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Accessory

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons[®]
2nd Edition

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Ravenloft[®]

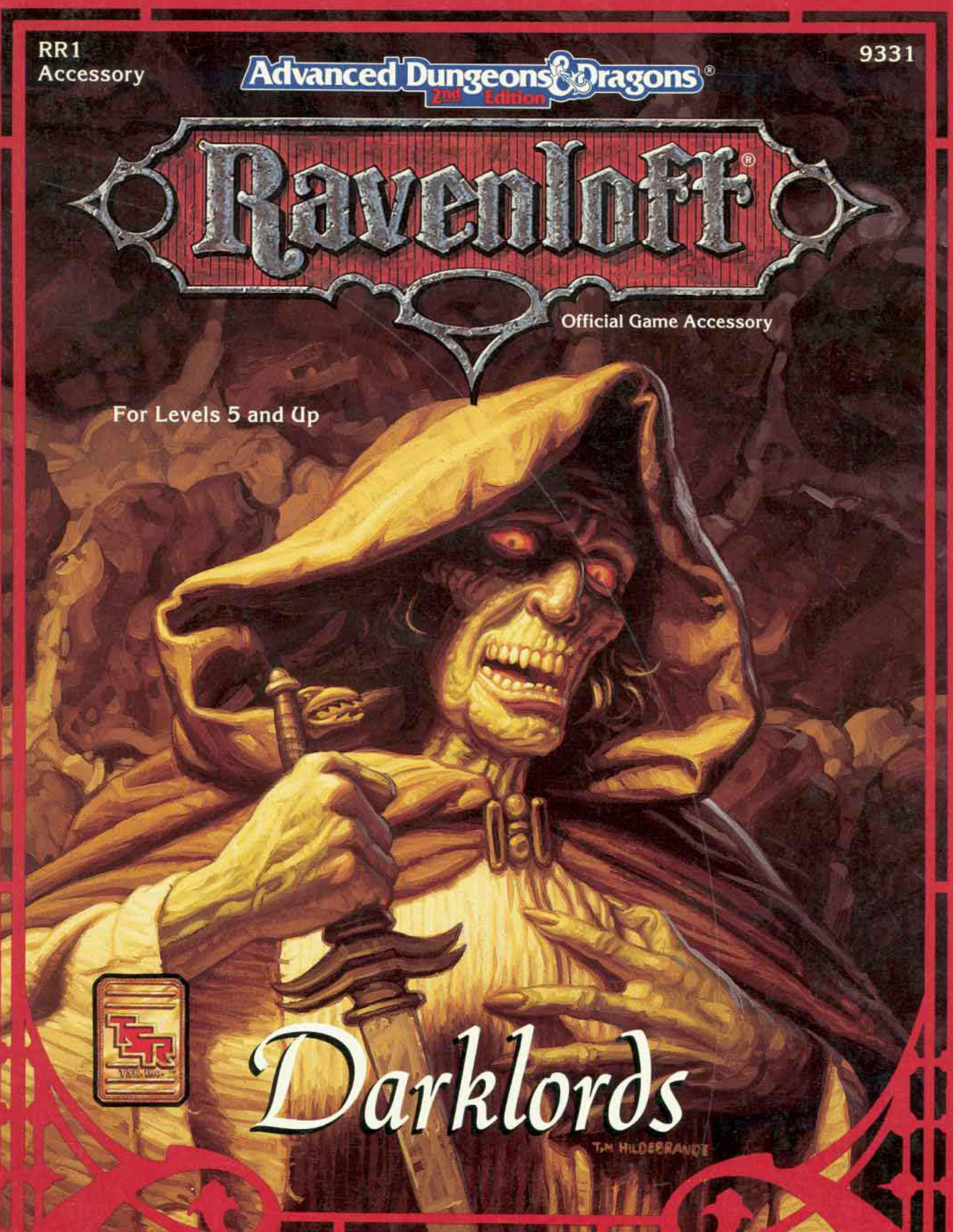
Official Game Accessory

For Levels 5 and Up



Darklords

T.M. HILDEBRANDT



DARKLORDS

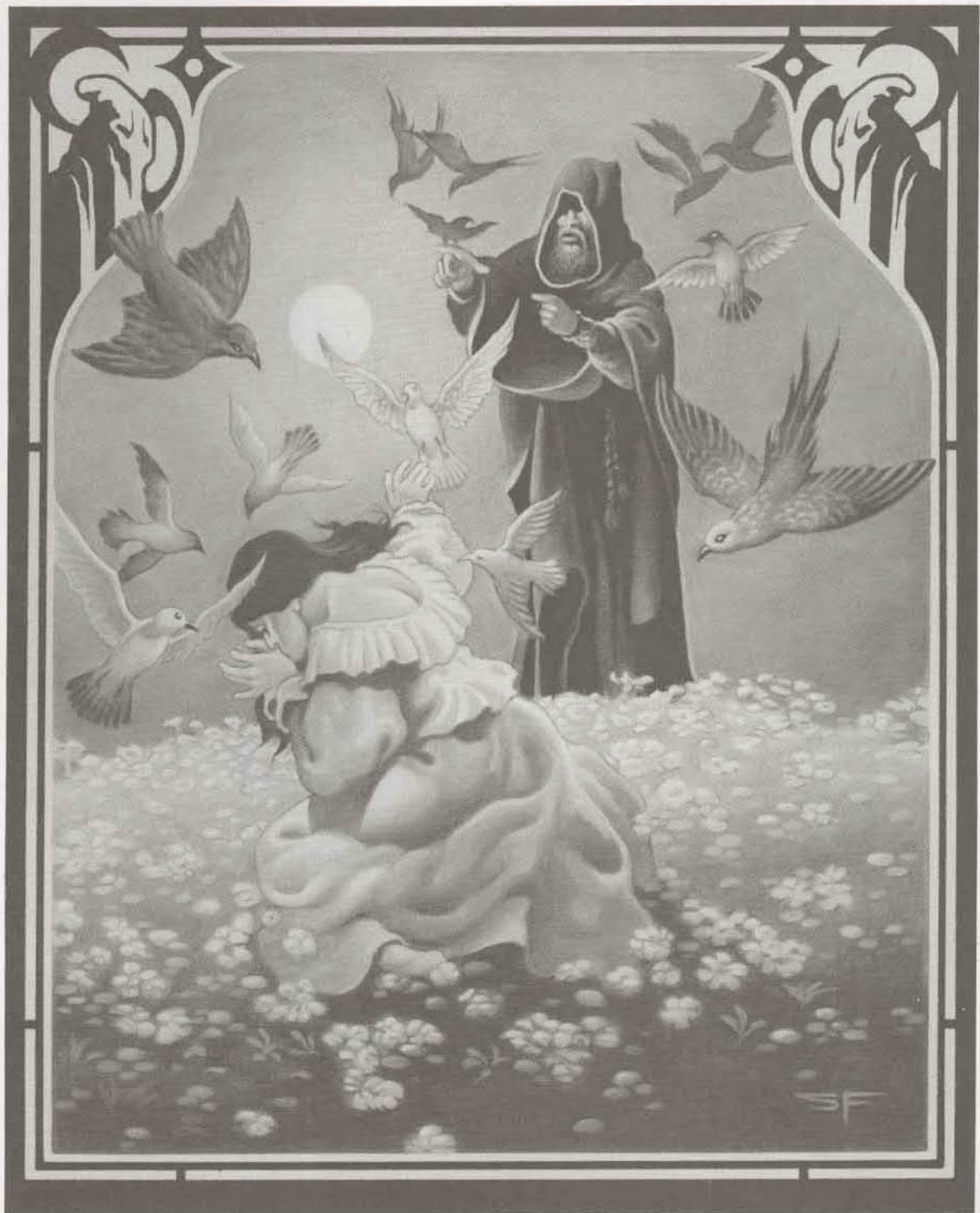


TABLE OF CONTENTS



Introduction 4
 Using Darklords 4
 Powers and Destruction 4
 Creating Your Own Lords 4
 The Mood of Ravenloft 5



Hags 36
 Appearance 36
 Background 36
 Current Sketch 39
 The Domain 40
 Confronting the Hags 41



Anhktepote 6
 Appearance 6
 Background 6
 Current Sketch 8
 Confronting Anhktepote 9
 A Recipe for Mummification 11



Headless Horseman 44
 Background 44
 The Domain 44
 Confronting the Horseman 44
 The First to Follow 46
 The Last to Follow 46
 The Winding Road 47



Banshee 12
 Appearance 12
 Background 12
 Current Sketch 14
 The Domain 14
 The City of Dead 16
 The Hand 17
 Confronting Tristessa 20



House of Lament 48
 Background 48
 Current Sketch 50
 Confronting the House 51
 Destroying the House 52



Bluebeard 22
 Appearance 22
 Background 22
 Current Sketch 24
 Bluebeard's Castle 25
 Confronting Bluebeard 26



Von Kharkov 54
 Appearance 54
 Background 54
 Current Sketch 56
 Confronting Von Kharkov 56
 Castle Pantara 58



Ebonbane 28
 Appearance 28
 Background 28
 Current Sketch 30
 The Four Keys 31
 The Domain 31
 Confronting Ebonbane 32
 Shadowborn Manor 33



Merilee 60
 Appearance 60
 Background 60
 Current Sketch 62
 Confronting Merilee 62
 An Account of My Meeting with
 the Child Vampire 63

TABLE OF CONTENTS



Monette 64
 Appearance 64
 Background 64
 Current Sketch 66
 The Domain 66
 Confronting Monette 67
 Excerpts from a Ship's Log . . . 67



Phantom Lover 68
 Appearance 68
 Background 68
 Current Sketch 68
 The Domain 70
 Confronting the Phantom . . . 71
 Fragments of a Diary 73



D'Polarno 74
 Background 74
 Current Sketch 77
 The Domain 77
 Confronting D'Polarno 79



Tiyet 80
 Appearance 80
 Background 80
 Current Sketch 84
 The Domain 85
 Confronting Tiyet 88



Zolnik 90
 Appearance 90
 Background 90
 Current Sketch 93
 Gregor's Children 94
 The Domain 94
 Confronting Gregor 94

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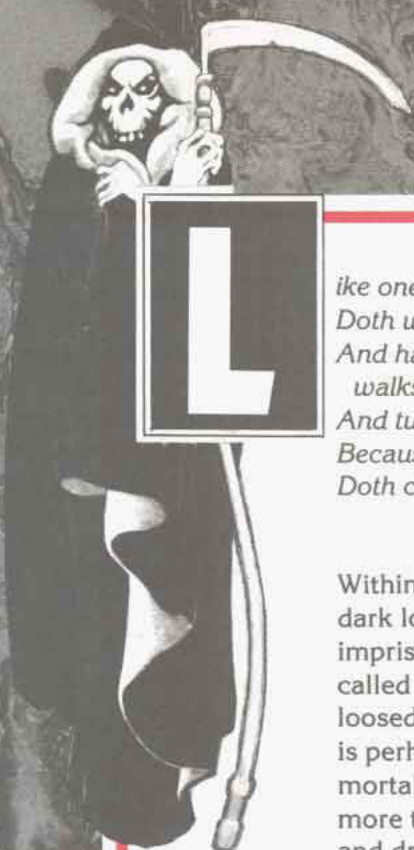
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INTRODUCTION



Like one that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having once turned round
walks on,
And turns no more his head;
Because he knows a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.
—Coleridge

Within this book are tales of 16 dark lords and ladies, each imprisoned in the shadowy abyss called Ravenloft, each waiting to be loosed in your campaign. Patience is perhaps their only virtue. What mortals blithely call “forever” is no more than a moment in their bleak and dreary existence. Still, they

know that the time to emerge is nearing. By opening this book, you have opened a door into Darkness, releasing the horrors that lurk within.

Using Darklords

The more powerful a lord in Ravenloft is, the more daunting and hopeless an encounter with that lord may seem. Lords need not always take center stage, however. In fact, it can be more interesting if they linger in the background like a malevolent threat, intruding into the foreground only when adventurers foolishly provoke their attention.

For example, Keening’s banshee is a deadly force; to enflame her wrath is to join her other victims as spirits and other undead. But she rarely attacks anyone who stays away from her mountain. Even by day (when she is able to walk about), she may not attack unless someone disturbs her. What role could she then serve in an adventure? The banshee has an enmity with the drow of Arak. What if the PCs unwittingly aid the banshee in exacting her revenge—or vice versa? Keening has no living inhabitants, only a city filled with undead that listlessly continue the routines of their former lives. What if a necromancer serving another

lord were attempting to harness the forces of that city?

Anhktepot, lord of Har’Akir, is a mummy described in this book. He has slumbered in his tomb for nearly a century. In the adventure *Touch of Death*, someone—or something—is attempting to usurp Anhktepot’s power. The usurper drives the plot of the adventure, not Anhktepot himself.

Powers and Destruction

Darklords have an ally that most creatures do not have: the Land of Ravenloft itself. The darklords can be assumed to have any power that logically fits the mood and tone of their realm. For example, if it is important to an adventure that Strahd can sense the use of magic in Barovia, then grant him that ability. This is not to say that he can do *anything*—merely that you can be more flexible with darklords than with other creatures.

If player characters kill a lord, and you’d like to use that lord again, that too is possible in Ravenloft. In fact, many of the lords, as written, are rarely destroyed even if they disappear. Three hags rule Tepest, for example. If two are killed, the third can conjure them up again in her cauldron of regeneration. In the desert kingdom of Sebuia, the lord may turn to glittering sand, dispersed by the wind, only to be formed again later by the land. Rebirth as well as reincarnation are possible in Ravenloft.

Creating Your Own Lords

The RAVENLOFT® boxed set offers several tips for DMs who wish to create their own lords. A detailed history, which explains how the villain became a lord, is one of those elements. When creating such tales, keep in mind that the Dark Powers and the Mists of Ravenloft rarely trick or entice a lord into their midst. A character is not offered power, for example; he demands it. He willingly takes the step that seals his fate; the Dark Powers

INTRODUCTION

welcome him, but they do not force him to become a lord.

The Mood of Ravenloft

Adventures set in Ravenloft demand more of a DM, because their success depends as much—or more—upon the ability of the DM to be a storyteller rather than a rules lawyer.

Rich description is vital to maintaining the mood of this campaign setting. While running an adventure, remember that the shadows of Ravenloft are more likely to conceal an opponent here than in other lands. PCs seldom know the true nature of a threat initially. You needn't lie or mislead the players, however. If PCs are facing a rat in broad daylight, obviously they'll know it's a rat. But bright light is a rarity in Ravenloft. Catching only a glimpse of some small, black creature slipping into the shadows, the player characters cannot be sure of what they've seen. Take advantage of the murkiness and uncertainty of this setting.

Quoting the numbers intrinsic to the AD&D® game—"You suffer 5 points of damage," for example—tends to detract from Ravenloft's mood. If someone suffers damage, always describe the effects of that damage. For example, a swing from the Headless Horseman's scythe may cause "1d4 points of damage," but the numbers are secondary. First, a DM will tell the player that the blade caught his PC's face, creating a painful, gaping wound that is certain to leave a scar. In some encounters, it's appropriate to calculate damage for the PCs yourself, describing the wounds to players, and any weakness that results, but keeping the numbers to yourself.

Before you design an adventure using one of the darklords in this book, review the chapters titled "Techniques of Terror" and "From Gothic Roots" in the boxed set. They'll help you fine-tune your story and prepare you for unnerving even the most unshakable PC. Then call your players together late at night, dim the lights, and play.



ANHKTEPOT



T

he desert of Har'Akir is ancient beyond belief. Not all of its past is marked by noble deeds and great kings. In ancient days, the evil pharaoh Anhktepote ruled the nation of Har'Akir. Although he died long ago, his mummified body occasionally awakens to stalk the burning wastelands and remind the people of his reign of terror.

Appearance

When Anhktepote died, his body was wrapped in strips of white funeral linen.

Originally his eyes were covered and his hands bound across his

chest. He has since ripped the cloth from this eyes and torn his hands and arms free. The torn, graying cloth dangles and flutters in the desert winds. His eyes are golden lights, tinged with orange. His uncovered fingers are brown and shrunken.

He walks with a stagger, his gait stiff and awkward. His voice is a scratchy whisper, like sand on rock. A golden ankh hangs on a chain around his neck. He wears the ceremonial headgear of the pharaohs; he removed the rest of the funeral vestments.

Background

Pharaoh Anhktepote ruled centuries ago in the great desert land of Har'Akir. The pharaoh, like most of his culture, was obsessed with death. The religion of the people revolved around death, and the pharaoh was the link between men and the gods. Anhktepote himself was a priest of Ra, the sun god.

Anhktepote commanded his priests to find a way for him to live forever. Many slaves and prisoners died horribly as subjects in Anhktepote's gruesome experiments. Totally frustrated with the lack of success, the pharaoh had several temples burned and razed. He

stalked into the Kharn temple, greatest of all in Har'Akir, and cursed the gods for not granting him his heart's desire. Ra, sun god and patron of the pharaohs, answered Anhktepote. He told the pharaoh that he would live even after death, though he might wish otherwise. Ra did not elaborate.

Anhktepote left the temple elated but confused. He still did not know how to cheat death. That night, everyone he touched died. His wife, several servants, and his eldest child—all were dead. According to custom, they were mummified and entombed in great buildings in the desert.

Soon the great pharaoh came to understand his curse. So long as Ra shone upon him, he was safe. But once he was no longer under the sun's watchful eye, whomever he touched died horribly.

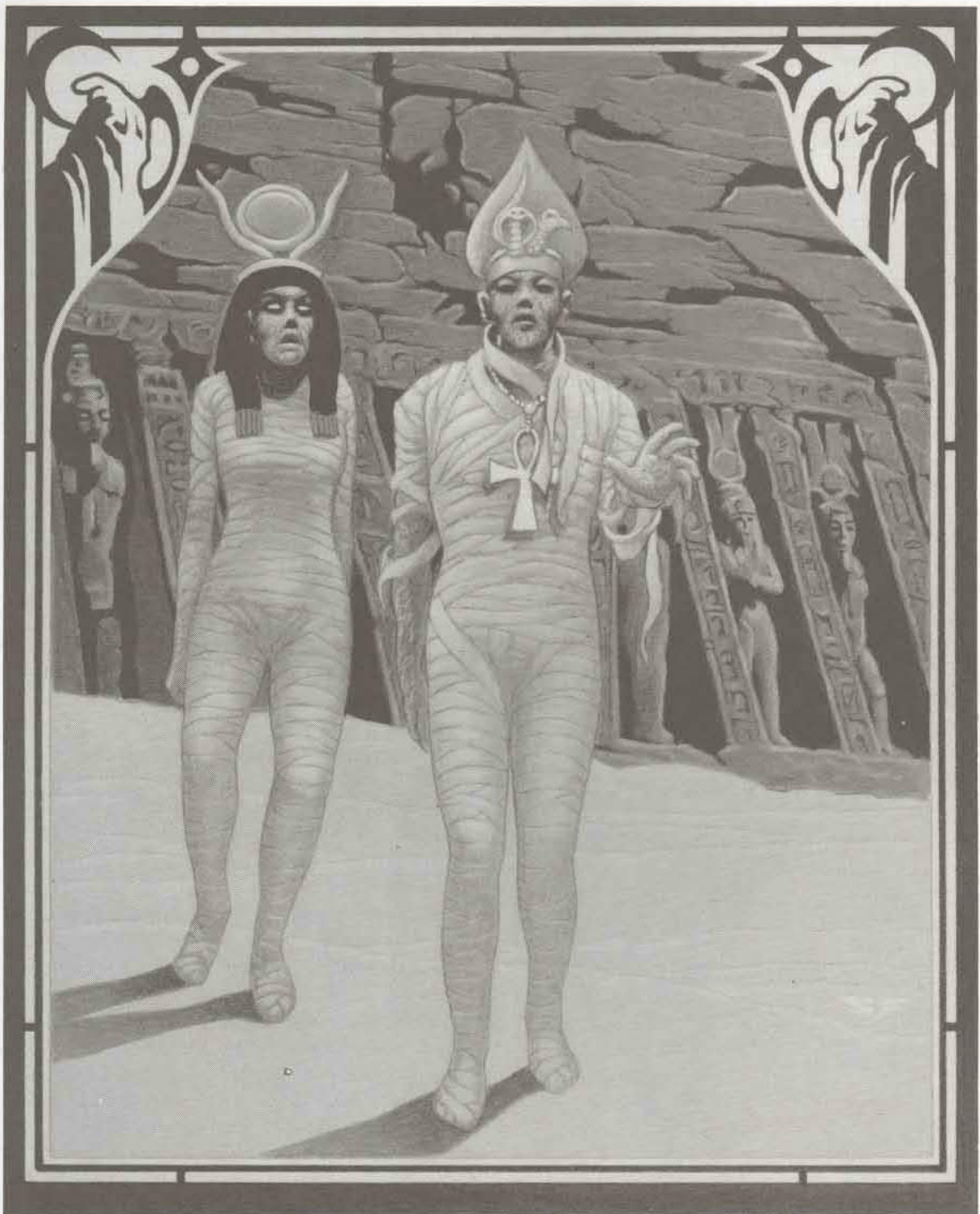
Shortly after the final ceremony of his wife's funeral, Anhktepote was visited in the night. A mummy wrapped in funeral linens entered his chambers. By the vestments he knew it was Nephyr. He fled from her down the long halls of the palace. Finally she cornered him. Unable to talk, the mummy Nephyr tried to embrace Anhktepote. Horrified, he screamed for her to leave him forever. She turned and left. Nephyr walked into the desert and was never seen again. Her tomb remained open and empty.

