

SWORD & SORCERY

# Ravenloft

CHAMPIONS OF DARKNESS



A Ravenloft Campaign Setting Supplement



# CHAMPIONS OF DARKNESS<sup>™</sup>

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Introduction:  
A Treacherous  
Path

"We shouldn't be here, Henri." Paul's pleading statement, tinged as it was with fear, brought a mischievous smile to Gaspare's face. He glanced back at Henri and Paul and placed a finger against his lips urging silence. Henri gulped and nodded at Gaspare. Paul looked even more fearful and was about to speak again when the sound of a door opening in the next room startled them all. Gaspare immediately moved back to the small crack that let him see some of the room. Henri moved closer and placed his ear to the wall. Paul stayed where he was, trembling.

"Well, do you have her?" a harsh voice said. Gaspare could just make out a pair of legs in rugged trousers and high leather boots that shifted a bit at the question.

"Not yet, my lord, but I will have her soon enough." The voice, punctuated by a nasty laugh, seemed to come from the owner of the booted feet. "After all, they have no choice but to sell her. It's just a matter of a day or so more before they are convinced that my offer is the only one they are going to get."

Gaspare looked over at his companions, excitement shining in his eyes. Taking note of Paul's trembling, he just shook his head and turned back to the crack.

"And everything is in place for the hunt next week?" the harsh voice asked. The owner of the booted feet shifted a bit and now Gaspare could see another pair of legs in the fine breeches and well made boots of a noble.

"Everything is ready, my lord, except for the prey, but as I said, she should be ours within a couple of days."

"Excellent, the girl should give us good sport," the harsh voice replied with a laugh that chilled all three boys.

Overcome with terror, Paul leapt up and ran for the door, knocking over some of the abandoned crates in the process. The sound in the other room stilled. Gaspare and Henri joined their companion in flight. They did not get far before the door opened, admitting the two men that Gaspare had seen in the other room. The one Gaspare had identified as a nobleman immediately gestured and spoke a word, and the man in high boots grabbed Paul's arm. Gaspare felt a wave of lassitude pass over him that seemed to be freezing his limbs in place; Henri froze in mid-stride and fell unmoving to the floor. Gaspare shook off the momentary feeling, snatched up a crate and threw it at the nobleman. Luckily, he realized that the crate concealed a hole in the wall just large enough for him to fit through.

Taking advantage of the noble's momentary preoccupation, Gaspare dove through the hole and ran out of the old warehouse. He hid, hoping that if the two men took his friends with them, he could follow them and perhaps come to their rescue. He did not wait long before he saw the fellow with the high boots come out with two large sacks that he tied onto a horse and led off down the alley. Gasping for breath and trying not to make a sound, Gaspare followed, flitting from shadow to shadow.

Gaspare trailed his quarry to a stable near the city gates where he acquired another horse saddled for riding. It was obvious to Gaspare that the high-booted man intended to leave the city. Without a horse of his own, Gaspare had no chance of following him.

"Well, what will you do now, little one?" a harsh voice whispered in Gaspare's ear as a hand clamped onto his shoulder.

Gaspare turned his head to see the nobleman leaning over him, a predatory smile on his face. "You are very good, you know. Great potential ... and I so hate to see such promise go to waste." The noble looked Gaspare up and down again, and in an almost

purring tone said, "Yes, you'll fit in very nicely. Now come along quietly and you will be given a chance at power beyond anything you could imagine." His face grew cold and sharpness tinged his voice as he continued: "Cross me, and I'll turn you over to the guards as a petty thief."

Given the alternatives, Gaspare followed the noble to the stable, where he was ordered to get up on the horse with the man he had followed. The man gave him a feral grin as he offered Gaspare a hand up. The nobleman had a third horse brought out for himself, and they rode out of the city and into the forest.

Before long, they came to a clearing that held an elegant hunting lodge. Servants came out to take the horses unload the sacks from the packhorse's back.

"Place them in the guest quarters downstairs," the nobleman ordered before turning to Gaspare. "Welcome to your new home, young man," he said in a silken voice. "You may call me Sir. You may eventually earn the right to call me by some other name, but that is for the future. I shall call you 'Boy' until you have earned the right to a name." He smiled at Gaspare and beckoned him to follow him into the lodge. Gaspare hesitated. Sir looked back at him and gestured. Gaspare felt someone slam into him and knock him to his knees.

"Better get moving, Boy," chuckled the other fellow, who had come up behind Gaspare. "You don't want to make him angry." He aimed a kick at Gaspare, forcing him to scramble to his feet and move toward the lodge. The boy reined in his anger and fear and went along quietly.

"I see you do have some intelligence," the nobleman observed. "Good, that will make things easier for you. Now, I am going to give you some time to settle into your room. You will stay there until I call for you." He led Gaspare up a flight of stairs and opened the door to a small but well furnished room. As he entered his new home, Gaspare heard the door lock behind him.

Several hours later, Sir came to collect him. Night had fallen, and Gaspare could hear the sounds of the forest filtering in through the windows of the lodge. Sir led him back outside and gestured for Gaspare to precede him into the forest. "We are going to play a little game, Boy. It's called 'Cat and Mouse.' The object of the game is very simple: the Cat tries to hunt down the Mouse. The Mouse tries to outwit the Cat." As he said this, Sir's voice took on a deeper, growling quality. "You will be the Mouse and I . . . I am the Cat." As he spoke, Sir transformed into a large panther as Gaspare watched, horrified. The panther screamed and leaped for the boy. Gaspare screamed in terror and ran for his life. He tore through the forest, trying everything he could think of to throw Sir off his trail. The panther pursued him steadily, its cool familiarity with the forest evident in its casual, unhurried lope. After what seemed like hours, Gaspare stopped, collapsing against a tree trunk, his chest heaving and his breath coming in great shuddering gasps. Sir found him there and pounced on him, sinking his teeth into Gaspare's arm. The boy shut his eyes, expecting to feel claws rip into him and fangs tear at his throat. Nothing more happened. When Gaspare finally opened his eyes, he saw Sir standing there in his human form, looking amused.

"That was not a bad chase, Boy," he said smiling. "We'll see how you do when you change and learn to hunt." Sir took Gaspare's arm and led him, unprotesting, back to the lodge. As the truth of his fate dawned upon him, Gaspare felt waves of terror and anger shudder through him, followed at last by an inconsolable sadness — his innocence shattered, his childhood lost.



*And oftentimes, to win us to our harm,  
The instruments of darkness tell us truths,  
Win us with honest trifles, to betray 's  
In deepest consequence.*

— William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*



Inside the heart of every hero is a bitter seed, a shadow of pride or selfish love or a goal that must be reached, no matter what the final horrific cost. Those caught within the Mists, dwelling in the dark realms of **Ravenloft**, find their shadows fed and their obsessions encouraged. Such seeds blossom into distorted flowers of blood and hate. The heroes in *Champions of Darkness* twist on almost irremovable barbed hooks of inner pain, rapt in the seductive call of the Dark Powers.

An anti-hero begins with one foot already on the road to damnation. No matter how lofty his goals, no matter how just his cause, he is lost. The Dark Powers gaze into the passionate depths of his heart, calling forth blackness and rot. Fallen heroes wend their myriad ways to villainy and despair, perhaps earning — after passing the point of no return — the title of darklord.

Why would any player dream of portraying such a character? Why would someone knowingly place a beloved creation in a situation so cruel and seemingly insurmountable? What possible excuse could any player give? The following answers suggest some of the motivations for playing a character wracked by inner conflict.

## The Anti-Hero



Anti-heroes provide a challenge for players. They have depth, anguish, angst, and occasionally dress with a flair unknown to any brown-robed cleric or knight in battered plate armor. And frankly, however well loved the leading man or woman may be, the tormented anti-hero offers the meatier role.

Clean-cut heroes too often stride through life, swords dripping with the blood of evildoers, no thought that they might ever be wrong crossing their minds or hearts. Right is as much a fact of their lives as the sun in the sky. Heroes newly come to the domains have yet to learn what any Barovian child could tell them: in **Ravenloft**, night has a way of falling without warning.

Within the Dread Realms, any innocent may lose her way along the rose-strewn path of good

intent one evening and find a monster staring through her eyes in the mirror before morning's dawn. Werewolves may inflict their curse upon her. She may find herself caught in the cold embrace of a vampire. She might fall in love — or hate — with the wrong man.

For the innocent, the taint arises from circumstances beyond their control. Anguish comes from knowing that they have lost something they can never recover. The seduction of the Dark Powers stems from the new hungers in their souls, and from the faint and foolish hope that somehow there must be a way to reclaim all that is gone.

Others, less faultless and pure, begin their journey to damnation with eyes wide open. They have a mission or a cause that overrides any concerns, leading them to discard former moral convictions. They know that achieving their goals could mean the loss of everything — perhaps everyone — they hold dear, but the end result is worth the risk, at least for them. Many darklords have fallen into this trap — for “love,” for “honor,” or for “pride.”

Yet the champion of darkness struggles (or at least should struggle) toward redemption, chasing the gleaming spark of moral strength that constantly eludes him. The same concepts of honor, love, and pride that make the anti-hero's near-eventual damnation increasingly poignant in a world where goodness is so rare can sometimes also serve as the means of atonement. Those that tread the tenuous path between righteous need and true evil, listening to the misleading siren song of the Dark Powers, keep a fragile hold on their souls.

## Shadow's Song

One truth is certain: people rarely do wrong or evil things, at least not in their own minds. For villains or anti-heroes, the overriding necessity of what they do overwhelms any moral quandary. Mental anguish must be stopped: anti-heroes must bring their lover back from the dead; stop their brother from taking away the only light in their life; or destroy the evil monster that made them what they are, regardless of the consequences. One can find as many types of anti-heroes as there are versions of injustice, pain, fanaticism, or corruption within the world of **Ravenloft**.

Still, bards repeat the same refrains of heroes lost to the shadows. Archetypal villains and anti-heroes have listened to the same seductive verses voiced by the Dark Powers down through the





centuries, the chorus of corruption echoing throughout **Ravenloft's** history. Some of the more common dancers to the tune of damnation are listed below.

### The Conniver

To the conniver, the world rests upon a silver platter for his enjoyment. People are his playthings. He delights in finding ways to fool all of the idiots around him — and everyone is an idiot. Scams, finagles, and sleight-of-hand thefts are his tools in trade. He does not care whom he hurts, as long as he gains a profit. A sociopath through and through, the conniver cannot, or will not, see the negative consequences of his actions as anything more than inconsequential fallout.

### The Dissectionist

The dissectionist follows a more subtle road into the shadows. For her, knowledge is king. The dissectionist experiences the world as her laboratory and all creatures within it as her subjects, no matter how painful the experiment or how horrifying the final outcome to her work. Whether digging into an ancient cursed tomb to set loose ancient evil or sewing body parts into bizarre shapes and animating the result, her work is more important than any ephemeral morality. In the Gothic atmosphere of **Ravenloft**, the Dark Powers are always happy to allow her experiments to succeed — if not quite in the way that she expects.

### The fanatic

Dedication to a cause is noble. For the fanatic, living his life for the cause surpasses the limits of sanity. Whether religious or secular in nature, the organization or moral teachings become more important to the fanatic than the beings led by those teachings, and certainly more important than any who are not. His beliefs and the rules he lives by become the pattern of his world and all the people in it. Any who do not follow the strictures of his laws and morality become less than human — obstacles or corrupting stains on his pure vision of the world. Fanatics represent some of the most dangerous and powerful anti-heroes and villains because of the absolute certainty of their belief in the rightness of their cause.

### The Insane

A fragile psyche cannot easily survive among the horrors inherent to **Ravenloft**. Some find their minds broken or split into facets, each unknown to the next; others become numb to all feeling, inhu-

manly jaded to all but the most violent and alien sensations. Champions of darkness caught in a maelstrom of madness may either slowly sink into a bestial sea or, gasping, struggle to the surface and face all they have done and try, somehow, to make reparations.

### The Monstrous

In the gothic world of **Ravenloft**, the anti-hero may sometimes become what he is through no fault of his own. In a realm peopled with vampires, lycanthropes, and corrupting spirits of all sorts, many tragic souls find themselves on the path to darkness through mischance or the machinations of the Dark Powers. For a champion of darkness tainted with bloodlust or animal rage, the world offers two choices: kill or allow yourself to be killed, for blood is necessary to continue and life's blood is a constant temptation. Moreover, if the monstrous character continues his bloodthirsty career and does not seek out a cure, it is certain that someday he will spawn others of his kind, continuing the curse and his suffering forever.

### The Vigilante

While a "good" hero works to root out evil and destroy evildoers wherever they are found, the vigilante lives for a more focused cause: the death and destruction of a certain group or foe, without resort to laws or thought of consequences. The vigilante believes himself above the law, in fact above most peoples' idea of decency. A vigilante has a higher cause, and he considers himself a hero of the people in his dedication to it. Pride provides the hook upon which the Dark Powers hang his downfall, because for him, the end justifies the means.

### The Anti-Hero Defined

The champion of darkness faces many challenges in a world controlled by the Dark Powers. No matter how he may struggle against the forces of Evil, he is fooling himself if he believes he can prevent his inevitable downfall. Playing such a character, reaching the balance between heroism and villainy, requires finesse and an understanding of the nature of a dark champion. It requires finding the motivations, the depths within such characters, and their reasons for both existing and continuing to exist. Within this book lie the secrets to playing a champion of darkness: understanding his struggles, his many faces, and





those elusive elements that lead him down that treacherous path, as well as those turning points that might provide a road to redemption.

## How to Use This Book

**C**hampions of Darkness is the first of two Ravenloft supplements designed to illustrate the conflict between good and evil in the Dread Realms. This volume provides guidelines for players and DMs who wish to create characters with shadowy motives or an attraction to evil. A forthcoming companion volume, *Heroes of Light*, offers details for players and DMs who wish to design characters determined to hold onto their virtue and stand firmly on the battered side of good.

Roleplaying in *Ravenloft* provides many chances for PCs to begin their descent on the treacherous path that ultimately leads to becoming a darklord. This book is not, however, a manual for “playing evil,” but rather a guide that allows characters to travel along such a path while holding out the elusive chance of atonement and redemption. With the material presented here, you may create darker characters, deal with the various consequences of evil deeds, and run campaigns with less noble but more tragic heroic characters — as well as a few terrible villains.

**The Introduction:** A *Treacherous Path* introduces and defines the concept of a “champion of darkness.” This section includes information on some archetypal anti-heroes, what brought them to their fate, and what motivates them now.

**Chapter One:** *Creating the Anti-Hero* presents prestige classes appropriate to more sinister, con-

flicted characters as well as a few prestige classes intended exclusively for DMs. New feats appropriate for more sinister or shady characters and NPCs (and their dread companions) are also detailed. A discussion of the complex motives that impel monstrous characters to do what they do, along with an examination of how to play monsters as champions of darkness, provides food for thought.

**Chapter Two:** *Patrons* offers information on various organizations and secret societies that support anti-heroes, providing them with a network of contacts, material, and spiritual backing that usually entice the champion closer to eventual corruption.

**Chapter Three:** *Who's Doomed* describes heroes and villains aptly labeled “champions of darkness,” including a write-up on Jander Sunstar (after his supposed demise). Some of these illustrious or infamous individuals may be useful in your campaign as NPCs or as guidelines for players and DMs who wish to build their own anti-heroes.

**Chapter Four:** *The Campaign in Darkness* discusses themes for running various anti-hero campaigns. A section on fame and notoriety illustrates how these concepts can become a new twist for your game. This chapter also offers advice on dealing with failed powers checks. Finally, a section of fiendish adventure hooks for your darker characters, including a campaign-spanning series of ideas for characters from 1st through 20th level, offers ideas for creating adventures and entire campaigns revolving around characters who are fighting not only for their lives but for their very souls.

**Appendix:** *DM's Notes* presents two new monster templates and one new Vistani sub-race.







Chapter One:  
Creating the  
Anti-Hero

"Do it again, and this time try to keep in mind that your goal is to hurt your opponent, not tickle him." Master Fyodor's dry tone drew a chuckle from the other students. Antonio just nodded his acceptance and moved back into position. Guiarmo saluted him with his blade and moved in to attack. Fyodor retreated to the edge of the grounds to stand beside a well-dressed man who was watching the sparring.

"Well, my lord, I hope you are pleased with the progress of the new recruits."

"More than pleased, Fyodor," answered the gentleman. "Of course, if I were not pleased, then you would be out of a job, now, wouldn't you?" he said, looking directly at Fyodor.

"I would, Lord Amberino. I merely sought to make certain that these lads met your expectations. I assure you that I meant no offense," Fyodor replied, bowing low. They both turned to look at the training field where Antonio had just dealt a blow that landed Guiarmo on his back, unconscious.

"No offense taken, my dear Fyodor. I am quite content," Lord Amberino said. "Tell me, when do you think they will be ready for fieldwork? I am most eager to start seeing a return on my investment." Lord Amberino turned his attention to the archery range where three men were loosing deadly shots against human-shaped targets.

"It should not be long, my lord," Fyodor said. "I expect they will be ready in another week or so for some preliminary raiding." The instructor turned his attention back to the field, pointing to two of the recruits: "Alright, Augustus, you and Eduardo pair up next." The two trainees nodded and moved into the ring.

Fyodor turned his attention back to Lord Amberino. "I will have them ready for you in a week, my lord."

"Excellent! In that case, I shall leave you to your work. I have some plans to make now that I have a timetable."

Amberino turned to leave, but paused for one last question. "By the way, Fyodor, you have also trained them in the proper mindset as well as in weapons and tactics, I hope?"

In answer, Fyodor turned and caught Antonio's eye. He gave him a signal and gestured toward a servant who was carrying away the dirty towels. Antonio nodded and came up to the servant, drawing his sword again. The servant barely had time to register what was happening before Antonio's blade took his head from his shoulders. Antonio bent down and cleaned his blade on the servant's clothes before saluting Lord Amberino and Fyodor as he returned to his place in the practice ring.

Satisfied, Lord Amberino left the practice field.



*I know indeed what evil I intend to do,  
but stronger than all my afterthoughts is my fury,  
fury that brings upon mortals the greatest evils.*  
— Euripides, Medea (431 B.C.)



champion of darkness comes in many forms and with many and varied powers. The choices a player makes for his character can lead to a quick spiral into the clutches of the Dark Powers or a gradual descent tempered by the possibility of redemption. This book explores the inner torment of such characters as they strive to fight the growing darkness that centers around them or else resign themselves to their fate and travel the path of corruption to its bitter end.

The eerie gifts, strange alliances, and dark motivations set forth in this chapter can aid players in giving their characters depth, history, and intensity through new prestige classes and feats tailored to those who live on the cliff edge of darkness. Though some of the prestige classes and feats described may be chosen by characters of any alignment, many are restricted to characters whose motives and early choices have led them closer to the seductive call of the Dark Powers.

Ultimately, a character may succumb not to the predictable end set out by her own actions, but to some unexpected trick of fate that transforms the character's very nature into a monstrous creature. During the course of adventuring, some characters may fall prey to a vampire's kiss or a werewolf's bite. In Ravenloft, this does not necessarily mean that a character must bow unresistingly to her fate. She may, instead, attempt to cling to what she can of her old self, her old virtue, her old dedication to the battle against evil. Only this

time, the battle takes place within her very soul. An exploration of the primal battle within the souls of those individuals trapped by monstrosity illustrates why they struggle with the shadows on their souls and gives advice on how to play characters so tainted.

## Prestige Classes



rake, a roué, a scoundrel, a raging vigilante, or a priest who goes just a little too far: all seek a balance point between their beliefs and true darkness — or choose to ignore such a compromise and throw themselves wholeheartedly into their new path. The following prestige classes allow DMs to add excitement and danger to NPC encounters, creating adversaries whose own inner struggles serve as a mirror to the actions of the characters. As enemies and antagonists to good characters, or as patrons and employers of neutral or evil characters, the individuals created from these prestige classes show PCs what they might themselves become should they make the wrong choices or listen to the seductive inner promptings of the Dark Powers.

Some players may opt to gear their characters toward the following prestige classes in order to explore the quandaries of their characters as they struggle against overwhelming urges or discover that the wish for fun and profit through chicanery hold more appeal for them than the standard battle against evil. These prestige classes add dimension and powers to the standard character classes of Ravenloft, enabling players and DMs to bring to the fore the battle against the evil within as well as the terrors without.





## Charlatan

A charlatan is a master of deception and subterfuge. Many rogues and gypsies gravitate to this prestige class, finding that the easiest place to hide underhanded dealings is in plain sight. Charlatans excel in fast-talking and manipulating the perceptions of others. Where a rogue might silently sneak up on a rich merchant with the intent of relieving him of his portable wealth, a charlatan invents a good confidence game and convinces the merchant that his best interests lie in “investing” in the (completely fictional) opportunities presented by the charlatan’s honeyed words. This prestige class excels in connivance. The charlatan’s goals and end results may resemble those of rogues or highway riders: quick profit with a minimum of effort. In practice, however, the charlatan’s trade requires him to ply his trickery in public, making a huge spectacle of the ordeal. From organizing a complex scheme to relying on a simple misdirection, a charlatan is always on the take. Charlatans operate at any Cultural Level, but become most prominent in Cultural Level 5 regions and beyond.

**Hit Die:** d6.

### Requirements

To qualify to become a charlatan (Chl), a character must fulfill the following criteria.

**Skills:** Bluff 8 ranks, Diplomacy 6 ranks, Forgery 6 ranks.

**Feats:** Skill Focus (Bluff), Skill Focus (Diplomacy).

### Class Skills

The charlatan’s class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Bluff (Cha), Craft (Int), Decipher Script (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Disguise (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Forgery (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Innuendo (Wis), Listen (Wis), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), Read Lips (Int), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Spot (Wis), and Use Magical Device (Cha). See Chapter Four in the PHB for skill descriptions.

**Skill Points at Each Level:** 6 + Int modifier.

### Class Features

All of the following are class features for the charlatan prestige class.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Charlatans are proficient with the crossbow, dagger, dart, light mace, rapier, sap, and short sword. More often than

not, though, a charlatan uses a rapier as his weapon of choice. He gains no other weapon or armor proficiencies.

**Attempting a Confidence Game:** When a charlatan intends to use his class abilities, the chosen mark gets a Will save against a DC equal to the charlatan’s roll of a Bluff, Diplomacy, or Forgery check in an attempt to see through the charlatan’s verbal smoke and mirrors. Bluff checks apply when a charlatan attempts a face-to-face ruse. Forgery checks come into play when a charlatan pulls a con through written correspondence or creating false deeds and documents. Diplomacy checks are appropriate when the charlatan uses truth as his “weapon.” A charlatan can pull these cons a number of times per day equal to 3 + his Charisma bonus.

**Charmer (Su):** At 1st level, a charlatan learns how to ingratiate himself in the eyes of others. He can spend one of his con attempts to charm one target individual. Usually, the charlatan rolls a Bluff check to determine the Will save DC of the con attempt. If the target fails the Will save, she behaves as if under the effect of charm person for a number of hours equal to the charlatan’s class level.

**Example:** The gypsy Vaclav, a 3rd-level charlatan, wishes to ingratiate himself with a local merchant. He opens a flattering dialogue with the NPC, complimenting him on his wares. Vaclav’s player spends one of his con attempts for the day and announces that he is trying to charm the merchant. The result of his Bluff check is 17 (Vaclav’s Bluff modifier is +12, and he rolled a 5). The merchant must now make a Will save against DC 17 to avoid being charmed by Vaclav for three hours.

**Captivating (Su):** At 2nd-level, the charlatan’s persuasive abilities become more potent. He may spend one of his con attempts to captivate a group of people. This ability usually requires a Bluff check to determine the DC of the Will save. In the rare situation when the charlatan is actually telling the truth to a group of people, the DM might insist on a Diplomacy check instead. If the Will save is failed, then the effects of this ability are identical to hypnotism. The charlatan’s speech takes one round to perform and can affect 2d4 HD of living creatures, no two of which may be more than 30 feet apart. This effect lasts for 2d4 rounds. As with the hypnotism spell, the targets get +2 to their saves if the charlatan attempts this ability in combat.



**Infamous:** As a charlatan becomes experienced as a con artist, he develops a reputation. Townsfolk and nobles conned by the charlatan tend to spread the word about their experiences. As these rumors circulate, people begin to look out for



the charlatan. When a charlatan rolls a 1 on his con attempt, the target of the con realizes with whom he is dealing. Not only does the con fail, but

the DM should roll 1d4 to determine the consequences of being busted. Use the following chart to determine the result:

**d4 Result Effect**

- 1 The victim runs off and will react violently if pursued or if the charlatan persists in his game.
- 2 The wizened mark not only takes off but also spreads rumors about the charlatan's presence and activities in the area (causing a -6 penalty to con checks while in the area).
- 3 The target starts to yell, attracting attention from anyone standing nearby. The unwanted attention might summon the town guards or spark a mob scene that turns ugly if the charlatan does not cease his attempt. In this case, further con checks in the area automatically fail, unless the charlatan succeeds in a Disguise check (DC 17).
- 4 The situation turns out (much to the charlatan's dismay) to be a sting operation. The targeted mark is indeed a constable who has lured the charlatan into a trap, and the situation will end up with the charlatan being dragged off to jail unless he can make a speedy retreat.

**Crowd Pleaser (Su):** At 3rd-level, a charlatan may spend one of his con checks to enthrall a group of people. The charlatan must speak without interruption for one full round and roll a Bluff or Diplomacy check (DM's choice) to please the crowd. The result of the check determines the Will save DC for anyone within range of the charlatan's voice. Those affected give the charlatan their undivided attention, ignoring their surroundings. As with the spell enthrall, creatures with 4 or more HD or Wisdom scores of 16 or higher remain aware of their surroundings and have an indifferent attitude to the charlatan. These characters or creatures gain a new save if they see or hear something they oppose. The effects last for one hour or as long as the charlatan keeps speaking. Those affected will discuss the topic of the enthrallment for 1d3 rounds after the speech is over. If any member of the audience is attacked during the enthrallment, the effect immediately ends.

**Gifted Orator (Ex):** At 4th level, a charlatan becomes a gifted orator and can influence the actions of others. As in suggestion, this ability only



affects one character. The charlatan spends one of his con checks to use this ability. Once he has begun his oration, he rolls a Bluff or Diplomacy check (DM's choice) to determine the DC of the Will save. If the Will save is failed, the target of the suggestion will carry out the orders (a sentence or two) as long as the suggestion does not bring direct harm to her. Most charlatans who gain this level of persuasion mastery usually start a "snake oil" traveling business, making their way through the countryside convincing ignorant townsfolk to buy things they will never need.

**Bad Reputation:** When a charlatan has reached 4th level, he has gone above and beyond Infamous. The charlatan has a wide reputation. From this point on, when the charlatan uses one of his con attempts and the target succeeds in its Will save, the DM rolls 1d8.

| d8 Result | Effect  |
|-----------|---|
| 1-2       | The target walks away, disgusted.   |
| 3-5       | The wizened mark not only takes off, but also alerts others, causing a -6 penalty to con checks while in the area.  |
| 6-7       | The person who saw through the charlatan's lies either goes straight to the local authorities or rallies an angry group to run the charlatan out of town.               |
| 8         | The whole scene is a set-up. Either a lawman or angry past victim has set up the charlatan in order to catch him red-handed. The outcome may be dire for the charlatan. |

**The Ultimate Con (Sp):** The apex of a charlatan's career is the ability to con someone into selling out his own mother. At 5th level, a charlatan can place a lesser geas on others. Like the spell, this ability affects one creature of 7HD or lower. The charlatan must spend one of his con checks and roll the appropriate ability check to determine the DC for the target's Will save. If the subject fails, he will follow any course of action (no matter how outlandish) except direct suicide for five days. This can include telling a farmer to "gather all of your crops and give them to me." The charlatan may command a town official with the following "request": "Give me this month's tax money so I can invest it in silks that will make us all rich." The manipulative applications are nearly limitless. The consequences for not being able to carry out the "geas" are similar to those described in Chapter 11 of the *PHB*. Only the spells break enchantment, limited wish, miracle, remove curse, or wish can knock some sense into an individual under the effects of this spell-like ability.

**Table 1-1: The Charlatan**

| Class Level | Base Attack Bonus | Fort Save | Ref Save | Will Save | Special                               |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------|----------|-----------|---------------------------------------|
| 1st         | +0                | +0        | +0       | +2        | Attempting a confidence game, charmer |
| 2nd         | +1                | +0        | +0       | +3        | Captivating, infamous                 |
| 3rd         | +2                | +1        | +1       | +3        | Crowd pleaser                         |
| 4th         | +3                | +1        | +1       | +4        | Gifted orator, bad reputation         |
| 5th         | +3                | +1        | +1       | +4        | The ultimate con                      |



## Dreamcaster

Some sorcerers find the source of their inner power from dreams or unconscious minds. No wielder of magic is as proficient in the arts of illusion and mental trickery as a dreamcaster. So intertwined with these magics are dreamcasters that the fey see them as brethren, rather than mortals to be tricked or pestered. Most dreamcasters tend to have avian familiars such as ravens, owls, or hawks, because birds, like dreams, can carry messages. These characters may be of any moral alignment, but most are chaotic. Dreamcasters are as fickle as the fey and as mutable as the dreams in which they immerse themselves. They tend to focus on the abstract aspects of nature. Characters belonging to this prestige class are rarely materialistic, for all they really need from the physical world is a full belly and a comfortable place to sleep. Dreamcasters exist at any Cultural Level, from the most primitive to the most advanced.

**Hit Die:** d4.

## Requirements

To qualify to become a dreamcaster (Drm), a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

**Alignment:** Any chaotic.

**Skills:** Knowledge (arcana) 4 ranks, Scry 8 ranks, Spellcraft 8 ranks.

**Spells:** Ability to cast 1st-level arcane spells, one of which must be sleep.

## Class Skills

A dreamcaster's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Alchemy (Int), Craft (Int), Concentration (Con), Knowledge (arcana) (Int), Profession (Wis), Scry (Int), and Spellcraft (Int).

**Skill Points at Each Level:** 2 + Int modifier.

## Class features

All of the following are class features of the dreamcaster prestige class.

### Weapon and Armor Proficiency:

Dreamcasters are proficient in all simple weapons but are not proficient with any kind of armor or shields.

### Spells per Day:

At 1st, 3rd, and 5th level, the dreamcaster gains new spells per day as if he had also gained a level in a spellcasting class he belonged to before adding the prestige class. He does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained (improved chance of controlling or rebuking undead, metamagic or item creation feats, hit points beyond those he receives from the prestige class, and so on), except for an increased effective level of spellcasting.

If a character had more than one spellcasting class before becoming a charlatan,



## Chapter One

he must decide to which class he adds the new level for purposes of determining spells per day.

**Dreaming Empowerment (Su):** At 1st level, a dreamcaster gains a special bonus when rolling Will saves versus Illusion and Enchantment spells. Any time the dreamcaster is required to make a save versus either of these two types of magic, he may add his class level to his normal save. The dreamcaster's connections to the unconscious mind make him less susceptible to magical trickery or enchantment, adding extra resolve to his ability to resist succumbing to these types of magic. This empowerment may also be added to any save made against psionics that affect the mind.

**Fey Friend (Su):** At 2nd level, a dreamcaster develops an affinity for the fey and these creatures recognize him as one of their own. This ability allows a dreamcaster to add his class level to any Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information, and Innuendo checks when dealing with fey creatures. The dreamcaster gains the ability to speak Oneiros, the hushed language of the dream spawn (see *Denizens of Darkness*).

**Dreaming Potency (Su):** At 3rd level, a dreamcaster's glamour and mind-affecting magic

become truly potent. The dreamcaster's class level is added to the save DC of Illusion and Enchantment spells cast by the dreamcaster.

**Dreaming Visions (Sp):** Upon reaching 4th level, a dreamcaster sleeping dreams become powerful magical tools. While a dreamcaster sleeps, he may cast the scrying spell, using his own dreams as the spell focus. Scry checks should be made as normal. A dreamcaster may use this spell-like ability only once per eight-hour sleep cycle, but he does so as a free action and this use does not count toward the dreamcaster's spells per day limit.

**Sandman's Gift (Sp):** At 5th level, a dreamcaster may cast dream or nightmare as a free action while sleeping. The character may only cast one of these spells once per eight-hour sleep cycle. This does not count as one of the dreamcaster's spells for the day. A dreamcaster can use this spell-like ability even if he does not know these two spells or does not possess enough levels as a spellcaster to cast them normally. The DC for the Will save to resist nightmare is 10 + the dreamcaster's Charisma bonus + his class level. Dreamcasters often use this power after locating their target with dreaming visions.

**Table 1-2: The Dreamcaster**

| Class Level | Base Attack Bonus | Fort Save | Ref Save | Will Save | Special              | Spells per Day             |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------------------|----------------------------|
| 1st         | +0                | +0        | +0       | +2        | Dreaming empowerment | +1 level of existing class |
| 2nd         | +1                | +0        | +0       | +3        | Fey friend           |                            |
| 3rd         | +1                | +1        | +1       | +3        | Dreaming potency     | +1 level of existing class |
| 4th         | +2                | +1        | +1       | +4        | Dreaming visions     |                            |
| 5th         | +2                | +1        | +1       | +4        | Sandman's gift       | +1 level of existing class |



## Highway Rider

Dashing, romantic, dangerous — the highway rider embodies the echo of pounding hooves along a moonlit forest and the mocking laughter or charming smile behind a silken mask. No mere brigand or thug, a highway rider knows etiquette, style, and the rules of elegance. She gathers jewels from the necks and fingers of nobility while charming them with poise and wit, steals important documents from mounted messengers left in the dust, and sends fear into the hearts of the greedy. A master with the pistol on horse or off, she is at one with her steed in fight or flight. In the ballroom, at court, or in the shadows, she performs her tasks with uncanny grace.

The highway rider is a rogue with a mission. It might be as general as bringing fear to the hearts of wealthy travelers or something far more specific and personal. Often one of the nobility or a servant to a noble house, the highway rider lives to regain an inheritance, to overthrow a despotic duke, or to build rebellion and admiration among those who might learn of her exploits. In the Mists of Ravenloft, the highway rider walks a tightrope between villainy and heroism, between romantic legend and symbol of darkness. The highway rider knows her cause is just even if her actions might accidentally cause harm to the innocent. Originally seen in Dementlieu and Lamordia, the highway rider first becomes prominent in Cultural Level 9 regions where pistols are commonplace and people are far more likely to travel regularly from town to town.

**Hit Die:** d6.

## Requirements

To qualify to become a highwayman (Hwr), a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

**Alignment:** Any non-lawful.

**Base Attack Bonus:** +4.

**Skills:** Bluff (seduction) 6 ranks, Diplomacy 4 ranks, Ride 4 ranks.

**Feats:** Equestrian, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Pistol), Point Blank Shot, Mounted Combat.

## Class Skills

The highway rider's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Balance (Dex), Bluff (seduction) (Cha), Diplomacy (Cha), Disguise (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Intuit Direction (Wis), Knowledge (nobility) (Int), Ride (Dex), Spot (Wis), Tumble (Dex). See Chapter Four in the *PHB* and Chapter Two of the *Ravenloft Core Rulebook* for skill descriptions.

**Skill Points at Each Level:** 4 + Int modifier.





## Class features

All of the following are class features of the highway rider prestige class.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** The highway rider is proficient with the crossbow (hand or light), dagger (any type), dart, longsword, rapier, sap, shortbow (normal), and short sword. She is proficient with light armor only.

**Studied Foe:** A highway rider always has one person or group that she considers her enemy. Anyone she encounters belonging to this group must be defeated or utterly humiliated in some fashion. If she thoroughly vanquishes her foe, she must choose another.

**Knowledge (roads):** A highway rider knows major and minor roads and paths wide enough for a rider within any familiar domain so that she may find places for ambush more easily and make quick getaways. At 1st level, she adds a +2 competence bonus to any Spot check to find a suitable escape route.

**Mist Ways (Ex):** A highway rider has a unique connection to the roads upon which she rides. As long as she is on a road or identifiable path, she cannot be Mist-led. Her Intuit Direction skill is beyond compare when surrounded by the Mists (+20 circumstance bonus). This does not stop a darklord from blocking her if he actively seeks to keep her within his domain. Persons following the highway rider may stay on the path as well with an Intuit Direction check at DC 10, as long as they stay within 10 feet of her mount.

**Savoir-faire (Ex):** Highway riders have an innate understanding of manners and courtly etiquette. At 2nd level, when placed in a social situation, especially among the nobility, the highway rider has a +2 competence bonus to any Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information, and Innuendo rolls. At 4th level, this bonus increases to +4.

**Mount (Ex):** At 3rd level, the highway rider has worked with her horse long enough for it to be considered a trained mount. All statistics are as per the PHB (see the sidebar, "The Paladin's Mount," in Chapter 3), except the animal (usually a light or heavy riding horse) has been trained not to shy at the sound of pistol shots and is well acquainted with his master's mounted acrobatics. If within one mile and not restrained, the mount will respond to a pre-arranged call or whistle, attempting to reach the highwayman as quickly as possible, usually within three rounds.

**Trick Rider (Ex):** At 4th level, the highway rider suffers no penalties to attack rolls while mounted. She may also use Balance and Tumble without penalty while on her horse, even when her mount is at full gallop.

**Notoriety (Ex):** As the highway rider continues her career with flare and elegance, she automatically develops notoriety. Whether inspiring fear or garnering admiration, the highway rider has eager assistance to gather supplies and weapons or to find a bolt hole with ease and secrecy. See Chapter Four on levels of notoriety.

Table 1-3: The Highway Rider

| Class Level | Base Attack Bonus | Fort Save | Ref Save | Will Save | Special                                    |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------|----------|-----------|--|
| 1st         | +1                | +0        | +2       | +0        | Knowledge (roads) +2                       |
| 2nd         | +2                | +0        | +3       | +0        | Savoir-faire +2, mist ways                 |
| 3rd         | +3                | +1        | +3       | +1        | Mount                                      |
| 4th         | +4                | +1        | +4       | +1        | Trick rider, savoir-faire +4, notoriety +1 |
| 5th         | +5                | +1        | +4       | +1        | Notoriety +3                               |

## Manipulator

Only the most suave and seductive of nobles play the chess game of feudal politics like a true master. Most often, a manipulator is a bard or aristocrat who has turned using other people into an art form. Insidious and insightful, a manipulator can make for a great behind-the-scenes player whose fingers are in every proverbial pie. Manipulators cast spells like a sorcerer. Many of the spells are effects that allow the manipulator to know certain things about the people and the world around him. Such knowledge includes discovering the secrets of others to be used for blackmail, gaining an awareness of the contingencies of a rival, and developing the ability to spot an assassin in his home. The rest of the manipulator's spell repertoire consists of straightforward attempts to make other's do what he wishes — to the point where he can boss around or bamboozle whole towns into subtle servitude. Manipulators appear at any Cultural Level, though they are more common in Cultural Levels 5 and greater.

