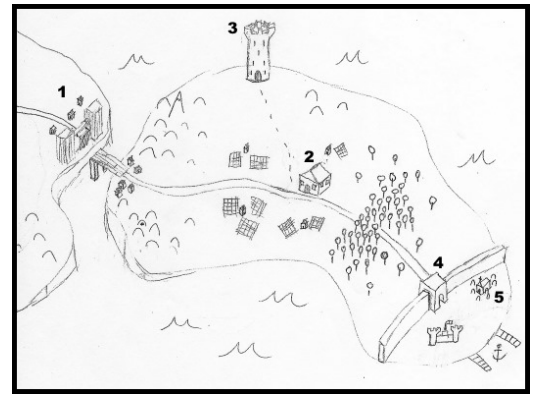


MALAKAI'S FOLLY

by Chris Eck

Finally unlocking the secrets within an ancient tome, Malakai, a local necromancer, came to an amazing realization. Hidden for centuries beneath the Far Port cemetery was a powerful nexus of Necrotic energies just waiting to be tapped. After designing a ritual to focus them into physical form, Malakai decided to venture into the crypts below the graveyard. His attempt at completing the ritual was partially successful, resulting in the creation of the Orb of Shadow. However, the necromancer underestimated the amount of necrotic energy stored and was killed during the orb's materialization. Seven days ago, just after Malakai fell, the dead began rising from their graves and attacking the living. At the stroke of midnight, the victims also rise up to join in the assault against those still alive. So far the phenomenon seems restricted to just the island.



1. Shepherd's Rest is a small outpost that keeps watch over the minor trade road between Ostia and Far Port. Until the recent invasion of undead, the guards had few problems to deal with. Now, dozens of refugees huddle together in makeshift camps and the drawbridge of the outpost is raised. From the gatehouse, several zombies can be seen shuffling about the sister outpost across the river.

Torin, the Captain of the Guard, will share what little he knows. About a week ago, the dark cloud formed and now the place is overrun with undead. Most of the survivors fled the island, making their way further inland to Ostia. He'll show them a map of the area and be sure to point out the Necromancer's tower, convinced that he's behind all this. Malakai never really bothered anyone before, but it's rumored that he is a necromancer. He'll lower the drawbridge for them but only briefly. He can't risk the undead coming across the bridge and won't lower it again if there's an immediate threat.

2. Serenity Vale was once a pleasant farming village. Those that couldn't escape were killed by the undead, but a few survivors were able to barricade themselves in the Fluffy Pillow Inn. They can offer a safe place to rest but are unwilling to share their supplies.

3. The Necromancer's Tower was the home of Malakai. It is an unassuming stone tower surrounded by a tall wrought-iron fence. 10 zombies and 10 skeletons guard the gateway in silence. The undead here have orders to only attack other undead and won't harm the PC's. They are under the control of Henrietta Higgenbottom, a cheerful Gnomish Necromancer. If the PC's attack, Henrietta yells at them from a 3rd story window after 1 round of combat.

Henrietta was supposed to meet with Malakai two weeks ago but the weather kept her ship from arriving on time. When she finally made landfall, bad things were already happening. Since then, she's been researching Malakai's personal notes and realizes what must have happened. She happily explains her theories and points the heroes in the direction of the Far Port Graveyard. Henrietta can be convinced to accompany the heroes if they wish, but she requires Malakai's spellbook plus an equal share of the loot as payment. If she stays in the tower, she offers to pay them for Malakai's spellbook and will loan the PC's most of her undead servants

4. Far Port is completely overrun with undead. Hordes of zombies, skeletons, and ghouls roam the streets of this walled, port city. Deeper in the city, tendrils of dark energy can be seen rising to feed the cloud that hangs over this land. The PC's will need to get creative in order to move through town without getting swarmed. If they brought Henrietta's undead with them, they will likely lose any zombies still with them since speed will be a factor. If combat does occur in Far Port, then for each undead that they kill two more will show up on each map edge.

5. The Far Port Graveyard is mostly empty of undead. A few skeletons wander around the countless open graves, but they can be easily avoided. The main crypt stands in the center of the graveyard upon a small hill. Dark energies drift out of the open doorway like wisps of smoke. When the PC's get closer, the muddy tracks of clawed humanoid can be seen coming and going.

The corridors of the crypt are lined with sconces containing burnt down torches. An abundance of muddy tracks are present on the dust-covered floor leading deeper into the crypts. In the center of the room is a strange metal sculpture holding an inky black orb and a nearby table holds an open book. Six ghouls with obscenely distended bellies are busy devouring a corpse next to a large pile of bloody bones. The remains of Malakai, now a robed wight, stands behind the ghouls. It raises an emaciated hand in the direction of the intruding adventurers and hisses for his minions to attack. If a ghoul is hit with 8 points of slashing damage, the gorey contents of its stomach spill out making the surrounding squares difficult terrain.

The metal device in the center of the room is magically tapped into the necrotic reserves of this place. If the orb is removed or if the stand is knocked over, it causes a release of 6d6 (21) necrotic damage in a 20' radius, but still puts an end to Malakai's ritual. The device can be safely disabled with a DC 15 Arcana check. Malakai's notes in the open book on the nearby table also explain how to do this without the need for a check. Once the ritual is halted, the ominous cloud dissipates at the next dawn and the dead are no longer reanimated at midnight. However, the undead that were created prior to the ritual's end still remain.

Random Encounters Roll 2d6:

- 2 - Zombie horde... RUN!
- 3 - Ogre - 50% chance its an Ogre Zombie
- 4 - Family beset by skeletal guards
- 5 - Wild animals attack - 50% chance they are zombies
- 6-8 - Small group of Skeletons and/or Zombies
- 9 - Remains of a merchant caravan
- 10 - A friendly druid offers to heal the party
- 11 - A seemingly empty ship drifts in the ocean.
- 12 - Infuriatingly arrogant noble will pay the party well for his safe return.

Orb of Shadow:

A fist-sized orb of crystallized necrotic essence seems to swallow the surrounding light. More than just cold to the touch, it leaches the life from your hand.

This magical orb can be used by a spell caster as an arcane focus. The orb can enhance any necrotic spell, but it takes a small portion of the caster's life to use this feature (-1 HP). The orb can also be used in the construction of an appropriate magic item, such as a Staff of Animate Dead. This reduces the time and cost of the item creation process by half.