common "hack-'n'-slash" remedy by which many adventures end.

Seeking a cure to lycanthropy can extend an adventure that otherwise might have come to an end with simple defeat of a monster. One of the best things about infected werebeasts is that they can be saved from evil and regain their peaceful existence, with the help of intelligent and heroic PCs. Some quick adventure hooks for this scenario are: an NPC werebeast who holds a strongly rumored key to the PCs' escape from Ravenloft; a time limit before the beast must kill an innocent or die himself; one of the PCs is infected, and the adventurers learn (perhaps from the Vistani) that the only way to cure the PC is to first cure the werebeast that infected him and then kill the true monster that began the chain of contagion. The DM is encouraged to think of a hook that affects the PCs personally or one that affects the overall story of the campaign (any recurring villains or quests to tie into the adventure?).

PCs who seek only to wipe out the menace are arguably committing an evil act, regardless of the victim's alignment, and thus are subject to a powers check. At the very least, the DM can impose an experience-point penalty for such irresponsible behavior. It's a good idea to introduce an NPC priest or other character early in the adventure who will warn the PCs that killing monsters is not as simple as following a trail of blood and executing whatever is found at the end of it. That way, there can be no excuses for PCs who hack first and ask questions later.

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lie in waiting for their prey to come by. Other times the hunters must discern freshly tracks and then follow, remaining upwind and approaching the beast in utmost silence. In either case, patience always wins the day. You may be right about the path, but wrong about the time or day, or you may find the pack and be forced to approach it through dead leaves.

Snares are a tricky thing with lycanthropes. The hunter cannot depend upon limited intelligence and so it is unreasonable to expect the creature to simply step into a noose or fall into a pit. I recommend stalking the monster as if it were an animal, but snaring it as if it were a (very powerful) human. Magical traps are better if they can be deployed in such a way that will not alert the prey to your presence. The werebeast's senses are keen, and whispering *half* a spell may be the last thing you ever do.

The psychological factor also comes into play here, and it may be necessary to create a feint of some kind, to distract the monster while it blunders into a real trap. I cannot provide any useful, specific suggestions for accomplishing this; there are too many factors to consider. The best advice is, once again, to first understand the mind of the beast and then use that knowledge to trap it.

Those who would trap the monster while in its human form may eliminate

Especially if the PCs are intent upon trapping a live werebeast, the determination of the perfect spot for an ambush can provide the better part of an adventure. Here, the PCs first seek to learn the identity and habits of the lycanthrope, and then engineer the best possible trap zone and snare, magical or otherwise. Luring an intelligent creature into a trap inspires much more complex scheming than simply cornering and killing it.

the need to crawl through the forest. If you are certain of your target as it moves incognito through the streets of a city, then you may perhaps lure the monster into a trap. This is more tricky than it sounds, though; the lycanthrope is most lucid in this form, and even if it is not aware of the PCs, it is instinctively suspicious and not easily fooled.

Of course, those who plot to trap the lycanthrope in its hybrid form must be doing so as part of a battle plan, but it is wise to plan the entrapment of a werebeast as if you expect it to be in the hybrid aspect. The monster is quite likely to assume that form as soon as the trap is sprung. This leads me to a final piece of advice for those who would snare the beast.

The hunters should strive to control the place where they will confront the werebeast. If they can do so, they can booby-trap the entire area against escape, then hope to force or flush the monster into one of several snares. This is rarely a simple task, but it provides the best chance to save an infected werebeast or to interrogate one born to its condition.

Making the Kill

When destruction becomes the only alternative, and I know well that it does, then the processes described above should still be adhered to, except in this case it would lead expressly to a *lethal* trap. The hunting party should use whatever means at its disposal to incapacitate the creature before putting it to death. This is much preferred to meeting the werebeast in open combat, for it may pass on its disease and escape or even leave a person infected after it dies. Like the animal it essentially is, the lycanthrope is most ferocious when cornered, capable of surprising feats and deadly blows even in its death throes.

If it is the hunter's intention to kill the creature, then I would suggest first learning the lycanthrope's chemical

susceptibility (discussed in Chapter Two). Then set the trap with innumerable blades or points, generously coated with the substance. Finally, find a way to flush the quarry into that trap and let the poison do its work. The hunters should coat their weapons with the toxin as well, but I strongly urge them not to meet the beast in combat! They may accomplish their goal in battle, only to give rise to yet another curse and the necessity of destroying yet another hapless creature.

When the deed is done, invite a priest to consecrate the remains according to the dictates of his teachings and then cremate the body as soon as possible—immediately if you can. While werebeasts are not known for regeneration or rising as undead, they do harbor disease, after all, and it is proper and necessary to eliminate the possibility of its spreading in any way, shape, or form.

Charlatans

Hunting a werebeast is a difficult task, one which many would rather leave to someone more skilled (or foolhardy) than themselves. To the good folk seeking such assistance, I offer this caution: beware of charlatans. There are many who tout themselves as werhunters, self-styled “professionals” who claim to be skilled in the arts of detecting and destroying lycanthropes. These individuals travel throughout the land, hiring out their services to villages that believe (often falsely) that they suffer from a werebeast’s attacks.

Few of these so-called professionals actually know what they’re doing. In fact, virtually all the hunters I’ve encountered are scurrilous rogues. They charge exorbitant rates and leave town as soon as the money is pocketed.

The hoax perpetrated by such scoundrels is often simple. They visit a settlement, preferably an isolated one, and publicly claim to have found evidence of a lycanthrope in the

Charlatans represent all manner of adventure hooks. For example, if murder is the villain’s goal, the PCs must prevent it. Perhaps the PCs stumble across a less diabolical ruse, attempt to reveal it, and then a *real* lycanthrope enters the scene. Or the player characters discover that a member of a so-called “hunting party” is in fact a werebeast himself, unbeknownst to his companions.

vicinity. They frighten their victims with pseudoscientific babble about the “atmosphere of pestilence” and other intangible horrors. Some charlatans manufacture the so-called “proof” by savagely slaying some farm animals before approaching the village. Then they can appear, claim they are “following the spoor of an itinerant terror,” and offer to eradicate the scourge (for a fee, of course). I know of cases where the charlatans doctored animal remains by adding bits of shredded clothing and human bones to heighten the villagers’ terror.

Creating the appearance of a successful hunt is easy. The “intrepid hunters” sally forth into the wilderness for several days. Then they return, looking exhausted and wounded (thanks to quantities of mud and animal blood rubbed into their clothes and skin), claiming to have destroyed the beast. The more brazen hunters proudly present the hacked corpse of an unfortunate animal, claiming it’s the werebeast in question. (Trusting, of course, to the ignorance of the villagers, who may not know that slain lycanthropes revert to their human form.) The satisfied villagers bolster the charlatans’ reputation, making it easy to repeat the ruse in a nearby locale.

While individuals like these provide no value for the money they receive, at least they do little enough damage. Unfortunately, other hunters take this fraud much further. The ruse begins as described above; a savaged corpse is

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found (usually an animal). But instead of claiming that the werebeast at fault resides in the wilderness, the charlatans declare that the culprit is an *infected* lycanthrope—and probably one of the villagers.

After a period of "research," for which the hunters are compensated, they name the "ravaging beast." This is usually a social outcast, a villager isolated by appearance, language, or eccentric behavior. By selecting a person already considered odd or not of the norm, the hunters can readily persuade the townsfolk to accept their supposition. To add further horror, sometimes the person identified as the lycanthrope will also accept the hunters' claim and beg for assistance in *finding a cure*.

Thus, the hunters can begin the process of "curing" the lycanthrope. Such cures have two things in common: they are impressive and *flashy ceremonies, playing to all the base beliefs and misconceptions of the townsfolk; and they are very expensive*. Most charlatans claim success, which is a simple matter given that no lycanthropy existed. Unfortunately, some evil few who claim failure have found this an easy excuse to commit murder.

Last Thoughts

A true hunter always has as much respect for the prey as he has for himself. This is as true for those who track werebeasts as it is for those who hunt deer and birds. *It is not only a matter of understanding that the lycanthrope can kill at least as easily as it can be killed, it is more importantly a matter of recognizing the creature as a living thing instead of an object simply to be destroyed*. It has drives and fears and a desire to live! When one understands the heart and mind of the beast, one becomes more attuned to it. When one knows what motivates the prey, one may anticipate its reactions. When the hunter puts

himself in the place of his quarry, he comprehends what he would do if *he* were the hunted (as he may well be!).

That is the difference between hunting and murder. In the end, that is the sole distinction between a man who contains a beast within and another who becomes the beast without.

The werebeast is a fell opponent—intelligent, cunning, and fearfully lethal in combat. Detecting its presence, locating it, and then hunting it down is a singular undertaking. Too often the task easily claims the lives of hunters, or curses them with the dread affliction, which is certainly worse than death.

Yet the task of hunting down and destroying the werebeast is an important one. Lycanthropy is a pernicious, insidious infection in the body of its victim and the body of society as well. It is a plague upon both the individual and the societal soul, for it erodes our ability to embrace our own neighbors for fear that they may not be what we think they are. Pitiably they may be, yet still they must be condemned.

As I draw to the close of this treatise, I must admit that studying the *lycanthrope has been most disturbing*. For all my condemnation of these monsters, I must pause a moment and reflect upon the reality of the beast within me. The werebeast kills because *killing is what it instinctively does*. It has no agenda, no point to prove, no hatred to vent. On the other side, I have no need to kill at all, instinctively or otherwise, yet I have pursued that objective with righteous tenacity. We are both predators, yet who is the more monstrous?

I must conclude that my agenda to destroy all creatures of darkness, my point to prove that they are indeed vulnerable in some way or another, and my utter hatred of all things evil renders my deadly intent a tragic necessity—and I am therefore no monster at all.

Let the werebeast look well to its hunting skills; I shall show it who is the *superior predator!*

"We are not monsters," the werewolf told me in its rough voice. With a furry gray forefinger it scratched absently at the side of its snout while it spoke. The beast's long black lip curled under the claw as it scratched, exposing a row of yellowed canine teeth.

"We are not monsters," it repeated, calmly emphasizing the point. "We are like you, like the birds and the deer and, yes, like the wolves. We are all the creations of the gods. We all do that which is in our natures to do, following the natural imperatives incorporated into every fiber of our beings. None has any choice in the matter; but we werecreatures are really quite content with the reality of the situation, unlike most humans.

"Would you call an eagle a monster for being an eagle?" It leaned toward me and an earnest tone entered its voice. "A wolf for being a wolf? No! Not when it kills a farmer's sheep or even when it hunts the lost traveler in the forest is it a monster. It is just doing what it was born to do—survive.

"We are no different, me and my kind, from any other predators. It is merely human arrogance that labels us with the term 'monster.' Since we have the temerity to feed upon the self-styled kings of creation, we are hated and feared."

The creature chuckled quietly. "If deer had the power of speech," it mused, "I wonder what horrible tales they would tell of that monster humanity..."

—From the personal journals of Dr. Van Richten

APPENDIX FOR THE DM



As Dr. Van Richten noted earlier, virtually any predator between the size of a small dog and a large bear can provide the basis for a lycanthrope phenotype. Most but not all werebeasts are mammals, and most but not all of them are pure carnivores. The *MONSTROUS MANUAL* tome lists the most common, and probably most useful, of lycanthropes, but it's always a good idea to throw new creatures at the players—particularly in Ravenloft.

So how does a DM go about creating a new lycanthrope from scratch? There are six attributes to consider: phenotype, appearance, gaming statistics, special abilities, vulnerabilities, and society. Each of these is described in the following pages. To render the

process as clear as possible, a sample new lycanthrope, the weredog, is developed concordantly. The finished monster is detailed in the official *MONSTROUS MANUAL* format on page 191. This procedure focuses upon the design of a true lycanthrope, but the process remains much the same for infected werebeasts.

Phenotype

The animal you choose will determine some of the creature's characteristics, including its most likely habitat. For this example, the lycanthrope is a weredog (suitable for use in temperate climes both above ground and below).

Appearance

The next step is to decide on the appearance of each of the creature's

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three aspects: human, animal, and hybrid.

Human

The primary form of the lycanthrope is that of a human (or demihuman). Pick the race that's appropriate for the adventure or encounter you have in mind. The creature's appearance usually will be reminiscent of the animal aspect. A werebadger is most commonly a dwarf in (demi)human form. The lycanthrope may display one or more of the features commonly associated with werebeasts in their (demi)human form. For example, its forefingers may be abnormally long—the same length as its second fingers—or the lycanthrope's hair or beard might have a white stripe in it, like the pelt of a badger.

The demeanor of the human form is also a characteristic of its appearance. A wereboar might be extremely ill tempered while a werefox might be flirtatious. The werebadger is likely to be an unassuming loner until provoked, at which time it would show startling aggressiveness.

Animal

The secondary form of the werebeast—that of an animal—is easiest to design, as a lycanthrope in that form generally resembles a larger version of the natural beast—larger than average, but not so much larger that its lycanthrope nature is obvious. (Note that the wererat is an exception, for its animal aspect resembles a giant rat. This point raises the possibility that other werebeasts might be able to transfigure into giant-monster forms of animals. While this is left up to the individual DM, such cases should be very rare.)

The werebadger is one such case; this lycanthrope's animal form is that of a giant badger.

Closer inspection of various body traits may yet betray the werebeast's identity. For example, its eyes might

show a faint spark of unnatural intelligence, or perhaps a bit of whiteness around the irises. In any case, this feature shouldn't be immediately obvious, and the creature might well be able to suppress such characteristics in order to appear a simple "dumb animal." The lycanthrope's eyes might glow faintly red at night, but in such a way that a player character would attribute it to the reflection of a light source like a fire.

Hybrid

The tertiary form of the lycanthrope should combine animal and human features. The overall shape is largely humanoid, yet animal features, subtle or conspicuous, render this the most identifiable lycanthrope form.

A werebadger in hybrid aspect is dwarf-sized, its hands might resemble paws, yet still retain opposable thumbs. Its face might have a pronounced, badger-like face with whiskers.

Gaming Statistics

The easiest way to determine the werecreature's statistics is to extrapolate from those of existing lycanthropes. In general, a werebeast's attributes are proportional to the relative size of its animal aspect. A bear is larger and more powerful than a wolf, for example; thus, a werebear should generally be a tougher opponent than a werewolf. (Of course, those vulnerabilities specific to a bear, like a fear of dogs, can greatly alter the relative challenge of an encounter.)

Badgers are Small creatures but are very strong, due to the fact that they dig burrows in which to live. This strength should be reflected, despite the beast's small size and claws. Damage of 1d6/1d6/1d4 (claw/claw/bite) seems about right. THACO depends on Hit Dice—15 for our werebadger.

Armor Class (AC) depends upon the innate toughness (thickness of hide, etc.), speed, and dexterity of the natu-

ral animal. Werebears have a low AC largely because they're such powerful, thick-skinned animals. However, a wererat's AC derives mainly from its quick, darting movements, which allow it to evade a blow. Since badgers are small, low to the ground, and have a thick, furry hide, an AC of 5 seems about right for our werebadger.

Don't forget that the *Armor Class* may alter with the lycanthrope's own change of form. A hybrid's AC should lie somewhere between that of the animal form and AC 10 (since armor owned by a werebeast would have to be donned after the change). Consider how much of the animal form's natural AC would remain with a hybrid. Our werebadger would certainly lose some of its advantages—namely, being low-slung and the thickness of hide in hybrid aspect—so AC 7 seems about right.

Of course, attribute scores and armor dictate the AC of the human form.

Most other attributes derive from the nature of the phenotype. Badgers tend to live alone, unless it's a mother with young. While they prefer to avoid confrontations with creatures larger than themselves, they are fierce fighters if cornered or protecting young. Badgers are not solely predators, but omnivores. Our werejaguar might have treasure class M, Q, or V, if any. While normal badgers are neutral in alignment, a werebadger (especially in Ravenloft) would have an alignment of chaotic evil. Number appearing would normally be 1. Badgers are aggressive fighters when provoked, so a *Morale of Elite* (14) is appropriate.

Special Abilities

Certain types of lycanthropes, by virtue of their phenotype, gain some special capabilities. For example, werefoxes have an ability to *charm* victims. A werebeast's special skill might be magical or simply a physical

ability. It might be arbitrary or related in some way to the phenotype. DMs have a free hand in this area, giving them the chance to create unique (and PC-surprising) lycanthropes.

Our werebadger is a skilled digger and, as mentioned, can be quite ferocious when angered. Extrapolating from this, werebadgers are likely to do more damage with their claws than with their teeth, and they also may go berserk in combat.

Vulnerabilities

Each werebeast has at least one nonmagical vulnerability. Most, but not all, creatures of a particular phenotype share the same vulnerability (werewolves fear silver, for example). DMs should first decide upon a basic vulnerability for a new phenotype, and then decide whether the individual creature(s) in question conforms to the generic weakness. The vulnerability might be something traditional (wolfsbane, silver, etc.), or it might be symbolically related to the nature of the phenotype.

As noted elsewhere in this text, the oil of poppy seeds (and to a lesser extent, the seeds themselves) are poisonous to werebadgers.

Society

Social behavior should relate to the characteristics of the natural animal. If the animal is pack-oriented, the lycanthrope will be social. If it is aggressively territorial, so is the lycanthrope. These creatures are intelligent, however, so they can suppress their natural tendencies if necessary. The propensities will remain, however, even if they're not obvious, and they will tend to color the creatures' philosophies and behaviors.

Badgers are often solitary. Hence, the werebadger might be a lone adventurer or a hermit living on the outskirts of a settlement.

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Sample Triggers

- ⊗ Appearance of a comet
- ⊗ Emergence of spring flowers
- ⊗ Entering a specific locale or type of terrain (swamp, graveyard, mountains, childhood home, etc.)
- ⊗ Exposure to a particular type of plant, animal, or mineral
- ⊗ Extreme fear
- ⊗ Healing magic
- ⊗ Hunger
- ⊗ Intense anger or embarrassment
- ⊗ Intense passion
- ⊗ Lunar or solar eclipse
- ⊗ Necromantic magic (or magic from any specific sphere or school)
- ⊗ Participation in combat
- ⊗ Particular sound or music
- ⊗ Phase of the moon
- ⊗ Physical pain
- ⊗ Seeing a particular image or type of image
- ⊗ Sighting the phenotypic animal (a were-wolf changes at the sight of a wolf)
- ⊗ Sight or smell of blood
- ⊗ Sleep
- ⊗ Snowfall
- ⊗ Solstice or equinox
- ⊗ Sunset or sunrise
- ⊗ Thunderstorm
- ⊗ Total darkness

Sample Weapon Vulnerabilities

- ⊗ Bone
- ⊗ Bronze
- ⊗ Cold iron
- ⊗ Copper
- ⊗ Flint
- ⊗ Gold
- ⊗ Lead
- ⊗ Obsidian
- ⊗ Silver
- ⊗ Wood (specific type)

Sample Chemical Susceptibilities

- ⊗ Aloe
- ⊗ Amaranth
- ⊗ Belladonna
- ⊗ Camphor
- ⊗ Chamomile
- ⊗ Clover
- ⊗ Fennel
- ⊗ Garlic
- ⊗ Ginseng
- ⊗ Ipecac
- ⊗ Juniper berries
- ⊗ Laburnum extract
- ⊗ Lotus
- ⊗ Mandrake
- ⊗ Mangrove leaves
- ⊗ Mistletoe
- ⊗ Mercury
- ⊗ Poppy
- ⊗ Quince
- ⊗ Saffron
- ⊗ Skullcap
- ⊗ Sulfur
- ⊗ Tamarind
- ⊗ Wolfsbane

Sample Special Powers

- ⊗ +2 bonus to resist bloodlust
- ⊗ Breath weapon (as *stinking cloud* spell)
- ⊗ Can enter bloodlust at will
- ⊗ Can sense presence and location of "infective progeny"
- ⊗ Charm by gaze
- ⊗ Charm by voice
- ⊗ Fear by voice
- ⊗ Gaseous form
- ⊗ Magic resistance (1d8 x 5%)
- ⊗ Regeneration (1 hit point/round)
- ⊗ Rogue skills (climb walls, hide in shadows, move silently: 50%–95% chance)
- ⊗ Summon animal allies
- ⊗ Super jump
- ⊗ Two attacks per round
- ⊗ Waterwalk

WEREBADGER

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Temperate hills and underground
 FREQUENCY: Very rare
 ORGANIZATION: Solitary
 ACTIVITY CYCLE: Any
 DIET: Carnivore
 INTELLIGENCE: Average (8-10)
 TREASURE: M, Q, V
 ALIGNMENT: Chaotic evil
 No. APPEARING: 1
 ARMOR CLASS: 4
 MOVEMENT: 6, Br3
 HIT DICE: 5
 THACO: 15
 NO. OF ATTACKS: 3
 DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1d6/1d6/1d4
 SPECIAL ATTACKS: Berserk frenzy
 SPECIAL DEFENSES: Silver or magical weapons required to hit
 MAGIC RESISTANCE: Nil
 SIZE: S (4' tall)
 MORALE: Elite (13) or Fearless (20)
 XP VALUE: 650 (975 magical weapon)

Werebadgers are dwarves that can transform into giant badgers or dwarf-badger hybrids. In humanoid form, they appear to be normal dwarves with a silver stripe in their hair or beards (not an uncommon trait among dwarves). In hybrid form, they stand upright but have the features of a badger: thick fur, enormous claws, and a badger's head. In beast form, the werebadger simply appears to be a giant badger. Transforming into this shape rips apart any clothing the creature wears.

The werebadger's claws are so large that they "clack" together when not flexed or clenched.

Combat: This monster attacks with its foreclaws, followed by a bite. Unlike the giant badger, the claws are actually more fearsome than the bite, but only the bite can transmit the curse of lycanthropy.

Unlike most lycanthropes, the werebadger has no qualms about using weapons. Their natural weapons are so potent, however, that only a magical weapon is of notable improvement. They favor axes and war hammers, and there is a 75% chance the creature owns a weapon (25% chance that any weapon carried is magical). In animal form werebadgers cannot use weapons. Only silver or magical weapons harm Werebadgers. The oil of the

poppy seed is poisonous to them (save vs. poison or die).

Each round of combat, the werebadger has a 25% chance to enter a berserk frenzy. Roll before each round of combat. When this occurs, the werebeast froths at the mouth, its claw attacks gain a +1 attack bonus, and its bite attack gains a +3 bonus. Once in a frenzy, it will not break off the attack until either it is dead or until all its opponents have fled or died. To make matters worse, during the frenzy, all bite attacks have double the normal chance of causing the lycanthropic infection to be passed on.

Habitat Society: Werebadgers tend to live on the fringes of society (when they choose to live among others at all). They choose professions that allow them to be alone or excuse bursts of violent anger. For example, many become scouts or skirmishers in dwarven armies. Werebadgers dislike physical labor as a rule. They typically do not work stone or metal.

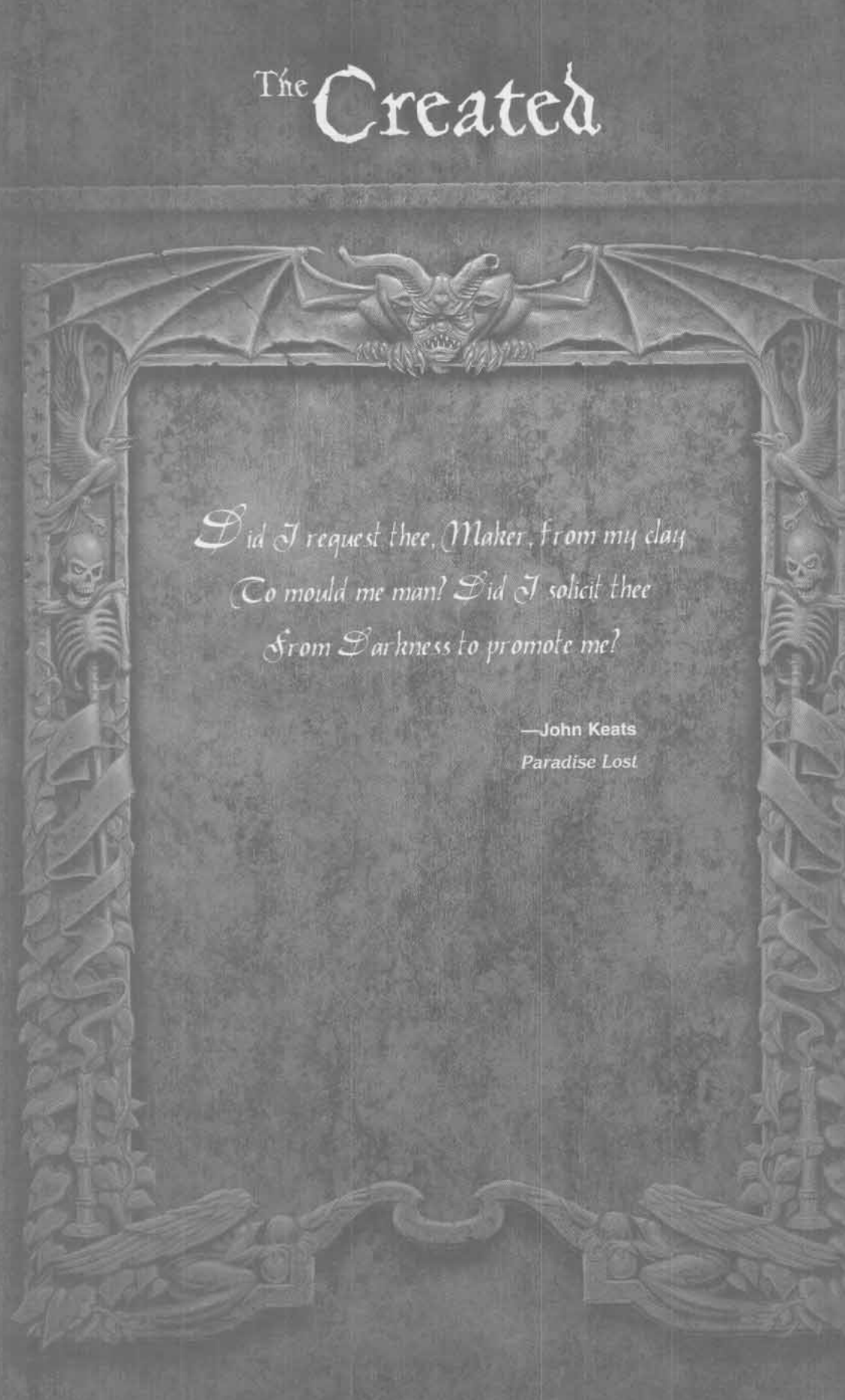
Werebadgers dislike other forms of lycanthropes, but do not hate them. Those that avoid dwarven society tend to be loners, living in caves and tunnels, preying upon the unsuspecting. If one encounters another werebeast, the werebadger would fight only to defend its territory.

On rare occasions a werebadger will be found with a mate and young. Treat the young as common badgers with lycanthropic immunities. Any sign of hostility on the part of intruders will immediately throw both parents into a berserk frenzy (no die roll necessary).

Ecology: This lycanthropy affects dwarves more readily than other forms of humanoids. Gnomes, goblins, orcs, and other underground dwellers are half as likely to be infected as dwarves. Humans, elves, and other surface dwellers are only 25% as likely to be infected.

Werebadgers do not live as long as dwarves. If allowed to die of natural causes—a Milton for the species—they can live to be 80 or 90 years old. Dwarves or other long-lived races that are infected with this form of lycanthropy have the remainder of their life spans halved. A prematurely old dwarf or gnome is sometimes suspected of being a lycanthrope.

The Created



*Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay
To mould me man? Did I solicit thee
From Darkness to promote me?*

—John Keats
Paradise Lost

No beast so fierce but knows some touch of pity. But I know none and therefore am no beast.

—William Shakespeare, *Richard III*, I, ii

INTRODUCTION



As I once again set pen to paper, I am reminded of my previous works. Each of my guidebooks has been a tribute to the brave souls who have fallen to the evils inhabiting this Realm of Mists. So many courageous folk have given their lives in an attempt to cleanse their homeland! So many innocents as well, including my own beloved wife and son, have been forever lost to the dark instruments of evil.

Thinking back upon the life's work thrust upon me by my own bitter losses, I am ever reminded of my responsibility to the dead, to the living, and to those yet to be born. Until it is my time to join my dear wife and son, I will continue fighting evil in all its myriad forms. Thus I freely renew my task in the hope that others will be spared the stark pain and loss I have witnessed and shared.

Compilers' Note: And such are the dual reasons for which my sister and I have gathered together the good doctor's manuscripts: in the hope of sparing others' pain and aiding those who, like ourselves in this small way, have taken up the doctor's cause of fighting evil since his own disappearance.

GWF

As I have previously written, knowledge is power. The work you now have before you, gentle reader, is a treatise touching on both madness and obsession. To those who would use this knowledge to feed the flames of their own obsessions, I offer a word of advice: Cast this work into your hearth fires instead.

I have come to believe that there is knowledge meant only for the gods

themselves. The creation of life, the most sacred of all gifts, is surely knowledge of this type. Yet some have managed to "peer beneath the wrapping," as it were. Having glimpsed such wonders, they could not resist the temptation to seize the gift for themselves, whatever the cost. They cobble together bodies that should have long been laid to rest, or even substances that never knew life, and create a living being in the most unnatural manner possible. The horrid results reflect the perversity of their methods.

I am speaking, of course, of *golems*. These unholy creatures are a mockery of the human (or demihuman) spirit and form. Not one—not even the rare golem fashioned in the shape of a child—can ever know goodness, purity, or light. They are the Created as we are the Born. But where the birth of a true child is surely the greatest blessing a parent could ever know, the creation of a golem is just as surely the most hideous curse, as the new "parent" will shortly discover.

Some of these so-called parents are wizards and priests, bending powerful magic to their task. I have heard tales of distant realms where *only* powerful magic can give life to the lifeless golem. I must stress to you, dear reader, that this is not the case in the lands with which I am familiar. Many creators—perhaps the most dangerous of all—are common folk driven by needs so twisted that all else dwindles to insignificance. The very land about us appears to give their obsession a form, to imbue their constructs with life while imparting no trace of humanity.

The same wanderers who claim that a golem is a purely magical construct would also suggest that it has no more intelligence than a rabid dog. Such

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ignorance may cost them their lives. While a few golems might be dubbed "mindless killing machines," such creatures clearly are in the minority. In fact, the mind of a golem is most often keen. Unfortunately, it is always twisted.

Like natural parents, many creators of golems fashion their "children" in a familiar medium: flesh. As my knowledge of the Created comes mainly from experience with flesh golems, this treatise will focus primarily on creatures of this type.

However, if the accounts I have gathered can be trusted, it is possible in this world to construct a golem from virtually any material, from silver to straw. I will attempt to give what information I can on the destruction of other, less common forms of the Created as well. But I must first confess that what knowledge I possess in such areas is limited indeed.

I have often stressed the importance of understanding the mind of one's enemy. With the golem, the hunter must seek to understand not only the creature but also its creator. What would drive someone to meddle with life and death in such a foul manner? Obsession, yes. Madness, surely. But what else? Few of us are fortunate enough to ride life's course without claiming some sort of obsession or madness of our own. I myself might be considered obsessed by some. Over the many years of my fight I can think of any number of good people who have named me mad. Perhaps in some small way they are right. I acknowledge my life's work is an obsession to me. It has been one since the moment I held my wife, Ingrid, in my arms for the final time. Cradling her cold, still form against my chest; burying my face against her soft, perfumed hair; hearing the echo of her sparkling laughter in my mind; I swore vengeance on Baron Metus and all of his murderous ilk: the vampires.

Over the years, I learned of still other evils: liches, ghosts, werebeasts, and

more. My work and the obsession governing it broadened. I gained an understanding of golems only recently. In studying these creatures, I discovered something about the nature of evil, and about myself. Here, now, I freely confess to sitting by my hearth, in my home empty of wife and child these many years, and toying with the idea of creating a new family in their image. This idea crossed my mind for but a moment before I realized the true horror of what I contemplated. Yet, for that briefest of times, I understood the need—the utter loneliness and the aching void within—that could drive one to commit acts which were previously unthinkable.

Looking upon the darkness in my own soul, I realized we all must be ever vigilant. Dark forces lie in wait for the unwary. They listen for our cries and call out to us in turn, offering to fulfill our deepest desires. They seek out the seeds of torment within us and strive to nurture them, bending them toward darkness rather than light. Every one of us, especially those who have dedicated themselves to fighting evil, must be on guard. The darkness calls to us from without, but it has no true power over us unless we allow it access to our hearts.

I consider these insights extremely valuable. No less valuable is the knowledge I have gained about golems. I have a dear friend to thank for both. But this information was acquired in the most difficult manner possible: through my friend's death. Indeed, many good people have perished to gain the information I shall impart throughout this work. I hope at least some few will be saved by this hard-won knowledge. As always, however, a would-be vanquisher of evil must remember this rule: Nothing in our world is absolute. Do not cling so hard to old beliefs and knowledge that you become blind to new evidence.

I shall now relate to you, dear reader, the tale of how I came to know of golems. It is my fervent wish that

none of you will ever have to see the torment that accompanies the Created and their creators. However, if you are reading this at all, it is likely that the Created have already touched your life in some way, or may one day soon. I write in the hope that you too shall come to the same understanding and conviction as I: that all golems must be destroyed for our sake, and for theirs.

A Doctor's Obsession

Antonin Madren was twenty-two years of age when we first met. He came to me full of the enthusiasm and imagined immortality felt by the young. He also possessed a finely developed wit and poetic sense. We became friends in no time. When he told me of his desire to practice medicine, I quickly agreed to take him on as a student.

Over the years our friendship grew. Antonin's dexterous hands and alert mind were honed by years of practice and learning, and he soon overtook me in surgical skill. When he was thirty, Antonin traveled to Martira Bay to begin his own practice. From then on we corresponded erratically through letters, commenting on each other's latest books.