**Hit Die:** d6.

### Requirements

To qualify to become a manipulator (Mpl), a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

**Alignment:** Lawful neutral or lawful evil.

**Skills:** Bluff 8 ranks, Diplomacy 8 ranks, Gather Information 8 ranks, Perform 4 ranks, Sense Motive 4 ranks.

**Feats:** Machiavellian, Skill Focus (Bluff), Skill Focus (Gather Information).

### Class Skills

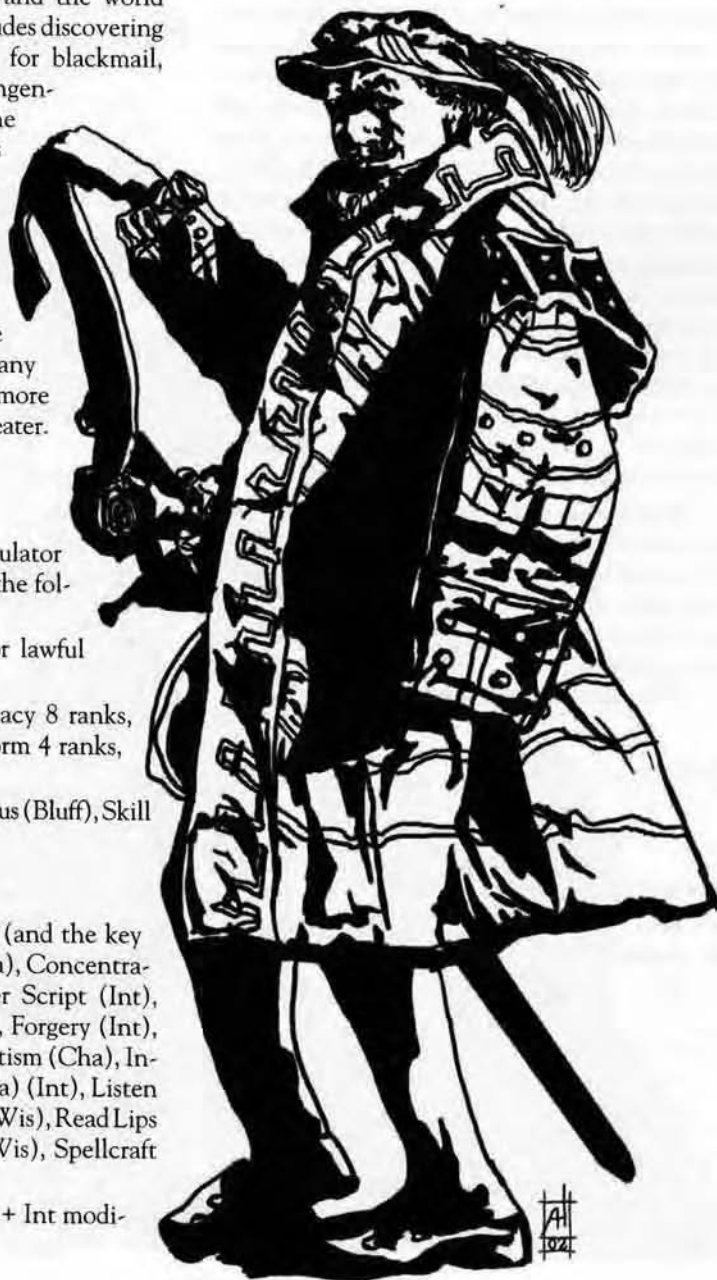
The manipulator's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Decipher Script (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Disguise (Cha), Forgery (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Hypnotism (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (arcana) (Int), Listen (Wis), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), Read Lips (Int), Scry (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Spellcraft (Int).

**Skill Points at Each Level:** 4 + Int modifier.

## Class features

All of the following are features of the manipulator prestige class.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** The manipulator is proficient with all simple weapons and with a rapier. The manipulator is also proficient with light and medium armor, but not with shields.





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**Spells:** Beginning at 1st level, a manipulator can cast arcane spells just as a sorcerer does. To cast a particular spell, the manipulator must have a Charisma score of at least 10 + the spell's level. The character gains bonus spells based on his Charisma score, and the DC for the saving throws against his spells is 10 + the spell's level + the manipulator's Charisma modifier. Like a sorcerer, a manipulator need not prepare his spells ahead of time.

**Compelling Conversationalist (Su):** At 1st level, the manipulator can utilize some of the bardic music effects without the need to play music or poetry. Instead of a Perform check, the manipulator makes a Diplomacy check. Three or more ranks in Diplomacy allow inspire courage and fascinate. Six or more ranks in Diplomacy allow inspire competence. Nine or more ranks in Diplomacy enable the use of suggestion. Finally, twelve or more ranks in Diplomacy allow the manipulator to inspire greatness with the charm of his silver tongue. If the character already has the bardic music ability, the ability to move people with art and countersong still remains. The manipulator can attempt these effects a number of times per day equal to his class level. The character has options from both classes, but should keep track of the times per day and DC for each class separately.

**World Wise (Ex):** At 2nd level, a manipulator knows the ways of the world he lives in. With a successful Wisdom check (with a bonus equal to his class level plus his Intelligence modifier), the manipulator may know something about local notables, places or people. Unlike bardic knowledge, this ability does not help with legendary items.

**Iron Will (Ex):** Like the feat of the same name, a manipulator gets a +2 competence bonus to Will saves upon reaching 4th level.

**Shrewd (Ex):** Upon reaching 5th level, a manipulator develops a remarkably shrewd cunning. For the Charisma-based skills Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information, and Intimidate, the manipulator may also add his Wisdom bonus to these checks. This represents a manipulator's ability to bring his keen observations into play when deciding how to talk to different types of people.

### Manipulator Spell List

Manipulators choose their spells from the following list.

1st level—*cause fear, charm person, comprehend languages, daze, detect magic, detect poison, detect secret doors, ventriloquism.*

2nd level—*calm emotions, command, detect thoughts, erase, hypnotism, sleep, suggestion, whispering wind.*

3rd level—*clairaudience/clairvoyance, enthrall, see invisibility, tongues.*

**Table 1-5: Manipulator Spells Known**

| Manipulator Level | 1st | 2nd | 3rd |
|-------------------|-----|-----|-----|
| 1st               | 2   | -   | -   |
| 2nd               | 2   | -   | -   |
| 3rd               | 3   | 1   | -   |
| 4th               | 3   | 2   | -   |
| 5th               | 4   | 2   | 1   |

**Table 1-4: The Manipulator**

| Class Level | Base Attack Bonus | Fort Save | Ref Save | Will Save | Special                      | Spells per Day |     |     |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------|----------|-----------|------------------------------|----------------|-----|-----|
|             |                   |           |          |           |                              | 1st            | 2nd | 3rd |
| 1st         | +0                | +0        | +2       | +2        | Compelling conversationalist | 0              | -   | -   |
| 2nd         | +1                | +0        | +3       | +3        | World wise                   | 1              | -   | -   |
| 3rd         | +2                | +1        | +3       | +3        |                              | 1              | 0   | -   |
| 4th         | +3                | +1        | +4       | +4        | Iron will                    | 1              | 1   | -   |
| 5th         | +3                | +1        | +4       | +4        | Shrewd                       | 2              | 1   | 0   |

## Master of Curses

On the precipice of proud moral superiority, the master of curses is someone, usually a cleric, who interprets his god's will by sending disaster to those he considers to have done evil and bringing mercy to those he judges wrongly afflicted. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth — he builds his curses to fit the crime, growing increasingly skilled in constructing these acts of vengeance as he grows in power.

The master of curses, however, does more than curse those who, in his opinion, deserve the wrath of the Dark Powers; he is also adept at untangling curses to break unjust ones. In fact, if he cannot break a curse, he can, if skilled enough, find a way

to take the curse upon himself. He travels from one accursed realm to another, rebuilding the balance of justice in the world, sometimes out of a sense of his own honor, but often for a price.

A master of curses has many enemies. The Vistani find the master of curses' audacity at manipulating curses an affront, unless, of course, he is Vistani himself. The Dark Powers watch the master of curses, waiting for the day that he curses someone selfishly or unjustly. One who has unjustly or thoughtlessly cursed another may tremble at his wrath or scheme to bring his death before he breaks their vengeful curse.

All clerical masters of curses gain the Curse domain as a new priestly domain in addition to any domains already chose before beginning this prestige class. Non-clerical masters of curses must take this domain and one other clerical domain from Destruction, Law, Protection, or War at 1st-level. While clerics often become masters of curses, anyone ever strongly affected by a curse may choose to take this prestige class. The master of curses first becomes prominent in Cultural Level 2 regions as organized religion takes form.

Hit Die: d8.

### Requirements

To qualify to become a master of curses (Mcu), a character must fulfill all the following criteria.



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**Alignment:** Any lawful.

**Base Will Save Bonus:** +5.

**Skills:** Sense Motive 4 ranks.

**Feats:** Skill Focus (Sense Motive), Voice of Wrath.

**Spells:** Must be able to cast divine or arcane spells.

**Special:** The master of curses may have cursed someone unjustly and later regretted it or been the victim of a curse himself. He may also have cursed someone successfully and simply relished enacting his vengeance.

## Class Skills

The master of curses' class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Concentration (Con), Diplomacy (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Listen (Wis), Scry (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Spellcraft (Int). See Chapter Four in the PHB for skill descriptions.

**Skill Points at Each Level:** 2 + Int modifier.

## Class Features

All of the following are class features of the master of curses prestige class.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** A masters of curses is proficient with all simple weapons and all types of armor and shields. Prestige Domain: When one chooses to become a master of curses, he gains access to the Curse domain. The character gains the granted power associated with the domain and may choose those spells as domain spells in addition to any other daily domain spells he might also pick.

**Spells per Day:** For the master of curses, succeeding in his mission leads to the constant threat of taint by the Dark Powers. The master of curses often chooses to use a spell from the Curse domain instead of creating an original curse to lessen his risk of coming into their notice. At each level, the master of curses gains new spells per day as if he had also gained a level in a spellcasting class he belonged to before adding the prestige class. He does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained (improved chance of controlling or rebuking undead, metamagic or item creation feats, hit points beyond those he receives from the prestige class, and so on), except for an increased effective level of

spellcasting. If a character had more than one spellcasting class before becoming a master of curses, he must decide to which class he adds the new level for purposes of determining spells per day.

**Evil Eye (Ex):** If the master of curses is half-Vistani, he gains the ability to use the power of the evil eye as Vistani do, as described in the *Ravenloft Core Rulebook*, but is limited to once per week if male, twice per week if female. No one without Vistani blood may have this ability. The master of curses gains this ability at 2nd level.

**Improved Voice of Wrath (Ex):** At 2nd level, the master of curses' affinity for the unseen forces of vengeance grows stronger. Curse checks now gain an extra +2 bonus.

**Turn or Rebuke Cursed Undead:** At 3rd level, the master of curses gains the ability to turn or rebuke undead created by curses as though a cleric of his total character level. For example, Heinrich, a 7th-level fighter, is cursed and decides to become a master of curses himself. As a 3rd-level master of curses, he may turn cursed undead as though he were a 10th-level cleric. If the master of curses was a cleric before taking the prestige class, he may turn cursed undead as per the feat Extra Turning.

**Vision of Darkness (Su):** As the master of curses becomes more adept at his craft, he gains the preternatural ability to see into the souls of those he judges. Beyond any ability to sense motive, the master of curses may look into the eye of his victim and know what affliction would devastate her the most fully and how deserving she may be of it. The target must make a Will save versus DC 15 + the master of curses' Wisdom ability bonus to block his insight.

**Willing Sacrifice (Su):** When a master of curses has reached the pinnacle of his power, he may attempt to redress truly unjust curses by taking the power of the curse upon himself. This is a very dangerous practice, for when the curse is lifted from its rightful target and falls upon the master of curses, it gains one level of severity. No other master of curses may break a curse gained from the power of Willing Sacrifice. For the master of curses to perform this rite, he must know all aspects of the curse, and the cursed one must be willing. The ritual takes place at the time of the full moon (causing a great deal of trouble when lycanthropy



is involved) and takes from moonrise to moonset to complete. For the Willing Sacrifice to be successful, the victim must make a Fortitude save against DC 20 minus the master of curses' Wisdom ability bonus, and the master of curses makes a Will save against DC 20. If the Willing Sacrifice is not successful, the curse rebounds upon the victim, increasing one level in severity as the master of curses temporarily loses one point of Constitution. If this comes to pass, the master of curses must make a powers check as though he had laid a curse of the rebounded curse's new severity level.

## New Cleric Domain

### Curse Domain

**Deities:** Ezra, The Lawgiver, Ra, and Set.

**Granted Powers:** You may cast bestow curse with a +4 to the DC of the target's saving throw. You may cast mark of justice once per day.

### Curse Domain Spells

- 1 **Doom.** One subject suffers -2 on attacks, damage, saves, and checks.
- 2 **Hold Person.** Holds one person helpless, 1 round/level.
- 3 **Bestow Curse.** -6 to an ability; -4 on attacks, saves, and checks; or 50% chance of losing each action.
- 4 **Poison.** Touch deals 1d10 Con damage, repeats in 1 min.
- 5 **Insect Plague.** Insect horde limits vision, inflicts damage, and weak creatures flee.
- 6 **Harm.** Subject loses all but 1d4 hit points.
- 7 **Destruction.** Kills subject and destroys remains.
- 8 **Horrid Wilting.** Causes the moisture in the body of a living creature to evaporate, causing serious damage and, possibly, death.
- 9 **Energy Drain.** Subject loses 2d4 levels.

Table 1-6: The Master of Curses

| Class Level | Base Attack Bonus | Fort Save | Ref Save | Will Save | Special                           | Spells per Day             |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------|----------|-----------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1st         | +1                | +2        | +0       | +2        | Prestige domain                   | +1 level of existing class |
| 2nd         | +2                | +3        | +0       | +3        | Evil eye, Improved Voice of Wrath | +1 level of existing class |
| 3rd         | +3                | +3        | +1       | +3        | Turn cursed undead                | +1 level of existing class |
| 4th         | +4                | +4        | +1       | +4        | Vision of darkness                | +1 level of existing class |
| 5th         | +5                | +4        | +1       | +4        | Willing sacrifice                 | +1 level of existing class |



## The Mesmerist

For those lost in madness, the mesmerist is often their last hope. A master of hypnotic suggestion, his soothing voice and intense eyes capture a wandering mind lost in coils of darkness and lead a distraught soul into the light. He understands emotions, fears, and the many terrors that seek to destroy the minds of those caught in their web. A supreme manipulator of minds, he soothes doubts and seeks to sap the will of those who need his help — of course, with only the best of intentions. When this master of the mind unselfishly helps the mad, his skills are without compare; unfortunately, the mesmerist rarely builds his art with the intent of assisting those in need.

The mesmerist may use his powers for selfish or altruistic purposes. Most often he associates with the influential, amusing them with his abilities or fooling them into believing his powers are far greater than they are. He alone understands that hypnotism works only as well as the victim's mind allows.

A mesmerist lives with a strong temptation — the compulsion to control those around him. His hypnotic grip grows slowly as he learns to make fools of his companions with silly commands and small changes to their personalities. Later, as he refines his ability, the mesmerist discovers more reasons to manipulate weak minds; eventually, he takes control of any who might oppose him.

Perhaps the most dangerous facet of the mesmerist is the fact that hypnotism is not his first and best power. For him, a rich

and commanding voice, a sincere and intense gaze, and the skill of an orator create a far more menacing array of abilities than mere hypnotism.

Most mesmerists begin as bards or sorcerers, although clerics may occasionally choose this prestige class for its madness-curing benefits.

Any race may become a mesmerist; however, calibans and halflings are very unlikely to choose to do so.

Originally trained as doctors of the mind in sanitariums scattered around Ravenloft, the mesmerist first becomes







prominent in Cultural Level 8 regions where the populace is again examining the mind and heart.

**Hit Die:** d6.

**Requirements**

To qualify to become a mesmerist (Msm), a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

**Alignment:** Any non-lawful.

**Base Will Save Bonus:** +4.

**Skills:** Bluff 4 ranks, Concentration 6 ranks, Hypnosis 4 ranks.

**Feats:** Alertness, Iron Will, Open Mind.

**Class Skills**

The mesmerist's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (seduction) (Cha), Bluff (telling fortunes) (Cha), Diplomacy (Cha), Disguise (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Heal (Wis), Hypnosis (Cha), Innuendo (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Perform (Cha), and Sense Motive (Wis). See Chapter Four in the *PHB* and Chapter Two of the *Ravenloft Core Rulebook* for skill descriptions.

**Skill Points at Each Level:** 4 + Int modifier.

**Class Features**

All the following are class features of the mesmerist:

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** The mesmerist is proficient with simple small weapons and with the pistol. He is not proficient with armor or shields, since his greatest defenses are his voice and his hypnotic abilities.

**Spells:** Beginning at 1st level, a mesmerist can cast arcane spells just as a sorcerer does. To cast a particular spell, the mesmerist must have a Charisma score of at least 10 + the spell's level. The character gains bonus spells based on his Charisma score, and the DC for the saving throws against his spells is 10 + the spell's level + the mesmerist's Charisma modifier. Like a sorcerer, a mesmerist need not prepare his spells ahead of time.

**Knowledge (madness):** At 1st level, a mesmerist has an innate understanding of the broken mind. Even if the victim of madness cannot communicate, the mesmerist may Concentrate on body language and expression (DC 15 + victim's Charisma bonus) and discover what sort of insanity

afflicts his patient. The mesmerist may attempt to use this power on the same character once per day after one hour of uninterrupted concentration.

**Mesmeric Focus (Ex):** At 2nd level, if a mesmerist can convince his insane patient (or the person he is attempting to control) to concentrate upon his mesmeric focus, all Hypnosis checks receive a further +2 bonus as typical distractions no longer break concentration. The mesmeric focus may be anything the mesmerist wishes, but it must be small enough to carry in a pocket or pouch. Typical foci include a faceted crystal on a chain, a pocket watch (available in CL 9), or a burning candle.

**Hypnotic Voice (Ex):** For the mesmerist, voice is the ultimate instrument. He has a trained tone that is both pleasant and soothing, yet commands and receives attention when he wishes. At 3rd level, any skill or spell requiring persuasive speech receives a +5 circumstance bonus (whether adding to a Will Save DC made by the foe or a skill check made by the mesmerist) when spoken. If originally trained as a bard, this bonus also affects Perform (song) and Perform (storytelling).

**Simple Minds (Su):** At 4th level, the mesmerist can use his hypnotic abilities on animals. This ability only works on domesticated animals and smaller creatures often found near civilization, such as dogs, cats, lizards, snakes, and songbirds. The mesmerist must make a Cha check against a DC of 10 + the creature's Intelligence score. If the mesmerist succeeds, the beast is convinced to follow simple non-life-threatening commands (those that can be inferred by gesture if he does not have the spell speak with animals) for up to 1d4 rounds.

**Broken Will (Ex):** At 5th level, the mesmerist gains the ability to lessen the Will of those hypnotically controlled by him. While a target is under hypnosis (whether the skill or the spell), the mesmerist may attempt an opposed Charisma check against the target to lower his effective Will (in connection to the mesmerist's machinations) by one. This may be done once per day. If the victim succeeds in opposing the mesmerist, he may make an Intelligence check (DC 15) to realize what the mesmerist is attempting to do.





Chapter One

**Mesmerist Spell List**

Mesmerists choose their spells from the following list.

1st level—*cause fear, daze, detect magic, ghost sound, hypnotism, prestidigitation, sleep, ventriloquism.*

2nd level—*charm person, detect thoughts, hypnotic pattern, tongues, undetectable alignment.*

3rd level—*charm monster, emotion, enthrall, lesser geas, suggestion.*

**Table 1-8: Mesmerist Spells Known**

| Mesmerist Level | 1st | 2nd | 3rd |
|-----------------|-----|-----|-----|
| 1st             | 2   | -   | -   |
| 2nd             | 2   | -   | -   |
| 3rd             | 3   | 1   | -   |
| 4th             | 3   | 2   | -   |
| 5th             | 4   | 2   | 1   |

**Table 1-7: The Mesmerist**

| Class Level | Base Attack Bonus | Fort Save | Ref Save | Will Save | Special             | Spells per Day |     |     |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------|----------|-----------|---------------------|----------------|-----|-----|
|             |                   |           |          |           |                     | 1st            | 2nd | 3rd |
| 1st         | +0                | +0        | +0       | +2        | Knowledge (madness) | 0              | -   | -   |
| 2nd         | +1                | +0        | +0       | +3        | Mesmeric focus      | 1              | -   | -   |
| 3rd         | +2                | +1        | +1       | +3        | Hypnotic voice      | 1              | 0   | -   |
| 4th         | +3                | +1        | +1       | +4        | Simple minds        | 1              | 1   | -   |
| 5th         | +3                | +1        | +1       | +4        | Broken will         | 2              | 1   | 0   |

## Moon Bane

The moon bane is a character with a dark secret and a mission to prevent what has happened to her from happening to anyone else. The moon bane begins her existence as one cursed with lycanthropy by an evil lycanthrope. Unlike most of these monsters, however, the moon bane has managed to hold on to some of her previous nature.

Moon banes fight a constant inner battle. If cured of the curse, they are filled with remorse for what they have done. If not cured but possessing some means of controlling the curse (such as moon

silver), they fear the evil they might do if they lose control again.

In either case, moon banes have vowed to hunt down and kill any evil lycanthrope they encounter. Some devote themselves so strongly to their quest for revenge and the elimination of the taint of lycanthropy, that they do not hesitate to kill non-evil lycanthropes and sometimes sacrifice innocent lives to achieve a victory in their private war against darkness. Any standard character class may take this prestige class. The moon bane exists at all Cultural Levels.

**Hit Die:** d8.

### Requirements

To qualify to become a moon bane (Mb), a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

**Base Attack Bonus:** +6.

**Skills:** Wilderness Lore 4 ranks.

**Feats:** Alertness, Great Fortitude, Target Vulnerable Spot.

**Special:** Must be cursed by and/or cured of lycanthropy. A moon bane's beast side, even if she has been cured, makes people uneasy around her; thus, she is prone, in stressful situations, to revert to her bestial nature unless she succeeds in a Will save (DC 13, subject to DM adjustment).

### Class Skills

The moon bane's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Animal Empathy (Cha), Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Handle Animal (Cha), Hide (Dex), Intuit Direction (Wis), Knowledge (Lycanthrope Lore), Profession (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis), Use Rope (Dex), and Wilderness Lore (Wis). See Chapter Four in the *PHB* for skill descriptions.

**Skill Points at Each Level:** 4 + Int modifier.



## Moon Silver

Crafted by Vistani Canjar, moon silver appears to be a simple piece of jewelry, either a ring, pendant, earring, or some other small decorative bauble. Moon silver jewelry glows in the dark or under the light of the moon in direct proportion to the moon's phase. Moon silver acts upon the wearer as a scroll of protection from all lycanthropes and is usable once per day. A few "moon rings" are said to exist that provide a permanent cure for lycanthropy (at least so long as the ring is worn). For a character to benefit from the protective effects of moon silver, he must wear the jewelry continually, since the item attunes itself to the wearer. Moon silver cannot be "borrowed," but it may be given as a permanent gift.

The Vistani do not sell moon silver nor do they part with it casually. Non-Vistani almost never acquire moon silver unless they have performed some deed to prove themselves worthy of the gift.

## Class features

All of the following are class features of the moon bane prestige class.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** A moon bane is proficient with all simple and martial weapons and with light and medium armor.

**Animal Speech (Ex):** The moon bane has the ability to speak with normal animals of her

lycanthropic type and retains this ability even after being cured of the curse. This ability also allows her to train and command these animals as if they were animal companions. For rules on what these animals can be trained to do, see the "Animal Companions" sidebar in Chapter Two of the DMG.

**Sense Lycanthropes (Ex):** Through her own experience and from extensive study, the moon bane has learned to pick up on the subtle differences that identify were-creatures, no matter what their current form. A Spot check with a bonus of +1 per class level is required against a DC of the target lycanthrope's Charisma score.

**Studied Foe (Ex):** Moon banes have an intimate knowledge of their enemy derived from personal experience. They gain a +2 insight bonus to all Sense Motive checks and Wilderness Lore checks involving lycanthropes. They also gain a +2 attack bonus when fighting other lycanthropes.

**Calm Beasts (Su):** At 4th level, a moon bane gains a strong connection to the natural animal of her lycanthropic (or former lycanthropic) type. The moon bane may calm 2d4 +1/class level HD of animals as though casting the druid spell calm animals. These animals are limited to those of the moon bane's lycanthropic type.

**Trance Beasts (Su):** The apex of control over the bestial self allows the moon bane to conjure her own inner strength into an aura around her affecting all animals of her shapechanging type. This effect extends for 25 feet plus 10 feet per class level. The effect fascinates 2d6 animals for as long as the moon bane concentrates as though using the vampiric power Children of the Night.

Table 1-9: The Moon Bane

| Class Level | Base Attack Bonus | Fort Save | Ref Save | Will Save | Special           |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------|----------|-----------|-------------------|
| 1st         | +1                | +2        | +0       | +0        | Animal speech     |
| 2nd         | +2                | +3        | +0       | +0        | Sense lycanthrope |
| 3rd         | +3                | +3        | +1       | +1        | Studied foe       |
| 4th         | +4                | +4        | +1       | +1        | Calm beasts       |
| 5th         | +5                | +4        | +1       | +1        | Trance beasts     |

## Night Lord

This prestige class should be reserved for NPCs. A night lord acts in many capacities for her patron darklord. An individual who seeks to be imbued with the Dark Powers must prepare to sacrifice much of her self in trade for that power. A night lord serves as her patron's will and body outside the domain and as the darklord's eyes and ears within the domain. Traditionally, any exceptional martial retainer within a darklord's domain can be groomed to become a night lord. Sometimes a warrior seeks out the lord of the realm, ready to sacrifice her soul for power, vengeance, or some other abiding reason. The Dark Powers imbue a night lord through a formal oath of fealty to the patron darklord. This soul pact transforms a fearsome fighter into a preternatural elite guard with gifts of her own that spawn from the darklord's connection to the Dark Powers of the Domain of Dread.

The oath has several ramifications. The thoughts of the night lord become open to the darklord at any time, so long as the night lord remains within her darklord's domain. The Mists block this effect in the same way as it blocks the will of the darklord. If a darklord casts any magical effect on one of his night lords, the

NPC's levels as a night lord are subtracted from any save and the night lord's Dread Blessing class ability does not apply. A night lord's empowerments make her even more susceptible to the darklord's will. If at any time a night lord betrays her master, her special class abilities disappear until the darklord grants forgiveness (which many darklords refuse to do).

Night lords may exist at any Cultural Level, though they are most common at Cultural Levels 5 and beyond.

**Hit Die:** d10.





## Requirements

To qualify to become a night lord (Nld), a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

**Alignment:** Any evil.

**Base Attack Bonus:** +5.

**Skills:** Knowledge (Ravenloft) 4 ranks, Ride 6 ranks.

**Feats:** Mounted Combat, Trample.

**Special:** The night lord must have a darklord patron accept her into his service.

## Class Skills

The night lord's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Handle Animal (Cha), Heal (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (Ravenloft), Profession (Wis), Ride (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis), and Spot (Wis). See Chapter Four in the *PHB* and Chapter Two of the **Ravenloft Core Rulebook** for skill descriptions.

**Skill Points at Each Level:** 2 + Int modifier.

## Class features:

All of the following are class features of the night lord prestige class.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** A night lord is proficient with all simple and martial weapons, and all types of armor and shields.

**Spells:** Beginning at 1st level, a night lord can cast divine spells just as a ranger does. To cast a particular spell, the night lord must have a Wisdom score of at least 10 + the spell's level. The character gains bonus spells based on her Wisdom score, and the DC for the saving throws against her spells is 10 + the spell's level + the night lord's Wisdom modifier. Like a ranger, a night lord must prepare her spells ahead of time.

**Sense Sinkholes of Evil (Su):** At 1st level, night lords are consciously in tune with the ebb and flow of ethereal resonance. This sense enables them to be aware of unclean spiritual places suitable for use as dens of evil to spawn undead. The undead spawn of the den ultimately serve the night lord's darklord patron, but they also serve the night lord as a proxy master unless commanded otherwise by the darklord.

**Dread Blessing (Su):** Beginning at 2nd level, a night lord applies her Wisdom modifier (if positive) as a bonus to all saving throws.

**Smite Virtue (Su):** Once per day, a night lord of 2nd level or higher may attempt to smite a good-aligned hero with one normal melee attack. She adds her Wisdom modifier, if positive, to her attack roll and deals one extra point of damage per class level. If the night lord accidentally smites a creature that is not good, the smite attempt has no effect, but is still used up for the day.

**Command Undead (Su):** When a night lord reaches 3rd level, she gains the supernatural ability to command and rebuke undead. She commands undead as a cleric of two levels lower.

**Frightening Aura (Su):** When a night lord reaches 4th level, she takes on a supernaturally frightening presence. Enemies wishing to do the night lord harm find themselves frozen by fear when they gaze upon their adversary. Any enemy within 10 feet of the night lord must make a Will save (DC 10 + the night lord's class level). This save must only be made once when the enemy first enters the night lord's proximity. Failures are treated as failed Fear saves.

**Desensitized (Ex):** At 4th level, a night lord's heart becomes cold and human virtues are snuffed out of her soul. The night lord is unable and unwilling to resist the seductive caress of the Dark Powers. The night lord no longer needs to make Will saves relating to fear, horror, or madness. All other forms of Will saves still apply.

**Horrifying Designs (Ex):** At 5th level, a night lord permanently loses two points of Charisma as the Dark Powers invest her with an even more horrifying visage. With this further twisting of the mortal visage, the night lord forces all enemies within 10 feet to make a Horror save (DC 10 + night lord's class level). To enact this power, the night lord's twisted face must be visible. The night lord must perform some premeditated macabre act (for instance, caressing a zombie or using human entrails as a focus for scrying) and spend one of his attempts to command undead for the day. The aftermath of such an action (often the culmination of a series of actions meant to break a strong will, shatter an Innocent, or cripple the resolve of an enemy of the darklord) can occasionally result in the creation of a Sinkhole of Evil. When a night lord uses this ability, she must make a Dark Powers check (5% chance of failure).

**Phooka Mount (Su):** At 5th level, a night lord receives a phooka mount from the Dark Pow-





ers. This creature appears from the Mists as each night lord completes her training in cruelty. When anyone other than a night lord attempts to mount a phooka, the beast runs to the nearest body of water, plunges in, and attempts to drown the unfortunate rider. (See the Appendix for information on the phooka.)

### Night Lord Spell List

Night lords cast spells from the following list.

1st—*bane, cause fear, curse water, detect undead, doom, expeditious retreat, inflict light wounds, magic weapon, mount.*

2nd—*bull's strength, chill touch, darkness, darkvision, death knell, desecrate, ghoul touch, inflict moderate wounds, ray of enfeeblement, scare.*

3rd—*animate dead, bestow curse, contagion, deeper darkness, fear, inflict serious wounds, keen edge, speak with dead, vampiric touch.*

**Table 1-10: The Night Lord**

| Class Level | Base Attack Bonus | Fort Save | Ref Save | Will Save | Special                          | Spells per Day |     |     |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------------------------------|----------------|-----|-----|
|             |                   |           |          |           |                                  | 1st            | 2nd | 3rd |
| 1st         | +1                | +2        | +0       | +0        | Sense sinkholes of evil          | 0              | -   | -   |
| 2nd         | +2                | +3        | +0       | +0        | Dread blessing, smite virtue     | 1              | -   | -   |
| 3rd         | +3                | +3        | +1       | +1        | Command undead, frightening aura | 1              | 0   | -   |
| 4th         | +4                | +4        | +1       | +1        | Horriifying, desensitized        | 1              | 1   | -   |
| 5th         | +5                | +4        | +1       | +1        | Phooka mount                     | 2              | 1   | 0   |



## Propagandist

This prestige class is designed for NPCs and fits best in areas where the Cultural Level is 8 or 9. Although most suited to bards and rogues, this prestige class can be based on any of the standard character classes. A propagandist is a master of information manufacture and control. These individuals have an uncanny knowledge of people and what makes them tick. Normally, propagandists work for the government of an area, keeping control over and placing a government "spin" on news. They are the ones who put forth the "official word," whether by way of heralds and town criers or newsheets posted for all to read. Propagandists, with their feel for the people in the area where they work, can present information in such a way that the "masses" are inclined toward a desired interpretation of the events. Their ability to manipulate information to prove just about any desired conclu-

sion makes them extremely useful to their employers and very dangerous to that employer's enemies.

Occasionally, a propagandist may arise independently of a realm's authorities and work as an entrepreneur to bring certain individuals to power. An adventuring party that hires the services of a competent propagandist can quickly develop a reputation for excellence in the field that wins them many commissions from wealthy patrons.

**Hit Die:** d6.

### Requirements

To qualify to become a propagandist (Prp), a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

**Alignment:** Any chaotic or neutral.

**Skills:** Diplomacy 4 ranks, Gather Information 8 ranks, Innuendo 4 ranks, Knowledge (local) 4 ranks, Knowledge (Ravenloft) 4 ranks.







Feats: Hearthlore, Machiavellian, Mesmerizing.

### Class Skills

The propagandist's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Diplomacy (Cha), Disguise (Cha), Forgery (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Innuendo (Cha), Knowledge (local), Knowledge (Ravenloft) (Int), Profession (Wis), Read Lips (Int), and Sense Motive (Wis).

**Skill Points at Each Level:** 4 + Int modifier.

### Class features

All of the following are class features of the propagandist prestige class.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** The propagandist does not gain any new weapon or armor proficiencies.

**Intuition (Ex):** Knowing what makes people tick is crucial to manipulating their reactions. At 1st level, the propagandist gains a bonus of +1 per class levels to all Gather Information and Sense Motive.

**Sense Group Dynamics (Ex):** At 2nd level, propagandists become adept at determining the dynamics of any group or situation. By observing a group for an hour, the propagandist can tell how each of the people feels about the other people in the group. The propagandist can see the forces at work within the group and predict how those forces will affect the group and any others that they interact with. The propagandist can determine who (if anyone) leads the group as well as who would challenge the group's leader for her place. The propagandist adds his Intelligence bonus to all

Diplomacy checks when dealing with the group of people he has observed.

**Confidant (Ex):** At 3rd level, the propagandist's natural intuition and charisma make him someone who can draw confidences from people. Ideally, this talent should be role-played out, but if not, a Charisma check with +1 bonus per class level determines how successful the propagandist is at eliciting the target's secrets. The DC for this check varies. DM's should establish a difficulty based on the actions of the propagandist and how well this charm was role-played.

**Psychology Curiosity (Ex):** At 4th level, the propagandist develops an overweening curiosity, sometimes to a fault, about what motivates people. When presented with a new area or group of people, the propagandist feels an almost overwhelming need to puzzle out the dynamics of the situation. Sometimes he gratifies his curiosity to the exclusion of other concerns. A Will save (DC 13) is required to overcome this urge. The Will save only needs to be made when the propagandist is first presented with the new situation.

**Information Dissemination (Ex):** At 5th level, by combining this talent with his other skills, a propagandist can put a "spin" on news and events to manipulate how people interpret those events. He can present a specific interpretation and make it sound plausible to the "masses" or downplay the implications of an event so that people either miss them entirely or dismiss them as not very likely. This ability also gives the propagandist a sense of timing as to when to release certain news in order to achieve the desired reaction. This ability has no roll, but relies on the DM's ability to incorporate the information into her story plot.

**Table 1-11: The Propagandist**

| Class Level | Base Attack Bonus | Fort Save | Ref Save | Will Save | Special                   |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------|----------|-----------|---------------------------|
| 1st         | +1                | +0        | +0       | +2        | Intuition                 |
| 2nd         | +2                | +0        | +0       | +3        | Sense group dynamics      |
| 3rd         | +3                | +1        | +1       | +3        | Confidant                 |
| 4th         | +4                | +1        | +1       | +4        | Psychological curiosity   |
| 5th         | +5                | +1        | +1       | +4        | Information dissemination |





## Scourge

Torturers are a necessary evil, and the scourge is the epitome of the torturer as artist. Quiet and discreet, scourges are the preferred assistants to nobles whose stomachs are just a bit too queasy to do the job themselves or perhaps want a more subtle, less physically harming form of torment. Whether her patron wishes extreme pain without marking the body or elegant mental distress, the scourge performs as asked.

Scourges study the humanoid body as others study spells, learning endurance levels, pain points, and weaknesses. They also seek to understand the minds and hearts of their victims. Perceptive and sometimes merciful when allowed, the scourge is proud of her specialty. She knows that she deters criminals for her patron and is sometimes the only conduit available for discovering truth. In addition, she just enjoys her work. The best scourges often end up with a darklord as a patron.

Scourges may come from any class, although monks and clerics most often choose this path. The scourge first rose to prominence in the CL 6 region of Pharazia where a torturer's guild began as a branch of the confessors. Now, scourges have spread to different realms as they train others in their craft. One of the most prominent guild chapters, Sans Merci, has a strong patronage in Richemulot.

**Hit Die:** d8.

### Torturer as Player Character

The scourge is more appropriate as an NPC prestige class, so DMs should be cautious in allowing a player to choose the scourge as a PC prestige class. For a scourge to be playable as a prestige class, some adjustments should be made to powers checks for routine torture. Since a scourge believes her duties to be justified and causes pain as a profession, there is no automatic powers check failure for good-aligned NPCs or Innocents. DMs may also decide percentage chances depending upon the situation for PCs, friends, and family. Torturing companion party members should cause automatic failure except under situations of extreme duress (such as torturing instead of killing someone to save his life). Fewer leniencies should be given for sadistic torture. Check the **Ravenloft Core Rulebook**, Chapter Three, for sadistic torture powers checks.

## Requirements

To qualify to become a scourge (Scg), a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

**Alignment:** Any non-good.

**Base Attack Bonus:** +4.

**Skills:** Heal 4 ranks, Intimidate 4 ranks.

**Feats:** Endurance, Improved Unarmed Strike, Iron Will, Jaded.

**Special:** Another scourge must consider her worthy of training, and the prospective scourge must have endured torture without breaking (Will DC 20).

## Class Skills

The scourge's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Heal (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Profession (torturer) (Int), Read Lips (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), and Use Rope (Dex). See Chapter Four in the *PHB* for skill descriptions.

**Skill Points at Each Level:** 4 + Int modifier.

## A Craftsman's Cools

Although the scourge takes pride in doing much of her work by hand, there are times when an implement of torture is necessary, even if only to intimidate. The scourge is inventive and may use any normal weapon as an instrument of torture. Everyday objects often used include sharpened straws, wet reeds (used for whipping or binding), ropes, chains and leather straps. Daggers are used for flaying or disemboweling, while slender swords create puncture wounds in non-vital areas. One unique weapon for the scourge is the cat-o-nine-tails. This nine-lashed short whip is tipped with weighted, sometimes sharpened ends. The "cat" may be used to entangle just as a normal whip, but also causes real instead of subdual damage when used correctly. Other favored weapons include the whip, the flail, and a well-heated poker.