Anhktepote was also visited by the mummified bodies of the others whom he had killed. He came to understand that he controlled them utterly. They did his every bidding. He used their strength and his own touch of death to tighten the reigns of his evil power over Har'Akir.

He killed many of the kingdom's priests, making them his undead slaves. The priests kept their spellcasting powers as mummies. Occasionally he would find one of his mummies destroyed, burned from the inside out. Anhktepote was convinced that Nephyr was responsible, but he had no proof of this.

One day the priests rebelled against the pharaoh and murdered him in his sleep. The

АНКТЕРОТ

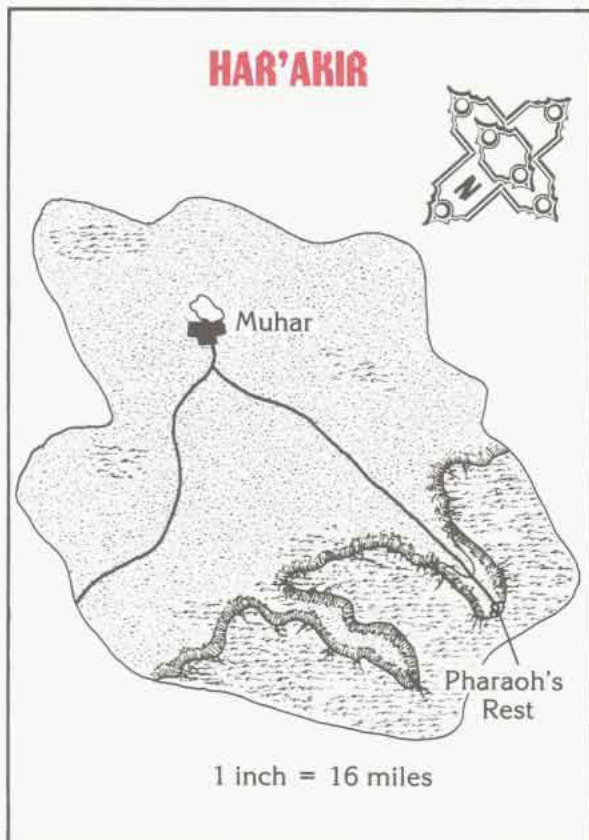


ANHKTETOT

funeral lasted for a month. During it, Anhktepót was awake and helpless, trapped inside his own corpse. His mind screamed as they mummified his body. He was nearly insane when they entombed him.

As the sun set, and Ra's power waned, the borders of Ravenloft seeped into the desert kingdom to steal away the tomb of Anhktepót and the nearby small village of Muhar (also known as Mudar). When the priests returned to visit the tomb, all they found was sand and rock. It was as if the village of Muhar and Anhktepót's tomb had never existed.

Upon entering Ravenloft, Anhktepót discovered that he once again had control over his body. He now rules a small mud village in the middle of a barren wasteland. It is a bitter end for a man who once ruled a great nation and wielded great personal power.



Current Sketch

Anhktepót spends decades at a time "dreaming" in his moldering tomb. He can neither sleep nor die, but he can forget the world for a time and dream again of the pleasures of the flesh and the power of having a nation to do his bidding.

It takes a notable event to awaken the pharaoh mummy. Anyone disturbing his tomb qualifies as such an event. He can feel some of the happenings in the land through the people of Muhar. If they feel great anxiety, then he might put aside his dream long enough to investigate. Any excursion of Anhktepót from his tomb usually ends in death and destruction.

Anhktepót's most fervent dream is to be human again. He would even take up the mantle of mortality and die a natural death if he could but rule a few years as a normal man. Of course he does not envision himself as a peasant or commoner. He would only accept a station in life as great as he once held. He would rather die than not rule.

In a cruel twist, Ravenloft has granted him the power to be human again, but at a high cost. He can drain a man of life in a sunrise ceremony and be restored to his human form, although he becomes a normal, 0-level human with no spellcasting powers. Should he die in this form, Anhktepót stays dead unless his body is mummified and entombed. In that case, he is a mummy once again with all of his powers.

If Anhktepót is a normal, living human, and the sun sets, his body returns to its mummified condition, and he regains all of his supernatural powers. The body of the victim whose life he drained is completely dehydrated and cannot be raised or resurrected. It takes only one round to drain a man this way, but Anhktepót has just a 10-round period of time to do it before the sun has completely risen.

He could be human again (during the daylight hours) for a few months by sacrificing all of Muhar's villagers. Once they were all

ANHKTEPOT

dead, he would be alone forever. Anhktepote chooses not to do this. Instead he awaits a time when he can rule a larger population.

Confronting Anhktepote

Greater Mummy, Chaotic Evil

Armor Class	-3	Str	19
Movement	9	Dex	8
Level/Hit Dice	13	Con	19
Hit Points	65	Int	15
THACO	7	Wis	23
No. of Attacks	1	Cha	3

Damage/Attack: 3d6

Special Attacks: Disease, spells

Special Defenses: +4 weapon needed to hit

Magic Resistance: 25%

Anhktepote is a greater mummy as described in the RAVENLOFT® *Monstrous Compendium* appendix. All of the vital combat descriptions are repeated here. The touch of the pharaoh mummy causes a rotting disease that kills in 1d3 days. One day after the infection, the victim is bedridden with convulsions so severe that spellcasting or wielding a weapon is impossible. His skin begins to dry up and flake off. The disease must be cured before any other type of healing can occur. This cure requires one *cure disease* spell for each day the disease has progressed to rid the victim's body of the rot. The spells must be cast within a 24-hour period.

If the disease is not cured within one day of the infection, the victim loses 1 point of Strength and Constitution and 2 points of Charisma. All losses are permanent. Only a *wish* spell can restore the lost points.

Any character who is mummified alive while infected becomes a greater mummy under the control of Anhktepote. The oldest of Har' Akir's greater mummies may have more physical power than Anhktepote himself. Even so, the ancient pharaoh still controls them utterly. If

you don't have the RAVENLOFT *Monstrous Compendium* appendix, just make his minions regular mummies.

Anhktepote can be turned, but he uses the special row of the Turning (Undead) table. He is immune to damage from holy water, but suffers 1d6 points of damage from non-evil holy symbols. The ankh he wears around his neck restores 2d6 hit points each round, even after he is killed. Anhktepote will rise from the dead if the ankh is not removed immediately after he is killed.

In addition to his 25% magic resistance, Anhktepote is immune to *charm*, *hold*, *death* magic, poison, cold-based spells, mind control or mind reading spells, and normal fire. He is vulnerable to magical fire.

He has a *fear* aura that causes all creatures that see him to roll a fear check. His presence is so terrifying that there is a -4 penalty to the check. Like most undead in Ravenloft, the sight of him also requires a horror check.

In life, Anhktepote was a 13th-level priest of the sun god Ra. He still retains these abilities. His power to turn undead has been warped and perverted—he now *controls* undead. As a mummy, he has no fear of the sun and no special attraction to the dark. He has lost the power to shapechange into a hawk, since no living form would accept him. He gains all the normal spell bonuses and immunities due him because of his 23 Wisdom (see Table 5 in the *Player's Handbook*).

Major Spheres: all, astral, charm, creation, elemental, sun

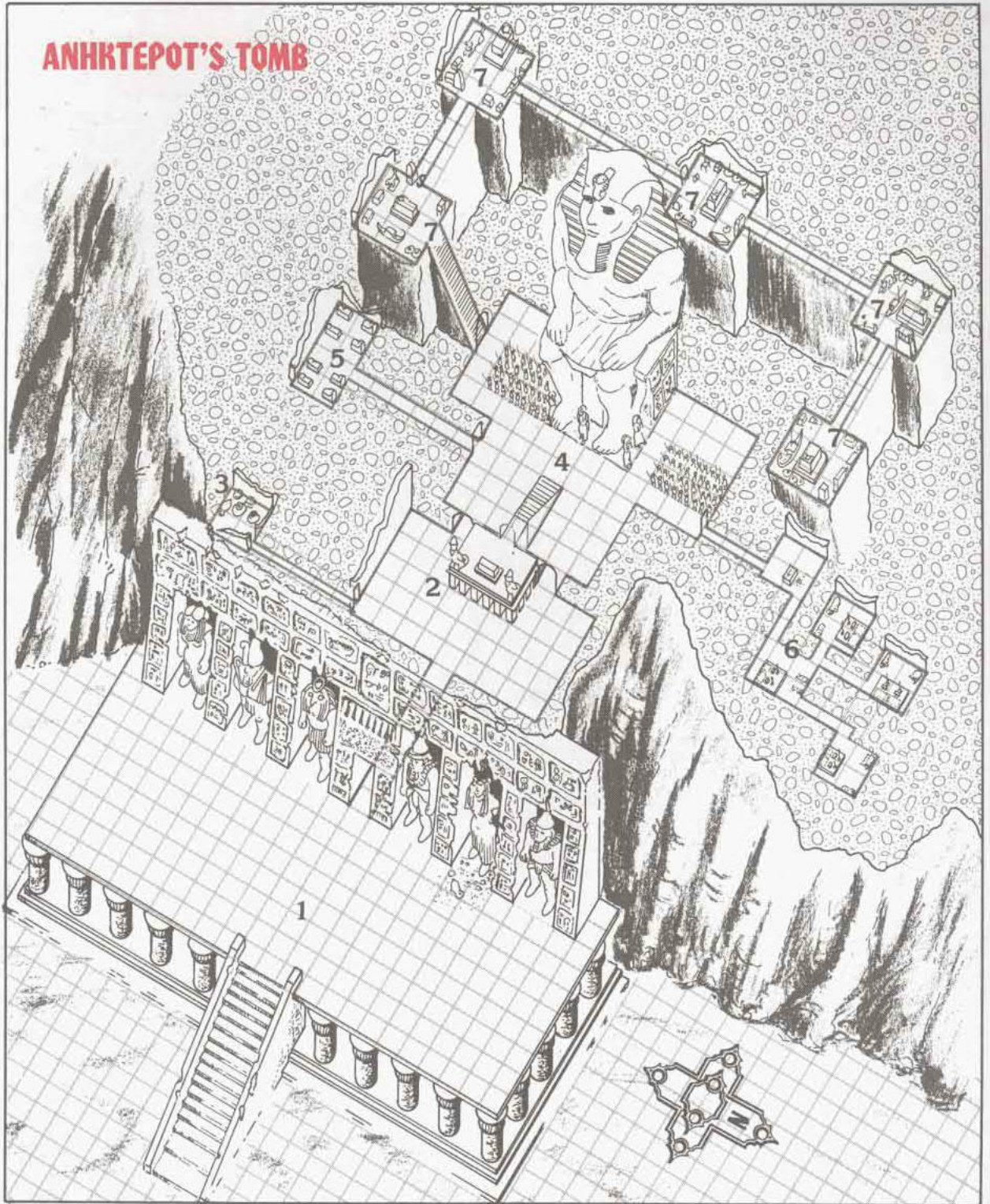
Minor Sphere: weather

Granted Powers: *light*, *continual light*, *sunray* once per day; control undead.

Anhktepote has a large treasure of gold, gems, jewelry, and magical items. So far he has not needed any of these items and they lie untouched in their vaults. Should the need arise, he is quite capable of using any magical item available to priests.

АНХТЕПОТ

АНХТЕПОТ'S TOMB



ANHKTEPOT

Map Key

1) Shrine: This low, flat building is a monument to the life and works of Anhktepote. Tightly spaced columns fill the shrine, each carved with pictures telling of famous events in his life.

An exterior stairway leads to the flat, empty roof. Six alcoves are embedded in the cliff face, each containing a huge stone statue of a deity or relative of Anhktepote.

2) Temple of Ra: Pharaohs' tombs frequently doubled as temples. This is the main temple, with supporting pillars shaped like the deities of Har' Akir.

3) Purification Room: Supplicants cleansed themselves here before worshiping in the temple. Large urns that once held water now lie cracked and filled with dust.

4) Temple of Anhktepote: A gargantuan stone likeness of Anhktepote dominates the room. The open areas on either side are filled with clay figures representing the warriors who served in his armies.

5) Crypt of the Minor Officials: The less important officials of Anhktepote's reign were killed upon his death, and then buried with him in this room.


6) Priest's Quarters: When the temple was an active part of Har' Akir life, the priests who served it lived and worked in these rooms.

7) Crypts of the Family: Each room is devoted to a particular wife of Anhktepote and the children she bore. There are more rooms than those shown on this map. They are hidden behind secret doors and formidable barriers made of stone blocks.

A Recipe for Fine Mummification

- Lay body on a stone slab.
- Insert long metal instrument with hook through nostrils and pull brains out. Rinse brain cavity with palm wine.
- To open torso, carefully slit skin of left flank with sharp stone knife. Withdraw all vital organs through the opening: heart, intestines, liver, lungs, and so forth. Set aside.
- Rinse body cavity thoroughly with palm wine, then a spice infusion.
- Pack body cavity with herbs and spices, especially myrrh and cassia.
- To purify the flesh, immerse body in oils and resins for no fewer than 40 days.
- Treat organs with spice and oil while body is desiccated.
- Place treated lungs, liver, stomach, and intestines in four Canopic jars of stone or alabaster, with stoppers.
- Test body for doneness. When all flesh has been dissolved and naught but skin and bones remains, wash the body again.
- Plump the body and face with bags of myrrh and cinnamon for a natural look.
- Important: Return the heart (center of intelligence and feeling) to the chest. Replace kidneys also if desired.
- Sew the body incision if desired. Leave small opening so that the heart may be withdrawn for testing in the Underworld.
- Anoint body with scented oils and/or treat with resin.
- Wrap the body with strips of linen treated with gum. Enclose scarab amulet over heart, along with other protective amulets.
- Place mask over head.
- Place Scrolls of the Dead between thighs so the deceased can reach them easily in the underworld.
- Place body inside series of coffins. Place in an outer sarcophagus made of stone.
- Store upright in a cool, dark place.

THE BANSHEE



On the northern regions of the Core, just south of Darkon, there lies a tiny domain called Keening. It is shaped by the song of evil, and no living creature can find comfort there. This is the realm of Ravenloft's banshee. Her true name is not known, but natives of nearby lands call her *Tristessa*, the sad one.

Appearance

As with all banshees, Keening's lord is a floating, luminous spirit—the shadow of her former self. She died young, in agony, and so she will remain until time comes to an end.

Nearly all banshees were evil elves in life, but *Tristessa* was not born of an ordinary clan. She was a drow—a dark elf who lived underground with the rest of her black-hearted kind.

Like many of Ravenloft's lords, she stands apart from ordinary creatures of her type. Even now, in her spirit form, *Tristessa*'s skin is black as coal. When she moves, it gleams and glitters, as if it were cut from the starry night sky. Her long white hair floats wildly about her body. Were it not for the hair, she would nearly fade into the darkness.

The banshee's face is distorted by torment and grief. Even by day, when she rests, her brow is furrowed, her dark mouth twisted in pain. When she rises, her eyes become large and round, clearly showing the red-streaked whites, each surrounding a pale, flickering blue iris. When she wails, her mouth gapes like the entrance to a cavern, revealing her white teeth, purple tongue, and the blue tonsils at the back of her throat. Tears well in her eyes and stream down her cheeks like the wax from a sputtering candle.

The banshee is tall, thin, and graceful, with slender arms and long, thin fingers. She wears a tattered gown made of violet gauze. A white

shroud spotted with blood is draped over her arm. At times she cradles the cloth as if she were cradling a child.

Background

Tristessa's past is buried as deeply as the kingdom which once was her home. She is rumored to have come from Arak, a domain to the east of Keening. Today Arak is a barren, windswept domain with no sign of life above the surface. Deep underground, there lies a kingdom of drow elves. According to legend, *Tristessa* once lived among them, many centuries ago.

She was a priestess who earned the disfavor of *Lolth*, the spider goddess. In other realms, drow priestesses are required to sacrifice a male consort to prove their devotion. It is said that *Tristessa* failed to do so, and she was punished for the offense. But it is unlikely that *Lolth*'s powers truly extend to Ravenloft, even if the goddess is worshiped in Arak. Further, no living creature can describe the drow civilization in Arak, and it cannot be assumed that it mirrors the drow societies of other worlds.

Still, Arak's kingdom does appear to share one quality with other drow civilizations: deformity is not accepted. In the Forgotten Realms, drow elves destroy children who are born with marked imperfection. So it must be in Ravenloft's Arak, for *Tristessa*'s endless wails as a banshee are for the loss of her child—a child who was born with the legs of a spider. *Tristessa* alone refused to notice this trait; in her eyes, her only child was perfect.

Far below the surface of other realms, there exist creatures known as *driders*. Their upper bodies are those of bloated drow, while their lower bodies are those of genderless spiders. These wretched beasts were not born in this condition, nor can they produce others of their kind. At one time they were drow, but they failed the test of the spider goddess *Lolth*. As punishment, she transformed them into

THE BANSHEE



THE BANSHEE

driders. Driders are outcasts. They become vengeful foes of the drow, who despise and fear them. If there are driders in Arak, it is no wonder that the drow in that domain shunned Tristessa and her child.

Sages in Darkon say that a party of Arak's drow arose from the dark kingdom one night, dragging Tristessa and her child along with them. Arak's surface was then lush and green. That night, the sky was cold and clear, and the blades of grass shone like silver in the moon's light. Tristessa's captors staked her to the ground, and laid her child beside her. Then they abandoned the pair.

Morning broke. As the sun climbed high in the sky, screams echoed across the landscape—screams so shrill that even the drow below could hear them. Tristessa and her infant could not survive the harsh rays. Mother and child dissolved into the wind, which rose, howling fiercely, and destroyed all life upon Arak's soil. The storm moved west, enveloping a nearby town with its fury. Then the town and storm disappeared, and Keening was formed.

Current Sketch

Tristessa's eternal home is Mount Lament, the lonely mountain at the center of Keening. She lives in a cavern near the summit. The cavern is constructed like a mine, with a single shaft plunging deep into the mountain, and three layers of tunnels winding like a web around the shaft. The air is rank and thin, quickly tiring those who are not accustomed to it. Glistening silver cobwebs hang across the tunnels like curtains. Embedded in their sticky strands are blue, glittering stones. When the sun is shining, the banshee is always in this cavern, waiting until the slanting rays of the afternoon sun strike the uppermost level.

As darkness begins to conquer the light, the banshee leaves her lair. She is in search of her child, for the infant did not remain with her. To any living person she encounters, she may

whisper pitifully, "Tell me—where is my child?" Many are struck dumb with fear and cannot answer. When no response is forthcoming, she may begin to wail. Like the cry of all banshees, the sound can destroy man, beast, and flora.

Tristessa sometimes imagines that she and her child are together, happy at last. Some people, fortunate to have survived an encounter, have spied her sitting by the river. Sitting upon the stony bank, she is gently rocking the bloody shroud on her arm and singing a haunting lullaby. In this dreamy state, she is relatively harmless, oblivious to the rest of the world. Disturbing her is a dreadful mistake.

One should not imagine that Keening's banshee is simple-minded. She is more like a mother gone mad with grief. In lucid moments, she remembers what happened in Arak. Revenge upon the drow, then, becomes her main objective.

The banshee does not encounter the living often, however. Those who inhabit her domain are beyond life. The city she engulfed in Arak now lies at the base of the mountain, its inhabitants no longer alive. Some, mercifully, are deceased. Most are undead. Ghosts of others she has met on the mountain haunt the places of their demise. When the sun rises, they, like the banshee, disappear.

