

Lords of Gossamer & Shadow

Gossamer Worlds:

Hollow Thune



by Matt Banach





Rite Publishing Presents:

Gossamer Worlds: Hallow Thune

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Based on Lords of Gossamer & Shadow by Jason Durall

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Hollow Thune

“Heading back down the invisible hallway, I traced my fingers along the invisible wall to my right and tread cautiously, just in case the invisible floor actually did open up into the infinite black void below. As I took another step I felt the wall corner ninety degrees to the right – an intersection – and rather than take my chances striding forward into nothingness without guidance, I followed the turn. After several dozen steps I came upon a solitary slab of dull grey rock, like a tombstone hanging lonely in the darkness. The Door’s knob had rotted away, and in its place there was nothing but a sucking, hissing, fist-sized pit of Shadow.”

- Yaeger's Travelogue

Description

Thune is dead. Hollow Thune is all that remains.

Millennia ago, the planet Thune was a thriving civilization composed of two divergent yet complementary humanoid races: the stoic, industrious dver-guh and the passionate, artistic ylf-mor. While their relationship had its ups and downs, the yin and yang of the dver-guh and ylf-mor modeled a healthy balance between Eidolon and Umbra, and both races had so far progressed side-by-side into a modern age filled with machinery, trade, inspiration, and culture. That is, until the dver-guh discovered vril.

Vril was (is) an ethereal fluid on the edge of cognizable science, which highly educated mystical types would say is a raw form of psychic-responsive magical energy with an Eidolon-attuned polarity. I only mostly understand that. Whatever vril is, it is *incredibly* potent stuff, capable of fueling rockets, eradicating cities, and radically restructuring minds and bodies. A little goes a long, long way.

Dver-guh leaders heralded vril as the key to the “Master Plan” for the ascension of the dver-guh race, and dver-guh scientists immediately began exploiting vril to advance their technology leaps and bounds beyond mere flying machines and electric brains. Industries boomed, cities roared, and fleets of experimental vehicles filled the skies. The more naturalistic and liberal ylf-mor protested but kept their distance, wary of vril's power and the fervor of the possessive dver-guh, until the fateful day when an ylf-mor dabbler dared to harness vril, using its power to transform a dver-guh factory into a blooming forest with a single thought. Though the incident was immediately covered up, the damage was done; to the dver-guh the ylf-mor were no longer merely unwelcome competition, they were an abomination to the so-called Master Plan. The wound to the dver-guh's pride swiftly became infected, their distrust flare into hatred, and their ambition became monstrosity. And so, whispering at map tables and scheming behind the veil of technological progress, the dver-guh thought up the unthinkable and set about doing it. The ylf-mor soon found

themselves alienated by propaganda, systematically excluded from every aspect of society, then uprooted from their homes and forced into ghettos or far-off relocation territories. When it came, the blitzkrieg was swift and merciless; dver-guh tanks and bombers wielding the catastrophic power of vril annihilated every ylf-mor settlement on the planet, and in less than a year an entire race was reduced to ashes.

It wasn't a fight. It was genocide.

The hollowing-out of Thune began during the war. At first, dver-guh mines bored deep into the planet, searching out metals for construction of the war-machine and rare minerals for fringe science. Then they built elaborate bunker-cities, fearful of ylf-mor retribution, should the power of vril be turned against them. Towards the end, when chemical attacks, bombs, and ecological disasters had rendered much of the surface uninhabitable, the dver-guh drew their civilization underground, carving out vast air-filled caverns and hidden reservoirs far beneath the blasted landscape. Down there in the dark the dver-guh engaged in horrific experiments with vril, evolving their bodies, unlocking psychic powers, and infusing every fiber of their beings with dangerous concentrations of the stuff – evolutions they touted as predestined by the Master Plan and revelatory of their place as the superior race of Thune – the “vril-guh”.

At the zenith of their self-obsessed ascendancy, the dver-guh unleashed a



Erebi

devil even worse than themselves and lost it all. The Master Plan foretold of an ultimate revelation buried deep within Thune, a “Black Sun” which the dver-guh idolized, believing it would unlock the final secrets of vril and guarantee their eternal domination. Desperately they dug, hollowing out still more of the planet, going so far as to quench the furnace of the molten planetary core so they could reach the dark jewel suspended at Thune's center. Surviving accounts described the Black Sun as an obsidian sphere the size of a mountain; the dver-guh thought it was a treasure chest – turns out it was a prison cell which they really shouldn't have opened.