**Table 1-12: New Weapons**

| Exotic Weapon—Melee  |       |        |          |                 |        |          |
|----------------------|-------|--------|----------|-----------------|--------|----------|
| Weapon               | Cost  | Damage | Critical | Range Increment | Weight | Type     |
| <i>Medium-size</i>   |       |        |          |                 |        |          |
| Poker*               | 1gp   | 1d6    | x2       | —               | 3 lb.  | Piercing |
| Exotic Weapon—Ranged |       |        |          |                 |        |          |
| <i>Medium-size</i>   |       |        |          |                 |        |          |
| Cat-o-nine-tails     | 40 gp | 1d8    | x2       | 10 ft.          | 5 lb.  | Slashing |

\*If the poker is thoroughly heated, it deals +2 fire damage for 5 rounds.

### Class features

All of the following are class features of the scourge prestige class.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Scourges are proficient with all simple melee weapons as well as unarmed attacks. They are also proficient with exotic melee and ranged weapons. See the sidebar “A Craftsman’s Tools” on a scourge’s preferred weapons and the tools of their trade.

**Spells:** Beginning at 1st level, a scourge can cast arcane spells just as a sorcerer does. To cast a particular spell, the scourge must have a Charisma score of at least 10 + the spell’s level. The character gains bonus spells based on his Charisma score, and the DC for the saving throws against his spells is 10 + the spell’s level.





## Chapter One

+ the scourge's Charisma modifier. Like a sorcerer, a scourge need not prepare his spells ahead of time.

**Pinpoint Agony (Ex):** Study of the humanoid body has led the scourge to understand painful pressure points and also those areas of the body most easily damaged. At 1st level, if the scourge deals a successful critical hit with an unarmed attack, the target is stunned by pain as though by the monk ability Stunning Attack.

**Detect Thoughts (Sp):** At 2nd level, the scourge can detect thoughts as per the spell as if cast by a 7th-level cleric. The DC of the target's Will save is increased by 1 for each class level of the scourge. The scourge may do this 3 times per day as a standard action.

**Mask of the Torturer (Ex):** As the scourge grows in ability, she learns to keep all sign of true thoughts and emotions out of her expression. At 3rd level, anyone attempting a Sense Motive check on a scourge must do so against a DC of 20. The scourge also gains a +4 bonus on all Bluff and Intimidate checks, as her visage becomes mask like—cold, pale, and inhuman.

**Hands of Death (Ex):** The hands of a scourge become more deadly as she advances. When she has reached 5th level, her perception of the humanoid body has become so acute that once per day she may have her unarmed strike deal real damage plus her Dexterity bonus. If the damage done in one strike is half or more of the foe's remaining hit

points, the target must make a Fortitude save (DC 15). If the save fails, the victim immediately finds his hit points dropping to zero as the scourge has damaged a vital organ.

### Scourge Spell List

Scourges choose their spells from the following list.

1st level—*cause fear, chill touch, comprehend languages, detect magic, detect poison, flare, resistance.*

2nd level—*detect thoughts, ray of enfeeblement, shocking grasp, sleep, true strike, unseen servant.*

3rd level—*blindness/deafness, ghoul touch, hold person, Tasha's hideous laughter.*

**Table 1-14: Scourge Spells Known**

| Scourge Level | 1st | 2nd | 3rd |
|---------------|-----|-----|-----|
| 1st           | 2   | -   | -   |
| 2nd           | 2   | -   | -   |
| 3rd           | 3   | 1   | -   |
| 4th           | 3   | 2   | -   |
| 5th           | 4   | 2   | 1   |

**Table 1-13: The Scourge**

| Class Level | Base Attack Bonus | Fort Save | Ref Save | Will Save | Special              | Spells per Day |     |     |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------------------|----------------|-----|-----|
|             |                   |           |          |           |                      | 1st            | 2nd | 3rd |
| 1st         | +1                | +2        | +0       | +0        | Pinpoint agony       | 0              | -   | -   |
| 2nd         | +2                | +3        | +0       | +0        | Detect thoughts      | 1              | -   | -   |
| 3rd         | +3                | +3        | +1       | +1        | Mask of the torturer | 1              | 0   | -   |
| 4th         | +4                | +4        | +1       | +1        |                      | 1              | 1   | -   |
| 5th         | +5                | +4        | +1       | +1        | Hands of death       | 2              | 1   | 0   |

## Solitary Outcast

Sometimes a person's soul is bound to a lonely life. The solitary outcast lives on the borders looking into a world he cannot join — always the observer and often the only one able to perceive and understand. All solitary outcasts were marked in some fashion by past events. No solitary outcast is ever an Innocent or surrounded by friends for long. They, like the Vistani, are doomed to wander, their alienated existence palpable to all who encounter them.

Solitary outcasts have a purpose in their journeys: they may hunt a deadly foe or seek a certain something they hope will end a terrible curse. Often, they begin life abandoned and reared by creatures of the wild or denied a home by virtue of their race or some warped feature that marks them as different. Shunned by their fellows, they yearn for acceptance, with the taste of bitterness and resentment sharp on their tongues.

Nevertheless, being a solitary outcast has some advantages. Solitary outcasts meet foreign creatures and societies, find their way across distant lands, and in the process grow knowledgeable about the world in which they dwell. Since the solitary outcast usually fights alone, he must not only be strong and skilled with weapon but also develop the wisdom to understand when flight is the only option.

Calibans and half-Vistani often become solitary outcasts. Those who begin with the Feral Rearing feat are also often solitary outcasts. Any class may become a solitary outcast, although rangers and other fighters are more likely to do so. The solitary outcast first becomes prominent in Cultural Level 2 regions, when settled populations develop a fear of strangers from without.

**Hit Die:** d10.

### Requirements


To qualify to become a solitary outcast (Syo), a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

**Base Attack Bonus:** +4.

**Skills:** Hide 4 ranks, Speak Language (minimum 2 extra languages after initial languages for race and Intelligence), Wilderness Lore 4 ranks.

**Feats:** Alertness, Skill Focus (Hide), Track.

**Special:** The solitary outcast may not begin as an Innocent.

He must have an Outcast Rating of  at least 3 to start and should have some special reason to wander. Moreover, all solitary outcasts must be physically marked in some fashion. This marking can be as subtle as oddly colored eyes or as obvious as a scarlet raven-shaped scar across the back of one hand. Finally, no solitary outcast may settle in one place for more





than the cycle of one moon without losing all class advantages, one per week in reverse order of level increases.

## Class Skills

The solitary outcast's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Animal Empathy (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Hide (Dex), Intuit Direction (Wis), Knowledge (monster lore) (Int), Listen (Wis), Ride (Dex), Search (Wis), Speak Language (Int), Spot (Wis), Wilderness Lore (Wis). See Chapter Four in the *PHB* and Chapter Two in the *Ravenloft Core Rulebook* for skill descriptions.

**Skill Points at Each Level:** 4+ Int modifier.

## Class features

All of the following are class features of the solitary outcast prestige class.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** The solitary outcast is proficient with all simple and martial weapons, light and medium armor, and shields.

**Studied Foe (Ex):** At 1st level, the solitary outcast may choose a foe. If the outsider began as a ranger, his favored enemy modifiers still apply and he may choose another foe.

**Master of Languages (Ex):** As a wanderer, the solitary outcast has a facility for languages greater than any bard. At 2nd level and each level thereafter, the solitary outcast may choose one new language if he spends at least a week with a tutor who knows the language and is willing to teach him. If he is in a population that speaks a language

he does not know, he has a +4 bonus to his Speak Language skill to understand and learn the new tongue.

**Companion (Ex):** A lonely being, the solitary outcast rarely stays with a group for any extended length of time. At 3rd level, the solitary outcast's longing brings him a partner for the road. The companion may be a normal animal, as though the outsider had cast animal friendship. Often, though, especially if the solitary outcast is of evil alignment, he will find he has a Dread Companion at his side. Rejecting the companion means that the solitary outcast will not be chosen again for companionship without extraordinary circumstances.

**Wanderer's Shield (Sp):** As someone who has rarely known kindness or a sense of home, at 4th level the solitary outcast possesses an aura of "otherness" that causes fear in those who would attack him. When angered, or at need, the solitary outcast may cause fear as per the divine Necromancy spell of the same name twice per day. This fear effect, however, extends to a 15-foot radius surrounding the solitary outcast. A Will save (DC 10 + the solitary outcast's class level + his Wisdom) negates this fear effect.

**True Sight (Sp):** Perceptive and often philosophical, the solitary outcast sees and understands much about the nature of the world as well as humankind. At 5th level, he may discern lies and perform true seeing each once per day as though a divine spellcaster of 10th level. A Will save (DC 10 + the solitary outcast's class level + his Wisdom bonus) negates this effect.

**Table 1-15: The Solitary Outcast**

| Class Level | Base Attack Bonus | Fort Save | Ref Save | Will Save | Special             |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------|----------|-----------|---------------------|
| 1st         | +1                | +2        | +2       | +0        | Studied foe         |
| 2nd         | +2                | +3        | +3       | +0        | Master of languages |
| 3rd         | +3                | +3        | +1       | +1        | Companion           |
| 4th         | +4                | +4        | +1       | +1        | Wanderer's shield   |
| 5th         | +5                | +4        | +1       | +1        | True sight          |





## Worldbreaker

This prestige class should be available solely for NPCs. The Destroyer Goddess Kali in the kingdom of Sri Raji has frighteningly devoted followers. Only the most loyal (or fanatic) priestesses become worldbreakers. Thought to be avatars of the goddess, worldbreakers channel Kali when they dance, unleashing their matron's power.

Unfortunately, mortals who become intimately involved with a worldbreaker tend to become insane. A worldbreaker has the nature and tenets of her goddess on her mind (even more so than most clerics). A worldbreaker priestess lives by strict rules.

First, a worldbreaker may only marry an acknowledged priest of Shiva, since only the chosen of Shiva are seen as equals and can transmute the worldbreaker's destructive tendencies into more fruitful ones. If a worldbreaker becomes emotionally involved with a non-Shiva follower, the goddess usually hurts the unfortunate chosen one during a time when the worldbreaker channels her power. Shiva followers also tend not to attach value to material objects, a necessary requisite to an abiding relationship with a worldbreaker, since those priestesses tend to leave a wake of destruction in their paths.

Secondly, a worldbreaker must drink a small bit of human blood during her meditation hour.

Finally, a worldbreaker collects her own blood, which she combines with herbs and oils to make rust colored body paint that she applies to her skin in the form of complex symbols during her meditation hour.

The worldbreaker may come from any region of Cultural Level 2 or beyond. Since 740 BC and the Rebirth of Kali, otherwise known as the Great Conjunction, there has been a resurgence of Kali worship within Sri Raji and sometimes outside it.

**Hit Die:** d8.

### Requirements

To qualify to become a worldbreaker (Wrb), a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

**Alignment:** Any chaotic.

**Base Fortitude Save Bonus:** +5.

**Skills:** Knowledge (religion) 8 ranks, Perform (dance) 5 ranks.

**Feats:** Great Fortitude, Life Force Sacrifice, Tantric Ability.





**Special:** Must be a female cleric of the Sri Raji deity Kali and have possessed the Destruction domain since 1st level.

### Class Skills

The worldbreaker's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Heal (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (arcana) (Int), Knowledge (religion) (Int), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), and Spellcraft (Int). See Chapter Four of the *PHB* for descriptions of these skills.

**Note:** Due to the nature of this prestige class, at some point, the character will inevitably possess the Trickery domain, at which point Bluff (Cha), Disguise (Cha), and Hide (Dex) will become class skills.

**Skill Points at Each Level:** 2 + Int modifier.

### Class features

All of the following are class features of the worldbreaker prestige class.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** A worldbreaker is proficient in all simple weapons, but most tend to use saps, often in combination with the Combat Casting and Two-Weapon Fighting feats to incorporate whirling sap blows and dance-like spell casting gestures into her combat maneuvers. To use the dancing abilities of this class, a worldbreaker can only wear leather armor (goat) and cannot use a shield.

**Spells per Day:** At 1st, 3rd, and 5th level, the worldbreaker gains new spells per day as if she had also gained a level in a spellcasting class she belonged to before adding the prestige class. She does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained (improved chance of controlling or rebuking undead, metamagic or item creation feats, hit points beyond those she receives from the prestige class, and so on), except for an increased effective level of spellcasting. If a charac-

ter had more than one spellcasting class before becoming a charlatan, she must decide to which class she adds the new level for purposes of determining spells per day.

**Chakra Mastery (Su):** At 1st level, this ability allows the worldbreaker to add her Charisma bonus to all saves. Additionally, the priestess may dance silently in place of praying when casting a spell. The worldbreaker must make a performance check against a DC of 10 + the spell's level. If the check is successful, she can cast that spell as if it were prepared using the Silent Spell feat, without using up a spell slot.

**Madness Effects:** Upon reaching 2nd level, the worldbreaker begins to go mad, as the long term effects of channeling a chaos goddess erode her sanity. The DM should roll on the "Moderate Madness Effect Table" (see *Ravenloft Core Rulebook*, page 71) or pick one of the four effects on the chart. The worldbreaker may make a Will save to determine if she can resist the madness. Failure means the worldbreaker exhibits her form of madness in a dramatic fashion. Upon reaching 4th level, the worldbreaker becomes permanently deranged. The DM should again roll on the "Major Madness Effects Table." This second major madness is permanent and active all the time, since Kali destroys part of everything she touches, even her most blessed priestesses. A worldbreaker can never recover from this madness. Neither rest, magic, nor hypnosis can mend the mind of a worldbreaker.

**Kali Domain:** The Goddess Kali has four domains: Destruction, Evil, Healing, and Trickery. As a 1st-level cleric, the prospective worldbreaker must choose the Destruction domain along with one of the other three. A worldbreaker picks a third domain at 3rd level and the final domain at 5th level. If the worldbreaker's alignment is not already evil, she becomes so whenever she chooses the Evil domain.

**Table 1-16: The Worldbreaker**

| Class Level | Base Attack Bonus | Fort Save | Ref Save | Will Save | Special          | Spells per Day             |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------|----------|-----------|------------------|----------------------------|
| 1st         | +0                | +2        | +0       | +2        | Chakra mastery   | +1 level of existing class |
| 2nd         | +1                | +3        | +0       | +3        | Moderate madness |                            |
| 3rd         | +2                | +3        | +1       | +3        | Kali domain      | +1 level of existing class |
| 4th         | +3                | +4        | +1       | +4        | Major madness    |                            |
| 5th         | +3                | +4        | +1       | +4        | Kali domain      | +1 level of existing class |





## New Feats

*Then black despair,  
The shadow of a starless night, was thrown  
Over the world in which I moved alone.*

— The Revolt of Islam



or those yearning for the seductive embrace of evil, the Dark Powers provide many interesting abilities. Divine feats provide new attacks and defenses for clerics, especially those of evil alignment. Other general feats are more suited to those of a roguish persuasion. A few might even be useful to who follow the cause of good — or at least believe they do. DMs may decide which of these feats they wish to allow in their games.

Some special feats exist solely for the dread companion. DMs who allow feats to be applied to dread companions may expect their players to use an available feat slot when the creature is called.

### Brawler [General]

In the world of Ravenloft, few peasants have the ability to gain swords or the training to fight well unarmed. With this feat you may choose one object you can lift and swing and use it as a crude weapon as though you had proficiency with it.

**Prerequisite:** Str 13+.

**Benefits:** If weapons are taken away or you have no coinage to get them, this feat allows you to pick up any reasonable object and use it with the effectiveness of a standard weapon. It is up to the DM to decide damage for the unusual object, although all ability bonuses and combat feat bonuses still apply.

### Darkness Within [General]

Now that you have started to walk the spiraling path of corruption, the inhibiting powers of good and purity are less effective on you.

**Prerequisite:** You must have failed a Dark Powers check and be on the way down the path of corruption.

**Benefit:** Protection from evil only gives +1 to AC and saves against you, as does magic circle against evil. Holy smite does half damage to you, and dispel evil only gives opponents a +2 bonus when facing you.

## Deadly Presence [Divine]

You can sometimes suppress or nullify life-giving magic.

**Prerequisites:** Ability to turn or rebuke undead, Cha 13+.

**Benefit:** You can spend one of your turn/rebuke undead attempts to interfere with healing spells within a 25-foot area. The effect lasts one round, ending on your next action. While the effect is active, any spell cast in the area that would restore lost hit points to another character requires the caster of the curative spell to make a Will save to succeed. The DC of the Will save is 10 + the interfering character's level as a divine spell caster + his Charisma bonus. If the healer fails the save, the healing spell is affected, and a number equal to the interfering character's level as a divine spell caster plus his Charisma bonus is subtracted from the number of hit points that would otherwise be restored. The DM should make a powers check at 2% every time this feat is attempted.

### Deathly Pallor [General]

Death magic has warped you to the point that lesser undead see you as one of their own and do not harm you.

**Prerequisite:** You must be able to cast the spell *animate dead*.

**Benefit:** Unintelligent undead such as zombies and skeletons see you as a fellow animated undead and will not attack you unless commanded specifically to do so. Although you are very much alive, some of effects related to the undead affect you as well. You must make a Will save to see creatures under the effects of the spell *invisibility* to undead. You can even be rebuked, commanded, or turned, although the cleric or paladin doing so suffers a -7 penalty on the turning check, using your level as the HD category of undead. You make a powers check at 20% when you take this feat.

### Death's Favor [Divine]

You possess faith in death as the only eternal thing in the universe. Death itself rewards you for your vigilance.

**Prerequisite:** Ability to turn or rebuke undead, Cha 13+.

**Benefit:** Spend one of your turn/rebuke undead attempts to gain a +2 sacred bonus to your saving throws versus all Necromancy spells and any divine spells of the Death and Repose domains.



## Dirge of Woe [General]

You can sing the songs that cause the living to lament and the dead to shed tears.

**Prerequisite:** Bardic music ability, 9+ ranks in Perform.

**Benefit:** Spend one of your bardic music uses to make enemies quake with dread, fear, and sadness. All good-aligned creatures within 30 feet of you must make a Will save against a DC of 10 + your bard class level + your Charisma bonus. Those failing the save must subtract your Charisma bonus from all checks, attack rolls, and saves as long as they remain within the 30-foot area. Neutral characters must make the same save against half the above DC (round down). Evil characters are still moved by the music and might shed tears or lower their heads in somber silence, but suffer no other effects. The DM should make the appropriate checks and rolls so that players cannot use Dirge of Woe to detect alignment by inference.

## Dispassionate Dread Companion [General]

For reasons unknown to your character, your dread companion is not very dreadful. This can be a mixed blessing. Unlike many dread companions, yours does not seek out as much trouble. Your companion's nature is more self-absorbed and requires more motivating.

**Prerequisite:** You must be able to have a dread companion.

**Benefit:** Your dread companion is not evil. Substitute neutral as the alignment for your companion.

## Energy Drain [Divine]

You can channel negative energy to drain the life force from your foes.

**Prerequisite:** Ability to turn or rebuke undead, Cha 13+.

**Benefit:** After you succeed in a melee touch attack, you may opt to spend one of your rebuke or command attempts to drain the energy out of a foe. The victim must first make a Fortitude save against a DC of 10 + your divine spellcaster level. If the save is failed, the victim is drained a number of levels (or HD) equal to your Charisma bonus. The effect of this energy drain lasts until the afflicted character gains a full day's rest. You make a 1% powers check when you use this ability.

## Equestrian [General]

Naturally skilled on horseback, you may perform any action on horseback that you could normally perform while sitting or standing, including normal attacks and various special feats, as well as special riding maneuvers. Your defensive maneuvers also protect your mount with this feat.

**Prerequisites:** Mounted Combat, 5+ ranks in Ride.

**Benefit:** As comfortable on horseback as on your feet, you may Dodge, use Point Blank Shot, or any other feat normally only available while in standard melee. Your mount also gains the benefit of any defensive maneuvers, with penalties to attack and other feat- or action-created bonuses counting toward the mount as well.

**Special:** You may only use this feat with standard mounts such as light horses and war dogs, since these domesticated animals are more easily trained to your will. No mount of a size more than two categories greater than its rider can benefit from its rider's defensive maneuvers.

## Ethereal Touch [General]

Your physical touch has an ethereal quality. Ghosts, spectres, and creatures that would normally be intangible to others are physically solid to you.

**Prerequisite:** Wis 16+, previous contact with an incorporeal being.

**Benefit:** You may touch incorporeal creatures and subsequently harm them. This feat allows the character to possess the corrupting touch attack as described in the entry for "ghosts" in the PHB.

## Extra Domain [Special]

You may select an additional cleric domain with this feat.

**Prerequisite:** Wis 18+, 10+ ranks in Knowledge (religion), divine spellcaster level 7th+.

**Benefit:** When you take this feat, you may choose an extra cleric domain. If your deity has domains you do not have, you must choose from those. If you have every domain your deity encompasses, then you may pick a domain that does not conflict with your deity's nature (or alignment).

## Extra Wounds [Divine]

When you cast inflict wounds spells, the damage tends to be more severe.





**Prerequisite:** Ability to turn/rebuke undead, Cha 13+.

**Benefit:** Spend one of your turn/rebuke undead attempts to add your Charisma bonus to the damage you cause with an inflict wounds spell.

## Feral Rearing [General]

Abandoned or orphaned at birth, you were raised by wild animals. Utterly deprived of human contact until your adolescence, you remain more beast than human.

**Benefit:** You have the animal type rather than the normal creature type for your race. Animal Empathy is a class skill for you, regardless of your actual class. You gain a +4 racial bonus to all Animal Empathy and Handle Animal checks. You may communicate with one normal animal listed in the Monster Manual (e.g. brown bear, hawk, wolf, etc.) as though affected by the spell speak with animals cast at 5th level. This is an extraordinary ability.

Your base Outcast Rating is increased by 2. Like a barbarian, you do not automatically know how to read and write. You must spend 2 additional skill points (or 1 skill point if you are a bard) to gain the ability to read and write a language you can speak. Barbarians with this feat suffer no additional effect.

**Special:** This feat must be taken at 1st level.

## Hearthlore [General]

You possess a remarkable reservoir of knowledge regarding the myth and folklore of the land, including the superstitions of the common folk regarding herbal healings, protection from supernatural creatures, and other widely held beliefs.

**Prerequisite:** Int 14+, Wis 16+.

**Benefit:** Knowledge (monster lore) and Knowledge (Ravenloft) are considered class skills (see Ravenloft Core Rulebook for skill descriptions).

**Special:** This feat must be taken at 1st level. Though characters of any class may take this feat, it is exceptionally rare among all classes but barbarians, druids, rangers, and sorcerers. Classes that rely on book learning and higher education do not absorb the knowledge of the "folk" as readily.

## Hollow [General]

You were born without a soul. Energy draining has no effect on you, nor do any spells or effects that enslave or imprison the soul. Unfortunately, this

makes you an abomination in the eyes of some seers and prevents you from ever being raised from the dead.

**Prerequisites:** Cannot be of good alignment.

**Benefit:** You are immune to energy draining, magic jar, and trap the soul; the malevolence ability of ghosts; and all forms of possession. You cannot be reincarnated, raised, or resurrected. Your base Outcast Rating is increased by 1 when dealing with any character that has a Wisdom score of 12 or more, and by 4 when dealing with the Vistani.

**Special:** This feat must be taken at 1st level.

## Life-force Sacrifice [Metamagic]

You know how to sacrifice your own life essence for greater spell casting flexibility.

**Prerequisite:** If you are a divine spellcaster, you must possess one of the following domains: Death, Destruction, or Repose. If you are an arcane spellcaster, you must have mastery over the Necromancy school. In the case of wizards, you must specialize in the school of Necromancy; in the case of sorcerers, you must know one Necromancy spell for each level of spell you can cast.

**Benefit:** When the tide of a situation or conflict goes in a completely different direction and catches you without appropriate spells, you may sacrifice a number of hit points equal to the level of the spell you want to "exchange" for another spell of the same level in your "repertoire." This ability is similar to the cleric's spontaneous casting ability except that you lose hit points, and the spell can be exchanged for any spell you can normally prepare. The sacrificed hit points must be regained only through normal healing. Attempts to use cure spells or any other magical healing to regain hit points sacrificed using this feat are ineffective.

## Machiavellian [General]

You have a silver tongue and a natural presence about you. You have learned to put this innate charm to use as a political predator.

**Prerequisite:** Cha 16+; 2+ ranks in each of Diplomacy, Gather Information, Innuendo, and Sense Motive.

**Benefit:** You gain a +2 competence bonus on Diplomacy, Gather Information, Innuendo, and Sense Motive checks.





## Mechanical Aptitude [General]

Your character is especially gifted when it comes to designing, creating, and building things that require moving parts. This feat is very common among gnomes.

**Prerequisite:** Int 13+, 4+ ranks in any Craft sub-skill.

**Benefit:** You gain a +2 competence bonus to any Craft check that relates to moving parts, including clock making and gunsmithing.

## Mesmerizing [General]

Something about you reaches inside people and grabs hold of their will.

**Prerequisite:** Wis 16+, Cha 14+.

**Benefit:** You gain a +2 competence bonus to Diplomacy and Hypnotism checks.

## Mimicry [General]

You are skilled in the ability to replicate sounds, including accents, different vocal tones, and various animal noises and calls.

**Benefit:** You have a +2 competence bonus to Disguise checks while attempting to speak as someone other than yourself or while imitating a particular person (with an opposed Charisma check to fool anyone who knows that person as better than an acquaintance). Strangers in other domains are less suspicious of you, since you speak in any tongue (if you know the language) with little or no discernable foreign accent. Any spells or abilities that influence animals also gain a +2 bonus, as you are far more adept at speaking their "language."

## Piercing Gaze [General]

You have a greater ability to see through mists and fog, as well as an increased chance to capture the gaze of someone you wish to enchant.

**Prerequisite:** Wis 12+, Cha 12+.

**Benefit:** Your gaze is strange and intense. Often your eyes seem to glow in the dark when ambient light reflects off them. When caught in the Mists, you have a +3 bonus to Spot checks when looking for a Mistway. Your oddly piercing gaze also allows you to cast spells that require victims to look at you with a +2 DC to their save.

**Special:** Because of the weirdness of your gaze, you have a +1 Outcast bonus with strangers. This feat must be taken at 1st level.

## Second Sight [General]

You have a gift of perception. Not only are you exceptionally alert, you are gifted at the art of scrying.

**Prerequisites:** 4+ ranks in each of Scry and Spot.

**Benefit:** You gain a +2 competence bonus to all Spot and Scry checks.

## Shadow Affinity [Metamagic]

You have a natural affinity with the creatures of shadow.

**Prerequisite:** Spellcaster level 1st+.

**Benefit:** When you summon outsiders from the Plane of Shadow, they are treated as one hit die higher than normal and do not make a Will save to free themselves as with normal conjuration in Ravenloft. Additionally, you gain a +1 bonus to all saving throws related to darkness and shadow magic.

## Skeletal Dread Companion [General]

Your dread companion is itself undead, on top of being a supernatural creature. Although all dread companions are evil, the Dark Powers reserve skeletal dread companions for individuals who seem truly bent on continuing on the path of corruption and moral decay.

**Prerequisite:** The ability to have a dread companion, be it a mount or a familiar.

**Benefit:** After choosing the type of animal for a dread companion (usually horses for paladins, and bats, cats, owls, and so on for wizards and sorcerers), you may apply the skeletal dread companion template (see Appendix) to your companion. Skeletal dread companions retain any and all abilities from when they were alive. For instance, bats still fly despite the lack of a wing membrane, and cats still see sharply even though they have hollow eye sockets.

Skeletal dread companions are much tougher than other companions, and even though they are undead, they are far from mindless. Normal rules for Intelligence for a dread companion apply. The disadvantages of this feat consist in the possibility that your dread companion might be turned, rebuked, or commanded by a cleric, and spells and effects that target undead will likewise affect your companion.





You make a powers check at 5% when you take this feat.

### Skywise [General]

With this feat you know with absolute accuracy the cycles of the sun, moon, and stars.

**Prerequisite:** 4+ ranks in Knowledge (nature) or Wilderness Lore.

**Benefit:** Living in the realms of Ravenloft, sometimes your life may depend upon your ability to know when the full moon is about to rise — or when sunset is coming. You have the natural ability to know when the moon will rise and what phase it will be in. You feel the changes in the earth when the sun rises and sets and have an uncanny knowledge of the patterns of stars within the seasons. This feat does not depend upon seeing the sky. You are just as accurate while indoors or exploring an underground tomb and do not need to concentrate to know when a change is about to take place.

### Tantric Ability [General]

Generally practiced by the inhabitants of Sri Raji, this ability is a lovemaking technique meant to bring two souls closer.

**Prerequisite:** Wis 14+, Cha 12+; you must learn this feat through direct experience from another individual who possesses Tantric Ability. You cannot have this feat if you also have the Hollow feat.

**Benefit:** You declare the use of this feat when your character participates in intimate relations with a chosen partner. The partner makes a Will save (DC 15 + your Charisma bonus). If your partner fails the Will save, you gain a +2 competence bonus to all Diplomacy, Innuendo, Read Lips, and Sense Motive checks involving the partner for a number of hours equal to your Charisma bonus.

### Target Vulnerable Spot [General]

You gain the ability to locate and attack vulnerable points in a creature's body with a piercing weapon.

**Prerequisite:** Wis 13+, +4 ranks in Heal, Improved Critical, Weapon Finesse.

**Benefit:** When attacking monsters with particular vulnerabilities (such as a lycanthrope's susceptibility to silver), you gain an advantage. If you succeed at a critical hit with a piercing weapon

of the correct type (silver, wooden stakes, and the like), you have found their vulnerable spot and do three times normal damage — stunning, disabling, or killing the creature as per its weakness listed in *Denizens of Darkness* or the *Monster Manual*.

### Tarokka Natural [General]

You are a natural with tarokka cards. Perhaps you have Vistani blood in you, or maybe you are a seer. Whatever the case, you own and know how to use the infamous deck of divination cards. Unlike many con artists using the decks, yours actually works.

**Prerequisite:** Int 12+, Wis 12+.

**Benefit:** You may use the tarokka deck as a focus for Gather Information and Scry checks in addition to the normal Bluff checks for the cards. Like the Bluff check (when pretending to use the cards), you gain a +2 competence bonus to the roll when actually using the cards.

### Unseen Sensor [Metamagic]

Your divination and scrying abilities are much more subtle than others that use similar magic, and your viewings remain largely unnoticed.

**Prerequisite:** 6+ ranks in Scry, 6+ ranks in Hide, able to cast at least two Divination spells.

**Benefit:** When you succeed in Scry checks or use arcane eye, the sensor that views the location is invisible. Spells that allow someone to see things that are invisible can see the sensor.

### Unwholesome Ichor [General]

Owing to an unusual heritage, a curse on your family, odd eating habits, some other similar reason, you have blood that is poisonous to any natural creature and distasteful to the undead.

**Benefit:** If you are bitten by any natural creature with an Intelligence score greater than 2 or by intelligent undead, they automatically turn their attention to someone else if possible or discontinue and attack involving physical contact if no other foes are within range. Natural creatures that have caused more than 4 points of damage with their bite attacks must make a Fortitude save (DC 10) or be nauseated and unable to attack anyone for 2 rounds. Intelligent undead may make a Will save (DC 15) to continue a biting attack against you. If they fail, they react as though turned and will not attempt to bite you again during this combat.

**Special:** This feat must be taken at 1st level.





## Vampiric Regeneration [General]

Your familiar sustains your life (and its own) by draining the life force of those around it.

**Prerequisites:** Ability to possess a dread companion.

**Benefit:** Whenever your familiar suffers damage, or when you suffer damage while within one mile of your familiar, your familiar emits an enervating aura with a radius of 30 feet. This counts as a free action. All living opponents within this aura must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 10 + 1/2 your familiar's HD + your Charisma modifier) or take 1 point of damage.

Each round, your familiar cures a number of hit points equal to the total damage its aura inflicts (1 point per affected creature). If you are within one mile of your familiar, the total is divided between you and your familiar. If you are separated from your familiar, it uses the entire pool to cure itself.

Your familiar automatically maintains the enervating aura until it is killed or has cured all of its damage (or until both you and it have cured all damage, if you are within one mile of your familiar). You are immune to your familiar's enervating aura, but your allies are not.

## Playing Monsters



Evil people never believe they are evil. They may do evil acts and accept that they have done them, but they always rationalize their actions with some underlying motivation other than "I did it because I am evil." The motivations that drive evil beings may be fairly straightforward ones such as greed, desire, or hunger. When the motivations are more complex, however, they result in a three-dimensional, multi-faceted character that is not only fun and challenging to play but also helps add scope and depth to a campaign. Keep this in mind when playing monsters, especially as PCs.

When a character falls prey to the caress of a vampire or the bite of a lycanthrope, what changes take place within the once-human, now monstrous soul? In some ways, the character remains the same, but in other ways, her focus changes drastically. Though she may attempt desperately to hold on to her former life, she can feel the stirrings of inhuman hungers within her and she knows that, little by little, she is changing into a monster. As she grows more and more aware of the increasing distance between her current self and her past life, she may

face her future with resolve to find redemption (even in death), anger at the blow fate has dealt her, or despair at her horrible plight. She may accept, reject, deny, or attempt to overcome her new state of being. Sometimes she may try to hide what she is from those she loves, but eventually the truth must reveal itself.

This section looks at the most common forms of "monsters" that begin as human and at a third creature that begins as a "monster" and attempts to become something more, with often disastrous results.

## Vampires

Playing a character who has succumbed to the attacks of a vampire presents a unique challenge for both players and DMs. Everyone knows that vampires are driven by the need for blood, but is that all that motivates them? A blood-drinking monster that goes out and kills every night to feed soon grows boring to portray, either as a PC or an NPC. Each vampire has a history, and detailing that history, whether for a PC or an NPC, transforms a standard "blood-sucker" into a complex and fascinating anti-hero or antagonist.

The following questions may help flesh out your vampire. Besides the hunger for blood, what other motivation drives the character? How did he become a vampire? Did he seek it out? If so, why did he want it? If he did not, is he angry with the one who doomed him to this undeath? Now that he knows the truth of being a vampire, how does he feel about it?

By answering these questions, you learn more about your vampire's nightly existence and bring his inner turmoil to the fore so that you can use it to make your character (or an NPC) a unique individual.

The driving need for the blood that grants vampires their continued existence gives them power as well. Along with the power comes a pleasure that is nectar to them. This blood hunger also dooms them to live apart from mortals.

As immortals, vampires not only outlive most mortals, they also grow to look upon them as prey. This perception makes it difficult for a vampire to have a lasting relationship with a mortal or to see these frail creatures as equals.

When a character becomes a vampire, she discovers that she is smarter, stronger, and faster than most mortals. Her senses become enhanced as well, making her even more sensitive to the sights,





sounds, and odors of the world around her. All of this ultimately leads to feelings of superiority. A vampire who continues to adventure with her mortal companions often cannot help but feel as if she is better than the rest of the group and may become very frustrated with her companions' weakness or lack of wit.

Upon entering a town, a vampire must deal with her sharpened senses that now recoil from the stench of unwashed bodies, feces, urine, and even the cheap perfume worn by a prostitute or a serving wench. All these odors, which fade into the background for most mortals, can be repugnant to someone with a sensitive nose. Add to this the alluring scent of hot blood that emanates from the masses of people that live in a town, and you have a mix that can drive a vampire mad.

A PC vampire might be somewhat better than most at controlling where and how she feeds, but she will never be able to get away from the need for blood. The hunger is constant. With her keen senses, the PC vampire can smell the blood of her companions, beckoning to her with its sweetness. This colors any alliance or friendship she might make or try to retain. The rest of her adventuring party eventually realizes that they travel with a predator and that they qualify as "prey." Ideally, an "adventuring" vampire should have a strong motivation for doing so. Does she regret what she is and seek to do some good to atone for her compromised nature? Is she hungry for the company of others, particularly those who were once her friends and traveling companions? Or is she looking for new experiences to ease the tedium of the years? Is she driven by more base motivation, such as the search for power or wealth to ensure her comfort? Just like a mortal, a vampire's motivations may consist of a combination of several or all of these reasons, colored by the fact that she also needs and desires the blood that gives her life. Such a vampire, whether she is a PC or NPC, adds much more to a story than a slaving beast completely ruled by the need for blood and little else.

## Lycanthropes

Lycanthropes present a similar challenge. Like vampires, their nature (in this case, bestial rather than monstrous) sets them forever apart from normal people. The need for raw meat drives a lycanthrope. He must have this sustenance every day or suffer the consequences. The lycanthrope's feral nature expresses this need in a passion for the

hunt and the kill. The thrill of the chase and the satisfaction of tearing warm flesh from the prey's body are seductive songs that lycanthropes always hear and must respond to.

As with vampires, wercreatures are also stronger and faster than normal people. They have greater endurance and keener senses than mortals. This leads to feelings of superiority, while their fear of being hunted down by a group of mortals makes them wary of trusting anyone. A wercreature traveling with an adventuring group most likely resents being held to a traveling pace mandated by his feeble mortal companions. The odors accumulated by a group of people constantly on the move with few hygienic amenities also irritate the sensitive noses of most lycanthropes, making them resent the heavily armored fighter or the druid whose robes collect all the dirt and stains of the road.

When portraying true lycanthropes as PCs or NPCs, you should remember that these creatures know what they are and have some control over the change. How do they feel when the music of the hunt fades and the lycanthrope stands over the body of his prey, his hunger sated and his needs temporarily abated? Some lycanthropes revel in it; others may feel remorse, especially if their prey was sentient or known to them.

Afflicted lycanthropes normally do not remember what they do when the change takes them, but they know that something happens from indications such as torn and bloodied clothing. Since afflicted lycanthropes are very likely to target those near them when they change; they sometimes regain their self-awareness only to find their families murdered and eaten and themselves with bloodied clothes and red stained hands and mouth. Imagine the guilt and remorse that such a person must feel . . .

Ideally, PC lycanthropes should come from the ranks of those who are battling the inner beast. They try to deny the song of the hunt, but they must still find the needed quantities of raw meat. These wercreatures may search for a way to cure (or at least control) their affliction. Their interactions with other members of an adventuring group become tense and charged with mistrust, as their companions find themselves constantly looking over their shoulders or frantically watching the night sky for the first sight of the moon. This is especially true in the case of afflicted lycanthropes





who do not have as much control over their shape change.

Some lycanthropes become hunters of other lycanthropes because they so revile themselves for what they have become and because of the actions they are compelled to take. Regardless of their motivations, these characters always need to feed the hunger and are always hearing the dark, seductive cry of the call to the hunt. This overriding need colors anything else these characters do or feel.

## Constructs

Unlike vampires and lycanthropes, dread constructs do not begin as human. Instead, they begin their "lives" as creatures spawned in a laboratory or concocted from the desires of an obsessed individual. Nevertheless, they present some of the same challenges for role-playing as do humans-turned-monsters.

For constructs, the desire they experience is the drive to become "real." Their journey goes in the opposite direction from that of a vampire or werewolf, who changes from mortal to monster. Constructs struggle to sift from monster to mortal.