The Domain

The summit of Mt. Lament lies at the center of this domain, only ten miles from any border. But as any adventurer can attest, the ascent is physically taxing by day and deadly by night. The slopes are not steep, but the ground is loose and unsettled.

In the warm months, the borders of this realm are lush and serene. The breeze stirs the meadows gently and whispers through the pines. The mountain looms beyond, its gray, rocky slopes snow-capped until the height of summer. Although the borders of the domain are beautiful, they are strangely silent. A

THE BANSHEE

traveler may strain his ear for a songbird or a hawk, but he will hear only the wind.

The mountain itself has little natural flora. At the base, the grass is sparse and the trees are leafless and contorted, as if they were subject to a constant gale. As the mountain rises, the trees give way to sharp-bladed weeds that can slice the curious hand, and thorny thickets that can snag exposed flesh. Near the top, the slopes are shifting rubble, and rock-slides are common. Only climbers who are light of foot, or make no tread at all, can pass here safely.

From early autumn to late spring, snow clings to the summit of the mountain, preserved in the shadows between the crags. Several streams spill off the slopes, some fed only by the snowmelt, others by springs. At night, the water becomes black and churning, but the unknowing traveler may assume it is only reflecting the gloom around it.

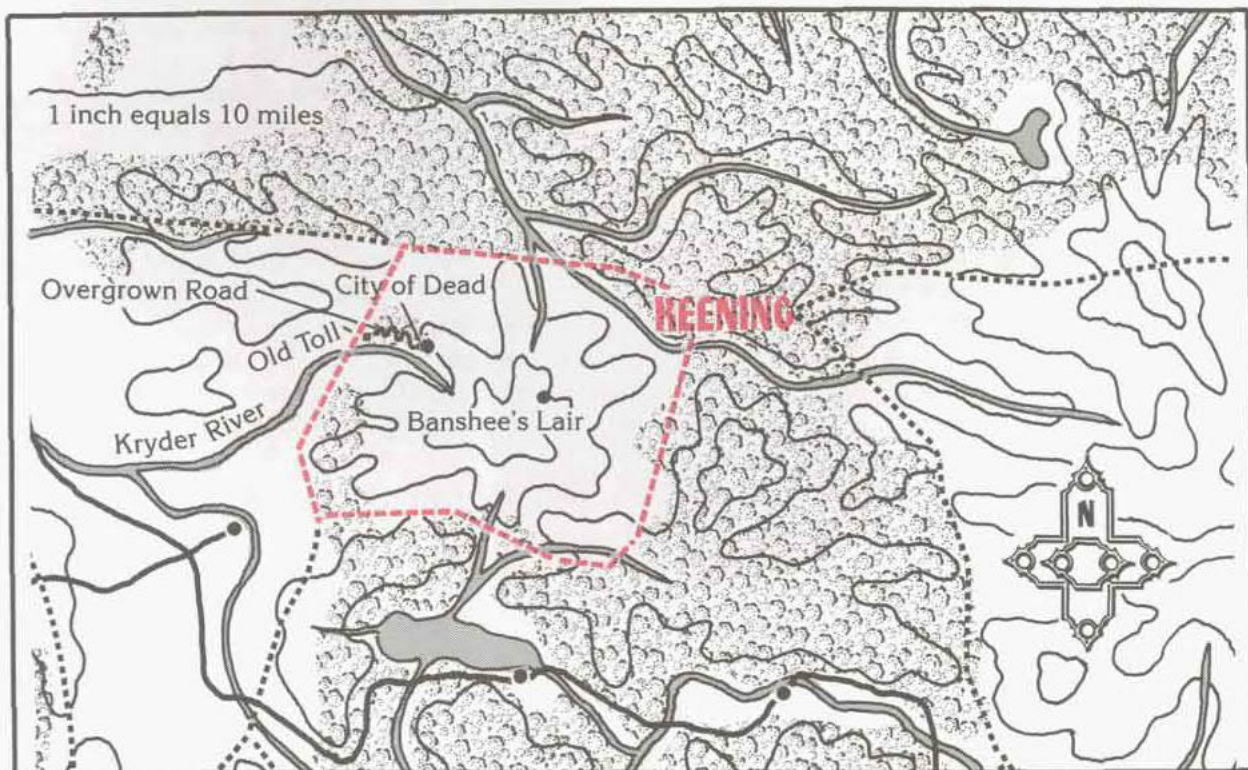
One of these streams flows westward, spilling into a small river, which in turn runs westward

to join another. This vein eventually meets the Vuchar River in Falkovnia. In Keening, near its source, the stream flows past a city of restless dead.

The Approach to the City

Keening's City of the Dead once lay in Arak on a major trade route. Merchants journeyed south from Sidnar in Darkon, skirting the mountains of Arak to reach the city. There they would meet with other tradesmen who had traveled north from Egertus in Nova Vaasa. Now Arak is barren and mountainous, and no major roads run across it. Sidnar and Egertus have declined. The once well-traveled road between them is gone.

Today the City of the Dead lies at the base of Keening's Mount Lament, not far from the Kryder River. To reach the city, adventurers must follow the river toward its source. As two arms of the mountain begin to flank the Kryder,



THE BANSHEE

a road appears—part mud, part stone, part bramble. The road disappears into a dark, twisted forest, leading north from the river.

This road once crossed another river in Arak. A drawbridge and a stronghold marked the crossing, but only a few cut stones and rotting timbers exist in Keening. The river is deep and swift here, and it is not safe to cross without ropes or other assistance.

Faithful Guards: A dozen soldiers were posted at the crossing in Arak to exact a toll. The soldiers, now lifeless, still guard the road beside the river in Keening. Unlike many of the dead in this domain, they will never walk again. They stand, nearly motionless, with only the dregs of their uniforms fluttering in the wind. Their mouths are gaping, as if in a scream. Each still grips a rusty iron sword, raised high, but their armor has fallen to the ground, the leather straps having been gnawed along with their flesh. At least one of the swords is magical, boasting a +2 bonus. (The section titled “The Hand” explains what happens if anyone takes a sword from the soldiers.)

A strongbox lies beside the soldiers, rusted shut. It contains mold and dirt, a few gold pieces, two silver armbands, and a gold brooch inset with a small ruby. The pin on the brooch is coated with poison. Anyone who handles the brooch has a good chance of being pricked (roll a Dexterity check with a -3 penalty; this is Ravenloft, after all). The wound bleeds profusely and the character suffers 1d10 points of damage.

The road winds through the woods circuitously, covering roughly a mile before reaching the city. A crow, flying straight above the trees, would cross less than a quarter mile, but that route is barely passable on foot. Thick brambles choke the forest.

By night, shadow creatures lurk in the woods that flank and sometimes obscure the road. By day, however, there is only the whisper of the wind, the rustling of dry leaves that cling to the trees, and the creak and groan of their twisted branches.

The Beggar Woman: About a half-mile up the road, buzzards circle overhead. By the side of the road, a beggar-woman crouches, shrouded in a hooded cloak. She turns when anyone approaches, revealing a wrinkled cheek and a milk-white eye. Only one side of her face is intact; the other is rotted. She is undead, held here only by the strange bonds of Ravenloft.

Like most of her kind in Keening, the beggar woman continues the motions of her former life, extending a hand as travelers pass by. Her voice is only a rasp. If the travelers do not offer her any money, or if they proffer some other insult, she rises slowly, shaking a finger. Minutes later, she crumbles into a heap of bones and decay; her skeleton can no longer support her.

The woman is not harmless, however. As a unique form of wight, she has the powers of an evil eye; her milky orb can cast *heat metal*. She can also cast *cause disease* (the reverse of *cure disease*) without touching her victim; he need only be within ten feet. The disease is debilitating, as described in the *Player's Handbook*.

The Beekeeper: In the meadow to the west of the beggar woman, a beekeeper tends his hives. He is a zombie, but he ignores visitors unless threatened. The bees are more dangerous; if anyone attacks or destroys the keeper, they swarm. These bees inflict 1d4 points of damage to two characters per round, unless repelled by smoke, fire, or a magical barrier. A character who plunges into the river—and stays there for at least a round—is also safe, save for the clinging, slithery weeds in the deeper portions.

The City of the Dead

Keening's city is like many other bustling medieval cities, except that all of its citizens are undead. They are zombies and wights, shackled to an emotionless routine that mocks the routines of the living. In other worlds, such creatures appear only at night. In Ravenloft the bounds of Nature are often stretched in favor of

THE BANSHEE

chaos. Here, the humble undead rise late in the morning and retire in the dead of night. Carousers revel the whole night through. They can bear the sunlight at any time, however, just as normal man can withstand the dark. The city's inhabitants attack anyone who interferes with their routine, but if the living walk quietly and peacefully among them, the undead are not disturbed.

As noted in the banshee's history, Arak was the original site of this settlement. The city had outgrown its first wall, been encircled by a second, and then attracted settlers beyond that. Even today, two dozen cottages lie outside the city's new wall (new only in the sense that it came last). These are two- and three-room structures with timber frames, thatched roofs, and walls of wattle (woven sticks) and daub (mud and dung). The roofs have gaping holes, some with a wisp of smoke escaping. Each cottage has a garden at the front and rear, which is now filled with neat rows of thistles and weeds. Women tend the gardens and scrub the stoops of their cottages.

Beyond these are several plowed fields, growing prickly wildflowers and neatly cultivated thorn bushes. Men who look like scarecrows tend the fields, moving slowly and methodically. Some stand hoeing though they have no hoes; they are only going through the motions. Neither the farmers nor the women outside the cottages will pay a visitor any mind. They may stop to stare, but will not otherwise react.

Guards patrol the city walls and stand at the gate. The guards at the gate are stern, unmoving, and straight-faced (as much as one can tell, given the tattered nature of their faces). Unless threatened, they allow travelers to pass through.

Within the gates, the city comes alive in its own strange way. In the horse market, zombies still silently barter the skeletal carcasses of their nags and steeds. Bards and gaily clad entertainers walk the streets playing inaudible tunes. The market square is filled

The Hand

Each dead soldier guarding the river crossing holds a rusty sword. Some are magical. (At least one boasts a +2 bonus.) If someone attempts to withdraw a sword—magical or otherwise—the body collapses into a heap. The soldier's hand, however, holds fast. It is fused to the hilt. A successful bend bars/lift gates roll is required to remove it, with only one attempt allowed.

The hand is the guardian of the sword, and it seeks revenge upon anyone who disarms its former master. On a night that follows, when the new owner of the sword is sleeping or vulnerable, the hand scuttles off the hilt, heading for the throat of the violator. It can leap 15 feet to reach its goal. Although it can inflict damage by simply punching or gouging, the thing's real goal is to strangle its victim, the fingers digging deeper and deeper with each passing minute. If the throat is covered by armor, damage is 1d4+2 points. If the throat is vulnerable, damage is 1d6+2 points per round. The victim must succeed on a bend bars/lift gates roll (trying every other round) to remove the hand and save himself before he loses all his hit points. No one else can save him.

Until it is destroyed, the hand attempts to complete its mission. If it was ripped from the victim's throat, it attempts to crawl to safety or feign destruction, waiting to attack again another night. Whether the violator abandoned the sword with the hand intact, or loosed the hand from the hilt before taking the sword, the thing still seeks revenge.

The land has given the hand a unique ability to teleport. Once a day, it can teleport to a random position within 100 yards of its intended victim, provided he is still in Keening. Then it crawls forth, taking the shortest route. When opportunity arises, the

Continued on next page. . .

THE BANSHEE

...Continued from page 17

hand attacks. It is a powerful form of the crawling claw, a creature native to the FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign setting.

No form of death magic or any *raise dead* spell can affect the hand. *Resurrection* renders it immobile for a number of turns equal to the level of the caster. *Charm*, *sleep*, *hold*, and similar spells do not affect the hand, as it is undead. It cannot be turned or *controlled*, however, nor does holy water affect it. Cold-based spells weaken it, reducing its damage by 1 point per die of damage caused. Edged weapons cause half damage. All magical weapons cause damage as if they were not enchanted in any way, although attack roll bonuses still apply.

Like other crawling claws, Keening's variety is telepathically linked to others of its kind. If it needs help, it can summon other hands to assist it in its efforts. If buried beneath a weight, each Keening claw can lift ten pounds.

Keening's Crawling Claw (12): Int Non-(0); AC 7; MV 9 (special); HD 2; hp 15; THACO 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 + 2/1d6 + 2 (unarmored foes); MR above; SZ T; ML fearless 20; XP 65; AL N

with sellers and buyers, even though product is sometimes scarce. The butcher sells and resells the same slab of rotting meat; his neighbor offers the same limp, dead chicken to anyone who passes. The shop fronts are open, revealing chandlers, coopers, cartwrights, shoe makers, armorers, helmet makers, tinkers, wiremakers, tailors, menders, goldsmiths—all that a normal city would hold. Trappers carry skins through the square. Blacksmiths labor before a forge. Children play, shambling among the crowds, or dangling a string toy before a dead, decaying pet.

Here, too, is the dark side of society. Thieves and drunken thugs seek out new prey. Crippled

beggars lie in the mud, extending a hand.

Ladies of the perpetual evening silently solicit passersby, offering what's left of their bodies. Every facet of city life still exists here. The folk who reside here are simply the voiceless, living dead, frozen in this miserable existence.

The buildings in the City of Dead are two and three stories tall, with exposed timber framing. The streets throughout much of the city are no more than narrow, winding alleys, over which the dilapidated buildings lean. Normally the streets of such a metropolis would be filled with animals, from cows and unruly hogs to chickens, stray cats, and dogs. Animals did not fare well when this city came to be in Keening, however. Only the rats, now skeletal or rotting, appear to have survived.

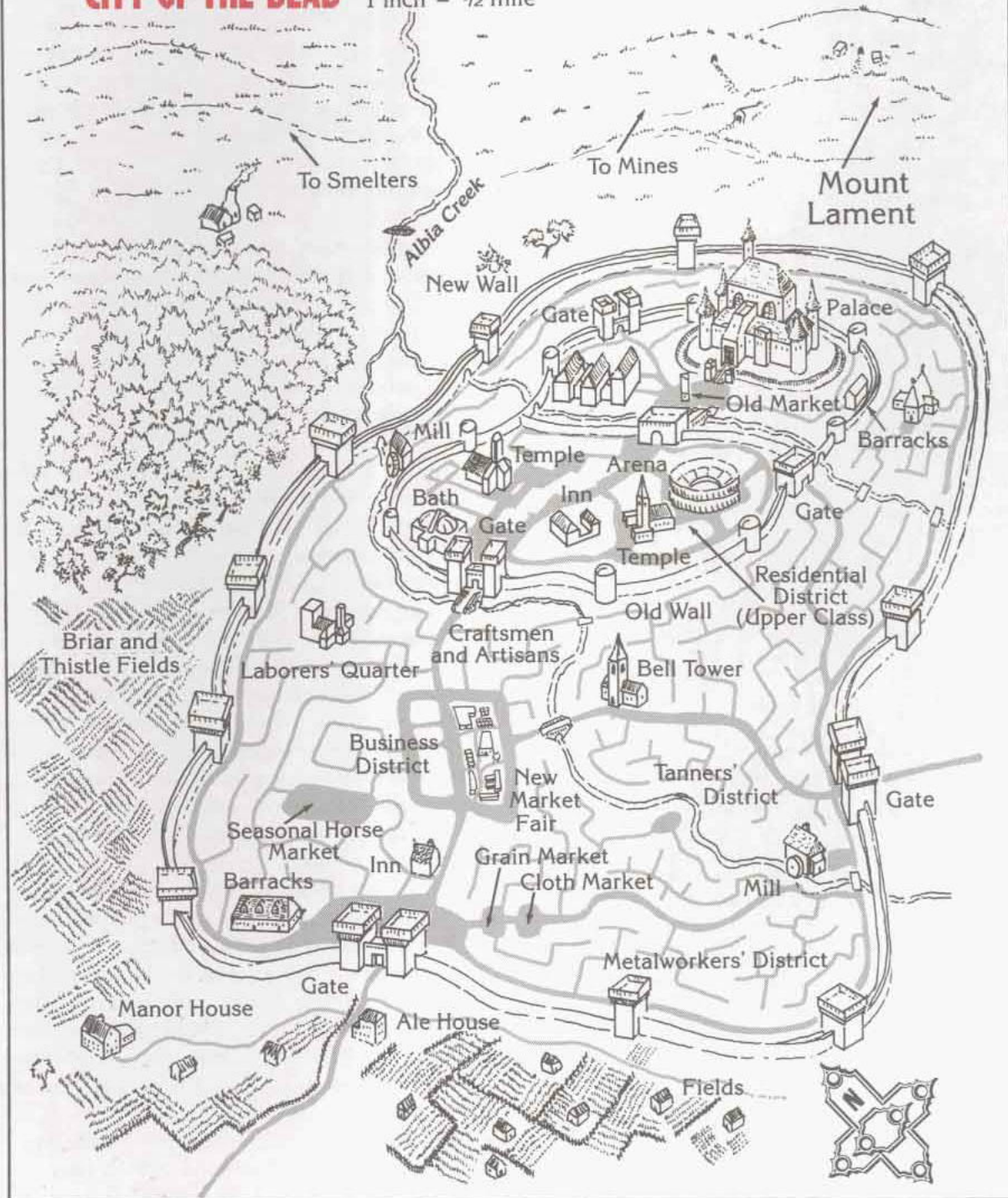
In fact, all things foul still exist here. There are no living or undead beasts of burden, yet the streets are strewn with dung and garbage, strangely preserved over the years. The tanner's district still carries the putrid odors common to such districts in other cities. Despite the lack of cattle, deer, or sheep, the tanners are still tanning hides in the time-honored fashion, by rubbing them with dung.

At the northern end of the city, inside the old wall, there is a palace. A dry moat surrounds it, filled with thick, unruly vines studded with thorns. The drawbridge is dangerously rotted, and the stones of the castle are disintegrating. The palace still holds many of the riches common to such a place. The noble who lived here is gone, the whereabouts of his family unknown. This is still the home of the loyal palace guard, however, and they intend to defend their posts "to the death."



THE BANSHEE

CITY OF THE DEAD 1 inch = 1/2 mile



THE BANSHEE



Confronting Tristessa

Banshee, Chaotic Evil

Armor Class	0	Str	NA
Movement	15	Dex	13
Level/Hit Dice	8	Con	NA
Hit Points	64	Int	15
THACO	13	Wis	13
No. of Attacks	1	Cha	9

Damage/Attack: 2d10 + 8 (touch)

Special Attacks: Death wail three times daily (paralyzing during daylight), crippling touch, spell-like powers

Special Defenses: +1 or better weapon to hit, detects presence of living in her domain

Magic Resistance: 50%

Anyone who sees the banshee must roll a fear check (saving throw vs. paralyzation) with a -2 penalty. Those who fail are 50% likely to drop any items they are carrying. All who fail this check flee in terror for 10 rounds.

The banshee's favorite attack is her keen. When she wails, any living creature within 30 feet of her must roll a saving throw vs. death magic. Those who fail die immediately, becoming one of Keening's countless fatalities. Tristessa can wail three times each day. If she wails during the day, paralysis takes the place of death. She often keens at sunset, upon leaving her lair, especially if she knows that intruders are near.

Ordinary banshees (or groaning spirits, as they are also called) can sense the presence of living creatures up to five miles away. Tristessa can sense the presence of any living creature within her entire domain. She is unsure of an intruder's exact location until he comes within five miles, however. Furthermore, she seldom attacks unless the intruder begins an ascent of her mountain.

Tristessa's touch can be deadly, inflicting 2d10 + 8 points of damage. She usually reserves this attack for creatures and characters

THE BANSHEE

who do not appear very threatening. If provoked, however, she may try to touch more powerful, hated foes, inflicting another, more sinister kind of damage.

At will, the banshee can inflict a crippling deformity with her touch. Any body part that meets her fingers warps and twists until it is useless: a face twists until an eye is obscured, a victim's hand becomes fingerless, a foot twists until the character limps with painful slowness. In addition to such effects, the deforming touch inflicts 1d8 points of damage, and it completely immobilizes the victim for one round while the deformity takes shape. The effect lasts only as long as the character is in Keening, but it has a 50% chance of resurfacing if the victim returns to Keening at a later date.

Ravenloft has enhanced the banshee's powers in other ways, too. She can make herself invisible at will, though her movement is halved. By day she can appear to be corporeal, although normal material objects pass right through her, causing no harm. In this form her wail causes paralysis, not death (normal saving throw). She can carry physical objects, using a natural ability to levitate them in her arms.