Seven years ago, Antonin wrote to say he had lost his sister, his only living relative, to heart failure. In his letter, Antonin cursed his inability to save her. He claimed to have been too preoccupied to notice the medical clues signaling her heart problem. Of course, I wrote back at once, and suggested that he was taking on far too much blame. These things sometimes happen. We doctors are not omnipotent; we cannot prevent every death. No letter came in response.

I did not hear from Antonin again until years later, when he arrived at my very doorstep. I remember it was raining steadily that night. It was not the dramatic maelstrom found in so many novels. There was no lightning, no thunder. . . only the relentless

drumming of the rain. When I opened the door, I was shocked to find Antonin on the stoop. He wore only a shirt and trousers, and was soaked to the skin. Ushering him in, I immediately set the kettle on for tea and offered him a towel. Without so much as a word, he accepted my ministrations. It seemed the silence stretched between us forever, until finally the cheery whistling of the teapot interrupted it.

Returning with tea cozy in hand, I settled once more in front of Antonin. By now, I was seriously concerned. His breathing was ragged, his eyes glassy, and there was about him the aura of fear. I know no better way to describe it. When I could stand the terrible silence no longer, I began to ask him questions. But he answered none of them.

Beginning to despair of ever reaching the man's once open mind, I quieted. It was then I noticed Antonin staring at the wooden model of a human heart I keep on my cluttered desk. Wordlessly, I rose and brought the model to my silent guest. It was as if I had touched flame to paper. Out poured the ragged, disoriented thoughts of what had once been one of the most disciplined minds I ever had the pleasure to know.

At this point, you must forgive me for being less than complete in my account. Antonin spoke of many things, none of them quite lucidly. But I will here record only those thoughts of direct relation to golems, only those rantings from which others might yet benefit. As to the other confessions he made to me that night, I shall respect his memory and confidence, and keep my silence. That said, here is our exchange, as best I can recall it.

"I tried every sort of heart I could think to use," he told me. "Not even the lion's was strong enough."

"What did you try to do with them, Antonin?" I asked as gently as I could.

"None of them could help her. Every one failed my poor sister."

"Are you saying you placed other

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hearts in your sister's body?" I whispered. My stomach, so recently warmed with hot tea, turned to ice at the thought.

Nodding distractedly, Antonin continued. "Yes, yes. But nothing worked. Until I used the living heart. It worked. I took it from that poor urchin, and yet it still beat. I placed it within her, and it still beat. But not enough, not enough. So I found other pieces to use, other parts to replace. Until every organ, every appendage, was functional."

Here Antonin paused, looking up from the wooden heart he still clutched to his breast. "Her eyes opened, Van Richten. And she smiled at me. At me."

When Antonin smiled I knew he was mad. Through my tears I asked him to continue.

"But it wasn't my sweet sister after all. She was so different, not at all herself. One day I arrived home to find all the crockery smashed. A week later I awoke with her hands about my neck, strangling my life away."

Tears had replaced his earlier smile, and we cried together as he continued. "I hit her, the mockery of my sister. Again and again I hit her. When it was over, I buried her. But the next night I again awoke to find her choking the life from me. That is when I fled."

"Then you have escaped your creation, Antonin?" I asked. The uncertainty in my voice stemmed from the madness still in Antonin's pale face.

"Oh, no. That isn't ever possible. I just keep moving. When I stop, she will find me again. She tells me so every day and night, inside my very head. She speaks of how she wishes to strangle me."

Rising slowly, Antonin straightened his tie and smoothed his pants. "I shall be leaving you now, doctor. She says she is near, and I have no reason to doubt my sister."

"But surely if you stay we can destroy her!" I cried. "I do have some small measure of experience with such things."

"Not with golems, doctor. She is not truly alive, and thus she cannot truly die. She is unstoppable, even by you."

Turning, Antonin headed to the door. Looking back at me, he tossed a small journal to the carpet. "You are the only person I could trust to read this, the only one who would not be tempted to follow the path laid out in this book and construct an abomination as I did. Should you ever run into that creature or others like her, use this information in your defense. The man who gave me this book is dead now. Killed by his own creation, as surely as I will be killed by my . . . sister."

With that, Antonin left me. Several weeks later I learned he was strangled to death in a small inn some two days south of my home. Although Antonin succumbed to madness, he did manage to bring me the knowledge I needed to begin hunting down the Created.

In the pages that follow, I will attempt to put forth all that I have learned of the Created. I have gathered this knowledge from Antonin's journal, my own researches, and my own experiences. It is my sincerest hope you will come to discern that the monsters and their creators are both, in some sense, victims. Should you ever confront a golem, perhaps this realization will aid you.

I say this, of course, so that you might better understand your foe. Never should such empathy keep you from using all means at your disposal to destroy it. For the Created are indeed monsters, despite their vaguely human appearance. And they are enemies to be feared. Golems do not view life and death as you or I do; they cannot share our joys and fears. Should you ever be so unfortunate as to fight a golem, do not rejoice too swiftly upon slaying it. You must be prepared to become acquainted with true horror as your victim rises again and again from its supposed death. It will take all your resources, and perhaps more, to free the world of just one of these unholy menaces.

Wonderful news today! Last month I wrote of the beautiful young woman, Safira, who for several weeks had been battling a terrible case of pneumonia. After my brief visit yesterday, it seems she succumbed to her illness. Poor dear. But now my own child will have such a sweet, pretty face, and hair as soft as silk. It won't be long before my happiness is complete!

I must make haste. I have a funeral to attend. And then I must make my preparations for a more private honoring of the dead.

—From the journal of Thor Hessen

CHAPTER ONE: ASSEMBLY



In this chapter I shall explain the challenges faced by a madman who desires to construct a golem's body. I use the term "madman" expressly, for one of the most fearful aspects of a golem's construction is the creator himself. As I noted in the introduction, it seems that virtually any twisted personality can create a unique and intelligent golem in these misty lands, from a farmer to a scientist. All that seem truly necessary are an obsessive, driving need or desire and the ability to fashion the physical body.

Most golems are made of flesh. Due to the predominance of flesh golems among the Created, I will give a proportionately large amount of space to discussing the particular requirements of constructing a flesh golem's body.

It is conceivable, however, that a golem could be fashioned from almost any material. Of course, certain materials such as paper or ice would presumably be too unstable to form a lasting body. Furthermore, others such as diamonds and rubies would be difficult to acquire in large quantities, making their use in a golem unlikely. Even if one could acquire enough of such rare materials, they would be difficult to form into bodies. Still,

anything is possible given a creator with the appropriate resources and skills.

Procuring Materials

Gathering the materials required for a golem's construction can be a difficult, expensive, and even dangerous prospect for the would-be creator. It can also be time consuming, depending on the material chosen.

A flesh golem typically requires no fewer than six corpses: one for each limb, one for the head and torso, and another for the brain. (I shall present my theory on why this is so in Chapter Two.) These parts for flesh golems must be gathered rather quickly, lest the tissue reach a state of decay too advanced for use.

A colleague once wrote to me for my opinion on a rather demented little taxidermist, who had to be kept under lock and key to prevent him from gathering up the bodies of dead animals and stitching together hybrids. Apparently, the man had succeeded in creating at least a few animal golems before he was stopped. Fortunately, the taxidermist was given to long periods of catatonia. A catatonic individual stares into space for hours, even days on end, lost to the world around him. Thus, this man would gather together most of the necessary materials only to find himself, days later, sitting amongst the stench and gore of rotting, unusable corpses.

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Assembly Time and Cost

	Flesh	Bone	Clay	Glass	Metal	Stone	Straw	Wood
<i>Preparation time</i>	6 wks	1 mth	3 wks	3 mths	2 mths	2 mths	2 wks	1 mth
<i>Assembly time</i>	2 wks	1 mth	1 wk	3 mths	2 mths	1 mth	1 wk	1 mth
<i>Cost of assembly (gp)</i>	50,000	35,000	65,000	125,000	100,000	80,000	100	20,000

Notes

Preparation time is the period spent gathering materials and equipment. It does not include the many months or years of planning and research that some creators perform beforehand.

Time of assembly represents the actual number of hours the creator spends physically putting his creation together. (When added to preparation time, this equals the "construction time" presented in the *MONSTROUS MANUAL* tome.) In general, this is the minimum time required to achieve satisfactory results. When an obsessive creator is working toward perfection, additional time may be devoted to the task.

Cost of assembly includes cash expenditures for labor and incidental expenses, as well as the basic cost of materials and equipment needed. Repeated from the *MONSTROUS MANUAL* book, these figures should be viewed as basic guidelines for *RAVENLOFT* campaigns. As materials vary, so do costs (a stone golem, for example, would cost more if carved from granite than from sandstone). Other factors also affect cost. In general, DMs should let the story at hand determine how much a creator spends—and, if the creator is poor, determine how that person obtains those funds. Bear in mind that a golem created through obsession (as opposed to traditional magic) may cost far less than amounts shown; the creator serves as the craftsman. On the other hand, even a master craftsman might hire others for incidental or gritty tasks, so

that he or she can focus on the "art." Remember too that those who are obsessed with creating life often spend everything they have to achieve their goal—be they a pauper or a prince.

Craftsmanship

The table above reflects the minimum investment for an "average" golem. (Base statistics for such golems are presented in Chapters Three and Four.) A creator who invests more time and money—or less—can create golems of varying quality, as outlined below. These variations help DMs tailor a particular golem to the needs of their campaigns. For example, a poorly constructed golem may be just the foe for an inexperienced party.

Excellent: If a creator invests twice the usual creation time and expense, the golem gains +1 to physical attributes and an additional 2d3 points to its Charisma.

Good: If a creator invests 50% more resources and time, the golem gains +1 to two of its physical statistics (DM's choice) and an additional 1d3 points of Charisma.

Average: No bonuses or penalties apply.

Poor: If the time and cost are reduced by 25%, the golem suffers a -1 penalty to all physical attributes. Further, its Charisma drops 1d3 points.

Shoddy: If the time and cost are reduced by 50%, the golem suffers a -2 penalty to all physical attributes, and its Charisma drops 2d3 points.

Builders of flesh golems who have an ice-cold place available to store bodies and body parts have more temporal leeway than most. Deep snow, ice caverns, even large iceboxes may be used to prevent or slow decomposition. While searching for a flesh golem south of Viaki, I discovered a frozen lake with no fewer than three bodies wrapped in canvas and tied to the nearby dock. By stationing myself at the lake, I discovered the identity of the golem's creator.

Other materials can be gathered more slowly with little or no consequence, as *decomposition is not* an issue with metal, stone, and the like. But do not think constructing any form of golem body to be easy: far from it. Although some creators do not spend adequate time assembling their grotesque progeny and undoubtedly have poor results, most creators labor long and hard, using all resources at hand to "perfect" their dread creations.

Fleshy Concerns

Constructing a flesh golem presents its own challenges. As noted, no single body will do: six is the minimum number required. (Each arm, each leg, the trunk plus head, and the brain must all be taken from different corpses, though still more bodies can be harvested for smaller parts.) Furthermore, the flesh must be relatively fresh. Despite such requirements, flesh is by far the most common material used in the construction of golems.

Why are flesh golems predominant? Perhaps this is due to the natural proclivity of flesh to contain and shelter intelligent life. Unlike the other materials discussed so far, flesh is innately accommodating to the life force. Thus, for the very same reason you and I are not made from inanimate wood, glass, or metal, the animating force of the golem most readily enters a vessel crafted of once-animate flesh.

Perhaps due to the very nature of flesh, far more would-be creators of flesh golems succeed at their grisly task than the would-be creators of other forms of the Created.

For the creator, flesh is also readily available, at least for those willing to rob the graves of the newly dead (or to murder the living). Flesh is soft and thus relatively easy to stitch together. The golem's patchwork of skin does not heal well when pieced together, however. The fusing of flesh in a golem serves to emphasize the bond, resulting in hideous, raised scars and conspicuous traces of stitching.

Such obvious deformities, along with the mismatched body parts, are a blessing to all who wish to hunt golems; they allow us to know the creature for what it truly is. When one hunts a vampire or werewolf, for example, it is possible to be a guest in the creature's very home and fail to recognize the prey. But there is no worry of attending a gathering hosted by a golem and not realizing who—or what—that person is! No, the true nature of these hideously formed beings is always instantly recognizable.

Although the tissue mass that constitutes a flesh golem is hideous, it is amazingly functional. These golems regenerate at an extraordinary rate. In



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short, the flesh heals many times faster than it did while sheathing other bodies (see Chapter Three for details).

At this point in our discussion, we must ask ourselves several questions. When selecting body parts for inclusion, how much tissue deterioration and decay is acceptable before the body part becomes too decayed for use? Can pieces of any body be used? For example, can animal or monster parts be used in the assembly of the body?

Before we proceed to examine these horrible yet medically fascinating issues, I must first warn more sensitive readers that the material next covered is of necessity rather visceral. If the following material disturbs or upsets, I apologize. Still, we must not allow faint-heartedness to keep us from knowledge.

Climate and Decay

In order for a body part to be useful in the construction of a flesh golem, the ligaments, tendons, and the like must not yet have rotted to the degree that they rip and tear when manipulated. Although a flesh golem's body is extremely powerful and resilient once it is animate, during construction the opposite is true. The creator must take great care to stitch the muscles, tendons, and ligaments of one body part to the corresponding muscles, tendons, and ligaments of its partner. This work is both arduous and exacting.

Due to the stitching and great amount of manipulation the body parts must withstand, I estimate that, given average conditions, body parts must be utilized within one week of death. Beyond that period, the part may have degraded to uselessness. Note that this is a very general estimate, and conditions are rarely "average." Several factors can affect the exact speed of decay. The most important are temperature and moisture.

The colder the temperature at which a body is kept, the longer the process of decay is kept at bay. Obviously, the reverse is also true; the warmer the temperature, the swifter the decay. Moisture in the air, or humidity, also affects the rate of decomposition. The higher the humidity, the more rapid the rotting. However, humidity levels are secondary in importance to temperature.

In an environment well below freezing, it is possible for a corpse to remain in virtually pristine condition for an indefinite period of time, untouched by even the slightest hint of decay. This is why a body found during a spring thaw at a northerly lake often appears to have died only recently, when in fact the victim has been frozen for months. Of course, the process of decay can never be reversed, and any decay that occurred before the body was frozen will still be in evidence. Further, once the body part is exposed to warmer temperatures, decay continues.

What if the temperature is cool but not below freezing? In this case, or when the air is very dry, body parts can remain intact for quite some time. They do continue to decay, but the process is slowed. Under such conditions, it would seem reasonable that body parts would remain usable for perhaps as long as two weeks, although such parts would surely undergo some degradation.

When the air is warm but not hot—that is, in temperatures humans find most comfortable—flesh decays steadily. I venture to say that a body part would become useless after a period of perhaps nine days in such a temperate environment. If, however, conditions were particularly moist but not excessively hot (or vice versa), decay would set in at a faster rate than under so-called "average" conditions. In such climates, flesh might become unusable in perhaps as few as five or six days. (This explains why the

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villagers living near the Great Falls wait no more than one day before burying their dead. Through experience, these villagers know that warm, moist air cause bodies to decompose quite rapidly, just as meat becomes rancid far more rapidly in the summer than in the winter.)

I had been called to a small village in my homeland of Darkon. The local residents were terrified that a plague of vampires was about to be called down upon them. Quaking with fear, the village leaders brought me to the hamlet's tiny graveyard. Along with the gray light, twisted trees, and chipped stone markers, freshly turned earth greeted my eyes. A trio of graves had been disturbed, with the ground hastily heaped back into place.

"You see, good doctor?" the village elder cried. He was a stooped and slender man some ninety-odd years old, and his voice cracked with fear and age. "We laid these three young men in the ground only days ago, but they do not rest. How can we protect ourselves?"

Informing him that I must investigate further before drawing any conclusions, I asked my companions, Gildred and Havaland—the famed Strickmund brothers—to aid me in searching the gravesites. It seemed odd to me that such a small village (of no more than fifty individuals) would suffer so many deaths at once.

Listening to the sodden shoveling sounds and grunts of effort of the brothers Strickmund laboring at the graves, I determined to delve further into the circumstances surrounding the three deaths.

"Did these young men die of some sudden disease, perhaps a wasting sickness or an illness of the

blood?" I inquired of the elders present. The victims of a vampire's foul ministrations often appear to die in such a manner, before rising as minions of evil but a few nights later.

"No, Dr. Van Richten," the village leader replied, his aged hands shaking with sorrow and fear. "That is why we took no precautions with the lads' bodies. It was simply an accident that caused their deaths, just a terrible accident."

"I have found that accidents are not always what they first appear to be," I responded, as gently as possible. "Please tell me more about the circumstances..."

—From the journal of
Dr. Van Richten

Under the most extreme conditions of damp heat, such as a jungle environment, decay sets in with amazing speed. If you ever visit the jungles of Sri Raji for example, note the rich loam of the earth, the quickly rotting logs, the amazing variety and number of insects. All are signs of both the speed and thoroughness with which death brings decay in such a clime. It would seem difficult in the extreme to construct a flesh golem under such conditions, but would-be creators are fantastically resourceful. At best, I would imagine the creator to have only two or three days' leeway before the flesh so degrades as to become nonviable.

There is an interesting side note on humidity and its effects on decomposition. When exposed to an extremely raw, arid climate, a corpse may not decompose in the normal manner. I observed this effect myself while journeying across a desert. My fellows and I, riding sturdy mules, were attempting to reach the lair of a lich whose sanctuary was supposedly hidden beneath the dust and sand. The wind was particularly fierce one day, forcing us to stop and make

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camp early. That night, I feared both my tent and my person would be ripped to shreds by the driving storm, or at the least that I would be permanently deafened by the wind's titanic roar!

Fortunately my fears proved groundless. The tents held, as did my ears. In the morning we emerged, ready to set off once again. As I sipped cool water in a vain attempt to wash the gritty tang from my mouth, our guide, Atrawn, ran up to me. He dragged me over the facing dune, nearly causing to me to spill my water skin with his urgency.

He pointed to a small group of bodies, which had been invisible previously. Knowing the storm must have uncovered the corpses, I began an examination. It was as if all the moisture in the bodies had been drawn out. The dark skin was still wrapped firmly about the bones, but it was extremely thin and wrinkled. Along the necks, legs, and arms I could easily make out tendons, jutting stiffly outward from the shrunken forms. There was no odor of death or decay about the bodies, only the clean, warm smell of the desert.

By this point in my examination, my companions had gathered around as well. Torenor the dwarf carefully plucked a trinket from one of the bodies, wondering aloud if it was valuable. Glancing at the silver and onyx earring, I was startled to see it was a durasha, an item used by a certain nomadic tribe as a ward against evil spirits. However, the tribe had died off years ago, killed by rivals.

From both the condition of the corpses and the presence of the durasha, I estimated the bodies to have been at least a century dead. Apparently, the sere climate caused the moisture to disappear so quickly from the tissue that no true decay could set in. It would follow that similarly desiccated parts could be used in the construction of a golem.

Despite this possibility, I have never heard of such a creature.

I'd like to close this section with a cautionary note. Do not make the mistake of assuming that because you are in a hot and humid region, the would-be creator will be unable to finish his work. Climatic limitations can be circumvented; as always, the truly obsessed will find a way if any chance of success exists, no matter how remote.

A colleague of mine once reported stumbling across a strange room located deep beneath the earth. Within the chamber, a gold miner had begun collecting and storing body parts in preparation for construction of a golem. The miner's story was one of loneliness and rejection, and the man apparently longed for someone who wouldn't mock or shun him. It was fortunate for the man that my colleague discovered his chamber, for the rejection he would have ultimately faced from his golem would have been far worse than any he could possibly have conceived.

...Clearly my inquiry about the three youths' deaths caused my hosts great discomfort. The elders shook their heads in sorrow and confusion. An old woman stood among them, pulling her heavy woolen shawl closer about her frail shoulders. It was she who gave the only verbal response, "They were working on the new barn when it collapsed on top of them. We all worked fast as we could to get them out of there... but there was naught we could do for the lads, poor things."

Clucking her tongue in sorrow, the woman, one Nelly by name, turned to stare at the ruined building just visible through the trees while Havaland and Gildred completed their excavation.

The villagers had been too terrified to search the graves themselves, so they were quite shocked to see the mangled forms lying uncovered within the newly re-opened graves. All three of the men had been young and powerfully built. Now though, each of the bodies was missing one limb.

Asking as delicately as I could under the circumstances, I confirmed that each man had been whole when buried. . . .

—From the journal of
Dr. Van Richten

The chamber was reachable only by arduously crawling through a network of small caves that followed a tiny underground stream. Although the outside temperatures averaged over 100 degrees and the humidity was always high, the chamber itself was extremely cool due to its depth and stone insulation. Thus, the collected body parts remained quite fresh even though the first of the limbs' "donors" was almost a week dead.

Effects of Decay

I do not wish to imply that a week-old body part and one that is but hours dead are of equal value. The fresher part would be much more valuable from a creator's perspective. While a piece of flesh may be usable, it does not follow that it reflects "peak condition." When partially decayed materials are used in the construction of a golem, the creature's structural integrity is diminished. Further, if too many parts have degraded sufficiently, the creature as a whole may not be viable, no matter what the creator attempts.

Another possibility is that a member of the Created whose body contains partially decayed body parts is not as clever or powerful as a golem constructed solely with fresher parts.

Presumably, any lessening of skills would be those relative to the defective body part or parts (a slightly rotted brain might create a less intelligent creature, for example).

Indeed, I suspect that certain body parts—especially those upon which skills are based—might be more vulnerable to decay and damage than others. Eyes, brains, hearts, and other organs should become unusable at a faster rate due to their delicacy. Other, less delicate body parts—limbs, for example—would no doubt withstand greater abuse before they are rendered worthless.

A scientist with whom I am acquainted has suggested that the level of decay is not truly pertinent, save that a part must have enough structural integrity to hold together during the actual physical construction. I tend to dispute this idea; it makes little sense, given what we know of physiology. However, it is unwise to entirely rule out any possibility when dealing with the Created. Take this information, your own observations, and any other sources you can find and come to your own conclusions. It is your life at risk.

Nonhuman Body Parts

It is indeed possible for body parts from corpses of different races, and even different species, to be used in the creation of one golem. I myself was involved in the destruction of a particularly grotesque golem who appeared to have been constructed from no fewer than three different species. Its head and torso were human, but one of its arms was that of a brown bear, while its legs appeared to have been ogre limbs. It was a terribly disfigured monster, all out of proportion with itself, like a child's fanciful drawing come horribly to life.

What, if any, mental and emotional effect would this sort of merging have? That is a question which I shall explore

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later in this work. However, all my hypotheses and psychological postulations are as nothing to staring into the face of such a wretched being.

I speculate that only certain natural barriers would keep a creator from being able to cobble together a golem made from many different creatures. One obvious barrier is size. If the difference between two connecting body parts is too great, the creator cannot successfully stitch the parts together. Even if the stitching could be accomplished, a golem with, say, the body of a halfling and the arm of an ogre would have difficulty effectively using the outsized limb. In general, the supporting frame must be of sufficient size and strength to utilize its limbs. Some leeway may be assumed, however, due to the additional strength musculature appears to gain when reanimated as part of a golem construct. I shall delve further into the subject of odd parts—and the resulting physical attributes—in Chapter Three, “Constructions of Flesh.”

Here it is probably wise to mention the tragic creatures known as broken ones. Educated readers may believe these sad beings to be almost identical in nature to golems. While they do have certain similarities, this is not at all the case.

Broken ones are the tragic survivors of both scientific and magical experiments. Humans once, their humanity has been inextricably mingled with the life force of animals. The shock of this transformation forever alters the wretched creatures. But there is an extremely important distinction between these beings and golems. Broken ones are alive. They do not die in the experiments, and thus the scientists and mages do not create new life in creating broken ones. Although terrible violation of the spirit occurs, no death is involved. This is a critical difference between golems and broken ones.

...At this point in the investigation, I realized no vampire was at work here. Someone, perhaps even one of the elders standing before me, was attempting to construct a flesh golem. Far from easing my mind, this discovery only caused my heart to race. For once a golem becomes functional, it can be even more difficult to destroy than the dreaded vampire!

Fortunately, in this instance we were able to stop the creator before he completed his dread child. That very evening, I and my two stolid companions stationed ourselves around the tiny graveyard. We caught the grave robber attempting to exhume yet another corpse. The man himself was crazed with desperation and need—what had brought him to such a state we will never know. When it became obvious he would be unable to make good his escape, the man drank from a small vial in his possession. Moments later he collapsed, a victim of the powerful poison contained therein, and the obsessions of his own warped mind.

As a doctor, I use all my humble skills and knowledge to fight death. Yet, standing in the bitter cold of that bleak cemetery, I knew this man's death was probably for the best. Had he completed his work—and I knew it would have been impossible to dissuade him—then he surely would have faced a more horrid demise at the hands of his own creation.

—From the journal of
Dr. Van Richten

Body Parts and Decay

Van Richten has introduced the subject of decay and its effect on a flesh golem. This topic is covered in greater detail below. Such information can be useful in creating a history for a flesh golem, as well as in "customizing" a particular monster by giving it limbs that have decayed almost to the point of uselessness. This mechanism is particularly useful to DMs who wish to create a weaker golem for low-level parties.

Stages of Decay

The condition of the specific parts used in the creation of a golem can affect the monster's base statistics (see Chapter Three for a list of these statistics). For purposes of determining decay, there are two categories of body parts: organs and limbs. Organs are delicate and more vulnerable to such deterioration.

Body parts undergo four stages as they decay: fresh, good, usable, and decayed. Brief descriptions of possible game effects for each stage are given below. These are guidelines for DMs, who may use them to "flesh out" physical details for a particular golem.

Fresh: Fresh body parts come from corpses that have been dead for only a brief period of time. No significant decay has occurred.

Good: Body parts in this group have begun the process of decay, especially soft organs. However, their general condition is still good, and game effects are minimal. For example, a golem with a tongue in "good" shape prior to its animation might exhibit slightly slurred speech, but no other impairment. The most prominent effect involves the brain. If a brain has deteriorated from fresh to good condition, the golem's Intelligence score is decreased by 1 point.

Usable: Body parts in "usable" condition have truly begun to decay, and they will weaken the golem in some small way. This is particularly true if organs are involved. Some examples of the effect of using such parts during creation of the golem are as follows:

Eyes: Vision reduced to 50%

Limb: -1 to Dexterity, -1 to Strength

Brain: -3 to Intelligence

Feet: Movement reduced to 75%

Decayed: This flesh is in an advanced state of decay. Organs and other delicate tissues in this state cannot be used to construct a viable golem. It is sometimes possible to use other body parts in this state, but they produce an inferior golem. Examples of the effect of using such body parts during the creation of the golem are as follows:

Limb: -2 to Dexterity, -2 to Strength

Feet: Movement at 50%

Once body parts pass this final stage, they are far too putrid for use in a flesh golem, although a zombie golem or bone golem might be constructed successfully. Anyone viewing such a golem should immediately make a horror check due to the hideous appearance of the monster (DM's option).

Climate and Decay

A body part's rate of decay varies by climate. The following table defines six different "climates" by their heat and humidity levels: arctic, cool, temperate, moist, torrid, and desert. The effects of each climate on decay are outlined below.

Of course, not every body part is exposed to the elements. Some may be stored in a cool cellar or even frozen to slow or stop decay. Would-be creators of golems usually attempt to preserve body parts in the best condition possible.

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Climatic Effects on Decay

	Sere	Arid	Average	Humid	Very Humid
Temperature	0%-10%	11%-40%	41%-60%	61%-80%	81%-100%
Freezing $\leq 32^{\circ}\text{F}$	Arctic	Arctic	Arctic	Arctic	Arctic
Chill $33^{\circ}\text{--}60^{\circ}\text{F}$	Cool	Cool	Cool	Temperate	Moist
Average $61^{\circ}\text{--}80^{\circ}\text{F}$	Cool	Temperate	Temperate	Moist	Torrid
Hot 81°+ F	Desert	Temperate	Moist	Torrid	Torrid

Arctic: Body parts kept below freezing will not decay further. If a fresh body part is frozen, it will still be fresh when it thaws. Likewise, if a body part was in usable condition when frozen, it will be in the same state when thawed. Decay will continue as soon as the part is exposed to temperatures above freezing.

Cool: Body parts that are stored in a cool environment decay at the following rate:

Fresh	Days 1-2
Good	Days 3-5
Usable	Days 6-10
Decayed	Days 11-14
Unusable	After Day 14

Temperate: The decay rate for flesh stored in a temperate environment is as follows:

Fresh	Day 1
Good	Days 2-4
Usable	Days 5-7
Decayed	Days 8-10
Unusable	After Day 10

Moist: Body parts exposed to a moist environment decay at the following rate:

Fresh	Day 1
Good	Day 2
Usable	Days 3-4
Decayed	Days 5-7
Unusable	After Day 7

Torrid: Body parts subjected to such conditions decay at the following rate:

Fresh	First 12 Hours
Good	13-36 Hours
Usable	36-72 Hours
Decayed	Day 3-Day 5
Unusable	After Day 5

Desert: When conditions are extremely dry and hot, bodies can become desiccated very rapidly. As Dr. Van Richten observed, the moisture is drawn out of the body so quickly it becomes mummified. In such cases, limbs and other visible parts are preserved indefinitely, and it is possible to use them in the creation of a golem. Such body parts are considered *fresh*. Note that this does not include organs, which are considered to be in a torrid environment for purposes of judging decay (see above).


See my Alyce sit up, brush her hair, and smile. How wonderful! But most wonderful of all, looking into those deep blue eyes, canted upwards in reminiscence of their elfin donor. What matter the puffy stitches beneath, the heaviness of the eyelids? My child, my Alyce is at last alive and whole!

Every night I raise a glass of the finest wine my cellars have to offer. It is a toast to the genius gifted me by the gods, allowing me to create life itself. Soon my old friends will humble themselves before me, and beg to have me as their teacher.

But they have already proven themselves unworthy by doubting my genius. Well, they shall soon doubt no more.

—From the journal of Thor Hessen

CHAPTER TWO: ANIMATION



The "parents" of the blighted creatures called golems toy with a gift that most reserve for the gods: creating life. But how is such a thing possible? How can that which is dead or inanimate assume an existence that is not undeath as we know it, but life? Although I am far from certain as to the exact nature of the process, I do feel qualified to put forth several theories on this subject.

I would advise the reader while perusing this chapter to maintain a certain amount of healthy skepticism, as well as an intellectual distance. In the first place, although these theories of mine have grown out of many hours of research and firsthand observation (mainly of flesh golems), they are but theories. And they are highly speculative theories at that.

Secondly, I am certain it is unwise to delve too deeply into this realm of knowledge. Although information is certainly necessary to combat the Created, I fear that even a person of good conscience and moral fiber might be somehow *changed* by gaining some knowledge of the creation of life, no matter how limited in scope. From both a philosophical and emotional

perspective, I have come to the decision that there is just some knowledge mortals are not meant to possess. Alas, if the world were as it *should* be, it would be very different indeed.

With those caveats in mind, we may proceed to my theories on the animating forces necessary to the creation of a golem.

The Source of Life

It is my firm belief that the force that animates a golem is not created *per se*. Rather, it is a pre-existing spirit, drawn to the empty vessel that is the golem body, and then trapped within it. Such animating forces may be of two varieties: a dark spirit or a stolen life force. Both are horrid in their own way.

Dark Spirits

It has been postulated, by both myself and other theorists, that there are numerous evil "spirits" about in our world—not ghosts, mind you, but beings who have never truly been alive, who have never maintained a corporeal existence. A few scholars assert that such dark forces must hail from another realm entirely. I myself believe they are in some way a part of our land, just as we are, existing at the edge of our nightmares in a manner we

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cannot fully comprehend. It can be assumed, however, that these darkling spirits know neither life nor death as we understand it. And, unlike mortals, they do not have a cycle of life.

We can at best speculate on what such an existence might be like. However, it does not seem unreasonable to hypothesize that these evil, ethereal beings might experience the emotions of mortals as tangible qualities. We can further imagine that these creatures could be attracted by compellingly evil thoughts and deeds, especially when they are accompanied by intense desires.

When a powerful wizard performs a difficult magical working, or a priest pushes back undead minions, he calls upon skill and faith, yes. But these acts also require great force of will and conviction. Further, an individual whose heart and mind burn with an all-consuming obsession might exhibit an equal intensity of will, if not a greater one. Such emotion might well attract a darkling spirit.

Imagine now that this warped individual were to focus his will toward the creation of life, and that he had properly constructed a body which could receive the darkling spirit. Under these circumstances, the creator might be able to trap the entity in that vessel. The spirit—thus mired within a corporeal form for the first time in its existence—might lack the capability to extricate itself. As the wizard who creates a powerful item of magic can attest, the bonds shaped by a strong will can be powerful indeed.

I shudder to think that creatures incapable of true death—that are utterly devoid of morality, pity, and sheer humanity—are even now inhabiting our land and walking among us.

The Stolen Life Force

To my great sorrow, I am certain the life force animating some flesh golems

is stolen from those already living. All who fashion this type of creature must steal from the *dead*, of course, seizing their limbs and organs. But a few creators—and fortunately they are unusual—commit an even greater atrocity: They rob the living of their very identity.

I can say this terrible thing with certainty, thanks to a long-time correspondence I have maintained with the Vistani wise woman, Cyrilla. Those of you who have read my other works may wonder that I have even one friend among the Vistani. It is true that I cannot help but find the Vistani, as a culture, loathsome. If not for the Vistani thieves who kidnapped my boy, Erasmus, he would never have come into the hands of the foul vampire, Baron Metus.

Yet, over the years, I have come to the conclusion that one cannot condemn an individual for the failings of an entire culture. While I abhor those who brought such personal grief to myself and my loved ones, I have managed to attain a level of respect and friendship with a few, individual Vistani. That stated, let us continue.