Constructs realize that they are hardier and much stronger than their creators. These creatures have no need for food or rest. Eventually, the construct becomes aware of the qualities that set them apart from mortals. Those who interact with them sense the difference already, which colors their reactions to the golem.

The true tragedy of these creatures is the fact that they are animated puppets who mimic life but are not "human." They realize this as they become self-aware and experience the capacity to learn. The bond with their creator allows the construct to know exactly the purpose for which it was built and exactly how flawed its creator finds it to be.

Starting out with an innocent bewilderment and a desire to please, dread constructs become slowly more and more self-aware. They begin to realize that they are not like other beings. People do not react to them the same way. The construct realizes that people see them as tools or toys or unnatural monsters. They also know from their bond with their creator that they have fallen short of what their creator envisioned.

At this point, the questions start. "Why am I not a real person? What is the meaning of my existence? What will happen to me when my creator dies?" When constructs show their frustration and look to their creator for answers, what they usually get is fear. Never has a construct been good enough to meet its creator's expectations, and now the one who made the construct reviles his creation.

Then the thought occurs: "Why should I care? I am better than 'real' people are. I do not need food. I am stronger and tougher than they are. I do not need sleep. In fact, I do not need them ..."

This realization can result in a complete disregard for life, causing insane killing rages as the construct strikes out at those who call him a monster. The tragic cycle completes itself, making the construct into the monster he fears himself to be.

PC constructs face the revulsion of other party members and anyone the party encounters. They also face resentment and fear from most people. A dread golem's existence consists of a never-ending quest to "become real" that can never be fulfilled. Constructs will always search for acceptance but will never find it. Eventually, a construct comes to hate those that it once sought to befriend. Exploring this tragedy can provide a real challenge for players and DMs and can greatly enhance the richness of a Ravenloft campaign.







Chapter Two:  
Patrons

Flickering lamplight did little to dispel the smoky darkness of the Blind Peddler Tavern. This feature and the fact that it was located in one of the seedier sections of Mortigny, Richemulot's second largest city, made it an attractive place for clandestine meetings. The tavern was also a perfect place to recruit people for "acquisition" trips for L'Académie des Sciences. That is what brought Jean Claude here tonight.

The triad in Dementlieu had charged him with assembling a group to go after some scrolls that belonged to a scholar wizard who lived on the coast. In the past, this wizard had refused L'Académie's offers to purchase the scrolls. The next step, therefore, was to acquire them, regardless of the wizard's desires. Secrecy was of utmost importance in this operation. Since the task involved dealing with a wizard's magical protections, Jean Claude knew that he must be selective in his choice of a team.

He moved further into the tavern, looking for a table where he could observe the tavern's customers without being observed himself. He spotted a likely table and claimed it, signaling the barmaid as he sat down. He ordered an ale and handed her a silver coin. He then sat back and looked over the crowd, sizing up likely prospects.

After his second tankard, Jean Claude resigned himself to the fact that it would be a long night. So far, all he had seen were a couple of botched pick pocket attempts that ended rather nastily and a one-sided brawl between a drunken customer and the bartender, who unceremoniously tossed his attacker out the door and into the street.

Deciding that he might have better luck tomorrow night, Jean Claude finished off his ale and got up to leave.

Before he could walk away from his table, the door opened and five people entered the tavern together. They were dressed in traveling clothes and carried good weapons that showed signs of use and care. All of them moved with a grace that spoke of familiarity with shadowy operations.

The apparent leader of the group glanced around the tavern and spotted an empty table. He gestured, and with casual obedience the group moved to it and sat down. When the barmaid approached them, Jean Claude heard them order cheap beer, paid for with copper coins from a pouch that looked rather lean. He settled back down at his table and gestured for a third drink.

Perhaps his luck had just changed. Focusing his attention on the group, Jean Claude listened to their quiet conversation long enough to realize that they were exactly the sort of team he sought. Two of them were spellcasters; all of them, from the muted references to recent activities, had some experience at stealth. They were also in need of money, so they would be unlikely to ask too many questions if he made the offer attractive enough.

Yes indeed, he thought, smiling as he signaled to the barmaid and ordered a round of ale delivered to the newcomers' table, his luck had certainly changed.



*The awful shadow of some unseen Power  
Floats, tho' unseen, amongst us.*

— Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty"



ven the most haunted and driven champion of the shadows experiences an occasional overwhelming need to seek out others of his kind, to find fellowship or succor among the other outcasts and ne'er-do-wells whose lives echo the same dark pattern. Whether offering a refuge or laying a meticulously complex trap, the patrons listed below have one element in common: their members dwell in darkness, often infusing the souls of others with the beginning spark that leads to unquenchable evil.

Mysterious, often deadly, and always more than they seem, these organizations, families, and groups exist to add another element to the feel of Gothic horror within a Ravenloft adventure. The "patrons" described in this chapter cause even the most jaded champion of darkness to experience a shiver of terror as he realizes that pitiless and powerful secret organizations hide in the shadows and manipulate the minds and hearts of men and women in the Dread Realms.

Some of these groups exist for their own selfish desires; others perpetuate some dark cause or seek to redress evil on its own terms. Still other patron organizations represent the powers of the darklords themselves.

Characters driven by circumstances or choice to risk their souls by treading the treacherous path that could lead to irredeemable evil may find succor, employment, retribution, or relief through association with the groups described below.

## Carnival

Hear those shrieks and moans of horror? Gaze at that seductive bat-winged beauty soaring through the clouds! Brightly colored Vistani vardos appear, some barred with slats of steel, others covered with painted images of distorted figures. Each has a driver, his leering whiteface a demented mask above harlequin clothes. This is Carnival, the show of all shows, filled with freaks, geeks, and terrors beyond imagination. This is home, escape, and refuge to some who walk a perilous moral path, perhaps even you!

A gathering of outcasts, this family of performers effortlessly travels through the Mists from village to barony to wasted heath. Anyone who wishes

may join, but all that stay risk becoming part of the show. Seemingly a fine place to lose pursuit or gain free passage through the Mists, Carnival is also a place of mystery, power, and danger — a place where the most beautiful may be the most deadly, and nothing and everything is what it seems.

## A Tour of Carnival

As Carnival moves through the Mists, it takes the form of a long line of Vistani vardos (wagons), gilded and painted with bright colors. The parade consists of 40 or more vardos, six of which are barred with thick steel and contain the most dangerously "Twisted" creatures of Carnival. The painted banners hanging on the sides of the vardos advertise various performers and freaks, including the Illuminated Man, the Snake Mistress, the Hideous Man-Beast, and the Vampiress. Isolde, the mysterious leader of Carnival, makes her home in one of the least decorated vardos tucked securely away in the middle of the line.

Before Carnival arrives at any location — and there are no planned routes — fliers appear as though by magic to announce its coming. The Vampiress, a trouper who looks like a beautiful vampire and has functional bat wings, flies ahead to find a suitable place for the Carnival grounds, usually an open area near the edge of a local village or town.

When Carnival's troupers arrive, they drive the vardos into a circular pattern with Isolde's wagon at the very center. Each vardo is then opened with a small tent or stage attached to its side. Colorful painted banners snap in the breeze, showing the various delights and terrors awaiting those who venture inside the open wagon. Some vardos have panels that fold down to uncover the secrets within.

Barkers bellow and whisper, describing the wonders and horrors contained within Carnival, hoping to draw the crowds and take a copper or two from each person eager for the show. Skurra wander silently throughout the Carnival grounds, their grimly smiling clown faces and clashing silken tatters providing a festive, if oddly eerie air. Some of the Skurra play instruments, lending their haunting music to the atmosphere of skewed revelry.

Other crewmembers set up booths with games or food for sale among the vardos. Animals dart among the wagons, stray cats and dogs that travel with Carnival. These creatures also suffer from the "Twisting," becoming, as the troupers call them,



## Secrets of Carnival

Though ostensibly a traveling circus that makes its journey throughout the realms of Ravenloft, Carnival hides many secrets known only to a trusted few. Those who encounter Carnival sometimes discover one or more of these secrets and later wish that they had not proven so "fortunate."

### The Carnival Domain

Carnival technically exists as a floating pocket domain. This means that it moves from one place to another, overlaying and superimposing its strange physical and psychic laws over the reality of each domain it travels through to the edges of its influence. As in all regular domains, Carnival's powerful darklord cannot leave it, but wields tremendous power within. Isolde is the darklord of Carnival, and her influence radiates outward from her centrally located vardo to a distance of 300 feet.

### Twisting

The phenomenon of Twisting began soon after Isolde appeared. It is the Dark Powers' reaction to Isolde, who is actually a ghaele, or greater eladrin. Her thirst to pursue and capture her quarry has brought her through the Mists to Ravenloft. Twisting becomes evident in anyone who stays within her domain more than  $5 + 1d8$  days. (This time period is cumulative, and a character need not spend consecutive days to suffer the effects.)

Somehow, the Dark Powers see deep within each person's soul and use the flaws discovered therein to reshape and change their victims' outward forms. Twisting makes virtually everyone monstrous in the eyes of normal Ravenloft denizens. Twisting also provides a freakish talent or boon, sometimes taking away one ability or making normal tasks difficult, but never destroying those abilities that are a distinct part of the victim. DMs should think long and hard about the sorts of changes that might occur based upon the actions of their players.

#### Examples:

Elvera, a shy sorcerer who rarely speaks her mind even when her knowledge and thoughts might be helpful to her companions, might find her face changed so that her mouth disappears altogether. Spells work somehow without the use of verbal components, but Elvera cannot speak normally and must eat and drink by pouring liquid through her nose. Still, she has gained the ability to communicate telepathically with anyone of average Intelligence or better and can read another's thoughts and emotions with ease, sometimes even influencing them to speak or act in certain ways. She is now "The Mute Magician."

Ravenel, a vain and handsome bard with a vicious tongue and a ready hand at insults, might find himself warped into the shape of a bee centaur. His face is still handsome; he can still sing, though he tends to drone or hum; and he has gained the ability to fly and may sting others with his barbed abdomen. He will never be a welcome guest in any tavern again, however, and has the annoying need to consume four gallons of nectar each day. He is now "The Fabulous Stinger!"

El Sav'age is a strong fighter who cannot make up his mind which weapon to use and so carries three times the weapons he needs to every fight, always fighting two-handed or with multiple-shot weapons. He finds himself Twisted into an eight-armed freak with four of his arms distorted into the shapes of his favorite weapons. He can make several attacks and is a very effective fighter, but will never be comfortable in bed again and cannot possibly blend into normal society. He now lives his mutated life as "The Amazing Whirlwind of Death."

Twisting, although a radical change, is nevertheless reversible. If a character is gone from Carnival one month for each day spent there, the Twisting gradually fades and disappears, taking away both advantages and disadvantages as it goes. Twisting may also be removed by a succession of restoration spells, one for each week spent at Carnival. No trouper will offer this solution, however, since no one has discovered it. Characters returning to Carnival after the Twisting fades have no guarantee what sort of distortion might occur if they stay too long again. In fact, no Twisting ever manifests in the same way twice.



creepings, crawlers, and fidgets — odd little creatures so changed that no one can tell what sort of animal they were before. They usually react like curious raccoons, nuzzling and begging for food, especially around anyone with shiny objects they can steal. The troupers treat gawkers and curiosity seekers to spectacles and freak shows before sending the “Georges” home lighter in the pouch — if the pickpockets do not do so first.

Anyone who wishes to join Carnival may do so. Anyone seeking asylum is accepted with no questions asked. People who might be outcasts anywhere else because of deformities or scarring are treated with respect among the troupers. Trust, however, is harder to gain and more valuable. The regular performers trust no one fully but Isolde.

## History

Carnival began long ago as a walled freak show just outside the town of l’Morai. The last ruler of Carnival was a warped man known only as The Puppetmaster, a performer who could make anyone dance as though attached to his strings. After the death of one of the performers, some of the troupers of Carnival began an investigation that led to a horrific conclusion. All within Carnival had once been normal, but now were terribly transformed by the Puppetmaster’s powers. In l’Morai, criminals were twisted to fit their crimes, their memories and names taken from them, becoming part of the show, never to leave their walled prison again except as prey for the townspeople. Blind Marie, with the help of the giant Herмос, started a rebellion and convinced other members of Carnival to join. The ensuing siege might have resulted in the deaths of all the rebels, but Marie sacrificed herself to the townsfolk of l’Morai. Herмос fled with the others, his faith in Marie never faltering.

At first, the troupers of Carnival looked only for refuge, a place where they might rebuild and find acceptance. Everywhere they went, however, they found hostile glances and suspicion. They feared they would never find sanctuary. Reviled in Darkon, they were about to pack up and move on when the Great Upheaval occurred. Frightened by the tremors, the angry sky, and the attitude of the people in Darkon, they hurried to Falkovnia. This mistake nearly cost them their lives. The “kind folk” of Falkovnia were ready to enslave and kill the people of Carnival when Isolde stepped in and

rescued them. She became their protector and their patron, asking nothing in return.

Soon after, the Twisting began, a process that changes (nearly) all who live within Isolde’s influence. Only the Skurra, Vistani outcasts who created a tribe of their own within Carnival, have found protection from this metamorphosis. The Skurra came, bringing their vardos, thus allowing Carnival to travel freely from realm to realm. Now Carnival moves constantly, usually staying a day or two, never remaining more than a week in one place for fear that the Twisting will seep into the very ground.

## The Troupers of Carnival

Many tasks in Carnival need doing and many different troupers do those jobs. Barkers, crew, freaks, and Skurra all have their place within Carnival, while mongrels (those “strays” who only stay a short time) live on the fringes of Carnival’s society. Here are some of the major troupers of Carnival,

**Isolde:** Leader, savior, and guiding star for the troupers of Carnival, Isolde is a mystery to all. Believed by some to be a spirit sent by Blind Marie to save Carnival in its hour of need and by others to be an evil succubus in disguise, she is actually one of the greater eladrin, also referred to as ghaele, or, by some, as angels. A spirit of pure chaotic good, Isolde fought as a crusader in a battle of wits with a terrible incubus. After several encounters, he escaped her avenging blade by slipping into the Mists. Unable to follow into a plane declared off-limits to her kind, she was forced to beg her masters to allow her the chase. They agreed, but with a price: she was placed forever within a human shell and banished for all time to Ravenloft. Never had Isolde seen a place so full of evil, both petty and great, as Ravenloft.

Now, although she still pursues her old enemy, she spends much of her time attempting to alleviate the suffering of innocents and fighting evildoers. She is studying the darklords and has gained much knowledge of their abilities and beginnings. Unfortunately, the Dark Powers taunt her much as they do other domain lords. They send the magical fliers that advertise the arrival of Carnival, thus warning her nemesis and making the end of her quest near-to-impossible.

Isolde rarely converses with strangers to Carnival, appearing only when there might be trouble



or during a performance. A stunning midnight-haired beauty with pale skin and dark eyes, she wears flowing dresses of black or deep blue only for the grandest occasions. Although her manner and appearance might lead some to believe her to be of noble birth, her usually mannish dress and the long mother-of-pearl bladed sword she always carries belie her graceful carriage and elegant exotic features. For statistics on Isolde, see the entry on "ghaele" in the MM and apply the following changes: Isolde can no longer assume alternate form and has lost most of the innate powers of her kind; in exchange, she has gained the basic abilities of a 10th-level paladin within Ravenloft, has the ability to accelerate Twisting if she wishes, and can supercede the powers of other darklords in her presence. Within a 300-foot sphere around her, she can cause almost any change or effect she wills. Twisting occurs with or without her conscious assistance, but she believes this to be a good thing and, in any case, she cannot control the outcome.

**Hermos the Giant:** One of the original members of Carnival, Hermos is a gentle, kind-hearted man whose greatest joy is holding children up on his shoulders so that they may see the sights more clearly. When Carnival belonged to the Puppetmaster, Hermos fell in love with Blind Marie and did everything in his power to help her realize her dream of freedom. Climbing over the walled grounds of Carnival during its siege, he discovered an escape route and eventually led the troupers to safety, sorrowfully leaving Marie to her sacrificial death at the hands of the townsfolk of l'Morai.

Now, Hermos works as Isolde's right-hand man, believing her to be a guardian spirit sent from Marie to watch over Carnival. Spiritual advisor and willing ear to the other troupers, he has earned the respect and love of most of the residents of Carnival. He makes certain all the routine tasks at Carnival go smoothly, oversees the payroll, and keeps everyone on their toes. Hermos' boyish face with compassionate eyes and a ready smile tops





over 10 feet of awkward limbs and body. Hermos is one of the first people at Carnival to give a home to wanderers in need of sanctuary. He is also the only person in Carnival who makes Isolde feel completely comfortable.

**Tindal:** Tindal is Carnival's lead barker. A talented wizard, Tindal specialized in creating Memory Mirrors, magic mirrors that show distorted reflections, sometimes an idealized view, other times the darkness and evil within the viewer. Many of his mirrors are on display for the amusement of the Georges. Very few of the troupers know the truth that Tindal is actually a "fetch" — a living, breathing reflection of Tindafalus, the mage who originally created the mirrors. Of the two, Tindal is the better man. Tindafalus lives trapped in any reflected surface within Carnival and exists to take revenge upon Isolde, who he believes is responsible for the Twisting and for his own terrible fate.

Tindal is charismatic, handsome, and verbose. He enjoys bringing in the crowds and is oblivious of his actual nature. Grey and gaunt, looking more than 30 years older than Tindal, Tindafalus whispers foul rumors of Isolde's origins to any who will listen to his schemes and works to destroy her from within his reflected hell.

**The Skurra:** Vistani who lost their tribes or were cast out, the Skurra started a new tribe, the Tribe of None, also called living ghosts. Skurra found acceptance in Carnival. All Vistani tasques have their representatives among them, but the Skurra may be (at the decision of the DM) either living Vistani or restless Vistani spirits called up by Isolde to protect Carnival. In either case, the Skurra have learned a method to protect themselves from the Twisting: magical face paint called skurra-vera, applied in designs unique to each individual. When a Skurra paints her face for the first time, she learns that she must never speak aloud and must never be called by her real name, so that the Twisting cannot find and change her true self. Communication occurs through expression, music, and gesture. Various Skurra work as knife-throwers, dancers, musicians, and animal trainers within Carnival. Skurra also drive Carnival's vardos through the Mists. All horses are painted with skurra-vera in patterns along their flanks and heads, although some were already Twisted before the magic took effect. Any half-Vistani who asks to stay at Carnival will be shown the skurra-vera, but if they choose to use it, all aspects of the ritual must be followed for the protection to work.

## freemen of falkovnia

Ultimately, any repressive regime creates rebels destined to overthrow it. This is happening in Falkovnia. Tired of Vlad Drakov's cruel and sadistic reign, a group of desperate people have come together to form a covert organization dedicated to overthrow him and his Talon guards. Most of the members of the Freeman have lost family to the Talons' brutality. They see the Freeman as a way not only to avenge their loved ones but also to stop the ones responsible from doing the same to others. They are fighting a desperate battle against overwhelming odds. The monumental nature of their goal has caused the group to employ hit-and-run tactics that do not always take into account civilian lives. One of the key leaders, a servant of the goddess Hala, has so far kept the group from becoming too extreme in their operations. Many members in the organization, however, possess a justifiable desire for revenge and the willingness to vent their anger on any of Drakov's soldiers that fall into their hands.

Currently, the Freeman operate by moving randomly from place to place. They are always in hiding and leave their temporary shelters only to strike against Drakov's soldiers and tax collectors. They lead a life of constant fear and paranoia, knowing that if they are caught, they face excruciating torture and a long, painful death. Their loyalty to the cause is unswerving, and all Freeman (and Freewomen) willingly accept the risks. Many of them no longer have families; most no longer think in terms of hope: for them, what they do exhibits a grim resolve to fight Drakov for as long as they can. They feel they can do nothing else and still be true to the ones he and his Talons have taken from them.

Drakov is aware of the organization and sends his soldiers to hunt for them. At this point, however, he considers them a minor annoyance, a fly to be swatted at and forgotten until the next time it shows its pesky face. Some of the Freeman have been captured, but every day a few more people pushed beyond bearing find the Freeman. Because of this, the group's membership, while not growing quickly, shows a slow but steady increase. New members are treated with some suspicion at first, since any one of them might be a spy sent to betray the Freeman to Drakov.

A recent development offers them some ray of hope that allows them to continue to obtain the weapons they need to fight. Agents who claim to be



working for Barovia's ruler have approached the Freeman with an offer of aid. These agents, who are actually members of the Order of the Ebon Gargoyle (see below), want to use the Freeman scouts as couriers for their agents in Darkon. The promised payment in good weapons and armor has proven a very tempting offer, and the leadership of the Freeman has agreed to this plan. The operation is still in its initial stages, but promises to bring better weaponry and armor to strengthen the Freeman's position.

### People of Note

**Gregor Kartovich:** Gregor Kartovich founded the Freeman of Falkovnia after his wife and young daughter were taken by the Talons. They were accused of treason because they protested when the Talons killed their goat when it strayed into their path. Gregor was forced to watch as both women were beaten and defiled until the brutes grew tired of them. The Talons made Gregor witness their deaths. Though consumed by hatred of Drakov and all his minions, Gregor is still a wily fighter and has kept the members of the group from throwing themselves away needlessly in their quest for ven-

geance. He and Liza, the priestess of Hala, are the level heads in the organization. Gregor is in his forties; his face is weathered and lined with bitterness. When he speaks, there is a passion in his voice that makes his people listen to him. His courage in facing what happened to his family is an example to the rest of the group. Most of the Freeman would gladly follow Gregor into the Abyss and beyond.

**Liza:** Liza serves the goddess Hala as her priestess. She is the sole survivor of her hidden temple. Drakov's Talons slew the rest of Hala's clerics when they found and destroyed the temple. Now Liza's goal is to bring Drakov down. To this end, she works to support the Freeman in their efforts, providing healing and aid for them as well as wisdom in planning their next moves. Hers is the voice of reason when emotions and tempers run wild. Her eloquent speeches offer hope that the Freeman can one day succeed in bringing the tyrant to bay. Liza also acts as the group's counselor. She tries to help the individual members to work past their anger and grief so they can operate without the blind rage and lust for revenge that will only get them killed. She is the heart of the group as Gregor is its mind and will. Usually projecting an







aura of serenity, Liza appears both older and wiser than her actual age of 30. She is loyal to the group and all its members, working tirelessly to help them in whatever way she can.

**Ivan Rabinski:** Ivan is the third of the key leaders of the Freeman. He is a hot-tempered man who loves nothing more than killing Drakov's soldiers. He is so obsessed with his goal that he cares little for anyone that may get hurt in the process. He stages bold raids against patrols and warehouses that provide the Freeman with food, weapons, and other needed items. He shows no mercy to Drakov's soldiers and is not concerned by the fact that the fires he sets throughout the cities of Darkon have also killed innocents. To his mind, they are acceptable losses in the war for freedom. Freeman, according to Ivan, are not strong enough to afford the luxury of scruples. Ivan never speaks of any family. His attitude about spending lives makes most of the rest of the group wary of him. Nevertheless, his tactical brilliance in planning and executing the attacks that have so far kept the organization together makes him a respected leader among the Freeman.

## The Hunt Club

Originally begun as a diversion, this club has grown from its small beginnings in Richemulot to an elite and exclusive club for the decadent and rich. Its membership consists of bored young nobles who seek new thrills and challenges. The brothers Phillippe and Jean Paul Gaston founded the Hunt Club along with a few friends. In a search for excitement, they challenged each other to chase down dangerous animals and monsters.

Over the last five years, membership in the Hunt Club has grown to about 20 people. All the members of the Club live for the thrill of the chase, the more dangerous the better.

The Club members feel themselves above the law, but they do prefer to avoid unpleasantness. To this end, they are discrete about some of their more "exotic" prey and take precautions to ensure the ignorance of their staff and hirelings. Even the existence of the Club is but a rumor in most noble circles. The Club members decide if they wish to approach a potential new member only after observing him or her in more mundane hunting situations. They only approach those who show the same love of the chase and desire to be challenged that they possess.

The Hunt Club operates from a hunting lodge in the forests outside Mortigny. Anytime there is the opportunity for a hunt, the Club is ready to seize the advantage. They also organize a bi-monthly Grand Chase in which a suitable quarry is brought in and released in the forest. The hunters have 24 hours to find and kill it. Any form of prey is considered "suitable" so long as it promises to give the hunters a good run. Intelligent prey is especially favored, as it tends to be the most challenging.

To this end, the Hunt Club sometimes hires adventurers to search for and retrieve specific creatures or else discover the location of the quarry's lair if they cannot bring the creature back themselves. The club's members have developed many methods to trap and transport safely their chosen quarry to the forest for the hunt.

## The Hunting Lodge

Set in a secluded area of deep woods outside Mortigny, the Hunting Lodge is comfortably furnished and has a staff of servants that see to the members' needs. In its design, the lodge resembles an inn with a large common room where the members gather to talk and dine. The common room has a dining table at one end, while the other end of the spacious room is set up with a bar and groupings of comfortable chairs and small tables. Games of various kinds are set up around this area of the room. The building has several comfortable bedrooms upstairs for regular members. Trophies from past hunts are mounted throughout the lodge, with a head of a dread troll assuming the place of honor above the common room's large fireplace. A heated bathhouse attached to the lodge provides a welcoming place where members can go to relax and soak after a hunt. The Hunt Club actually owns a good deal of the forest around the lodge for its private hunting grounds. Trespassers are likely to find themselves hunted if they wander into this territory.

## People of Note

**Phillipe Gaston:** Phillippe is an athletic young man who excels at both sword and spell. His ready wit and smile make up for a less than handsome face. Phillippe's great love of the chase is only rivaled by his love of the fair sex. He is quite a womanizer and will not pass up a chance for another conquest, seeing it as a different form of "the hunt." Phillippe and his brother Jean Paul inherited their father's wealth and lands when they were young boys. Their father's seneschal, Andre





Rousseau, managed the estate for the boys and still continues to do so as neither of the brothers seems inclined to take over from him. In fact, Phillipe much prefers letting Andre deal with all the day-to-day details of running the estate. It leaves him free to join his friends for a hunt or to seek out a wench for a roll in the hay. As long as he has funds to draw upon and a place to entertain, he is content.

**Jean Paul Gaston:** Jean Paul is a young man who knows what he wants and will stop at nothing to obtain it. Normally, considering his silver tongue and rakishly handsome appearance, he has no trouble getting what he wants with a smile and a song or well turned poem, though in a pinch, he is handy with the sword as well. Jean Paul believes in living life to its fullest; new experiences are nectar to him. Nothing makes him happier than dancing on the razor's edge of danger. He considers his brother Phillipe a bit boorish and crude, but he is still a good companion. Jean Paul often leads the pair into ticklish situations and then leaves Phillipe

to extricate them from it safely. He keeps telling Phillipe that it is for his own good so he can learn to deal better with such things. He is not entirely sure that Phillipe believes him, but since he possesses as much love of adventure as Jean Paul does, it really does not matter except as a brotherly challenge. Jean Paul has no real interest in the estate beyond making sure that it continues to provide the necessary funds to allow him to continue to live in luxury and do as he pleases.

**Jonathan Flicker:** A good friend of the Gaston brothers, this half-elf also lives for the excitement of the hunt, combining his uncanny skill with bow and arrow and other weapons with a flair for magic. He is the one who talked Phillipe and Jean Paul into expanding the Hunt Club and is working on making contacts among the nobility in other locations.

Jonathan would like to see the Club grow into a moneymaking organization, arranging customized hunts for selected clients. The client would choose his prey and the circumstances of the hunt.





The Club, in turn, would provide the prey and a place for the client and his colleagues to hunt, all for a pretty price. He has not quite sold the brothers on this idea yet, but others in the club favor the concept and want to go forward with it. Jonathan is looking for the ultimate challenge for his skill as an archer. He moves on to more and more deadly prey to test his limits. Since he still lives to continue his search, he has obviously not found those limits.

## L'Académie des Sciences

L'Académie des Sciences is a hidden group of scholar mages based in Dementlieu. Members of this group search for knowledge and collect artifacts in an effort to keep them from being destroyed by the "common folk," who cannot possibly appreciate the value of such items. Their commitment to this goal borders on obsession, and they are as greedy as any dragon in their quest to gain and hoard knowledge. Unlike dragons, they normally find others to retrieve the tomes, scrolls, and other artifacts that they desire. Hiring a group of adventurers to explore and plunder the ruins of a wizard's tower or the crypt of some legendary mage is a

common method for this group. They pay very well for items that interest them and for an adventuring group's silence, though they tend to treat these groups as useful but ultimately replaceable tools.

Their lack of ethical scruples concerning the acquisition of magic items often places them in conflict with the Order of the Ebon Guardian, which seeks to remove evil artifacts from circulation. L'Académie covets all rare items of magic, even those associated with evil.

All members of L'Académie are spellcasters of some sort. Membership is by invitation only, and the invitation is only extended by a unanimous decision of the triad that rules the society and dictates its activities. Agents of L'Académie are more likely to approach PCs to hire them for a mission to retrieve some ancient tome or scroll. If a PC mage does happen to come to the triad's attention, and if they are interested in him, they will arrange to observe the candidate covertly and test him or her extensively before tendering an invitation to join the society.

The triad that rules L'Académie des Sciences started the society 20 years ago as a haven to preserve knowledge and learning that might be





repressed or destroyed by others either because they could not understand or appreciate it or because the knowledge was dangerous. These three mages decided that all knowledge should be safeguarded regardless of the views of the government. They decided on Dementlieu as a perfect location for their headquarters due to the country's more open views on scholarship and knowledge. Branches of L'Académie now exist in Borca, Richemulot, and Mordent. These "clubs" operate independently of one another and of the main headquarters for the most part. Any information they gain is passed on to the triad in Dementlieu but not necessarily to the other branches. Fierce competition between the branches sometimes ensues, but all take great care not to do anything that will bring the triad's wrath down upon them.

The triad still holds the ultimate power in L'Académie. Consisting of Antoine Desplais, a human wizard, and Louis and Lucine Bonmot, brother and sister wizard/rogues, the triad shares a common goal and view. Nevertheless, the three compete, after a fashion, for "the top spot," a competition that has led to the formation of the outlying branches of L'Académie.

Antoine, who currently holds the dominant position, oversees the branch in Richemulot; Louis has charge of the branch in Borca, and Lucine holds responsibility for the branch in Mordent. They use the branches not only to increase the holdings of L'Académie but also to "win" points over the other two by bringing in more or better items. The maneuvering gets quite Machiavellian at times but is never allowed to get too far out of hand as each member of the triad knows that the other two would join together against him (or her) if they did anything to hinder L'Académie's goals.

### The Dementlieu Headquarters

The triad established L'Académie des Sciences in Port-a-Lucine, a city large enough to provide ample ways to remain hidden and to offer ready access to transportation when needed. L'Académie is housed in a private four-story townhouse that has been turned into an exclusive club. Only members and guests of members are allowed inside the headquarters. Inside, the building is opulently furnished with rich carpets, furniture, and tapestries. The décor is eclectic, but every piece of furniture or adornment is of the highest quality and nothing clashes. Servants move

about unobtrusively serving food and drinks in the intimate parlors and dining room on the first level.

On the second level, several rooms are devoted to an extensive library that contains many rare histories and texts on religion, philosophy, science, alchemy, and magic. This is the general collection, which is available to all members and their guests.

The triad has their living quarters below the street level. They store L'Académie's most valuable texts and artifacts in secure rooms, warded and trapped by magical and mundane means. Most of the serving staff is forbidden from entering this area. Each of the triad has a personal maid or manservant that sees to all his or her needs; these trusted individuals are the only servants allowed in the triad's living area.

When they need to interact with the rest of the membership, the triad uses the opulent offices on the third level. These rooms contain copies of priceless treasures as a deterrent to thieves. Also on the third level there are studies and offices for some of the more notable members of L'Académie. To be granted a study or office on level three is an indication of the triad's favor. The fourth floor contains a few comfortably furnished guestrooms for visiting members of the other branches.

### People of Note at Dementlieu

**Antoine Desplais:** Antoine is a distinguished looking fellow in his late fifties. Though handsome, his piercing eyes and intense manner tend to put people off. He wears severe clothing consisting of a black tailcoat, top hat, and a highly starched, brilliantly white shirt. He carries a silver-headed cane and when venturing outside wears a black velvet cape lined with black silk. When dealing with "almost equals," his manner is distant and politely formal. When interacting with underlings, he is cold, arrogant, and a perfectionist. Antoine spends most of his time immersed in his wizardly studies or managing the staff both in Dementlieu and, through his capable lieutenant, in Richemulot. He controls the funds for L'Académie and handles relations with the city officials.

**Louis Bonmot:** Louis is a handsome man who has aged with grace. The few wrinkles on his face serve merely to underline his outwardly jovial demeanor. He is prone to laughs and smiles, and his witty chatter can make even the most uptight people relax around him. His charm has been essential to L'Académie in obtaining information





and items. He is a consummate con artist with very few scruples as to where and how the items that fill L'Académie's shelves were acquired. The end justifies any means in his book, and it is fun besides! Louis is extremely devoted to his sister Lucine and to L'Académie. He will do anything necessary to protect them both. Louis and his sister run the acquisitions part of L'Académie. He is the one that hires, normally through agents, adventuring groups to go after artifacts and tomes for the organization.

**Lucine Bonmot:** Just as the years have been kind to her brother, Lucine shows little sign that she is approaching fifty. Her face is still pretty and her figure still shapely. Artfully applied cosmetics hide the few wrinkles around her eyes and mouth. Lucine has never married, considering romance to be a complete waste of time. She jokingly says that she is married ... to L'Académie! Her desire to obtain rare and unusual items has put herself and her companions in grave danger more than once, but that only seems to whet her appetite for more. Of the three members of the triad, she is perhaps the most competitive and the most vindictive. All members of L'Académie learn very quickly not to cross her openly and to be sure that she never finds out about it if they do so at all. Lucine is the cataloguer for L'Académie's large collection. She knows to the last item everything that is in it and where it is. Rumor has it that she has bound part of her soul into every item so she knows at all times where it is and if anyone touches it.

### The Richemulot Branch

Antoine has trusted the running of this branch to Maurice Desoux, an ambitious wizard who is always looking for ways to "one up" the other branches. In many ways, the location in Richemulot is a scaled down version of the Dementlieu headquarters. Also situated in the capital city, the building is smaller and most of the best items that have been acquired are sent on to Dementlieu, but it has the same gentlemen's club feel to it. Maurice has set aside some rare artifacts and tomes for his personal library that he neglected to report to Lucine and Louis. Antoine is aware of this, although he has not given Maurice any indication that he knows. Maurice's branch normally operates in the areas north and east of Richemulot as well as in Richemulot itself. Richemulot agents are normally found in places such as Falkovnia, Lamordia, and Darkon.

### The Mordent Branch

Jessica Foxgrove, a distant cousin of Daniel Foxgrove, runs this branch for Lucine. Placed in Mordentshire, this branch also hides its operations under the guise of a private club. Although not as opulent as the main headquarters, the Mordent branch has the advantage of being in the same town as the famous Rudolph van Richten. Jessica has passed on all of van Richten's published works to the triad in Dementlieu. Even though she is ruthless in accomplishing her goals, Jessica presents the façade of a proper, genteel lady. She is loyal to Lucine because she is well paid to be so. Her agents are commonly found in Valachan, Verbrek, Invidia, and Sithicus as well as Mordent.

### The Borca Branch

L'Académie's branch in Borca seems nothing more than a herbalist's shop from the outside. Damien Zarduci was appointed to run this branch and is fiercely loyal to Louis Bonmot for being given the opportunity. Damien keeps enough cash on hand to bribe the Dilisnya enforcers. He has become adept at making it appear as if the business is only just surviving, though he actually turns a quite tidy profit selling herbal potions and tinctures, including many very deadly poisons to an underground clientele. The enforcers take their cut and generally leave him and his "workers" alone. Damien's agents cover Borca and most of the countries southeast of it, including Barovia and Nova Vaasa. A few were sent into the Shadow Rift as well, but none have returned.

### The Order of the Ebon Gargoyle

The primary duty of the Order of the Ebon Gargoyle consists of ferreting out and executing any member of the Kargat found in Barovia. This task lies at the heart of the Order, which serves as a visible sign of the enmity between the darklords of Darkon and Barovia. Members of this exclusively Barovian society, however, do not limit their prey to the spies of Azalin. The Order's members actively seek to uncover and put an end to any attempts to spy on Barovia by agents of any of the other darklords. The Order also tries by their highly visible presence to remind the boyars and burgomeisters who administer law and order in Barovia of their true ruler. While normal folk rarely encounter one of the members of the Ebon Gargoyle, those engaged in suspicious or traitorous





activities against Barovia have good reason to fear the Order's attentions. Recently, the Order has begun an inquisition against obvious members of the faith of the Morninglord, seeing a possible conspiracy against the darklord in the church's teachings. Many Order members believe that the Morninglord's places of worship serve as meeting sites for a conspiracy to revive the ancient sun-based religion of Barovia.

## Joining the Order

Members of the Order of the Ebon Gargoyle belong to a powerful organization whose sheer strength and reputation keep its members from needing normal monetary income, at least within Barovia's borders. The fact that the Order does not pay its members in gold is public knowledge. This discourages those who would wear the gargoyle armor to gain quick material wealth from joining. Instead, members of the Order simply take what they want, secure in the protection of their darklord and patron.

Any class or race may petition to join the Order of the Ebon Gargoyle. The difficulty, however, lies in surviving the strenuous series of tests required for acceptance into this elite group. Merely passing the trials presents a candidate with a serious and often life-threatening challenge. Doing well and earning the attention of the higher-ups in the Order requires true brilliance or sheer dumb luck.

The nature of the tests varies depending on the recruit's probable role in the Order. Recruits desiring to serve as soldiers or who aspire to the calling of night lord (see Chapter One) undergo their training and testing in a cave complex known as the Great Oubliette, northwest of Castle Ravenloft. Located within a mountain south of the Shadow Rift, the complex consists of a labyrinthine maze of caverns that surrounds three deep chasms. The top of the mountain holds a prison-like "barracks" for the recruits, each of whom is assigned a small room not much larger than a prison cell.

The chasms within the maze serve as arenas for gladiatorial-style combats between recruits, each of whom must survive 10 battles against other recruits. The 10% survival rate is not mentioned to recruits until they have been taken to the complex and effectively imprisoned there until they either die in battle or pass their tests and emerge as seasoned fighters (and killers).

Occasionally, as a special "treat" for the trainers, strange Outlander monsters — often creatures that seem to come from the Plane of Shadow or some other place outside the Mists — are summoned from deep below the mountain and thrown into the pits to face several trainees.

A foundry and a smithy lie within the military complex. Recruits are issued no armor or weapons better than a single sword and leather armor. They are told, however, that if they wish to forge their own armor and weapons, they may do so provided they find an instructor willing to teach them and do not fall behind on their military training.