Only magical weapons with a +1 bonus or better can harm the banshee. She is completely immune to *charm*, *hold*, *slow*, and the like.

Drow Powers: All drow have certain base magical powers that improve with experience. Tristessa shares many of these powers, with an aptitude similar to that of an 11th-level drow. Specifically, she can use the following spell-like powers three times per day, unless otherwise noted:

- *Dancing Lights*, with the number of light sources increased by three.
- *Faerie Fire*, with the area of effect increased by 70 square feet.
- *Darkness*, creating a globe of darkness with a diameter up to 14 feet greater than usual. The globe is impervious to infravision and normal sight, although *true seeing* is still effective, as are *gems of brightness* and *gems of seeing*. She can use this power at will.

The banshee can move the effects of these three spells around at will (movement rate 16). She can vary the areas of effect as it suits her. Ranges for casting and control are 111 feet beyond the norm.

Like drow priestesses, the banshee also boasts the following powers, which she can use three times per day:

- *Clairvoyance*
- *Detect Lies*
- *Suggestion*
- *Dispel Magic*

In addition, the banshee can use these spell-like powers at will:

- *Levitate*
- *Know Alignment* (neither good nor evil can be detected in Ravenloft, only law, chaos, or neutrality.)
- *Detect Magic*

She was stripped of all other spells learned in the worship of her deity in Arak.

Closing the Borders: To close the borders of Keening, the banshee creates a wall of wind. No creature can fly or walk through this wall, and no magic can diminish its force.

Weaknesses: A vial of holy water inflicts 2d4 points of damage to the banshee when it is broken upon her. *Dispel evil* forces her to return to her lair, and prevents her from keening for 1d4 hours; otherwise, it has no effect.

The banshee turns as a special undead, but priests and paladins suffer a -4 penalty in these attempts. In bright light, the banshee must roll a successful Intelligence check with a -3 modifier to use any of her spell-like drow powers, except *invisibility*.

Tristessa's desire for revenge against the drow may be her most damaging weakness of all.



BLUEBEARD

In many realms there are men whose charms draw trusting and impressionable young women into their grasp. These rogues are the bait that lures an unending string of admirers, each one cast aside long before she herself has tired of the attachment. Some folk call such men “lady killers,” but only a little death is involved—the death of innocence.

Ravenloft has its lady killers, too. Here, however, the label is more appropriate. Below you'll find the tale of one such murderer, a man whose beard is as blue as twilight, and whose heart is as black as the abyss.

Appearance

Bluebeard's features are masculine, but not oversized and rough as in his former life. His beard is still blue, but it has become darker, attaining a shade of navy that some, unaccustomed to a man with a blue beard, might mistake for black.

Background

Many storytellers can relate the tale of a man called Bluebeard. Some believe they spin only a yarn, designed to keep young brides obedient to their husbands. Others think perhaps they tell of someone whose flesh has long since crumbled into dust. But Bluebeard and the atrocities he committed were not fiction, nor did death remove him from other worlds. Ravenloft did.

Lord Bluebeard was not a handsome man. In fact, he was singularly ugly. His features were bulbous and red, but his beard was most offensive, for it was literally a shade of blue. He was nonetheless charming, overcoming his physical faults with good grace and enticing wealth.

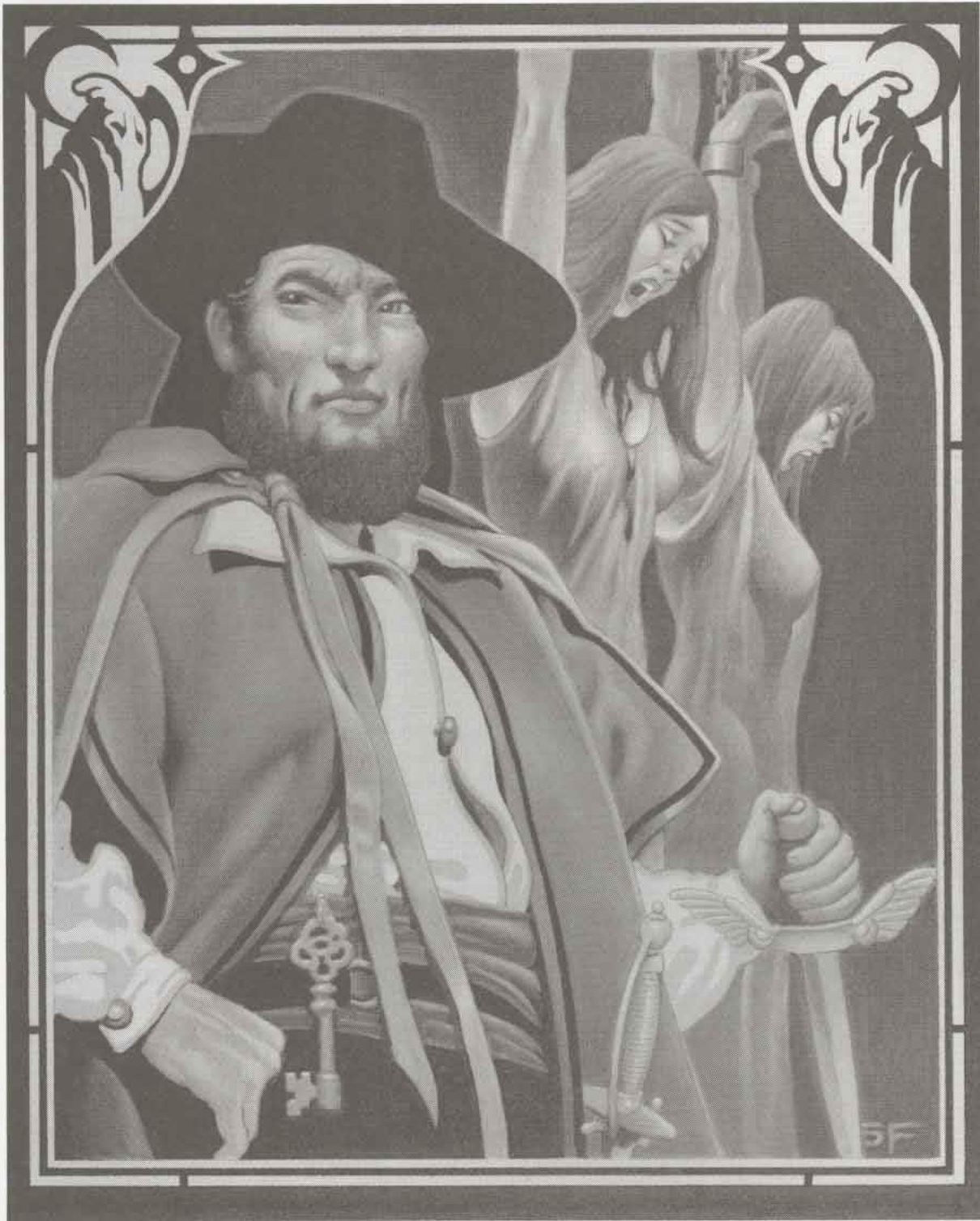
Bluebeard lived in a squat castle, with an octagonal tower at each corner. Every room was lavishly appointed, with gilded mirrors, silver accents, fine furniture, and imported carpets. The lord was generous with the people who served him, paying them well and frequently granting them leave. In fact, he required that few remain in his castle after nightfall, sending all but the stable hands, the steward, and a maidservant home to sleep in the village. To a stranger, it appeared that the lord did not want for anything. But he did have one misfortune: he could not keep a wife.

The first, it was said, ran off with a bard. According to the healer (who later left town), the second wife died in her sleep. The third wife simply disappeared. Lord Bluebeard called for a search, but she could not be found. Were it not for the kindness he evoked, most people would certainly have been suspicious. A few questioned these occurrences, but others chose to believe him unlucky. Of course, Bluebeard had killed each woman. In his eyes, he had rightfully removed them from their wifely duties, for which they had proven themselves unworthy.

A lovely and innocent girl named Marcella was Bluebeard's fourth wife. She was barely fifteen. Bluebeard was quite kind and generous to this girl, often surprising her with gifts. Marcella thought herself fortunate to be his wife. Though his tastes were peculiar and his opinions cast in stone, she soon found that when she agreed with him completely, theirs was a happy union.

Only a month after their wedding, Bluebeard announced that he would be leaving the castle for a few weeks. He gave her an enormous ring of keys, each to a different room in the castle. One of the keys, small and golden, he separated from the rest. This key, he said, would unlock the little tower room on the uppermost floor. She could go anywhere else she pleased, except the little room. “That is where I keep my surprises,” he said. “And I should be dreadfully angry if you

BLUEBEARD



BLUEBEARD

looked there." Marcella laughed, and promised to obey him.

As the days passed however, she found herself outside the little room, gazing at the door. Twice she pressed the little key into the lock, but recalling her husband's words, she did not enter. At last, however, her curiosity won out. Marcella put the key in the lock, and opened the door.

The windows in the room were covered, and at first she could not see. She stepped inside. The air was heavy with dust and a coppery or iron-like smell that she could not identify. Slowly, her eyes revealed the contents of the room. The floor was caked with dried blood. On the wall hung the corpses of three women, each suspended limply on a hook. Their throats had been cut.

Marcella dashed from the chamber, shutting and locking it behind her. She ran to her room and sat upon the carpet in tears, wondering what she was to do. As she looked at the little gold key, she saw that it was red with blood. She tried to wipe it, but the stain would not come off. It was a magical key, made red by the motion of turning in the lock of the little room. Only Bluebeard could use the key without this effect, and only he could erase the stain. The door had been opened, and Marcella's fate had been sealed.

Bluebeard returned only minutes after she had opened the door, like a bloodhound drawn to its mark. Immediately, he demanded that she give him the ring of keys, and asked what had happened to the little gold one. His wife at first tried to hide her indiscretion, claiming the key was lost. Bluebeard remained calm. "All is not as it seems," he said charmingly. "Give me the key, and I shall tell you a story that will restore your faith in me. No harm could I ever bring to someone as dear to me as you."

At last, Marcella gave him the key. Seeing its color, he remarked how sorry he was to lose her, for she was his favorite. But, he added, disloyalty could not be tolerated.

"You must have been quite eager indeed to

know the contents of the room," he said. She nodded, unable to speak. "Then know them, you will," said Bluebeard, "for you will join the others there for all eternity."

At that, he grasped her arm and dragged her to the room. She swooned as they crossed the threshold. Lord Bluebeard cut her throat and hung her from a hook, beside his other dead wives. With no more than a sigh, he closed the door and locked it. The key was again clean. Bluebeard left to go courting.

It is not clear how many wives Bluebeard killed before Ravenloft opened its arms and drew him in. There were more, to be sure, perhaps as many as eight. All of them, along with the lord who slew them, now reside in Bluebeard's small domain, which is called Blaustein.

Current Sketch

Ravenloft has granted Bluebeard many of the things he lacked in his former life. Over the course of a century, his features have improved. Though he is not yet handsome, he is no longer ugly. The unquestioning loyalty and obedience he once demanded have been granted. The people in his domain love him completely. Even his wives—now spirits—appear to be reaching the standards they found so unattainable in life.

Inwardly, Bluebeard has changed little since becoming a lord. He is the ultimate judge and jury, granting punishment as he believes it is deserved. Displeasing Bluebeard is a capital offense. Unfortunately, it is easy to do so. Bluebeard often has a hand in his victims' downfalls, tempting them toward the deeds that will seal their fate.

Bluebeard's murders have become more common, but the victim is only rarely his wife. Many of the young women among his folk are captivating, and any would accept Bluebeard's attentions. Those attentions are never forthcoming, however, for the women in Blaustein drive Bluebeard mad.

BLUEBEARD

If Bluebeard should covet any girl who is native to his domain, she takes on the semblance of one of his dead wives. He does not see a former wife as she was in life; that would hardly be unsettling. He sees them dead, decaying, and bleeding, and no matter what the expression of the real woman is, his former wife is always grinning at him. No one else who lives in Blaustein can see the transformation, though visitors with appropriate magical or psionic abilities are able to.

Despite his “distaste” for Blaustein’s women, Bluebeard has never lost his desire to marry. The women of Blaustein are repugnant to him, so he must rely on victims from other realms—the hapless, who accidentally visit his domain; the bold, who come for adventure but succumb to his charms; the slow-witted, who are lured by the promise of marriage to a wealthy man. His own villagers have attempted to procure him a wife from afar, so strong is their devotion. It is even said that Bluebeard’s charm can extend through the Mists, reaching any girl who is too greedy, foolish, or vain to resist.

His last wife, Lorel, came to him in this fashion. Somehow, Bluebeard was able to reach her in another realm, perhaps by invading her dreams. Spellbound, she stepped into the Mists of Ravenloft. She found herself at Bluebeard’s castle, with no memory of anything that had come before. Bluebeard became her guardian and teacher, and soon thereafter her husband. Within a month, Lorel, like the wives before her, entered the forbidden room. And like her predecessors, she found a permanent place within it.

Bluebeard’s Castle

Bluebeard’s castle sits atop a hill at the edge of his village, reached by a winding, rutted dirt road. The castle, like the village below, is almost completely under the control of Lord Bluebeard. He knows of every action within its heavy stone walls.

It is a massive, rectangular keep. Four octagonal towers mark the corners. No wall surrounds the castle, however. In fact, it seems the castle was designed to admit besiegers in a rush, for directly opposite the entrance is a pit, which plunges deep into the hill below the castle. The bottom of the pit cannot be seen. In times of peace, two heavy doors cover the pathway to the precipice. During wartime, the doors are designed to stay open, leaving the pit exposed.

The stairway leading up to the main floor lies to left of the entrance, behind a heavy oak door. In the heat of battle, attackers would fail to make the necessary turn and then plunge into the pit. Those who faltered would find the floor beneath them pitching forward, spilling them into the depths. Eventually, the soldiers who followed would recognize the danger and avoid it, but hearing the screams of their fellow soldiers below, they might still retreat in terror.

The ground floor of the keep, like that in most castles, is devoted to storage. There are no windows here, and the air is cool and dank. The base of each tower serves as a prison cell. In the center of the area is the rim of the great pit, with no rails to safeguard against falling. A character without a light to guide him might easily meet his end here.

The entrance level to the castle lies midway between the ground (storage) level and the first floor. The first floor contains the main living area and its grandly proportioned rooms. In the center is the great hall, with massive, rough-hewn banquet tables. The floor planks are covered with a musty straw, upon which herbs have been strewn, followed by heavy rugs. Tapestries cloak the walls, depicting lovely pastoral scenes.

Quarters for the castle guard are to the south of the great hall. Only by day are there any soldiers in the castle, however, and then only half a dozen. They haven’t much to do, except walk the walls between the towers, stand beside the castle door, and on occasion toss someone into the pit.

BLUEBEARD

The uppermost floor of the castle holds additional living quarters for the family and guests of the castle. The tower rooms have tall windows with closed shutters, set deep into the wall. Bluebeard does not use the rooms on this level.

A castle such as this could accommodate a small corps of soldiers, a complete household staff, a noble family, and countless guests. Today it houses only Bluebeard, his dead wives, and his guests. Any staff he retains, except the steward, quietly leaves for the village when nightfall approaches. Though they are loyal to Bluebeard, they refuse to stay in his castle at night (they believe it is haunted).

Many who have slept in the house have heard a woman in the corridor outside their rooms. The woman was crying. She rapped gently at the door, and begged quietly for help, as if she were afraid of being overheard. But when they opened the door, no one was there. Some later heard a woman's coquettish laughter, fading away as if she were running down the hall.

No villager blames Bluebeard himself for any of the occurrences in Blaustein. In fact, few can remember them; Bluebeard makes them forget. Some know Bluebeard has lost several wives to tragedy. They believe the castle is to blame, for it is said to be haunted by the ghost of Bluebeard's first wife. She is unable to rest, and resents any other woman brought into the castle. The folk are eager to employ someone who will bring an end to this haunting, so that their lord might live in peace.

The upper floor of the castle contains the room that wrought the terror of Bluebeard's wives, as well as the rooms in which they resided. Each wife had a suite of chambers here. Today these rooms open only if the name of the former occupant is uttered before the door. The voices of the wives can be heard behind the walls. Each wife has become a spectre.

Bluebeard avoids his castle when he can. Even if he has guests, he is apt to leave after bidding them good night, following the lead of his servants. Whenever he stays in the castle—which he must do every three days, in

order to sleep—he always awakens in the room in which his wives were hanged. They are huddled about him, caressing him tenderly like devoted sweethearts. Sometime during the night, they bring him there as he sleeps. With the help of Ravenloft's Dark Powers, the spectres carry him through the halls and secret passages of his castle. Bluebeard is the lord of his domain, but a prisoner of his dead wives and of his own misdeeds.

Like the folk in his domain, Bluebeard's dead wives are utterly devoted to him. In death, they became the faithful creatures he expected them to be in life.

Confronting Bluebeard

Fighter, Lawful Evil

Armor Class	10 (5)	Str	19
Movement	12	Dex	17
Level/Hit Dice	5	Con	13
Hit Points	30	Int	13
THACO	15 (12)	Wis	9
No. of Attacks	1	Cha	8

Damage/Attack: 1d4 + 3 (*silver dagger* +3)

Special Attacks: Nil

Special Defenses: Immune to level drain; can detect lies at will

Magic Resistance: 10%

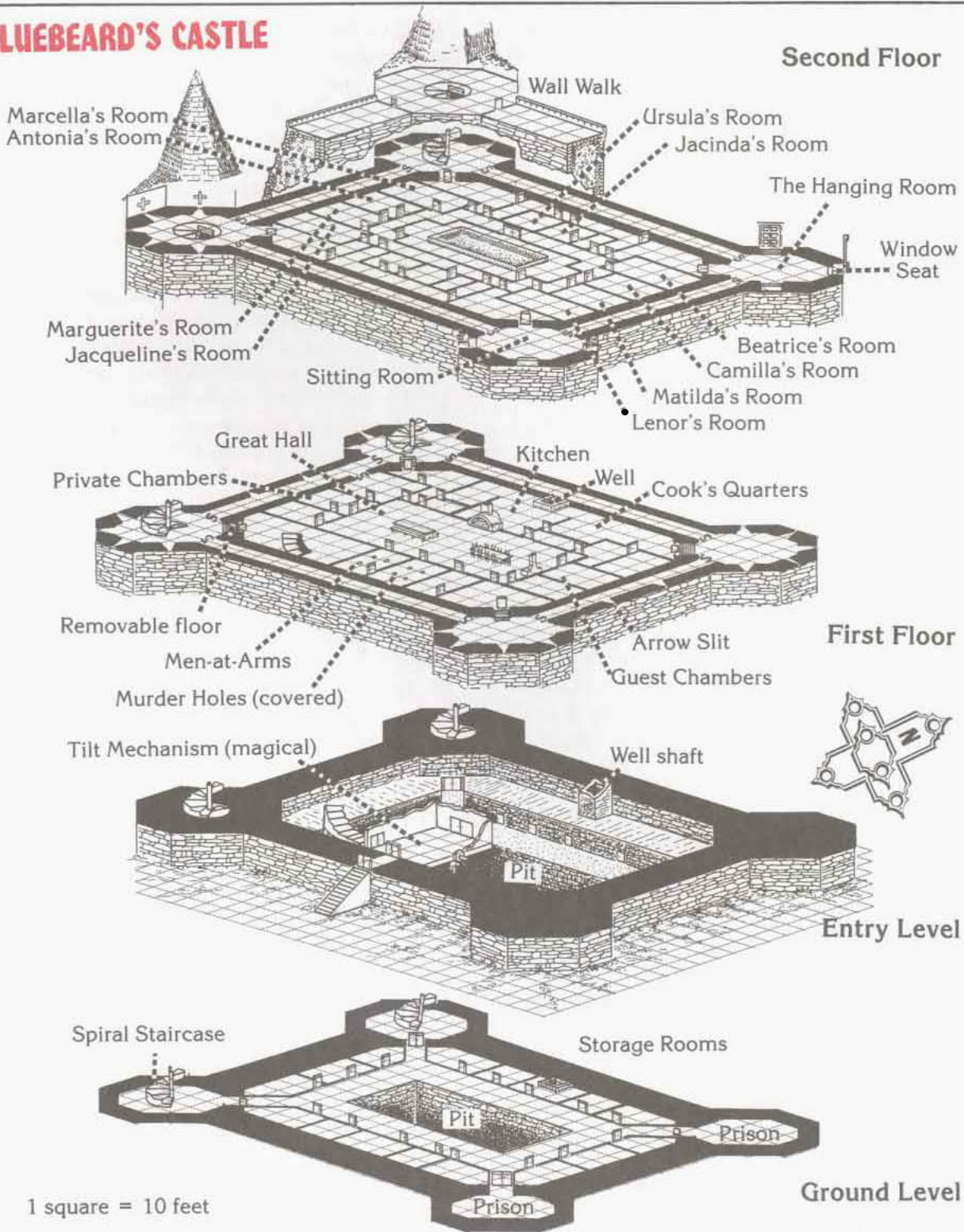
Bluebeard's combat abilities are limited. By day, he relies on his devoted staff and the villagers in his domain for protection. By night, the spectres of his wives can wander the castle freely, and try to shield him from harm.