Although it is extremely unusual for a Vistani to exchange letters with an outsider such as myself, Cyrilla and I have been friends and colleagues for many years—ever since we joined forces against an especially vicious werewolf bent on destroying an entire village in northern Darkon. Cyrilla is a true sage, and I trust her observations implicitly.

Only last year Cyrilla wrote to me of a young Vistani woman, Cyrilla's own niece, whose impassioned dancing was the pride of the entire clan. The young woman, known as Vassa, had many suitors, but neither she nor her family found any of them worthy.

One particular young man seemed unable to accept Vassa's rejection. For days at a time he sat outside her family's wagon, praising the girl's

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beauty and dancing. She did not respond. After months, the young lad despaired and left the clan, cursing Vassa and her father. The boy left a note, vowing that somehow he would make Vassa his own.

Weeks passed and there was no sign of the lad. The Vistani assumed the boy was gone for good.

The creature dropped from the rafters, some thirty feet above, landing just behind poor Irina. Laughing horribly, the monster grabbed our companion by the neck, lifting her off the ground with a strength unbelievable in such spindly arms. Still laughing, the thing broke Irina's neck before any of us, even the elf Darien, could move. Scampering away into the darkness, it left us with our dead friend and the echoes of its hideous, unstoppable laughter.

I have never felt such unrepentant, alien evil as when we faced that laughing golem. I hope to never face such evil again.

—From the journal of
Hataras the Quiet

If only this had been true. One month after the boy's disappearance, Vassa too disappeared. Exhaustive searching and the application of Cyrilla's formidable skills soon found the girl, but in body only. Although she yet breathed, nothing the Vistani attempted could bring Vassa back to consciousness. Eventually, the girl stopped breathing. Vassa was mourned and her body burned on a pyre, as was the custom of her clan.

The following year the clan was back in the section of Corvus where Vassa was kidnapped. One evening, the clan was celebrating a particularly successful trade when a whirling dervish appeared in their midst. Dressed in colorful skirts, adorned with

bangles, the creature danced clumsily about the fire.

Cyrilla's own words best describe what next occurred:

The creature looked like some child's toy made of river clay and mud, and smelled much the same. With ungainly movement, it spun round and round the fire. I remember how the creature's ugliness intensified the gauzy beauty of its twirling skirts. Strange what we think of in times of true horror!

By this time the musicians had ceased to play, and all save myself had backed fearfully away from the monstrosity. But I stayed. Why? I believe I recognized something in the golem even then. The blood of the Vistani is strong, and I know my kin, Van Richten.

Awkward and out-sized, it lumbered up to me, until it stood within arm's length. Its stench was so foul my breath caught in my throat and my eyes began to water.

"Have you no kiss for me? No kiss for Katya?" it whispered tauntingly.

Oh, Van Richten, I had only called one person by that pet name. It was Vassa, she of the nimble feet and flowing hair. This lumbering form contained the spirit of the laughing, shining girl, but that spirit was now twisted into a hideous mockery of her former sweetness.

I managed to speak to her only briefly before she struck out at me, but I doubt my words had any effect. I almost died that night, doctor. The strength embodied in that body was unbelievable. My magic protected me, but only just. I wish I could say I destroyed the golem that night, but I cannot. It was all I could do that night to drive the thing from our camp. Perhaps my powers were simply not sufficient, but I think my heart was also not in the terrible task. For although the monstrosity was intent upon my death, I sensed that some small shred of Vassa remained trapped

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within that lumbering body, aware of the horrible parody of life and beauty she had become.

I am convinced the boy who left our camp found some way to place Vassa's spirit in that hideous body. That one Vistana could do this to another is a great shame to our people. Van Richten, if you ever run into poor Vassa, you must destroy her. The human mind cannot even begin to comprehend the bleak horror of her new existence.

I have discovered several other occurrences in which a golem knows information only a particular loved one would know. We can only imagine the horror of finding oneself trapped in a golem's body, as one's humanity is slowly stripped away.

My only child, Erasmus, was placed in a similar situation when Baron Metus transformed him into a vampire. Erasmus came to me and asked me to destroy him, as he could feel his mind and his spirit twisting into some monstrosity. This I did for my brave, wonderful child. I can only believe that becoming a golem is just as horrible, if not more so, than what Erasmus experienced.

I have heard of but one instance where an individual was said to have been placed in a golem body, only to have the process reversed. The story was highly fragmented, and the source is suspect, but that does not mean the possibility should be discounted entirely. Where there is even a remote chance to save an innocent, people of conscience must strive to the utmost to reclaim that lost soul.

However, even if it is possible to reverse the procedure, I am certain there is an extremely limited period of time in which this could be accomplished. The reversal would need to be made before the original body died, although if the body could be resurrected it still might be possible to perform the reversal. An even greater time limitation is the one

imposed by the spirit itself. It cannot be very long before all remembrance of the spirit's former life disappears and the individual's life force becomes irretrievably warped, or even dissolved utterly. I would assume that the window of opportunity for such a reversal would be anywhere between several days and a month in length, depending upon a number of variables.

Brain Transplants

When considering flesh golems, there is one more way in which a spirit might be placed within the creature's body. Though I know very little of this method and it is truly horrid to contemplate, I would be remiss if I did not present it: The creator may actually transfer the physical brain of a *living* being into the prepared vessel. It is truly maddening to think that the golem's mind may retain some knowledge of its former self—and know the great atrocity that had been committed.

When the creator of the golem transfers a living brain into the body of the Created, the spirit of the brain's donor is also transferred. Of course, without a brain to direct its function, the body of the donor soon perishes. Such a transplant cannot work if the donor perishes *before* the transplant is complete, however. A dead brain can serve only as an empty vessel for the dark or stolen soul, as described earlier. The operation on the living tissue is extremely delicate and must be performed quickly; else the brain will surely perish and the spirit with it.

If the operation is successful, the spirit of the individual is transferred. A significant jolt of energy is required to bind the spirit to its new form. I shall address this topic below. Note, however, that the energy required to bind a transplanted spirit may not be as great as that used to bind a dark or stolen soul to the abysmal prison that is the golem body.



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Fusing Body and Spirit

Once the body of the construct has been prepared, and the spirit has been selected or attracted toward it, the most difficult and mysterious portion of the creation process is yet to occur. Somehow, through a massive surge of energy, the golem spirit is bound to the vessel. A metaphysically transfiguring fusion of body and spirit occurs, and the golem comes to life. The precise manner by which this process works is only guessed at by researchers more gifted than myself.

My own poor excursions into the realm of theory have convinced me that the required energy can be either physical or what I term *psychic* in origin. A third force—magical energy—may also suffice, though it could be coupled with another form. I shall address magical animations briefly below and focus on the other two energy sources first. Whatever the source, however, there is no question that animation is achieved on at least some occasions,

The exact amount of energy required is unknown, if not immeasurable. However, in the physical case, we can estimate it to be at least the amount of energy transmitted in a bolt of lightning. There have been several documented cases in which lightning has either animated a golem construct or reanimated a golem that was thought to be destroyed.

Other equally powerful sources of energy would presumably serve the same purpose. However, whatever physical energy is applied must come in the form of a *sudden* shock or jolt. A steady but less potent energy flow does not provide the catalytic energy needed to bond the spirit to the body.

The exact process through which the spirit, the life essence as it were, of a living being is removed from its natural body and placed within the golem is unknown. However, it is certain that the two bodies must first be positioned

closely together. If physical energy is to be used, the jolt required for animation must then strike *both* physical forms either simultaneously or in quick succession. If the energy jolt does not affect the bodies simultaneously, the living body must be the first to be struck.

I have noted many instances of successful animation, including that involving my dear friend, Antonin Madren, where the available evidence fails to reveal any readily apparent source of physical energy. Given the absence of physical or magical energy, I believe that the body and spirit are fused and transformed by the sudden release of *psychic* energy.

The creation of a golem is an act of evil—this is my firm belief. Further, the creators are driven by obsessions which almost inevitably plunge them into madness. These obsessions serve to justify to the creator evil deeds ranging from the petty to the most heinous imaginable. The creators of these golems are in agony, and all too often they have placed innocent victims in agony as well.

I theorize that the mad obsession, the pain and suffering, and above all, the overwhelming evil associated with the creation of a golem coalesce as a crackling, swirling nimbus of psychic energy around the creator and his created. This energy builds until the ultimate moment, when it suddenly reaches a transcendent peak at which it breaches the barriers between our material world and the darker world of spirits.

The surge of psychic energy draws the requisite spirit through the tattered barrier between the tangible and the intangible, into the vortex which is the Created. Whether the spirit is a dark and evil being which exults in its newfound form, or an innocent soul silently screaming against its fate, it has now combined with the physical shell prepared by the creator to form a golem.

I realize that at first blush this theory may seem radical, even somewhat wild, to some. Yet careful study and re-

search will reveal that this theory in all ways comports with observed reality and provides a logical explanation for the otherwise inexplicable.

Every creator carefully chooses the materials used to construct his "child." Many choose the animating spirit, or personality, just as selectively. Some creators, such as the young Vistani man of Cyrilla's acquaintance, become obsessed with a specific individual and attempt to place that person's spirit within the golem.

The massive energy current causes the spirit to separate and transfer from its original body to that of the waiting golem. The transference understandably causes some degradation of the personality, including memory loss, confusion, and a return to a childlike state of being. I have heard tell of some very few people who maintained some memories of the experience and were able, with the help of their comrades to reverse the process.

I must say that the hope of such a reversal is exceedingly slim. Besides requiring the original body to survive another massive energy charge, the window of opportunity for such a reversal is very small for two reasons. In the first place, the original body will die in a matter of weeks without a personality residing within it. To keep the body functional for even that long requires near constant care.

Secondly, and most importantly, even if the new golem maintains much of its former personality, that personality is already degrading. Certainly within the course of a month the old personality will be utterly gone, replaced by a hateful, lonely, sociopathic creature with no hope of redemption.

Magical Energies

It has long been known that wizards, and to a lesser degree priests, can create certain types of golems, including flesh, bone, clay, glass, iron, stone. (The list of types animated

through magic is actually longer, of course, but the permutations are not important to the discussion at hand.) The mages and priests who create these golems do so through a rigorous process of research and the casting of multiple spells. There are even rumored to be a few manuals holding

The "traditional" automaton created by a wizard or priest is the only golem a player character (PC) can create while in Ravenloft. In other words, only those PCs who are high-level wizards or priests can succeed. A player character may not even attempt to create the golems through obsession (the method discussed throughout this book).

Such an act hardly qualifies as a noble pursuit. The attempt to create life in this manner is suspect in any world. However, those who toy at such grand schemes in Ravenloft place themselves in special peril, for the powers of the Demiplane itself are apt to supply the spirit that will inhabit the vessel. Any character who does attempt to create a golem is subject to powers checks: one for every month of research or work. A powers check is also in order whenever the PC commits an evil act associated with the construction—robbing a grave, for example. The base chance for attracting the attention of the dark powers for making a golem is 10% in this case. (As usual, DMs should feel free to adjust this percentage to suit their campaigns.)

Thus, the PC who embarks on this course of action is following the path to self-destruction (DMs should make this clear to players). In no way should creating a golem be beneficial to a player character. It is an evil act, and usually proves fatal in time. Even if the PC succeeds, his creation will do everything in its power to free itself and turn on its creator (the PC).

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the secrets of golem creation somewhere in this misty realm.

I believe the creators of such golems enjoy more control over their progeny than the twisted personalities who animate a golem through their madness and obsession alone. This is not to say that these mages and priests do not risk their creation turning upon them, however. The risk is always present, and it grows over the course of time. Despite the research and methodical planning, despite the great intelligence of the creators, the eventuality is much the same. Even a golem created through magic grows to despise its creator. In time, the creator will lose control of the monster and face possible death at the golem's hands.

I take this to mean that the powerful magical workings involved in creating the golem and bringing it to life eventually involve the same dark forces that give shape to other golems in Ravenloft. The process may at first appear different due to the creator's greater degree of control, but this may simply serve to lull an incautious creator to his doom.

The Spark of Life

Astute readers may be wondering why the creators of flesh golems do not simply choose *one* body to house the darkling or stolen spirit that will bring it to life. After all, this is surely the simplest course of action. Instead of spending hours in dark graveyards and hospices, risking discovery many times over, the would-be creator could simply select an appropriate vessel that is whole. The vessel would also be seamless in appearance, physically impossible to discern from normal mortals of its species.

Nonetheless, as I noted in the previous chapter, at least six bodies must be used in the construction of a flesh golem. I believe several reasons determine why no single corpse can suffice. Some involve the mindset of the creator himself. Others, which are

even more difficult to prove, point to the actual requirements of the vessel.

The first obstacle to choosing a single vessel arises from the creator's expectations regarding his creation's appearance or prowess. Simply put, very few mortal bodies have all the strength, stamina, size, and dexterity that the creator might wish for his golem. To the casual observer, this might seem a paltry concern. Yet to those individuals whose driving needs push them into creating a golem at all, simple expedience is far outweighed by the creator's specific requirements, whatever they may be.

Secondly, many creators of golems have a strong need to prove their brilliance or artistry (often to themselves). To this end, they experiment crazily. For example, they may place the eyes of an elf and the heart of a lion in the body of a dwarf. This sort of bizarre experimentation may well increase the creator's feelings of omnipotence. To a mind so twisted, every individual who lays eyes on the golem will be forced to acknowledge the creator's power and genius.

Thus, we have reviewed the first two reasons why multiple bodies are required in the construction of a flesh golem: No single body can reflect all the qualities desired, and the ego of the creator demands a hand in shaping his own unique progeny. Both are equally valid, and both most certainly play a role in many cases. However, I believe there is a third and final reason for the need to use these unmatched parts—a reason which overrides both of those previously stated.

As I have learned through the journal of a lich I once pursued, even dead bodies still hold onto some tiny piece of the energies of life. This *spark of life*, as I term it, is what first enabled the lich to create dreadful zombie golems. I believe this spark of life also provides much of the energy required to bind the spirit of the flesh golem to the body.

If my theory is correct, the amount of energy left in the tissue of one body

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alone is simply insufficient for this task. Furthermore, I suspect that the spark of life within a single body is too closely connected to the spirit of the person who once inhabited the vessel—and thus, the body automatically rejects an invading presence.

Any portion of a corpse still retains that spark of life, although it is diminished. Thus, the spark of life within just one body may be insufficient, but when the life energy remaining in several bodies is combined, it may create a force great enough to allow animation. Furthermore, a body cobbled from multiple forms may not contain enough of any single personality's essence to prevent a new spirit from entering it.

As I have stated, these are but theories; I have no proof to support my claims. However, one thing is assured: I have never seen, nor heard of, a flesh golem that was fashioned from fewer than six separate bodies (though some were assembled from more than twenty!). Thus, we can be reasonably assured that no single corpse may ever count itself among the Created.

March the Eleventh

To whomever may find this note:

I do not know how long I shall have before they come looking for me. But when I leave this world, I wish to hold the knowledge that I performed at least this one courageous act, however small, before my death. Would I had the strength to have opened my eyes sooner!

Now I must somehow set to paper the words which I can hardly bear to think. The child that my barren body could never bear has been brought into this world; even now it crawls through the halls of this fell place, somehow alive. But where a true child is a blessing, the thing below is a blighted curse! No child of mine.

Though he readily accepted my family's fortune, my husband could

never accept my barrenness. His need for children was strong. But I never knew how strong, never thought of his need when the babies began to disappear from the neighboring morgue... until this morning when I discovered his journal.

He—a doctor, sworn to nurture and fight for the life of every patient—he took those poor infants and stole their chance for eternal peace. This very evening I followed him to his laboratory, and there saw a strange infant lying upon a table, wrapped in layers of dark blue wool. The smell of antiseptic was everywhere, the air so close I must have swooned. The next thing I remember was a horrid crashing sound and the scent of burning wool. Light dazzled my eyes, and it was a few moments before I could again see properly.

When my vision cleared, I saw him holding the infant aloft, exactly as I had seen him hold the babies of our acquaintances. But this—this thing was a deformed parody of those joyous infants, its arms and legs disjointed, its face deformed. And the silence! Such grave silence from a newborn. Then I saw the hideous eyes, the flesh, this child sewn together as a quilt is pieced, from the scavenged remains of—

Ah! He has found me. . . .

I write these final words even as he struggles to break down the door. He whom I took to be my husband but five years ago—he has determined to murder me to hide his secret. You who read this know that I am gone, but my husband and his creation may yet live! I only pray this journal falls into the hands of good people who will use the knowledge to stop my husband and his child, and others like them if there is more such evil in this world!

—Evania Fairwind

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If a man will begin with certainties, he shall end in doubts; but if he will be content to begin with doubts he shall end in certainties.

—Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*

There are precious few certainties in this life; but too often we cling to them as two drowning men clutch at each other, each afraid to let go and swim for shore. Thus do they both lose what they most desired, and thus can we lose sight of the larger truths around us.

—Dr. Rudolph Van Richten,
excerpt from a letter to Cassien Attenberg

CHAPTER THREE: CONSTRUCTIONS OF FLESH



This chapter concerns itself with the fundamental physical and mental abilities of the flesh golem—the most prevalent variety of the Created, and the one with which I am most familiar. Following this, I shall address the flesh golem's more outwardly impressive traits. As we shall soon discuss, however, even a golem's most fundamental abilities are terrifying in their enormity.

When considering the traits of the flesh golem, we are faced with an immense task and little firm knowledge. Little, if any, properly conducted research has been done in

this field. As a result, we are faced with a difficult situation. What do we believe and what do we discount? Too often we leap to embrace any information that only *appears* valid. Yet if we ignore facts not in evidence because they seem unlikely, then we may overlook some critical truth.

As I compiled research for this tome, I strictly ordered myself to proceed cautiously and with an open mind. I also vowed to be candid so that I might not mislead any reader into mistaking supposition for fact.

Thus, as I delineate the various characteristics of the flesh golem, I bid you to keep this caveat firmly in mind: *Golems are individuals*. While the term "mundane" may apply to a few unintelligent creations brought to life through conventional magic, in my experience such foes are the exception to the rule. True, each golem may

This chapter focuses on unusual golems made of flesh. Although there is no such thing as an "average" flesh golem, the statistics below reflect a golem's base ability scores. All statistical modifiers in this chapter build upon these base scores.

Base Statistics (Flesh Golems)

Strength	19	Intelligence	5–16	Dexterity	18
Wisdom	3–6	Constitution	20	Charisma	6
Movement	12	THACO	11	Armor Class	6
No. of Attacks	2	Hit Dice	9	Damage	2d8/2d8

share basic traits with others of its kind. But it also may display unique mental or physical characteristics. Such unique qualities are especially apparent in flesh golems who were brought to life through the sheer will of their creators. Thus, one should view each golem as we do any villain who strikes from the shadows: a unique nemesis about whom we know little. In facing this lack of knowledge, we can, however, cling to one certainty: All golems are tremendously powerful.

Basic Physical Traits

In this section, I shall outline the physical traits of the flesh golem—specifically, its strength, dexterity, and constitutional fortitude—and describe how these traits may vary between individuals.

Do not allow any alarm you might feel at the brute physical power of the Created to overwhelm you. It is a temptation even I have succumbed to on occasion, falling into my old habits of over-intellectualizing to distance myself from the contemplation of such power. Ah! You see? I am still using my old defense even now. Do not be ashamed if you wish to do the same. After all, there is no shame in fear itself—it is an instinct that helps keep us alive. But when we are frightened, we must not deny it, lest our repressed fear cloud our thinking and keep us from properly assessing a golem's abilities. Such misguided thinking has brought about the death of too many good people.

Before we begin our analysis, I would remind the reader of the following: While all the information given reflects the typical case study, not all golems will conform precisely to this analysis. Some may be even more powerful, others less fearsome.

Strength

The profound strength of the Created can cause even the bravest of warriors

to hesitate. I do not believe I exaggerate in saying that most golems are as powerful as some giants! This is all the more impressive considering the average flesh golem stands only seven to eight feet tall, and some individuals are much smaller. (Even the rumored-to-exist doll golems are said to be able to lift a full-sized human male and toss him about as if he were the doll. I would not be surprised to learn of a diminutive flesh golem who did the same!)

The basis for this immense strength does not seem to rely directly on the components used to construct the golem, although stronger limbs can

Big or small, all golems are strong. However, the size of a golem does affect its physical prowess. The average flesh golem is of *Large* size. But what of the golem built with a hill giant's torso? Or with a dwarf's bandy legs? Such modifications may result in unusual sizes, which affect Strength scores as shown on the table below.

Size and Strength

Size Category	Strength Modifier
Huge (12 ft. or more)	+2
Large (7–12 ft.)	+1
Medium (4–7 ft.)	0
Small (2–4 ft.)	-1
Tiny (under 2 ft.)	-2

Golems with a Strength greater than 19 can inflict more damage, as noted on the following table:

Strength and Damage

Strength	Damage
20	2d8 + 1
21	2d8 + 2
22	2d8 + 3
23	3d8
24	3d8 + 1
25	3d8 + 2

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certainly add to the golem's already formidable strength. Instead, it appears that the flesh (or other material) is tempered and strengthened during the tremendous energy surge that accompanies the creation process. Each cell burns with a new life, which apparently lends an unnatural capacity to the body as a whole. This tensile strength may in part aid the body in trapping or retaining an appropriate animating spirit or essence.

Dexterity

Despite their often-lumbering appearance, flesh golems are surprisingly nimble and flexible. This account by my longtime scout, Markil, provides an apt description and warning:

"I'm takin' my shift at guard, sittin' in the tree near the fire like I do, when I see this big thing shufflin' towards me. I can't quite make it out, but I figure such a mashed-up lump of a creature can't be too much of a danger at the moment, being it's still fifty feet away. So's I turn my head to hiss down at Dr. Van Richten and get his attention. Next thing I know, there's this pushing feelin', and I'm wakin' up with one mean headache. Guess it's just a good thing that golem hit me 'stead of tearin' me in two. You just never figure a thing like that can move so fast."

Markil is correct: The deceptively clumsy appearance of most golems

As noted in Chapter 1 of the *Player's Handbook*, Dexterity scores can affect a character's Armor Class (see the section titled "Defensive Adjustment"). The same modifiers can be applied to flesh golems whose Dexterity varies from the base score of 18. For example, a golem with a Dexterity of 21 has an Armor Class of 5 when defending against an attack that can be dodged.

must never lull the hunter into believing his prey to be slow. I do not believe I have ever faced a golem who was not as fast or faster than the most dexterous of my companions, although I have read accounts of slow and fumbling golems.

The power of the creature was poetic, in the same manner as a hurricane or volcanic eruption achieves epic proportions. It seems I stood breathless for hours, gazing at the crags and fissures of the being's variegated features. It was as if the gods had decided this land of ours would not do, and thus sent this creature to tear it down so they could start anew.

Those were my first impressions of the golem I had traveled day and night to confront. It was a monstrous thing, yes, but it had achieved a level of monstrosity so primal that it became as awe-inspiring as any force of nature.

—Astonby of the Oaks,
as recorded by Taynesbert in
The Open Palm

Once again, this remarkable dexterity does not seem dependent upon any particular parts or materials, although they may have some effect. If so, I do not yet have enough information to determine the relationship between specific body parts and quickness.

Constitution

Even more than it is strong or dexterous, the flesh golem is resilient. In fact, the fortitude of a golem is almost certainly the greatest of its physical traits, and I am yet in awe of it. These creatures rarely tire in battle, and they can resist many physical and magical attacks. Further, when they are harmed, their capacity to

The base Constitution score of flesh golems is 20. Such creatures can regenerate 1 hit point every 6 turns (i.e., every hour). A golem with a greater Constitution score regenerates at a faster rate, as listed in Table 3 of the *Player's Handbook* (see "Regeneration").

regenerate tissue is nothing less than phenomenal. The Created may well enjoy the greatest physical resiliency of any known creature. This much is true: Of all the foul and fantastical monsters I have fought, there is none—not even my especial foe, the vampire—that can match the golem in its sheer resiliency and physical fortitude.

Mental Abilities

The mental capabilities of most golems can be impressive, though they certainly are not as formidable as the creature's physical traits. I shall address two aspects of the flesh golem's mind here: its innate intelligence and its telepathic talents. The psychology of the golem—how it views itself and others—is a topic reserved for another chapter.

Intelligence

Travelers from distant lands often claim that a flesh golem has no more cunning than an animal. This is a grave mistake! Perhaps such people are fooled by the golem's often bestial, uncivilized appearance. Indeed, that appearance has led many an incautious hunter to underestimate his foe and pay for the mistake with his life.

Flesh golems do appear to lack certain advanced mental capabilities, however. There is no evidence that any member of the Created (flesh or otherwise) can appreciate art or grasp complicated philosophical or mathematical principles. On the other

hand, I know of no reliable scientist who has spent any length of time conversing with a golem, much less making a serious study of its psyche or intellect. While the creator of a golem often attempts and even relishes such a study, he is incapable of impartial observation. Therefore, it is currently impossible to determine the precise mental limitations of the golem.

Where golems do excel mentally is in low cunning and the ability to manipulate and maneuver in order to gain what they desire. In fact, golems may well be as intelligent, in their fashion, as most humans. Further, it may well be that golems simply do not

The type of brain used determines a flesh golem's Intelligence score. As a general rule, the score is at least one rank below that of the brain's original "owner" (see Intelligence ratings in the *MONSTROUS MANUAL* tome). For example, a golem with the brain of a wereraven (genius) would be rated "exceptionally intelligent" (15–16), while a golem with the brain of a normal human would have a low Intelligence (5–7). This assumes, however, that the brain is relatively fresh and in excellent condition.

Note that even in Ravenloft, creatures built from a substance other than flesh are most often nonintelligent, following the standard presented in the *MONSTROUS MANUAL* book; they have no brain upon which intelligence can be measured. This is particularly true of golems created through conventional magic. However, any golem born of obsession and given life by the mysterious powers of Ravenloft could exhibit both great intelligence and a distinct personality; such exceptional creatures are described in Chapter Four.

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care about certain issues, and thus only devote their faculties to achieving their personal goals, whatever those might be.

I must offer one additional caution on the mental faculties of golems. Virtually all of the Created have indomitable wills. These monsters are capable of single-mindedly following a course of action for as long as it takes to succeed. Most assuredly, this is why so few creators survive once a golem decides it wishes its "parent" dead—the golem is relentless. My own departed friend and student Antonin Madren was pursued by his creation across several lands before that beast succeeded in striking him down.

If you ever discover a golem bent on a course of action involving the harm of others, you must immediately turn all your efforts to stopping the creature. Else you must find someone who is willing to do so themselves. Otherwise, who knows how many individuals could lose their lives to the will and power of such a creature?

Telepathic Talent

My brief conversation with Antonin Madren, the former student whose plight first introduced me to golems, indicated the golem he created was able to speak into his mind. Further, Antonin indicated that the golem seemed to always know where he was, and perhaps even what Antonin was

Creating Golems

As the DM, you may wish to create your own unique golem. This is highly encouraged; "personalized" golems are more interesting and far more frightening, since the players won't know the precise abilities of their foe without proper investigation.

The information in this chapter and the next provides a means for creating new, unique golems. It is assumed that each monster will be "fleshed out" as fully as any NPC, with enough depth to serve as the focus of an adventure. Although this book is mainly concerned with golems of flesh, Chapter Four offers suggestions for other types. In any case, a DM must make the following decisions when creating a new golem:

Who created the golem? It is very important to determine what kind of person created (or is creating) the golem. Each creator is driven by unique obsessions and needs. Deciding on a creator's background often determines many of the golem's eventual abilities and skills.

For example, if the creator is a physician, he might be obsessed with creating the perfect physical specimen. Such a golem probably would be made of flesh, and might be more physically powerful than others of its kind. Or perhaps the creator is a writer obsessed with making a bizarre creature from his novel come to life. Such a golem might be a strange collection of animal and humanoid body parts.

What type of golem is it?

Although most golems are made of flesh, it is possible to create golems from wood, stone, glass, and many other materials (see Chapter Four).

If flesh, what body parts to select? Traditionally, a minimum of six bodies must be used in the creation of a flesh golem: one distinct source for each limb, another for the torso and head, and one for the brain itself. It is certainly possible to use components from more than six bodies, however. Further, parts from exceptional humans or other creatures can give a golem unusual powers and abilities (see page 223 for further details).

thinking. Granted, Antonin was by no means in his right mind when he imparted this information to me. His feelings of persecution, hearing of voices, confused desperation—all are symptoms of paranoia, a psychological disorder.

Several times in the course of my research on the Created I have run across physicians' documents mentioning paranoia, delusional psychosis, and like diagnoses about an individual who (it was later discovered) had created a golem. Of course, the vast majority of individuals so diagnosed truly have the disorder in question, and are not the creators of golems. Nonetheless, I do feel it is always worthwhile to ask the village's

physician, wise woman, priest, or other healer whether they have recently counseled anyone with such delusional or psychotic symptoms. At least once, an investigation of mine was solved by asking just such questions. On other occasions, when the creator had already been murdered by his "child," I was at least given information helpful in tracking the golem in question.

The creation of a golem involves a sustained period of passionate, all-consuming commitment from the creator. Apparently, one element necessary to the success of the project is the need for a bond to develop between creator and Created. However, all evidence indicates that this bond is one-way only. The golem-

What are its extraordinary abilities? This chapter suggests unusual powers or skills that can set your golem apart from others of its kind (see page 231 for details). Such powers help keep the players off guard, and make the creature a more challenging opponent. Take care not to make your golem too challenging, however. In general, an individual creature should receive no more than one or two of these extraordinary abilities.

What are its peculiar vulnerabilities? MONSTROUS MANUAL entries for golems describe the common vulnerabilities of each variety. However, just as you may grant an individual golem an extraordinary ability, you should consider hindering it with an unusual weakness. The "zeitgeber" described in this chapter is just one example (see page 227). Vulnerability to a particular form of weapon is another.

Most golems can be struck only by enchanted weapons. However, each golem type might also be vulnerable to a particular blessed weapon. Such weapons cause full damage to the

susceptible creature. Note that the list below is optional; Dungeon Masters should feel free to devise a vulnerability tailored to a particular golem's history and physical type.

Optional Weapon Vulnerabilities

Golem	Weapon Vulnerability
Bone	Blessed mace
Clay	Blessed pick
Flesh	Blessed pitchforks or spear
Glass	Blessed hammer
Metal	Blessed sword
Stone	Blessed pick
Straw	Blessed sickle
Wood	Blessed axe

Final Touches? The quality of craftsmanship and the physical state of body parts used can also have an affect on the golem's abilities—and it need not be for the better! For example, flesh golems do not age as a rule, but an improperly constructed body might well decay, presenting an ever more frightening visage to the PCs.

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A flesh golem maintains a unique telepathic bond with its creator. At will, the creature can see through the creator's eyes. This ability, coupled with an uncanny ability to know in which direction the creator lies, enables golems to track their makers with a skill no bloodhound could equal. The golem's telepathy is so invasive that the monster, in effect, knows its creator better than the creator knows himself. The creator can keep no desires, fears, dreams, or feelings from his golem. (In this sense, the ability resembles the psionic power of empathy, with no limit to range.) The golem's telepathic ability also enables it to "speak" into the creator's mind at will, regardless of range.

The telepathic power binding the golem and its creator lies solely with the golem. In other words, the creator cannot sense the thoughts or emotions of the golem. Nor can the creator intentionally send messages to the golem. This bond can be broken only if the creator is shielded by powerful magic. Even when the creator is so shielded, the telepathic "voice" of the golem can still reach him, though the golem may lose other benefits of the bond.

child has great access to the mind of its creator.

The bond seems to be a perversion of the special relationship an infant shares with its mother. As an infant draws sustenance from the mother, the golem apparently needs access to its creator's mind. However, the sustenance gathered from the poisoned mind of the creator inevitably drives the golem to hate its parent.

The Created seem to use their knowledge of their creators to torment and track their "parents." Most golems do not appear to read every waking thought of their creator precisely. Rather, they seem to gain fragmented

images and emotions from their creator, enough to give the golems an uncanny ability to discern the creator's whereabouts and predict a creator's actions. This is undoubtedly the reason why so few creators of golems manage to escape the ministrations of their foul progeny.

When I state that the golems must have need of this perverse bond, I may be overstepping myself. Perhaps the only true reason the golem is given the "gift" of a telepathic bond to its creator is to punish the one who would bring such a horror to life.

Compilers' Note: This psychic bond does lend much credence to the good doctor's theory that at least some portion of each Created's "spark of life" comes from the twisted psyche of its obsessed creator.

GWF

Biological Concerns

Issues normally addressed when discussing the biology of a species include essential bodily functions, nutritional requirements, and the like. Certain basic questions arise. For example, is the species mammalian, insectile, and so forth? Are they air or water breathers? I shall address such topics below.

Also of concern in a biological survey are reproductive characteristics, including mating rituals, gestation times, and the like. Golems do not reproduce (a limitation for which we may be thankful!), so these issues do not greatly concern us here. If a flesh golem were to seek a mate, it would be for purely psychological reasons, rather than a response to any physical drive.

In general, it can be assumed that flesh golems are closer to mammals in nature than any other type of creature. However, this is at best a loose association—a remembrance of the body's past, perhaps.

Odd Parts and Basic Traits

One of the easiest ways to create a unique flesh golem is through the use of unusual or exceptional *body parts*. Body parts taken from monsters, demihuman races, and even animals can affect the golem's basic ability scores and other fundamental statistics. (Unusual parts may also give a golem other extraordinary abilities, which are discussed on page 235.)

The table to the right is organized by body part. Each subtable presents a range of creatures whose corpses might supply components to the adventurous assembler. However, the charts are by no means exhaustive. Further, they're provided as guidelines only; as DM, you should feel free to expand and adapt the information as you see fit. For example, if a maniacal NPC in your campaign creates a flesh golem using the arms of a hobgoblin, you could assume this option boosts the creature's Strength by 1 point, considering a hobgoblin is similar in Strength to a bugbear.