Tests for arcane spellcasters take place in a town obscured by choking fog. The village, known as the Town of Forgotten Whispers, lies a little to the south of Vallaki. An individual who seeks to join the Order and demonstrates a talent for casting arcane spells finds himself teleported to this training village. No one except the trainees themselves — primarily wizards, sorcerers, and bards — lives in the village. Regular shipments of supplies (food, drink, and other necessities) are teleported in to a storehouse in the middle of the village for the trainees to help themselves — and the distribution of goods is not always the most equitable. Survival of the strongest and craftiest seems to form a common theme that runs through the Order's training methods.

The students must learn their skills from the unliving inhabitants of the village, the enslaved spirits of arcane Outlander spellcasters slain by the choking fog and now trapped by the power of Barovia's darklord, who has promised them eventual release if they serve as instructors for his recruits. No one knows if any of the trapped spirits has ever been allowed to leave, but none of the ghostly tutors dares to risk the darklord's wrath. (Needless to say, most arcane spellcasters who belong to the Order of the Ebon Gargoyle acquire the Ghost Sight feat in order to succeed in their studies.) The students are trapped within the town by the deadly fog, unable to leave unless they master the teleport spell and remove themselves from the town without traveling through the fog. Once a student leaves through his own magical ability, he has demonstrated his arcane skills and is considered to have passed his trial. Those who undergo this rigorous training and then decide not to join the Order are hunted down and slain.

Priests who wish to ally themselves with the order must have demonstrated the ability to com-





mand or rebuke undead. Clerics of any faith who attempt to influence the undead minions of the Order occasionally find themselves forcibly “recruited” or offered an exceedingly unpleasant alternative. Training for the Order’s clerics and priests takes place in a small sinkhole called the Dark Grove, formerly a druid’s grove — now blighted with evil — near the border Barovia shares with Nova Vaasa and Hazlan. Though this grove does not lend itself to the worship of any single deity, it serves as an ecumenical gathering place designed to strengthen the tie with the realm’s undead. Students learn from the Order’s ranking priests the nuances of the Death, Destruction, Evil, Healing, Trickery, and War domains. The choice of deity is left up to the individual cleric. Few priests of neutral or evil deities decline the invitation to join, provided they meet the simple requirement stated above. These priests usually see membership in the Order as a practical means of advancement.

Within the grove, student-priests focus on animating and commanding undead and on mastering the relationship of healing spells to their harmful counterparts. Training ends when a student demonstrates her ability to animate and command the undead to the satisfaction of her instructor, who may require the student to put her undead minions through their paces.

Clerics who have completed their training may choose to turn down the invitation to join the Order or enter the ranks of the Ebon Gargoyle as a war priest with a thorough knowledge of how and when to command undead. While some individuals do decide to leave the Order after training, they usually seem to disappear. Rumors say that members of the Order are sent to dispose of these clerics, though many believe that those who refuse to join the Order prudently change their names and assume a new identity. Priests who join the order must sacrifice someone they know (a friend or family member), offering the victim’s blood to the



realm's darklord or one of his vampiric minions and animating the corpse as a "gift" to the Order's ranking officers.

Rogues, assassins, and spies may undergo the harshest training. A covert "guild" in the Village of Barovia provides training in various stealth and assassination maneuvers. Anyone who attempts to go public with the details of the guild's existence is killed (usually by other trainees) and the knowledge covered up. Training lasts for up to five years and consists of a simple, yet nearly impossible task. The trainee must find a way to enter Castle Ravenloft and acquire selected mundane items from the castle's stores. Any mistake usually results in death; there are no second chances. If any of the castle's minions — or the darklord himself — catches the trainee, the unfortunate would-be Order member meets an unpleasant demise. If another member of the Order catches a trainee either trying to break into the Castle or en route to his goal, he may attempt to kill the student or may report him to his trainers, who have the right to sentence him to death. A character must acquire the designated items within a five-year period. When he does so, he receives an audience with Strahd (or one of his trusted minions). He must explain how he acquired the items and return them to their rightful owner. If his methods and techniques are acceptable, the trainee receives his badge of office. Otherwise, he is killed to keep his knowledge of the castle's defenses secret.

## The Duties and Organization of the Order

While most members prowl the roads within Barovia searching for signs of espionage or sabotage, a few special members train deep within the lowest dungeons of Castle Ravenloft. Here, Strahd maintains a small group of scourges (see Chapter One) whose sole purpose consists of extracting information from any Kargat spies (or other significant prisoners) delivered to the darklord's personal attention.

The Order's hierarchy resembles that of a standard militia, with an elite group of mounted officers at the top and rank-and-file members at the bottom. Each of the officers possesses some sort of fearsome steed — a phooka, a dread nightmare, or one of Strahd's skeletal steeds. To qualify as an officer, an Order member must be at least a 10th-level fighter and usually possess one or more levels in at least one of the following prestige classes:

assassin, blackguard, night lord, scourge, or shadowdancer. These officers form a subgroup known as Obsidian Guardians. All are bound to the darklord by a geas. The Obsidian Guardians travel throughout Barovia (and infiltrate other realms as necessary) organizing the rank-and-file of the Order and ensuring that everyone within the organization knows his place and remains loyal.

Rumors circulate within the Order's lower ranks that Strahd possesses a magical artifact that enables him to bind the wills of the Order's officers to him in an unbreakable bond. The most popular tale describes a pen and inkwell that casts geas upon every contract or document drafted and willingly signed with it. Other rumors maintain that the armor provided by the Order contains enchantments and magics that enable the darklord (or one of his trusted agents) to use the wearer as a conduit for scrying or as a target for detect thoughts. The fact that anyone who attempts to betray the Order (or leave without express permission) is caught and usually executed lends credence to these rumors.

## Badges and Weaponry

As a badge of membership, the Order of the Ebon Gargoyle uses black lacquered armor shaped to look like a gargoyle. Although these intimidating uniforms look identical, they contain varying degrees of enchantments, depending on the rank of the wearer. Standard troops of any class wear gargoyle armor that is the equivalent of normal plate mail. The most common weapon of the Order's armies is a scythe, although some members prefer greatswords, sickles, or halberds. Almost all members of the Order of the Ebon Gargoyle also keep a hand crossbow at their sides.

An officer's armor holds magical enhancements that augment his assigned duties. The armor worn by assassins and scouts is endowed with the silent and shadow qualities to enable them to move with stealth and secrecy. Military leaders and war priests possess armor enchanted to double all damage from charge attacks made by the wearer. Arcane spellcasters of the Order learn a variant of mage armor called ebon mage armor, identical to the original spell except that it creates an illusion of the standard "gargoyle armor" so that on the rare occasions when the Order marches en masse, all members look identical and can only be recognized for what they are by what they do under battle conditions.







## Members of Note

Several prominent individuals serve the Order in various leadership capacities. Sheriff von Zarovich serves as the General of the Ebon Gargoyles. This self-titled individual is the darklord's number one night lord and scourge. He bases himself in the Village of Barovia but often travels throughout the realm, overseeing the training efforts of the various branches of the Order and making certain that the group fulfills its purpose. The caliban barbarian Harg, a noted scourge, heads The Oubliette. Though not specifically a member of the Order's elite, he is considered a de facto member of the Obsidian Guardians. The wizard Lazara, a noted dreamcaster, keeps track from afar of the progress of the Order's spellcaster trainees in the Town of Forgotten Whispers; while Zurov, a high priest of the Lawgiver, takes charge of the Order's clerics and war priests. No one knows the true identity of the head trainer for the Order's scouts.

## Tactics

Although the Order is not currently engaged in full scale battle, members still train periodically for the eventuality of war. The use of undead as shock troops is a natural tactic in a realm ruled by a vampire. More common than a full army, however, are small units of individuals that complement each other's skills augmented by one or two undead minions under the control of the unit's cleric.

Frequently, the Order sends in undead as shock troops, using plenty of undead fodder when it attacks. More common than a full battle force are small circles of members that complement each other's skills combined with a number of undead minions (usually under the control of one of the cadre). Members are usually assigned to groups consisting of at least two warriors, one or more arcane or divine spellcasters, and a pair of "stealth experts." While each group has its own leader, all members are subject to the orders of the Obsidian Guardians. Each group receives its assignments either from one of the Guardians or from an animal courier (either a skeletal bat or a dire wolf).

## Sans Merci

An elegant manse of creamy stone sits on a quiet street along the river in Pont-a-Museau. Richemuloise have no real curiosity about it. Idle speculation among nearby merchants suggests that it may be a private club or the home of a wealthy nobleman who enjoys his privacy. Few notice suspiciously human-shaped bundles carried by the shadowy figures skulking in and out of various underground entrances beneath this serene dwelling. Fewer still have ears sharp enough to catch the odd noises echoing in the chambers below.

None of the rumors whispered on the winds of Pont-a-Museau reflects the true nature of the business so efficiently run in the warrens winding and twisting among the sewers. This is Sans Merci, headquarters of the most elite of torturers' guilds in Ravenloft, and those who gain entrance come from a very short list of possibilities: torturer or tormented, patron or fool.

## History

In the sternly ruled land of Pharazia, white-robed guardians of the peoples' morality watched and punished any insane enough to break the codes of purity. For those few who willingly and unrepentantly broke the laws of Diamabel, a special torment lay in wait. Ismahlee Mafee, roughly translated as "no excuse," became the exclusive branch of the confessors who have taken the torturer's art to its highest form. Inventive and merciless, the most talented created the Order of Scourges, their title taken from the instrument used with such precision in their hands.

One of the greatest of these scourges, called Fadi, found himself doubting the wisdom of Diamabel, ruler and near-god of Pharazia. Even a rebellious thought, if pondered long enough, was an offense against the purity of the Way in Pharazia. Fadi, a fair and honest sort of torturer, knew he must confess and suffer the torments necessary to drive the terrible doubts from his mind — or leave. The next victim brought to his attention was an Outlander, one who knew nothing of the Way before he broke its laws. Fadi listened to his words, mixed with screams and cries for mercy, and found the strength to break tradition and find his own Way outside the harsh land that had shaped him. Some of his colleagues left with him, his apprentices and other doubters. Unwilling to join the fierce nomadic tribes wandering the desert beyond Phiraz, Fadi's group fled their domain, looking for



other places where their talents might prove useful and appreciated. During the next few years, they scattered. Masters taught their apprentices, found patronage, and set up guild houses and training areas, or sometimes simply continued on their path alone.

Presently, six guild houses exist in Ravenloft: one each in Borca, Falkovnia, and Richemulot in the Core Realms; Nidala in the Shadowlands; Paridon in Zherísía; and Port d'Elhour in Souragne. Sans Merci, the guild house in Richemulot, comprises the largest and most senior of these houses of torment and information gathering.

## The Guild

The scourges' guild has no formalized name. Long ago the members decided to call it nothing more than "the Guild," so its reputation would come only from those who personally knew of it. Each guild house has one master scourge, plus his assistants and apprentices. In the Guild's beginnings, all torturers were Pharazian, although within the last few years scourges have gained apprentices from many other lands, often chosen from their most enduring "patients."

Some terms are standard among the Guild's members: the one in need of answers is known as the "inquirer"; the person placed in their tender care is called a "patient" or "customer"; and scourges are usually called "craftsmen," although they often assume the title of "healer" or "merchant" within the Guild's community.

As one might imagine, discipline is swift and stern when members break guild law. Punishments vary for transgressions, running the gamut from flogging for those who disobey their inquirers (number of lashes dependent on the degree of disobedience) to death for those who betray the Guild itself.

Members may be chosen by anyone of the rank assistant or better and must go through rigorous physical and mental training. All scourges are healers; most are accomplished martial artists as well, with strong, disciplined minds and bodies.

## Guild Houses

All guild houses have some common features useful and necessary for such a clandestine and secretive organization. Each guild headquarters has hidden passages and rooms with soundproofed walls as well as at least two secret entrances and

exits. All guild members must know certain codes, including hand signals and exotic phrases taken from Pharazian poetry. When a member leaves, he memorizes the hand signal for his date of departure and then must repeat the phrase and do the hand signal used on that day to return — whether an hour or six months from the time he left. Secret passages are guarded with magical and non-magical traps at entrances and exits. None but the Master Scourge himself knows all the twists, turns, and traps of the building, passing along the final secrets, when and if he chooses to retire, to his most deserving assistant.

Sans Merci, as the longest-established guild house with one of the wealthiest patrons (a member of the Reinier family), is the most elaborate and busiest of the guild houses and possesses the most notoriety. Set in one of the numerous abandoned buildings along the river in Pont-a-Museau, its location has several advantages over any other. The nearby river serves as a useful dumping place when tortures take an unexpected and terminal turn. Many secret and unusual entrances and exits take advantage of the sewers underneath the area. Proximity to the haunts of the Reinier clan gives that decadent family a secure place to go to play with their prey. In fact, the Master Scourge of Sans Merci has reserved some space within his walls for special punishments meted out by members of the Reinier family themselves.

## Member of Note

The Guild, although at one point almost entirely Pharazian, has since become quite eclectic in its membership. A scourge may be male or female, beautiful and polished or brutal and horrifically ugly. Regardless of his other qualities, however, he must be loyal, circumspect, and creative, with endurance and a subtlety with the whip. The best scourges — and those who rise highest within the Guild — have learned to use judgment but not to judge those who provide their victims. Guild members do not wear any special clothing or carry any symbols that might provide a clue to their allegiance. Only numerous old scar patterns and burn marks link guild members to their duty and their art. These are usually found on the torso and legs, where they can be conveniently covered.

**Etienne du Savier:** The Master Scourge of Richemulot, Etienne du Savier lives as a respected member of the nobility in Pont-a-Museau. His



sleek black hair hangs long and heavy along his neck, rarely captured in a braid or ponytail. Pale olive skin and leaf-green eyes place him well within the physical range of native Richemuloise nobility. Perceptive individuals, however, may take note of the exotic timbre in his voice when he forgets himself in a moment of excitement. Elegant, obviously educated and urbane, du Savier seldom finds time to attend balls and other entertainments. Unlike many, he holds few if any gatherings himself beyond a philosophical discussion held once a month with selected close friends and their especially invited guests.

Some might take note of his modesty in a city where men usually bare their chests in the summer: he seldom opens his shirt even in the most humid conditions, and then only to the base of his throat. Anyone seeing him naked to the waist would immediately notice an almost continuous pattern of white marring the skin of his back as well as striping along his muscular chest. Du Savier usually dresses in tan and cream, though more formal occasions call for deep brown with touches of gold. He wears one small golden hoop earring hidden beneath his hair on the left side. The earring is actually a ring of spell-storing allowing du Savier an advantage in almost any situation involving his favorite spells of dominate person, emotion, and detect thoughts, all of which he keeps loaded in the ring.

In his early forties, du Savier has reached the pinnacle of success in the art of torture and interrogation. A talented sorcerer, monk, and scholar, he has a great fascination for philosophical discussion and moral debate, as well as a keen interest in new spells and fighting techniques. Captured for theft as a young boy, du Savier, who began his career as a street thug in Phiraz, soon impressed his captors with a swift and calculating mind as well as a body quite able to withstand extreme punishment. Ten years ago, he left with the other rebel scourges as one of their leaders and found his niche among the nobles in Richemulot. Only when absolute secrecy and subtlety are necessary does du Savier indulge himself in interrogation, allowing his apprentices and assistants to develop their skills while he uses his time to make powerful contacts and find new and exceptional methods of torture — magical, physical, and mental.





## The Tribe of Hyskosa

"Picture a darkened encampment. Murmured voices whisper in angry tones; no one dances here; no violins play. Our past is broken, our future writhes in the Mists to send our seers mad. This is a gathering of the tribe of Hyskosa —doomed wanderers trapped without hope. All we have left is the chance for revenge. However long that may take and no matter the form, we feel heat beneath the cold gray ashes — as smoke rising invisibly from a badly smothered fire."

## The Heart of the Matter

The tribe of Hyskosa scattered across Ravenloft as its people fled their doom. When they gather, there are rarely more than two vardos and a few outriders moving purposefully in the dusk. The secretive nature of their former Manusa tasque is exaggerated. No one may know of the loss of their powers, for they show none of their vulnerabilities except when mad visions send them writhing and screaming to the ground. Vowing to bring doom upon the one who caused their downfall, the members of the tribe of Hyskosa have become skilled guerrilla fighters, talented in disguise and misdirection. Masters of magic, stealth, and terror, they hope some day to regain their rightful powers and end their darkling status.

## The Past

One family, united in their misery and despair, found a reason for living. The tribe of Hyskosa paid a horrific price for family loyalty. Now they exist outcast from their people and trapped within the Mists that used to part for them as a hot needle through skin. By their very nature they are darklings, evil and mostly insane. One thing they hold in common — their hatred for Azalin, the darklord who caused their downfall.

The tribe of Hyskosa began as one Vistani family of the Manusa tasque and Canjar tribe. Masters of time and the Mists, one of their number, a Vistani male called Hyskosa, found himself cursed with the Sight. His visions of the future spoke of six signs signaling the damnation of the entire Material Plane. Labeled a dukkar, a legendary foe of the Vistani destined to cause their downfall, he suffered a terrible fate. Madam Eva (leader of the Zarovan tribe) charged Hyskosa's family to destroy him. Ultimately they failed, and in 740 BC Hyskosa's Six Signs culminated in the Grand Con-

junction. Hyskosa's prophecy was only narrowly averted.

Madame Eva summoned Hyskosa's tribesmen to the Vistani camp in Barovia to account for their failure. Valana and her kin claimed that Azalin Rex had captured Hyskosa and imprisoned him deep within the dungeons of Castle Avernus. They swore that Azalin had guided Hyskosa's Hexad to ensure its passing, while guarding his prized seer with spells so powerful that not even the Vistani could breach them.

Their pleas fell on deaf ears. Damning evidence proved that many in Hyskosa's tribe had actually helped carry out the Hexad by steering giorgios into fulfilling the prophecies. In one of the darkest hours of the Vistani's history, Madame Eva herself ritually exiled the entire tribe of Hyskosa — men, women, and children. Some of Hyskosa's kinsmen fled, scattering themselves across the Land of Mists, but retribution eventually found them all. The women of the tribe retained their prophetic Sight (as opposed to standard darklings), but were cursed to share Hyskosa's fate, driven mad by their horrific visions.

Hyskosa's kin have ever since been the avowed foes of Azalin. During the last decade, when one of Azalin's own devices scattered him to the four winds, the tribe rejoiced, but their broken Sight mockingly revealed that he was not truly destroyed. Azalin has now returned, claiming that he was trapped in the land of the dead. The tribe of Hyskosa dream of sending him there permanently.

## The Present

Their mystic connection to the Land of Mists forever severed, the tribe of Hyskosa has focused on the one course left to it: vengeance. Half-insane masters of magic and treachery, the Hyskosa damage, mislead, invade, and destroy. The tribe of Hyskosa seeks to ensure that Azalin shares in its suffering and has dedicated itself to foiling all his best-laid plans, whatever they are, whatever the cost. So far, no matter what they have tried, Azalin has proven too powerful for them to do more than annoy him. He ignores them, considering the tribe of no more consequence than buzzing gnats.

## The Future

As time passes, their thirst for vengeance does not die, but many of the tribe of Hyskosa find other uses for their abilities. Tribe members unlucky enough to be caught outside Darkon cannot reach





Azalin directly, but may make allies among the gorgios as they seek new and devious ways to strike at their nemesis. Many are willing assassins; others have turned their fervor to the destruction of other poor souls who have gained their enmity. Still, their constant thirst for vengeance will live as long as the tribe of Hyskosa survives.

### family

As former members of the Manusa tasque and Canjar tribe, the tribe of Hyskosa still show the dark, narrow slanted eyes and rounded bodies of their former family. Dress has not changed except for favoring darker colors, but they are just as likely to disguise themselves for their latest schemes in whatever garb is appropriate. All have the ritual brand of exile: six angry scars radiating outward on their palms like a sunburst. Because of this, they often wear gloves. As enigmatic and secretive as their former kin, the tribe evinces the edge of madness to any that meet their gaze. The few children born to the tribe of Hyskosa are ritually

branded soon after birth so that their vengeance might not die with this generation.

**Valana, raunie of the Hyskosa Tribe:** Valana was born a child of the tribe of Canjar. From early childhood, she showed leadership ability and wisdom beyond her years. At 16, barely come of age, Hyskosa, her brother, prophesied the six signs. Valana, loyal to her kinsman and her tribe, listened to his words and worked with others to bring about the Hexad. When that failed, Valana was cursed, as were all the women of Hyskosa, to retain her prophet's sight but be crazed by the visions swirling within her mind. Madame Eva personally pronounced her curse upon Valana at the same time as she made the young girl raunie, the leader of a mad and broken tribe.

Once, Valana was beautiful. Her wavy blue-black tresses and fiery ebony eyes bewitched every man who crossed her path. Now she has lost her beauty, her face and body cruelly ravaged by exile. Although Valana is only in her late thirties, her once voluptuous figure is now gaunt and angular.





Her ebony hair and eyes retain their glamour, but her sunken dark glance betrays festering anger and madness. She wears the exotic fashions of the Vistani but eschews the flamboyant hues of the people who rejected her for the grim colors of charcoal and dried blood. Valana also carries several changes of clothing to aid her guerrilla tactics, including simple dresses and cloaks to blend into giorgio crowds, as well as a disguise kit for more elaborate charades. No matter what her guise, she always carries her vishnaad knife. At once a symbol of her title as raunie to her tribe, the obsidian

dagger also provides a visible sign of her status as a darkling (see Appendix).

Although an intelligent tactician and sorceress, Valana teeters on the brink of madness, relentlessly driven by obsession — a fact apparent to anyone who speaks with her for any length of time. Her rough contralto voice rises in screams and falls to low mutters as she spouts her deranged prophecies of doom to all who will listen. Still, when in disguise, Valana can suppress her need to speak the horrific visions in her mind — at least until she finds out what she needs to know.





Chapter Three:  
Who's Doomed?

The panther moved gracefully through the woods, carefully stalking its prey, all its attention and senses focused on the man riding along the forest trail. The panther's tail twitched, but it suppressed the growl building in its throat. It had waited too long for this opportunity and would not let impatience ruin its ambush. It inched forward carefully along the branch until it was in just the right place. Gathering its strength, the panther tensed, ready to spring on its unsuspecting prey.

The horse and rider came nearer and nearer. The panther leapt from the tree, landing on top of the rider, taking him from the horse. The panther's jaws closed around the man's neck, feeling the burst of hot blood in its mouth as its teeth tore into the skin. The rider did not even have time to cry out, registering only a faint, puzzled amazement as his life's blood poured from his throat. Soundlessly, he died.

The panther suddenly leapt away from the corpse of his victim as the taste of the blood registered on its tongue and in its mind. The werepanther Gaspare threw back his head and roared in frustration as he realized that, yet again, his enemy, his former master, Michel Destoiyene, had escaped him. This poor dead husk was some stranger, perhaps one of Michel's lackeys or simply a hired hand.

Gaspare heard mocking laughter floating through the forest night. Despite his desire for revenge, Gaspare resisted the urge to try to follow the sound. He had no doubt that Michel would have laid a series of deadly traps for him just to see if he could survive them. Gaspare refused to play Michel's games any longer. He could not, since the night that Michele had tricked him into hunting down and killing his own friends, Henri and Paul. The memory of that night would haunt him forever. The looks of terror on their dead faces and the taste of their blood in his mouth were experiences that he would never forget. Neither would he ever forgive Michel for forcing him into that terrible hunt.

The night he feasted on the flesh and blood of Henri and Paul was the night that Gaspare left the lodge and turned against his master. Ever since that night, Gaspare had struggled to come to terms with his new life while searching for a way to bring his former master down. Apparently, the search would have to continue, he thought bitterly, as the echoes of Michel's mocking laughter still floated on the air.





*Though much is taken, much abides; and though  
We are not now that strength which in old days  
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we  
are;*

*One equal temper of heroic hearts,  
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will  
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.*

— Alfred, Lord Tennyson, "Ulysses"



haped by the tragedies in their past, fighting against the dark beast that lives within them, here you will find a gallery of people who do not always win the fight against their dark sides. These are people that some would consider doomed. Others consider them heroes. They are all driven by need and circumstance to allow their "evil" tendencies to come to the fore at times. They have killed and they have loved. They have known loss and grief. Each of them fights to uphold his or her vision of what is right. Does this make them doomed? Does this make them evil? That is something that you will need to decide for yourself as you read their tales below.

## Alcair Desant, "Baron Morte"

**Male human Ari5/Mpl5/Prp5:** CR 14; SZ M (6 ft. 1 in. tall); HD 5d8+5 plus 5d6+5 plus 5d6+5; hp 90; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (touch 14, flat-footed 13); Atk +14/+9/+4 melee (1d4+3, +3 dagger of venom) or +14/+9/+4 melee (1d6+3 +3 rapier of puncturing); SQ Compelling conversationalist, confidant, information dissemination, intuition, Iron Will, sense group dynamics, shrewd, world wise; ALLE; SV Fort 4, Ref 7, Will 17; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 18, Wis 17, Cha 18.

**Skills:** Bluff +24, Diplomacy +26, Forgery +13, Gather Information +27, Hypnotism +16, Innuendo +21, Intimidate +17, Knowledge (Ravenloft) +10, Knowledge (Darkonian lore) +19, Perform +10, Sense Motive +25.

**Feats:** Hearthlore, Leadership, Machiavellian, Mesmerizing, Skill Focus (Bluff), Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Skill Focus (Gather Information).

**Languages:** Balok, Darkonese, Dwarven, Elven, Falkovian, Gnomish, Infernal, Mordentish, Vaasi.

**Spells Known:** (cast per day: 3/2/1; base DC 14 + spell level) 1st—*cause fear, charm person, comprehend languages, detect magic*; 2nd—*detect thoughts, suggestion*; 3rd—*enthrall*.

**Signature Possessions:** +3 dagger of venom, +3 rapier of puncturing, cloak of etherealness,

clasp of protection +3, ring of change self (three times per day), mortem mask.

## Mortem Mask

This specially crafted major wondrous item endows Desant with several powers. While the baron is wearing it, he registers as undead to any magical detections. Any divine or arcane magical effect that would affect the undead likewise affects the baron, including turning, rebuking, or commanding undead. The mask also endows its wearer with immunity to poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, necromantic effects, and mind-influencing effects. The mask's wearer is immune to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, ability drain, and energy drain. Finally, the mask's wearer is immune to effects that would require a Fortitude save. While the baron wears his mortem mask, an illusion of vampiric undeath appears on him. His flesh grows pale and he exhibits other physical traits common to vampires.

**Caster Level:** 17th

**Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item; *permanent image*; *miracle* or *wish*

**Market Price:** 25,000 gp

## Background

The Baron Morte is a native nobleman of Darkon. As a boy, he witnessed the cataclysm of the Grand Conjunction, and the chaos he experienced would stand in his mind forever. Over the years, he began to develop a need to control his life and anyone connected with it. During his adolescent schooling, the young boy, then known as Alcair Desant, first crossed paths with the Darklord Azalin Rex. Azalin recognized Desant's natural linguistic abilities and recruited the boy's talents to piece together some of the necessary components of the Grim Harvest. The young, impressionable noble saw the darklord as a role model.

To Desant, Azalin represented a being in complete control of his existence and of the world around him.

Azalin, observant enough to notice an impressionable and malleable mind in his vicinity, started directing Desant and encouraging his political





aspirations. Over the years that led up to the “fall of kings,” Desant was given the title “Baron Morte” by Azalin Rex. Suddenly, the baron found himself high in the Kargat chain of command, having special powers over the information disseminated to the natives of Darkon regarding the Order’s activities. Baron Morte has been groomed to be the Kargat’s “spin-doctor”. The lies and misinformation that keep people guessing as to the Kargat’s true motives come primarily from Desant.

The Baron is one of the few high ranking members of the Kargat not killed during the Requiem. From behind the scenes, he had a hand in Azalin’s return. He is, perhaps, the only living human high-ranking member of the Order. He is a public opinion specialist, and the darklord needs him to retain his humanity if he will fulfill that role effectively. Azalin is not foolhardy, however, and at an early age placed several permanent geas spells on Desant to ensure his obedience as thoroughly as any undead under the lich’s control.

### Current Sketch

Baron Morte has a tricky job. On one side, the organization he works within is a “secret” police. Yet like any shadowy elite political faction, the Kargat needs to “leak” misinformation about itself in order to inspire the paranoid obedience in Darkon’s citizenry so necessary to its effectiveness. He is a master of intrigue who spins Byzantine plots that serve to encourage others in behavior that falls in line with the Kargat’s wishes and Azalin’s interests. When someone important is getting close to exposing Azalin’s true nature as a lich, the Baron is called into action to create “plausible deniability.”

Baron Morte lives a double life like his darklord, but in reverse. By day, he must be the charismatic and charming Alcair Desant, a “concerned” citizen who is preaching acquiescence and complacency in public. By night, Baron Morte takes his place in the war-councils of undead masters, most of who do not realize that he is a mortal man. An insidious manipulator, he occasionally sets groups of heroes up for a trap with his wiles and charms or convinces entire provinces that Azalin is the greatest protector they have ever known and that they owe the Kargat their lives countless times over.

### Combat

When the Baron is in combat, he prefers to capitalize on the fact that he can appear to be a vampire or a ghost. Depending on whether he is



fighting by day or night, he either uses his mortem mask to look like a vampire or his cloak of etherealness to mimic the qualities of a ghost. His knife and foil drain Constitution, thus adding to his charade. When clerics attempt to use their abilities to affect undead, the Baron has been known to yank off his helmet after using his ring of change self to conceal his identity, thus making it possible for him to continue his assault. If he is wounded, he retreats, using his cloak of etherealness. The Baron tries to ingratiate himself with his opponents, sometimes assuming multiple identities when dealing with a group of self-styled heroes.

### The Baron as Background NPC Villain

Sometimes a physical parley becomes just another paranoia-building tactic in an ongoing psychological war. When PCs enter a local town in Darkon to replenish their supplies or gather information, they risk encountering the Baron and walking into one of his elaborate traps. Since the town is probably already under the thrall of the charismatic Baron, the citizens willingly cooperate as the Kargat manipulator assumes multiple iden-



titles to sell the group shoddy, dangerous, or even cursed equipment. In some games, the Baron can make a very good long-term NPC villain. He is a slippery character and prefers not to stick around for a physical battle if he can avoid it. These manipulative tactics make the baron a heavy asset to the Kargat. He can manipulate "do-gooders" into spending all their gold to "fight" the Kargat and thereby funding the Kargat as they purchase their supplies from him. He can make the existence of a group of adventurers very frustrating. Once he has a good understanding of his victims, he can take control of their reputations in ways that make PCs with honest intentions complete outcasts, no matter what their convictions. When the rest of the town shuns them, the Baron then descends (again with a false identity) and becomes the group's only friendly contact in a town that hates them.

Misinformation ensures and the party ends up wandering around, confused, and in constant danger. Whenever possible, the Baron prefers not to kill his enemies, but to make them do his work for him.

## Estiban, "The Gentleman Rogue"

**Male half-Vistani Rog5/Hwr5/Chl 5:** CR 15; SZ M (5 ft. 7 in. tall); HD 5d6 plus 5d6 plus 5d6; hp 60; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (touch 16, flat-footed 13); Atk +10/+5 melee (1d6, rapier) or +13 ranged (1d4, throwing dagger of returning) or +9 ranged (1d10, pistol); SA Sneak attack +3d6; SQ Bad reputation, captivating, crowd pleaser, charmer, evasion, gifted orator, infamous, Knowledge (roads), mist ways, moon madness, mount, notoriety, savoir-faire, studied foe, the ultimate con, trick rider, uncanny dodge; AL CN; SV Fort 4, Ref 11, Will 8; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 15, Wis 15, Cha 18.

**Skills:** Appraise +12, Balance +13, Bluff +16, Diplomacy +16, Disguise +14, Escape Artist +13, Forgery +14, Gather Information +14, Handle Animal +12, Innuendo +7, Open Lock +15, Perform +12, Ride +12, Search +12, Sense Motive +12, Spot +12, and Wilderness Lore +9.

**Feats:** Equestrian, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (pistol), Mounted Combat, Point Blank Shot, Skill Focus (Bluff), Skill Focus (Diplomacy).

**Languages:** Balok, Luktar, Patterna, Vaasi.

**Signature Possessions:** dagger of returning, muzzle loading pistol, ring of freedom of movement, cloak of protection +3, spy glass.

## Background

Estiban is the son of an outcast member of the Corvara tribe of the Vistani. He was raised on the roads of Nova Vaasa, learning how to navigate open territory from his earliest years. Even during his youth, Estiban was quite the charmer with the opposite sex.

With a friendly pout in his eyes and a smile that can disarm even the most defensive of individuals, this road pirate makes his way through the world, living off his wits, his good looks, and his considerable talents in the ways of roguery. Estiban started his criminal career early out of necessity when a Vaasi constable captured and hanged his father. Estiban never found out what his father did to deserve his fate, aside from being one of the Vistani.

## Current Sketch

As an adult, Estiban is the scourge of lofty nobles guilty of the sin of pride. This charming and cunning thief waylays every single wagon, horse, or caravan that comes his way. At first, he approaches with a smile, using his abilities at perception and his knowledge of human nature to size up his prey. After he has done so, he decides what weapons to use and exactly how much he is going to steal from





his unlucky victim. Often, greed does not act as Estiban's primary motivation. He seems to have a special grudge against corrupt nobles and anyone in authority. He especially enjoys snatching a purse filled with coins recently acquired through bribery or blackmail.

This con artist sees himself as a vigilante who deals out only as much cruelty as is warranted. If he stumbles on a caravan of lovely women who are just traveling, he might just steal a kiss. If he catches a rich and snobbish lord who likes to order people around, he finds some way to humiliate the nobleman, fooling him into giving Estiban all his money. He finds great satisfaction in embarrassing a nobleman who needs a lesson in humility by convincing his victim that he has purchased something grand, and then laughing from the sidelines at his victim's confusion and dismay when the carnival and parade of elephants he has purchased are not waiting for him at his destination. If a traveling party he approaches is overly belligerent and has no innocent member worthy of mercy, Estiban has no qualms about dispatching individuals who need to shed their mortal coil to "make the world a better place." Caravans that show him courtesy win his lenience, though he still robs them of something just on principle. Sometimes Estiban settles for a good meal or a funny story from a particularly appealing group of travelers. If necessary, Estiban pitches a sad story to his victims, hoping to con them into giving him money of their own free will.

### Combat

When Estiban does decide to fight, he uses guerrilla tactics. A master of ambushes, Estiban conceals himself in the underbrush on the side of the road and takes long-range shots at his quarry while moving alongside them just out of sight. In this fashion, he has been known to whittle down a whole caravan over the course of a journey. When he engages himself in this type of warfare, it is usually to prove a point or fulfill some past grudge. He rarely uses this sort of casual slaughter on a group of travelers who are minding their own business.

### Janus Martov

**Male human Rog6/Ftr5:** CR11; SZ M; HD 6d6+18 plus 5d10+15; hp 78; Init +8 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (touch 14, flat-footed 10); Atk +13/+8 melee (1d6+3, masterwork club) or +12/+7 melee (1d4+3, dagger) or

ranged +15/+10 (1d8+1, masterwork mighty composite longbow [+1]); SA Sneak attack +3d6; SQ Evasion, uncanny dodge; AL CN; SV Fort +8, Ref +10, Will +4; Str 16, Dex 18, Con 15, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 13.

**Skills:** Appraise +7, Balance +10, Bluff +7, Climb +8, Craft (bowyer/fletcher) +14, Decipher Script +6, Disable Device +8, Disguise +5, Escape Artist +8, Gather Information +6, Hide +9, Knowledge (guerrilla tactics) +7, Listen +6, Move Silently +11, Pick Pocket +6, Read Lips +3, Search +4, Sense Motive +3, Spot +4, Use Rope +7.

**Feats:** Ambidexterity, Combat Reflexes, Far Shot, Improved Initiative, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Weapon Focus (composite longbow).

**Languages:** Balok, Mordentish.

**Signature Possessions:** Masterwork mighty composite longbow (+1), masterwork club, necklace with a fine chain and a heart shaped locket, woodworking tools.

### Background

Although only 22, Janus Markov has known bitter loss and grief. He presents a determined and unyielding face to the world, having decided that revenge is the only purpose that makes his life worth continuing. Normally, he wears plain clothing and soft boots, although he uses his disguise ability when needed. Shaggy red-brown hair frames a face that, although rugged and weathered, still retains a boyish quality to it. His green eyes burn with the fire of a devoted revolutionary. His hands show that he is accustomed to performing hard work as well as using weapons. He now uses both these skills in service to the Freemen of Falkovnia, where he has found an outlet for his hatred and a cause that allows him to carry on.

Janus is an intense man who is not very tolerant of people who waste time and resources. This does not make him incredibly popular among his comrades in the Freemen, but his abilities both as a bowyer and as a scout leader have earned him their respect. He tends to be very direct with people he knows and reticent with those he does not know. He is also always on the alert for spies and traitors, so he is not quick to trust new people.

Born to farmer parents, Janus was the seventh and last of their children. He quickly realized that there was little room for him on the farm unless he was content to live under his older brothers' rule. Janus wanted his own house and a family, so he set





about turning his talent with woodworking to a trade that he could use to earn a living. He was taught how to craft bows by a ranger who had temporarily taken up residence in the forest near his farm. Janus proved to be a quick learner and soon outstripped his teacher. He decided then that he should go into the nearby town and set up shop.

Life seemed to be going quite well for him even with the oppressive taxes that Drakov's men collected. Janus even found a wife in Katerina Grinko, with whom he shared an immediate and abiding love. Janus' business was on the rise; he had even received an order from the local outpost of Drakov's guards. He and Katerina scheduled the wedding and made plans for a larger house. As an engagement gift, Janus gave Katerina a necklace with a heart-shaped locket pendant. The locket contained a single dried rose petal in it, which came from the first rose that Janus gave to his beloved. He had purchased it with some of the money that he had just received as an advance on an order for a special composite longbow for the captain of the local outpost.

The day of the wedding arrived. The weather was perfect — in fact, everything seemed to be perfect, until the guard contingent arrived. They were disruptive and bullied the guests. The captain cornered Katerina and insisted that she “allow him to break her in for her husband.” Katerina refused and the captain turned ugly. He ordered the wedding stopped and arrested Katerina for treason. Janus, overcome with rage, grabbed a stout chair and attacked the captain, killing him. It was an unfortunate chance that led a patrol of Drakov's Talons to the town at the time. They arrested both Katerina and Janus. Though both were condemned to death, the Talons' captain decided that the locals needed a lesson. As punishment, he had Janus tied to a post in the town square. Katerina was brought into the square, where she was tortured to death in front of him and the rest of the townsfolk. Janus escaped the same fate only due to the intervention of the Freeman. They staged a raid on the outpost and then came into the town, attacking the Talons. Their aid came too late to save Katerina, but Janus was rescued and convinced to go with them when they left, a choice his outlaw status made inevitable. Janus has been with the Freeman ever since, lending his skills and hatred of the Talons to their ambushes and raids.