Bluebeard has the ability to charm, but that does not account for the fanatic loyalty of his folk. They cannot remember anything he wants them to forget. Ravenloft has granted him this power, although it affects only the natives of Blaustein.

The land has also given him the ability to detect lies at will, so that he might know who deserves his wrath. This power affects anyone he confronts.

BLUEBEARD

BLUEBEARD'S CASTLE



EBONBANE



N

ot all of Ravenloft's foul lords are living or once-living things. One, at least, is fashioned from cold metal and even colder darkness. Manufactured in a forge of foulest evil, the enchanted sword Ebonbane has repeatedly proven its right to a domain in the demiplane of dread.

Appearance

Physically, Ebonbane appears as a slender-bladed, long sword. Its hilt has been cast from a single piece of silver that, mysteriously, never seems to tarnish. Although ornate,

Ebonbane's pommel has no special powers or abilities.

Its blade is fashioned from a strange, alien metal that was brought to the Prime Material plane from another dimension. Along its length, the keen blade is set with foul-looking runes of purest evil. These runes have many powers, all described later; they seem to glow with an eerie black aura.

Background

The macabre lore that surrounds the origins of Ebonbane begins, curiously enough, with a tale of justice and devotion to the holy cause of truth. Centuries ago, there lived a young woman named Kateri Shadowborn. Her parents were wealthy, but they were humble and just people. Much of their money went to the betterment of life for all those who dwelled in their lands.

As Kateri grew from a little girl into a young woman, she began to feel an emptiness in her heart. For all the good that she and her ancestors had done, there was something missing. By the time she had reached her midteens, Kateri Shadowborn knew what it was that she needed.

From that time on, she vowed to follow the holy path of the paladin. No longer would the Shadowborn name be simply associated with kindness and mercy; now it would be synonymous with justice and holy vengeance.

As the years passed, Kateri Shadowborn fought evil on every front. She single-handedly drove back hordes of marauders and destroyed nests of evil that threatened the well-being of her church.

Despite her prowess, Kateri Shadowborn was as vulnerable to time as any mortal. Eventually she was forced to lay down the holy sword that had served her for so many years. Having had no time in her busy life for romance, courtship, or motherhood, she planned to live out her autumn years peacefully. From her home in the ancestral Shadowborn Manor, she would oversee the family wealth and its allocations to charity. In the end, when she died, she planned to turn all of her family's possessions over to the church. The Shadowborn name would die with her, but the good that it had done would live on for decades.

Such a quiet end to a warrior's life was not to be, however. In her day, Kateri had made many enemies. While most of those who had opposed her church and its teachings had been destroyed or converted, there were others who plotted revenge.

One such group, a band of evil priests in the service of a dark deity whose name is best unspoken, decided that Lady Shadowborn had to die. Further, as an example to all who opposed their dark designs, she had to die horribly and in some way that would destroy her much-vaunted faith.

Over the course of several months, they began to fashion an evil magical weapon: the sword that was to be called Ebonbane. When the final dark rune was set upon the blade, an evil being from the outer planes was imprisoned in the weapon. Much to the surprise of the sword's creators, however, the spells that they had woven to control the extradimensional entity were woefully inadequate. When they

EBONBANE



EBONBANE

cast the last component of this mystical enchantment upon Ebonbane, they found its power turned back upon them. Now they were slaves of the presence they had attempted to contain.

One aspect of the magical spell cast on Ebonbane did succeed, however. Although the sword was free-willed, it still had become gripped with an utter hatred for Lady Shadowborn and all her works. The weapon quickly began to plan her destruction.

Ebonbane arranged to be found by a monk from a monastery near the Shadowborn estate. As soon as the unsuspecting holy man reached out to touch the weapon, Ebonbane struck. Lashing out with its titanic will, it utterly destroyed the monk's vital life energies and took over his body.

With the body of the monk nothing more than a puppet under the control of the evil Ebonbane, the sword instructed the monk to carry it to Shadowborn Manor. When the monk was received by Lady Shadowborn, he explained that the workers at the monastery had found this sword and wanted her advice on what to do with it. When Lady Shadowborn saw the unholy weapon, her natural ability to sense all things evil warned her of the treachery.

The battle that followed was magnificent. With every ounce of faith that she could muster, the aging paladin fought off the influences of the weapon. Time and time again, the animated sword tried to run Lady Shadowborn through, but always her holy sword turned it aside.

In the end, however, Ebonbane was too much for her. Calling on all the power of the dark dimension that had spawned it, Ebonbane delivered a final titanic blow that shattered Lady Shadowborn's *holy avenger*.

As the battle had raged on, Ebonbane was unaware that it was drawing the attention of Ravenloft's dark powers. With each iota of fiendish energy that it drew from the evil plane of its birth, it increased their interest in it. Finally, as the last stroke of this deadly artifact

took the life of Kateri Shadowborn, the Mists engulfed the estate.

When Ebonbane, thrilled with the victory that it had won, tried to leave the grounds, it found that it could not. At every turn, it was confronted by an impassable stone wall. It was imprisoned in the demiplane of dread.

Current Sketch

Ebonbane has found its time in Ravenloft utterly unbearable. It knows that its powers here are a hundred times what they were in the outside world, but it feels that this is no consolation for the loss of its own freedom.

Curiously, Ebonbane has never been able to grasp the full meaning of what has happened to it. It believes that it has been imprisoned by some trick of Lady Shadowborn. Even if confronted with absolute proof that it is imprisoned in a special demiplane full of evil creatures, Ebonbane would not believe this. In fact, the odds are good that anyone who dares to confront it with such information would die horribly.

In addition to its own rage over having been imprisoned in Ravenloft, Ebonbane finds that it has not been wholly successful in its attempt to slay Lady Shadowborn. The paladin, now in the form of a geist, remains a part of her ancestral home and, thus, of Ebonbane's domain.

Ebonbane has tried many times to drive Lady Shadowborn from its land, but it has always failed. The vital faith and religious strength that guided her through her life as a paladin still serve her in death. So long as Lady Shadowborn's pure faith remains unshaken, she seems to be able to resist Ebonbane's powers.

From time to time, when certain signs are right and the stars are in their proper positions, Lady Shadowborn is able to reach out of Ravenloft and draw in persons who are directly related to her. Thus, in addition to serving as a thorn in the dark lord's side, Lady Shadowborn has sought to destroy it several times. While she has been no more successful at defeating it

EBONBANE

than it has been at breaking her spirit, these occasional attacks have only served to remind Ebonbane that it is not the absolute master of all that takes place in its domain. Ebonbane has destroyed every group of heroes that Lady Shadowborn has been able to call into Ravenloft to battle it. With each defeat it feels the faith of its enemy slipping a little bit.

The Four Keys

Lady Shadowborn has learned that Ebonbane can be destroyed only by those who can gather together four “keys” and use them against the evil blade. Each of these magical components is based upon one of the four elements and has a special significance. The key of earth, for example, is symbolic of the metal from which Ebonbane was fashioned, and the key of fire represents the evil flames that forged its body into its current shape.

Ebonbane is unaware that these elemental components even exist, let alone that it can be destroyed by them. Thus, it is possible that a group of heroes drawn into the domain by Lady Shadowborn may one day be able to assemble these keys and use them against Ebonbane. With each failure, however, the power of Ebonbane becomes stronger and the faith of Lady Shadowborn diminishes. If she is to be freed from the curse of an eternal battle of wills with Ebonbane, it must happen soon.

The Domain

Ebonbane’s domain is a very small one. In essence, it is nothing more than the grounds around Shadowborn Manor and a mysterious circular stone wall that surrounds the house at a distance of about 100 yards. Within the wall, Ebonbane is lord. Beyond it, the Mists of Ravenloft rule.

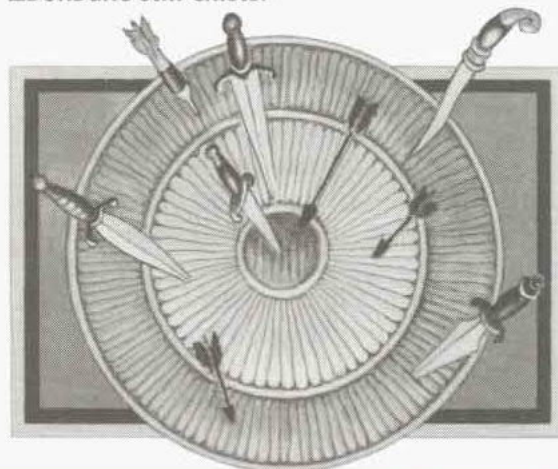
Anyone who comes upon the walls of this domain while traveling the Mists of Ravenloft will find that it is not solid from the outside. At least, that is how it first appears. Any object—a

staff, a sword, a hand, etc.—that is thrust into the wall passes through it effortlessly. Once this is done, however, the exploring object cannot be withdrawn. The only course of action open, aside from the abandonment of the trapped object or person, is to press forward and proceed into the wall. Stepping through the wall is simple enough, for it offers no resistance, and anyone can freely enter the domain.

Leaving Shadowborn Manor, on the other hand, is not so simple. Characters trying to magically bypass the wall find that their spells and similar abilities have no effect. From within, the wall is solid and utterly invulnerable. Scaling the wall is equally impossible, for it seems to flow like water under those who attempt to climb it. Even the most highly skilled of thieves cannot scale it.

Those exploring the domain discover that it is utterly devoid of animal life. Plants are abundant, from the estate’s blanket of lush grass to the trees dotted across it. Even fungi and molds can be found here, but all animal life has died out.

Unlike lords of other domains, Ebonbane cannot open and close the borders of the Shadowborn estate at will. The mysterious wall that encircles the manor house keeps the domain and its secrets locked up tight at all times. It is said that no one who enters this domain can escape it alive so long as the vile Ebonbane still exists.



EBONBANE

Confronting Ebonbane

Although Ebonbane is as much a thinking creature as any of Ravenloft's other lords, it is wholly inorganic and, as such, difficult to quantify in AD&D® game terms. The following conventions should suffice for encounters with the dreaded Ebonbane.

Artifact, Chaotic Evil

Armor Class	-10	Str	N/A
Movement	9	Dex	N/A
Level/HD	n/a	Con	N/A
Hit Points	n/a	Int	17
THACO	10	Wis/Ego	17
No. of Attacks	1	Cha	15

Damage/Attack: 1d8

Special Attacks: See text

Special Defenses: See text

Magic Resistance: Nil

Long before its imprisonment in Ravenloft, Ebonbane was both powerful and intelligent. Infused with a cruel and cunning intelligence by its creators, it could communicate telepathically or by speech with anyone who held it. If wielded in combat, it acted as a +4 weapon. When not in the hand of a warrior, however, Ebonbane was far from helpless. It could move about via an innate form of levitation and strike on its own.

As is often the case, however, Ebonbane found that its transformation into a darklord greatly increased its abilities. Like all the lords of Ravenloft's domains, Ebonbane is now an almost unstoppable force.

The runes on Ebonbane's blade are powerful and unholy, so much so that they act as *symbols* of whatever type it wishes. It can invoke each manner of *symbol* but once per day, however, so some measure of protection against this attack form can be had by careful record keeping on the part of those exploring its domain.

As mentioned above, Ebonbane is a +4

weapon able to move about and attack at will via its own levitation ability. Since coming to Ravenloft, however, Ebonbane has also acquired the powers of a *vorpal sword* and a *flame tongue*.

Although Ebonbane's domain (Shadowborn Manor and its grounds, described later) is small, its power there is virtually absolute. For example, the weather around the manor is wholly under its control. It can change a peaceful spring day into a freezing ice storm. This power extends to the point of controlling day or night, the phase of the moon, and similar effects. Thus, Ebonbane could cause the sun to stand high in the sky, as if at noon, for hours on end only to have it suddenly plunge beneath the horizon when a party of adventurers nears the manor itself.

Another of Ebonbane's more dangerous powers is the ability to animate blades. No sword or dagger is safe from the evil powers of Ebonbane, not even *holy avengers* or artifacts like the *Sword of Kas* or the mighty *Excalibur*. At will, Ebonbane can animate any and all swords and daggers in its domain and cause them to attack nearby characters or creatures. These weapons strike with a THACO of 10 and inflict their normal damage with each successful strike. Magical abilities inherent in the weapon, such as those of a *vorpal blade* or *sword of life stealing*, function normally, while those requiring a trigger by the wielder, as is the case with the *sunray* power of a *sun blade*, do not work. Ebonbane greatly enjoys turning a party's own weapons against its members and will often hold back on more lethal attacks in order to satisfy its taste for this vicarious hacking away at victims.

Ebonbane is able to dominate those who wield it in accordance with the normal rules for intelligent weapons in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. When it takes control of the person wielding it, Ebonbane instantly destroys its holder's spirit. What remains of the living body of someone who has lost such a duel of wills with Ebonbane is nothing more

EBONBANE

than a husk. The body remains alive for a few days (a week at the most) and then simply collapses and dies. While the body lives, it obeys Ebonbane's commands and, in game terms, acts much like a zombie.

Since it is an unnatural creature, Ebonbane survives by drawing off the life energies of living creatures that enter its domain. Because of this, nonmagical healing does not take place in or around Shadowborn Manor. The natural recuperative powers normally associated with living creatures are drawn off by this dreadful sword and serve to satisfy its dark hunger.

Shadowborn Manor

The heart of Ebonbane's domain is Shadowborn Manor. This is a fine building, crafted with loving care in ages past by Lady Shadowborn's ancestors. She, like her parents and their parents before her, kept it in good repair even while she was away on adventures.

The manor is a beautiful gothic building, with spires scattered about it and large windows to make the most of natural illumination. A large garden separates the main building from a crypt that houses several of Lady Shadowborn's ancestors.

The Temple

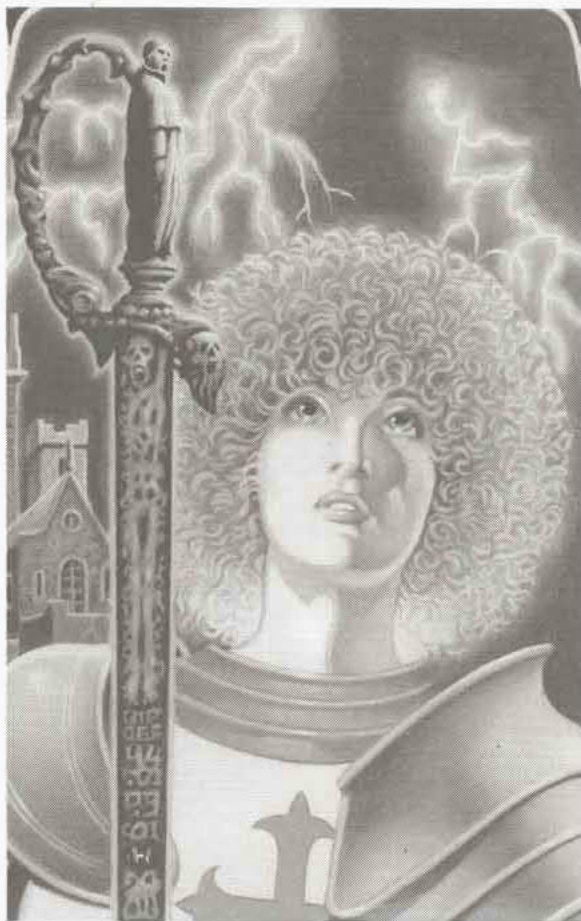
Perhaps the most important place in the domain that was once Shadowborn Manor is the temple. (See room 8 on the map, page 34.) Built under the watchful eyes of Kateri Shadowborn herself, this room was a sacred place holy to the deity she served.

In the years since she died, Lady Shadowborn has kept her faith strong by visiting the temple often in her geist form. Ebonbane, on the other hand, has never been able to break down the barriers of faith that protect this room. Thus, the area is like a blind spot to Ebonbane. So long as the temple remains holy and Lady Shadowborn's faith remains strong, it has no

sight into or influence over anything that goes on here. Persons exploring the domain will find this temple a safe refuge—provided they do nothing to defile it, and thereby allowing Ebonbane to break through its protective aura.

Map Key

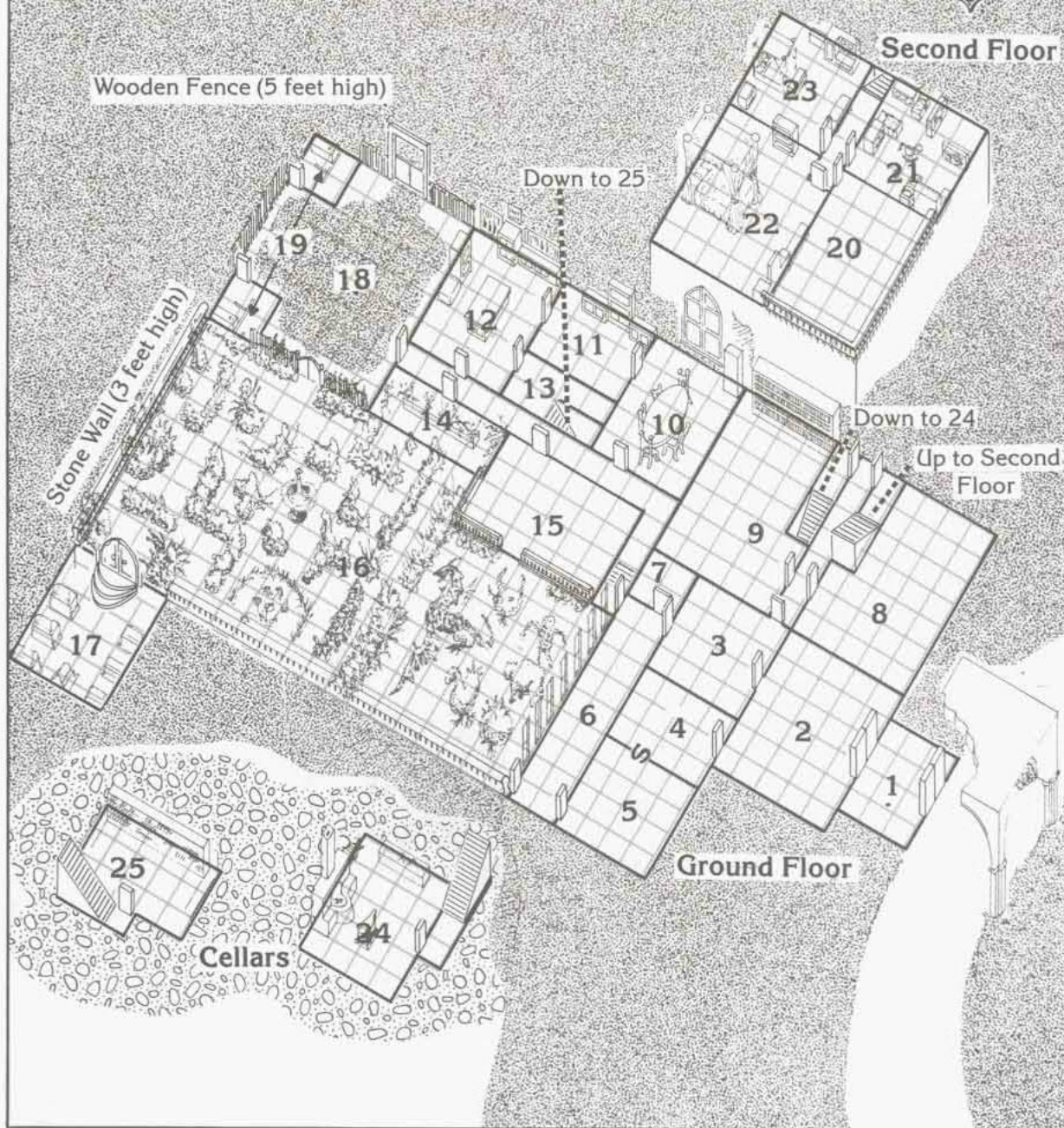
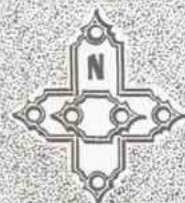
The following map key identifies the various rooms in Shadowborn Manor and indicates their use prior to the estate's consumption by Ravenloft. (See page 34.) It is impossible to judge what changes have taken place within the walls of the manor since it became the heart of Ebonbane's domain. No living being has ever ventured into this accursed house and returned to tell of his discoveries within.