I don't normally pass moral judgment on the denizens of gossamer worlds – the multiverse is a complicated place – but I'll just say that, after their atrocities, the dver-guh deserved everything they got.

Erebi – horrific monsters of pure Shadow, capable of annihilating gossamer reality with the merest touch – erupted from their ancient, ancient Dwimmerlaik cell, consuming the assembled dver-guh and vril-guh in an instant. Boiling outwards from the center of Thune, hungry and angry, these apocalyptic Shadow-things consumed surrounding matter in great gulps, boring through everything in their path like insane super-worms chewing up a rotten apple. Most of the dver-guh were eradicated in short order, and only the intercession of vril-guh super-scientists kept Thune from disintegrating into the void of Shadow right then and there. Mustering every ounce of power they could, the vril-guh erected the crystal pillars – over a thousand massive matter-stabilizing vril-reactors infused with the power of the Eidolon – which preserved the structure of now-hollow Thune and forced the rampaging Erebi to retreat to the surface and beyond.

The crystal pillars bought Thune a millennia of partial respite from the ravages of Shadow, but the world is still ruined and gets worse every day. It is, essentially, a tomb. The planetary core is a cold hollow, gravity is sketchy, the atmosphere is thin, and the only thing holding the remaining rock in place are

the crystal pillars which serve as a focus for the last-ditch efforts of the flagging Eidolon. Abandoned bunkers and cavern-cities dot the innards of Thune, though the pumps and generators have all failed and the infrastructure of old is long defunct. The dead vastly outnumber the living. Even if someone were to brave the Shadow-infested surface to gaze up at the stars, they wouldn't see any – they're all gone, as is Thune's sun. The sun being eaten happened fairly recently, but temperatures on the surface are already frigid and getting colder every day. Every other material object in this gossamer reality beyond Thune itself has been torn away, disintegrated and nullified by the infinite void of Shadow. As if all that weren't bad enough, an Erebus in the form of a super-colossal ouroboros has swallowed the planet, intent on consuming stubborn Thune from the outside working in, periodically sending enormous Shadow-worms into the interior as digestive aids. Times are tough.

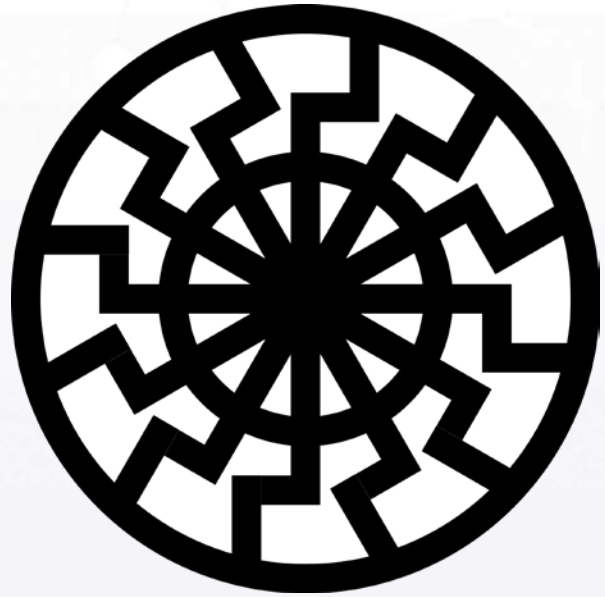
Nowadays, all habitation in Hollow Thune occurs within the cavernous and tunnel-riddled bowels of the planet, trapped between the war-blasted, Shadow-infested surface and the haunting inner core. While the planet is indeed hollow, the remaining crust and rocky mantle are still at least a hundred miles thick in most places, so there's still plenty of room for massive caves and tunnel systems. Interior spaces tend to come in three varieties – natural caves, dver-guh structures (such as mines, bunkers, and cavern-cities), and Shadow-

holes (tunnels and voids resulting from the Erebi consumption of gossamer matter during their deep through the planet). Despite being a large open space, the innermost core of Thune is dark and desolate – a spherical void stripped of all life and dominated by the presence of the ominous Black Sun, which hovers silently at the center of everything like an unblinking obsidian eye of doom.