### Current Sketch

Janus operates as a scout and raider for the Freeman. Nothing pleases him more than planning and executing an ambush on Drakov's men. He kills them without mercy or remorse in his need to avenge Katerina. He also makes bows for the Freeman when he can find wood to do so. Each arrow he crafts, he envisions piercing another Talon's heart, thus removing another evil from the world. Vengeance and a desire to bring Drakov and his bullies down are all that Janus has left. He will take just about any steps to ensure their downfall. He does draw the line at civilian casualties, however, insisting that their deaths would make the Freeman no better than the enemy. This sometimes puts him at odds with others in the group, but Janus has earned enough respect that the hot heads will normally listen to him.

### Combat

Ambush and guerilla tactics are what Janus knows best. He is most effective at staging ambushes of Drakov's patrols, where he allows no quarter. He puts his bow to devastating use against them and then moves in with his club to finish off any still standing. He has become an effective leader of one of the Freeman's raiding parties, his





abilities and obvious dedication to the cause earning him the respect of the men he leads. Yet Janus has one weakness as a leader — his hatred of Talons. He allows no prisoners to be taken, killing any who are not slain in the fight. He is ready to lead his men against them whenever and wherever he finds them. This obsession has put him and his group into tight situations against greater forces, but somehow Janus gets them through. Of course, he is still smart about his attacks, instructing his men to target the leaders with their arrows before moving in. He is such a good shot with his bow that he only switches to his club when his arrow supply is exhausted.

## Cair

Like the other open members of the Freeman, Janus has no home. He moves from one hidden camp to another as circumstances dictate. He does have woodworking tools on hand along with any bows he is currently making. These he will always try to take with him if he must flee, as the movement needs weapons and he needs his tools in order to make them. His own bow, which had been intended for the guard captain he killed, is another possession that he will not leave behind, as is the necklace that he gave Katerina and took back from her dead body. Other than that, possessions only mean tools to continue his fight. Anything that does not contribute to that is pointless and can readily be abandoned.

## Jander Sunstar

**Male elven eminent vampire Ftr16:** CR20; SZ M Undead; HD 16d12; hp 125; Init +12 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 50 ft.; AC 26 (touch 18, flat-footed 18); Atk +26/+21/+16/+11 melee (1d8+10, +1 longsword) or ++25/+20/+15/+10 melee (1d6+9 and energy drain, slam) or +24/+19/+14/+9 ranged (1d8+4, mighty composite long bow [+4]); SA Blood drain, children of the night, create spawn, domination, energy drain, black thumb; SQ Damage reduction 25/+3, turn resistance +7, resistances (cold, electricity, and fire 20), gaseous form, spider climb, alternate form, fast healing 8, light sleep, scent, uncanny dodge; AL CE; SV Fort +10, Ref +13, Will +10; Str 28, Dex 26, Con —, Int 17, Wis 17, Cha 24.

**Skills:** Balance +9, Climb +11, Craft (painting) +9, Gather Information +8, Handle Animal +9, Intimidate +8, Jump +11, Knowledge (nature

+5, Listen +9, Perform (flute) +10, Ride +10, Search +6, Swim +9.

**Feats:** Alertness, Ambidexterity, Blind-Fight, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Iron Will.

**Languages:** Balok, Elven.

**Signature Possessions:** Carved wooden flute, +1 longsword, mighty composite longbow (+4).

## Background

Jander Sunstar, a gold elf who once followed Lythander Morninglord, makes an unlikely vampire. Jander normally wears a simple tunic and leggings with high soft boots and a cloak with a deep hood. He always wears soft leather gloves that are custom fitted to his hands. These gloves are so well made that they allow him to do all but fine manipulation with them. Jander wears them with the ease of long use. He carries in his belt an intricately carved wooden flute. His face is unlined and he has unblemished golden skin. His glorious white blond hair brushes his shoulders, and he moves with a feral grace surpassing what even most elves can manage. Only his haunted eyes tell his true age. Although they are beautiful, the shadowed pain of remembered horrors and grief lends them an eerie, disturbing quality.

Jander is normally very polite to people, if a bit distant, and he still has the chivalrous heart that insists that he offer aid to those in need. Unfortunately, he does not trust himself around others and also does not want to deal with yet more pain as they are taken from him. So he tries to keep himself apart from other people but is quite willing to lend aid where needed.

Since he was already a vampire before coming to the Domain of Dread, Jander is somewhat different from the elven vampires normally found there. He feeds on blood instead of Charisma. His face has, if anything, grown more beautiful. He has no spell-like abilities, perhaps due to his abhorrence of magic. The only real similarity is the change that the Powers caused in him when he first came to Barovia: he can no longer touch a plant without killing it. This is why he began wearing the gloves. He wears them now also to hide his blackened hands. Jander also struggles to hold onto his elven nature, fighting against the dark urges of his vampiric state, a battle that he does not always win.

In fact, losing a battle to his vampiric nature is what brought Jander to Barovia over 300 years ago. In a frightening show of rage and grief, Jander made a dreadful vow of vengeance against the one who





had broken his love's mind. Anna was the only name he knew for her. His vow was heard and he was brought to Barovia, where he met Strahd. He actually grew to respect Strahd in some ways and in fact was his teacher in some of the vampiric powers.

Jander's quest to find out his love's identity and fate went on over the course of several years. Eventually, Jander discovered the truth about Anna. She was the same woman that Strahd desired enough to murder his own brother to get. He also saw at that time the truth about the Dark Powers. He realized that he, Strahd, Tatyana, Sergei, and all the others were merely toys that the Powers brought to the Dread Realms for their amusement.

In his quest for knowledge on how to end this cycle of torment, he teamed up with a young priest of Lythander and a young thief. Their search led them to Castle Ravenloft in hopes of finding an artifact that could defeat Strahd. Strahd attacked them, and though they hurt him badly, Jander was mortally wounded by the holy artifact that they hoped to have the priest use against Strahd.

The young priest was overcome by Strahd's power and could not present the item. Jander took up the artifact in a desperate attempt to defeat Strahd and to save his two young companions from the vampire lord's cruelty. He then sought release from his existence by allowing the sun to take him.

The Dark Powers had other plans, though. Jander did not perish but lay hidden by the mists for 200 years, his body slowly regenerating the damage caused by the relic and his attempt at suicide. He has only recently awakened to discover the bitter jest that the Powers made of his attempt to escape them.

## Current Sketch

Jander has only just roused from his enforced sleep. Although his body has healed the damage the relic caused, Jander's hands are blackened and will occasionally spasm as if in pain. The discomfort of this is not that acute, but when it happens, especially when he is playing his flute, the bitterness and rage that he always fights to keep in check come out and he will lash out at anyone near him. Normally, his attacks take the form of verbal assaults, but if pushed, he occasionally turns to physical combat to alleviate his inner pain. This loss of composure, of course, only adds to his guilt when he regains control of himself again.

Jander came to Barovia to avenge his love. Now that he knows the truth of what happened to



her, his determination and anger are aimed at the Dark Powers themselves. Not everyone believes him when he speaks of these nebulous dark forces. Those who do believe him usually want nothing to do with confronting the Dark Powers directly. Jander has compromised in his goals for now by fighting against the people that the Powers have corrupted. He is operating on the premise that if he can remove enough of them and restore more goodness to the lands, the Powers will be weakened.

He hunts vampires and other evil creatures, believing that he is granting their souls peace. He is, however, careful in his selection of prey. Jander hunts and slays only the ones that have truly given themselves over to their monstrous side. He is doing anything he can to bring some hope and goodness back into the Dread Realms. Jander is just now realizing the scope of the land and is trying to become familiar with the various countries and their cultures. To this end, he travels incessantly and could serve as a possible "on the road" encounter for an adventuring group.

## Combat

By choice, Jander uses his skills as a fighter over his vampiric abilities, and he will only use his





energy drain ability when defending others from an evil creature. Now that the Dark Powers have allowed it again, he uses his blood drain to feed on animals, feeding on sentient creatures only when he must. Jander is quite likely to hunt in his wolf form and will sometimes run with wolves, finding some release for his blood lust in the hunt. Jander falls fairly naturally into the role of leader and must make an effort to avoid doing so when he is working with others. He is hesitant about becoming part of a group, since he is always aware of the dangers of allowing himself to get attached to people. Also, he knows that while he is a match for many of the horrors he hunts, most of his would-be companions are not. If he does work with a group, he will do all he can to help them and protect them from harm. He will not be willing to work with any group on a permanent basis, however.

## Cair

Jander does not have a home. He journeys from place to place, watching and learning. Normally, he prefers to pass the day in the forests, usually hiding from the sun in caves and other dark areas. He never stays in any place for long, as he realizes that he will quickly over hunt an area if he lingers for more than a few weeks. Sometimes his loneliness and bitterness threaten to overwhelm him. At such times, he seeks a quiet place beneath the stars and plays hauntingly poignant music on his flute.

## Marynia Teslenko

**Female human half-Vistani Clr7/Mcu5:** CR12; SZ M (5 ft. 6 in. tall); HD 7d8 plus 5d8; hp 88; Init +6 (Dex, Improved Initiative) + special\*; Spd 20 ft.; AC 14 (touch 12, flat-footed 12); Atk: +12/+7 melee (1d8+4, longspear) or +14/+9 ranged (1d2+3 subdual, +1 whip); SA Turn or rebuke cursed undead, prestige domain, spells, spontaneous casting, evil eye, improved voice of wrath; SQ Moon madness, vision of darkness, willing sacrifice, Zarovan bonus to initiative, notoriety 4; AL LN; SV Fort +9, Ref +5, Will +12; Str 14, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 15, Wis 16, Cha 13.

**Skills:** Bluff +4, Concentration +3, Craft (painting) +5, Diplomacy +5, Gather Information +8, Heal +6, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (arcana) +5, Knowledge (religion) +5, Listen +6, Ride +6, Scry +6, Sense Motive +8, Spellcraft +5, Spot +5, Wilderness Lore +5.

**Feats:** Exotic Weapon Proficiency (whip), Improved Initiative, Martial Weapon Proficiency (longspear), Skill Focus (Sense Motive), Tarokka Natural, Voice of Wrath, Weapon Focus (whip).

**Languages:** Balok, Darkonese, Vaasi\*\*.

**Cleric Spells Per Day** (base DC 13 + spell level): 6/6+1/5+1/5+1/3+1/3+1/2+1.

**Deity:** The Lawgiver.

**Domains:** Curse (may cast bestow curse with a +4 to the DC of the saving throw; may cast mark of justice once per day), Law (cast law spells at +1 caster level), and War (free Martial Weapon Proficiency and Weapon Focus with the deity's favorite weapon).

**Signature Possessions:** +1 whip, bracers of armor +2, Lawgiver's tarokka deck (adds +1 to Scry ability), longspear.

\*Half-Vistani of the Zarovan tasque receive a racial bonus of 1d10-1d4 to initiative, rolled at the start of each encounter.

\*\*First and native language.

## Background

Marynia Teslenko moves with commanding presence. Slender yet strong, her broad shoulders and long legs give her a mannish physique belied by the sensual swing of her hips and the wealth of thigh-length curly dark brown hair only partially controlled in one long thick braid. An exotic cast to her features offsets the arrogant Vaasi jaw while highlighting her slanted pale gray-green eyes and wide mouth. Her olive skin is complimented by the bronze color of her clerical robes embroidered with the bound spear symbol of the Lawgiver. Coiled at her wide belt is a brown leather bullwhip, kept glossy and well oiled. Marynia also carries a longspear as prop, weapon, and holy symbol to hide the limp from her broken and crushed left foot. A long pale green split skirt and soft tan boots complete her ensemble, showing her to be classed above the masses of the poor, but far below the wealthy aristocracy of Nova Vaasa. Although only in her mid-thirties, her naturally serene expression and soft musical voice creates a sense of agelessness that can be eerie in the extreme.

One of the Lawgiver's tenets states that no races, ethnicities, or social classes should intermingle except in their pre-ordained places. Marynia Teslenko has herself broken the tenets of her god through her very existence. The child of a Vaasan woman and a Vistani rogue of the Zarovan tasque, she was abandoned by her distraught and supersti-







tious mother on the doorstep of a family of horse ranchers, the Teslenkos. Unbeknownst to Marynia's mother, the horse ranchers were particularly devout in their worship of the Lawgiver, Nova Vaasa's state religion, and decided Marynia had been given to them to raise so that she might some day become an honored cleric of their god. When she was sixteen, they sent the half-Vistani girl away to become an acolyte at the Lawgiver's temple in Kantora. Their own lovely and pampered daughter, Ivani, envied Marynia, wishing to leave the rough ranch work and the inevitable marriage to one of her own class. Five years later, when her parents began looking for a suitable husband for Ivani (then age sixteen herself), she fled late one night to join Marynia. She hoped she might catch the eye of a noble and escape into some romantic escapade or even marriage above her station (a sin in the eyes of the Lawgiver). Unfortunately, Ivani did gain the notice of a noble — Sir Tristen Hiregaard: a mistake that eventually brought her death.

Ivani's downfall began as she regaled Marynia with tales of her aristocratic lover, how kind and sweet he could be and how he planned to provide for her. Marynia became alarmed when she realized how far above her station Ivani had stretched and

felt a foreboding shiver of disaster. She did everything in her power to convince Ivani to return home, including reminding her of the tenets of her god. Ivani laughed at Marynia's concerns, exclaiming that the Lawgiver must wish her to be happy: he had given her one of the lords of the land! Within a week, Ivani was dead, slaughtered in a gruesome and horrifying fashion, her body left in pieces on the steps of the temple of the Lawgiver, staining them scarlet with her blood.

Certain that Sir Tristen had murdered her sister and profaned the temple, Marynia went to Castle Faerhaaven and begged to speak with him. It was during the time of the full moon and the Dark Powers made certain that Marynia would suffer Moon Madness in view of Tristen's men. They believed her insane and locked her away beneath the castle, awaiting their lord's return from one of his "outings" to decide what to do with her. Locked in the darkness beneath the castle, still remembering the pleading eyes in Ivani's torn face, Marynia cursed Sir Tristen to become as hideous on the outside as he was within so that he might never seduce another innocent girl.

Laughing, a twisted form crept from the shadows, his face similar and yet horrifyingly different from Sir Tristen's visage. Malken, Sir Tristen's alter-ego, arrived to gloat and enjoy the misery he had so relished causing. Marynia was certain her curse had taken effect. Terrified at the outcome, she began screaming for help, knowing the twisted figure in front of her would enjoy torturing and killing her next. No one heard, and for hours Malken tormented her in the chambers beneath his alter ego's castle. Finally, Sir Tristen "arrived home," believing that he had spent most of the day investigating his paramour's death. Learning of his (supposedly) mad prisoner, Tristen hurried down to see what he could do. He found Marynia broken and unconscious, lying in a pool of her own blood.

Taking her to the temple as quickly as his swiftest horse would allow (ironically, one from the Teslenko ranch), he charged them to help her before she bled to death. When Marynia awoke, Tristen told her of his innocence and spoke so convincingly that her instincts led her to believe his word. When she spoke of the deformed figure beneath the castle, Tristen shuddered but said he did not know the person who would do such a vile deed. He promised her that he and his men would search the lower chambers. Of course, his efforts



were ineffectual and his guards never found any sign of Malken's presence.

The clerics of the Lawgiver healed Marynia, but deliberately left the crushed bones of one foot to heal incorrectly as a way to teach her humility—she had actually attempted to accuse a member of the nobility of a crime! She left the temple vowing she would discover the identity of her sister's murderer no matter what the cost and truly curse him for his terrible and sacrilegious deed. During the twelve years since the murder, Marynia has learned much about her natural cursing ability, having only recently suspected the true nature of her heritage. A year ago, a mysterious Vistani came to her and taught her how to use the Tarokka deck, telling her it was a gift in gratitude for one of her deeds. Naturally talented with the deck but uneasy with the Vistani symbolism, she has spent much of her spare time over the last few months creating a special deck based on the Lawgiver's teachings.

### Current Sketch

As a vigilante in Kantora, Marynia has become known as a bringer of swift justice to those who would injure or kill others on its lawless streets. Over the years she has investigated other murders very similar to Ivani's. Many times she has discovered another connection to Sir Tristen with these horrifying crimes and wondered if her instincts of his innocence were wrong. Sir Tristen, however, has done nothing but support her in her efforts and she continues to quell any doubts. Rumors of a mysterious crime lord known as Malken have led her to other cities in Nova Vaasa, but she has found no luck in capturing or even investigating her elusive foe, since the Dark Powers have kept her scrying abilities from seeing anything but the most shadowy visions.

When the clerics of the temple of the Lawgiver learned of Marynia's exploits, they were horrified. After warning her repeatedly to stop her reckless actions, they searched her out to inform her that she was no longer a cleric of their temple. At a time when many clerics of the Lawgiver wonder if their god still exists, Marynia continues to be gifted with spells and has no doubt that she is on a god-sent mission to bring lawfulness to all of Nova Vaasa.

### Combat

Marynia rarely indulges in physical combat. Hampered by her twisted foot, she cannot move

quickly enough to indulge in melee, and, when forced into it, she uses her whip to subdue an opponent or else she keeps a foe away with her longspear. She uses her spells from the Law and War domains wisely and has begun to use spells from the Curse domain when she realized the Lawgiver had bestowed this extra domain upon her.

*SQ—Vision of Darkness (Su):* Marynia's ability to see into the souls of others is greatly enhanced by her Lawgiver Tarokka deck. As normal, she sees the most devastating curse she could place on a target if his Will save does not stop her. For Marynia, however, anyone who willingly allows her to read his fortune with the Lawgiver's Tarokka loses the ability to block her insights.

### Cair

Since her break with the temple of the Lawgivers, Marynia lives where she can. Often she will stay for a week or two with those who have benefited from her judgments. Although she usually stays in Kantora, she has allies in Liara and Egertus who provide her with information on the latest troubles in their cities and give her a place to stay. Although he has offered, Marynia has never again gone into Castle Faerhaaven, Sir Tristen's home.

### Sheriff von Zarovich

**Male human Ftr5/Nld5/Scg5:** CR 15; SZ M (6 ft. 5 in. tall); HD 5d10+10 plus 5d10+10 plus 5d8+10; hp 131; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 26 (touch 16, flat-footed 23); Atk +23/+18/+13 melee (2d4+9, +3 keen scythe, crit 17-20/x4) or +19/+14/+9 melee (1d6+4 plus 2 fire, hot poker); SA Smite virtue, frightening aura, horrifying designs, hands of death; SQ Sense sinkhole of evil, dread blessing, command undead, desensitized, dread companion, pinpoint agony, detect thoughts, torture's mask, spells; AL NE; SV Fort +14, Ref +6, Will +8; Str 18, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 17, Cha 12 (originally 14).

**Skills:** Heal +7, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (Ravenloft) +5, Ride 21, Sense Motive +13.

**Feats:** Endurance, Improved Critical (scythe), Improved Unarmed Strike, Iron Will, Jaded, Mounted Combat, Ride-by-Attack, Spirited Charge, Trample, Weapon Focus (scythe).

**Languages:** Balok.

**Night Lord Spells Per Day:** 3/2/1; base DC 13 + spell level.





**Scourge Spells Known:** (cast per day: 3/1; base DC 11 + spell level) 1st—*cause fear*, *chill touch*, *detect magic*, *flare*; 2nd—*ray of enfeeblement*, *shocking grasp*.

**Signature Possessions:** Gargoyle plate armor\*, +3 keen scythe, iron poker\*\*, ring of protection +5, ring of hold person (Will DC 18). Sadis Nocturne, dread nightmare companion: CR 6; SZ L Outsider (Evil); HD 8d8+24; hp 72; Init +7 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 40 ft., fly 90 ft. (good); AC 25 (touch 12, flat-footed 22); Atk +13 melee (1d8+5 plus 1d4 fire, 2 hooves) or +8 melee (1d8+2, bite); SA Flaming hooves, smoke; SQ Astral projection, etherealness, frightful presence; AL NE; SV Fort +9, Ref +8, Will +7; Str 20, Dex 17, Con 17, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 12.

**Special:** Because Sadis Nocturne is a dread companion, the sheriff and his mount share spells, saving throws, and have an empathic link. Sadis Nocturne also has Improved Evasion.

**Skills:** Intimidate +12, Intuit Direction +13, Listen +12, Move Silently +12, Search +10, Sense Motive +12, Spot +12. Feats: Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative.

**\*Gargoyle plate armor:** Once per day as a free action it can be called on to reflect a spell back to its caster as in spell turning. Additionally, the armor's shadow quality gives a +10 bonus to Hide checks. Since plate has an armor check penalty of -6, the sheriff gets an overall bonus of +4 to his rolls; the same applies to Move Silently checks due to the silent trait. Finally, the gargoyle molding enchantment doubles all damage from charge attacks. This plate armor is fashioned to make the wearer appear to be a gargoyle. The helmet is shaped to look like a horned gargoyle head, and its wearer looks out of the open, tooth filled mouth.

**\*\*Iron poker:** This weapon has an enchantment enabling it to heat itself 3 times per day as the heat metal spell. The effect takes about five minutes to make the poker end red and glowing, but the handle stays cool.

## Background

In the years following the Fall of Kings, a new servant appeared in the employ of Barovia's darklord. Blazing on the back of a dread nightmare, there emerged a "peacekeeper" in the domain. Known only as "Sheriff von Zarovich," this night lord and scourge has become Strahd's representative to many of Barovia's people. Many believe him to be a ruthless Barovian commoner who ingratiate





ated himself to the realm's darklord in such an impressive fashion that the vampire count adopted him and granted him his own surname. Others speculate that the sheriff is some distant descendant of the darklord who attracted the vampire's favor by attracting the attention of the Dark Powers. Still others claim (behind closed doors and in the most secret of places) that the sheriff is a power hungry upstart who has managed to amuse the darklord with his brash arrogance. However he gained the patronage of the darklord, the sheriff acts as Strahd's trusted agent.

The sheriff is legendary in his cruelty. Reports circulate that when a town cannot pay its tribute to the nobility to the realm, within days its entire population becomes transformed into lebentod under the direct control of the sheriff and his darklord, and the area encompassing the town becomes a sinkhole of evil. None have been able to name such a town or locate it in their travels, yet rumors persist and few people dare risk the possibility that these tales might be true.

The sheriff's features are usually hidden beneath a black helmet crafted to look like a gargoyle head complete with horns and colored with black lacquer. Peering beneath the helmet are cold icy blue eyes that reflect no humanity in their fearful gaze. When he does take his helmet off, the sheriff's disfigured visage usually requires those who view it to make a Will save against fear. The sheriff's face and head are scarred, rotted, and twisted — his eyes are all that seem human. He wears fierce looking black plate-mail, the same color as the helmet. The gloves and boots mimic gargoyle claws, and the clasp of the black and gray cloak is molded to look like gargoyle wings. When the sheriff speaks, his deep voice sounds hollow and devoid of emotion. The sheriff's body language is cool and controlled. He can stand still for hours without so much as a nervous twitch as he watches the blood drain out of a victim, showing no emotions — neither joy nor hate — in his eyes.

The sheriff's weapon of choice is an enchanted battle scythe, which he calls Herd-Culler. The scythe is often used when he rides Sadis Nocturne, his dread nightmare mount. The sheriff's secondary weapon is a cold iron poker that he wears at his hip.

### Current Sketch

The Sheriff of Barovia works as his master's eyes, ears, and hands in the land of Barovia. Since

Strahd does not often involve himself in the affairs of the land, the sheriff acts as his proxy. He enforces the laws of the darklord and dispassionately slaughters any who dare oppose Strahd. One way or the other, either alive or undead, the citizens of Barovia are forced into compliance.

When facing a large group, the sheriff often leads a militia of undead creatures including zombies, skeletons, lebentod, and a few lesser vampire lieutenants. Mounted garrisons of the darklord's forces ride Strahd's skeletal horses. Although a full-scale army has only marched once — to eradicate an army of zealot priests, paladins, and warriors of the Morninglord near Teufeldorf — rumors persist that the sheriff is raising a great undead and mercenary army to oppose the Kargat and descend upon Azalin before he can rebuild his empire to its full strength. The skulls of Kargat members caught by the sheriff operating in Barovia are put on pikes on the road leading to Castle Ravenloft.

### Combat

For most opponents, meeting Sheriff von Zarovich in battle offers them a swift and merciless death unless those foes rival a darklord in power. This martial veteran and his nightmare dread companion work as one mind and kill with frightening efficiency. Several magic item and feat combination maneuvers make the sheriff nearly unstoppable. Combining the magical properties of his gargoyle armor with his Spirited Charge feat triples damage dealt by a mounted charge from the sheriff and his dread companion. This maneuver does not incur an attack of opportunity, but does require a full round action for the single attack. If the sheriff is up against a paladin and is aware of this fact, he can use Smite Virtue as part of his mounted Spirited Charge. For the most efficient overkill, the sheriff can use his ring of hold person as a free action while Sadis Nocturne accelerates into a sprint for the Spirited Charge/Ride-by Attack. The sheriff may then deliver a deadly coup de grace with the war scythe. In more frantic melees, the sheriff merely wades into the battle, using his impressive Ride skills and his horrifying mount to avoid most damage. He sometimes removes his helmet to project his Frightening Aura at the same time as his companion belches smoke, thus projecting its own frightful presence. Because of the empathic link and spell sharing, the sheriff's vision is not impaired by the nightmare's smoke. Flaming hooves trample opponents that are slammed or knocked over. Those that choose to try and run are usually victims of Sadis Nocturne's





Combat Reflexes feat. In the few instances when the sheriff must withdraw from battle to regroup, the nightmare shares its etherealness ability to protect its rider from harm.

When the sheriff is not crushing enemies of Barovia, he plays the roll of investigator. He always leaves a few criminals alive to torture for information. Using Pinpoint Agony, Detect Thoughts, and his natural intimidation, the sheriff can crack the will of any enemy. He uses these techniques to uncover and crush any conspiracies against Strahd. Of late, the sheriff has declared illegal the trade of the Vistani elixir that protects travelers from Strahd's choking fog and possession of it by a Barovian citizen an act of treason. These crimes are punishable by death, followed by undeath.

## Revan Wolfbane

**Male human Rog8/Mb3:** CR11; SZ M (5 feet 10 inches tall); HD 8d6+16 plus 3d8+6; hp 75; Init +8 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft. ; AC 17 (touch 14, flat-footed 13); Atk +12/+7 melee (1d4+2, masterwork dagger) or +12/+7 melee (1d6+2, masterwork short sword) or +13/+8 ranged (1d4, hand crossbow); SA Sneak attack +4d6, studied foe (+2 attack bonus vs. lycanthropes); SQ Animal speech, sense lycanthrope, evasion, uncanny dodge; AL CN; SV Fort +7, Ref +11, Will +6; Str 14, Dex 18, Con 15, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 14.

**Skills:** Appraise +10, Balance +12, Bluff +8, Climb +6, Craft (locksmithing) +7, Decipher Script +5, Disable Device +11, Disguise +9, Escape Artist +13, Forgery +7, Gather Information +6, Hide +10, Knowledge (lycanthropes) +5, Listen +7, Move Silently +9, Pick Pocket +10, Read Lips +5, Search +6, Sense Motive +5, Spot +7, Swim +3, Tumble +8, Use Magic Device +5, Use Rope +6.

**Feats:** Alertness, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Mobility.

**Languages:** Balok, Darkonese, Mordentish.

**Signature Possessions:** 2 masterwork silver coated daggers; 1 masterwork silver coated short sword; 25 ft. of silk rope with strands of silver woven into it; silver coated masterwork manacles; masterwork wooden dagger; masterwork obsidian dagger; vials of wolfsbane, ginseng, and belladonna.

## Background

Revan Wolfbane is a wiry man with an acrobat's build. He has shaggy dark brown hair and green eyes. His thick eyebrows add a feral look to his handsome face. Revan has scars on his body



that he normally keeps covered up by his clothing. These are legacies of his time as a werewolf. The long sleeves on his shirt cover his wrists where the scars left from manacles can still be seen. His boots cover similar scars on his ankles. His torso bears burn marks and claw marks that are healed but can still be seen.

Revan moves with the grace of a predator and is constantly on the alert. The driving goal in Revan's life is to hunt down and slay all lycanthropes. It is his obsession, and he will take whatever measures needed to accomplish this goal. Unfortunately, innocents may get hurt in the crossfire, but if that is the only way to be sure of purging an evil from the land, then such is the price that must be paid.

Revan was an accomplished thief in Mordent. He was on his own, living on the streets at age 12 with only his 7-year-old sister Grace for family. He never knew what happened to his father, who just disappeared one day. His mother died from a plague. This left Revan to care for Grace, a task he performed with a surprising devotion and determination. Unfortunately, while casing a pos-





sible house, he found out that all the skill in hiding did not help when his foe could sense him by smell.

Revan managed to escape the werewolf that attacked him but not before he was badly bitten. Revan did not realize the significance of his wound and it seemed to heal up, even though it left scars on his arm. Over the next couple of days, he was ravenously hungry and developed a desire for raw meat. The next night was a full moon and Revan went out as normal to "liberate" some goods from the wealthy homes in town. That night he underwent his first transformation. He was not immediately aware of what had happened and, in fact, remembered nothing until he found himself at dawn in an alleyway near the abandoned building where he and Grace lived. His clothes were tattered and bloody. Blood was smeared all over his face as well.

In a panic, Revan rushed home to discover Grace's dismembered and partially eaten body on the floor of the room where they currently lived. It was at that moment that he realized what had happened. Revan spent the next several months in research. He broke into sages' libraries and bookstores looking for any and all lore he could find about lycanthropy. He also stole enough gold and gems to have 2 pairs of specially wrought magical manacles made. These manacles he used on the nights of the full moon to confine himself in a cave that he had located out of the city. They were designed to shrink immediately to fit him in whatever form he changed into and required a tiny key to open that was impossible for him to manipulate in any form but his human form. Thus he kept himself from killing anymore people, but he took his rage out on himself, scarring his own body with his wolf claws. He still keeps the manacles to use on other werereatures that he hunts.

Revan finally learned how to break the curse and set out to find the werewolf that had infected him. He eventually hunted the creature down and killed him. Revan then went to a priest of Lythander and convinced him to cast the required spell to free him.

### Current Sketch

The spell was successful, but Revan knew that his work had only begun. He continued his study of lycanthropy and put his knowledge to use in hunting down these creatures and killing them. If it does prove possible to redeem one, or if in his initial observation of them he sees that they truly want to

be free of their curse, he will approach them and offer to help. If they are given over to their bestial nature, he kills them without mercy. He always kills true lycanthropes, since he now knows that they are the ones who began this insidious plague. When he does decide to kill, he does so deliberately and professionally with little emotion. He will also not hesitate to kill others if they stand between him and his intended prey.

Revan is a loner and does not readily trust others. If he can be coaxed into working with a group, it will be for the purpose of accomplishing a goal that furthers his own "mission." He will pursue the goal to its end and has little patience for anything that distracts the group from accomplishing it. He is willing to try to convince people of the rightness of his mission, but he does not really expect anyone to listen or agree with him.

### Combat

Revan is a canny fighter who knows how to maximize his strengths. He plans an ambush carefully with as much built-in redundancy as possible. He normally opts to strike from ambush, using his reinforced net to bring down his prey and then shooting it with a hand held crossbow to introduce a powerful sleep poison (Fortitude DC 20) into its system. He may also use poison-laced meat as a trap if the creature is truly hungry. If luring the creature into an ambush proves impossible, Revan is not above using any means to destroy it, up to and including trapping it inside a wooden building and setting it ablaze.

In any case, he always tries to devise a way to bring the creature to bay so he can knock it out with the poison. If this is someone that he has decided might be saved, the werereature eventually awakens to find itself wearing Revan's manacles and chained securely in a remote cave. Otherwise, Revan kills his prey as soon as he has it knocked out.

With the ones that he hopes to save, Revan proceeds to explain who he is and offer his aid in freeing them from the curse. He makes it clear, however, that if the answer is "no" he will kill them. He also explains that if they answer "yes" and saving them proves impossible, he will end their misery quickly and painlessly.

Revan is not a trusting sort, so if his captive agrees to his offer of help, he will leave her chained while he hunts down and kills the lycanthrope that



infected her. He will then find a priest who is willing to try the spell that will cure lycanthropy and bring him to the cave. If the spell succeeds, Revan finally releases the person. If it does not, he sends the cleric on his way and destroys the now eternally cursed person.

operations in a remote location that is far enough away from traveled paths to ensure privacy even when his "guests" scream and howl. He steals what he needs to make the cave livable, or if he cannot steal it, he steals the money to buy it. Because of this, he travels light, carrying his manacles and other special gear that he needs for the hunt, such as his poison and the various bane herbs that he has discovered to be effective against lycanthropes.

### Cair

Revan moves from place to place in his quest to track down lycanthropes. He sets up a base of





Chapter Four:  
The Campaign in  
Darkness



Twilight was falling outside Revan's cave. Suddenly, the evening chirping of the insects fell silent, quelled by the arrival of a group of intruders. Revan stood in the cave entrance and watched them come closer, weapons in hand and righteous anger plain on their determined faces.

"They just don't understand," he muttered, shaking his head. Fingering the silvery crescent moon pendant hanging around his neck, Revan turned and retreated into his cave. He had preparations to make. If these people would not listen to reason, he needed to be ready to stop them by whatever means he found necessary. The evil creature he held captive in the back of the cave must not be allowed to go free.

A low moan drew his attention to the rear of the cave, where a young girl lay on the floor, her body wrapped in chains and rope. Her hands and feet were manacled together.

"First things, first," Revan said as he drew an intricately worked silver bladed dagger from its sheath at his belt and knelt down beside the girl. The girl turned looked at him with frightened eyes that grew even rounder with terror when he brought the dagger close to her throat.

Revan noticed her reaction and smiled grimly. "Recognize it, don't you?" he said contemptuously. "You can feel it burn even when it's not actually touching your skin, can't you?"

"What do you want of me?" she asked in a tremulous voice. "What have I done to you?"

Revan laughed. "Your very existence is a festering sore upon the land, girl. I know what you are and what you have done. The only question you should be asking yourself is, 'Do I want to be free of the curse?'" He paused to let his words sink in. "Well," he continued, "do you?"

"I — I don't know, I think —," she faltered, her voice fading into a soft whimper.

"Well? Best be quick girl," Revan snapped. "I don't have time to waste. If you are worth saving, I can help you. If you don't want it, just say the word and I'll end your torment here and now." He allowed the blade of the dagger to touch her throat and she screamed.

At the bottom of the hill, the determined adventurers looked up as the scream echoed outside the cave. They glanced at each other and broke into a run up the hillside.

Revan heard them making their noisy way up the slope. So did his prisoner.

"Don't think that you can escape me, girl. I'll prove to them what you are. Now, do I kill you when they show up, or do I try to convince them to give me a chance at curing you? Make your choice quickly, or I'll make it for you."

Revan picked the girl up from the cave floor and placed her in front of him. He held the dagger to her throat just as the intruders burst into the cave.

"Stay back and listen to me or I'll kill her now!" Revan brought the dagger closer to her skin as he spoke.

A young man in shiny armor started to reply, his hand moving for his sword. Before he could speak, the girl screamed as pain wracked her body, sending her into a series of convulsive spasms. Her limbs twisted and her face elongated, becoming something inhuman and beastly. Hair sprouted from her skin.

Her would-be rescuers stepped back, shock and dismay registering on their faces as the girl continued her transformation into her hybrid werewolf form. Before the change could finish, Revan pulled her head back and drew the dagger across her throat, slicing deeply into it to make certain he severed her artery. The spray of blood caught his hand. Some of the blood coated the armor and tunics of the intruders.

Revan let the girl's body fall to the floor and reached down to clean his dagger on her bloodied clothes. He retrieved his manacles before turning back to the intruders who still stood near the cave entrance, struck dumb with horror and their faces registering their confusion.

"Things are not always what they seem," Revan said, his voice grating on the ears of his unwanted visitors. Unhindered, he walked past them and joined the other creatures of the night.



*The road to Hell is paved with good intentions.*

— Samuel Johnson



arkness has a seductive quality. For a DM creating a Gothic atmosphere within the Dread Realms of Ravenloft, champions of darkness are an integral addition to the story. They provide shadow to the ubiquitous heroes' light. They epitomize the truth of what makes Ravenloft unique — the ever-present pull toward Evil. Within this chapter lie methods of bringing that attraction to the fore, as well as provisions for a clever DM to tempt his players in a campaign based around that eventual downward spiral into the dark. The DM learns new methods to motivate the characters toward the siren call of the shadows.

Then, of course, what happens to a character corrupted by the Dark Powers? Moreover, how do the characters react when their reputation precedes them to the next village? This chapter discusses how to handle the growing notoriety of champions of darkness and the fear and suspicions engendered by their increasingly more questionable actions.

Finally, a series of adventure ideas created to introduce darker elements into a Ravenloft campaign, along with a blueprint for constructing an entire campaign featuring the characters' long slide into darkness, provides DMs with a number of ways to build memorable and varied stories to entertain and challenge her players.

If you are a DM, this chapter has a special focus for you. Here are the tools to help you put together a campaign that tests the inner strengths of the characters and provides a thoughtful experience for your players. If you are a player, you should consider leaving this chapter to the eyes of the DM if only to avoid spoiling the fun of discovery for yourself.

## Motivation



reating a campaign with moral quandaries that lead heroes down dark paths and then in the end give them the chance to find the light again, places characters at the heart and soul of Ravenloft. Campaigns such as these allow characters to be caught within the torment and seduction inherent in a world controlled by the Dark Powers. For the DM, finding those motivations and building that eventual descent into darkness is difficult

but rewarding; for characters, it should be horrifying, inevitable, and very, very attractive. Listed below are several kernels from which a shadowy — and sometimes redemptive — story may grow.

## Compassion

Within the heart of all heroes is the belief that they can make a difference to an attractive villain. Their actions, they believe, might bring light into the darkest vampire's soul or soften the heart of the cruelest werewolf. For the DM, providing an NPC with a terrible history and a shattered heart — and making certain that heroes know of this — leads to a monster spared so that he may kill again. While a DM may find it difficult to create charismatic villains, he should keep in mind that all villains firmly believe they are right in what they do.

All villains (beyond mindless beasts) have a story. Most had, or have, people who care about them. Often, providing a sympathetic NPC who cares for the villain will quell the most valiant and bloodthirsty hero. If the villain has the chance to communicate his lofty goals and horrible "undeserved" fate, he can draw heroes into leniency — possibly to their eventual moral or physical destruction. When the same villain strikes again, the heroes feel betrayed and will be less likely to listen to another sympathetic adversary. If a DM uses this ploy too often, the characters will become suspicious of everyone they meet — and pitiless to any they feel are evil.

For pitiless characters, the path to darkness becomes steeper and more perilous. If they are not willing to stay their hand from a foe begging for mercy, no matter how terrible the crime, they have developed a coldness of heart will surely draw the Dark Powers near.

## Greed

Power is important in Ravenloft. Only those favored by the Dark Powers have a real chance at gaining and keeping power. For some characters, the acquisition of power overwhelms their original goal to fight evil and brings them, through greed, to the attention of the Dark Powers. Stories based around greed often begin with characters in need of some unusual item necessary to save a town from plague or drive off undead. The DM does well to make that very object attractive to the characters — explaining its destruction if used as intended and the continual good it could do if kept in their hands.