EBONBANE

SHADOWBORN MANOR

One square = 10 feet



EBONBANE

- 1. Archway:** This area served as a carriage stop for dropping off and picking up passengers in foul weather.
- 2. Entry Hall:** As one might expect from so wealthy a family, the entrance to the manor was richly decorated. It served not only to welcome guests, but also to impress them with the wealth and taste of the Shadowborn family.
- 3. Cloak Room:** This was actually more of a walk-through area than a cloak room, although racks along the walls served to hold a variety of outdoor clothing.
- 4. Parlor:** This small sitting room was used to meet with those visiting the estate on business. It was well appointed, but hardly plush.
- 5. Den:** This working area was used for the affairs of the manor. All matters of business were recorded or considered here.
- 6. Gallery:** This long hallway was decorated with a string of windows that looked out upon the garden (16). Portraits of the various family members who lived in Shadowborn Manor were set on the wall opposite these windows.
- 7. Closet:** This walk-in closet was used primarily for storing old documents and records that were too important to throw away, but were not needed on a daily basis.
- 8. Temple:** This area served as a shrine to the god that Lady Shadowborn served. (Before that, it had been a gallery for the sculptures and other works of art that her ancestors collected.) Since Ebonbane has taken control of the estate, it has become a very important area (as described earlier).
- 9. Library:** All of the family's books, scrolls, and similar materials were kept here. It served as an informal study and research area as well. Lady Shadowborn added many volumes of religious writings to the collection.
- 10. Dining Room:** This was an ornate and tasteful dining area with easy access to the pantry and kitchen.
- 11. Pantry:** A wide variety of preserved foods was stored here.
- 12. Kitchen:** This well-stocked room held every conceivable manner of kitchen utensil.
- 13. Larder:** This area served to store fruits, vegetables, and perishable foods.
- 14. Greenhouse:** Many of the Shadowborns were avid gardeners, and this area was the heart of their hobby.
- 15. Porch:** This stone deck area was often set with fine furniture so that family and guests could pass the time enjoying nice weather outdoors.
- 16. Garden/Topiary:** Many of the inhabitants of this estate had a fondness for working outdoors in this area.
- 17. Crypt:** Lady Shadowborn's ancestors were interred here. At the time she died, Lady Shadowborn was to be the last of her line and, coincidentally, would have filled the last available resting place in this chamber.
- 18. Kitchen Yard:** This small courtyard was enclosed by a wooden fence and provided the kitchen staff an area to work outside.
- 19. Outhouse:** These two privies were separated from the house by the kitchen yard, a fact that many of the estate's inhabitants complained about in winter.
- 20. Balcony:** This area provided a fine view of the estate grounds.
- 21. Bedroom:** This was a well-appointed room kept for children.
- 22. Master Bedroom:** The lord or lady of the manor slept here. It was a place of fine furnishings and tasteful elegance.
- 23. Guest Bedroom:** Anyone spending the night at the manor would be put up here.
- 24. Workshop:** Lady Shadowborn had this area added to the manor. She is said to have had an interest in fashioning weapons and is rumored to have crafted her holy sword in this very room.
- 25. Wine Cellar:** The wealth of the Shadowborn family is perhaps most obvious from the quality of the vintages that were stored in this area.

THE THREE HAGS



T

his is the tale of a haggish trio—the first a slimy sea hag, the second an ugly annis, and the third a grisly greenhag. Together this covey rules and torments Tepest, a mountainous domain at the center of Ravenloft's Core.

It is no coincidence that these three ladies share a domain. Once, long ago, they were sisters, all comely young creatures with milk-white skin and hair the color of honey. They were the daughters of a farmer and his wife. But the girls aspired to be more, and much more they would become.

Appearance

Like all hags, the three sisters can change shape at will, assuming any appearance that pleases them. Yet none can *truly* please them, for they always see themselves and each other as they really are: hideous, wretched, skinny creatures, somewhat like hunch-backed old women, with wrinkled and baggy skin, pointed noses, sharp black teeth, and a plethora of warts. Once beautiful and vain, they are now tortured by their appearance.

Leticia, the eldest, became a sea hag, the most disgusting of them all. At four feet in height, she is also the smallest. Her skin is yellow, with open sores which ooze a whitish fluid. Her face is distorted by bony protrusions, and her eyes are red with large, black pupils. Her hair resembles long, limp seaweed that cloaks her body. Her tears are yellow-green.

Laveeda, the middle sister, became an annis. Like her monstrous counterparts in other worlds, she is large and physically powerful. At eight feet (even when hunched), she towers over her sisters. Her skin is shiny, mottled, and blue-black; to cheer herself, she fancies that it looks like clouds drifting softly across the night sky. It is anything but soft, however; when

struck, her skin is as hard as iron. Where she once had graceful curves, Laveeda now has baggy pouches of flesh. Loose skin dangles from her arms and hips. Her teeth are large, sharp, and black. They are too big for her mouth, and it always hangs open, releasing glistening threads of drool. Her blue hands are equipped with razor-sharp talons, like those of a vulture. Her tears are black.

Lorinda, the youngest sister, became a greenhag. She stands five feet tall. Her skin is greenish-brown, like a toad's, and although it looks fleshy, it's as hard as tree bark. Her long hair is black and greasy. Her eyes are brilliant orange, with dark, reptilian slits for pupils. Her fingers are long and slender, with sharp, rock-hard talons that are black as coal. Lorinda's tears are red.

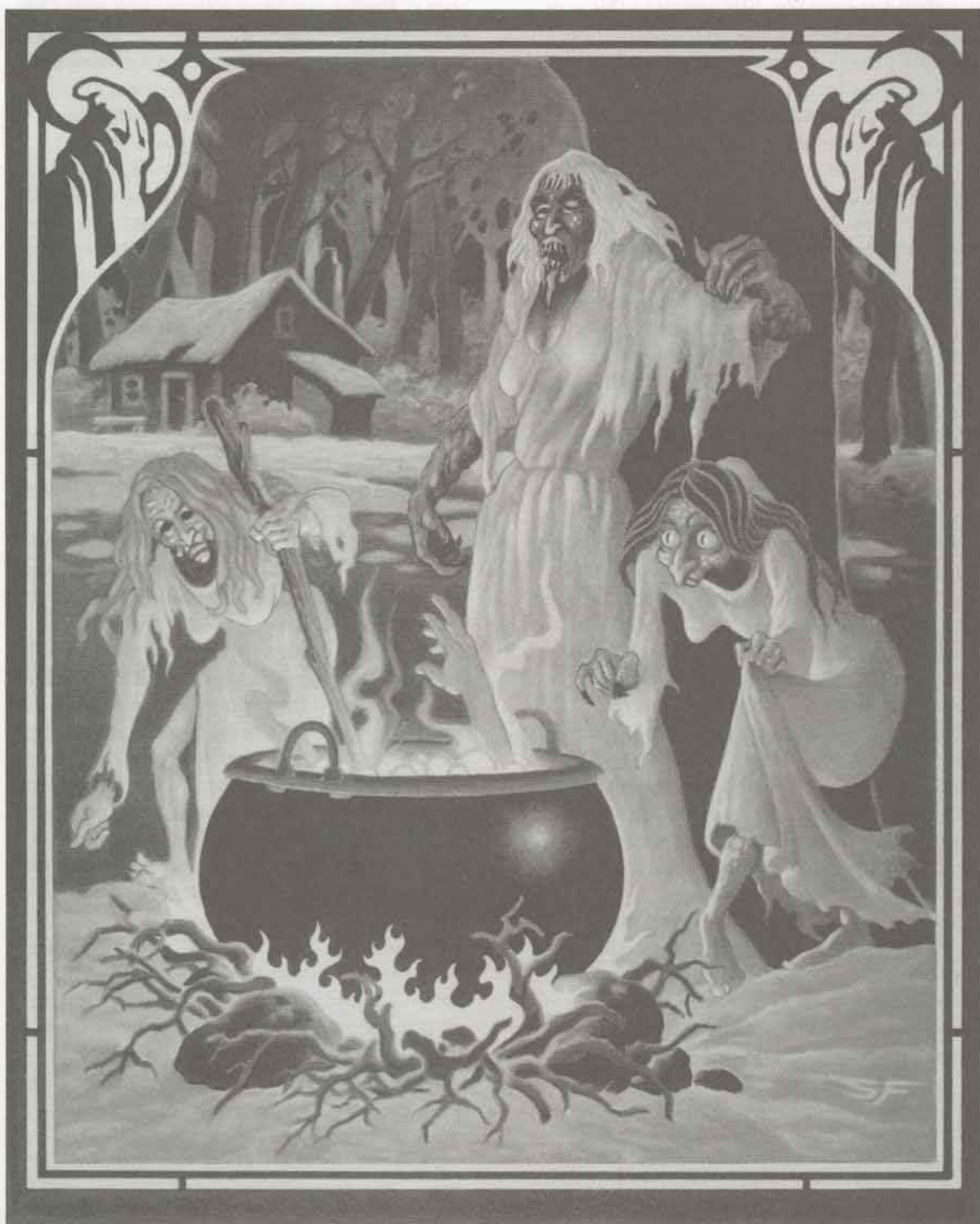
Background

Rudella Mindefisk, a poor farmer's wife, lived on a desolate patch of ground with her husband and two sons. She was a lonely woman. Her men-folk were veritable ogres, surly and gruff. They spent their days hunting or tending the fields, leaving Rudella alone. The nearest homestead was two days down the road. Occasionally a traveler would visit the Mindefisks' cottage, seeking shelter, but such visits hardly brought the companionship Rudella desired.

With each passing year, Rudella longed for daughters. Rudella's husband did not share her hopes, thinking that girls would be useless on a poor farm. But Rudella pressed the subject, until he forbade her to mention it again, stating he would sooner quit their marriage bed than allow such horrors to pass. And he did just that.

Rudella said nothing more of her wish for daughters, but she did not forget it. As the day gave way, and night's shadows crept into the cottage, she sat by the embers of the fire alone. While her husband and sons slumbered, she begged the fairies (for she believed in them) to bring her a daughter, whom she vowed to love

THE THREE HAGS



THE THREE HAGS

more than her own life. She repeated this vow for three nights before she abandoned hope.

Rudella's pleas did not go unnoticed. Within a week, a great basket appeared at the front door—a basket containing three little girls, who appeared no older than three years. Rudella took them in. Her husband was incensed. He bellowed that they could remain in his house only so long as they did not burden him; else he would throw them out, Rudella along with them.

The girls were sickly and frail at first, but under Rudella's care they flourished. Unfortunately, Rudella herself did not. As her daughters grew stronger, her own vitality waned, for she had to work three times as hard to maintain the household. She died two years later.

Holger, Rudella's husband, immediately sought to be rid of the girls. He took them to the woods and left them to the wolves. But the girls found their way home. Next he bundled them in a sack and plunged them into the river. Still, they managed to return. Thereafter he abandoned all thoughts of destroying them, fearing the wrath of the gods and fairies, who certainly must have enchanted the girls.

In time, Holger came to accept them, though he was never fond of them. In his view, they were the source of his wife's demise and could contribute little to the farm. He expected nothing more from them than a tidy cottage, a well-milked cow, and a simple stew for dinner. Their brothers felt the same way.

The girls spent most of their time alone together, and that suited them. When the men went to work in the fields, they managed their chores and put together a meager meal for themselves (for they did not eat with the others). Afterward, they plotted. And they schemed. They planned for the day when they would leave the farm behind, and attain better, more luxurious lives. What began as wistful daydreams became dark, heartfelt desires.

But how could they attain gold? The answer came when a stranger, a traveler, came to the

door of the farm during a storm one evening. The girls knew this man had a purse because he gave their father a gold piece in exchange for shelter in the stable and a bite to eat.

The farmer and his sons rose early the next morn. Soon after, the visitor came to the kitchen for his breakfast. The girls, just 13, were as ready as seasoned criminals. While Laveeda distracted the traveler, her two sisters attacked him. Leticia struck him between the shoulder blades with an ax, while Lorinda sliced his throat with a sickle. The girls picked the dead man's pockets and uncovered a few additional gold pieces. It was a meager prize, but they had found the whole experience exhilarating.

Burying their victim would be a chore, and none of the young ladies was predisposed to digging. They elected to cook him in a stew, which they would serve to their father and brothers. They had never worked so hard as they did that day. To be rid of the man's horse, they put a barb beneath its saddle, and sent the beast galloping away.

With each subsequent traveler, the girls repeated their grisly attack. But after three years and six victims, they had yet to amass a fortune. Each, on her own, had decided that instead of killing the next man, she would woo him, and convince him to take her away from the farm before the others had a chance to murder him. Each had little intention of remaining with him, but imagined that better opportunities would present themselves in a more populous area.

Before long, when the Mists hung over the land, another victim arrived—a rogue and a dandy. Each girl in turn tried to ply him with her affections. These he accepted, enjoying their little plot. But he had no intention of taking any of them from the farm, and in the presence of the others, he favored them equally.

Each girl was too jealous to allow him to choose a sister and not herself. When Lorinda was entertaining him in the barn, Laveeda spied

THE THREE HAGS

on her. Leticia spied on them all. Enraged, each sister vowed to kill the man rather than allow another to have him. And so they did. When the last blow was struck, the man and the farm dissolved. The girls became hags, and found themselves hungry and ugly in the mist-shrouded mountains of Tepest.

Current Sketch

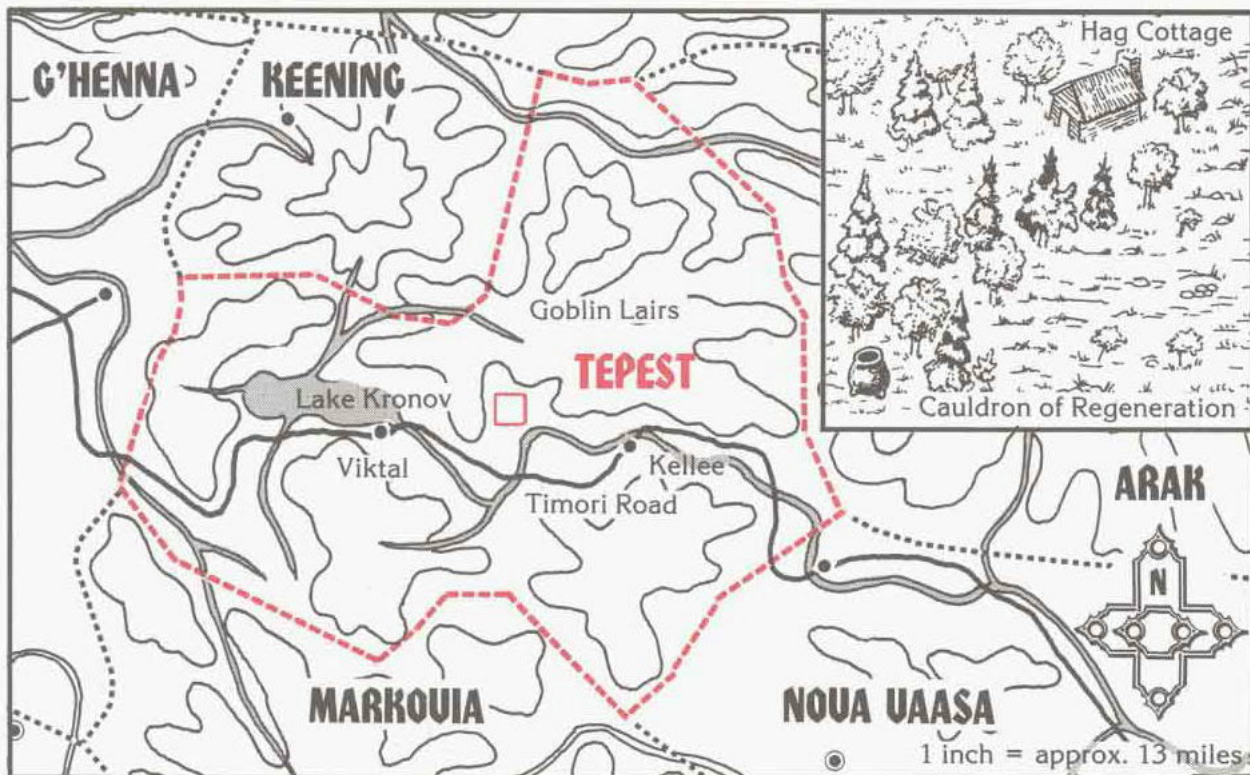
The hags have been trapped in Tepest for less than 50 years. They manage to keep a relatively low profile, preying on travelers from other domains, or luring a victim into isolation before attacking. Tepest's folk are simple, and they know of the hags only through stories and legends, which they share with their children to prevent straying or disobedience.

Goblins that plague the domain are a more immediate and visible threat, although even these are not fully understood, and the folk call them "little beasties." Most disappearances are

attributed to them. In fact, since the legendary hags are suspected to eat goblins (which the real hags do), some folk see the covey as a benevolent force, not dangerous unless encountered or crossed.

That is far from the truth. Like all hags, the sisters hunger for flesh. They hunger for the suffering of their victims even more. They are the masters of cannibalistic cuisine, choosing their fare carefully from the boldest, beefiest knight to the most tender and lovely young bride. The hags hate folk who are good, despise folk who are beautiful or handsome, and are jealous of anyone who is happy and loved. Because the hags find such things unattainable, they punish those who have them.

Hag Trickery: Vanity and a need for adoration drives many a dark plot. In the guise of women, the hags have been known to lure many a young shepherd to their lair. There they imprison him, often in a *forcecage*. "If only you could grow to love us, then we would set you



THE THREE HAGS

free," they say to their quarry, revealing their hideous selves. Sometimes they claim that true love will lift their curse, and make them good, kind, and beautiful once more. But of course, they were never good and kind, and their curse will never be lifted. Furthermore, they have no intention of setting any victim free. Only if he is clever, and manages to trick them in some devious manner, can he ever hope to escape.

Jealousy and spite for young lovers leads to another favored ploy of the covey. When a hag learns of a particularly beautiful young woman in Tepest, she may attempt to take the woman's place. A young bride-to-be is the preferred victim, because the hag can bask in the love of the groom before she reveals herself. If he fails to love her still (which is inevitable), she devours him.

Leticia, the annis, is most fond of this particular ploy. To accomplish the switch, she kidnaps the young woman. Her sisters hold the victim hostage in the underground keep, remaining in contact with Leticia telepathically. Though it requires restraint, the hags do not kill the girl initially. It is their job to question her. She provides information that will help the hag who has assumed her place act convincingly.

Although the hags' murders in their former life were quite quick, their habits have changed. When time and circumstances permit it, a victim is something to be teased and savored. Instead of a clubbing, a simple bruise will do, to tenderize the flesh (as the victim is informed). Instead of a stabbing, a simple cut will do, followed by the smallest sampling of blood. As grisly as this may seem, it is to a victim's benefit. The longer the hags prolong his or her death, the better the victim's chances are to escape.

Daughters of Darkness: Like the hags in other lands, the three sisters can bear children—the results of their entanglements with humans. Ravenloft has diminished the hags' fertility, however. Each can bear no more than one child in a decade, under the light of a

full moon. All offspring are girls. The children appear normal at first—beautiful and completely human.

The hag who bore the creature is said to have maternal instincts initially, and she will fight fiercely to protect her youngling from an outsider. Her sisters rarely share these instincts, however. The newborn is a delicacy; supposedly many of these hag-children are eaten. Other hag offspring may fall prey to goblins or wolves. Still, it is rumored that a few have survived, eventually becoming hags or crones.

One of these hags lurks in Lake Kronov. She assumes the form of a sea serpent, which rises annually in the mist-covered water to devour a fisherman or two. Another hag, it is said, once lived in a cottage not far from the village Kellee. She had two young children in her clutches, but she was not very smart. After she had fattened them up, the captives managed to push her into an oven.