And so, reeling from the atrocities of genocidal global war, trapped inside the crumbling shell of a dead world, hopelessly besieged by a merciless horde of reality-nullifying alien horrors, somehow... impossibly... life goes on.

Typical Denizens

Morlocks are the subterranean descendants of the precious few ylf-mor who escaped slaughter at the hands of the dver-guh by hiding themselves deep underground. The ylf-mor embraced the necessity of change in the finer spirit of the Umbra, accepting the vicissitudes of mutation and adaptation borne out through generations spent scabbling in the dark. Whereas the ylf-mor were willowy, elfin creatures with graceful bodies and skin speckled with patternless flecks of black and white, morlocks are slouched, near-blind, ape-like creatures with pebbled hides and translucent flesh. Adult morlocks are under five feet tall and weigh less than a hundred pounds, though oftentimes they seem even smaller due to their slouching and their tactic of drawing themselves in, still as a



Black Sun

rock, as a means of stealth when evading seismically-sensitive predators.

Generations spent underground in the most desperate conditions have taken a toll on morlock intellect and culture, but they remain a spiritual and artistic people, capable of moving poetry and profound oral histories “spoken” in their silent tactile language of hand gestures, tappings, and body movements. A morlock group expressing themselves resembles a furtive grope-fest of twitching, patting, and pawing – a terribly creepy thing to be in the midst of, if you don't understand their intentions. Their cave paintings and murals are exquisite, once you realize that their true medium is texture, not color, and what might appear to be a pock-marked wall contains the equivalent of soaring prose wrought in morlock-Braille.

Technologically, the morlocks are primitive spear-wielding cave-people, focused entirely on base survival – cultivating fungi, hunting subterranean beasts, and evading nullification by Shadow – though canny elders amongst them have figured out how to operate old machinery and fire ancient weapons every once in a while. Exemplifying the tenacity and adaptability of their patron Umbra, the morlocks are a fecund race who have refused to die; since the eruption of the Erebi and the fall of the dver-guh their numbers have grown into the low millions, scattered in diverse, autonomous tribes throughout thousands of warrens. While morlocks usually prefer to reside in natural cave systems, more adventuresome tribes have moved into the ruins of the fallen dver-guh, filling defunct bunkers with blooming fungal gardens and covering the cavern-cities with mural-sagas depicting their traumatic past... and hopes for a future.

The dver-guh died out as a race shortly after the opening of the Black Sun, either consumed directly by the void of Shadow or perishing in the rampant chaos, explosions, and collapses which accompanied the fall of their empire. While several underground dver-guh cities remain as moldering ruins, the last of the dver-guh perished once the superior vril-guh determined that 'the precursor genetic stock' no longer held any tactical, intellectual, or individual value. Rumors persist that somewhere on Thune there is a heavily shielded bunker inhabited by the last of the dver-guh high commanders – some twisted diminutive

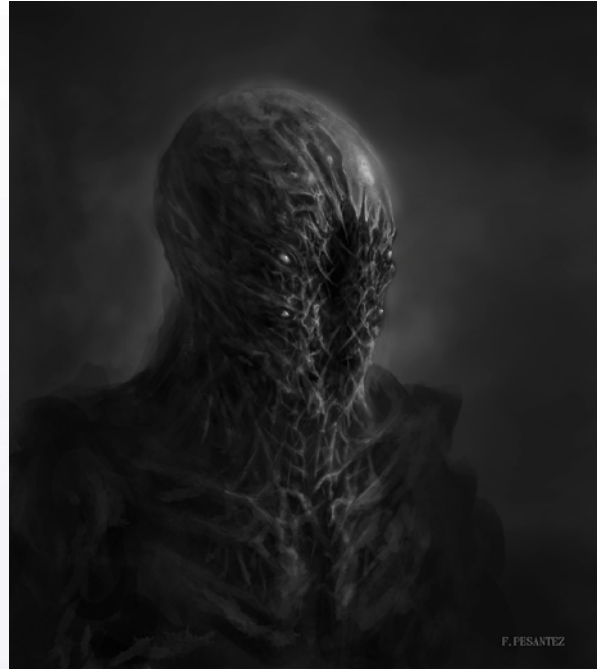
freak who has haphazardly extended his life span with infusions of vril, surrounded by animatronic servants who help him pretend the Master Plan is still going well.