Perhaps the object is a cursed item, whispering words of encouragement to its "master" and driving him into believing that everyone he knows wants to take it away. Rumor of a spellbook within a long-forgotten tower containing the spell needed to destroy a hated darklord and gain his power may lead mages to draw their companions into untold danger. A Vistana may lay a curse upon the adventurers when their greedy rogue decides to loot her wagon.

Perhaps, the beginning is not so unselfish and innocent: an outsider hears of a group dedicated to upholding the law of the land (the Kargatane, for instance, or the Order of the Ebon Gargoyle). He decides that he should join — not out of the spirit of doing good, but because he knows he can gain influence and power in his realm from joining. Whether intentions are good or not, acquisitiveness is part of the temptation of the Dark Powers and should be used by any talented (and fiendish) DM to the ultimate advantage.

## Hopelessness

Within the world of Ravenloft, darkness has the edge and villains are encouraged with ever-increasing power. Although no campaign should ever lead heroes to feel totally defeated, creating situations that seem hopeless can add a sinister edge to the characters' experiences. With subtlety, the PCs will not understand the dire nature of the shadows surrounding them until the horror is overwhelming. In the best long-running Gothic campaigns, a gradual and growing belief in their hopeless situation leads PCs to desperate tactics — and into the clutches of the Dark Powers, creating true champions of darkness out of everyday "heroes."

This sort of campaign is especially appropriate when characters are Outlanders unfamiliar with Ravenloft. Although leaving the Dread Realms is deemed impossible, no PC should ever believe this to begin with. In fact, if a DM can manage it, the word "Ravenloft" should not come into play at all — at least for the first few gaming sessions. As priests realize their limited powers, and the veil between them and their god falls like a curtain over their faith, they should be frantic to leave the Domain of Dread and only through time realize the impossibility of their goal. Outlander paladins are also very susceptible to a powerful belief in their own ability to leave, which should gradually crumble into dust as time passes. For these character classes

and other PCs with strong faith, hopelessness is the beginning of their fall.

## Love

Love is a very powerful force for good. Yet it may also draw the most virtuous soul to damnation. Ravenloft DMs should remember that even Count Strahd was brought to his doom by his love for his brother's intended bride. (The Dark Powers certainly do.) Whether the quiet love of one companion for another or the deeper passion of lovers beneath the moon, jealousy, envy, fear, and overwhelming lust are all rooted in that feeling the Dark Powers mislead characters into believing is love.

Love provides one of the strongest motivations to excuse and eventually embrace the dark. That innocent maiden a paladin saved (and loved) last week may be a snarling vampire's bride tonight. She has a voice to speak and beg for her life and those gentian blue eyes have not changed. Her erstwhile rescuer is damned. Whether he kills her to save her soul or lets her go and damns others, his life will never be the same.

The Dark Powers know this and can see how his love led first to weakness and then from weakness to guilt. From that moment on, the Dark Powers remind him of his lost love. Innocent voices cry out in his dreams. Every vampire bride he meets will have those same soft blue eyes. Friends and adventuring partners may grow angry and concerned as the paladin finds it harder and harder to destroy these beautiful but soulless undead creatures. Every night he hears that soft and gentle voice on the breeze tempting him to her deadly kiss. One day he goes to her, his belief in law and good distorted and broken. The DM has begun the paladin's slow but inescapable descent. Now his companions must decide whether to attempt redemption or destroy their old (and beloved) friend — and their actions may start them on the road to their own destruction. Love and attraction, twisted by the Dark Powers, have become obsession.

## Misplaced Heroism

Oftentimes, especially for outlanders, the world of Ravenloft is a confusing and frightening place (or should be). The inner workings of the Realms, how they were created, and what controls and powers them is a mystery — in most cases, even to the darklords themselves. As characters discover



the evil lurking at the heart of each Dread Realm, they may be inspired to end that evil.

Herein lies one of the classic character traps in Ravenloft. What should happen if a darklord were destroyed? Would the cause of good be upheld? Would the characters free the people from their subjugation? No. The death of a darklord (unless the Dark Powers find someone to replace her) would mean the destruction of the realm and the deaths or disappearance of countless thousands — most of whom are average, innocent people.

The DM should remember that the Dark Powers rarely do things by chance. Individuals or groups that strike against the darklords never conquer, unless it is the will of the Dark Powers that they do so. At the end of a long campaign, the time may come that those ambitious and heroic players who fight until they win (no matter what!) discover themselves wearing heavy and unexpected crowns — as darklords in Ravenloft.

## Revenge

The need for vengeance provides a basic motivation for a soul's destruction. Many essentially good characters thirsting for revenge have become the playthings of the Dark Powers. Beginning a sinister campaign with a villain performing a terrible and inexcusable crime for which he goes free, perhaps escaping to another realm or even "proving" his innocence in a darklord's court, leads to certain outrage for heroic characters. For the Dark Powers, their anger becomes a hook. Each time characters see the villain, when he taunts them by his freedom or by other untraceable crimes, he brings them closer to frenzy. When that frenzy becomes uncontrollable, when any act is worth their foe's death, the characters have become puppets and the Dark Powers are pulling their strings. A champion of darkness is born.

## Powers Checks in the Dark Campaign

**F**or a DM, keeping a balance with powers checks can be difficult. Not every act has a moral quandary involved, although many good stories should contain that element. Dealing with the gothic horror of a downward spiral toward corruption is as much a part of a Ravenloft campaign as meeting Strahd. Still, a DM must tread carefully.

Many players feel justified in their actions and have no interest in “ruining” their characters by a misjudged interpretation of their intent. Perhaps the most difficult situation involves a mixed group — some of whom wish to be heroes in the classic sense. Good through and through, they want no moral dilemma. Evil should be destroyed. Monsters are monsters. Building a sense that foes have dimension (they have their reasons too!) is dissatisfying to these players, unless they feel they can truly redeem their enemy. In many ways, these characters should be the easiest to corrupt, for they absolutely believe in their superiority and the righteousness of their cause.

Others are players who want more sinister plots and moral quandaries in their games. For them, powers checks are a means to an end: they either hope one day to become masters of evil — or fall far, and recognizing the danger to their tormented souls, crawl upward again toward redemption. Even one player in a group with the intent of “descent and redemption” provides much for a DM to build a campaign around. If the DM realizes a player plans to make his character irredeemably evil, he should let the player know that eventually his character will be taken from his control — either killed by his former companions or turned into an NPC villain. Even a high-level master of curses cannot clean his corrupted soul.

Although a canny DM will make any powers check results secret to all but the affected character, keep in mind the visible signs of corruption. No matter how sneaky a character attempts to be, his companions have a chance to notice the subtle (or not so subtle) changes taking place. In the first couple of stages, cautious characters might conceal the dark stain on their souls (and any physical deformities). As the level of corruption grows, however, companions should definitely notice any odd powers the corrupted one has suddenly developed, as he begins to depend upon them

increasingly. Odd smells, animals growling at the evil one on sight, sleeping longer and longer during the day: all provide tangible signs for adventurers to become aware of a companion's change. Below are DM guidelines for managing characters along the Path of Corruption.

### Innocence

For a player who begins her character as Innocent, the path to corruption is particularly terrifying. For innocence to be sullied by horror or hate or monstrous changes beyond her control makes the former Innocent's downfall a source of vengeance, anger, and pain for the character and her companions. The death of an innocent soul is a dramatic and irreversible tragedy and should be treated as such by the DM. A note of sorrow and hopeless anger can provide the beginning to an intense revenge scenario or perhaps a long-running campaign to discover and destroy the villain who ravaged the affected character's innocence beyond healing.

### The Caress

During this first stage of corruption, the seductive gifts of the Dark Powers should be far greater than any drawbacks created by them. Evil does not seem so bad, and the DM should seduce the player with the power as readily as the Dark Powers do the character. There is little need for regret. Just as the addict savors his first drink of absinthe, the addiction to power is a sweet and heady sensation, seemingly harmless. During this stage, few if any feel guilt for their crimes, and characters should think rarely of redemption.

### The Enticement

As a character's first taste of power provides so much while taking so little, the enticement stage builds upon his cravings, while the “balancing” curse is an annoyance, but little more. At this point, companions might notice that something is “not quite right” about their friend, but in a world without detect evil, there is no way to discern the problem with certainty. If a DM wishes and the curse is a minor physical change or manifestation, he may allow a Spot check (DC 15) whenever the enticed one uses his gift. Mental curses are still subtle enough to be unrecognizable as supernatural. Characters may, at this point, realize the error of their ways and ask a priest or deity directly for some means of redemption — good campaign fodder for a DM.

## The Invitation

When a character succumbs to the Invitation, he has fallen to a point almost beyond redemption. Gifts are powerful and harder to cover, as are the accompanying curses. The DM should allow companions a Spot check (DC 10) to notice the changes unless the corrupted person is taking special care to conceal the metamorphosis (Disguise DC 15). Animals often become wary around him, and he must make an Animal Empathy check (DC 10), if he has the skill, to keep cornered animals from attacking him. Horses (if they are used regularly by the character) will allow the character to ride, having gradually become accustomed to his changing scent and actions.

## The Embrace

As the corruption grows, special abilities and horrific changes become nearly impossible to hide. If companions are still loyal to their friend, they should realize that many normal people would notice something freakish and evil about their

friend. They may consider staying out of populated areas unless they take efforts to conceal their fallen companion (if physical changes occur). At this stage, the DM should occasionally take control of the character away from its player as the Dark Powers take hold. When the character uses a gift, allow him a Will save at DC 15, which, if failed, makes the character an NPC for the rest of the scene or until the DM deems it appropriate.

## The Creature

Twisted beyond any ability to hide the corruption inside, the dark one has little hope of redemption except through death. The character is under the DM's constant control, unless the player can make a Will save at DC 25. If the character becomes lucid for a moment, the DM may allow him to plead for help — but the chance of being saved is slim to none. The DM must not make it easy for any character to recover from this level of evil. If a PC has performed enough heinous acts to reach this stage, he is definitely suitable as a villainous NPC, but unlikely as a continuing player character.





## The Darklord

As the final step along the Path of Corruption, the evil character finds himself imprisoned within a personal hell called his domain. If any companions have lingered and failed to redeem their friend, they too have a chance of being swept up into the trap, although they may leave if the Mists allow. At this stage, the character is an NPC and could become a recurring villain or may see his companions flee for good as they recognize the horrible final change. For a DM, creating a new Domain of Dread is a daunting task, but unless the character is very powerful or has performed an act of "ultimate evil," his new realm should be small — perhaps even room-sized if the new darklord's crimes were petty enough. In any case, the new realm should reflect the places where the character performed his acts of corruption.

## Notoriety/Fame Rating

DMs may choose to add Notoriety/Fame to a Ravenloft campaign, especially if players often perform splashy public acts, do not mind using their own names to get thanks and rewards from that grateful burgomaster's daughter, or spread their ill-gotten wealth around small and suspicious villages. Through Notoriety/Fame, heroes gain the option of finding allies or enemies among the public.

The DM may interrupt a group of characters sleeping at an inn with a disturbance that awakens them in the middle of the night. The startled characters may find a crowd (who has heard tales of the characters' last adventure) outside the inn carrying torches and screaming for their blood. Perhaps a character chances to save the life of a talented minstrel. Soon, everywhere he goes, people know his name and ask him to tell the tale in exchange for a free drink and meal. Maybe an enemy spreads rumors of lycanthropy among adventurers, giving them false notoriety (and a real problem). Notoriety/Fame can add many plot devices for a talented DM and give characters just what they deserve.

DMs and their players may use Notoriety/Fame in many ways. Champions of darkness with something to hide sometimes choose to develop a separate identity, disguising themselves with a costume or mask, or using another name to hide their connection to certain clandestine but showy deeds. In this instance, one "identity" may have a much higher Notoriety/Fame level than the other. In

another instance, someone may have multiple personalities, and each facet of a character's fractured mind might develop its own Notoriety/Fame as he carries out various deeds under each personality.

For each level of Notoriety/Fame, there is an added 10% chance that a stranger will know of the hero, even if he does not recognize him personally. Anyone with a Notoriety/Fame rating may lower Outcast ratings by one level for every two levels of Notoriety/Fame he gains. The DM should add Notoriety/Fame points at the end of an adventure or after an act that draws the attention of someone powerful or captures the imagination of a large group. For particularly showy or violent acts seen by a crowd, the DM has the option of awarding more than one level of Notoriety/Fame at a time — although this should be done with caution. High levels of Notoriety or Fame are most likely to occur in heavily populated areas and in those areas with Cultural Level ratings of 3 or higher where news spreads more quickly by horseback and by the printed word.

No matter how many incredible acts a hero carries out, many will take no notice. Only darklords and a few exceptional NPCs have Notoriety/Fame scores beyond seven, indicating their power and influence within their domains. Outsiders to Ravenloft rarely have reason to know even the most famous hero or notorious villain and thereby should not be given an opportunity to recognize the normally infamous character.

## Notoriety

If a character has been incredibly, "deliciously" evil or even just amoral, he may develop Notoriety. Notoriety is both a blessing and a curse. A bad reputation can be wonderful when you are up for a little game of intimidating or awing the peasants. Notoriety can prove amazingly helpful when the need arises to steal from a cowardly baron or quite useful when your masked form appears through the Mists in front of a mob.

Nevertheless, having your face and reputation known can lead to unwanted attention from the darklords (even their approval is dangerous), perhaps even from the Dark Powers. The DM should keep levels of Notoriety in mind whenever a character meets someone new, rolling percentage dice to determine the NPC's knowledge of the character's acts and adjust reactions accordingly. The DM should keep in mind, however, that NPC alignments should play a part in their reaction.





## fame

Fame comes to those who perform good deeds, or at least interesting and exciting tricks that bring approval from the toiling masses. Fame is more dangerous. It definitely leads to the eventual attention of the nearest darklord or his minions — and often ends badly for the latest savior to the people.

Still, even in such a mistrustful world as Ravenloft, fame can provide characters with unexpected alliances and assistance. The DM should keep levels of Fame in mind whenever a hero meets someone new; rolling percentage dice to determine prior knowledge of his actions and to make the appropriate reactions.

## Percentage Modifiers to Notoriety/fame Checks

No matter how spectacular the feat or heinous the crime, some people in the world are uninterested in the antics of others. In the insular Dread Realms, many never look beyond their villages for news for fear of discovering yet another horror.

Even darklords are unknown to wanderers from beyond the Mists. Below are listed possible modifiers to Notoriety/Fame checks meant to provide realistic recognition factors dependent on the person meeting the Notorious/Famous character. These percentages do not stack with one another; if a character is a stranger to the region, the DM can assume that he is also a stranger to any villages within that region.

| Modifier   | Chance               |
|--|----------------------|
| Newly arrived Outlander to Ravenloft                       | -50%                 |
| Stranger to the realm (The Core, The Amber Wastes, etc.)   | -30%                 |
| Stranger to the region (The Southern Core, etc.)           | -20%                 |
| Stranger to the country (Pharazia, Markovia, etc.)         | -15%                 |
| Stranger to the village/city (Phiraz, Harmonia, etc.)-     | 10%                  |
| Area Knowledge (local) of 5 slots or higher                | +5% per rank above 4 |
| Notorious/Famous character has unusual looks or costume    | +10%                 |
| Notorious/Famous character has a bard or minstrel as a fan | +10%                 |





## Alleyways into the Night: Story Ideas for Dark Adventures

**C**reating adventures for champions of darkness can be an overwhelming task for a Ravenloft DM. Although very appropriate in a world where hope is a rare commodity and dastardly deeds are richly rewarded, evil characters can quickly run away with a campaign, causing conflict among their party members or with other more peaceful denizens of their domain. The adventure hooks within this section provide ideas for the DM that allow more sinister characters to have an outlet, while placing them in situations often motivated by their less-than-savory outlook on life. Alternatively, some story hooks provide that sense of moral dilemma so prevalent in darker Ravenloft tales.

### Captured by Moonlight

A wealthy old baron begs for the assistance of a group of characters. Cursed by one of the Vistani, he is under the taint of lycanthropy. The story involves the characters in discovering the real truth behind the curse and finding a way to lift it—or choosing not to do so. If they find a way to coerce someone into lifting the curse, they will gain a powerful but evil ally. This adventure idea is suitable for any characters of any level.

#### Set-up

A group of characters arrives in a town or village of the DM's choice and sees scrolls tacked up in various places. On the scroll is written, "Anyone with arcane knowledge or those willing to be helpful in any way, please come to the Scarlet Fisher Inn. Your useful assistance will be well rewarded. Signed, Baron Von Riven." The scrolls are tattered and windblown and look like they have been hanging for a while.

#### Opening Scenes

Assuming the characters decide to follow their clue, they can find their way to the inn. Inside, the Scarlet Fisher is empty except for a couple of tables occupied by disreputable looking men drinking and grumbling in obvious boredom and dissatisfaction (part of the baron's guard). When the characters arrive, a young barmaid shows them to a table and takes their orders. If they ask her about the baron,

she shakes her head and whispers (while glancing at a half-open door in the back) that no decent person would get involved with the baron unless he wanted trouble.

When the barmaid goes to one of the other tables, one of the baron's guards grabs her and pulls her into his lap, clearly hurting her in the process and provoking a struggle. If the heroes help her, the guards may either run or else stand and fight, causing a rousing bar brawl. Regardless of the outcome of the fight, the barmaid tells the characters of a wandering master of curses who came into town just recently, asked for the baron, and left quietly soon afterwards. She explains that she has no interest in gaining any part in the baron's reward, but is reticent about letting the characters know exactly what is wrong. If they press her, she eventually mentions a rumor that the baron is never seen when the moon is full and that some people have disappeared from the surrounding forest.

### Building the Adventure

If the characters go to the back room, they see a handsome man with silver streaks in his hair staring darkly into a goblet of wine. This is Baron Von Riven, who has almost given up on getting any assistance. If they offer him their help, he explains that he was caught in a terrible situation a few months ago and gained the enmity of one of the Vistani. Only if the characters promise to be discrete will he explain his predicament: an ancient Vistani crone cursed him with lycanthropy. He must find some way to lift the curse, as he feels his restraints are becoming less useful each passing month. If pressed for more information, they see his eyes glow red and hear a low growling begin in the back of his throat. He does not provide any more useful facts.

Characters may either go find the Vistani caravan and hope to convince the grandmother to lift her curse or look for the master of curses and help him begin an investigation into the exact situation and what should be done. Whether they find the master of curses or the Vistani caravan, they will discover the same story: a Vistani wise woman cursed the baron with lycanthropy because he seduced and left her granddaughter pregnant with a half-Vistani child.



## Chapter Four

### finale

At this stage, the DM may remind the characters of their choices: they can attempt to persuade the master of curses to lift the curse, intercede with the Vistani on the baron's behalf, or return to the town and destroy the lycanthrope before he can change and kill again. Whatever their choice, they either earn the enmity of the Vistani or the baron and his allies.

### The Carnivorous forest

This adventure can involve any group of characters, but can become an especially desperate experience if characters are on the run or being pursued by some group and are forced to travel through a forest that local folklore considers "cursed."

### Set-up

Describe an archetypal gloomy "eerie-forest." As the characters investigate the interior of the forest, have them make Wisdom or Wilderness

Lore checks (DC 15) to realize that no sounds of life emanate from the forest. No insects chirp, no birds sing — nothing comes from the patch of cursed land. Unfortunately, however eerie the area seems, passing through it may be PCs' only means of escape.

### Opening Scenes

As the characters go deeper into the forest, describe it as very shady with one of the thickest and densest canopies they have ever seen, making the forest dark from lack of the sun's penetration. The flora of this verdant area is rich and full. Flowers of every color dot the landscape, and the air smells fresh and sweet. If the flowers do not tempt the group off the path, allow the characters time to get hungry and then describe the lush berries that cluster on bushes just off the path and the ripening fruit on many of the trees. Rose bushes grow throughout the forest. The fruits and flowers make the air pleasing and soothing. If the characters still stick to the path and insist on eating their





own dried trail rations, the forest takes its own actions to lure them off the path.

## Building the Adventure

The flowers and fruit of the forest start sending out mystical scents and pollens to begin breaking the characters' will. These effects are meant to exhaust, frustrate, and delay the characters. Have the characters start making hourly Will saves against sleep from the flowers' soporific aromas and against suggestion ("come and eat") from the fruit trees. The DC of the saves depends on the strength of the PCs. This adventure idea can be set to any Challenge Rating. Generally speaking, if the PCs are 1st through 3rd level, set the DC at 15. Increase the DC if the characters are more powerful (to a maximum of 20).

Once one of the characters inevitably fails a Will save and goes for a piece of fruit, you should have that character roll a Reflex save (DC 15) to avoid the thorns from the rose bushes. If the Reflex save is failed, give the character one hit point of damage. (Continue the rose's attacks until a character does take damage.) The blood drawn from the attack acts as a signal to the other dread plants (see *Denizens of Darkness*, page 113) that surround the characters on all sides. The exact number and type of dread plants depends on the level of the PCs and what CR they require to work up a good sweat. If they are low level, give them a few bloodroses to fight. If the characters are between 3rd and 7th level, add some bloodroots from the ground to the bloodroses. If the characters are between 8th and 9th level, the bloodroses, bloodroots, and crawling ivy (which descends from the canopy) attack them. If the party of adventurers is 10th level or higher, you might consider adding a few death's head trees, quickwood, or undead treants to the mix to provide the characters with a real challenge.

If the characters are desperate, they may resort to fire to fight off the carnivorous vegetation. This helps them kill the attacking plants, but it also sets the forest ablaze. If the DM wishes to do so, he can make the escape from a burning forest as daunting as escaping the hungry plants that attacked the characters in the first place. While this adventure may not present too many moral quandaries for characters, it might draw the attention of local druids, who realize that all plants have a right to exist, or might offend some other force in the region who has a vested interest in the cursed forest.

## False Accusations

A nefarious highway rider is terrorizing the towns nearby — or at least the greedy noblemen and merchants traveling between the towns. When the characters first meet him, he asks for their assistance and, depending upon their impulses, they either help a lawbreaker (and hero to the locals) or help capture a thief, thereby gaining the favor of the local constabulary. This adventure idea may take place in any location with a Cultural Level high enough to support a highway rider. It is suitable for all character levels.

## Set-up

"Night's Vengeance," actually a young idealistic servant to the local nobility, has started a campaign to equalize the wealth between the nobles, merchants, and the village poor. Charming, handsome, and very good-hearted, Night's Vengeance (a.k.a. Vincente the stableman) has taken money, jewels, warm cloaks, and fur coverlets from the merchants and nobles traveling along the roads. Too popular with the common people, he caught the attention of the local darklord.

Now a team of mercenaries is in pursuit. To destroy the villagers' favor toward the highway rider, these swords-for-hire murdered five people in a merchant caravan and framed "Night's Vengeance" for their deaths. Plans are to capture him and take him back to the nearest town for a speedy trial and an even speedier hanging. The heroes are in a position to make the mercenaries' plan impossible and gain the enmity of a darklord, or help the mercenaries and bring about the death of a good and idealistic (if misguided) hero.

## Opening Scenes

A shadowy figure gallops past, eyes gleaming beneath a wide-brimmed hat. Behind him, several men follow in hot pursuit. As he reaches the characters, he pulls up, smiles, and tosses one of the group a small pouch (which is filled with gold and gemstones). With a wink, he cries, "Distract them any way you can, my friends, and you will have gained the favor of Night's Vengeance." His horse rearing, he tips his hat and rides off the side of the road and through a copse of trees, disappearing in the darkness.

In a moment, the posse behind him will arrive. If the characters attempt to distract it in some





fashion and can do so successfully (DM's decision), the highway rider escapes. If they try to convince the posse to stop and talk, one member does so while the rest continue their chase. If the characters cannot stop the pursuit and want to help, or if they feel they would be better served to assist the pursuers, they may follow the posse on a wild and incredibly difficult ride. The highway rider leads them on a merry chase along narrow paths trapped with deadfall, low branches, and occasional unexpected ditches and streams (Ride DC 25 to stay on horseback). Characters who can perform a Ride check at DC 20 twice will catch up with the highway rider as he reaches an impasse and may become either his allies or his foes as the remaining posse arrives on the scene.

### Building the Adventure

Depending upon the characters' decisions, there will either be a fight between the heroes and the mercenaries (PCs who failed the Ride DC arrive 2 rounds after the conflict begins) or the characters will help the mercenaries surround and capture the young highway rider. If the PCs drive away the mercenaries (who flee if outnumbered), Vincente tells them his tale of woe and asks for their help in regaining the faith of the people. If they take the side of the mercenaries, the characters will be regaled with stories of the terrible acts Night's Vengeance has done as they take him back to the darklord's prison and ready him for "trial."

At this stage, the heroes should make their way into the village. Either they may investigate the true story of the merchant caravan murders and try to find a way to convince the populace of their new friend's innocence, or they will be there to await the trial and inevitable hanging. If the PCs ask anyone about the highway rider and look sympathetic, they will be bombarded with tales of his daring and compassion. Almost no one believes that Night's Vengeance actually killed the merchants, although all are too frightened to say much unless the characters convince them of their sympathy for the highwayman.

### Finale

Possible endings for allies include waiting for the hanging to take place and rescuing Vincente or finding a witness to the merchants' slaughter and bringing him or her to the trial. For darker characters, assisting the mercenaries may lead to joining the mercenary band or gaining the local darklord's favor.

## The Inquisition fires

This story idea is ideal for starting characters if the DM wishes to give the anti-heroes a good reason to be wary of the so-called forces of "purity and goodness." This story hook can also be a good starting point for characters that are not of good alignment and are native to the Domain of Dread.

### Set-up

This story is best for beginning characters who come from a tiny village with a population of about 120 people. The mood of the village is one of fear and superstition. The townsfolk are frightened of shadows and dislike anything supernatural. The spellcasters of the group (arcane and divine) must keep their powers secret, or they will likely incur a wrathful angry mob, and they know it.

The prevailing religion of the area is the Church of the Morninglord, to whom the townspeople pray to banish the shadows of the night. If a DM is using this story as the beginning of a campaign, then he might want to limit severely the characters' starting gold and equipment. The village has little to offer in the way of supplies; there is no magic shop, weaponsmith, healing chapel, or apothecary in this small village. The only weapons available are farm implements such as scythes, sickles, normal chains, pitchforks, and other similar items.

The DM might want to give the characters a few markings that make them stand out from the crowd, or play on distinguishing features of dress or accent that serve to mark the characters as suspicious and perhaps dangerous people — particularly the spellcasters. The local constable may have a low opinion of roguish types or obvious mercenaries.

Although this may be the characters' home, they have every reason to feel like outsiders, stuck in a place where nothing happens, where curiosity is regarded with suspicion, and where individuals with special talents are treated as troublemakers.

### Opening Scenes

The action begins when a merchant cart rolls into town on an early autumn afternoon. This causes a lot of commotion in the town, because merchant carts do not visit often. The town is generally too poor to buy imported goods or too frugal to spend locally harvested resources on things that are not needed for basic survival.

The very thing that causes the older, more conformist villagers to avoid the wagon causes the





characters to investigate closer. An old gypsy woman drives the wagon. The DM might want to make the woman Vistani, or half-Vistani, and describe her as a kindly woman to the characters. She has a trade cart full of decorations, lanterns, masks, and costumes for an autumn festival that the characters have never heard of because it is not celebrated in their small town. The festival seems to be a celebration of death and autumn, relying on costumes and carved autumn fruit to create an atmosphere of strangeness and revelry. The masks on the cart feature smiling skulls and horned devil visages. The lanterns are pumpkins carved into the forms of faces. The costumes depict spirits, ghouls, and other monstrous creatures.

The town mocks the woman and makes cruel remarks. The woman ignores her detractors and greets the characters with a warm smile. Have the gypsy woman (who introduces herself as Ildred) offer sugar coated cranberries from jars and play on the odd quirks of the characters while she makes cryptic observations about the spellcasters. If the DM has done a good job in describing the lack of excitement in the town, the gypsy woman's presence should pique the characters' sense of wonder and adventure.

Eventually, the townsfolk grow increasingly hostile and start to drive the woman off, using taunts and insults at first, followed by stones and other small thrown objects. As the woman departs, she asks the characters if they would camp with her that evening to scare off any "bandits." If they empathizing with the "outcast" treatment given the woman by the townsfolk, the characters should accept her offer.

You can take this opportunity to educate the characters on some aspects about the world of Ravenloft such as the Mists and the darklords. Ildred can give the characters insights into things their parents and the others never talk about. You might want to introduce the Tarroka deck and have the old woman do readings for each of the characters. She can be the one to explain the basics of being gifted with magic, be it arcane mastery or divine empowerment. She can also explain the ideas behind the festival of death and other celebrations of the natural cycles. She gifts the characters with some candy and masks, non-magical, but of a kind unfamiliar to the characters. Play Ildred as the wise old grandmother none of the characters ever had, but wished they knew. She is

non-threatening and generous with the gifts and the stories.

The next morning, the characters awaken in the field around the camp. The fire has gone out, and the wagon with its elderly occupant is nowhere to be found. If they make the proper Wilderness Lore (Track), Search, or Spot checks (DC 10), they will notice that no trace of the tracks of the wagon in or out of the field remains. To even the most observant ranger, it seems as if nothing resembling a wagon was ever present in the area.

## Building the Adventure

When the characters make it back to town, they discover that affairs have taken a grim turn. The whole town has gone to a public meeting. If the characters investigate (by attending the meeting — late), they find that two representatives of the Morninglord (one paladin and one cleric) have come into town bearing warnings about an old woman who is actually an evil spirit.

While the characters were conversing with Ildred, these two religious figures were rallying the entire town against anyone who has fallen under the woman's evil thrall. The constable, some of the other townsfolk, and the two holy visitors immediately seize the characters, whom they saw go off with the woman the night before.

Most likely, the characters will be caught. If they try to run or fight, the paladin and cleric (along with as many allies as necessary to ensure a capture) bring them down using subdual damage. If they run and hide, the townspeople find them. One way or another, they are brought to trial. That evening, the characters are escorted or carried to stakes over pre-constructed pyres, not yet lit. The DM should make the characters sit through a mockery of a trial in which the characters are guilty by association.

During this time, the NPC cleric reads the list of crimes and misdeeds that our anti-heroes are charged with, including trafficking with spirits and participating in witchcraft (if any spellcasters used their abilities during the arrest scene). The masks given to them are presented as evidence and symbolically placed on their faces during the trial. (Escape Artist checks to get free have a DC of 30 and will take any characters enough time to witness the entire trial scene).

As the fires are set, while the characters are trying to free themselves or are resigning themselves to an early end to their adventuring careers,



their accusers make a tactical error. Both the cleric and the paladin issue a challenge to the forces of darkness as a test of their faith and an example to the town.

While the characters are freeing themselves from burning pyres, the darkness of the land answers the challenge. From out of the night, a herd of skeletal horses tears into the town. Chaos erupts, but fortunately for the characters, the bloodshed that ensues covers their escape. The cleric and paladin attempt to defend the townsfolk, who run for cover. The characters have the opportunity to flee into the night. The skeletal horses do not bother the characters, since they did not issue the challenge. As long as the characters keep their masks on, the horses may even protect them and cover their escape.

### Finale

The characters may go on from this point to find another town more amenable to adventuring groups. In their travels, they may encounter Illdred more than once (the DM should decide exactly what sort of creature she is), and they may also run into the paladin and cleric who condemned them. They might meet with other representatives of the Morninglord who are not quite so fanatic in their actions, and they could find their beliefs challenged by their early brush with the fires of self-righteousness.

### The Light of the Silvery Moon

This story idea places the PCs in a situation in which they are caught between nobles in a deadly game of "who done it?"

### Set-up

This is a mystery that leads to the characters' finding out some truths about lycanthropy. The PCs will need to be smart to figure things out before they fall victim to the same fate as the man for whom they are looking.

A noble family in Port-a-Lucine hired Jacques de la Coeur about four months ago. He was supposed to be researching lycanthropes for his patron, Girard Beauchamps. Girard seeks this knowledge because his son, Francois, was attacked by a werewolf and now carries the curse. Girard wants to find a way to cure him. Unfortunately, Francois freed himself and killed his father, setting things up so that the new scribe (Jacques) hired by Girard would be blamed for the murder.

Jacques is now in prison. He has proven completely cooperative except for protesting his innocence, but the magistrate has yet to hear his case and will not allow him any communication with anyone until the case is heard.

### Opening Scenes

The party is approached by a young woman named Isabeau de la Coeur. She wants to hire them to go to Port-a-Lucine and find out what has happened to her father, Jacques de la Coeur. She tells them that he is a sage and was hired by the Beauchamps family to do some research regarding some of the land's monstrous creatures, the lycanthropes. He was not supposed to do any field work, merely assemble data from accounts of these creatures in histories and tales told by adventurers. Isabeau would get a letter from him every couple of weeks, but she has heard nothing now for two months and her inquiries to Girard Beauchamps have gone unanswered. She begs the party to go and see if they can find out what has become of her father.

### Building the Adventure

When they reach Port-a-Lucine, the PCs discover that Girard was murdered and that the city guards have the murderer, Jacques de la Coeur, in custody. There is wild speculation that the ungrateful wretch may have also murdered Girard's son, since he has not been seen for several weeks. The magistrate will hear the case in three days' time, and everyone expects that Jacques will hang.

The party can, by talking to people and covertly checking out the grounds of the Beauchamps estate, pick up clues that there is more here than meets the eye. It can uncover the hidden cellar that was Francois's prison dug into the ground behind the stables. They may also find a journal hidden beneath the metal-framed bed in the cellar that explains what has happened to Francois and his plans to free himself so he can hunt down the creature that cursed him and take revenge. The characters may also hear tales of animals being attacked at outlying farms and manors. A couple of people have disappeared as well. If the PCs check into these leads, they can track Francois to his lair, where they can confront him.

### Finale

The party can confront Francois and either subdue him, kill him, or convince him to turn himself in. Chances are they will need to subdue or





kill him. If they kill him, they will have a difficult time proving Jacques' innocence. If they subdue him, he will confess to the murder. Either way, the party should be able to win Jacques' freedom and reunite him with his daughter.

### Prime Prey

This story idea should appeal to characters with a special hatred of lycanthropes. The Hunt Club wishes to have a wereleopard for the chase next month.

### Set-up

The party is hired by the Hunt Club to acquire a wereleopard for them. The Club makes a generous offer for this and provides the party with special equipment and drugs to bring the creature down. As they track down their prey, the characters may face moral dilemmas as the object of their hunt turns out to be a young girl on her own quest to break the curse.

### Opening Scenes

Jonathan Flicker approaches the party and explains that he wishes to acquire a rare creature, a wereleopard, for research into finding a cure for lycanthropy. He tells them nothing of the Hunt Club or the true plans for the creature. If the PCs, he admits that he has heard that one of these creatures is terrorizing the town of Denton and gives the party directions.

### Building the Adventure

When the party reaches Denton, it will hear rumors about some great cat that has been seen in the woods outside town. It also finds out that sheep and other farm animals have been killed and eaten by some large creature. The townsfolk are blaming these disappearances on the cat, but so far they have not been able to track it down and kill it. They gladly accept the PCs' help in finding the cat and offer them hospitality. When they retire to their rooms in the town's only inn, one of the characters



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finds a scrawled note left on her bed that reads, "Go away. Do not come into the woods." That night, another sheep is killed, and the farmer who owns the flock can show the party where he found the remains of the animal. The PCs can realize that they are indeed dealing with a large animal and, by the tracks, a cat of some sort.

The PCs can either lay a trap for the cat near the sheep flock or, if any of them have any knowledge of lycanthropes, they know that the creatures must consume a certain amount of raw flesh each day. They may use this knowledge (along with some of the poisons given to them by Jonathan) to lay a trap with poisoned meat or go hunting the creature after coating their silvered weapons with the drug. Whatever their method, the characters eventually face Lenore, who proves to be an earnest young woman trying to rid herself of her curse.

### Finale

If the PCs convince Lenore that they can take her to someone who is trying to find a cure, she will go with them and they can turn her over to Jonathan. Jonathan will pay them and take custody of her. That night, the party will get a visit from a house cat that has a message tied on it. The message is from Lenore and it tells them of Jonathan's true plans for her and begs the party to help her escape. The hunt is not planned until the next night, so the PCs have a day to find her and get her back. If the party believes the message and goes to rescue Lenore, it may earn the Hunt Club's enmity. If the PCs choose to ignore the message, the Hunt Club may seek them out for further employment.

### Quest for the Tomb of Dairon

This story idea involves a quest to find the tomb of a very powerful necromancer. L'Académie des Sciences in Mordent hires the adventurers to find the tomb in exchange for some of the wealth hidden there. The only problem is, the Borca branch has also hired a group to find it, and they are not the only ones interested.

### Set-up

This story hook should be fast and furious as the party deals with agents from the rival Borca branch of L'Académie as well as agents of the Kargat. It is designed to open anywhere, but the action leads the party into Richemulot, Borca, and Mordent.

### Opening Scenes

The characters are approached by Monique de Claire, a member of the Richemulot branch of L'Académie de Sciences. She tells them that she is working for "certain interested parties" and explains the job. L'Académie can give the party the location of a ruined tower on the Borca and Mordent border that once belonged to the necromancer Dairon and contains, she believes, clues to the location of his tomb.

### Building the Adventure

Dairon's tower has fallen to ruins. The group finds little of interest here other than a map hidden in the wall of Dairon's destroyed lab. To find it, the characters must first deal with Nolan, the ghost of Dairon's apprentice. Coming out of the ruins, the group is ambushed by Kargat agents. After besting them, the PCs can move on to the coast of Mordent. The map gives them only a rough idea of where to look. They will need to search the coastline north of the small fishing village of Ghent. In Ghent, the characters can re-supply and ask for information from locals about the details on the map. If they stay the night in Ghent, the characters find their room broken into by the group working for the Borca branch of L'Académie, though the characters should not know of this second group's identity or for whom it works.

Realizing that other parties are still interested in beating it to the tomb, the party should make all haste to locate the entrance. The DM can throw several obstacles in the party's way so that it has a growing sense of urgency about the mission. When the characters finally locate the correct site, they move through a series of traps and puzzles to reach the actual tomb. There, they find gems and gold as well as several tomes that were buried with Dairon.

At this point, they also meet the necromancer himself. Depending on the level of the party, Dairon could be anything from a ghost to a very powerful lich. The PCs should be able to defeat him but emerge from it beaten and bruised only to find the Kargat agents waiting for them.

### Finale

In a climatic battle, the Borca group shows up just in time to help the PCs defeat the Kargat agents. At this point, the two groups can compare notes and realize that they are both working for the same organization. Where they go from there is up





to them, but if they do anything to L'Académie, such as trying to keep more than their share of recovered items, feel free to make their lives interesting for a while.

## Shades of Grey

This story idea can be used to underline the anti-hero theme and introduce the PCs to a possible ally, Jander Sunstar.