In other worlds, sages claim that any hag can change her own unborn child for that of a human female who is sleeping. The human mother, upon giving birth, is slain by the hag-child she carried. Even in Tepest, this ghastly tale has not been proven true. However, it's likely that a Tepestani hag would switch her newborn child for a human infant—perhaps even to save the little creature from her sisters' clutches. (They would be quite satisfied in eating a substitute). Imagine the horror of a Tepestani mother watching her beautiful girl grow up to become an ugly, flesh-eating terror, one who would not hesitate to devour her own "family."

Companions: Unlike other hags, Tepest's covey is not guarded by giants, nor does it associate with ogres. These hags are alone.

The Domain

Tepest lies at the heart of Ravenloft's Core, in the Balinok Mountains. The domain is no more than 40 miles wide, but these are rugged, wooded miles, with alpine pastures on higher ground.

THE THREE HAGS

Only two roads cross the Balinoks. The Timori Road, which snakes across Tepest, is one. It is a lifeline for Tepest's goblins and hags, bringing in a steady stream of fresh blood. Steep cliffs border the route in parts, while dark woods hug the edge in others, creating the shadows in which creatures who favor darkness can lurk. In most places, the road is no more than a single wagon wide. A caravan moving uphill that encounters another coming downhill must back up to a wider point in the road and yield.

The Cottage: The hags dwell in a large but simple whitewashed cottage in the woods. The roof is steep and thatched. Inside there are two rooms, and a great fireplace in the center. A cauldron hangs over the embers, which are always glowing. The contents bubble and steam. According to legend, this pot may actually be a portal to another domain in Ravenloft.

A hatch beneath a filthy sheep-skin rug leads to a nearby cave. Mementos from past victims fill the cave—scrolls, magical items and weapons (most of which are fairly commonplace), armor, clothing, and so forth. The skins of their victims are tacked to the wall.

Confronting the Hags

The sisters have ravenous appetites, but they feed for pleasure more than survival. Each hag can devour a man-sized opponent in just ten minutes (ten rounds). Their long, nimble fingers end in steely claws, with which they can skin a deer in seconds. The hags are exceptionally strong, too. Each has a Strength of 18/51 or better, which enables them to crush a goblin in one hand as if they were squeezing a ripe banana.

Bow-legged and hunch-backed, the hags look arthritic if not crippled. In truth, they are amazingly quick. With their bandy legs they can waddle and shamble virtually at the speed of a stag (18). They can also leap boulders, climb trees, and scale cliffs with ease.

Each hag can mimic the voice of any creature, though after two rounds of this, there is a 35% chance she will cackle strangely. Each sister also has the natural ability to change her size and appearance at will. This mimics the 9th-level *shape change* spell (not the less potent *change self*). It is the covey's most-used ability, because it allows the trickery on which the hags thrive.

On a whim, any of these hags may play the lovely damsel in distress, especially on the Timori Road. When a weak or lone opponent comes to the rescue, the hag reveals herself and attacks. This little ruse provides a source of amusement as well as a meal. The hags are far from stupid, however; they won't reveal themselves to strong or dangerous opponents. Instead, they may view the situation as a challenge, and use the disguise to lure the opponents (or one of them) into a much more compromising, private position.

All hags are ugly, but these sisters are especially so. When they reveal their true nature to an unsuspecting victim, he must roll a horror check. If the victim passes this, a fear check must follow.

Spellcasting: Like all coveys, the sisters can cast the following spells as a group: *curse*, *polymorph other*, *animate dead*, *dream*, *control weather*, *veil*, *forcecage*, *vision*, and *mindblank*. They can use these spells twice per day (double the usual rate), and the spells take effect as if they were cast by 9th-level casters.

Ravenloft has granted the sisters another unusual bonus: they can cast these spells no matter where each of the hags is within the domain. (In other coveys, the hags are required to be within ten feet of each other.)

In addition, each sister can cast the following spells at will, once per round: *fog cloud*, *audible glamer*, *invisibility*, *pass without trace*, *speak with monsters*, and *weakness*. (In other lands, this second group of spells is normally reserved for the annis or greenhag alone.)

Telepathy: The sisters share most abilities because they are so alike in their thinking. In

THE THREE HAGS

fact, when the hags wish to do so, they can communicate telepathically. They are not limited by distance, nor does a rock wall or any other substance impair them. On her own, each hag is cunning, but with three heads together, they're deadly. The sisters cannot read any other character's thoughts, however—only each other's. Both (or even all three) of the hags involved must be willing to engage in this mental communication. In combat, a hag cannot communicate telepathically if she is engaged in any other engrossing action, such as casting a spell (a rarity in combat) or raking with her claws.

Special Abilities: Unlike others of their kind, the sisters differ from one another mainly in appearance. They share most spells and abilities normally reserved for only one of the three hag species they represent. There are a few exceptions, however:

- Leticia, the sea hag, can cast a *deadly glance* up to three times a day. She can choose her victim, who must be within 30 feet. Only a successful saving throw vs. poison can deflect the effects of this glance. If the victim fails this saving throw, he has a 25% chance to die from sheer terror. Otherwise, the victim has a 75% chance of being paralyzed for three days—or less, if Leticia decides to eat him before then.

- Laveeda, the annis, can smell human flesh a half-mile away—up to a mile away if the wind's right. If she has been close to the person whose odor she detects, she can identify that person by his scent. Furthermore, she has a wondrous sense of hearing. For these reasons, she can never be surprised (unlike other annis). When trouble is expected, Laveeda always stands guard.

She's particularly good in melee, too. If she makes three successful attacks in a single round, she has successfully grappled an opponent. Then she rakes with her claws and chews heartily. Once she succeeds in grappling a victim, all subsequent strikes succeed.

- Lorinda, the greenhag, can move through the forest in absolute silence. Furthermore, if

she attacks victims in the woods, they suffer a –5 penalty to their surprise rolls. She's the tracker of the group.

Tactics: The hags do not willingly engage in combat if the odds are against them. Instead, they use spells and trickery to place their victims in a more vulnerable position. When direct combat does occur, they'll use every weapon available to them, including hatchets and cleavers if necessary. With their exceptional Strengths, they gain a +3 bonus to their attack rolls and a +7 bonus to damage.

Magical Items: The sisters create special magical gems called *hag eyes*. These gems appear to be of little value (20 gold pieces or less), but through them the hags can see whatever the gem is pointed at. They can place these gems anywhere—for example, in a brooch that's given as a gift or left for a human to find, or simply embedded in the wooden hearth of a cottage. Destroying a *hag eye* in the presence of the hags inflicts 1d10 points of damage on each member of the covey, and one of the three hags will lose her normal sight (not infravision) for a day.

If a gem is of higher value, the hags can create *improved hag eyes*. These enable the hags to cast spells against anyone seen by the eye—the eye serves as a conduit for their magic. If anyone handles one of these gems, he will suffer a deformity 1d10 turns later—he will begin to look like a hag. His nose will swell, his skin will blister and ooze, and so forth. NPCs are likely to suspect he has an infectious disease, and avoid him “like the plague.” The deformity gradually disappears after the sufferer leaves Tepest.

Weaknesses: The sisters have only a few weaknesses. Ugliness is one of them. When they gaze in a mirror—even when they are in some other, seemingly lovely form—the mirror cracks. The hags despise bright sunlight, for they cannot use their ability to *shapechange* when exposed to it. Furthermore, direct sun is painful, although it inflicts only 1 point of damage per turn. The hags usually appear in

THE THREE HAGS

late afternoon and at night for this reason.

The sisters are arrogant and, like many lords, underestimate an opponent's intelligence. Perhaps this is why they enjoy riddle matches. They rarely resist a challenge to engage in one. If a victim yells out a clever riddle before the hag strikes, there's an excellent chance the hag will pause, venture an answer, and pose another riddle to the opponent. In theory, this can continue until the opponent misses an answer (and is eaten).

The hags may pose virtually any riddle, but here are three of their favorites: 1) What walks on four legs when young, two when mature, and three when old? (A man; the third leg is a cane.); 2) Blue mirror of midnight's soul, sometimes half but always whole. (The moon.); 3) For brothers and sisters I have none, yet that man's father is my father's son. (It is the riddler himself, an only child with a son.)

When asked a riddle in return, the hag rarely offers a response it is unsure of, and instead remains dumb until it can think of an answer. It may offer a wrong answer, but it may never admit it, and the match will continue until it misses several more and becomes disgruntled. (Posing riddles that are difficult can be just as dangerous as posing none.) If the opponent is clever and lucky, the match will last until sunrise, when the hag trundles away to avoid the light.

For a stranger or new opponent, the chance this riddle match will occur at all is 75%. But if the hag knows the victim and has been aggravated by him for a while, this is far less likely. Even if the hag agrees, she probably will eat him anyway.

Destroying the Hags: Tepest's hags appear dead if they are reduced to 0 hit points. If one sister survives, however, she has an excellent chance of re-creating the others. By placing any shred or particle of her sisters' bodies in their *cauldron of regeneration* (mixing in other vile, slimy ingredients), a hag can re-form her lost sisters over the course of a day. The special *cauldron* is located in the woods, not far from

the hags' cottage.

If a hag cannot be re-created in this way, it is likely that one of her children will take her place.

Leticia, Sea Hag

Armor Class	2	Str	19
Movement	18, Sw 15	Dex	16
Level/Hit Dice	5	Con	17
Hit Points	39	Int	12
THACO	15	Wis	13
No. of Attacks	2	Cha	3

Damage/Attack: 1d4 + 6/2d4 + 2

Special Attacks: See text

Special Defenses: See text

Magic Resistance: 50%

Laveeda, Annis

Armor Class	0	Str	19
Movement	18	Dex	16
Level/Hit Dice	7 + 7	Con	17
Hit Points	78	Int	14
THACO	13	Wis	15
No. of Attacks	3	Cha	3

Damage/Attack: 1d8 + 8/1d8 + 8/2d4 + 1

Special Attacks: See text

Special Defenses: See text

Magic Resistance: 20%

Lorinda, Greenhag

Armor Class	-2	Str	18/51
Movement	18, Sw 12	Dex	16
Level/Hit Dice	9	Con	16
Hit Points	81	Int	14
THACO	11	Wis	18
No. of Attacks	2	Cha	3

Damage/Attack: 1d2 + 6/1d2 + 6

Special Attacks: See text

Special Defenses: See text

Magic Resistance: 35%

THE HEADLESS HORSEMAN



F

rom Aerie to Kantora, no one is safe from the Headless Horseman. When the moon takes the shape of Death's sickle, he haunts the roads of Ravenloft's Core, seeking to behead anyone whose footsteps call him forth.

There can be no escaping his pursuit. Thundering out of the darkness, the Horseman overtakes even the swiftest runner, and leaves the victim bleeding in his wake. One heart ceases to beat, but its former rhythm is echoed by the pounding hooves of the Headless Horseman, who disappears once again into the night.

Background

Nearly every domain haunted by the Headless Horseman knows a different tale of his origin. In Falkovnia, some say the spirit was a victim of Drakov's men, wrongfully beheaded. In Barovia, they say he sliced off his own head rather than fall prey to one of Strahd's minions, who later gave the head to Strahd.

In Borca, folk have the most specific tale, which they are sure is most true. Borcans say the Horseman was once a bard who had the misfortune of meeting Ivana Boritsi, the lord of Borca. Ivana invited him to her private baths (an offer he could not refuse). Unfortunately, she was in a fickle mood, and he was unable to entertain her. Inspired by the sickle shape of the moon, she had him beheaded, continuing her bath in his blood.

The headless body, as the story continues, was cast into the river near Levkarest. (As to what Ivana did with the head, no one is sure.) The corpse floated downstream until it neared the road to Sturben, where it became lodged beneath a bridge. On the night of the next sickle moon, the body arose. Ravenloft's Dark Powers supplied it with a phantom steed and a

crescent-shaped blade. Ever since that time, the Horseman has ridden forth to cleave the necks of unfortunate travelers.

The Domain

Any road in Ravenloft can become the Headless Horseman's domain; Ravenloft briefly superimposes his road upon another. (It is even rumored that he has appeared in other realms, such as Ansalon.) Like other lords, the Horseman is imprisoned in his domain; he can never leave the road. Ravenloft has granted him the freedom to appear within the bounds of other domains, but in turn the Dark Powers restrict him severely. His existence is a monotony of riding; he can do nothing else.

When and how the Horseman's domain appears remains something of a mystery, though it nearly always takes place on the night of a sickle moon. He can strike anywhere, but most often on a lonely stretch, assaulting a small group or perhaps just a single, hapless victim. One person alone is unlikely to survive this terror, but a few, traveling in the safety of a group, have survived to tell the tale.

Confronting the Horseman

Headless Horseman, Chaotic Evil

Armor Class	0	Str	18/00
Movement	24	Dex	17
Level/Hit Dice	8	Con	17
Hit Points	40	Int	9
THACO	13	Wis	8
No. of Attacks	3	Cha	5

Damage/Attack: 1d4 + 7

Special Attacks: Sickle

Special Defenses: Spell immunity; see text

Magic Resistance: 100%

Before the horseman comes, the night grows black and still. Clouds obscure the moon, leaving only a thin blue halo to outline its shape behind them. Mist covers the land. Then,

THE HEADLESS HORSEMAN



THE HEADLESS HORSEMAN

a faint rumbling arises from the road behind, like a storm breaking in the region from which the travelers came.

The rumble turns to thunder, as if an entire cavalry unit is approaching at a frantic pace. Yet it is the sound of only one rider. Appearing, then disappearing, as it surges and pulses through the Mists, comes a single steed. It is a great black horse, with hoofs that flash with fire when they strike the ground, and eyes that are wild and white. The large ebony nostrils are flared, and they issue forth puffs of smoke. The teeth are bared in a grin, the lips pulled back by the sawing and jerking of the reins.

The rider is a large man, dressed in silver and black. His dark, high-collared cloak floats behind him. His ebony-colored boots are gleaming; his spurs and stirrups are made of shining silver. The left arm holds the reins, drawn high and taut. His right arm, raised overhead, carries a huge, shining sickle.

The rider has no head. He thunders by at a break-neck pace, swinging his blade like a pendulum—first once, then twice, then three times at the heads of his victims. Decapitation is his goal, but strenuous efforts to avoid this attack may result in a less serious wound. If he misses his attack number by 1, a scalping or vicious slice to the neck (1d10 points of damage) may result; by 2, a brain-bruising bash to the head (1d6 points, 1d4 if helmeted); by 3, a scarring slash to the face (1d4 points). If he misses by 4 or more, the sickle hisses harmlessly past its mark.

Nothing can diminish the horseman's speed. He is immune to *hold*, *slow*, *charm*, and the like. He cannot be turned. As quickly as he came, he is gone, disappearing into the gloom. In his wake, if his steel found its mark, lies a twitching corpse with its head beside it.

For a while, hardly a sound can be heard. The night muffles all but the rapid breathing and steady heartbeats of those the horseman has left alive. The respite does not last, however. In moments, the silence is broken. The horseman has an entourage.

The First to Follow

A crowd approaches, or so it seems, coming from the Mists that brought the horseman. At first these characters cannot be seen—only heard, cackling and laughing hysterically. As the travelers soon discover, this is no ordinary crowd. It is nearly a dozen heads (1d6 + 6), bouncing, floating, and rolling up the road, turning this way and that to reveal their jeering grins, bloody necks, and filthy, matted hair. They are what became of the horseman's victims. Unlike the horseman, the disembodied heads intend to stop and relish their assault.

The heads bash wildly against their hapless victims, butting with their foreheads and snapping with their teeth. When a tender piece of flesh presents itself, they latch on—especially to necks, cheeks, or lips (1 point of damage per round; automatic after the first successful hit). The teeth hold fast, like barbs, and if the disembodied head is torn away, the victim's flesh and clothing tears too (1d3 + 1 points of damage). Nothing short of destruction can sway these taunting, bloodthirsty creatures; morale does not apply. After no more than six rounds of combat, however, the jeering heads depart. (They fight for at least three rounds, with a 50% chance of continuing for another three.) Then the heads disappear into the Mists, following in the wake of the Horseman. Once again, only darkness and silence remain.

Heads (2-20): Int Low; AC 3; MV Fl 24 (B); HD 2 + 2; hp 10; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg special; MR Nil; SZ T; ML Nil; XP 65; AL CE

The Last to Follow

Silence (and safety) on the Horseman's road is always fleeting. The third wave approaches out of the gray pall from whence the other horrors came. It is another crowd, this one apparently smaller. At first, only the sound of their hissing and groaning comes out of the Mists. Then five pairs

THE HEADLESS HORSEMAN

of red, glowing eyes appear in the fog, three low, two high. They drift forward at speeds no man could match on foot (18). Then the entire entourage is clear: the heads of four medusae, and the head of a maeder, a medusa's humanoid mate.

The medusaen heads—those of green-skinned ladies, whose hair is a bed of swarming snakes—attempt to fix their victims in place. The powers of these heads have changed since the medusae from which they came were beheaded. They are not diminished in a way that suggests they are decaying, however.

Their gaze, when met, can paralyze, but it can no longer petrify. The snakes upon their crown are still venomous—but not as venomous as usual. The head must be within one foot before its tresses can strike, but the creature can easily strike up to four (1d4) times per round, inflicting 1d10 points of damage with each attack. At the end of each combat round, a poisoned victim must roll a successful saving throw vs. poison or fall to the ground unconscious, seemingly dead. If he fails a second saving throw vs. poison, he is dead. Anyone who touches him must also roll a successful saving throw vs. poison or fall unconscious for 1d4 rounds.

The maeder is a muscular male humanoid that is the mate of a medusa. It is a rare creature native to the Forgotten Realms (a fact that gives credence to the theory that the Horseman briefly leaves Ravenloft). Now, only his bald head and brawny neck remain. The maeder's skin is gray.

The maeder groans throughout the combat, stopping occasionally to let out a low, guttural chuckle to punctuate the medusaen hissing. Petrification and paralyzation (including related spells, such as *hold* and *slow*) have no effect on this creature. In its former life, the creature had the ability to turn flesh to stone. Ravenloft has replaced that power with another: the maeder can cast any spell that the PCs cast against

either the Horseman or the jeering heads in the second wave.

Neither the medusae nor the maeder is stupid, nor do they share the bloodlust of the first wave. If defeat is apparent, they flee, hissing and moaning as they fade away into the fog.

DM Note: This third wave of horror is optional; use it with mid- to high-level parties who suffered little during the first two waves.

Medusa's Heads (4): Int Very (11); AC 5; MV F 15 (C); HD 4; hp 20; THACO 17; #AT 1-4; Dmg 1d10; MR 20%; SZ T; ML 14; XP 650; AL CE

Maeder's Head (1): Int Very (11); AC 5; MV Fl 15 (C); HD 4; hp 20; THACO 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4; MR 20%; SZ T; ML 14; XP 420; AL LE

The Winding Road

One might ask why the horseman's victims do not simply flee from the road. Usually, that's to no avail. It is rumored that the road has sinkholes, which can engulf a victim up to his waist in two rounds if he attempts to flee. More importantly, the road can turn to follow its victims, branching if need be, using their footprints to guide it.

Any footfall (or handfall) leaves a print on this road that the road itself can track. As a scent draws a bloodhound, the touch of a victim draws the road. The only way to avoid the road's pursuit is to fly or levitate, or to leap by magical means. Even then, the road attempts to hold on to the character, its force reaching up to slowly drag its struggling victim back to earth (50% chance). In the meantime, the road continues to shadow its victim's movements.

Although the horseman cannot reach a character in flight, the heads are not bound to the surface of the road. They are able to fly and will follow their victims into the air.



THE HOUSE OF LAMENT

N

ot every lord in Ravenloft is a creature of flesh and blood. Here is an entity whose skeleton is made of wood and stone. Its eyes are glass, but they are no less seeing. Its breath is the wind, but it is no less alive. This is the House of Lament, a shelter which many are welcome to enter, but few are allowed to leave.

Background

The house was not always as it stands today. Centuries ago, there was only the stone tower, which belonged to the castle of a Lord Dranzorg. Dranzorg

surrounded himself with criminals and thugs, some fanatically loyal, most only as loyal as their lord's purse was big. Such men, whose very being is bent toward mayhem and murder, are not at ease during peace. Dranzorg knew this. To occupy their talents and foster his own power, he sent them into a neighboring land, where they raided, pillaged, and killed.

The ruler of that bleeding land, Lord Silva, was old and weary of war. His eldest son had been killed in a previous battle, and his army was tired. Silva had only one daughter, a pale beauty with coppery hair, whose name was Mara. She was in love with an officer of her father's guard, but she was not bespoken to him, and only her maidservant knew of their affection. The old king offered Mara's hand to Dranzorg. In exchange for this marriage, Silva asked for an end to the maraudings of Dranzorg's men, and a lasting peace between the two lands.