There is one restriction in regard to combining various creatures' body parts: *All parts used to create a particular golem must come from creatures within one size category of each other.* For example, the arms of a hill giant (size: Huge) could not be placed on the body of a human (size: Medium). However, the same arms could be placed on the body of a gnoll (size: Large). The *MONSTROUS MANUAL* tome lists all size categories for monsters and creatures.

Life Span

By all accounts, golems do not experience physical development, nor do they age. It is possible that a golem's life span is so long that we, who live for but a moment by comparison, simply cannot recognize

Effect of Odd Body Parts

Torsos

Hill giant	+3 Strength
Ogre	+2 Strength
Bugbear	+1 Strength
Dwarf	+1 Constitution
Horse	+1 Constitution, +1 Strength

Arms

Hill giant	+2 Strength, -2 Dexterity
Owlbear	+1 Strength, +2 Damage (from claws)
Goblin	+1 Strength, +1 Dexterity
Elf	+1 Dexterity
Gnoll	+1 Strength

Legs

Horse	MV 24; extra attacks 2 rear hooves, damage 1d4/1d4
Elf	+1 Dexterity
Ogre	MV 9, +1 Strength
Huge spider	MV 18, +1 Dexterity
Wolfwere	MV 18, +1 Constitution

Miscellaneous

Elf eyes	60' infravision, +1 Charisma
Giant fly eyes	360-degree vision; surprised on roll of 1 only
Heart of a lion	+1 Hit Dice
Heart of a paladin	+2 Hit Dice, +2 Charisma
Blood of a bard	+1 Charisma

such gradual changes. However, for all practical purposes, we must assume that flesh golems can live forever. (Not surprisingly, this immortality applies equally to golems made of materials others than flesh.)

I base this assumption upon the experiences of others, as well as upon

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Golems do not age as a rule. Thus, they live until they're destroyed. Rare exceptions might include a flesh golem that was improperly constructed, or a creature condemned to aging by the mysterious powers of Ravenloft.

my own firsthand observations. There are legends of individual golems appearing and reappearing in a specific area over the course of centuries. (Most notable are those accounts of a powerful fiend who haunts the isles off the coast of Lamordia.) Of course, it is quite possible that more than one flesh golem might be at work in such tales. However, given the rarity of these creatures, and given further similarities noted by the witnesses, it seems likely to me that similar accounts spanning centuries do indeed describe the same creature. This certainly supports the notion of a very long life span.

It seems that flesh golems do undergo an initial period of mental development and are thereafter mature. Fortunately, there is no indication that golems gain power or prowess with age. *On the other hand, neither do they seem to lose any power.*

Respiration

It is still questionable whether golems have any need to breathe. Many observers have claimed that the creatures do; after all, most golems

All golems—flesh and otherwise—can survive without breathing. Thus, they cannot be harmed by being choked, buried, immersed in water, or by any other suffocating attack. Additionally, golems are not subject to spells that affect the respiratory system (such as *stinking cloud*, *cloudkill*, and so forth).

can generally speak and make other vocalizations, so it would appear their lungs are functional. My own belief is as follows: While many golems are able to breathe, few (if any) require air to sustain themselves. In short, they could suspend their breathing indefinitely without any ill effect.

I have heard of a peculiar flesh golem who has supposedly taken to haunting the seas west of Martira Bay, where his creator was a fisherman. Apparently, this golem can remain underwater for extended periods of time without sustaining any harm whatsoever. Of course, this ability may be a peculiarity of the particular golem, but I do not believe this to be the case.

Despite this phenomenon, if you should have an opportunity to bury a golem under an avalanche, for example, or to drown the monster, by all means attempt it. At the worst, such a tactic might afford you and your fellows some time to regroup—a rare luxury when battling the Created! Perhaps the attempt will even be successful in disabling your enemy. Still, you must be ever vigilant. Never make the assumption your foe is truly defeated until all that remains of the fiend is ashes and nightmares.

Nutritional Requirements

It is uncertain whether golems have any nutritional requirements whatsoever. If the creature needs no air to sustain its unnatural life, then is it not reasonable to assume it also can forego food? However, some few observers have noted that golems have the capacity to eat if they so desire. Of course, that still begs the question as to whether such golems eat out of necessity or for sheer pleasure. After all, many of us eat simply because we enjoy the act itself. Perhaps golems feel the same.

To my knowledge, only one golem has been held in captivity for any length of time. The danger of such a proposal

Flesh golems born of obsession need to eat flesh—that is, fresh meat or carrion—in order to replenish their physical body. However, only one meal a week is required. The flesh consumed is generally equal to that found in a suckling pig. If a golem goes more than one week without consuming flesh, it will begin to lose 1 point of Constitution per week. Once the golem eats sufficiently again, it will regain any Constitution lost at the rate of 1 point per day. (A smart party might be able to starve a golem under certain circumstances.)

Golems may also hasten their regenerative capabilities by consuming flesh, gaining an additional 2 hit points per turn spent eating. However, eating will *not* give the golem more than its initial number of hit points.

For further information on the regenerative abilities of golems, see pages 229 and 234.

is so prohibitive as to be almost unthinkable, yet I know of one group who attempted it nonetheless. May the gods look kindly upon their souls!

Apparently, the group included three brave individuals: the foreign mage Maya Junifell, the dwarf priest Taganaceous Barrelfist, and the sage warrior Astonby of the Oaks (the same warrior-philosopher whose engrossing adventures are chronicled in Taynesbert's epic saga *The Open Palm*). These brave friends and comrades managed to successfully battle the flesh golem into unconsciousness and place the creature within a specially prepared chamber.

Of the few scraps of notes later salvaged from the wreckage of their stronghold, one was an observation by Taganaceous regarding the golem's apparent hunger upon awakening. The

monster almost immediately devoured two entire suckling pigs left within its enclosure. Taganaceous goes on to report that the golem refused all foodstuffs after that point.

Why did the golem eat the pigs? There are many possible reasons, ranging from fury and a desire to destroy to actual hunger and physical need. However, if golems do need to eat, it is apparently far less often than the vast majority of creatures. Unfortunately, no more than speculation is currently possible given our lack of solid information.

Zeitgebers

The parts making up a flesh golem's physical form may be seen as being fused into a single, living being. This fusing creates much of the golem's great strength and, in all probability contributes to their apparent immortality.

The golem's life appears marked by a monotony within as well as without. As I have stated, the creature's appearance and physical prowess do not change with time. Further, while some flesh golems are capable of eating and breathing, they do not need to do so—these processes seem but vestiges of the body's former existence.

Golems also lack any fixed cycle of activity and rest. In short, they do not require sleep. This information may not seem particularly relevant to our concerns, but in fact it is of great interest. Because the Created need no rest, they are able to pursue their activities relentlessly, without any hint of fatigue. This ability places golem hunters at a great disadvantage, as they most certainly need time for both rest and recuperation.

I can offer but one hopeful piece of information on this subject: Golems sometimes respond to *zeitgebers* (TSIGHT gay-bers). A *zeitgeber* is any natural phenomenon that triggers

SECTION, THE THIRD:

certain behavior in living creatures. For instance, many small mammals respond to the decreasing temperatures of winter by going into hibernation. Hibernation is thus triggered by a zeitgeber. In this instance, the onset of a season—with the accompanying drop in temperature and shortening days—is the zeitgeber.

The most common zeitgeber to which flesh golems respond is light. This response appears to reflect some fragile link to the past existence of the body parts—an unusual sort of “memory,” as it were. In most cases, the zeitgeber causes the creature to enter a state of inactivity or comparative weakness. On several

occasions, I have noted flesh golems suddenly ceasing their activities for a period of perhaps twenty or thirty seconds at sundown. It is an odd occurrence, and it certainly does not apply to all creatures. However, those that do exhibit this behavior are probably affected by this zeitgeber.

February the Third—*This second day on the mountain was perhaps the coldest I have ever experienced! Even wrapped in five layers of silks, wool, and furs, my body became numb and I succumbed to a bit of frostbite. And the sun on the snow and ice: blinding! I feared I would*

The zeitgeber can become a key element in an adventure involving a golem. Golems are extremely dangerous foes, and providing an Achilles' heel in the form of a zeitgeber, or triggered behavior, can give clever players an interesting weakness to exploit.

A zeitgeber can also set a golem of your own creation apart from the ordinary. The list of potential “triggers” is endless. The sound of a certain musical instrument, the sight of an open grave, the scent of lilacs—these are but a few possibilities. However, a particular zeitgeber should not be chosen randomly. Rather, the zeitgeber should reflect some peculiarity of the monster's creator or the monster itself. This sort of zeitgeber is particularly atmospheric and emphasizes the twisted relationship between creator and creation that is at the heart of many golem adventures.

For example, imagine that the golem's creator is a musician obsessed with the notion of composing and producing the perfect opera. He creates a golem so that he might have the perfect tenor for the starring role. However, whenever the

monster hears the strains of organ music, it begins howling uncontrollably in a parody of song. As for possible game effects, while “singing” the golem could suffer a -2 penalty to hit, or even be unable to initiate an attack (although it should remain able to defend itself).

The effects of a zeitgeber can be as unique as the zeitgeber itself. For example, the creature might attempt to kill anyone who brings the particular trigger into effect, or perhaps the golem would remember its former life for 1d4 rounds. Other possibilities for zeitgeber effects include the following: causing the golem pain; making the golem flee for 1d6 rounds; causing the golem to come running; making the golem unable to attack the person causing the zeitgeber; and causing the golem to take a particular action, such as dancing.

The DM creating a new golem is encouraged to devise unique zeitgebers for the creature, as well as the zeitgeber's unusual effects. A golem with unknown abilities and weaknesses will be much more exciting and horrifying than a monster whose abilities are utterly familiar to players.

stumble off the cliff face and tumble to my death before facing the thing that has terrorized the village of Uselix for twenty years.

The creature is rumored to be eight feet or more in height, rudely put together as if it were the cast-off plaything of some god-child. Its hands are said to be twisted and taloned, with the jaws and wicked teeth of the snow bear.

Perhaps tomorrow I and my local hirelings will be able to bring down this terrible beast man, and I shall become famous!

—From the journal of
Terrence Crannock

Of course, it is possible that certain golems may respond to other, more unusual zeitgebers. For example, I have heard one tale of a golem who was halted in its tracks by a particular melody, though I cannot be sure whether the effect was physical, psychological, or both. Such triggers, if discovered, can become useful weapons in the hands of a resourceful golem hunter. Although I would not count on your opponent pausing in such a manner, it is an interesting and possibly exploitable oddity of golem behavior.

Resiliency of Golem Flesh

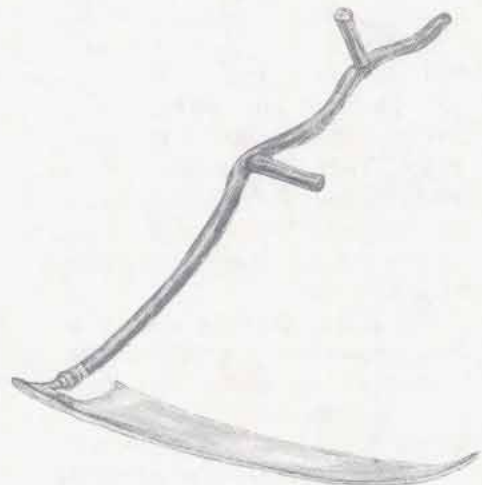
The flesh forming the body of a golem is apparently greatly transformed during the creation process, becoming stronger, denser, and far less porous. It seems probable this is in fact *necessary* in order for the flesh to maintain its integrity. This process may be likened in some ways to the transformation certain trees go through in the forests of Keening. Some oaks in that desolate area petrify, their trunks developing a peculiar density similar to that of granite.

The transformed and strengthened flesh appears generally waxy in texture, save around the stitches. Such

areas, traumatically sewn and fused together into a workable unit, appear reddish and angry. This effect may fade with the passage of time, however. Thus, a careful observer can guess at the relative "age" of a golem by observing the amount of inflammation around the site of any stitching.

Despite the great strength and density of the golem's flesh, there is apparently no loss of flexibility. In fact, Kenyard Brisbane, a former student of mine and devoted foe of evil in all its myriad forms, once told me he observed a golem who dislocated his own shoulder entirely—merely to reach a small rabbit hiding within a small hollow! According to Kenyard, the golem appeared to have no qualms whatsoever about such self-mutilation, merely pushing the disjointed arm back into place after he had reached his quarry.

Of course, Kenyard's observations reveal as much about the golem's sense of pain as his flexibility. Given this and similar reports, I have come to believe that golems either do not feel pain or that pain does not affect them in the way it does you or me. The vast majority of humans and demihumans find it extremely difficult to function with a dislocated limb. This pain



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All golems are utterly immune to poison and cannot be harmed by any toxin. Further, they are completely immune to disease, including magical maladies.

resistance (or lack of the capability to feel pain) is, of course, no boon to golem hunters. Though we may harm a golem, we can never be certain that such damage has impaired its capabilities until the moment the hideous creature actually falls.

I'd like to end this section with an intriguing digression. Kenyard, my former student, noted another curious matter regarding the golem with the dislocated shoulder. Despite an apparent need for an occasional meal, the golem did not eat the rabbit once it attained it. Instead, the creature carefully *ripped the poor creature apart* and then stared at its remains for nearly an

hour—as if the golem were performing some biological survey of its own.

Resistance to Toxins

The innards of the flesh golem appear just as rugged as the exterior tissue—as any hunter who has utilized poisonous gas (or poisons of any sort) against their kind can attest. Like all members of the Created, flesh golems are immune to toxins. This immunity serves as a further example that the flesh of the Created no longer functions in anything near its original fashion. Of course, this comes as no real surprise, since the flesh is “deceased” before being violently fused together during the reanimation process.

Weapon Immunities

The incredible density of the golem's flesh creates yet another difficulty for its foes. In most cases, weaponry must

A flesh golem created in Ravenloft can be struck by weapons of +1 or better enchantment (see page 288 for complete combat statistics). They are vulnerable to magical spells, except *mind- or life-affecting spells such as sleep, hold, charm, or finger of death*. Further, they can be struck by creatures with at least 4 + 1 Hit Dice (PCs do not qualify regardless of level).

Like all golems created in Ravenloft, flesh golems receive a +4 bonus to saving throws against physical damage, including spell effects. They are partially immune to cold and electricity. Cold or electrical attacks cause half damage, but do no harm if the golem makes a successful saving throw.

Fire and acid both cause full damage to flesh golems. Acid can be held only in glass or ceramic containers. A normal-sized flask of acid inflicts 1d8 + 2 points of damage.

A normal metal weapon that has

been heated until it is “red hot” and glowing can also be effective against flesh golems. The weapon must be placed in a fire of considerable size and intensity—such as a large bonfire, raging furnace, or some other inferno. The heated weapon must be at least as large as a short sword; otherwise it softens and becomes ineffective. Further, the weapon must make a saving throw vs. magical fire each time it is heated, and a saving throw vs. crushing blow every time the hot metal delivers a blow. If the weapon fails a saving throw, it becomes too warped and/or blunted to be useful. Note that a weapon heated in this manner remains hot for 2 rounds only.

Flesh golems may be susceptible to *blessed spears or pitchforks* (see page 220). As the DM, you should feel free to give an individual golem a unique weapon vulnerability. Try to tailor the vulnerability to the golem's story, however.

be magical to puncture or lacerate this tissue. A nonmagical blade or cudgel pushes into the yet-resilient flesh, but refuses to penetrate or draw blood. For instance, I once observed a fighter thrusting his sword directly into a golem's neck, but when the sword withdrew, the creature's skin was unmarred!

Moreover, to "draw blood" from a golem is at best a euphemistic notion. Flesh golems do not truly bleed. When the tissue such a creature is pierced, it oozes a watery, odoriferous liquid similar in appearance to plasma, though the smell is closer to that of rancid meat or a gangrenous wound.

It is interesting to note that nonmagical weapons do not *always* fail to harm the Created. Apparently, enraged mobs of peasants armed with mere pitchforks and firebrands have brought down a golem on several occasions. Nonetheless, if you ever plan on facing one of these monstrosities, I strongly recommend procuring as many magical weapons as possible. It may well mean the difference between suffering only a few losses and losing your entire party.

Basic Regeneration

*Power; like a desolating pestilence,
Pollutes whate'er it touches; and
obedience,
Bane of all genius, virtue, freedom,
truth, Makes slaves of men, and, of
the human frame,
A mechanical automaton.*
—Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Queen Mab*, III

One of the most horrific and yet fascinating aspects of the flesh golem's tissue is its capacity to repair itself at an extremely rapid pace. In a matter of hours, a golem can heal completely from a wound that would impair a stalwart warrior for days.

Even more incredible is the sensitivity and adaptability of the flesh golem's system. In recent years, I have

As noted earlier in this chapter, the regeneration rate of golems is based on their Constitution (see page 219). Thus, regeneration rates vary between 1 hit point per 6 turns (20 Constitution) and 1 hit point per turn (25 Constitution). However, some flesh golems also have the ability known as *hyper-regeneration*, a phenomenal form of regeneration that takes effect when the creature's hit points drop to 0. Hyper-regeneration is explained on page 234.

begun to believe that the Created have some unique form of regenerative capabilities, which are highly specialized. These powers of regeneration come into use when the golem is mortally injured. I can think of no other reasonable explanation for the uncanny ability of the Created to *fully recover* from horrendous wounds which had felled the creature only minutes before.

I have witnessed this phenomenon several times firsthand, but the first is yet the most vivid. I cannot begin to describe the depths of horror I felt on that fateful night. My battle-worn companions and I were celebrating the demise of our foe—when the very creature rose up in apparently perfect health! Alas, two more of our number perished before the golem fell again to our weapons and spells. Only my compatriot Nikita and I remained. This time neither she nor I rested until we had burned every piece of the golem's body to ash.

To this day Nikita refuses to hunt another golem, and in truth I cannot blame her. The wiry thief still claims the golem attempted to grab her hand and drag her with it onto its funeral pyre. Although I did not witness the event, being on the other side of the rather large fire, I do not doubt that the golem's great evil and tremendous will enabled such a final attempt.

SECTION, THE THIRD:

Be forewarned, good friends! The creature you believe must surely be dead may instead simply be waiting for you to let down your guard before it resumes its attack, fully refreshed and functioning perfectly!

February the Fourth—*Tonight I write from the confines of a tiny shelter, which my five remaining hirelings were able to carve out of the ice and snow. Outside, the storm that swept down on our poor group this afternoon rages still.*

I grieve for the brave men of Uselix who lost their lives today. And all for nothing! Even as the first gusts of wind and snow reached our group, the creature was upon us. I now know why the thing was so difficult to track. The monster was lying in wait for us, but not behind some rocks or trees. No, it was waiting beneath a layer of snow and ice precisely at the narrowest point in the mountain pass.

Our first man went down before we realized the creature's trap. From that point onward my memory is but a blur, a patchwork made up of dying men and that looming, rending, killing monstrosity. Worse yet, our weapons did not even seem to scratch the thing's hide. . . .

—From the journal of
Terrence Crannock

Reassembly

Even if you are fortunate enough to sufficiently damage a golem to the point where it can no longer regenerate, it would not be wise to leave any part of the creature intact. If the golem's creator is still among the living (or, the gods forbid, some other person attempts this!), he may well be able to repair his creation.

This process of repair involves two stages: First, the creator reattaches the

Any disassembled golem—be it flesh, metal, or otherwise—can be put back together and reanimated as long as at least 50% of its original parts remain available and intact (and in excellent condition). Assuming the body is repaired, the only requirement for reanimation is a simple bolt of energy; the life force of the golem is already within its body. The energy—typically a bolt of lightning—merely provides the necessary charge to the golem's "batteries."

golem's body parts. Then, he recharges the golem through a burst of energy, which is normally a lightning bolt. Once reanimated, the golem is as powerful as it was before, showing no signs of the damage you and your comrades fought so hard to inflict!

February the Fifth—*I have done it! Sadly, however, I am the only remaining member of this expedition, and I owe my success to poor Tomas. It was, after all, his idea to place our weapons in the campfire.*

As he stated in his simple, plainspoken manner: "It works with the wolves. Whenever there's a whole pack of them and only a few of us herders, we heat our weapons right up till they start to glow. You only do it with old weapons, on account of the blades sometimes break, but all you have to do is poke a wolf once and the whole lot of them takes off right quick."

I shall be sure to tell Tomas's family of his sharp thinking when I present my condolences to them. The lad's plan actually worked! When the horrid creature finally came upon us once more, we pulled our weapons from the fire and, our hands wrapped in wool,

we faced off against the mighty creature. As soon as I struck the first blow I knew we could defeat the thing, for the weapons burned into the monster's flesh as if it were butter! The battle was bitter, but I prevailed!

Even now the thing's body lies just outside. On the morrow I shall attach it to the sled and bring home my trophy in triumph so that all might witness.

—Final journal entry of
Terrence Crannock

Extraordinary Abilities

Golems are extraordinarily diverse creatures, each a unique reflection of its creator's obsessions and desires. As such, almost all golems have certain unusual abilities and powers which other creatures of the same type lack. Most golems have no more than two of these unusual or unique abilities, however. This is fortunate, as any power given to the Created beyond that which they already possess is truly frightening. Such abilities can be very dangerous, but most particularly if they come as a total surprise to the golem hunter.

I have therefore attempted to compile a representative sampling of the extraordinary abilities that either I or a reliable witness has seen manifested in one of the Created. Most examples are not linked to a golem's physical body *per se*, but instead derive from the creator's particular reasons for creating the golem. I point this out by way of a warning: Such abilities might apply equally to golems constructed from a material other than flesh (although my research along this vein is admittedly less reliable). I shall also present abilities derived from peculiar body parts—the snout from a hound, for example, or the arms of two giant apes. Obviously, the abilities arising

from such peculiar parts apply solely to creatures of flesh.

As you read the following descriptions, keep in mind that the list is only representative. It is by no means meant to be an exhaustive compilation of such abilities.

Gizella, the young girl I mentioned in my previous entry, lay curled on her straw pallet, the light from the flames bathing her flesh with the ruddiness of life. Relieved, I stepped forward, preparing to wake her: As I reached out, I noticed that Gizella's face was turned toward the fire. But her body was turned toward the doorway opposite!

For the second time in as many days, I was too late. Being careful not to disturb the body, I noted the massive contusions and bruises all along the girl's neck and shoulders. Brushing back her long, pale hair I found what I was seeking: the bruised imprints of the culprit's fingers, starkly malevolent against the pale flesh. Setting to work, I carefully measured the marks. It soon became obvious to me that the fingers belonged to no ordinary mortal. For what human or demihuman has the fingers of a human man on one hand and the fleshy claws of an owlbear on the other?

My horror at the untimely and particularly brutal murder of this unfortunate young girl, not yet seventeen winters old, has only strengthened my resolve. Tomorrow, I will send for Palovian and his group. After the evidence discovered tonight, I am convinced the golem created by Delona is murdering the youth of this village.

—From the journal of
Dr. Van Richten

SECTION, THE THIRD:

A golem with the *animate dead* ability can animate and control a number of corpses equaling up to twice its Hit Dice. However, the golem can only give general, empathic commands such as feelings of rage. The golem cannot control exactly who its creatures will feel rage toward. (One exception: They never attack the golem.) Such animated corpses function as zombies.

Animate Dead

I once faced a flesh golem who had the ability to animate any corpse it touched. The creature seemed to revel in *animating the freshly killed bodies* of its foes, and I remember with great sadness having to strike down the animated body of one of my companions in the very same battle in which he was killed.

The animated corpses were not golems, of course, but some sort of lesser undead creatures. Still, it would certainly be possible to be overwhelmed when faced by a large number of such animate dead.

Golems with this power can cause despair up to three times per day. To do so, the golem must consciously exert its will while simultaneously moaning, ripping at its own flesh, laughing, or performing some other action designed to horrify observers.

Anyone looking upon the golem must make a successful saving throw vs. death magic or be overwhelmed by apathy and despair. Affected individuals can only defend themselves, and may not take any offensive actions or attempt to flee at a rate faster than a slow walk. This effect lasts as long as the golem remains in the victim's sight.

Cause Despair

An encounter with any golem would bring about some degree of despair, of course. However, in the lower reaches of G'Henna, I encountered a flesh golem who could wield despair as surely as a warrior might wield a sword. This golem's victims were overcome with great melancholy and hopelessness, no matter how bold they might otherwise have been. To trigger the desired effect in a victim, the golem deliberately tore away chunks of its own flesh while moving toward its target. What made this terrible sight even more hideous was the creature's constant smile, as of some circus clown, leering evilly beneath its dead eyes.

Victims who succumbed to this despair would find themselves barely able to defend themselves, let alone cast spells or flee. I myself was *fortunate enough to stave off this attack long enough to make my escape*. Still, a wave of absolute lethargy and apathy came over me, and it nearly drowned my will.

Cause Horror

Hataras the Quiet once told me of a golem whose hideous laughter nearly drove him to madness. The dwarf shook with fear as he related the tale, *and he spoke in no more than a whisper*. And this was nearly a year after the incident! Indeed, he said he could not bring himself to leave his home for several weeks following the horrible encounter, and that the hideous laughter still echoed in his nightmares whenever his weary mind drifted into sleep.

Anyone hearing the gibbering golem's laugh must make a successful saving throw vs. death magic with a -2 penalty. Those who fail suffer the effects of a failed fear check.

I too have faced such a gibbering creature. No words could describe the chilling sensation that its maniacal laughter produced in me. Hardened warriors may faint and the most faithful of priests despair upon hearing such a sound, but all who do are sorely put not to give in to its debilitating terror.

Climb Sheer Surfaces

I have both heard and read accounts of golems who can climb sheer walls as easily you or I might walk across a room. While I personally have not witnessed such a phenomenon, the trait described reminds me of the vampire's ability to scale vertical surfaces, and I would not be surprised to learn that golems are equally adept.

Golems with this ability have an 85% chance to climb sheer surfaces (as would a thief). Some flesh golems also have other thieflike abilities. Such golems should be treated as 5th-level thieves when such abilities are gauged.

Diseased Touch

It is possible for a golem to confer a highly contagious rotting disease with no more than its touch. Such a touch wreaks hideous results upon living flesh, and I am glad to say that I have witnessed the effects only once. If my experience and gathered accounts are correct, a golem with this ability secretes some sort of virulent pus from its pores. As a result, the creature's skin gains a moist, pustulant coating, which harbors the virus. The golem itself is immune to the effects of this disease, whose symptoms included blackened buboes (better known as pustules), high fever, delirium, and eventual death. The only treatment known to be effective is the priest spell *cure disease*.

I pray that you never run into such a creature yourself. However, if you notice that the skin of the golem you

Victims touched by the golem must make a saving throw vs. death magic. Those who fail this saving throw will be stricken ill, losing 25% of their original hit points per turn. When a victim's hit points reach 0, the character falls unconscious. The victim will then lose 1 point of Constitution per day until cured (or until reaching 0 Constitution and death). Constitution loss is permanent. No normal or magical healing short of a *cure disease* or *heal* spell will cure this terrible affliction.

fight seems to constantly glisten, be extremely wary of touching the moisture—lest you contract this dread affliction!

Energy Drain

This is one of many golem abilities that instill weakness and terror in those who face the creature. A golem with such a draining power weakens the victim by touch. The loss reflects a waning of the victim's spirit more than any diminished physical capacity. Yet this touch can be so devastating that the victim never fully recovers from the onslaught. Perhaps he will fall prey to illness more easily in the future, or simply feel a lack of energy and vibrancy. With hard work and tremendous discipline, however, much of the results of this touch can be relieved—as I well know from my own experience.

When the golem touches its victim, it can drain 1d6 hit points. There is no saving throw against this effect. Through both normal or magical healing, the victim can recover half the lost hit points (rounded down). Remaining hit points are permanently lost. The golem can use this ability up to 3 times a day.

SECTION, THE THIRD:

Hyper-Regeneration

I have watched in horror as golems that were supposedly killed only minutes before have risen anew, in perfect health, to strike again. I can only assume that certain golems possess some sort of survival reflex, which causes a sudden upswing in their already rapid regenerative abilities. Thank the gods the monsters do not seem capable of this sort of healing at will; it only seems to occur after the creature is felled.

If what I surmise about golems is true, at least some of these creatures have a unique ability to "hyper-regenerate." This phenomenon might be best likened to our own bodies' ability to produce a sudden surge of adrenaline in a time of great stress. These surges can, at times, be so profound they enable us to perform heroic feats normally outside our capability. A young mother, for example, who otherwise struggles to carry a load of firewood, may heft a massive tree trunk if it has fallen and trapped her child.

Certain monks and other ascetics can learn, through rigorous training, to control their adrenaline surges and

This accelerated rate of regeneration occurs when the golem's hit points drop below 0. At this point the regeneration rate rises to 10 points per round, and lasts until the golem is fully healed. The golem may rise at any time during this process (once its hit points are above 0); however, the creature usually waits until it has fully recovered before doing so.

Hyper-regeneration is one of the abilities that can be used for maximum scare effect on players. There is nothing more frightening than having the monster you just "killed" stand up in perfect condition a few moments later!

other physiological changes. However, I have neither seen nor heard of a golem able to do the same with its regenerative fail-safe. Pray to the gods that this is always the case. A golem with such abilities under its conscious control would be nigh onto unstoppable.

Spell-like Abilities

No golem can cast spells. However, the "stench of decay" described below is a prominent example of a spell-like ability—an extraordinary ability which mimics a particular wizard spell. It is only one of many, in a category that varies greatly in scope. Other possible spell-like abilities—those of which I am currently aware—are detailed below. Typically, an individual creature will boast only one or two such powers. Further, the golem cannot use a spell-like power as often as it pleases; three uses per day is the usual maximum, though some are limited to just one occurrence.

I believe such powers reflect the particular creator's skewed desires or obsessions. For instance, I have heard tell of a golem who could cause darkness on even the brightest of sunlit days. Its creator apparently had a pathological fear of the dark. Additionally, I once read of a golem whose creator longed to be taken seriously by those who mocked him. The golem he later constructed could cause those who gazed upon it to

A golem's spell-like abilities can mimic any of a number of 1st- to 3rd-level wizard spells. The DM should feel free to choose any such ability that seems fitting for a golem of his or her own design. Though Van Richten suggests a maximum of three uses, that is exceptional. As a rule, a golem should be able to use any spell-like ability only once per day.

begin laughing uncontrollably for minutes on end. Of course, this was not the laughter of harmless amusement—rather the racking, gasping sounds of a victim barely able to breathe due to the terrible laughter arising from his own throat.

It seems that a particular golem's extraordinary or unique abilities are more often than not mockeries of the creator's true desires. Ironic, is it not?

Stench of Decay

Cyrilla, the Vistani woman whose story I related earlier in this volume, told of the clay golem Vassa having a terrible odor. The stench was enough to make Cyrilla's eyes water, and she told me it was difficult to breathe while close to the golem. Cyrilla described the odor as a stench of decay, and I believe this to be an appropriate description.

When fighting a golem with such a stench it is wise to wrap a perfumed cloth about your nose and mouth; this can lessen the distracting and debilitating effects of the stench.

When faced with such a stench, victims are allowed a saving throw vs. poison. Those who fail are affected as per the 2nd-level wizard spell *stinking cloud*.

Transferable Telepathy

As is described earlier in this chapter, all golems born of obsession have a profound telepathic link with their creator. This link is so deep that it allows the golem to know the creator better than he knows himself, sensing his deepest fears and desires. It also allows the golem to speak into the creator's mind at will.

The information I am about to relate stems from an extremely old tale, and I was unable to verify the source. Nonetheless, I find the possibility it presents so disturbing that I cannot in all good conscience ignore it. The fragmented tale describes a

A golem with this ability can sequentially use its power of specific telepathy. Once a golem connects to a new individual, it cannot simply decide to drop the link, however. The only way for the link to end is through death—either the golem's or its victim's.

golem that could transfer its telepathic ability. Once the creature's creator was dead, it found another parental figure to latch onto! Of course, this unwitting individual failed to meet the golem's expectations, and he, too, met with a violent end.

According to the story, once the golem became linked to an individual, it would begin speaking into the poor victim's mind, causing that person to believe he was losing his sanity. Eventually, the link ended with the death of the new "parent," so being chosen by this golem was, in essence, a death sentence for the unsuspecting victim. How the golem chose its victims is uncertain.

Unusual Powers from Odd Parts

Flesh golems may also gain special abilities from unusual parts used in their construction. Whether from ego or as a result of twisted obsessions that



SECTION, THE THIRD:

For DMs constructing a unique golem, peculiar body parts offer nearly boundless possibilities. The powers arising from such parts can truly surprise and frighten players. Below are several examples of the abilities which flesh golems might gain from exotic parts.

Gargoyle Wings: These wings allow the golem to fly at a rate of 15 (D or E). Additionally, the golem appears even more terrible, causing a -1 penalty to any fear checks made in its presence.

Monkey's Tail: This prehensile tail enables the golem to swing from tree limb to tree limb at a rate of 12.

Giant Scorpion's Tail: This tail gives the golem an additional attack. If the attack hits, it causes 1d4 points of damage and the victim must successfully save vs. poison or lose an additional 2d4 hit points. The venom of the golem's tail can be used only three times a day.

Mage's Brain: A golem with a mage's brain can cast one 1st-level spell per day. This is a variation on (or rationale for) the spell-like abilities of some golems.

Basilisk's Eyes: These eyes do not grant the golem the ability to petrify its opponents. However, they do manage to force anyone looking at the golem's face to successfully save vs. paralyzation or be unable to attack for one round due to a sudden, short-lived paralysis.

Blood of a Cheetah: This blood allows the golem to triple its movement rate for 1d4 rounds. This ability is usable once per day.

we cannot begin to comprehend, some creators choose to assemble their golems from a variety of human, demihuman, animal, and even monstrous body parts—until the result makes an already startling creature truly bizarre.