### Set-up

Jander is tracking a powerful vampire, Ulrich Fargate, to his lair when he is discovered by the party. The PCs come across him attempting to rescue a young child caught in a particularly vicious patch of lashweed. Hopefully, the party offers to help him. If they do, Jander ends up telling them about the vampire and recruiting their help.

### Opening Scenes

When the party comes onto the scene, the child is still alive, barely. Jander is frantically trying to disentangle the child from the plant. If the party moves in to help, he gratefully accepts its aid. Those working close to him notice that he seems very effective against the plant. In fact, they see his bare wrist brush against a leaf and the leaf withers and falls from the plant. If the PCs react, Jander uses all his charm and persuasion to convince them of his good intent. If they cannot be convinced, he will go to mist form and leave.

### Building the Adventure

If the party has chosen to travel with Jander and has not yet realized what he is, he welcomes them but explains that he cannot bear the sunlight due to an illness and must travel at night. If they attack him, he flees but does not attempt to molest them. Slaves of Jander's quarry, Ulrich Fargate, set upon the party the following night. There are enough of them to give the PCs a real challenge. If Jander is with the party, he will be there for the start of the attack. If he is not, he arrives in the second round, having tracked the slaves to the spot where the characters have made camp. After destroying the vampire slaves, Jander again asks the party for help in destroying Ulrich. If the group still needs convincing, he points out that they are probably now marked as enemies of this powerful vampire and should be quite willing to see him destroyed.

### Finale

Jander will lead the party to the ruined manor where Ulrich lairs. There, he helps them destroy the rest of Ulrich's slaves and wolf guardians. He then leads them against Ulrich. Once they have succeeded, the party can bid farewell to Jander (who, in any case, will not stay with them for long) with the reasonable certainty that their paths may cross again and that they have met with an unusual — and unusually moral — monster.

## Smugglers for a Cause

This story idea can be used to introduce your group to the desperate poverty and oppression that permeates Falkovnia. It will also force the PCs to answer the question, "Does the end justify the means?"

### Set-up

The party is hired by Fyodor Gregorovich to smuggle a shipment of weapons and armor into Falkovnia to be delivered to a group of rebels that fight against the tyrannical government. Gregorovich is a member of the Ebon Gargoyles and this shipment also contains hidden in it instructions for their agents working in Darkon. The Falkovnian rebels will get the instructions across the border into Darkon as payment for this shipment of goods. Gregorovich will not inform the party of this, however. The PCs' job is to get the shipment into the rebels' hands.

### Opening Scenes

The group has three wagons to maneuver across the border. The wagons have cleverly hidden false bottoms that contain the weapons and armor as well as the secret instructions. Fyodor leaves it up to the PCs to determine their own cover, but he does point out that Falkovnia is known as the breadbasket of the core and suggests that maybe the group might pose as merchants seeking to purchase grains and flour to sell elsewhere. He even adds some extra funds to use for such purchases if the party requests. If the PCs are cool and unruffled through the checkpoints at the borders, this ruse will work.

### Building the Adventure

In traveling to the town where they are supposed to meet their contact, the characters come



across a group of the baron's guards. One is beating a young boy while another two are holding a woman who is obviously the boy's mother, forcing her to watch her son's brutal punishment. The guard with the child asks the mother again where her husband is and turns back to the child to kick him again just as the characters come upon the scene. If the characters try to intervene or if they slow down and look as if they might take some action, the guards turn to them and force a confrontation. Once the battle is joined, the party receives unexpected aid from a group of people wearing mismatched armor and using weapons that range from notched and rusty swords to pitchforks and clubs. They help the party finish off the guards and then take the characters into the woods. There the PCs can turn over the weapons and find out a bit more about the Freeman of Falkovnia if they want. They are also given directions to the nearest of the baron's granaries to help them keep up their cover. The rebels advise them that they should probably go ahead with the purchase of the grain in order to prove their story, as the baron's soldiers will be looking for the ones who killed their comrades and will focus on anything out of the ordinary.

## Finale

The party can get the grain without any real problems as long as it does not bring trouble upon itself. In the rest of their travels, the PCs see evidence of abject poverty and oppression everywhere. To underscore this point, as they come to the spot where the fight happened, they see two posts erected with people impaled on them and recognize some of the people who fought alongside them, now victims of their desperation.

## The Torturer's Mark

The body of a private manservant to one of the nobles of Richemulot washes up on shore in Pont-a-Museau. His corpse is covered with lash and burn scars; his expression is one of mortal agony. The nobleman offers 1,000 golden scandals to the PCs to bring him information about the death. The possibility of a title awaits those who can capture the one who did the deed, or better yet, find out what he knows and kill him. This adventure hook is more suitable for high-level characters.

## Set-up

A nobleman, Sacripant de Lione has been indulging in a game of blackmail with Patrice Montremart, a scion of one of the wealthier and stranger noble families in Pont-a-Museau. Each noble has some information on the other that would prove extremely damaging to his reputation. Although each has tried to regain the information from the other through theft, manipulation, and magic, neither has indulged in murder (at least as far as the other one knows).

De Lione's manservant, Pierre, was playing a dangerous game of his own. Seduced by Patrice, he found the hidden information (a packet of letters) and was on his way to her dwelling when he disappeared. When the characters discover Pierre's body floating along the edge of the river, he is fully clothed and wearing his weapon, but no longer has the vital information he had risked all to obtain. No matter how they may deny it, the characters were observed as the first to discover the body. It should soon become evident to the PCs that their best course of action consists in discovering who murdered this man and who has the "delicate" bit of information. In a city such as Pont-a-Museau, even knowing of its existence could be extremely profitable — or fatal.

## Opening Scenes

However the DM wishes to get them there, the PCs are walking at dusk along a thoroughfare paralleling the river in Pont-a-Museau. One of them notices a hand emerge from the water, bobbing as though trying to attract his attention. When they go down to the water to investigate, and hopefully they will, the PCs drag the be-draggled corpse of a young man from the current. Even in his waterlogged finery, dark burgundy stains show and long rips have turned his silken shirt to rags. He is obviously very recently dead.

Before the PCs have time to make more than a cursory examination, another man, cloaked and hooded, appears. Eyes as cold and clear as ice water stare down at the PCs over the bridge of a large arched nose. Lord de Lione was searching for his manservant, who had disappeared a few days before. On this day, he finally discovered the theft of his blackmail material and, suspicious of Pierre, he was on his way to confront Lady Montremart when he saw the PCs huddled around Pierre's body.





Worried that the heroes might have found the blackmail evidence, the lord wants to get them out of public view as quickly as possible and find out what they know. He curtly orders them to wrap the corpse in one of their cloaks and follow him, explaining that the dead man was his servant and he will reward them well if they choose to assist.

### Building the Adventure

De Lione takes them back to a small, seemingly abandoned house nearby. He searches the body and questions the heroes repeatedly as to how they came to find this corpse. If the PCs return the favor and question him, he eventually explains his situation and shakes his head regretfully at the thought that Patrice may have taken their game to a new and deadly level. He offers them 1,000 golden scandals each if they are willing to perform a discrete investigation and offers his backing to gain titles if they find information necessary to bring Patrice to the end of her game — or discover who else is playing. It should be obvious that gossiping to the wrong person will cause serious problems for the PCs, and there will be much to gain if they do what he asks.

However the DM wishes to handle the investigation, the characters will eventually discover that Lady Montremart regularly dines with Etienne du Savier, a rather quiet and mostly unnoticed noble who owns a home near the river. If they attempt to search Patrice's home, they will discover nothing out of the ordinary. If they can find one of the secret entrances to Sans Merci (covered in Chapter Three), the heroes can eventually make their way into the pits and torture rooms below. In one of many small locked rooms, they can find Patrice's torture chamber and some of her many instruments — as well as a locked box containing blackmail information on several of the noble families in Pont-a-Museau.

### Finale

The characters find themselves in a quandary. It is obvious that Patrice has been indulging in torture and went too far in her work. Should they kill her? Should they secretly return the information to those who were blackmailed, or do they take what they have and attempt to profit by it? How much of what they have learned should they report to their employer?

### Vengeance in the Mists

This adventure hook involves outlanders soon after their arrival in Ravenloft. Lost, confused, and unknowing, these low-level characters soon find themselves caught in a trap that begins their slow descent along the Path of Corruption. A caliban, rejected by the people of her village, is being hunted through the forest where the adventurers have arrived in the Mists. Will the characters help this twisted and brutish being or assist the hunters and their dogs in tearing her apart?

### Set-up

This adventure idea may take place in any domain containing wilderness and small villages. For the people in a small and insular village, the thought of succoring a twisted and obviously cursed being such as a caliban is anathema. A caliban, born to one of the villagers, was hidden away by her parents. She murdered her parents at the age of twelve then ran, unable to stand the beatings (meant to cleanse her of her taint) and the horror of being imprisoned for so long. When she tried to escape, one of the villagers took notice of her and saw her bloodstained hands and skirt. Finding the broken bodies of her parents, the villagers captured the caliban and tried to burn her at the stake. With her incredible strength and stamina, however, the caliban, Searlait Bitterroot, was able to break free of her chains and flee through the forest, coming upon the characters as they emerge from the Mists.

### Opening Scenes

The story hook begins with outsiders coming through the Mists in whatever fashion the DM chooses to land them in the Dread Realms. The characters arrive in a dank, Mist-wreathed forest at night. The trees are old and huge, and wilderness savvy characters may take note that the normal noises of the wood are unusually subdued. The thick cover overhead and wisps of white fog coiling through the trees hide changes in the starry sky. As the heroes try to orient themselves in this strange forest, they hear the sound of howling far off in the distance and see sparks of light flickering from the same direction. Soon, too, they hear weeping as something comes crashing through the trees toward them. They can identify a tall figure wrapped in a cloak that even in the shadowy atmosphere under the trees appears to be tattered and scorched. This is Searlait Bitterroot.



### Building the Adventure

Before the characters have more than a moment to see her tear-streaked face and the misshapen tusks distorting her mouth, Searlait falls at their feet and looks up at them imploringly. She seems unable to speak clearly, but even as she attempts to communicate, the characters hear the sound of the hunters and hounds and can smell and see the torches coming. As she rasps out “help me” in oddly accented Common, a group of angry people (number and levels are left to the DM) carrying torches, pitchforks, and a few swords surrounds the characters and moves in to grab its prey.

### finale

The Dark Powers rarely bring people into the realms of Ravenloft without a reason. For this group of characters, there is no easy right answer. Searlait cannot communicate easily, but the PCs,

if they examine her, can see marks of old bruises and scars, as well as the fresh burns on her legs. She looks older than she is, with muscular arms and a distorted but very tall body. The characters may assume she is a half-orc, but she does not match any half-orc they have ever seen.

For some heroes, the answer will seem easy. She killed two people while they were peacefully going about their business (as the villagers will say). Others may draw a very different conclusion, deciding that Searlait was obviously defending herself (if they take time enough actually to figure out what she has to say), and although still not innocent, had some real reason to do what she did.

This dilemma provides an interesting way for newly-arrived PCs to discover what powers checks (and the Dark Powers) are all about, as well as introducing them to a race they have never seen.



## Story Hooks for a Dark Campaign

**C**reating and running an epic campaign for a group of characters provides both DMs and players with a uniquely satisfying entertainment experience. For players, large-scale campaigns give them the sense of participating in a tale of world-shaking events in which their characters have a chance to tip the balance of power in one direction or another, turn the tide of war, or forever vanquish a major enemy. Epic stories offer the DM not only an exercise in creativity and organization but also a chance to act as writer, director, producer, stage manager, and supporting cast for an ongoing drama starring the players.

In a campaign of this sort, characters usually start out as young, inexperienced individuals of 1st level. They meet, form an adventuring party of some sort, undergo their first challenges as a group, and create relationships that, though they may fluctuate in strength over time, usually last for the rest of their adventuring careers.

As the characters grow more experienced and begin to develop reputations, they also acquire allies, enemies, and patrons. Their adventures become more challenging, their opponents tougher and stronger, and the scope of their actions extends beyond the dungeon into the world of politics and intrigue — or large-scale war.

In Ravenloft, DMs face a particular challenge running a long-term campaign. The influence of the Dark Powers and the multiple chances for characters to compromise their ideals and take the first step on one of the paths of corruption increases dramatically as the characters evolve into important persons in the Dread Realms. DMs who wish to create a campaign featuring champions of darkness have an even greater challenge. They must not only put together a story that holds their players' attentions, they must also prepare their players for their characters' inevitable, tragic end. For in the end, characters who fall completely under the sway of the Dark Powers and turn to corruption usually end up as NPCs, no longer under the control of the players who created them. This is the fate of the champion of darkness unless something occurs to turn the character back toward the path of redemption.

How do you go about putting together such a story and holding the attention of your players as their characters begin their inexorable journey toward celebrity and notoriety? The following example provides you with a loose structure for creating and organizing such a campaign. You may use the story arc below as a guide for creating your own meta-game featuring villains of your choice and locations more appealing to you than the ones presented in this example. If you decide to use this sample campaign for your players, you will need to put muscle and flesh on the organizational skeleton presented here.

### The Cold War: a Sample Epic

This story arc provides an overall framework to place in the background of your campaign and use to tie together smaller story arcs with internal continuity. The campaign revolves around the "cold war" that exists between the realms of Darkon in the northern core and Barovia in the southern core of the Dread Realms. The darklords of the two realms, Barovia's Strahd von Zarovich and Darkon's Azalin Rex, have known each other for over two hundred years. Though the two initially formed an alliance based on mutual respect for one another's power rather than on any sort of enduring friendship, that alliance eventually eroded and collapsed a little more than three decades later.

Since that time, both Strahd and Azalin have undergone many changes and have seen other domains rise and fall within the Dread Realms. Few openly challenge the darklord of Barovia except for periodic attempts by foolhardy adventurers to pierce the defenses of Castle Ravenloft. Azalin, however, faces a perpetually persistent and overt enemy in Falkovnia's Vlad Drakov.

Despite their separate struggles, Azalin and Strahd continue to grow in wary enmity of one another. Their long acquaintance has given both of them more than enough time to develop intense paranoia regarding one another. They are the first of the darklords, against whom all others must compare themselves.

In the present time, the domains of Barovia and Darkon lie at the far ends of the core's north/south axis, separated by the mysterious Shadow Rift. Nonetheless, Azalin Rex's Kargat, though they mostly serve to police Darkon for their darklord, send out spies and agents to keep track of Azalin's rivals, including Strahd. In return, Count Von



Zarovich's Ebon Gargoyles scour Barovia, dedicated to uncovering and killing Kargat spies.

The periodic warfare with Falkovnia has created an atmosphere of constant strife within the Kingdom of Darkon, as its darklord reassembles his power base. In Barovia, Strahd rules as he always has: from a distance, leaving routine matters (such as national defense) to his militias and his elite gargoyle troops.

### Set-up

"The Cold War" should build slowly, beginning with gossip and speculation and leading to open discussion among the characters and any talkative NPCs. An atmosphere of political tension gives characters several potential methods of interacting with their surroundings. Both the Kargat and the Order of the Ebon Gargoyle occasionally hire mercenaries for high-risk ventures. If the PC group fits into the category of swords for hire, either organization may wish to test the waters and discover if the characters have any qualities that warrant cultivation. Such an early exposure to the ruthlessness of both potential patrons can provide an early shock for the characters, especially when they face the cold reality that they are little more than hirelings thrown into situations likely to result in their deaths. Furthermore, the characters experience another rude awakening when they realize that should they die in service to either the Kargat or the Ebon Gargoyles, they will most likely learn a new "career" as re-animated undead, obedient and pliant to their masters. Such a discovery may force players into a re-evaluation of their morality and teach them a few lessons about survival against overwhelming odds.

Even if the agents of Azalin or Strahd do not manage to recruit the characters directly into their organizations, they are always on the lookout for covert operatives, lending a "cloak-and-dagger" air to the campaign. Anyone with the ability to move between the two realms may find both organizations attempting to recruit them or dissuade them from joining the "other side." The characters may find that they cannot remain on the sidelines. By joining one side, they incur the ire of the other. If they attempt to remain neutral to avoid such persecution, there is a strong chance they may face the wrath of both due to the paranoia of the times. Placing the characters in the middle of a dilemma involving choosing sides after hearing sufficient

rumors to pique their curiosity (or greed) allows you to create a solid backdrop for your characters' continuing adventures.

### Opening Scenes

How you want to present the opening scenes of your campaign largely depends on where you want to set the game. If you choose to do most of your scenes in Barovia, then the opening scene may consist of the characters coming upon a recruitment drive by the Order of the Ebon Gargoyle. Alternately, you may seed your characters' first few apparently unrelated adventures with rumors from the local townspeople about the "lord forming an army." If the characters start their adventures in Darkon, you can plant rumors spread by the Darkonian peasantry. These rumors should sound as if based on massive exaggeration, though the reality behind them may not be so far from the rumor. Characters may be intrigued to hear that "troops in black gargoyle armor are stealing children and eating them" or that "Falkovnia has found a new and powerful ally who has been raiding the realm."

The characters should not only realize that they must choose a side but that if they do not, a side will be chosen for them as the spectre of the "cold war" grows into the possibility of open assault. As the DM, you may wish to keep the rising tension in the background as the characters interact slowly with larger events. If you prefer, you might want to plunge the characters quickly into the thick of events, allowing them to participate in the frantic build-up to what might become a real "war."

### Building to the Climax

You must be very careful when moving to a climax with a meta-plot. If you rush matters and build the suspense too soon, you may find yourself in the position of not knowing how to follow your last adventure with one that provides a greater challenge. In an ongoing campaign, linking story hooks to a central story arc should take considerable game time. Months and years (of game time) may pass from the beginning of your story to your climactic final scenes.

If you plan to involve your group in adventuring on an epic scale, you should plan to extend your meta-story so that the characters eventually attain 20th level before bringing your campaign to an end. And all things do come to an end. Sooner or



later, characters must face the consequences of the actions they have spent a lifetime involving themselves in.

As a good way to organize the build-up of suspense and the orchestration of larger and larger story hooks, you might consider separating your campaign into several segments. These groupings track the characters' advancement in levels (and perhaps in corruption and failed powers checks) and also allow you to keep track of how quickly to bring in the background events that will form the climax of your campaign.

Based on the sample "Cold War" campaign, the following examples show you how to separate your campaign into sections that allow your characters to accomplish certain goals and pass certain milestones as they move deeper and deeper into the overall plot.

### The Cold War: 1st through 5th level

In this section, the characters work diligently to gain the acceptance of one of the sides of the Azalin-Strahd rivalry. At beginning levels, recruiters or agents from one of the two groups that might hire the characters for some standard "monster slaying" or fugitive retrieval, holding out the lure of treasure or patronage as a reward. By third level, the characters should have proven themselves and may experience a real challenge in the first test of their recruitment as active participants in the "cold war." They should overcome a monster or a rival group that proves almost more than they can handle.

You might want to restrict beginning adventures to one-night sessions. The "test" at 3rd level, however, should involve several game sessions and contain several elements for all character classes: a dangerous overland journey followed by a brief reconnaissance mission in a village and, finally, the confrontation of the enemy or monster in its lair. If the characters prove themselves competent, the side that is courting them might actively recruit them — either as members of one or the other organization or as covert agents. In any case, the characters' adventures at 4th and 5th level should involve them in actual training maneuvers, both in a controlled environment and in the field.

### The Cold War: 6th-10th level

This stage of the campaign places the characters in a position to know their enemy in





intimate detail. When characters have attained 6th level, they may qualify for a mission that takes them into enemy territory. Characters from Barovia may attempt the hazardous journey to Darkon, while Darkonian characters might try to travel to Barovia. If the earlier tenor of the game has involved the characters in direct actions against selected targets (monsters, fugitives, and the like), this section of the campaign can introduce characters to the concept of “going undercover.” They now have many of the tools—spells, abilities, feats—to allow them to extend their range of subtlety and creativity. This stage is all about the characters getting to know the enemy.

At this point, paranoia should infuse the characters’ every waking moment. They should realize (if they have not before) that they will never be safe now that they have made their choices and involved themselves in the cold war. They should realize the severity of the consequences should they fail in even one of their missions. The repercussions should not come just from the enemy. Capture by their enemy may be bad enough, but punishment meted out for failure by their own side should cause them more than sleepless nights.

When the characters have attained 8th or 9th level, you might want to bring in some hardcore rivals to challenge and frustrate the PCs. Perhaps the enemy has a group of NPCs whose powers and abilities parallel those of the PCs. This group can provide a constant challenge over the next several levels as the two groups race against each other to find a particular magical artifact in a dungeon or attempt to destroy an important contact.

By the time the characters have reached 10th level, you may provide them with a large and important task. Perhaps they find themselves the only defenders in a protected city that contains individuals (possibly civilians) who are important to the cause or who have some special meaning for the darklord. This crucial test of their worth may continue for several game sessions and involve planning strategies, coping with unexpected events (the disappearance of one of the individuals designated for protection, an outbreak of a magical plague, local uprisings), and, finally, a defense of the city from its attackers. A group that enjoys combat may relish mass attacks on a walled city or the sudden appearance of enemy troops within the walls. Success can solidify the characters’ reputations both in their own minds and in the eyes of

their patron darklord and his high-ranking associates.

## Taking Stock of the Campaign and the Characters

By now, the characters should be veterans who are well acclimated to battle and experts at smaller, more covert operations. From this point, they have earned the right to become trusted, competent members or allies of whichever patron they joined. Also, by this time, characters may have failed one or more powers checks and be well on the way to becoming true champions of darkness.

This is the mid-point of the campaign. At this stage in their careers, many characters have developed personal goals, either with regard to their own career or to their personal lives and relationships. Characters may wish to try for a promotion in rank if they have actually joined one of the two patron organizations. Cleric characters may wish to establish a church of their own. Wizards may desire to find a haven for their research between adventures. Pacing now becomes crucial. If your characters have gone up in levels too quickly, you may want to create some lull in the action and allow a few years of game time to pass so that characters of advanced levels are not still in their teens or early twenties. Seasoned, mature characters should be ... seasoned and mature.

Inter-session games involving one or two characters and the DM allow players to develop their characters as individuals and do things they could not do as a group. If characters marry, start a business, or establish a temple to their deity, they generally do so as individuals. If characters who have found themselves too far along the path of corruption desire to make a change in their lives, this, too, is something they may wish to do without their companions around them. In the process of accomplishing individual goals through one-on-one sessions during a hiatus in the group campaign, characters can grow and develop, age and mature, and, just perhaps, regain some of their lost innocence or come to terms with their certain doom.

Interim sessions involving some but not all of the characters also allow them to go back and pick up loose threads they may not have found the time to deal with in the past. A rogue and her wizard companion may want to return to a dungeon that they visited as a group but did not have the luxury to explore fully. A priest may wish to visit an NPC convert to check up on her spiritual progress and







may ask one of his adventuring companions to accompany him for protection and conversation.

These sessions may take place with just the DM and the players whose characters are involved, or they may form part of a session in which each small group's mini-adventures provide entertainment for the rest of the players. DMs may also wish to provide "cut scenes," describing the action in other parts of the world. Though the characters themselves may not witness these crucial developments, the players can appreciate how these actions will affect their characters in the future when the campaign resumes.

### **the Cold War: 11th-13th Level**

High action and adventure are the hallmarks of the campaign at this level of play. In keeping with the campaign's expanding horizons, the characters may find themselves in strange environments such as the Shadow Rift or some other mysterious place within the Mists. They may need to capture alive some powerful monster for their patron, and doing so may require them to make elaborate preparations and consult any number of sages or loremasters. If the group encounters rival NPCs

(presumably, their old rivals have also advanced in levels if they have survived), you should make sure that they are strong enough or numerous enough to challenge the characters. Send the characters off on quests and adventures in search of mythical creatures or unique magical items. Allow them to attempt to explore some of the great mysteries of the Dread Realms to acquire artifacts and other items to strengthen their side in the cold war.

By this time, also, the reputation of the characters should have grown to such an extent that they cannot enter a town in their homeland without causing raised eyebrows and whispers from the citizens. Some of the gossip spread about the characters may not be entirely complimentary, particularly if any of the characters has traveled very far along the path of corruption and has fallen prey to the seductions of the Dark Powers. Another moral quandary may arise at this juncture in the campaign.

### **The Cold War: 14th-15th level**

At this stage in the campaign, the characters should be able to defeat one of their major antagonists, perhaps a high-ranking individual with direct





connections to their patron's rival. Do not make it easy by any stretch, but try to allow the characters a major victory if they prove deserving of it by their actions. On the other hand, a major defeat may serve as a strong caution that, despite their power, they are not invincible. (Of course, the Dark Powers may seize upon such a nadir to ply their temptations even harder.) Perhaps the characters manage to capture or defeat (or even convert) one of their NPC rivals.

### **The Cold War finale: 15th-20th level**

By the time characters have reached 15th level, they are well on their way to experiencing the campaign's climax. During these final levels, you may want to have the characters find their way into the command structure of their patron organization. This might involve some drastic changes for the characters if they happen to work for Azalin and the Kargat. (See the discussion on playing monsters in Chapter One.) These levels allow you to flavor your story ideas with actual large-scale battles and mass warfare. Perhaps the cold war suddenly becomes "hot" and Darkon and Barovia declare war on one another. Barovia might, for example, seek an alliance with Falkovnia for the express purpose of gaining passage into Darkon (provided Azalin does not close his borders). On the other hand, Darkon may take the fight to Barovia by means of a long sea voyage, allowing you to create water-based adventures for your characters.

Not all high-level campaigns climax in large scale battles. Even "The Cold War" may not involve great clashes of armed forces. Your particular end-of-campaign adventure may feature high personal drama and result in a (most likely doomed) assault on the enemy darklord himself. The choice of how you bring your campaign to an end is ultimately up to you.

If you opt for a large-scale battle to end your campaign, you should make certain that your characters are in the thick of events. Most likely, they have risen to the ranks of commanders or have

formed an elite strike force to target the rival army's leadership. At this point, the "cold war" has become a full-scale war, and the characters are up to their necks in the struggle.

You have several creative options with running mass battles in role-playing games. You may use (or create) rules for mass combat. You may break a large-scale combat into many small battles and adjudicate each one, giving your players a chance to help you keep track of the pace of the war in areas where their characters are not involved. Using miniatures and elaborate battle-mats can make wars vivid and entertaining.

Perhaps the simplest and most direct way to handle a large-scale battle is to use a combination of free-form description to provide a bird's eye view of a battle and close-up scenes involving the characters. If the characters are commanders in the battle, their part in the "war" might consist of strategy sessions in which they plan how their armies will act on the field. As a DM, you should take the characters' tactics and apply them to what you know of the battle and determine what the most likely outcome will be. You may call for Intelligence, Charisma, or Leadership checks in order to help you decide what turns the battles take. Ultimately, the characters themselves should be involved in some conflict that influences the final result of the war — otherwise, they may be disappointed that after such a long adventuring career, they missed out on the final conflict.

Great wars are hard acts to follow. Campaigns of this sort take finesse to accomplish. When you have finished with your grand campaign, you and your players need to take stock of the changes their characters may have caused in the world. Perhaps your characters have fulfilled their destinies as champions of darkness. Or, just maybe, they have courted damnation and turned away after a long hard struggle. In either case, players and DMs have all shared an unforgettable experience that has provided entertainment on a scale rarely experienced — until the next time.





Appendix:  
DNI's Notes



his section contains descriptions and templates for three new “monsters” mentioned in the preceding chapters. The darkling is a sub-type of the Vistani race and may, with the DM’s permission, be used as a player character race only if the player chooses to play a member of the Tribe of Hyskosa. The phooka and the dread skeletal companion may be encountered in conjunction with appropriate NPC classes.

## Darkling

Darklings are Vistani who have been ritually banished from their tribes for evil deeds. Typical crimes include murdering another Vistani; helping a dukkar, a cursed male Vistani seer; or passing along important secrets to Vistani enemies. Darklings often use poisoned weapons, generally when they wish to cause fear or take revenge. Many darklings become rogues or assassins.

### Creating a Darkling

“Darkling” is a template that can be added to any Vistani of evil alignment. Her base creature type remains unchanged. A darkling uses all the normal statistics and special abilities of the base creature, except as noted here:

**Hit Dice:** Same as base creature.

**Speed:** Same as base creature.

**AC:** Same as base creature.

**Attacks:** Same as base creature.

**Damage:** Same as base creature.

**Special Attacks:** A darkling retains all the special attacks of the base creature and gains those listed below.

**Evil Eye (Ex):** Darklings can use a unique evil eye effect in addition to that listed in the Ravenloft Core Rulebook.

**Doom:** The target must make a successful Will save or suffer a –2 luck penalty to all attack rolls and saving throws for 1d4+1 rounds.

**Poison (Ex):** Darklings consider poison to be their trademark. Although many darklings do not know how to make poisons, all quickly learn where to get a supply and how to use them, gaining a +4 bonus to their Knowledge (poisons) checks. Typical poisons include deathblade, a thick syrup that dries on bladed weapons; black lotus extract, used as a contact poison; and arsenic, which is generally placed in food or wine. See Chapter Three of the

DMG for more information on poisons and their effects.

**Special Qualities:** A darkling loses the Vistani special qualities of Mist navigation and the Sight. She is no longer subject to static burn.

**Foreseeing (Su):** A darkling retains an innate sense of her enemies’ intentions, a stunted version of the true Vistani Sight. This ability to react before foes even act provides the insight bonuses to saving throws and skills listed below.

**Landlocked (Ex):** The Mists will not accept a darkling. Darklings cannot travel through the Misty Border, nor can they use teleportation magic. Thus, each darkling is trapped in a single Mist-bound area, be it an Island of Terror or a cluster.

**Saves:** A darkling receives a +8 insight bonus to all Fortitude and Reflex saving throws.

**Skills:** A darkling receives a +8 insight bonus to Listen and Spot checks. She gains a +4 insight bonus to Knowledge (poisons). She also receives a +4 insight bonus to Hide and Move Silently checks.

**Climate/Terrain:** Any land and underground.

**Organization:** Solitary or troupe (1 darkling, plus 2–8 human rogues and 2–5 human fighters, or up to 10 darklings as a part of the Tribe of Hyskosa).

**Challenge Rating:** Same as base creature +1.

**Treasure:** Standard coins; standard goods; double items.

**Alignment:** Always evil, usually chaotic.

**Advancement:** By character class.

### Sample Darkling

This example uses a 3rd-level male Corvara Vistani rogue as the base creature.

#### Darkling

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
|                           | <b>Medium-Size Humanoid (Vistani)</b>  |
| <b>Hit Dice:</b>          | 3d6+3 (13 hp)  |
| <b>Initiative:</b>        | +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)  |
| <b>Speed:</b>             | 30 ft.   |
| <b>AC:</b>                | 16 (+3 Dex, +3 studded leather)  |
| <b>Attacks:</b>           | Masterwork rapier +4 melee; masterwork mighty composite shortbow (+1) +7 ranged                  |
| <b>Damage:</b>            | Masterwork rapier 1d6+1 plus poison; masterwork mighty composite shortbow (+1) 1d6+1 plus poison |
| <b>Face/Reach:</b>        | 5 ft. by 5ft./5 ft.  |
| <b>Special Attacks:</b>   | Evil eye, sneak attack +2d6  |
| <b>Special Qualities:</b> | Evasion, uncanny dodge, calming influence, foreseeing, landlocked                                |





**Saves:** Fort +10, Ref +14, Will +11  
**Abilities:** Str 12, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 10  
**Skills:** Appraise +8, Disable Device +10, Hide +12, Knowledge (poisons) +6, Listen +16, Move Silently +13, Open Lock +10, Search +8, Spot +16, Tumble +7, Use Magic Device +6  
**Feats:** Improved Initiative, Point Blank Shot, Voice of Wrath  
**Climate/Terrain:** Any land  
**Organization:** Solitary  
**Challenge Rating:** 4  
**Treasure:** Masterwork studded leather, masterwork rapier, masterwork mighty composite shortbow (+1), 20 masterwork arrows, 4 potions of cure light wounds, potion of darkvision, potion of neutralize poison, 1 flask of deathblade poison (5 uses), thieves' tools.  
**Alignment:** Chaotic Evil  
**Advancement:** 4-7 HD (Medium-size)

### Combat

Darklings fight as their base creature with the following modification to their "fighting style." Darklings do not "play fair," often involving themselves in covert activities to gain an advantage over their enemy. Poison, a knife in the dark, and guerilla tactics are all a part of the typical darkling's method of attack.

**Evil Eye (Ex):** The Will save DC against the darkling's evil eye is 11.





# Phooka

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
|                           | <b>Large Outsider (Evil)</b>   |
| <b>Hit Dice:</b>          | 6d8+18 (45 hp)   |
| <b>Initiative:</b>        | +3 (Dex)   |
| <b>Speed:</b>             | 40 ft.   |
| <b>AC:</b>                | 25 (-1 size, +3 Dex, +13 natural)  |
| <b>Attacks:</b>           | 2 hooves +13 melee, bite +8 melee  |
| <b>Damage:</b>            | Hoof 1d8+5 plus 1d4 acid, bite 1d8+2   |
| <b>Face/Reach:</b>        | 5ft. by 10ft./5 ft.  |
| <b>Special Attacks:</b>   | Acidic hooves, trample   |
| <b>Special Qualities:</b> | Water breathing, frightful presence  |
| <b>Saves:</b>             | Fort +9, Ref +5, Will +3   |
| <b>Abilities:</b>         | Str 20, Dex 17, Con 17, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 12   |
| <b>Skills:</b>            | Intimidate +12, Intuit Direction +13, Listen +12, Search +10, Sense Motive +12, Spot +12, Swim +15 |
| <b>Feats:</b>             | Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Skill Focus (Swim)   |
| <b>Climate/Terrain:</b>   | Any terrain near a deep body of water  |
| <b>Organization:</b>      | Solitary   |
| <b>Challenge Rating:</b>  | 5  |
| <b>Treasure:</b>          | n/a  |
| <b>Alignment:</b>         | Always evil of some kind; a Phooka mount's alignment is the same as that of its chosen rider       |

When a phooka acquires a rider that it accepts, it fights as a trained war horse, overrunning opponents and trampling them to death with its acidic hooves. When a phooka is in water, it is in its element and is significantly fiercer. Not only do phookas breathe water and have the power to endow that supernatural ability on their riders (if they choose) in the water, but they swim at their normal land-based running speed. A phooka can conceivably overrun a small boat that has set sail.

**Acidic Hooves (Su):** In combat, the hooves of a phooka excrete acid. After a successful trample attack, the hooves do an extra 1d8 points of acid damage for 1d4 rounds, unless the victim succeeds in a Reflex save (DC 19).

**Trample (Ex):** As a standard action, a phooka can trample a Medium-size or smaller creature for automatic hoof damage plus acid damage (see

## Description

Phookas resemble horses in size and shape, and are usually gray or black with dull black eyes. They possess an inner fierceness, although they are canny enough to appear as normal and somewhat "docile" creatures to the unwary.

## Combat

Phookas are savage creatures. Their preferred means of dispatching a foe consists of drowning whenever possible. No one is sure why a phooka possesses the instinct to drown people, but it will bolt for a body of water in order to drown an unwanted rider even when bucking him off and trampling him to death would prove more practical. Speculations link phookas to water elementals, though they do not exhibit the same traits as these primal creatures of water.





above). Trampled opponents can attempt attacks of opportunity at a -4 penalty. If they do not make attacks of opportunity, they can attempt Reflex saves (DC 19) for half damage.

## Society

Phookas tend to be solitary creatures, eschewing the company of others of their own kind. Legends speak of herds of phookas that appear near large bodies of water as if they arise from the waters themselves, but no one has substantiated the tales. Phookas originally came from another realm outside the Mists, and no one knows of their organization in their native land. Their mating habits are also unknown.

## Phooka Mounts

A phooka who serves as the mount of a night lord or other evil-aligned individual may share spells with its master as if it were a dread companion. The phooka has an empathic link with the night lord and may use the night lord's saves while carrying its rider. A night lord can breathe water when riding a phooka mount.

## Skeletal Dread Companion

"Skeletal dread companion" is a template that can be added to any familiar or mount (referred to hereafter as the "base creature"). The base creature's size remains the same, and its type changes to "undead." The skeletal dread companion uses all of the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

The base creature does not lose any abilities because it is a skeleton. A skeletal raven familiar still flies, for example, while a skeletal pseudo-dragon familiar still has a venomous sting. The bonuses given by the familiar to its sorcerer or wizard still apply. Skeletal toads still give a Spot enhancement bonus even though they have no eyes. All other statistics and qualities for a skeletal dread companion, whether mount or familiar, remain the same as a normal dread companion.

**Hit Dice:** Increase d12.

**Speed:** Same as the base creature.

**AC:** Same as base creature.

**Attacks:** Same as base creature.

**Damage:** Same as base creature.

**Special Attacks:** Same as base creature.

**Special Qualities:** Undead.

**Saves:** Same as base creature.

**Abilities:** Same as base creature. As undead creatures, skeletal dread companions have no Constitution score.

**Skills:** Same as base creature.

**Feats:** Same as base creature.

**Climate/Terrain:** Any.

**Organization:** Solitary.

**Challenge Rating:** Same as base creature +1.

**Treasure:** n/a

**Alignment:** Any evil.

**Advancement:** By character class of the creature's master (see PHB).





## Sample Skeletal Dread Companion

This example uses an owl as the base creature.  
The familiar's master is a 1st-level wizard.

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
|                           | <b>Tiny Undead</b>   |
| <b>Hit Dice:</b>          | 1 (2hp)  |
| <b>Initiative:</b>        | +3 (Dex)   |
| <b>Speed:</b>             | 10 ft., fly 40 ft. (average)   |
| <b>AC:</b>                | 17 (+2 size, +3 Dex, +2 natural)                                     |
| <b>Attacks:</b>           | 2 claws +5 melee   |
| <b>Damage:</b>            | Claws 1d4-2  |
| <b>Face/Reach:</b>        | 2 1/2 ft. by 2 1/2 ft. /0 ft.  |
| <b>Special Qualities:</b> | Undead   |
| <b>Saves:</b>             | Fort +0, Ref +5, Will +2   |
| <b>Abilities:</b>         | Str 6, Dex 17, Con —, Int (depends on master's level), Wis 14, Cha 4 |
| <b>Skills:</b>            | Listen +14, Move Silently +20, Spot +6                               |
| <b>Feats:</b>             | Weapon Focus (claw)  |
| <b>Challenge Rating:</b>  | Varies.  |
| <b>Advancement:</b>       | See the Familiars sidebar in chapter 3 of the <i>PHB</i> .           |

## Combat

Like any familiar, a skeletal dread companion avoids direct combat if possible. When in a situation where it cannot flee and must fight, a skeletal dread companion at least has an advantage over other familiars: its undead body is more resistant to normal injuries.

The skeletal owl attacks with its natural claws, which can rake the face and eyes of anyone attempting to harm it. Its other option depends on the arcane spellcaster to whom the companion is bound. If the spell caster is of sufficiently high level, the companion can share spells, thus providing the avian with a considerable combat advantage.

**Undead:** Immune to mind-influencing effects, poisons, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and disease. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.



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