The vril-guh are all that remains of the vaunted dver-guh empire – eerie, eldritch übermensch standing as bitter reminders of what the dver-guh spoiled and sacrificed an entire world to become. They're also creepy, narcissistic, racist super-jerks. Whereas the dwarfish dver-guh were on the short and stocky side, vril-guh are statuesque, looming at around eight feet tall with glowing white eyes and flawless grey skin like polished granite, pressed and dressed in immaculate officers uniforms left over from the defunct dver-guh military. The hundred or so surviving vril-guh live in isolated, self-imposed hermitage, jealously maintaining the Eidolon-infused crystal pillars which hold Thune together. While this may seem admirable, the vril-guh don't do it out of altruism or duty – the pillars are the last remaining collection points for precious vril these days, and the vril-guh would be content to let the world crumble if only they could be the last ones standing and be assured their fix. Possessing far more intelligence than morality, the vril-guh apply their sinister intellects to black science, researching arcane methods to dispel the marauding Shadow, or simply experimenting on hapless morlocks to sate their masochism and pass the time.

Threats

Erebi are things of Shadow – that utterly dark and limitless void hanging between the myriad gossamer worlds. Note that I didn't say 'creatures of Shadow', because Erebi aren't creatures. They aren't alive, or undead, or mechanical – they're just walking *tears* in existence, sometimes surrounded by something you can actually look at, but oftentimes not. Some appear as clusters of miniature black holes, others as worm-like tunnelings through gossamer reality, and a rare few as half-eaten beings wearing only mocking tatters of substance like some sort of sick joke. In Hollow Thune, gigantic Shadow-worms are fairly common, writhing down into the planet on occasion, effortlessly burrowing through rock as they probe for weaknesses in the protective fields of the crystal pillars and hunt for life forms to eradicate. They're horrifying, and they've already won. As things stand, the Erebi have surrounded and infested Thune, and it is only a matter of time before they consume Thune utterly.

The Faceless Man is an Erebus – one of those few incredibly rare Erebi which manifests itself in gossamer reality in individualized humanoid form. It commonly appears as a tall, grey-skinned vril-guh dressed in the military uniform of a dver-guh high commander, with its face and chest cavity eaten away with Shadow-rot and nothing but a dark abyss glimpsed inside the hollow bipedal shell. I suspect the guise is deliberately chosen to aggravate the inhabitants of Hollow



The Faceless Man

Erebi come in many forms – or lack of form – and have the following qualities:

- Nullify Gossamer Reality [8 Points] – Unlike the Umbra, which warps or weakens reality, the presence of Erebi is actually destructive to gossamer reality, pulling it into the void of Shadow.
- Double Vitality [2 Points]
- Paragon Stamina [2 Points]
- Destructive Damage [8 Points]
- Psychic Barrier [4 Points]

Thune, terrifying the morlocks and mocking the vril-guh. While I sincerely doubt that the Faceless Man is the leader of the Erebi in any sense we might understand, it does seem to be a figurehead for their activities on Thune.

The Faceless Man was the first dark figure to emerge from the ancient Dwimmerlaik prison known as the Black Sun back on that doomed day when the dver-guh opened the sphere. While the other Erebi busy themselves marauding and digesting the planet, it seems the Faceless Man's role is to torment the cloistered vril-guh who maintain the crystal pillars which have thus far prevented the forces of Shadow from annihilating everything – perhaps a form of psychological warfare where direct assault has stalled. Nobody has ever heard the Faceless Man speak, but there are stories of people going insane in the Man's presence, then acting upon some irresistible compulsion, then keeling over dead, which I suppose may be the closest thing the Erebi have to 'communication'.