We were just bringing in the day's catch, and I remember spotting a particularly fine halibut in the net when the thing swooped down on us. At first I thought maybe it was one of those gargoyle things, but it didn't look like any gargoyle I'd ever seen. What it looked like was a nightmare come to life.

It's funny, but I can hardly seem to remember its face. What I remember best is the smell of the brine and the rush of the wind, and poor Neddie-boy's wide-open eyes right before it took him. I mean, the thing just snatched him up right out of the boat. Then it flew higher and higher. It had leathery wings, and its body was like something one of my kids would have stuck together. You know, like a doll made from the wrong-sized parts. I don't even know why it took Neddie. I mean—it wasn't for food. And it didn't even seem to want him. It just flew up high and then dropped him onto a rock—like it had been some kind of experiment or something! Then it flew off. Neddie sure didn't deserve that. . . Heck, nobody does.

—Account of an anonymous fisherman

It is essential for the golem hunter to be able to accurately predict the abilities of the foe from an analysis of its appearance. To aid in this effort, the abilities derived from a representative sampling of the innumerable possible body parts are

discussed below. Bear in mind that these examples barely scratch the surface of possible golem anatomy, and recall that it is always better to overestimate than to underestimate your foe!

Limbs. Both the number and the type of limbs that the creator attaches to a golem affect its powers and capabilities. This is particularly true of limbs that offered the "original owner" special abilities or provided modes of travel. For example, I have heard rumors of a peculiar creature inhabiting the jungles of Sri Raji. If the reports are accurate, the creature primarily travels by brachiating—that is, by swinging from tree limb to tree limb—through use of its long forelimbs, at an exceedingly rapid rate. These unusual limbs, presumably taken from some primate, grant the golem the power to utilize this swift and silent means of travel, and to attack its victims from above with little if any warning. Apparently, the creature even boasts a prehensile tail with which it hangs from above!

The potential combinations are almost boundless. I know of at least two tales of a golem with the wings of a giant eagle—these golems could fly. If a golem flies, we can assume this ability has a dramatic effect on the monster's choice of lair. Unfortunately, it also hinders our ability to both locate and destroy such a creature.

A golem with the body of a horse would move extremely rapidly and have the advantage of powerful rear-hoof attacks as well. Readers who use their imaginations can surely come up with a number of other possible abilities as well. What is important is that the hunter always attempt to remain open and flexible in his thinking about golem abilities.

Sensory Organs. A creator often chooses to use eyes, ears, or other sensory organs from nonhuman sources for reasons other than aesthetics. Those delicately shaped elf

eyes which "grace" the golem's brow grant the golem not only visual acuity but the ability to see into the infrared spectrum as well. The use of ears from species with exceptionally keen hearing grant that same sharpness to the golem.

A golem that once dwelled near Dervich was reputed to have tracked its prey by scent, with the aid of the bloodhound's snout grafted to its humanoid countenance. The hunter should always assume that the golem's senses are far keener than his own.

Other Body Parts. In addition to these relatively mundane organs and limbs, many fantastical appendages could be attached to the golem. Astonby of the Oaks once wrote of his encounter with a flesh golem equipped with the eyes of a giant fly and the stinger of a giant scorpion. These appendages gave the golem a nearly 360-degree range of vision, as well as an additional poisoned attack. I've also heard of a golem with the tongue of a giant frog. Apparently, the golem used the tongue to snag small prey, which it then proceeded to ravage. It also used the tongue to gain a stranglehold on larger victims.

While the list could continue indefinitely, these examples provide the reader with a good idea of the range of physical combinations possible among the Created. I find it ironic that a mad scientist might labor year after year, performing countless dissections in his quest for knowledge concerning life, then ultimately stitch together a creature about whose abilities he knows almost nothing. Indeed, many creators die at the moment they first glimpse the true potential of the golem—at the moment their creation turns against them and strikes them down.

SECTION, THE THIRD:

The untaught peasant beheld the elements around him, and was acquainted with their practical purposes. The most learned philosopher knew little more. He had partially unveiled the face of Nature, but her immortal lineaments were still a wonder and a mystery.

—Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *Frankenstein*

CHAPTER FOUR: UNUSUAL MATERIALS



In this chapter I shall discuss those rare creatures made of substances other than flesh. I have reliable information that each of the materials herein has been used in the construction of at least one golem. In some cases, I can provide firsthand information. In others, I can only provide secondhand information and my own hypotheses.

Although I cannot be entirely certain of these secondhand sources, I firmly believe it is better to err by offering the reader some potentially false or misleading information. It would be tragically irresponsible of me to hold back some information just because I believe it may hold relatively little merit or even be entirely specious. I will not make for you a decision on which your very life, and the lives of your companions, may rest.

That said, let us begin our examination.

Bone

One might imagine that a bone golem is simple to assemble; bone is quite easy to obtain, after all, and it does not degrade as swiftly as flesh. However, while a flesh golem can be constructed from the dead, a bone golem must be fashioned from the *undead* (or bones formerly so). By all accounts, bone golems are only viable when constructed from once-animate

skeletons that have been defeated in combat. Further, at least ten different skeletons must be combined to create the monster. I cannot say what necessitates such measures; I only know that without them, the would-be creator is unable to fashion a thing as powerful as a golem.

Bone has a number of drawbacks when compared to flesh (which, of course, might be viewed as advantages by a golem hunter). First, this material is not as adaptable or resilient. Thus, bone golems do not appear to have the same level of regenerative ability as do flesh golems. Second, I believe that bone may actually become somewhat brittle over time, which suggests a susceptibility to shattering attacks.

A devoted golem hunter and adventurer of my acquaintance, Hataras the Quiet, has noted that blunt weapons seem to have a far greater effect on golems constructed of bone



This chapter describes golems created by obsessive nonplayer characters (NPCs) in Ravenloft. As such, they should be rare and unique, like the characters who fashioned them.

These unusual creatures do not necessarily match the descriptions in the *MONSTROUS MANUAL* tome or the *RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM* appendices. For example, the golem made of metal as described below does not precisely match the description of the iron golem in the *MONSTROUS MANUAL* book, though strong similarities remain. Further, only a priest of good alignment can create the common clay golem. In contrast, the monster presented here might be the creation of a mad sculptor who fashioned his vision of the perfect woman, and then brought his sculpture to life.

Note that basic ability scores are given for each of the golem types in this chapter. These are *base scores* only. The DM is encouraged to modify scores as she sees fit, depending on the specific type of stone used in a stone golem, the pattern of glass used in a glass golem, type of wood, and so forth.

Potential strengths and vulnerabilities of each type of golem

are also mentioned. The list is by no means exhaustive. In particular, any golem could boast one or two of the extraordinary abilities listed in the previous chapter (the only exception being an ability based on the use of flesh, of course). Further, a golem might be subject to an unusual *zeitgeber* (see page 225), and be vulnerable to a particular blessed weapon. As always, you should feel free to create unique golems and adjust the experience point totals accordingly. Match your golem to the idiosyncrasies of its maker, using the suggestions in this chapter as examples of the wide range of possibilities.

Note that any material-specific strengths and weaknesses listed in this chapter are in addition the features common to *all* golems, which can be summed up as follows:

- Can only be struck by an enchanted weapon (+2 or better for every golem noted except straw and flesh)
- Immune to toxins and disease
- Immune to mind- and life-affecting spells
- Gain a +4 bonus to saving throws against physical damage
- Do not age or breathe

than do swords and other slashing weapons. This makes sense, as most skeletal creatures are not particularly susceptible to slashing or piercing attacks.

Clay

Clay can be found within many riverbanks and cliff sides throughout many lands. Normally, this material is used in the construction of pots, urns, and other items of great use to all. Unfortunately, this pliant material can also be formed into the body of a golem.

When used in the creation of golems, clay provides a strong, solid body. Several years ago, while battling a clay golem in the fens near Rivalis in the West, I and my companions were horrified to discover that traditional weapons have little effect upon the soft clay. Our swords and maces appeared to damage the golem not one whit. Fortunately for us, Antalya, our mage, used several fire-based spells on the creature. Although the flames themselves did little damage to the monstrosity, the heat from the fires apparently hardened the clay such that

SECTION, THE THIRD:

Only a weapon of +2 or greater enchantment can hit bone golems. When struck, a golem has a 10% chance to trap the weapon within its rib cage. An opponent must make a successful bend bars check to withdraw the weapon.

Like skeletons, these golems suffer only half damage from edged or piercing weapons. However, a *shatter* spell makes a bone golem more vulnerable; for three rounds the spell is cast, damage suffered from weapon attacks doubles. (Thus, edged weapons cause full damage, while blunt weapons cause double.) The golem is allowed a save vs. spell to avoid this effect.

Bone golems are immune to cold but vulnerable to fire. They regenerate at only half the normal rate from fire attacks, so a golem with a Constitution of 20 would regenerate 1 hit point of fire damage every 12 turns.

Bone golems animated by powerful wizards can emit a laugh so horrifying it prompts both fear and horror checks. Failing one check causes *paralyzation* for 2–12 rounds; failing both causes death. Most bone golems animated through obsession can also emit such a laugh. However, the creatures described in the RAVENLOFT MC appendices to the use this ability once every three rounds. Those animated through obsession are limited to three uses per day. Ironically, this can make them more powerful in combat, since they can use the power in consecutive rounds.

Golem, Bone: AL N; AC 0; MV 12; HD 14; THAC0 7; #AT 1; Dmg 3d8; SA see above; SD see above; MR Nil; SZ M; ML Fearless (20); XP 18,000. Str 19; Dex 18; Con 20; Int 12; Wis 2; Cha 3.

The clay golems outlined in THE MONSTROUS MANUAL tome are

fashioned by lawful good priests. They are clumsy and unintelligent, and they may become rampaging berserkers should they break free of their masters' control. But a golem molded from clay by an obsessed creator can differ markedly, for it is given life and intelligence by the mysterious powers of Ravenloft.

Only blunt weapons of +2 or better enchantment can strike a Ravenloft clay golem. Due to the pliant nature of its body, the creature normally takes half damage from all weapons. On an attack roll of 20, the golem can envelop an opponent, inflicting 1d6 points of damage per round. Only a successful bend bars roll will free the victim. (If it should suit the creator, an unusual clay golem might also elongate its limbs, enabling it to attack opponents up to 20 feet distant.)

Ravenloft clay golems take full damage from both heat- and cold-based spells. These magic spells make the flesh somewhat brittle. For three rounds following such an attack, the clay golem takes *full* damage from all weapons of +2 or greater enchantment.

Like any clay golem, a Ravenloft creation can be driven back 120 feet by a *move earth* spell, suffering 3–12 (3d12) points of damage. *Disintegrate* slows the creature for 1–6 rounds and causes 1–12 (1d12) points of damage. An *earthquake* spell focused on the creature can halt it for a turn and inflict 5–50 (5d10) points of damage.

After a round of combat, a clay golem can cast *haste* on itself for 3 rounds. It can do this once per day.

Golem, Clay: AL N; AC 7; MV 7; HD 11; THAC0 9; #AT 1; Dmg 3d10; SA hug; SD +2 or better weapon to hit; MR Nil; SZ L; ML Fearless (20); XP 11,000. Str 20; Dex 16; Con 20; Int 10; Wis 2; Cha 5.

the creature's flesh did not dissipate the force of our physical attacks.

Setting to work with renewed vigor, we managed to shatter the golem. Our stalwart fighter, Porren, was still celebrating his shattering blow when I first noticed the clay begin to soften and reform. Several members of our group were greatly injured at the time, so we decided it to be the better part of valor to retreat and plan our strategy anew. Unfortunately, we could not again find the Golem of the Fens, as locals call it, again. For all I know it is still wandering those very fens to this day.

Glass

According to some sages I have consulted, a powerful wizard or priest might fashion a golem out of stained glass. Such creatures take the form of a knight wielding a deadly sword. While I have never encountered such a monster personally, I have seen evidence of another unique creature of the same material, which was clearly the result of its maker's obsession.

When I began my quest to thwart evil long ago, I heard several legends

about a terrifying "lady of glass." I never found any reliable evidence, however, so I discounted such tales as mere fancy. That was before I discovered a firsthand account of precisely such a golem, purely by accident.

I was visiting a remote monastery in Darkon to learn more about liches—those dreadful, undead mages. The monks had graciously consented to give me access to their old records. While the information I sought eluded me, I did discover an intriguing letter among some faded documents. It told of a master glass craftsman with a burning hatred for priests. Thus did I uncover the following description of a lovely golem made of glass.

... and thus we ended the holy service consecrating our new chapel to our most wondrous and revered Lady of the Solemn Vows. What happened next was so foul, so horrid, that my hand quavers even as I write to you, my lord. I beg you to forgive this failing, but I have slept little since that dreadful dawn, and I can still see the terrifying beauty of the thing in my mind's eye.

As I described to you in some detail in my previous missive, the entire front

The **MONSTROUS MANUAL** book introduces a golem of stained glass, which takes the form of a knight and can be fashioned by high-level priests and wizards. Like such golems, the glass golem born of obsession can unleash a *prismatic spray* (see the spell in the *Player's Handbook*) once every 3 rounds. Additionally, such a glass golem may be able to focus a burning ray through its body at targets up to 100 feet distant, causing 3d8 points of damage. A successful saving throw vs. paralysis halves this damage. The burning ray attack can be used only once per day, and the golem must be exposed to direct sunlight.

Regardless of their origin, only blunt weapons of +2 or greater enchantment can strike glass golems. Due to their relative fragility, glass golems suffer double damage from such attacks. Additionally, a *shatter* spell weakens them to the point where melee attacks have a percentage chance equal to twice the points of damage inflicted of instantly slaying the golem.

Golem, Glass: AL N; AC 4; MV 12; HD 9; THAC0 11; #AT 1; Dmg 2d12; SA see above; SD +2 or better weapon to hit; MR Nil; SZ M; ML 20; XP 6,000. Str 18; Dex 17; Con 20; Int 12; Wis 2; Cha 12.

SECTION, THE THIRD:

Unusual metallic golems can only be struck by weapons of +2 enchantment or better. (Only +3 or greater weapons can strike iron golems. See the *MONSTROUS MANUAL* tome for details.) All magical weapons inflict only 2 points of damage to the metallic monster created through obsession, not including strength and magical bonuses. Fire does not normally damage metal golems. (In fact, for the common iron golem, magical fire actually heals 1 hit point per Hit Die of damage; DMs may wish to adapt

this ability for other metal golems, too.)

Metal golems are incapable of *hyper-regeneration*. Additionally, electrical attacks *slow* such creatures for 3 rounds. If the creature is struck by an electrical attack while touching water, triple damage is incurred.

Golem, Metal: AL N; AC 3; MV 6; HD 18; THACO 3; #AT 1; Dmg 4d10; SA Nil; SD +2 or better to hit; MR Nil; SZ L; ML 20; XP 15,000. Str 24; Dex 17; Con 20; Int 9; Wis 2; Cha 7.

wall of the new edifice was a paean to our serene Lady, She of the True Word. It was built entirely of glass by a single craftsman who worked ceaselessly to finish his masterpiece, forgoing even sleep. As the last notes of music faded to quiet that fateful morn, the dawn's light touched the wall of glass. The colors were dazzling, and I wept at the beauty I had been blessed to see. Now I wish that same beauty had blinded me, as then I would not have seen the deaths of so many good folk!

Seconds after the chapel was suffused by the colored light, the image of our Lady, some twenty feet in height, broke away from the wall and began her attack. Some of us cast ourselves to the ground, certain we had trespassed against our goddess in some manner.

But I saw the tiny form of the craftsman standing in the doorway—his face red, yellow, and green in the reflected light. Such an expression! His face was suffused with such twisted hatred that I could not bear to look on it, any more than on the violent deaths of so many of my fellows. I am ashamed to admit I fled in the face of such horror, but . . .

The tale of the golem ends there. I believe this to be a fairly accurate account. The chapel itself was surely destroyed in the attack. Although I

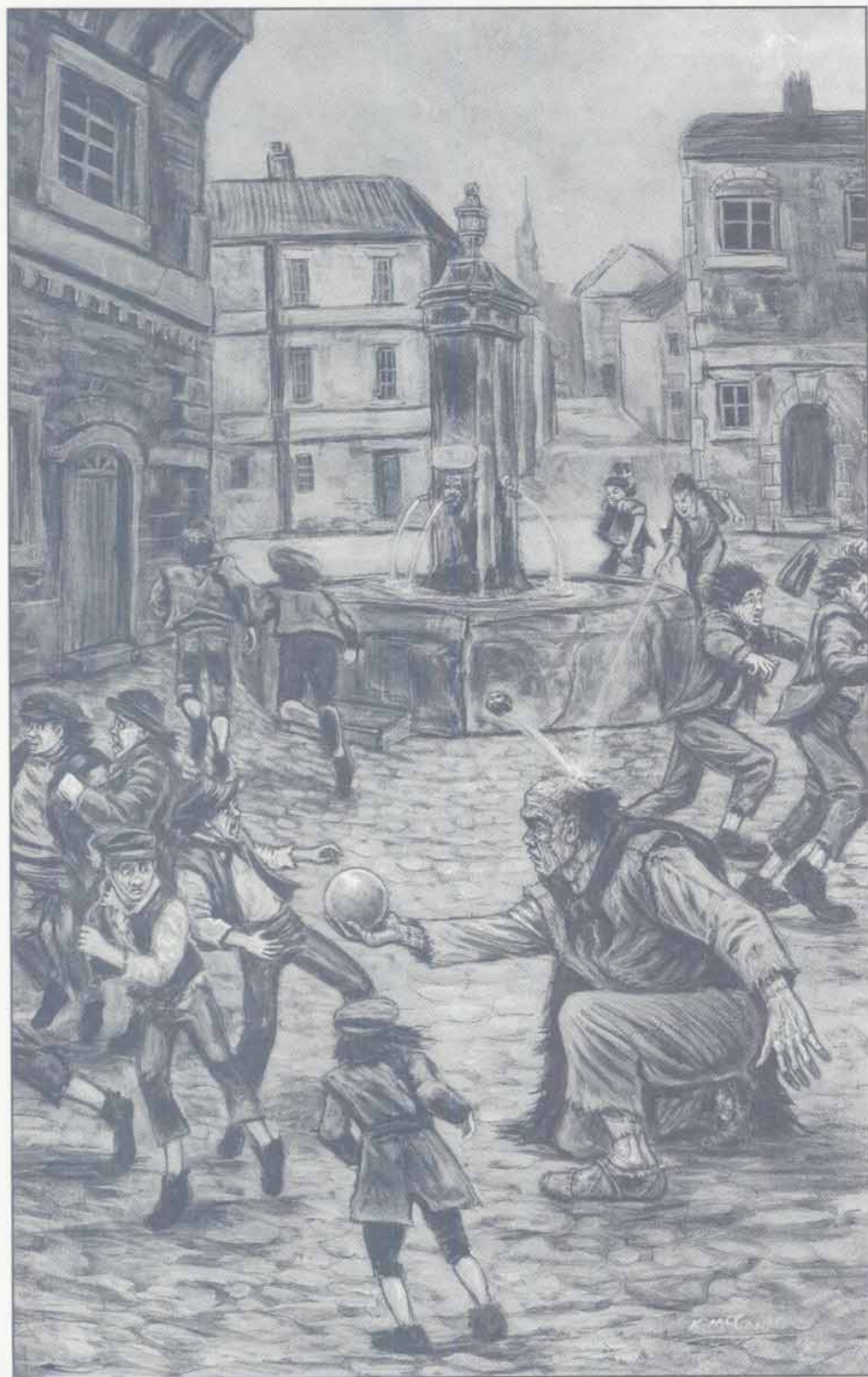
have been unable to find its exact location, I believe it may have once stood in what is now the Mount Nirka region of Darkon. It is probable that the golem is yet in existence to this very day, as there was a report of just such a creature being sighted no more than twenty years ago.

Although information is minimal, I would think it likely any golem of glass would favor slashing attacks. It might also be able to use certain properties of glass to its advantage, such as heat conduction and the like.

Metal

I have heard tales of golems made of iron, though I have never faced one. Presumably, almost any metal could be used. Yet the difficulty in procuring enough of a particular metal and then working it into a suitable form is prohibitive for most individuals. Thus, metallic golems are among the rarest of all.

It is fortunate, indeed, that the above is true, for it would seem plausible that a golem constructed of metal would be so tough as to be nigh unto indestructible. However, the former supposition may also imply that these golems are not as easily reanimated as the golems fashioned from other materials.



SECTION, THE THIRD:

Only weapons of +2 or better enchantment can strike a stone golem born of obsession in Ravenloft. Further, slashing and piercing weapons cause only 1 hit point of damage, not including strength and magical bonuses. Unusual golems constructed from slate or other brittle stone take double damage from magical bludgeoning attacks.

Like any common stone golem, up to three times per day the golem born of *obsession* can use *slow* on its opponents. Stone golems built from igneous rock inflict an additional 1d8 points of damage per attack due to the stone's jagged edges.

If you are ever so unfortunate as to face a metallic foe, I would advise relying on cleverness and trickery, as opposed to brutish physical assaults, to defeat your unnatural foe.

Stone

This material suffers much the same strengths and weaknesses of metal mentioned above. However, if the constructor is both patient and skilled, stone is often a far less costly material with which to work.

According to the noted dwarven scholar Abordicus Slategrinder, several appearances of stone golems have been recorded in his homeland of Dubkelheit in Lamordia. Abordicus describes these golems as extremely slow, methodical, and almost invulnerable. Indeed, when faced with stone golem bent on their destruction, one dwarven clan became so desperate they triggered an avalanche to bury the creature. In the process, over half their town was destroyed.

Golem hunters must sometimes take such extreme measures to rid the world of the Created.

A *rock to mud* spell slows the stone golem for 2d6 rounds. (The reverse, *mud to rock*, heals all damage!) A *stone to flesh* spell makes the golem vulnerable to all normal attacks during the next round—excluding spell effects that do not involve the loss of hit points.

Golem, Stone: AL N; AC 5; MV 6; HD 14; THAC0 7; #AT 1; Dmg 3d8; SA slows opponent; SD see above; MR Nil; SZ L; ML Fearless (20); XP 9,000. Str 22; Dex 17; Con 20; Int 9; Wis 2; Cha 8.

Straw

Though magically animated scarecrows have been known to stagger through the countryside, bent on murder, straw is rarely employed in the construction of an intelligent golem. When such a material is used, it is always due to its peculiar significance to the creator.

I have heard of one such occurrence of a straw golem, however. The halfling farmers residing near Delagia in



THE CREATED

Darkon have long believed that an intelligent creature made entirely of straw wanders the plowed fields of their countryside. As legend has it, a farmer by the name of Casdin refused to pay the taxes required of him by local law. After months of this flagrantly illegal behavior, the governor sent several members of the local guard to either collect the monies due or take Casdin into custody. The men disappeared.

A larger group was immediately dispatched to apprehend the farmer, now suspected of the far greater crime of murder. Casdin reportedly went quietly, insisting all the while the men had never reached his establishment. This seemed unlikely, and Casdin was placed in a cell in the guardhouse for the night. That very night both the men guarding Casdin, the governor, and the farmer himself disappeared.

Enraged, the governor's lieutenant sent the captain of the guard and ten of his men to retake Casdin. When the group reached Casdin's farmhouse, they discovered it had burned to the ground. The acrid scent of burning

flesh drew the guards to the barn, which was untouched by the fire. Within lay the body of Casdin, burned but still recognizable. His fists, cut and scraped, were tightly clutching a bunch of straw.

Though they were reluctant to unbar their door, the neighboring family was questioned later that day. They described what they had seen: a scarecrow carrying Casdin's limp form from his burning home. The creature's straw head was wreathed in flames as it headed into the barn, where Casdin's body was eventually found.

Later, it was also noted that several pieces of straw were found in the governor's bedroom. No other similarity linked the missing governor to the charred corpse of Casdin.

To this day, local farmers refuse to place scarecrows in their fields, lest Casdin's creature take umbrage and burn their own fields and homes to the ground.

As I noted at the onset of this section, the golem I have just described is not a magically animated scarecrow. The golem is a vastly superior opponent. To distinguish

The creature outlined here should not be confused with the scarecrow described in the first RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM appendix (even though the scarecrow is classed as a relatively weak form of golem in the MONSTROUS MANUAL tome). The straw golem born of obsession is immune to all fire-based attacks. It can summon a flock of ravens, which will attack the golem's opponents. The ravens surround the golem's opponents, blinding and pecking at them. These golems also have a 90% chance to surprise opponents when hiding in a field or similar environment.

Weapons of +1 or greater enchantment are needed to hit a straw golem. (Note that most golems given life by the mysterious powers of Ravenloft are immune to +1 weapons; the straw golem is weaker.) Magical edged weapons cause double damage to these golems. Additionally, if a straw golem is hit by water, it is slowed for 3 rounds (as per the spell).

Golem; Straw: AL N; AC 5; MV 12; HD 9; THAC0 11; #AT 2; Dmg 2d6/2d6; SA raven flock; SD immune to fire, +1 or better weapon to hit; MR Nil; SZ M; ML 20; XP 3,000. Str 18; Dex 19; Con 20; Int 12; Wis 2; Cha 6.

SECTION, THE THIRD:

The wood golem introduced here is not the Ravenloft doll golem. The latter creature is a toy that may or may not be made of wood. (Most doll golems, in fact, are stuffed animals or dolls of mixed materials.)

Wood golems do not bite or cause their victims to laugh uncontrollably, as doll golems can. However, the creatures do boast an unusual splintering attack. By smashing a limb against a solid object, a wood golem can cause 1d4 large splinters to fly from its body (range 10 feet). If a splinter hits its target, it burrows into the flesh, causing 1d4 points of damage per round until removed. Further, unlike doll golems, wood golems are not *slowed* by the *warp wood* spell. In fact, the creatures can themselves *warp wood*, three times per day.

Most wood golems can only be struck by weapons of +2 or better enchantment. If the golem is constructed of petrified wood, however, a +3 weapon or better is required. Magical fire attacks cause double damage. Additionally, these golems suffer twice the usual amount of damage from magically summoned insects (*summon swarm*, for example). Golems made from ironwood are *slowed* for 3 rounds by electrical attacks.

Golem, Wood: AL N; AC 6; MV 12; HD 12; THAC0 8; #AT 2; Dmg 2d8/2d8; SA splinters: SD +2 or better weapon to hit; MR Nil; SZ M; ML 20; XP 6,000. Str 19; Dex 18; Con 20; Int 9; Wis 2; Cha 7.

which foe you've encountered, I suggest you examine the head. In all likelihood, the straw golem born of obsession will be constructed solely of straw, though the material may be stuffed into clothing. In contrast, the evil scarecrow's head will almost assuredly be a pumpkin or gourd. Truth surely is stranger than fiction, is it not?

Wood

The time-honored skill of woodcarving continues to be a common practice in villages and towns throughout the land. Most carvers use this skill to create items ranging from the most practical of bowls to the most fanciful of sculptures. Unfortunately, I have heard that some carvers have turned this same skill toward the creation of wood golems.

Although wood golems tend to be smaller in stature than most, they are still vicious opponents and should not be discounted in combat. Some wood golems are said to have a painful splintering attack in which they drive

wickedly pointed shards of wood into the victim's flesh. The shards supposedly work inward, towards the victim's heart, inflicting additional damage upon the sufferer.

Compilers' Note: Since Dr. Van Richten wrote the above text, he continued to collect stories regarding golems made of other, unusual materials. Since his disappearance, we have collated these sparse notes into the following list. We have not, yet, been able to determine the degree of truth behind these "new" creatures, thus at present, we have no concrete details on the gargoyle, doll, zombie, or mechanical golem.

LWF

All four of these golem types can be found in the collected **MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM®** Appendices I & II (TSR #02162).

The young priestess Irena was too naive for her own good. In an effort to understand the creature's torment, she attempted to look into its mind. 'Twas then, I believe, that she began to lose her own. Of course, when the object of her pity used its hideous claws to pluck out her lover's heart, her miserable fate was sealed.

—Fragment of a diary

CHAPTER FIVE: GOLEMS & MAGIC



The magical abilities of golems are as diverse as the creatures themselves. Further, there is much variation in the effect that magic has upon them—so much so that I hesitate to put forth my observations on the subject, lest my words be taken as fact. Thus, the information in this section should be viewed as educated assumptions, studied estimation, and cautious advice.

Magical Powers

While some golems have innate abilities that mimic certain spells (see Chapter Three), I have never heard of a golem that could actually cast a spell of any kind. What an unspeakable horror such a creature would be! Fortunately, the Created seem physically and mentally incapable of the complex manipulation of magical energies performed by wizards and priests. True, golems can be extremely cunning in their thinking. Nevertheless, their brains lack the necessary flexibility, if you will, as well as the high levels of reasoning required to properly channel mystical forces.

Some sages have presented a second theory to account for this lack of spellcasting ability. This theory holds that the same energies which imbue life and superhuman strength in the golem's body actually

“overcharge” the delicate parts of the brain and body which allow a mage to channel and weave magic.

Regardless of which theory (if either) is valid—or if, as I believe, some combination of the two is the cause—I feel it is safe to state that golems do not cast spells. However, as I have noted, a number of golems do exhibit certain limited spell-like powers, such as the ability to slow their opponents or cause paralyzing fear. Normally a golem will only have one or at most two of such abilities, if indeed it has any at all. Still, a pessimistic attitude is probably best when considering the various abilities of such diverse creatures.

On that note, I shall turn the tables on the golem, and discuss the possible effects that spells cast by would-be golem hunters may have upon it. Be certain that any spellcasters of your acquaintance are aware of this information, for it may prove vital in



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Whatever their construction, golems are immune to spells affecting the mind (*charm, sleep, hold, etc.*). They are also immune to spells affecting the respiratory system and other life functions that are alien to golems. Exceptions are noted in appropriate MONSTROUS MANUAL entries. Remember that all members of the Created gain a +4 saving throw bonus against any spell causing physical damage.

keeping you and your companions alive. Thanks for much of this material are due to several mages and priests—brave folk who generously shared their expertise in hope of aiding others embroiled in the war against evil.

Spell Effects

Due to the impenetrable nature of their minds and bodies, golems are immune to many spells. In particular, they resist all efforts to bend their will; they cannot be charmed or lulled to sleep. As they do not need to breathe, they cannot be harmed by magic affecting the respiratory system. And since they do not age, they are immune to most life-altering spells, including those which ordinarily cause disease. Finally, they sustain far less damage in combat than we mortals do, and are completely immune to cold-based and electrical spell attacks.

Nonetheless, magic is one of the foremost weapons in the golem hunter's arsenal. Certain familiar spells have particularly devastating results when used against the Created.

In the following section, I shall discuss selected spells that function in perhaps unexpected ways (or not at all) when applied to the Created.

Wizard Spells

It seems that "heavy duty" spells, especially flame-based castings, offer

the most certain means of damaging the Created. However, spells should always be selected with care; the best magical arsenal includes a broad range of physically damaging effects.

The reasons for the caution above by now may seem obvious, but I would rather repeat myself than gloss over important information too readily. *All golems are different.* Although the details I shall impart here are given in good faith, dear reader, and seem to be generally true, this by no means indicates that the golem you face will not have capabilities, defenses, and even vulnerabilities different from those I explicate herein. Simply put, when faced with a specific threat, generalities do not make the strongest of shields.

Illusion/Phantasm: Magic spells relying directly on tricking the mind normally do not work on the Created. So spells such as *hypnotic pattern, spook*, and the like are utterly worthless against these foes. However, illusions that affect an area and are not cast directly upon the mind of the golem (*phantasmal force* or *phantasmal killer*, for example) do fool the Created.

Another exception to this rule seems to be spells causing *invisibility*. Although it is not exactly clear why such magic spells are effective against the Created when other illusions are not, I theorize that these spells in some way physically act upon the subject turned invisible, not the mind of the viewer. Or it may be—as the great mage Hermaine Gingold suggests—that the *invisibility* spell acts as a filter, physically enveloping the invisible subject and directing the viewer's attention around and away from it. Whatever the truth, golems cannot see invisible opponents any better than we do ourselves—which is to say, not at all.

Charm Spells: As with the illusion spells above, charm spells such as *sleep, hold monster, charm monster,*

and the like rely on affecting the mind of the subject, and thus are useless against the golem. The minds of the Created seem impervious to all forms of mental manipulation.

Animate Dead: This spell does not affect the Created.

Contagion: Golems are not subject to disease of any kind; hence, this spell has no effect.

Detect Magic: Given their extraordinary powers, golems are often described as magical. However, the Created do not appear to be magical creations in the sense that enchanted weapons, caryatid columns, or such are magical. The nature of such items and "created" creatures is readily monitored when a wizard uses a *detect magic* spell. Most golems are not detectable by such a spell. I have only heard of one or two cases in which a golem was successfully spotted in this manner, and even then I am unsure as to whether the "golems" in these instances were true members of the Created. In any event, the wise hunter will not count on such devices to ferret out his quarry.

Unlike ordinary golems created by mages and priests through the use of spells and manuals, the golems born of obsession are *not* detectable by the *detect magic* spell.

Dispel Magic: Although this spell works admirably with some few golems, in general it has no effect. The only golems who are "stunned" by this spell are the relatively stupid automatons created by mages and priests. However, such creatures are not the proper subject of this work.

ESP: This spell does not seem to work on golems. Additionally, I have seen mages faint with horror when making the attempt to contact such an alien and evil mind as that of the Created.

A wizard who attempts to use *ESP* on a golem must immediately make a horror check due to the incomprehensibly evil and frightening thought patterns. In any case, the caster will never receive useful information from the contact.

Irritation: This spell has no effect on golems.

Move Earth: If my research is reliable, this spell harms most clay golems. Other golems are unaffected.

Move earth inflicts 4d10 points of damage upon a clay golem. A successful saving throw halves damage.

Polymorph Other: To my knowledge, no wizard has ever successfully used this spell against a member of the Created. Even flesh golems are immune; it appears they lack the necessary qualities of the normal, living beings who are susceptible.

Protection from Evil: This spell does seem to offer some protection against the Created. However, as they are not summoned creatures, it does not keep them at bay.

When attacking a character who enjoys such magical protection from evil, golems suffer a -2 attack roll penalty. Further, the protected character receives a +2 to all saving throws against the golem's attacks. However, once the character attacks the golem, the protection is lost.

Protection from Evil, 10-Foot Radius: This spell functions under the same restrictions as its counterpart (see above).

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Reincarnation: Unfortunately, the spirit within the golem is too twisted and warped, or perhaps simply too trapped, to be removed from the golem body by this spell's force.

Stinking Cloud: This spell does not affect the Created.

Stone to Flesh: This spell can turn a stone golem into a flesh golem. The spell's reverse can transform a flesh golem into one of stone.

A stone golem is allowed a saving throw against the *stone to flesh* spell and its reverse. Failure indicates that golem has been transformed.

Trap the Soul: This spell does not seem to work against the Created. Either the golem simply does not have a soul to trap, or the soul is too strongly attached to its golem body to be removed by this spell.

Priest Spells

As I have mentioned in previous works, I have at times desired to become a priest. It seems that in the latter years of my life, this calling has grown stronger. Unfortunately, I don't believe I'll ever be able to answer it,



for it seems my duties lie in other areas.

The information below relates to a narrower spectrum of spells, but I believe it to be of even more value than the details regarding wizard spells. I also feel more assured that this information can be relied upon due to the outstanding integrity, dedication, and faith of the good friends and colleagues who compiled it. Without folks such as these, and without their examples of exquisite faith and service, I might not have been able to carry on my life's work over all these many years. All those who battle the golem owe them a debt of gratitude.

Animate Rock: This spell can have an interesting and useful effect against stone golems. It seems to cause a tremendous struggle for control between the golem and the priest. Although none of the priests I have talked to has ever seen a priest actually gain control of the golem, they claim the struggle causes the golem to attack less efficiently for the duration of the spell.

If a stone golem fails its saving throw against *animate rock*, the casting priest gains partial control of the golem's body. When this occurs, the stone golem suffers a -4 penalty on all actions, including attacks, for the duration of the spell. The priest must maintain concentration on the spell, taking no other actions; else all spell effects are lost.

If a stone golem fails its saving throw against *animate rock*, the casting priest gains partial control of the golem's body. When this occurs, the stone golem suffers a -4 penalty on all actions, including attacks, for the duration of the spell. The priest must maintain concentration on the spell, taking no other actions; else all spell effects are lost.

Earthquake: When a stone golem is at hand, this spell is extremely useful. Apparently, this magic makes such a creature shake so violently it causes damage to its form.

When targeted against a stone golem, the *earthquake* spell causes 5d12 points of damage. A successful saving throw cuts the damage in half.

When targeted against a stone golem, the *earthquake* spell causes 5d12 points of damage. A successful saving throw cuts the damage in half.

Poison: This spell does not affect the Created.

Raise Dead: No golem—flesh or otherwise—is affected by this spell. In the case of the flesh golem, I would hazard to guess at two reasons for this utter failure. First, many bodies are used in the creation. Secondly, flesh golems are not truly dead (nor are they truly alive).

Regeneration: Against a flesh golem, this magic is extremely effective. The spell destabilizes the physical integrity of such a creature, eventually causing its death. However, there are two difficulties with the use of this spell. First, although the flesh golem is technically dead, it can still be reanimated at any time. This is rather inconsequential when compared to the second difficulty: the slowness of the spell effect. It takes several minutes for the *regeneration* spell to truly harm the golem. However, as soon as the spell is cast, it seems to cause the already vicious creature to exhibit a truly maniacal burst of violence which lasts as long as the spell's harmful effects.

One final note: If the priest who cast the *regeneration* spell is killed before the golem dies, the spell appears to cause no more harm to the creature. Further, the creature will begin repairing itself at once.

When *regeneration* is cast on a flesh golem, the spell causes no damage for 5 rounds. For each round thereafter, the creature loses 5 hit points. The golem becomes violent and combative for 3d4 rounds after this spell is cast—standing in battle *even* if it has fewer than 0 hit points. During this period, it receives a +2 bonus to all attack rolls.

When the golem at last collapses, it can only be revived through use of its hyper-regeneration ability (if available) or through a reanimating jolt of energy. If the priest who cast the *regeneration* spell is killed before the golem “dies,” the spell ceases to have an effect on the golem.

Resurrection: Like *raise dead*, this spell has no effect on the Created.

Rock to Mud: This spell can be effective against stone golems, turning pieces of the creatures to mud. The reverse, *mud to rock*, affects clay golems in a similar manner.

Rock to mud causes 3d10 points of damage to stone golems. The reverse does the same amount of damage to clay golems.

Trip: Although this spell is considered an enchantment or charm, it is useful against golems, as it affects the object being used instead of the golem itself.

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My child, my creation. No longer does she gift me with sweet smiles and flowers. No more does she greet me with pretty words and the music of her laughter. The trinkets that once pleased her so, she now hurls back at me, along with a torrent of foul epithets.

How could my Alyce, she who I labored so hard for, treat me thus? It seems she grows more wicked and willful with every passing day. It is almost as if we are both, she and I, slowly awakening from a beautiful dream where I played the part of the doting father, and she the loving daughter. But what we will find ourselves upon awakening I find too terrible to contemplate.

—From the journal of Thor Hessen

CHAPTER SIX: PSYCHOLOGY



The terror of the unknown is with us from birth. It is part and parcel of being alive. No matter how sophisticated, how strong, or how learned we become, the fear is always there, lurking somewhere in the back of our minds.

When facing a foe as terrifyingly alien as the golem, it is easy to succumb to our age-old fear of the unknown. This fear can cause our own minds and bodies to fail us, just as a weak heart can betray the strongest of warriors. How can we best overcome the mind-numbing terror and knee-weakening horror that is one of the golem's most insidious advantages? Knowledge, pure and simple.

One of the many reasons golems are so horrifying to most of us is simply that we have no psychological context in which to place them or their actions. When facing a mortal foe, we believe we have an understanding of his motives. Many desires and drives are universal to all peoples. The desire to live, to love, to raise families are wishes with which we can identify.

But the Created do not share our mortality. Nor do they share our life

cycle. Theirs is a world alien to our own, with seemingly little in common.

Attaining some understanding of the psychology of the Created serves a dual purpose. In the first place, it gives those who choose to hunt these creatures a better understanding of their foe. This knowledge can provide a crucial, even life-saving advantage to the golem hunter.

The second reason this knowledge is so valuable is far more primal: The more we know about the "bogey-man," the less power our own fear has over us.

Of course, the Created are no mere shadows under the bed. The truth may at first be more horrifying than the vague fears of ignorance. But the truth is far more likely to provide the light needed to find one's way to victory. Ignorance in those who would hunt the Created simply ends in letters of sympathy to their bereaved relatives.

Mental Development of the Golem

To examine the psychology of the Created, we must begin by discussing their mental development. (Of course, I exclude from this discussion any creature that might be described as a mindless automaton, for such golems are not the focus of this work.) As

mortals, we grow and develop over the course of many years. Beginning as helpless infants whose only thought is our own comfort, we gradually mature both physically and mentally.

Golems apparently undergo a maturation process as well. However, this process is solely psychological in nature, since the golem begins its existence in a grotesque body that is fully developed. Further, the golem's maturation takes place much more rapidly than our own mental and emotional growth. While our passage from child to adult spans decades, the golem's entire cycle of maturation can take place in a period ranging from as little as several weeks to no more than a year.

In order to better understand the golem's mental development, I have utilized the research of Dr. Wilhelm Kohl, a brilliant university teacher specializing in the workings of the mind. In his fascinating treatise, *Foundations of Morality*, Dr. Kohl outlined a system of five stages to categorize the moral development of humans.

I have taken the liberty of reworking Dr. Kohl's development theory to apply it to golems. I hope the good doctor will forgive my twisting of his concepts, but I believe this to be the best way to undertake an examination of the maturation process of the Created. The five stages below are given in order, beginning with the golem's initial, immature mental state and ending with the mentally mature golem. Each stage is illustrated by a passage from a diary I have in my possession, which neatly describes a golem's psychological advancement.

While reading this section, keep in mind that the stages presented are mere tools for developing a rudimentary understanding of the golem's mental maturation. The discussion is general in nature, and there is surely a wide degree of

variation in the development of individual creatures.

Allow me to add one further note: What is considered development for the golem would most certainly be seen as mental disorder in a person. In no way are the stages given below meant to reflect normal human development.

Stage One: Dependence

Our first days together have been everything I knew they would be. Alyce worships me, and today, for the very first time, she called me Father. Oh, I have so much to teach her! She is a tabula rasa, a blank tablet on which I can bestow all my vast knowledge and learning. I am certain she will appreciate me as those imbeciles at the University could never do.

At the beginning of its existence, a golem is childlike in its dependence upon the creator. The shock of fusing with the golem body has not worn off, and the golem's mind has not yet recovered from this experience.

If the golem's life essence was drawn from a living being, the golem may well experience nightmares. These nightmares are most probably warped memories of its former life.

In any case, the golem will also find it has an uncanny ability to sense what is important to its creator. This ability seems to be the first sign of the near-telepathic bond between the pair (see Chapter Three for further details). Why the golem has this bond is unknown, but with few exceptions it holds true.

The golem may well feel the need to be in constant proximity to its creator, its protector at this stage of development. Furthermore, the clumsiness of its new body may add to this feeling of need.

For at least the first several weeks of its existence, the golem must learn to properly use its powerful physical form. This may cause some difficulties

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for the monster's creator. Imagine a two-year-old human child suddenly thrust into the body of an ogre, and the inherent dangers become obvious.

The golem's view of its creator helps temper these dangers. New to the world and its plight, the golem probably sees its creator as an omnipotent, godlike being who is utterly responsible for the golem's life and well-being. To the newly created monster, the "parent" may be perfection, utterly infallible. The creator will be obeyed out of a mixture of fear and respect, and the golem typically craves the attention and approval of its master.

Is it possible for any creature, any living being, to be inherently evil? Such an assertion may itself facilitate the committing of evil acts. By viewing any person as inherently evil, we take away his ability to be anything else. All actions are seen as being motivated by the individual's evil. Even acts of kindness are questioned, and assumed to have ulterior motives. Thus the person is never rewarded for behaving properly. Similarly, by defining a person as evil we also give that person free rein to behave as he will. After all, he is not responsible for his evil nature and thus he feels no compunction to behave properly.

—Ansolm Haas,
The Isolation of Evil

This stage of relative innocence and obedience can last anywhere from a few days to more than a month. However, should the creature confront a person other than the creator—and discover the horror and disgust with which a sane person inevitably views the golem—then the creature may quickly enter the second phase of development: confusion.

Stage Two: Confusion

Yesterday Alyce was exploring the lower parlor, where she apparently disturbed the maid. The woman reacted poorly, shrieking and causing a scene. Since that time, Alyce has seemed almost pensive. I believe I shall remove the mirrors from this wing of the manor. The looking glasses seem somehow to upset my dear Alyce.

Within a relatively short period, the golem must begin to realize its repulsiveness to other beings. The golem looks into a mirror, or sees the horror with which all but perhaps its creator gaze upon it. Recognizing that it is somehow a different kind of creature than its parent, the golem may well grow confused. Ironically, by this time the initial shock caused by binding the spirit to the golem's body has certainly faded, and so too has the resulting disorientation. The creature's intelligence can be measured as average—high enough to understand its pitiful position within the society around it.

Think on how a foundling child often feels when he first discovers he is different from other family members. It is an isolating experience, although it is also one from which a healthy child soon recovers. But the golem does not share the healthy mind of a mortal child. Furthermore, the golem's isolation is much greater than the foundling's. The creature's own evil nature sets it apart. Soon the combination of its powerful body, feelings of isolation and confusion, and its inherent nature goad the golem into questioning the omnipotence of its creator. The golem may even attempt to get its parent to change its body into a more "pleasing" form, one similar to the creators.

In any event, it is at this stage the golem first begins to turn away from its creator. At some point, the creator will be unable to meet one of his creation's

demands, or the golem will be rejected in its attempts at friendship with others. Then the golem's first feelings of betrayal begin to emerge, and it is on its way to the third phase of development.

The second stage represents the last period of "innocence" for the golem, if it is even possible for us to speak of an innocent golem. Beyond this, the inherent evil of the creature begins to truly manifest. The length of this stage varies greatly, but it is likely to be anywhere from one week to two months in duration.

Stage Three: Betrayal

Today I found the dogs—all five of my loyal wolfhounds. She left them by the grand fireplace where they so often warmed themselves after the hunt. But today their bodies were as cold as the ashes from last winter's fires. Alyce is growing more vehement in her outbursts, with unacceptable results. I shall have to have a long talk with her.

Now the true evil of the golem begins to surface. The creature senses its own perversity, and realizes how alone it truly is among mortals. The golem's creator—and thus the entire world—has betrayed it.

The creature suffers a fundamental lacking: It has no sense of continuity and connection to the rest of the world. The only person at all capable of understanding the fledgling golem is its creator, the golem's erstwhile parent. However, in my opinion, any person capable of constructing a golem is himself lacking in some fundamental manner. Furthermore, even if that parent still views the golem favorably, by this time the parent has inevitably failed the golem. And the golem, feeling it has little control over its own life and environment, begins to rebel.

This process may sound very similar to the distancing an adolescent

normally undergoes in relation to his family. The crucial distinction here is that the teenager moves farther from his parents in an effort to gain acceptance in society as a whole. In contrast, the golem rejects his only source of companionship and moves only toward an even greater isolation.

The creature's developing intelligence and intimate knowledge of its creator may compound the feelings of betrayal caused by the golem's isolation. As the telepathic bond between a golem and its creator strengthens, the golem begins to sense its maker's selfish motives.

Consciously or subconsciously, the golem comes to realize that its welfare is not the creator's sole concern, and that it has been sentenced to an existence of monstrous isolation and rejection by all living beings.

As the creature examines the differences between itself and mortals, it discovers its great strength and abilities. It tests those abilities more and more. The creature comes to realize that it boasts the physical capacity to do almost whatever it wishes. The only thing standing in its way is its creator: the parent who refuses to let the golem have its way in all things.

Soon the golem releases its frustrations in various forms of destruction, from mayhem to murder. Through that destruction, the golem at last begins to realize its *true* power. At some point its creator will be forced to confront his creation. He may well find himself inadequate to the task. After all, he has created a being far more powerful than himself.

This stage normally lasts but a few days. The golem will escalate its evil acts until it forces its creator into a confrontation of some sort. Once this confrontation occurs, the next stage in the golem's mental development is inevitable.

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Stage Four: Contempt

It seems I grow wearier with every passing hour. Even as I write this passage, I can hear her dainty footsteps in the hall outside my room. Soon she will begin singing that song again. Ah, yes! It begins again:

Father, father, come out to play,

Father, father, come out I pray.

Father, father, do not cry,

Your dear Alyce cannot die.

How much longer I can tolerate her taunting I do not know. But I must not stand for this. She was made to be my sweet daughter, and daughters do as their fathers command!

When the golem provokes its creator into a confrontation, it discovers the relative impotence of its parent. The parent can threaten, but he has lost all true control over the golem. Once this realization sets in, the golem becomes utterly contemptuous of the weakling who masqueraded as its master. Within the golem's mind a synthesis occurs: The creature's sense of power combines with the awareness that it may live forever in a world that rejects it utterly, creating a scorn that burns more intensely than any natural flame.

The intellect of the golem is now fully developed, and it includes a penchant for manipulation as well as a facile cunning. The one-way telepathic bond the golem has with its creator now lends the creature an extraordinary understanding of that person. In the golem's own twisted way, it fully comprehends the pathetic weaknesses, selfish obsession, and madness that make up its creator's psyche.

All people, even the noblest of us, have private thoughts and feelings not fit for revelation to others. Most of us attempt to moderate and conceal these unsavory aspects of ourselves. We also keep within our hearts cherished needs, loves, and desires that we may

not even share with our closest intimates.

The golem has access to the deepest recesses of its creator's heart, mind, and soul. This total knowledge inevitably breeds contempt. It also allows the golem to use its evil cunning to torment its creator. The creature cannot help but know what actions hurt its creator most. Soon it is not enough to simply deride the creator—the golem feels the need to flaunt its superiority to any who might fail to see the chasm separating the pathetic parent and his powerful child.

I have observed enormous differences between individual golems at this stage of development. However, all golems must surely grow to feel contempt for their creator. The more the creator attempts to control his creation, the sooner the final stage in the golem's development will commence—the stage in which the golem's contempt gives way to hatred and the creator's days become numbered. After that, it is simply a matter of time.

Stage Five: Hatred

I will go to her and make her understand. She is my daughter and must obey. If she refuses yet again, I will be forced to cast her out and begin the process of creation a second time.

After all my long months of labor; to be betrayed by such an ungrateful wretch—it is unthinkable! I made her; if not for me she would be nothing but molding flesh. She owes me both her obedience and her gratitude, and I shall have both in full measure. She shall give me what I have earned!

—Final journal entry of Thor Hessen

In this final stage, the golem's contempt for its creator deepens, becoming a dark, malevolent hatred. The creator must come face to face with the consequences of his own evil, embodied in the fury of his creation.

Just as contempt gives way to hatred, the golem's need to flaunt its superiority gives way to a desire to destroy the creator. The creature seeks to murder its parent, thereby severing its last tie to the living. This murder may not take place immediately, however. While most golems do attempt to dispatch with their creators posthaste, I have known of a few creatures who purposefully delayed the act. These golems took their time in planning or attempting the deed, apparently for the sheer enjoyment of tormenting their creators. Thus, even if a golem does not immediately succeed at patricide, the creator will always be in danger.

The creator is at a distinct disadvantage in such a contest. The golem is powerful foe against any mortal, but the creator is especially vulnerable. As noted earlier, the golem boasts an extraordinary bond to the creator's mind—a bond which enables it to know the creator better than the creator knows himself. Armed with such intimate knowledge, the golem may anticipate every action and reaction of its creator as it plots to destroy the puny, insignificant wretch who once dared to use and control it.

Summation

The information above details the mental development and separation process the golem experiences over the course of its "childhood." However, it does not address the actual psychology of the golem—its individual perceptions and feelings about itself and its new world. I shall address those issues in the following section.

Psychology of the Created

Psychology is an inexact science at best. Even the most learned mages and scholars do not truly understand the inner workings of a sane man's mind, much less the twisted psyche of a golem. This is not to say that a

knowledge of psychology is worthless: quite the contrary. Just as we would not throw away an entire loaf of bread simply because a few bites were missing, so we should not dismiss the advantage that a knowledge of our enemy's thought processes can give us simply because that knowledge is incomplete.

Since we know so little about our own minds, readers may assume we must know almost nothing about the Created. That is not necessarily true. The mind of a golem seems much less complex than that of the Born. Perhaps the enormous shock the Created undergo upon their "birth" is the source of this relative simplicity. Of course, I do not wish to imply that these creatures are stupid, or that one golem's mind is the same as the next's. However, the creatures do appear limited in the scope of their thought processes. This may explain why many golems tend to fixate on a single driving obsession.

With these comments in mind, let us now turn to a brief study of the psychology of the golem. Much of the information I am about to share is derived from an exchange of letters between me and Doctor Cassien Attenberg, a noted specialist in nonhuman psychology, as well as an esteemed colleague and friend. I have included key excerpts from Doctor Attenberg's letters to help illustrate each point.

Views on the Self

... As to your inquiry on the matter of the Created and their concept of the Self: The answer must surely be that they do have this conception. However, the conception of Self possessed by a golem must be a terrible one, for it seems to me the golem is similar to a feral child—raised to maturity without benefit of an appropriate figure with which to identify (a parental golem). Thus its self concept derives from its

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own experiences and the warping influence of its creator. . . .

—Cassien Attenberg

Many theorists maintain that one of the basic requirements for true sentience is that the creature or being in question has an awareness of the Self. By this we mean that the being must be aware of its identity as an individual—be self-aware as it were—in order to be considered truly sentient.

Through the evidence I and others have collected over the years, both first- and second-hand, it does indeed appear that the Created qualify as sentient beings. Although their consciousness is quite alien to our own, there is no question but that a golem is truly aware of its own existence as a separate being. And if a golem is indeed self-aware, then how does the creature view itself? That is the question I shall next address. However, before focusing on the Created in particular, I believe it would be helpful to briefly discuss a particular phenomenon occasionally found in human children.

Normal mortal children experience a series of stages in which they slowly develop their own sense of separate identity. If raised in a warm and loving home, a child will grow to appreciate his own worth. Such a child will, in all probability, grow up to become a productive member of his community.

However, a child who is raised in an abusive environment—and unfortunately I have seen far too many such cases—often fails to develop a sense of his own self-worth and acceptability. Such children often wind up spending their adult lives as criminals, hermits, or as other sundry social misfits.

But what of the children raised in loving homes—wanting for nothing, given education both moral and intellectual—who commit evil, despicable acts despite all the advantages a healthy environment

can offer? Parents of such children often despair at their own, personal failings, wondering what they did to cause their child to behave so cruelly. When questioned, it often comes to light that the child began to behave in a selfish, cruel manner at a very early age. Such children are often labeled “bad seeds.” It is perhaps an unfortunate label, and only applies to the smallest fraction of children, but in such cases it appears that the child is born with the ability to form a sense of self, but without the capability to truly care about and form attachments to others.

I mention such children for one simple reason. The Created may be the ultimate “bad seeds,” incapable of identifying with others and thus incapable of true morality. Initially, golems appear to be simply curious about themselves. Like small children, they experiment and revel in new-found abilities and talents.

However, as a golem grows to realize its true nature and how it came to *be*, the golem often begins to view itself with ever greater self-loathing. The creature realizes it can never be truly accepted by the Born and can never partake of the cycle of life (for, as I have mentioned, golems are infertile). It grows to understand how horrifying others find it, and how mortals look upon its cobbled-together body with revulsion and disgust.

Many factors in combination, certainly not limited to the ideation above, cause the golem’s opinion of itself to shift. Where it initially viewed itself with mere curiosity, the golem becomes a creature filled with self-loathing. Perhaps this seeming incapacity for self-acceptance and love is at the base of the golem’s evil. Perhaps when a spirit is forced into the waiting vessel—the golem body—any ability to truly love and care is lost in the process. Whatever the ultimate reasons, suffice it to say that the golem views itself with hatred.

Views on the Creator

... but how terrible it must be to always look into the mind of one's "parent." All parents occasionally think ill of their children, but good parents give only constructive criticism to their young. Children need to feel secure in that they are loved and deserving of love. It is inherently impossible for a golem to feel this way. Even worse, the mind with which the golem is in constant contact from the moment of its genesis is twisted and harmful. Children who are raised by abusive and mean-spirited parents so often grow up to be the same. Think on what such intimate contact must do to the golem's mind!

—Cassien Attenberg

As discussed earlier, a golem's view toward its creator changes dramatically as it matures. When new to the world, the golem views its creator as an omnipotent parental figure, a virtual god. As the golem becomes more self aware, however, its opinion of its creator degenerates. In the end, the golem views its creator as the author of its misery and loneliness. Hatred and contempt replace the feelings of awe and respect.

I have already asserted that this progression stems in part from the unique, one-way telepathy binding the golem to its creator. It seems that the golem is in near-constant contact with the creator's thoughts and feelings. The creator of a golem is an insane individual, obsessed and evil. Thus, it is my firm belief that this link contributes greatly to the golem's own warped psychology.

Some sages do not agree that all golem creators are evil madmen, noting that noble priests might also fashion a golem. I say there is nothing noble at all in such a pursuit. True, a kindly cleric may fashion a mindless automaton, and do so with the best of intentions. I condemn the act

nonetheless. As I warned at the onset of this work, those who create life in this heinous fashion are toying with dark and deadly powers, and they will sacrifice their own humanity as a result.

Obviously, the golem cannot help but be affected by its constant, intimate contact with such depravity. Every time the golem fails its parent, it most assuredly feels the rejection of its creator. The fact that such rejection may not be outwardly expressed makes it no less acute. The creature, in turn, lashes out against the one who caused it pain, once more earning the disapproval of its parent.

I am certain this vicious cycle is a central factor contributing to both the golem's self-hatred and its loathing for its creator. So closely entwined are these emotions that it is almost impossible to intelligently discuss a golem's feelings for itself or for its creator as separate topics.

Views on Mankind

The golem appears to understand that other beings have a concrete existence—that we are not merely shadows and smoke, but thinking and feeling creatures. Still, the Created may be termed a sociopathic race, for when a golem decides on a given course of action, it considers only the action's effects on itself: No other factors—such as the consequences to others—are considered valid. What is right is whatever the golem finds pleasing.

—Cassien Attenberg

Among the most evil aspects of the golem is its complete lack of empathy for living creatures. It views all other creatures as objects. In part, this is because the golem is incapable of feeling true pain, or at least it does not experience pain as we do. The golem's only experience of physical anguish is gained vicariously through its telepathic link to its creator, and even

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then there is no evidence the golem actually *feels* its creator's pain. Having no understanding of pain, the golem is unlikely to feel any qualms about inflicting it.

In a similar vein, the golem may not be able to truly comprehend death. To the golem, a life has no more value than a wind-up toy. We do not feel a toy has "died" simply because it stops working. If this occurs, we merely go out to purchase another toy.

I have encountered a few golems who appeared to form an attachment to a particular mortal, who even professed to love that person. But it is safe to say that such a golem cannot comprehend the true meaning of this emotion, much less experience it. Instead, the golem feels something more akin to obsession—a selfish, blinding desire not unlike the emotion festering inside its creator.

Views on Other Golems

In examining the relationship golems have with one another, I have often observed the psychological phenomenon known as *transference*. When this occurs in humans and demihumans, feelings about oneself and one's actions are externalized and are then ascribed to someone else. For example, an individual who feels that he is lazy may transfer this feeling onto, say, his son and accuse the son of being shiftless and lazy. Such individuals find it easier to take out their feelings on others than to confront their own feelings of inadequacy.

As stated earlier, golems grow to hate themselves. Such self-loathing could easily transfer onto any other golems encountered. Of course, this would not cause the golem to like itself any better, but it would provide another—perhaps fatal—target or outlet for its hatred and violence.

The golem is, in essence, a creature of isolation. It is cut off from

the natural processes, removed from the cycle of life and death to which most creatures belong. As such, it does not necessarily feel the same need for others of its kind that we, as social creatures, feel. Biologically speaking, there is no reason for one golem to interact with another member of the Created. Such interaction never leads to procreation and the furtherance of golems "as a species," so to speak.

However, we must remember that golems are individuals, and it is dangerous to paint them in strokes which are too broad. Simply because there is no valid biological reason for golems to interact with one another does not mean they have no desire to do so. Some golems loathe their ultimate isolation and the constant, violent rejections of others with whom they come in contact. It is certainly reasonable to believe other golems would be more accepting of the hideous visage and terrifying powers of the Created, as they themselves almost surely possess the same.

The following transcription lends support to this theory. A priest of impeccable repute sent the text, which describes the experience of a chimney sweep in Lamordia, to me. At the time of this writing, I have no confirmation that this evidence is valid. However, the priest vouches for the witness' sterling reputation. Furthermore, the priest has also related persistent rumors and stories about Lamordia's "devil man"—stories that seem relatively consistent with the fellow's account below, or at least with the existence of one or more flesh golems in the area.

I were in the chimney when it all happened. Now, I know that might sound sort of crazy, bein' in the chimney, but it weren't. I'm a chimney sweep by trade, so I spend lots of time in lots of chimneys. I'm a good sweep, too—ask anyone. Never had a single complaint.

Creator and Created

A golem and its creator are uniquely linked by their bizarre parent-child relationship. Any person who creates a golem is, by nature, a twisted and obsessed individual. The obsessions that drive the creator to make his golem do not disappear upon the monster's animation. In fact, the creator usually slips further into madness and evil after his "success."

Due to the powerful and complex connection between creator and creation, a DM may wish to consider not only the golem, but the golem's maker when designing adventures. In fact, discovering the creator of a golem and attempting to discover the nature of the creator's obsessions, as

well as his construction methods, can be an adventure in and of itself. Such creators can themselves be dangerous foes, often extremely protective of their evil progeny, as well as their dread knowledge. Adventures of this kind can range from destroying a creator's laboratory to spying on the deranged creator in order to gain information on the golem and its particular strengths and weaknesses.

The best and most memorable villains are not mindless, snarling beasts. Adding history, goals, and personality to your monsters (human and otherwise) will create far more interesting foes to challenge your players.

Course'n the poor fellow whose chimney I was in when it happened has got a right to 'is complaint, which I'm sure he'd make if'n he could. After all, I didn't help him none. I feel real bad about that, but it just didn't seem like there was much I could do, so's why get myself nicked too? Truth be it, I was too scared to move anyways. Just kept hopin' I wouldn't sneeze. Garson's chimney was a real sight of a mess, it was! Course, now so's Garson, poor sod.

Anyway, I was up in the chimney, but there was this piece of a brick missing, so's I could peak into the room if I put my eye to the hole. I was just pokin' on that broken brick to see if the whole thing weren't loose when Garson got a knock on his door. He was just getting around to it when I heard this splinterin' thud of a sound. It was like the sound of splitting a thin slice o' hardwood.

Well, Garson was up like a rabbit and I could just make out this look on his face, worse'n if it was the tax collector or somethin'. Then these arms. . . these arms just reached out and grabbed his neck. I couldn't make

out the killer too well on account of he was wearing this dark, hooded cloak, but his arms and hands ... Well, they was in worse shape than any blacksmith's I've ever seen. It was like you took some body parts and stitched 'em together—only they worked!

The whole thing must of only taken a second. Then Garson's neck snapped and I knew he was dead. And then I saw the other two. They all three wore the same type of hooded cloak. One of 'em had a good-sized bundle in his arms, and I suppose now that must have been Garson's wife, since she's missing too. Anyway, just as these three was leavin', I caught a glimpse of the first one's face. I ain't afraid to say I fainted right then and there—but lucky for me I got stuck in the chimney when I slumped down. Anyhow, that first one's face was all pieced together and weird. It's probably a good thing I did faint, else I think I would've screamed me head off. Would've been the end of me too, then. . . .

The witness goes on for a while longer, but the most likely assumption here is that the individuals in question

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were flesh golems working together. It certainly brings up the possibility that there might be a small group of golems living and working as a team in Lamordia. If so, they might have formed the rudiments of a society.

It would not be illogical to suppose that a few flesh golems have formed some sort of family unit and are attempting to find a means of propagating their species. We can only pray that such is not the case, or at least that it is ultimately impossible for one golem to create another. Even a small army of golems could obliterate whole cities with little effort.

One final note on the story above: The chimney sweep in question apparently disappeared himself less than a week after giving his testimony to the priest. It is unfortunate, as I would have liked to personally question the man. At least his story went on record. I wonder how many such stories have gone untold?

Goals of the Created

No creature can go through life without goals. Even the ant and the toad have goals, however simple they may seem to you and me. But to the ant digging its tunnel, or the swallow feeding her hatchlings, our goals are as irrelevant to them as theirs are to us. What is important, what is precious, is all simply a matter of perspective.

—Cassien Attenberg

Humans and demihumans, like all creatures, can be seen as having a number of different goals, some more important than others. First and foremost we need sustenance, shelter, and other basic necessities of life. Once these basic needs are met, we can concentrate on our more individualistic or esoteric concerns.

The Created do not share the basic needs for shelter and sustenance confronting the Born. Thus, a golem faces an existence in which goals can

be seized almost at random. Yet in my experience it is almost invariably true that the golem's main goals and concerns are either similar to their creator's or, even more common, a perversion of such goals. The ultimate twist, of course, is the most deadly: The creator wishes to live, but the golem, in time, wishes to destroy that life. This murder is often the golem's overriding concern so long as its creator survives.

Golems have numerous other concerns, however. As mentioned above, many golems do seem to have a great and unfulfilled wish to be accepted by others. Thus, another common and ultimately unattainable goal is the desire to propagate their species. Beyond this, goals may vary widely between individual golems, and often seem inscrutable to sane mortals.

Knowledge of a particular golem's specific goals can aid those of us who seek to destroy them. It is at times possible to stage a combat in the time and place of one's own choosing, instead of a situation favoring the golem. This advantage can be gained only through shrewd guesswork and observation, but such groundwork may provide the key to determining what is important to the golem, and thus what might move the creature to come to your chosen place of battle.

Whatever their individual desires may be, it seems that all golems have a tendency to fixate on one particular goal at any given time. Unlike humans and demihumans who constantly strive to achieve numerous goals, the golem focuses its indomitable will on one goal at a time. This single-mindedness is a double-edged sword to the golem's foes. It makes the golem more predictable, but it also makes the creature unyielding, and perhaps even unstoppable.

The Golem as NPC

Golems are unquestionably powerful villains. However, in any roleplaying game, an NPC is not brought to life by a simple set of statistics or nifty abilities. This is particularly true in the fantasy-horror setting of Ravenloft.

Golems are creatures of nightmare, and to fully utilize these monsters the DM must create an NPC the players feel is both unpredictable and dangerous.

When roleplaying the golem NPC, the DM should try to convey to the players the relentless intensity of the creature. For example, you might answer the PC's actions by repeating the same description again and again

("It just keeps coming toward you. . . ."). This sort of repetition, if used in an appropriate situation (such as when the party is trying to flee from the golem), can add greatly to the drama. Another unnerving tactic is to have your golem maintain a particular expression no matter what. You might stare impassively for periods of time, or smile. It is amazing how unnerved players can become when faced with a continually smiling foe—especially when they are doing their best to kill the thing!