Khul-Morghus is an Umbra Gaunt – a bodiless spirit of the Umbra which inhabits a dead creature. In this instance, the dead creature in question is the skeleton of the very last ylf-mor to perish in the dver-guh genocide; there's a lot of power in a corpse like that. If there is a hero left in Hollow Thune, Khul-Morghus is it. This skeletal champion is the realm's most effective individual warrior against the forces of Shadow, possessing an enchanted glaive which repels Erebi and can banish them back to Shadow with a solid hit. More importantly, the Umbra has imbued Khul-Morghus with an awareness of the Grand Stair, and the skeleton has, on occasion, left its home for brief periods in order to seek aid from other walkers of the Grand Stair as an

A Visage of Shadow

The Faceless Man has all the qualities of a standard Erebus, plus the Shadow-based equivalent of the following Sorcery spells: Mind Touch, Death, Weaken, Magic Drain, Bolt, and Teleport. While the Man is still a mindless manifestation of the incomprehensible void, for purposes of Psyche challenges consider it to have a Psyche rank of 85. If the Faceless Man is ever destroyed in battle, a new, similar Faceless Man re-emerges from Shadow within a week.

unlikely but determined emissary of a doomed world.

Khul-Morghus has the standard qualities of an Umbra Gaunt.

- Mobility [1 Point]
- Linked to the Umbra [2 Points]
- Double Vitality [2 Points]
- Tireless Stamina [4 Points]
- Resistant to Firearms [2 Points]
- Able to Speak in Tongues and Voices [4 Points]
- Psychic Neutral [2 Points]
- Follow Path [2 Points]

Nimbus, Khul-Morghus' Glaive [25 Points] – steeped in the power of the Umbra, this wicked polearm constantly surrounds its user with a cloudy, glowing haze of entropic matter and energy – the umbral haze has a scrambling effect on surrounding reality, but also rushes to fill any vacuum caused by the utter void of Shadow as if staunching a wound.



Khul-Morghus

- Confers Umbra Mastery on User [10 Points]
- Deadly Damage [4 Points]
- “Limited” Impervious to Harm [4 Points] – *Nimbus* and its user are resistant to the reality-nullifying touch of Shadow; this resistance is not absolute, but it is enough to withstand direct confrontation with most Erebi.
- Confers “Limited” Impervious to Harm on User [5 Points]
- Linked to the Umbra [2 Points] – *Nimbus* is the Umbra's weapon, so if its user is permanently destroyed the Umbra will find another champion, or

create one in the form of a new Umbra Gaunt.

Vril-guh are amoral supermen – frighteningly callous beings with post-mortal abilities such as telepathy, super-strength, and x-ray vision. They're super-intelligent as well, though they misapply their intelligence as evil schemers and mad scientists. Vril is insanely power, and some vril-guh still possess functional vril staffs – silver cylinders a few feet in length which project beams of devastating force more than capable of punching holes through mountains or leveling cities if turned up to their

highest setting. The hateful vril-guh have no compunctions against killing people who annoy them or defending their lairs with lethal force, however they don't want to waste a single drop of vril if they can help it, so they usually try to drive off threats through bullying or conventional weapons before expending precious resources. Vril-guh bunkers are surrounded by insidious traps such as collapsing tunnels, radioactive caverns, poison gas chambers, razor-wire snares, and even robotic sentries armed with flame throwers and machine guns left over from the last great war.

Notable locations

Agartha, located fifty miles beneath what used to be Thune's magnetic north pole, is the largest of the extant dver-guh underground cavern-cities, once holding over a million souls in its stalactite under-towers and stone-hewn townhouses, but now existing as but a husk of its former glory. Architectural highlights of the city include a still-volatile munitions factory, a mud-clogged hydro-electric plant, and a rusty ironworks connected to an expansive labyrinth of ore mines. Presently, a growing tribe of morlocks has occupied the city, cultivating phosphorescent molds along the abandoned avenues and fishing blind eels from crumbling aqueducts. The morlocks have covered the buildings of the central plaza with an epic tactile mural, telling a remarkably complete saga of the great death of the ylf-mor, the doom of Shadow, and the

Vril-guh have the following qualities:

- Immense Vitality [4 Points]
- Paragon Stamina [2 Points]
- Combat Reflexes [2 Points]
- Deadly Damage [4 Points] – when using a vril staff
- Resistant to Normal Weapons [1 Point]
- Psychic Neutral [2 Points]
- Self Healing [1 Point]

The Power of Vril: While the average vril-guh possesses the equivalent of Paragon-ranked Attributes, a vril-guh can temporarily increase its Strength or Psyche Attribute to a ranking on the low end or middle of the Attribute Ladder by harnessing the power of vril (as might be drawn directly from the inner workings of a crystal pillar). Such exertions are extremely taxing on the vril-guh's body and mind, potentially fatal, and any expenditure of vril necessarily entails drawing upon the strength of the Eidolon, which will have a catastrophic destabilizing effect on local gossamer reality. (See *Scarce Eidolon*, below).

constant terrors of the present darkness. The Door to Hollow Thune lies in the center of Agartha, opening into a plush banquet hall which once catered to dver-guh officers. Tattered red banners and shattered flatware still display the twelve crooked spokes of the Black Sun emblem – a symbol that was once the rallying sign of an empire, yet became the epitaph for an entire world.



Agartha

The core of Hollow Thune is a cold and haunting place, hollow both in a physical sense and a spiritual one, as nowhere else is the foreboding menace of imminent, inevitable death so soul-crushingly palpable. Nothing lives in the core – no morlocks, no mushrooms, no nothing. On the inner curvature of the core, the Black Sun hangs lightless in the “sky” – a featureless obsidian sphere the size of a mountain, suspended at very center of the planet. Creatures of Shadow still scurry back and forth from the Black Sun like ghostly rats, attending to the inscrutable whims of the Faceless Man, who seems to be tinkering with the ancient Dwimmerlaik artifact with a determined purpose. In case the hairs on the back of your neck did not already clue you in – that's terrifying. The skeleton Khul-Morghus has a horribly depressing theory that the Faceless Man is attempting to *invert* the dimension-warping technology of the Black Sun,

twisting what used to be a containment field for Shadow into an amplifying aperture (as in, a doorway) which would permit the entire engulfing void of Shadow to flood into a gossamer reality without restraint and nullify it in an instant. Scary stuff.

Festung Thuna is a massive fortress – one of the last structures remaining on the surface of Thune, looming on a craggy cliff overlooking a barren plain of dust that used to be an equatorial sea. Designed and built by the dver-guh during the apex of their military build-up in preparation for a ylf-mor counter-attack which never materialized, the installation is incredibly secure and supremely armored, which has allowed it to withstand the ravages of Shadow which have otherwise stripped the planetary surface of every other building and distinguishing landmark. However, thick walls alone can't possibly explain

why it still exists, and according to Lucien there's a very dangerous rumor going about as to why: supposedly Festung Thuna is now a Dwimmerlaik outpost, housing a handful of arcanists and summoners intent on using the unique opportunity of Thune's doom as a front row seat to study the Erebi and all things Shadow. Speculation runs rampant about what the Dwimmerlaik's relationship, if any, is with the Faceless Man, and what they intend to do about the Black Sun device before their own technology is turned against them.

Final Thoughts

Hollow Thune is probably one of the worst, most hopeless, most dangerous gossamer worlds I've ever visited. That's a damn shame, because my intuition tells me that somebody's going to have to go there in order to save the multiverse one day soon. So you might as well gird up and take a tour... just bring a flashlight.

~ *Yaeger Zane*

Hollow Thune Domain Table

Technology Level:	Primitive (long-defunct Electric)
Magic Level:	Known and Believed
Security:	Guarded [4 Points] (by the Erebi)
Type:	Personal Domain [1 Point] (current owner: the Faceless Man)
Control:	None
Influence on the Powers:	Eidolon – Weak* Umbra – Average Wrighting – Blocked
Special*	Scarce Eidolon: Thune has been swallowed by an Erebus in the form of a super-colossal ouroboros, and the bolstering of the Eidolon is the only force preventing the planet from being digested and utterly nullified in the void of Shadow. Any evocation of the Eidolon which draws upon its strength risks destabilizing local gossamer reality, triggering cave-ins, collapses, implosions, or calling the attention of the Erebi to a critical weak spot.