Whatever your particular golem's goals, never allow anyone or anything to deter it from its particular task (unless it is killed, of course).

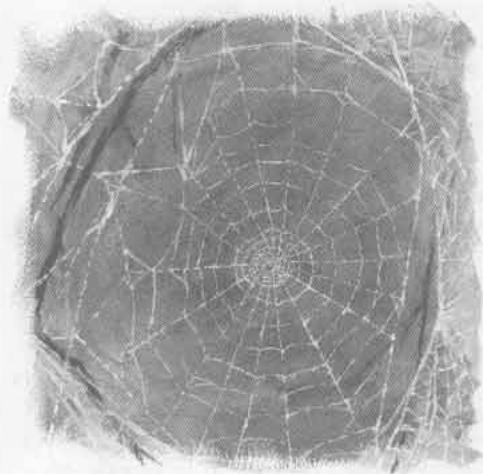
A Creature Built of Hate?

Although it is extremely tempting to assume that a golem is such a hate-filled creature that it despises everything, caring about nothing save itself, this is perhaps too simple a position.

I do not believe that any creature fueled only by such an emotion can function. It has been suggested by some that, while a golem does not hate everything, it at best feels apathy toward a being or subject. This too seems inadequate. Both of the above opinions suggest we may be incapable of understanding what such a creature as a golem cares about. Their concerns are surely different from our own.

Throughout this chapter I have attempted to put forth possible concerns and needs of the Created. What the psychology of the golem may most nearly mirror is the psychology of the sociopath who suffered trauma or abuse as a child. Although I feel sympathy for such an injured youth, I cannot feel the same for an adult who expresses his needs

through violence and pain, placing his concerns above all others. The golem may well be such a creature, abused by its "parent," shunned by society. The golem may well wish for acceptance, may even yearn to please. So, in some manner I grieve for this creature brought into our world only to know hate rather than love. But this does not excuse or lessen the golem's evil actions and its basic inability to truly care about others.



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Someone once asked me why I risk my life in service to others. The question struck me as odd, which in itself perhaps best serves as the answer to the question.

—The musings of Astonby of the Oaks
as recorded by Taynesbert in *The Open Palm*

Whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster. And when you look long into an abyss, the abyss also looks into you

—Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*

CHAPTER SEVEN: PURSUIT



The latter part of my life has been devoted to the hunting of evil. At first, my mission was simple; I wished only to destroy Baron Metus, the vampire who had murdered my ear wife and son. But once my eyes had been opened to the horrors lurking in the shadows of this land, my resolve to combat the forces of evil grew stronger. Occasionally, I find myself questioning the vocation which fate has thrust upon me—especially when I am alone in the wild, wrapped in little more than the damp night air, huddled beside my horse for warmth. But such moments, however filled with doubt or self-pity, have never swayed my course. For myself, I can only agree with the sentiments of Astonby of the Oaks and echo his words: “How could I do otherwise, having been given the knowledge, abilities, and commitment to do good?”

I do not mean to imply that such doubt-filled musings are of no consequence. When a person commits to a course of action involving the death of another being—no matter how foul and evil that creature may seem—then he or she must strongly question the motives. If, upon introspection, this individual discovers expectations of glory, wealth, or similar gains, then he or she would do well to put aside all

notions of becoming a hunter. In the first place, such personal rewards are seldom found. It is far more likely that loneliness, struggle, and anonymity will be the wages of this work. Secondly, and most importantly, when our motives turn toward personal gain and away from the welfare of others, we risk becoming the very beast we seek to destroy.

So, good reader, think carefully on your motivations for taking up your sword and stepping into the fray. And if—after such introspection—you truly believe that you take on such dangers to aid our land and its people, then gladly do I welcome your aid!

This chapter is designed as a tool for those who would hunt golems. To successfully face and defeat such a powerful foe, you must proceed carefully and make full use of all your faculties. I shall detail the basic steps in the hunt below. Do not take these steps to heart as unalterable law; each situation differs, and therefore may require improvisation. Still, I would suggest following my method whenever possible, for I've found it reduces casualties among golem hunters, and offers at least some chance at succeeding in this heroic task.

Throughout this chapter, I shall illustrate key points by examining a particular expedition I conducted recently. This hunt for the gibbering golem, as the creature was called, was extremely dangerous. It should adequately depict the horrors one

faces while stalking one of the Created.

In order for the reader to better grasp the nature of the situation, I will begin by relating the story of the gibbering golem's creation and the onset of its reign of terror.

The Gibbering Golem

Fressen Woodhall was born into one of the oldest families of Il Aluk, the principal city of Darkon. Once, the Woodhalls enjoyed a considerable fortune. But Fressen's grandfather had lost much of the family's resources in some speculative business ventures, in a manner fraught with scandal and shame.

Fressen's father, Edward, found it difficult to support his family. Too proud to accept any handouts, Edward was away from his family for months at a time as he struggled determinedly to rebuild the lost fortune.

Fressen was a lonely child. He idolized his much absent father, and desperately strove for Edward's praise and affection. The boy often became jealous of the attention Edward paid to Fressen's own mother, Danalie. Upon returning home, Edward brought her small trinkets and talked with her for hours at a time. Edward and Danalie were much in love, and they found their time together all too brief.

As the years passed, Fressen's jealousy grew. Finally, he resented even the smallest amount of time that Edward would devote to Danalie at home. Fressen's parents strove to make him understand that Edward could love and pay attention to both mother and son, just as Danalie could love them both. Unfortunately, this did no good. Fressen soon stopped speaking to his mother altogether whenever Edward was home.

By the time Fressen was ten, his parents feared he had a serious problem—one which he might never outgrow. Nothing they did seemed to

ease his jealousy, and Fressen's behavior became violent. Finally, on the night before Edward set out on yet another trip, Edward gave his young son an ultimatum: Be kind to his mother or be sent away.

When Edward returned from his trip, he found the life he had known destroyed. Danalie had died from injuries suffered when she fell down a staircase. Although the death was officially ruled an accident, Edward feared a darker truth. When Edward confronted his son, the boy confirmed his fears: Fressen had pushed Danalie to her death. Horrified and anguished, Edward sent the boy to an asylum for the insane, where he hoped some help might be found.

Although he had read reports of his son's condition at first, Edward lost interest in time. He continued to travel in the pursuit of his business, and eventually all his years of hard work brought financial reward. He took a new wife. Choosing to leave the terrible memories of his past behind him, Edward finally abandoned his son completely. He sent a letter to the asylum, stating that his son was to be told that Edward was dead.

Despite all the doctors' efforts, Fressen never recovered. He grew up in the asylum, alternating between short fits of violence and long periods of delusion in which he spoke of his father as if the man were omnipotent and perfect in every way.

The only positive interaction the doctors were able to have with Fressen involved his fascination with anatomy, physiology, and psychology. When poring over books on these subjects, Fressen would become quite agreeable and even lively. His intellect was sharp, and as long as he was given new reading material, he behaved civilly.

Eventually, Fressen was even allowed to work as an aide to the doctors. He cleaned the medical facilities, including the room in which the bodies of recently deceased

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patients were stored. One night, while working within that chamber, a particular cadaver commanded his attention. Fressen stared at the face of a corpse on the table before him. The profile was uncanny; the man was the spitting image of his father. Upon examining the corpse, however, Fressen realized that only the shape of the face was satisfactory. The rest was all wrong—even the eyes, which were green instead of blue. Fressen feverishly examined the cadavers around him. He was struck with a brilliant idea: If he took parts from different bodies and placed them together, he could recreate his father's form! Once the body was prepared, surely his father's "spirit" would return to it, and they would be reunited as father and son.

Working frenetically, the deranged young man began to cobble together a body, using surgical tools and the knowledge he had gained from his studies. The hands of the creation posed the greatest challenge; in his effort to recreate exactly a peculiarity in his father's left index finger, Fressen inadvertently exaggerated the size difference between the two hands. When he was finished, the self-taught surgeon gazed adoringly at his work. His father had indeed returned to him, to live again in the body *he* had prepared. But something was wrong—the figure on the table lay too still. Fressen pondered the problem. He imagined that the shock of the transfer into the new body must have placed his father in a catatonic state. Fressen chose a treatment which he had seen the asylum's doctors use upon other catatonic patients: shock therapy. This, he reasoned, would bring his father back to awareness.

Fressen placed the metal restraints and electrodes on the golem's body. Then he turned the wheel of the apparatus again and again, faster and faster, lending every fiber of his being to the task of generating the required

electricity. Finally, a jolt of energy surged into the cadaver. Fressen stood over it, anxiously awaiting a sign. Alas, his "father" refused to stir.

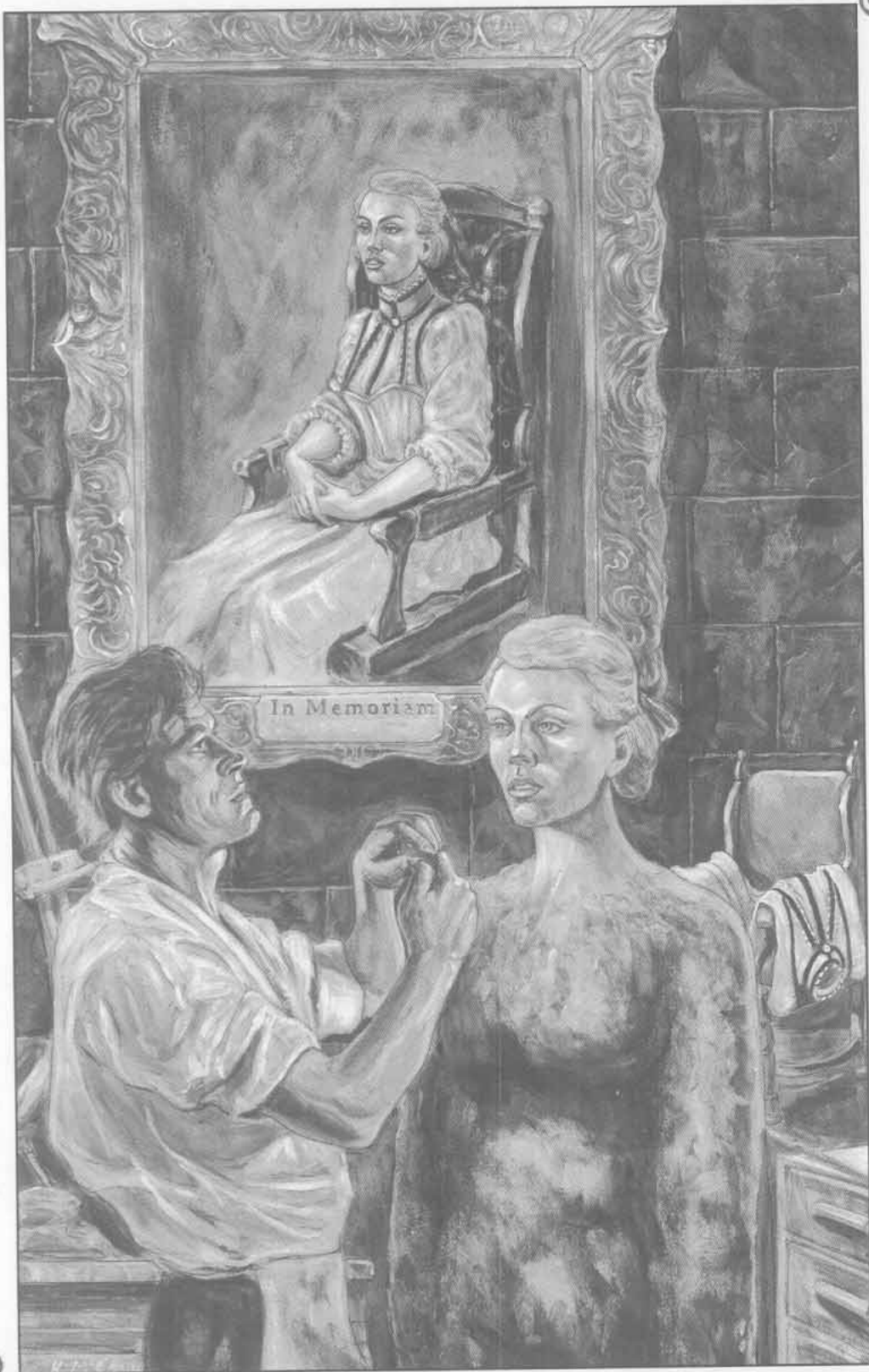
The mad surgeon tried one final, desperate measure. He gave his father an infusion of his own blood. This, he reasoned, would seal the bond of kinship between them, and welcome his father's spirit fully into its new home. As the blood seeped from Fressen into the corpse, the surgeon could feel himself growing dizzy. But his need for his father to be with him once more drove Fressen on, and he called out to his father over and over, urging him to wake.

When the doctors found Fressen, he was barely alive, lying beside the horrible corpse he had sewn together that night. The chief physician locked Fressen in a private cell, and then ordered the hideous creation destroyed. But when the doctors returned to the morgue, the thing was gone.

Confused and alarmed, the doctors instituted a search for the body. Unfortunately for them, they found it. Or rather, it found *them*. The new "Edward" proceeded to kill each and every doctor at the asylum that night. Skittering through the bleak halls by torchlight, hooting and gibbering, the golem returned from its first bloody night of existence to free his "son" and creator, Fressen.

For some few months, Fressen and his golem controlled the asylum. Located perhaps ten miles from the nearest village, the isolated asylum rarely received visitors, and thus no one discovered the doctors' tragic fates.

As the months passed, Fressen's "father" began to challenge and mock the young man. Finally, the golem ignored him. Instead of playing with Fressen, the golem became interested in finding a perfect mate for itself. Once again, as long ago, Fressen felt a rage burning within.



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When he confronted the golem and demanded its full attention, Fressen was horrified to discover he no longer had any control over his creation. As Fressen stood before the golem, "Father" began to laugh—creating a gurgling, gibbering sound in which Fressen heard only mockery and hate. Turning to flee from the terrible rejection and that hideous laugh, Fressen found himself unable to escape the sound. Wherever he ran, he heard the terrible laughter and the words of Father's scorn.

Overwhelmed with pain and exhaustion, with his creation's weird, gibbering laughter still echoing within his mind, Fressen collapsed. Slowly, surely, the echoing footsteps and maniacal laughter of his father approached. When his father stood beside him, the laughter quieted. Fressen felt his father pick him up and cradle him in his arms—finally, as his creation was meant to do. Fressen felt he had won his father's unswerving affection at last. Moments later, the boy was hurled down a tower staircase to his death.

The gibbering golem lived on in the asylum, but could find no appropriate mate there. Exploring outside its home, it discovered the nearby village. It was there the golem found his first new "bride." Staring at the woman, the gibbering golem discovered he could feel her feelings, taste her thoughts, exactly as he could Fressen's.

Delighted at the thought of being with his chosen mate, the golem presented himself to the woman, declaring his love for her. But his initial happiness changed to fury as he felt his mate's horrified rejection stabbing into his mind. Enraged, the golem seized the woman as she turned to flee. He shook her furiously for minutes on end, gibbering hideously all the while. Finally, his rage abated, and the creature brought the now quiescent body of his bride back to the asylum.

So begins the tale of the gibbering golem, as I have come to know it. Much of the story, of course, is surmised rather than known. However, one thing is clear: The tale did not end with the golem and his dead bride living happily ever after. Unfortunately, the gibbering golem claimed many a new wife before I and my comrades were able to hunt him down. In the pages to come, I shall share with you a letter I penned to a fellow comrade in the war against evil, describing my encounter with this dreadful creature. This letter illustrates perfectly the many stages of the hunt.

Discovery

Before it is possible to begin your quest to destroy a golem, you must obviously first learn of its existence. However, unlike with many other creatures such as lycanthropes or ghosts, tales of possible golems terrorizing a region tend not to describe the terrifying creature as a golem. It is rare indeed to hear a story using the term *golem* at all, as the vast majority of the populace are not aware such creatures exist, even in myths and legends.

Admittedly, this lessens the number of completely unfounded tales that must be sorted through when determining the veracity and accuracy of a given story. However, it also makes it entirely possible to hear a report involving the Created and not even realize that you have done so.

Due to these problems of reporting, the devoted golem hunter must ever concern himself with analyzing and evaluating reports and stories to determine if one of the Created might be responsible. Nine times out of ten, there will be nothing but gossip or entirely human atrocities behind a report, but occasionally such a story will lead you to one of the fell creatures you seek.

THE CREATED

My dear Astonby,

Just a few short days ago, I attended a party hosted by the noted philanthropist, Simon Tolliver. I expected an evening of idle entertainment, as per chance I was not in pursuit of any foul creature. Before the evening was out, that had changed.

One of the guests, a young man by the name of Jeffrey, had just arrived from the town of Devering. He told of the recent unexplained wave of disappearances among the young women of the town. Apparently, the investigators were at a total loss until two nights ago, when the body of a young woman was found lying on the road, underneath the shattered window of her bedchamber. It seemed that every bone in her body was broken, and there were multiple bruises around her neck.

At first, of course, one might assume the girl had simply jumped or fallen, and that her death, while tragic, was in no way linked to the disappearances of the other young women. However, upon inquiring further, I discovered the door to the dead girl's home had been literally ripped off its hinges. As a final piece of information, Jeffrey noted that some residents were claiming a hideous man-thing was traveling the streets at night, making weird gibbering sounds. Rumors abounded. The most popular? That a giant ape was somehow the culprit.

—Dr. Van Richten, a personal letter

patterns or themes. For ease of discussion, I have grouped these themes as follows: sightings, grave robberies, unexplained murders, and other physical evidence.

Sightings

This is clearly the most straightforward pattern of report. In such a story, at least one person actually sees the golem. However, as noted, the witness almost never calls the creature by that name. Instead, look for reports of “deformed” or “hideous” creatures with tremendous strength or powers. In particular, pay attention if a story mentions strange limbs and body parts, a horrifying visage, strange scars all over the body, or a creature made of metal, glass, and so forth. Such reports are quite likely to describe golems, particularly when they include information about a creature’s amazing powers and strength.

Grave Robberies

If ever you hear a series of reports regarding disturbed graves, missing or mutilated bodies, or peculiar disappearances, you must pay especial attention. Immediately attempt to determine whether these occurrences are still going on, or whether they appear to have ceased.



Discernment

In the search for evidence that a golem is active in an area, clues generally adhere to several different

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If the strange events are still occurring, you must move as rapidly as possible, for there is a reasonable chance someone is attempting to create a flesh golem and *may not have yet succeeded*. It is always preferable to stop the creator rather than confront his vastly more powerful creation. When hearing of such a report, it is often wise to immediately begin your investigation, even though it will probably prove to be a false alarm. The time before a golem is animated is often brief, and moving too slowly at this point may result in great tragedy for all concerned.

On the other hand, if the reports of such strange disturbances seem to have ceased, it is better to take a more cautious approach to your investigation. In all likelihood, either no golem is present, or the creature is already animate and thus extremely dangerous.

Unexplained Murders

Reports of unexplained murders, especially those of a particularly brutal nature, may also be evidence that a golem is on the rampage. When hearing such stories, try to determine whether the murderer used a weapon of some sort, or whether the attack was completed without resorting to such a device. If the attacker used a weapon of any kind, it is quite likely the killer is *not* a golem. The Created almost invariably prefer to kill using only their hands and brute physicality.

On the other hand, if the murders involve broken necks, beatings of amazing brutality, or other such extreme physical violence, one of the Created may well be the killer. In such cases, if at all possible, examine the bodies firsthand, Barring that, study the crime scenes, as you can often pick up valuable clues as to whether the deaths were caused by a golem.

Other Physical Evidence

There is, of course, other physical evidence pointing to the activities or mere existence of a golem. First and foremost is the testimony of a golem's creator. At times the work notes, diary, or other record of a golem's creator are discovered. Such records are invaluable for both their information on the specific golem and its powers, and on the creation of golems in general. Unfortunately, it is extremely rare to have the creator's notes to assist you. I have seen just four such records myself—and only once did the information involve the golem I was then attempting to destroy.

As noted above, evidence of great physical destruction may also indicate golem activity. Sometimes such destruction involves multiple deaths, as with the church destroyed by the glass golem mentioned in Chapter Four. Be on the alert for patterns in the place or type of place where the damage occurs (churches, farms, or hospices). In addition to identifying the creature, such information may later prove valuable in your hunt, as it reflects the golem's (and quite probably the creator's) particular hatreds and targets.

Investigation

Once you have decided that there is a reasonable chance that the story or report you have heard involves a golem, you must go about discovering whether or not this is actually true. Now, I want to make it clear that I am not advocating rushing off to investigate every strange tale of a lurking figure or a disappearance. But you will seldom find conclusive evidence that a golem is behind the stories without investigating personally. Therefore, you must decide whether the particular situation bears investigating.

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Once you have committed to the investigation, you must proceed to interview all witnesses. In addition, you must carefully observe any physical damage or evidence. If possible, examine the area's official records. Look for the same indications illustrated under "Discernment," above. Be diplomatic with the local officials; they are often suspicious of outsiders and disinclined to cooperate. This will be especially true if you have no credentials of your own to present. Do not be offended by such an attitude, however, for the officers are merely trying to do their work efficiently. Your best chance at attaining their aid is to appear as professional and responsible as you can.

If your investigation does not reveal that the perpetrator has extraordinary strength, or if you fail to locate any reliable witnesses, your trail may prove false. After all, the majority of cases are in actuality the work of mere mortals, however deranged or evil.

... I thought Jeffrey's tale was definitely worth investigating, so I asked the bright young lad if he would mind my accompanying him back to Devering. He readily agreed. In fact, he even said he'd read some of my books and had often considered becoming an investigator like myself!

When we arrived at the town two days later, I immediately set to work. Jeffrey proved to be an invaluable aide, introducing me to the local investigators, as well as to several witnesses who claimed to have seen a strange figure skittering through the dark streets at night while making strange gibbering sounds.

I was able to examine the body of the unfortunate young woman who had plunged from a window. As always, the sight of a young person who had been brought to

such a terrible end filled me with both sorrow and anger.

It was her body that convinced me there was a golem at work here, for not only was her neck crushed, but the attacker's left hand print was significantly smaller than the right print. This is one of the more certain indicators that a golem is at work, as such a large size differential (nearly four inches in this case) is almost never seen in nature.

By the time I turned away from the body, I had resolved to stop the malevolent monster that had stolen this woman's life so callously. Looking up, I saw my own conviction mirrored in young Jeffrey's pale face and set lips. I knew I could count on his aid as well.

Preparing for the Hunt

Once you have established that it is likely your enemy is indeed a golem, you must immediately gather all your resources, both mental and physical. Every preparation must be made as swiftly as possible, but not at such speed that you sacrifice quality.

Reinforcements

If you do not already have a team of skilled and brave individuals with you, now is the time to send for them! It would be the greatest of follies to attack a golem without as trustworthy and powerful a group as you can manage assisting you.

When sending for reinforcements, be certain to include magical talent. If possible, ask at least two priests and two mages to join your group. You must always assume a high casualty rate (unfortunately perhaps as high as fifty percent or more), and a party with no magical support is almost certain to meet with a grizzly end.

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... Once I had established the culprit to be some sort of flesh golem, I immediately had Jeffrey bring me pen and paper so I might send for allies to support us in our mission. Fortunately, I knew that a certain adventuring party known as the Hand was currently working in my home city of Rivalis. I had worked with the Hand before and found them to be highly skilled. Most importantly, four of the group's five members were magic wielders.

Within hours of confirming the golem's existence, a hired messenger was speeding toward Corvia with my urgent missive. If all went well, the Hand would be here within the week. ...

Research

It is imperative at this point in your mission that you learn as much as possible about the golem and, if possible, its creator. Question and requestion witnesses, read and reread documents pertaining to golems, such as the one you now hold. Go to every site the golem was said to have attacked and search the area for clues as to the monster's abilities or weaknesses.

Forming a Hypothesis

Once you have gathered as much information as you can regarding golems in general and your foe in particular, you must take some time to hypothesize. If possible, discuss the situation with one or more of your associates; people analyze information differently, and you will surely cover more possibilities if you have assistance.

Go over the information you have and determine what type of golem

you face. Any information you are certain of should be used as a springboard for your hypotheses. Additionally, it is wise to make estimations as to the possible upper extent of the golem's powers. Never assume that your foe is anything but the most powerful of creatures, for to do otherwise only places yourself and your companions at even greater risk than necessary.

... the next few days and nights passed in a blur as Jeffrey and I pored over our extensive notes and discussed what little we knew of our foe, including where and when the thing might make its next attack. Although we knew we were at a disadvantage, we decided it was highly likely the golem would return to this town within the month. For the disappearances happened approximately once every four weeks, and there seemed to be no particular reason why the "gibbering golem," as we had come to call our enemy, should change its established pattern.

Jeffrey's intimate knowledge of the town was particularly useful; he pointed out that all the women targeted by the golem had lived or worked near the town's southeastern edge. Thus we decided that the golem probably made its lair somewhere to the southeast. I asked Jeffrey whether any buildings lay in that direction, as many flesh golems prefer to inhabit the dwellings of mankind. Jeffrey immediately told me of the asylum. A smile came over his face as he realized what a critical turning point we had reached. Now we had a place to investigate. ...

Provisions

For any mission in which you plan to face one of the Created, it is imperative that you have the proper equipment. First and foremost, you must gather as many enchanted weapons as possible. It is inadvisable to invite anyone to accompany you in the hunt if they cannot wield such a weapon. Else, they have little chance of causing the golem any harm, much less of surviving, themselves.

It is also of vital importance to decide on a method of destroying the golem once you have felled the creature. The means must be swift and sure. If possible, you should form at least one contingency plan for the golem's destruction. Acid and magical fire are two good possibilities, as they both act swiftly and are harmful to the flesh golem. If you do not believe you will be able to utterly destroy the creature, then you can attempt to hack the golem's body into numerous pieces and scatter them widely. While it is true that such a dismembered golem might live to rise again later, you will at the least have removed its threat for the immediate future.

In addition to magical weapons, be certain that you have adequate first aid available to your group. Assume that some members of your hunting party will be seriously injured during the confrontation—for despite your best efforts, this is likely to occur. As noted earlier, at least one priest should accompany your hunting party. Two is an even better number. In addition, you should obtain bandages, antiseptics, and other medical paraphernalia. Finally, if at all possible, carry some magical, fast-acting medicines that anyone can administer, such as healing potions.

Reconnaissance

Unless you are already absolutely certain where the golem has established a lair, you must perform a

reconnaissance mission prior to your actual attack. Two or three individuals at most best perform such a task—more can hardly proceed with the necessary stealth or secrecy. The risks are great at this stage. If the golem should discover those who would seek it out, blood will surely flow. (I speak, of course, of the hunters' lifeblood ebbing away, for the golem itself cannot truly bleed.)

Usually, such a reconnaissance mission is best performed at night. Be certain to remind all involved that there is to be absolutely no contact with the golem! For this reason, it is never wise to include an inexperienced or arrogant person on this particular team.

During the mission itself, attempt to position yourselves as far as possible from the suspected lair, while still maintaining a good view. You must then be patient and observe. If you have indeed found the creature's home, the golem will almost certainly show itself at some point over the course of the evening—and if not, then over the course of the next.

It is my experience that most golems are restless, however. They tend to move around their chosen abode quite a bit, rarely staying still for long. Additionally, most reside alone, for golems are generally solitary creatures by both force and habit. Thus, if a steady stream of revelers flow from a house, it is not likely to be a golem's abode. If you do not spot your quarry the first night, I would advise watching the suspected abode for up to three or even four nights before checking closer or moving on. Once you confirm where the golem resides, you can complete your plan of attack.

... With the Hand not due to arrive in town for another two days, Jeffrey and I decided to investigate the asylum. At first I had objected to

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Jeffrey's accompanying me on this delicate task, but he argued so persuasively and calmly that I relented. Besides, I had no desire to spend the night alone, and two pairs of eyes are much more efficient than one.

Our vigil lasted well through the night. Just before dawn, we spotted our foe. He came skittering out of the forest, hooting and gibbering eerily, not two hundred yards from our position. I noted the thing's blinding speed and agility as it darted toward the asylum. In the predawn light, it was difficult to discern specifics, but even my weary eyes could make out the golem's misshapen, bulging form. I could feel poor Jeffrey shuddering beside me, and I am certain it was not from the cold. Despite his obvious horror, he was completely silent and did not flee. With the golem's lair confirmed, we returned to the town and awaited our fellows of the Hand.



Planning the Assault

As your final preparation before attempting to face your enemy, you should devise a plan and be certain that every member of your party knows his or her appointed tasks. This plan should be as detailed as possible, but should by no means be rigid. The expedition's members should also attempt to talk through the various things that might go wrong during your mission so that you will be as prepared as possible, should your plan start to go awry. In addition to providing contingency plans, this sort of discussion allows the expedition members to express their concerns and renew their commitment to the mission.

In addition to the general contingency plans made, you should always have an escape plan. It is no sign of virtue to remain fighting if your current battle is a lost cause. If you do not live through the battle, you will not be able to return to complete your task. If at all possible, such an escape plan should not be contingent on any one member of the group, in case that member should fall, inadvertently trapping your entire party.

The Attack

When all is in readiness, your party armed and prepared, your plan set and reviewed, and you have gathered your resolve, it is time to face your foe. Despite your desire for a surprise attack, it is wise to make your assault during daylight hours, as you will almost assuredly be more hampered by the darkness and shadows than your foe.

Once you have set forth on your mission, move swiftly! This point is absolutely essential when fighting a golem. Throw all your power and resources into the assault immediately. If you hold back, you are surely doomed. Every second that you face

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the golem brings you closer to death, for the golem is capable of doing such extreme amounts of damage that few men can withstand more than a few of its mighty blows.

You must also realize that, despite all your attempts at speed, there is a very high likelihood that your opponent will rise again before you can destroy the golem utterly.

... It was a brutally cold morning, especially so for Darkon in October, but the sky was clear and the sun just slipping over the horizon as we set out on our mission. The five members of the Hand were as follows: the two priestly twins, Jamillica and Serena; the elven warrior/mage Damien Lochwood; the Hand's indomitable warrior, Torus the Red; and the ever-quiet wizard, Corum of G'Henna. Counting myself and young Jeffrey, we were seven strong. As I looked over our group, I noticed the new blade gleaming by Jeffrey's waist, purchased just yesterday from Torus.

We proceeded to the asylum at an even pace. Entering the building was simple, for the door stood open to the elements. Proceeding cautiously, we stepped into the dank interior. My first thought was of the ruined hospices I had visited in Stangengrad. The shattered remains of bottles and jars littered the hall, and the smell of antiseptic mixed jarringly with the odor of decay. Steeling myself for the coming battle, we proceeded.

As we turning the corner of that gloomy hall, I had to grab Torus's arm; a man suddenly stood before us, and Torus was prepared to swing. But the man was no golem—though he looked to be near death. Gaunt and staring, his arms poised before him, the man

stood as still as a statue. Even as we took in the sight of the catatonic fellow before us, I noticed other men, who were shuffling aimlessly about in the shadows. Obviously the golem ignored many of the asylum's now freed inmates. So far, none appeared dangerous. But I feared an encounter with a murderous madman could weaken our party before we even met the golem, and I hoped our luck would hold.

By the time we actually encountered the golem, we were all feeling the strain of constant readiness. It did not help that we had been wandering through a maze of lunatics, dead bodies, and general filth. Before we could get our bearings, the golem came tumbling down upon us, landing on top of poor Damien's back. With a brief laugh, the thing snapped the elf's neck and dropped to the floor. Then, screaming and hooting, it attacked again.

Immediately Serena began to chant, her spell of regeneration twisting and tearing at the golem's form while it battled on. As Serena's powerful prayer took effect, the intensity of the golem's hooting increased, and I could feel the terror pulling at my heart. Shaking, I saw Torus turn to flee—only to be struck down by the golem before he could run!

Moments dragged by as we struggled with all our might to deflect the golem's mighty blows. Although I knew the creature must soon fall to the power of Serena's spell, every passing second seemed an eternity, and my arms were growing leaden with fatigue. . . .

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Destroying the Golem

It is essential that all is in readiness for the attempted destruction of the golem. Once the golem falls, you will have an extremely brief window of opportunity to accomplish this goal.

If, for whatever reason, you do not believe you will be able to destroy the golem utterly within a few minutes of its fall, *then you must flee immediately*. If you do not, be prepared to face a fresh and unharmed foe, while your party is almost assuredly possessed of serious injuries. Fighting a golem under such conditions will inevitably result in failure, and in failing there is certain death for you and your companions.

... As Jeffrey blocked a final, swiping blow by the golem, the creature slumped forward—its awful, terrorizing laughter echoing in our ears.

Three of my companions lay on the ground, wounded but miraculously still alive. Damien, of course, was dead. Only Serena, Jeffrey, and I had any fight left when the golem fell. Immediately,



we withdrew our phials of acid. We carefully poured the contents over the creature, then stepped away from the fumes, dragging our companions to their feet. We would not know for a few minutes whether we had acted quickly enough. I bade Serena to help the others outside—and to flee, if necessary. The three of us remaining waited. I cannot tell you how deeply it shook me to see the golem's hand rise, but it seems we were just in time, as it moved no more after that.

When we were certain of its death, we burned what little remained of the gibbering golem so that there would be no chance of its being reanimated once more.

As a final note, I am happy to report that Jeffrey has joined the Hand and is currently studying to be a mage. We need such young people to take up the fight against evil, for none of us will live forever.

When the madness and terror of the fight is concluded, you must tend to the wounded and bury the dead. If you have been so fortunate and skilled to have utterly destroyed your foe, you should be very proud of your great accomplishment.

Unfortunately, this sort of total victory is a rarity when fighting the Created. So do not be chagrined if you have but temporarily driven off the creature. This too is a worthy accomplishment when faced with such a deadly foe as the golem.

As a final word to you, my readers, I wish to salute you for your dedication and sacrifice in the service of others. It is no small thing to strive to be a force of light in the face of such fiendish, burning evil as is embodied in the Created!

Horror really can't be talked about because it's alive, because it's mute and goes on growing: memory-wounding pain drips by day, drips in sleep.

—George Seferis, *Last Stop*

APPENDIX FOR THE DM



Seferis' quote captures an important quality of horror and the horrible. What is truly horrifying cannot be conveyed by mere words.

In the face of our worst nightmares, language fails us. We are stripped of all civilized conventions, of our secure knowledge of what can and cannot be, and we are left alone, incapable of trusting what we have always relied on.

Golems are horrifying creatures on many levels, not the least of which is their strange parody of humanity. In Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, the villagers see a hideous monster and immediately leap to the conclusion that it is a monstrous being both inside and out. At first this may not be the case, but as the monster is rejected again and again by those it meets, as Dr. Frankenstein fights to control it body and soul, the monster indeed becomes what the villagers have condemned it to be: a creature of irrefutable evil.

The Created's closeness to ourselves brings the horror into our very laps. It is difficult to ignore or escape. In the movie *Halloween*, a murderous child known as Michael Myers returns to his placid middle-class suburban neighborhood to wreak mindless, unstoppable violence on the teens living there, and he does so with unnerving calm. (Myers is the prototype of a new wave of Hollywood golems that includes Jason and Chucky.) At the end of the movie, despite the best efforts of the film's heroine, and despite the fact that he should have been dead many times over, Michael disappears into the darkness.

There is no reasoning with golems, no under standing their true nature. They do seem to have a perverse understanding of us, however. Still, this understanding never leads to compassion. Rather, it only imbues the golem with a greater capacity for tracking and tormenting its victims.

Golems are the true bogeymen of the AD&D game. They are the creatures lurking under the bed, the things that go bump in the night. When a golem is handled to its best advantage during play, no other monster can equal the sheer heart-stopping terror it creates in a campaign.

Golem Adventures

There are four basic elements of particular importance to golem adventures: obsession, terror, intimacy, and tragedy. The whole tenor of an adventure can change by focusing upon a particular element or elements. For instance, using Dr. Van Richten's gibbering golem as an example, if the DM focuses on the tragic situation of the creature, born into a chaotic world with only the insane for company, desperately searching for a soul mate, the PCs may see their mission as one of release: freeing the gibbering golem from its mad and doomed existence. However, if the relentlessness of the golem is the focus of the scenario, the PCs may well begin to think *they* are mad as effort after effort fails to stop the horrid thing that laughs at them from the shadows and seems to be waiting around every corner, behind every door.

Before a Dungeon Master begins to work on a scenario involving golems, each of these four elements should be

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considered and their importance to the particular story determined. By taking just a little extra time and effort, the DM can provide the players with a scenario that is not just scary, but magnificently horrifying.

Obsession

Almost without exception, the creation of an intelligent golem involves obsession. Only through the obsessive drive of its creator can such a golem achieve life. Would-be creators who lack this obsession simply never succeed.

Obsession, as both a creative and destructive force, is an integral element of any golem scenario. The DM may use a creator's obsession to show the PCs the danger of such all-consuming drive. The creator reaches his goal, but at a horrible expense.

Conversely, in order for a party to defeat a golem, they must give up a great deal and devote their energies almost obsessively to the task at hand. The DM can easily slip in an encounter or two where the PCs must choose between temporarily backing down or sacrificing their principles to more easily reach their goal.

Obsession is purpose without balance. It involves an inability to see any viewpoint save one's own. Such a powerful emotion can create great good, pushing people to new heights they thought were unattainable. However, it can also become an end in and of itself.

Shakespeare often used obsessive characters as villains in his tragedies. Lady Macbeth would stop at nothing to gain power and position. Both golems and their creators are consumed by obsessions, and through these monsters we see our own faults grown to epic proportions.

Terror

The golem is the ultimate bogeyman. It is an unrelenting foe, seemingly

unstoppable. This element of primal terror is particularly relevant to scenarios involving the Created.

From the time we are children, we fear what we do not understand. Even more frightening is the enemy we cannot reason with or have power over. Golems are just such foes. Vampires, werewolves, and other classic monsters walk among us (at least at times), speak with us, and participate in society to an extent. All may share a particular Achilles heal, such as sunlight for the vampire, or the silver bullet for the werewolf. But golems do not participate in human society. And golem hunters have no foolproof weapon at their disposal.

Many players participate in a RAVENLOFT campaign because they enjoy the fear it inspires within them. It's the same reason we visit "haunted houses," tell ghost stories, and watch horror films. We like to be scared (at least through imaginary situations). For the DM, a golem is an ideal monster to just plain "scare the bejeezes" out of their players. For such thrill-seeking players, not much can top the horror of being certain you have destroyed your enemy—only to see it rise up again, good as new. After this has happened more than once, even hardened adventurers may be jumping at shadows and flinching away from every unexplained noise.

Intimacy

A common theme in gothic horror is the intimate situation—a comforting familiarity with a person or place that leads characters to drop their guards despite impending danger. In a golem adventure, characters should find themselves in a situation marked by such comforting familiarity. The Created often seek out human civilization and haunt its edges, sometimes yearning for acceptance, other times merely looking for prey. Thus, even the most familiar setting

can be the site of a golem scenario. But even if the PCs are in a strange town, they might still find a warm inn or a friendly tavern. When violence and fear strike in such comforting surroundings, the result is far more confusing and horrifying than, say, being attacked while crossing an orc tribe's lands.

As noted, an intimate situation may involve familiar people as well as places. For example, perhaps the golem's creator has stolen the animating spirit from someone the PCs know and care for. While the group may realize this awful truth at first, the golem may retain certain memories about the party and use the information against them. For example, if a character's mother has been ill, the golem might leave crude notes asking whether she has recovered.

Such a golem is particularly appropriate for the role of a recurring enemy. All golems make excellent recurring foes, of course, due to their power and regenerative abilities. But a creature whose spirit was linked to the PCs both before and after animation can add a neatly macabre note to confrontations. And having a PC wake to discover some evidence that a former acquaintance laid beside him in the night—when the PC had no idea that character was even in the area let alone still alive—can be as intimately horrifying as the kiss of the succubus. Of course, as the PCs soon discover, that former acquaintance will most certainly have changed for the worse.

Even more intimate and horrifying is discovering that a member of one's own adventuring party has been placed within the body of a golem. Such adventures approach their peak of horror as the golem PC rapidly begins to lose control, and his friends attempt to reverse the terrible transplantation before it is too late. This type of adventure is extremely tricky to run, however. Pacing and

balance are critical. To maintain effective tension, the DM must emphasize the golem PC's gradual loss of identity and control (which is the true horror), while still allowing the party some hope of saving the PC. If this balance can be struck correctly, however, you can be sure your players talk about this adventure for a long time to come.

Tragedy

Although golems are creatures of darkness, they are also creatures of great tragedy. As noted in Chapter Two, a golem may be animated by the life force stolen from another living being. During the course of its "kidnapping," the spirit becomes warped. However, it still maintains some idea of its former self, some memory of who it once was. The doomed spirit, twisted by the malignant obsessions of its creator, is evil and must be destroyed. The heart of the golem's tragic existence lies in both the tiny shred of humanity forever trapped within the golem's body and in the golem's initial doomed attempts to reach out to others from its utter isolation.

Frankenstein's monster is an excellent example of the doomed creation of a mad scientist. The creature yearns for companionship, acceptance, and even love, but its true nature can never allow the monster to attain these goals. Struggling and raging against its creator, its own nature, and the world that rejects it, Frankenstein's monster is a study in tragedy.

The golem's creator can also be portrayed as a tragic figure. With only minor modifications in the case history Dr. Van Richten presented in the last chapter, Fressen could be seen as a tragic figure. If his cold and disapproving father had murdered Danalie and then sent the grieving and shocked Fressen to the asylum, his

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story would truly be tragic and his creation of the golem "Father" seen as a pathetic attempt at finding love and acceptance himself.

The tremendous amount of destruction and loss of life can also bring a great deal of tragedy into the adventure. If the PCs must ride into a small village rent asunder by a golem, only to find a few children left alive of all the village's residents, or a mother sobbing over her dead child, they should certainly be moved by such a scene.

Techniques of Terror

When portraying golems in an adventure, it can be wise to pick up some tricks from horror novels and films. In general, think about what books or movies you find scary and then ask yourself why they scare you. Often, when a person is asked to think of what particular event scares him, he cites something along these lines: A monster jumps out of a closet at the hero. But what they actually found scariest was the tension as the hero walked through the house. Knowing that there is a monster out there *somewhere* is much scarier than simply having it stand before you. When the monster comes out from under the bed, you can at least attack.

Gothic horror relies heavily upon the fear of the unknown. Golems are an ideal way to bring this sort of terror into an AD&D campaign. They are inscrutable, they are evil personified, and they are out there somewhere. Maintaining this sense of uncertainty and imminent danger is one of the best ways of putting a party on edge.

Here's another method of enhancing the fear caused by a golem: Never let the PCs get a good look at their foe until the final confrontation. While playing the role of NPCs, arrange for a few horrified witnesses to mumble about "those terrible, terrible eyes" or some such. Let the PCs see the

devastation wrought by the creature. When the heroes arrive on the scene of such destruction, time the adventure so they're only a few moments too late, again and again, though they may catch a glimpse of the fleeting creature. In short, allow the players' own imaginations to do some of your work for you. After all, each of us has our own particular fears, and the images they conjure in our minds are those which horrify us the most.

The movie *Alien* provides an excellent example of this visual restraint. Ripley and the other crewmembers of their space freighter first see the young alien as it emerges from a crewmember's stomach (killing him in the process). The viewer shares their horror as the victim's stomach bulges and pulses, yet the creature itself is seen only fleetingly. Then the crewmembers know an alien is aboard their ship, but they can find only its trail—the skin that it sheds as it grows and grows. One by one, the crewmembers are picked off and eaten; still, we are granted little more than a glimpse of the attacker. (This film is also an excellent example of utilizing more than just sight to create horror and suspense. Sound, touch, smell, and taste are all important senses and should not be ignored when describing both your monster and the surroundings the PCs are in.)

Another means of making the Created truly terrifying is to emphasize their relentlessness. This quality is best conveyed through extremes: a golem displaying primal levels of emotion and destruction, or a golem that exhibits a complete absence of these qualities. In the latter case, for example, the enemy may walk at the same, deliberate pace, no matter what its victims do or how fast they run. This can be vastly more frightening than a golem who performs the pell-mell attack typical of many monsters. After all, a creature who feels no need to hurry must be confident in its eventual success. This

technique is especially effective when the PCs are on the run. The use of a recurrent golem foe (as discussed above under *intimacy*) can also be an excellent device for wearing at the PCs' nerves and causing them to feel always on the alert.

A final method that often proves effective in provoking fear is a *horror* movie stand-by that goes something like this: Create tension (Billy sneaks through the gymnasium trying to escape the monster he knows is out there), then create a shock (suddenly a dark figure looms up behind Billy), which turns out to be a false alarm (it's only Billy's goofy friend, Eddie, wondering what Billy's doing), and *then* spring the real shock on the relaxed audience (now the monster strikes!).

Of course, some players are hard sells, and if all your techniques to cause horrified and fearful reactions in your players fail, you can resort to using fear and horror checks. But it is infinitely more fun for all concerned if the PCs are actually scared and horrified.

Creating New Golems

Imagine you've decided which elements of horror you'd like to emphasize during your adventure, and have begun to develop a story line. You've decided who is attempting to create a golem and why. Now it's time to determine the exact nature of the golem, the malevolent heart of your story. The methods outlined below will help you create a unique monster especially suited to your campaign.

Using the MONSTROUS MANUAL tome

The simplest and quickest method of creating a new golem is to consult the golem entries in the MONSTROUS MANUAL book and the RAVENLOFT appendices to the MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM series. Even though these golems are automatons created by

wizards and priests, as opposed to intelligent creatures born of an obsession, the descriptions can still provide a useful springboard.

In any case, start by considering the golem's creator. Is he (or she) a blacksmith, for example? Consult the entry for the golem variety that best suits the creator and your story line (such as iron for the blacksmith).

Even using this sort of shortcut, you can create a unique golem. In fact, it's always a good idea to adjust the standard creature a bit so that your PCs must remain on their toes, not knowing exactly what type of enemy they face. Uncertainty will add excitement, fear, and mystery to your adventure.

During play, be careful not to make a pronouncement like this: "It looks like a flesh golem." Such a statement completely deflates what is otherwise a dramatic moment: the moment the PCs see their foe. Instead, *describe* the hideous, lumbering humanoid with a lopsided face, sagging skin, and huge hands, smelling faintly of blood and decay, or a fiendish creature that leaps from a rooftop and lands before the PCs as deftly as a cat. This kind of description prevents the players from recognizing the creature and immediately making a mental roster of its combat abilities.

When you've created a golem based on a standard type, it's especially important to prolong some of the mystery about that creature during play. One of the golem's main strengths is its resiliency. If the PCs are unaware of the exact nature of their enemy, they will be extremely shocked when the golem rises up from "death," apparently unharmed.

Starting from Scratch

This method for building a new golem takes more time, but the results will reflect that effort. You'll have complete control over your creation, and can

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tailor the golem to your exact specifications.

Earlier in this book, Van Richten presented common traits, vulnerabilities, and extraordinary powers of golems. These can serve as guidelines for your new creature. Consider the information to be suggestions only; it is not intended to be a rigid system of inflexible rules. The purpose of this book is to open up possibilities and expand the options of you, the DM, not to limit your creativity.

When building golems from scratch, remember how powerful these monsters are. Be careful to balance the golem's special abilities with at least a few vulnerabilities. It is a delicate task to create a monster that appears nearly unstoppable, but is also a monster the PCs have a chance of defeating. The gibbering golem described by Dr. Van Richten is an example of a golem "created from scratch."

PC Golems

If your story calls for the spirit of an NPC to be planted in the body of a golem, plotting the adventure is relatively easy. But what happens if a player character is the victim? This potentially dramatic twist poses special challenges. Certainly, the desperate fight to save the PC is the stuff of great adventure. However, becoming a golem must in no way benefit the PC.

In most cases, a golem's animating force, or spirit, has only the fragmented memory of its former self, and then only briefly. However, if your story calls for a PC's spirit to be transferred to a golem body, then the personality of the character should remain intact for a short time. This allows the PC and his friends a window of opportunity in which to save the unfortunate character. Bear in mind, however, that the sudden disruption of changing bodies is *always* followed by

the deterioration of the PC's mind and personality as he rapidly becomes a creature of obsession and evil.

The section below explains how long a PC's spirit may inhabit a golem before this atrocity is irreversible (and the player must abandon his or her role). It also describes what happens to a PC's personality and abilities when he becomes a golem. You may wish to devise your own methods of golem animation, but the following guidelines should provide a springboard for your imagination.

The Energy Surge

As noted in Chapter Two, a powerful surge of energy binds a spirit to the golem's body. When that surge occurs, the PC must make a system shock check. If he fails this check, his body dies during the transfer of the spirit, and the player must immediately give control of his character to you, the DM. The player should then create a new character, for the old one is permanently lost, trapped within its new golem body.

On the other hand, if the system shock roll is successful, the PC finds himself a golem. Within 2 to 24 (2d12) hours, the character will remember his true identity, although he will only have hazy memories of his transformation. He will have an acute sense of physical power, however—a power derived from his new form.

Brain Transplants

An adventure in which the physical brain of a player character is placed within the body of a golem offers an even more extreme plot twist. This ploy should only be used if you feel the PCs will have some chance, however slim, of restoring their comrade to his original state. There is an added difficulty, as the PC's body almost assuredly (barring extreme magical measures such as the use of a *time stop* spell or the like) actually dies

during the physical operation. The death of the character's body makes it that much more difficult for his companions to restore the unfortunate PC. In any case, the PC must make a successful system shock roll to survive. (See "Reversing the Transformation" on page 286 for more information.)

Changes by Class

When the mind and personality of a PC enter the body of a golem, the character's abilities can change dramatically. These effects are explained below. Of course, the normal changes first imposed on PCs when they entered the dark lands of Ravenloft are still in effect. Avengers, arcanists, and gypsies are all character classes that are defined in the *Domains of Dread* rulebook.

Warriors and Avengers: Save for the tremendous strength of the warrior's adopted golem body, the change does not significantly affect the PC's abilities. However, if the warrior utilizes this prodigious strength (or any of the other abilities of his new form) in combat, the character will find himself that much further from salvation (see "Effects on Personality," below). Avengers, while in a golem body, are less focused on their creator as they are on their nemesis. If their nemesis is within 10 miles, they may develop a telepathic link, like that a normal golem has with its creator. They lose all other benefits, and may find it hard to resist using their golem powers.

Paladins: A paladin entering the body of a golem in Ravenloft loses almost all of the paladin's powers. The paladin cannot successfully discover whether a being is chaotic while in the new body, nor can he heal himself or others while in golem form.

The paladin does, however, receive one small boon: He is no longer detectable by the lord of the domain. Further, he retains the ability to turn undead. However, any attempt to do so suffers a -4 penalty due to the in-

creased difficulty the paladin has at focusing his willpower and faith while in the golem body. If the paladin ever uses one of the golem's many abilities, or when he inevitably begins to be corrupted by his new form, he suffers an alignment change and loses all the special abilities of his class (see "Effects On Personality," below). In order to regain the paladin's abilities and alignment, the character must (at a minimum) embark on a holy quest. DMs must determine the effect on a paladin's powers when in a golem in lands other than the *Domains of Dread*.

Rangers: Rangers completely lose their animal empathy while in the body of a golem. Animals can sense the unnaturalness of the ranger's new form and instinctively shy away. If the ranger has any animal followers, they too will avoid their master. The animals will have no idea what has happened to the ranger. It is entirely possible they'll think the character has died and then move on. If the ranger regains his own body, the animals will return, provided they're still in the area.

Wizards and Arcanists: When placed within the body of a golem, a wizard immediately loses all ability to cast spells. Although the character retains the knowledge necessary to work magic, the body and brain of a golem are incapable of channeling the necessary energies. Try as he might, the wizard cannot master magic of any sort until he is returned to his own body. Arcanists are affected much the same as wizards. They can still, to a degree, enforce their will upon the mindless dead, however. All such attempts are to turn or command undead suffer a -4 penalty. The Arcanist's knowledge of forbidden lore is not affected.

If the wizard has a familiar, the character may well lose that companion forever. The familiar itself runs a risk of dying from the psychological shock of the character's transfiguration. When a wizard becomes a golem, the player

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Timetable for Personality Dissolution

Mental State	Wisdom 3-4	Wisdom 5-7	Wisdom 8-10	Wisdom 11-12	Wisdom 13-14	Wisdom 15-16	Wisdom 17-18
<i>Intact</i>	1 day	1 day	1 day	2 days	2 days	3 days	3 days
<i>Dominant</i>	2 days	3 days	5 days	6 days	8 days	9 days	10 days
<i>Balanced</i>	2 days	4 days	6 days	7 days	8 days	9 days	11 days
<i>Faint</i>	2 days	2 days	2 days	3 days	3 days	4 days	4 days
<i>Golem</i>	8th day	11th day	15th day	19th day	22nd day	26th day	29th day

Notes: First, locate the column for the PC's Wisdom. The text in that column describes the length of time spent in each mental state. Each time the PC uses any golem power, Wisdom is reduced by -1 for purposes of determining rate of personality decay. If the PC's brain was **transplanted** into the golem body, add 1 day to the duration of each stage.

should roll a saving throw vs. death magic for the animal. If the check is successful, the familiar survives. If not, the result is fatal.

However, even if the poor familiar survives the initial trauma, it will remain in a state of shock and attempt to flee the area. If the familiar is not stopped, chances are it will never be seen again, and any remaining bond between the mage and the animal will dissolve. However, if the familiar is somehow kept in the area and the wizard is restored to his normal body, the wizard can attempt once, and only once, to restore the bond. In order to do so, the mage must again cast the *find familiar* spell. If successful, the mage will regain the bond with his familiar.

If the above method fails, however, the familiar will view the mage as dangerous and will make every attempt to flee. It will never again be the wizard's familiar, and the wizard's powers are as affected as if the familiar had died.

Priests: Like a paladin, a priest who is placed in the body of a golem finds it extremely difficult to focus his faith and willpower. Thus, attempts at turning the undead incur a -4 penalty. This penalty is in addition to any other penalties the priest may suffer due to other conditions in Ravenloft.

The priest's spellcasting abilities are

also affected. While in a golem body, the priest can cast no spells above 3rd level. Additionally, the base chance of spell failure is 50%. For every point of Wisdom over 12, this percentage is reduced by 5. Thus, a priest with a Wisdom of 15 has a 35% chance of spell failure while in a golem body.

Rogues: If a rogue is placed in a golem's body, his abilities change to match the physical traits of the new form. However, unless the body has exceptionally dexterous digits and limbs, the rogue will suffer a penalty to any skills requiring finesse (lock picking, picking pockets, etc.). This penalty normally ranges from -10% to -50%. It is up to the DM to determine the specific penalties involved.

In addition to suffering the penalties just noted, a bard or a gypsy in the body of a golem can no longer utilize any of his magical abilities, including the ability to charm. Further, like the wizard, he cannot cast spells.

Effects on Personality

During the initial hours following a player character's transfer to a golem body, he becomes acquainted with the amazing strength of his new form. However, while power is gained, much is at stake: The transfer to golem form puts the character squarely on the path to becoming a creature of evil, in mind as well as body.

As the DM, you should describe in vivid detail the character's newfound physical prowess and abilities. However, if the character ever uses these abilities—the abilities of an inherently monstrous form—the inevitable dissolution of the character's personality occurs more swiftly.

Any time the PC uses a golem ability, you should make a powers check for that character. The base chance of attracting the attention of dark powers of the Demiplane should be roughly 10%. Feel free to vary this chance based on how and why the character has used his abilities. (For example, if he was saving a small child from harm, the chance might only be 5%, but if the PC used his powers for personal gain, the percentage should be much higher.) The *RAVENLOFT Domains of Dread* rulebook offers more advice for adjudicating PC actions and powers checks.

If the PC fails a powers check, make a note of it. Later, if the PC is successfully returned to his own body, describe the effects of that failure. These checks are cumulative. Thus, it is entirely possible for an incautious PC to find himself a creature of Ravenloft—an NPC—even as he thinks he has been saved.

This descent into darkness leads only so far. The PC *will not* reach the final stage through any actions the PC golem takes, and thus will not become a lord of a domain. Instead, once a PC golem has reached that point, actions that would otherwise require further checks merely cause his personality to dissolve at even greater speed.

In particular, for every powers check "skipped," the PC golem's personality immediately shifts to the next level of dissolution shown on page 284. Thus, a PC whose personality was in the balanced category before the evil act would decline to faint, thereby coming one step closer to total personality loss and NPC status.

Unfortunately for the poor PC, even if he refrains from using the dark

abilities of his new body, he merely keeps alive for a brief while longer the slim hope of returning to his former self. The amount of time a PC has before he becomes an NPC is based on the character's Wisdom and whether or not his brain was transplanted into the golem's body. Characters who've undergone such a transplant tend to retain their own personalities for a slightly greater period of time, as more of their "true self" inhabits the body.

Stages of Dissolution

The table on page 284 shows how many days elapse before a PC's personality disintegrates and he is forever lost. This disintegration is marked by five stages: intact, dominant, balanced, faint, and golem. Consult the column corresponding to the character's Wisdom. Anytime the PC uses the powers of his new form, however, his Wisdom is reduced by 1 point for purposes of determining the rate of the character's decline.

The text below defines each of the five stages of personality dissolution. This information should be shared with the player trapped in the golem body, so he can attempt to roleplay accordingly. If the player does not do so, however, feel free to have the PC make both fear and horror checks as he slowly feels himself losing control.

Intact: The PC's personality is essentially unchanged at this first stage. However, the PC should certainly be horrified by his situation and behave accordingly.

Dominant: Minor changes occur in the PC's personality. Although the PC is still in charge, tell the character he feels angry, moody, and hurt over minor incidents that would normally not bother him at all.

Balanced: At this point, the PC is truly caught up in the struggle to control his personality. No matter what the PC's original alignment was, it now becomes chaotic due to the PC's inner

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PC Golem Self-Control

Personality	—Roll 1d6—					
Level	1	2	3	4	5	6
Intact	A	A	A	B	C	D
Dominant	A	A	B	B	C	D
Balanced	A	B	C	C	D	D
Faint	B	C	C	D	D	D

Key

- A) PC remains in control of actions.
- B) PC flees scene for 1d4 rounds.
- C) PC attacks nearest nonparty member(s); regains senses in 1d10 rounds.
- D) PC loses control and attacks anything in sight for 1d10 rounds.

turmoil. Tell the PC he feels great confusion and strange desires, and that he is beginning to feel his control slipping away. The PC's mood begins to swing even more erratically than before.

Faint: By this point the PC has lost almost all of his original personality. The golem personality has gained the upper hand, and you should only allow the player to take the role of the PC only for brief intervals. At other times, you should control the PC, treating him as a young golem.

Golem: The PC has now lost his struggle and is a golem in every sense. The player has lost a character, for the golem is an NPC.

The Inner Struggle

While the PC is within the golem body, the character is in a constant struggle to maintain control of both his mind and body. Such a struggle is intense, and any sort of conflict or surprise can cause the PC to lose his grip, even if only for a short while. Even something so small as another party member or an NPC disagreeing with the PC golem may cause the PC to lose control.

Whenever violence of any kind occurs, when anyone disagrees strongly with the words or actions of

the PC golem, or when the PC golem is surprised, consult the table to the left to determine whether the PC maintains control. (Find the row corresponding to the character's personality state, then roll 1d6 to find the column listing the PC's reaction.) As the DM, you may also make this "self-control" check whenever you deem it appropriate.

Reversing the Transformation

The methods for restoring a PC golem to his rightful body vary according to the manner in which the character's life essence was originally transferred: through a surge of energy, or a through a brain transplant.

The Energy Surge: In this case, those who conduct the reverse transfer must possess both bodies: the character's own and the golem's. They must then utilize some sort of powerful energy charge again. The amount of power required is a matter for you, the DM, to decide. However, this reversal definitely calls for some effort and planning on the part of the PCs. The most important factor to consider is what type of quest you and your players will most enjoy. Several possible scenarios are outlined below. Whatever the method, however, when the reversal is attempted, the character must make a successful system shock roll. If the PC fails this check, the character and both bodies die.

- The party sets up a "Dr. Frankenstein" style laboratory (or uses the creator's lab, if he had one). Lightning is somehow harnessed to create the necessary energy surge.
- The adventurers become detectives, hunting in old libraries and ancient ruins to rediscover ancient alchemical formulae. One of these concoctions, when swallowed, frees the spirit to return to its body, while the second forces a spirit to leave its current form.
- The party uncovers information regarding a legendary magical pool

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that will reverse such a terrible transformation, provided both bodies are placed within it. Or perhaps they discover a legendary portal, and both bodies must be sent through it. This type of storyline can be used to send the party on an urgent quest in which they must fight against both time and any obstacles the DM places in their way to save their companion.

- Some bizarre magical item may also be used to place a PC in the body of a golem or to replace the PC in his original body.
- **Transplantation:** For obvious reasons, both bodies must be on hand to attempt a reverse transplantation of the brain. The procedure is complicated by two factors: the physical operation needed and the (probable) physical death of the PC's body.

The operation must be performed quickly, and a *heal* spell must be cast on the PC's own body at the moment the brain is replaced. The PC must make a successful system shock roll to survive this surgery.

If the PC's original body is dead, a *resurrection* spell must also be employed immediately following the *heal* spell. However, if the PC's body has been kept alive somehow, this second step is unnecessary. If the operation is successfully completed before the PC's personality has deteriorated (see page 284), the PC will be restored.

Lasting Effects

Even if a PC golem is successfully restored to his original human or demihuman state, he still bears the scars of this horrendous experience. Recovery from such trauma is slow, and it may never be complete.

The text below describes the lingering effects of such a reversal. The damage incurred depends on how long the PC was trapped in the golem body. Effects are cumulative, so a PC who reached the "balanced" stage mentally

receives all the ill effects of the earlier stages as well as the effects noted for the balanced stage.

Intact: The PC automatically suffers the effects of a failed horror check.

Dominant: The PC's Charisma score is reduced by 2 points due to mood swings and difficulty relating to others. Such the moodiness and resulting loss of Charisma last from one to four (1d4) months.

Balanced: The PC loses one experience level due to extensive memory loss.

Faint: The PC suffers from a *split personality*. In times of great stress (DM discretion), the PC's "dark side" may emerge and take control. The PC must make a Wisdom check with a -2 penalty to avoid slipping into his secondary personality.

If the PC does change personalities, he comes under the control of the DM for a period of one to four (1d4) turns. When the PC recovers from one of these episodes, he will remember nothing of that time period. This effect can only be cured by *heal*, *wish*, or a similar spell.

A Final Caution

As the DM, you should think carefully before creating any PC golems in your campaigns. Players do not like having their characters manhandled, especially when such treatment results in the death of their favorite character! However, you may wish to utilize the unique element of personal horror that a PC golem adds to an AD&D campaign. Seeing your friend struggle to control an alien and evil body (or having a character in such a position), and managing to save the individual is truly a heroic task. If the PCs should fail in their task, knowing the hideous creature who is now their enemy was once a valued companion should horrify party members. Whenever a PC realizes he is confronting a golem that was once a friend, the PC must make both fear and horror checks.

GOLEM, FLESH, RAVENLOFT

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Any
FREQUENCY: Very rare
ORGANIZATION: Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE: Any
DIET: Nil
INTELLIGENCE: Average
TREASURE: Nil
ALIGNMENT: Chaotic neutral or evil
No. APPEARING: 1
ARMOR CLASS: 6
MOVEMENT: 12
HIT DICE: 9 (40 hp)
THACO: 11
No. OF ATTACKS: 2 (fists)
DAMAGE/ATTACK: 2d8/2d8
SPECIAL ATTACKS: Strangulation
SPECIAL DEFENSES: See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE: Nil
SIZE: L (7'-8' tall)
MORALE: Fearless (19)
XP VALUE: 5,000

The madman who fashions a flesh golem must harvest its parts from at least six corpses: one for each limb, another for the head and torso, and yet another for the creature's brain. Most creators use an even larger collection of parts. For instance, the eyes may be drawn from one body, while the hands come from another. The result, sewn into a scarred mass, is always ghastly. While individual golems vary in appearance, none has the flat head and neck bolts common to old horror movies.

Combat: The Ravenloft flesh golem is made of strangely "living" tissue, but its body is highly resilient. While fire and acid cause normal damage, nonmagical weapons cannot penetrate its skin; only weapons of +1 or greater enchantment can strike it. Attacks from monsters of at least 4+1 Hit Dice also harm the golem (PCs don't qualify).

The flesh golem is immune to all cold and electrical attacks. (Note that electricity does not regenerate hit points, as it does for the flesh golems created in other campaign worlds.) The Ravenloft flesh golem is also immune to toxins, disease, and any attack that involves a biological function alien to the creature—in particular breathing, resting, or aging.

Most spells do not affect the golem. It cannot be teleported. It is immune to all mind-affecting magic, such as *charm person* and *sleep*. However, it cannot automatically detect invisible creatures or see through illusions, unless the corresponding magic is cast directly upon the golem (*phantasmal killer*, for example).

Excluding cold or electrical attacks, magical assaults that cause a loss of hit points can harm the golem. However, it gains a +4 bonus to its saving throw against such attacks. While failure means it incurs damage, most other spell effects are ignored. This applies only to

spells cast directly upon the golem, including those with an area effect. It does not include "side effects." For example, if a *wall of stone* falls on a golem, the golem does not eliminate the wall with its touch. The golem is also vulnerable to *wish*, *limited wish*, and level-draining attacks (though it always gets a +4 saving throw bonus to avoid a loss of hit points).

The golem has a special attack, which it can use when it pleases. If it strikes with both fists in the same round, it can begin strangling its victim during the next round. Strangulation causes 3d8 points of damage each round—automatically. The victim cannot escape unless he has a Strength of 19 or greater. It is possible for two people to break the golem's grip (one on each arm), provided each person has a Strength of at least 17.

The Ravenloft flesh golem boasts unique regenerative powers. It recovers 1 hit point an hour, whether or not it is resting. If its hit points drop below 0, the creature ceases to heal. The body is not dead, however, merely incapacitated. The mind is unconscious. If at least 50% of the creature's parts remain intact, the golem can be stitched and repaired. If it then receives a bolt of electricity, it reawakens, fully restored.

Only fire and acid can permanently destroy the body of the flesh golem. Anything less, and the creature may be reanimated at a later date. Fire is also harmful indirectly; the golem fears it. Unless it makes a successful fear check (save vs. paralysis), it must remain at least 10 feet from small flames (cooking fires, torches, etc.) and at least 25 feet from larger flames (bonfires, many torches together, and so on). Even a lit match may anger it, though no check is required. The fear check number for flesh golems is 12 (the usual number is 8, but a -4 penalty is imposed). If a golem is forced too close to a flame, consult the fear check results table in *Domains of Dread* to determine the creature's reaction.

Habitat/Society: Ravenloft flesh golems are fashioned by mad men—from scientists to artisans—and given life by the mysterious forces of the Demiplane. They live as hermits and long to be accepted by mankind, though most are too evil or insane to fit in. The inevitable rejection they suffer leads to a deep hatred of living creatures, especially humans and demihumans. Most eventually murder their creators.

The animating spirit belongs to the brain used to make the golem, or that of another creature transferred into it. This spirit is usually warped in the process, however. Therefore, it's much more primitive and child-like, and may retain very little memory of its former existence.

Ecology: Flesh golems have no meaningful place in the environment.

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ISBN 0-7869-1447-5



U.S. \$24.95 CAN \$36.95