Dranzorg accepted. He had no intention of complying with any treaty, however. Instead, his men attacked the caravan escorting Mara to his lands. They bludgeoned each chaperone to the last, and kidnapped the terrified young woman.

Dranzorg sent word to Mara's father that she had never reached him. Silva, he declared,

would be punished for his trickery. The warring would continue until Silva's own blood ceased to flow.

Silva sent spies to Dranzorg's castle in an effort to rescue his daughter. Mara's beloved was among them. The spies were killed before they reached the keep. Had they succeeded, they would not have found her, for Mara would never be seen among the living again.

When Dranzorg's men brought Mara to his castle, he imprisoned her in his dungeon for a night, where she slept among the rats. Then he called his stonecutters and masons forth, and declared that the northernmost tower and the adjoining wall must be strengthened. All night, Mara heard them grunting and working in the room above her, their hammers ringing, their trowels endlessly scraping.

When dawn's first light was on the horizon, Dranzorg released Mara from her prison. His men brought her to his chambers. "Did you know," he asked, "that an offering must be made to the gods to fortify a keep?" It was a custom in those lands to entomb a cat or a stag in the walls of a castle as it was built, in order to strengthen it and bring good fortune. Mara knew well of this custom. She did not answer, suspecting what Lord Dranzorg had in mind.

As Dranzorg watched, his henchmen dragged Mara to the base of the tower, where the wall had been thickened on the inside. A small alcove with a bench lay open, cut back into the old wall, the opening flush with the new.

Bravely, Mara cursed Dranzorg and his men, and proclaimed that her father would see her death avenged. Dranzorg was amused. He ordered that her finger be pricked with a sedative, so that she would not disturb the work to come. When she collapsed, his men placed her limp body on the bench in the alcove, and proceeded to seal the wall. Mara was entombed alive.

By nightfall, her screams sounded throughout the castle. They continued through the night, and on through the days and nights to come. Each day, the men of the castle

THE HOUSE OF LAMENT



THE HOUSE OF LAMENT

complained to Dranzorg, saying they could not bear the unholy noise, for surely the woman should have died in less than a day. Finally Dranzorg agreed. He personally opened the tomb. The screams subsided. No one lay within.

That night, as Dranzorg and his men slumbered, the members of the watch heard a woman singing in the tower. They followed the voice up the spiral stairs, climbing level after level, unable to find the source. The next morning, they were found at the base of the tower, their bodies crumpled and broken by the long fall from the top.

On each subsequent night, another man met a similar fate. Dranzorg's men were dying one by one, seemingly by their own hand or by madness. Lord Dranzorg began to lose his own sanity. Months later, alone in the castle, he heard a woman's voice calling his name. She beckoned softly, urging him to come to her. "I am so lonely," he heard the woman say. He followed the voice to the tower. It led him to the still-open tomb in the wall. He crawled onto the bench and died.

Today, the castle is gone. Its tower stood for fully 300 years, impervious to rain and ruin, remaining alone on the land long after the rest of the castle had crumbled into dust and had been dispersed by the wind. Admiring its strength and position, a merchant attached a great house to its side. The merchant moved his family in. One by one they died, like the lord and his men before them, and like those who would live and perish in the house thereafter.

Perhaps Mara's spirit became one with the house, evolving from the tormented to the tormenter, until every timber and stone in the structure was the embodiment of evil. Or perhaps Mara still exists in the walls, alone and full of sorrow, and the house, wanting to comfort her, encourages the living to join her. For in many lands it is understood that only the warm blood and flesh of the living can ease the cold misery of the dead.

Current Sketch

The House of Lament and its grounds now form their own island domain in Ravenloft. It is perpetually late autumn here. The air is moist and cold, sinking into bones and making joints stiff. By day, the sky is heavy and dark. At night, the clouds often coalesce, becoming a black storm whose fierce wind howls down the chimneys, as rain pelts the walls and roof and booming thunder rattles the window panes.

A high, thick stone wall marks the boundaries of the house. A moat encircles the wall on the inner side, filled with black, brackish water and decaying leaves. Beyond that is a narrow yard, where black, leafless oaks stand guard over a tangled ground. The lawn is overgrown with slender, arching vines, like those from a wild rose or flowering bramble. Dry leaves are caught in the vines, rustling as the wind makes an effort to loose them.

Though the garden and trees are bare, it would be a mistake to call them dead. Survivors have remarked that the vines seemed to move when their backs were turned, and that the trees, swaying in the wind, seemed to reach out with hostile intent. Such things could easily be attributed to imagination, however.

From the yard one can view the house itself. It is built from cut stone, with a round tower at the corner. Dark, tall windows on the second level stare out at the grounds below. Gray lichens cover the entire surface of the house, creating tiny fissures along the face of the rock.

The heavy, oaken door of the house may sometimes open, inexplicably, to invite its guests inside. Beyond the door is a foyer, two stories high. A chandelier fully ten feet across is hanging overhead. A black, curving stair with a heavy rail winds to the second floor. The spindles of the staircase are stout, and carved to look like woodland nymphs, but the faces are hideous. Near the ceiling, on the outer wall, is a tall, narrow Gothic window with crimson panes that bleed red light into the room.

THE HOUSE OF LAMENT

Throughout, the house has a feeling of weight. The oak floors are nearly black with age; the ceilings are the same. Thick rugs are laid here and there upon the floors, most of them dark red. Furniture is massive and black. The walls are hung with heavy tapestries that depict conquest and death.

On the first floor, many rooms have no windows to the outside, and thus are black as pitch within. In the outer rooms, each window has a peculiar design. A tall, narrow arch is cut deep into the wall, with a little ledge at the bottom. The peak of the window is 15 feet above it, near the ceiling of the room. The glass is fitted into the arch seven feet off the ground, so that it is barely within reach. At the top of the arch, the glass is crimson; the remaining glass is gray.

The arrangement of rooms on the first floor is like a ring within rings, with a small parlor at the center. When the fire in this room is ablaze, and the sconces on the wall are lit, the parlor becomes one of the few comforting chambers in the house, provided one can withstand the soft creaking and groaning in the ceiling above, a malady from which many old houses suffer.

Upstairs the rooms are arranged upon long hallways, where footsteps echo. The furniture is draped with dust-laden sheets. Here, too, the windows don't permit much light, being set into the deep wall. During the morning hours, the rooms are dreary; as sunlight fades, the corners in the large rooms are fully obscured by shadow.

Confronting the House

The House of Lament is an entity of evil, of which the spirit that was Mara is only a part. How this came to be is not fully understood, yet some sages would say that the site was always a gathering point of malignancy and evil, even when Dranzorg first built his castle there. Then the malignancy only served to influence the mood of those within it. Mara's absorption was the catalyst that enabled it to



grow. Now that evil is focused toward a single goal: absorbing spirits into its walls, so that Mara will not be alone.

Usually a small group of visitors will become the unwilling guests of the house. They soon discover its malevolent spirit, as it strives to wear down the strength and nerve of the guests, eventually singling out one or more of them for absorption. At first, the phenomena in the house may have logical explanations—the wind blows through a chimney, causing a low moan. Branches tap at a window. A draft creates a sudden pool of cold in a doorway.

Gradually, however, the house reveals itself to be alive; the wind whispering through the crannies of the walls and within the chimneys changes to a slow rhythm of inhalation and exhalation, as the house begins to breathe. A distant pounding is heard, echoing, like a muffled heartbeat. A woman is heard crying in a room; when the door is opened, the crying stops. Doors open and shut of their own accord, and the locks are thrown across them. A sconce lights by itself, and just as quickly extinguishes. Floorboards creak as if someone is stepping on them, but the dust is undisturbed. A woman's screams echo throughout the tower.

With the passage of time, the phenomena become more dangerous and unsettling. A character has no reflection in a mirror, or sees Mara instead. A noose appears, swinging from a chandelier. A cold spot becomes so icy as to cause damage. A mist seeps up from between the floorboards, putting those it comes across to sleep. A bedroom ceiling may suddenly come alive with a covering of maggots, which slowly rains down upon the characters below.

THE HOUSE OF LAMENT

Some of these creatures may be rot grubs (DM's discretion).

The house begins to "speak" to its captives, with messages in blood. The red words drip down a wall, proclaiming "Mara is lonely." Now the house can make the name of its favorite victim clear, too. If, for example, the fighter Roderick happens to be the player character desired, later messages will read "Roderick will soon be home" and "Roderick must die."

At night, an unseen phantom pounds at the doors, one after another, until it reaches the room in which the visitors are staying. The door is bent inward, shaking under the tremendous force of the beating. Anyone foolish enough to open the door feels a wave of pestilent breath sweep over him, forcing him to the floor. The victim, to all who look upon him, appears dead for 1d4 turns, though he is not, unless the accompanying 2d10 + 4 points of damage are enough to kill him.

Characters must roll a successful saving throw vs. spell to stay awake at night, rolling a new check each hour until they have fallen asleep. Once they slumber, the house can influence their dreams. Friends of the targeted character may dream of that character hanging himself. (Later, of course, the noose actually appears, dangling from a chandelier.) The character wanted by the house may dream of Mara herself—slowly learning her story. If all around him sleep too, and he is therefore unguarded, he will awaken to find himself alone in the tower.

The favored victim seems to age overnight, his hair graying, his skin becoming pallid and wrinkled. These effects slowly vanish after—or if—the character escapes the house. Escape is far from simple. The house wants a victim before it allows its guests to leave. Doors refuse to open; windows refuse to break. It is rumored that a portal does exist somewhere in the house, but its whereabouts are unknown.

Nearly every piece of wood in the house may be summoned up to aid the structure in its mission (though in most cases, each maneuver

is used only once). Stairs warp and twist. A floor may open, forming a giant maw, out of which come horrid creatures from the Negative Material plane.

Outside the parlor at the center of the first floor, the house has full control over its own light sources, and a 50% chance of extinguishing light sources created by its guests. While groping through the dark, a character may feel the hand of a companion tapping him on the shoulder or gripping his arm, only to learn later that no one but the house is responsible.

Destroying the House

The house cannot be harmed by fire, cold, or electricity. Piercing and bludgeoning weapons may cause the walls to bleed, but the red, sticky fluid quickly changes to black. It slips down the walls and onto the floor, where it becomes the equivalent of gray ooze—except for its color. If sufficient damage is incurred, the house can create a blood elemental from its wounds (see the RAVENLOFT® *Monstrous Compendium* appendix).

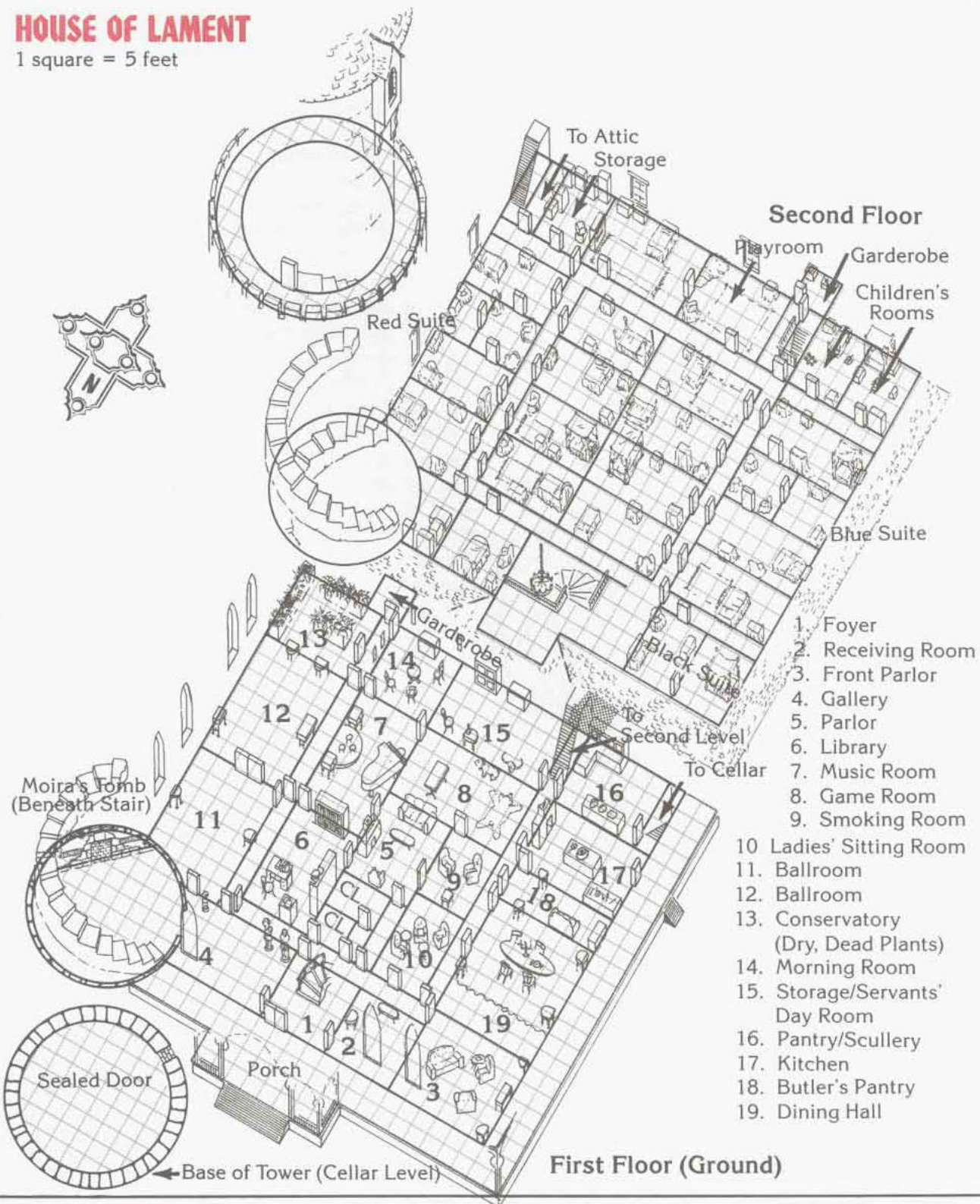
In many ghost stories, the haunting ends when the body of the suffering spirit (in this case, Mara) is laid to rest. If characters open the tomb in the tower, they find Dranzorg's skeleton—not Mara's. The sound of her gentle laughter signals her continuing presence.

As noted above, the house does not release its guests unless one of them dies within it. Usually, the victim is an NPC. If the victim is a PC—especially if that character sacrifices himself nobly and willingly—the house may meet its end. Though the house has absorbed many a victim over the years, none has been sufficient to end its reign of terror. When someone near enough in spirit or appearance to Mara's beloved goes to her, the house will begin to disintegrate. (Mara's beloved was a soldier in her father's guard.) As the survivors escape, the ground will open, swallowing the last remnants of the House of Lament.

THE HOUSE OF LAMENT

HOUSE OF LAMENT

1 square = 5 feet





VON KHARKOV

D

deep in the forests of Valachan, the trees press close together, blocking the sun. Within these dark shadows roam the black panthers, masterful hunters and silent killers. Not all of these cats of the night are what they seem. One of them is an undead horror of the night. The cats hunt for food, but he hunts to slake his vampiric thirst for blood. His name is Baron Urik von Kharkov and he rules supreme in Valachan.

Appearance

Physically Baron Kharkov is a black-skinned man standing just over six feet tall. He is broad shouldered and quite muscular. His eyes are an unusual shade of yellow. When he gets angry they change from round pupils to the slitted ones of a cat. His hair is black and straight, and usually kept immaculately groomed.

Background

Baron von Kharkov started life as a panther. He was polymorphed from his natural shape into a full-grown adult human by Morphayus, a powerful red wizard of Thay in the Forgotten Realms. Morphayus's creation was intended to be part of a twisted and elaborate plot of vengeance against Selena, a woman who had spurned Morphayus's advances. Morphayus named his creation Urik von Kharkov and gave him the title of baron. He arranged for years of schooling and training of his false man in far-off Cormyr. There Urik displayed a tendency toward violence and treachery.

Upon his return to Thay, Urik was constantly placed near Selena. Finally they became lovers, as Morphayus had hoped. He waited until the two were in a lover's embrace and then dispelled the magic holding Urik in human

form. Selena's body was found torn to shreds, with her clothes neatly stacked beside her.

Morphayus captured the panther and converted him to human form again. Morphayus intended to use Urik to kill again. Urik was horrified that there was an uncontrollable beast inside of him. He escaped from Morphayus and fled from Thay.

Urik burned with hatred over the humiliation of being turned into an animal by Morphayus. It was in this frame of mind that he entered Darkon. There, an impoverished bard told Urik tales of the Kargat vampires. Lured by thoughts of immortality and dark power, Urik traveled to the city of Karg and sought out a vampire. Urik's dream of untold power and eternal life soon turned to ashes in his mouth. True, he became a vampire, but as an undead slave to his vampire master. Urik won immortality at the expense of his precious humanity.

He quickly discovered that his unique background had affected his vampiric condition. His alternate form was that of a panther rather than a wolf. His other powers were subtly altered as well.

Urik nursed a hatred for his vampire master. The killing and pain of his victims became his only solace. Even among other vampires he gained a reputation for cruelty.

After 20 years of enslavement, Urik's master was destroyed in a fight with another Kargat vampire. Urik fled Darkon for the Mists of Ravenloft. He wandered alone in the fog for weeks, killing hapless wanderers and fleeing from the phantoms of his imagination. Finally the Mists gathered him up and opened a new domain for him, on the southern edge of the Core.

Urik called the land Valachan and installed himself as Baron Urik von Kharkov. He quickly discovered that Ravenloft takes as much as it gives. Valachan is stocked with many black panthers, which the baron can call to serve him. The land also granted him other powers over the domestic cats of the realm. At the same time, he is imprisoned inside his domain. His

VON KHARKOU



VON KHARKOV

hands became furred and grew retractable claws. To hide the deformity he wears gloves at all times. (With these on, his hands look quite normal and can function as regular human hands without penalties.)

Years later, deep in his dungeons, Baron von Kharkov found a statuette of a cat. He took a liking to it and kept it close by. Seven days later, he awoke from a trance to discover a ravenous sabre tooth tiger (smilodon) ready to spring upon him. Knowing himself invulnerable to most physical attacks and able to regenerate his wounds, the baron let it spring, intending to rip its throat out with his bare hands. Instead the huge cat mauled him badly. He was able to drive it off only by calling for his vampire slaves to attack it. The tiger fled the castle but still haunts the land. The statuette, now vanished, was the *Cat of Felkovic*. It is the one thing in all the world that Baron Kharkov truly fears. He has since acquired a magical sword to defend himself.

Current Sketch

Baron Ürik von Kharkov was once a panther, then a man, and now a vampire. He retains personality traits of all three. He has the quick temper and taunting cruelty of a cat, driven by the intelligence and creativity of a man. All of this is set against the background of his vampiric bloodlust. He has been trained by the best schools of Cormyr. With his temper under control, he can be the epitome of the mannered diplomat.

He hates wizards and other vampires above all other things. The only vampires he allows in Valachan are his own creations. The baron lives in his castle, surrounded only by a few servants, most of whom are his nosferatu vampire slaves. The folk of Valachan fear him greatly, for his fits of fury frequently result in mass killings of villagers. His edicts are generally obeyed instantly by the people.

Confronting von Kharkov

Nosferatu Vampire, Lawful Evil

Armor Class	1	Str	18/00
Movement	12	Dex	18
Level/Hit Dice	10+2	Con	19
Hit Points	50	Int	17
THACO	11 (8)	Wis	10
No. of Attacks	2 or 1	Cha	17

Damage/Attack: 1-3/1-3 or by weapon, +6 Strength bonus

Special Attacks: See text

Special Defenses: +2 weapon needed

Magic Resistance: 10%

Like all nosferatu vampires, Baron von Kharkov drains the blood of his victims rather than their life force. He does this by puncturing the skin with his two sharp fangs and then sucking out the blood. He prefers to do this on the neck, but he can drain blood from any location where blood vessels are near the surface of the skin.

For game purposes, this draining is a reduction of Constitution points. The baron can drain from 1 to 3 points per round. He usually prefers to savor the experience by draining only 1 point per round. A side effect of the draining is that the baron heals 1 hit point immediately for every Constitution point he drains. This is in addition to his normal regenerative powers.

The victim of such a draining is left weak and anemic. His skin is white and bloodless. Natives of Valachan mistakenly call the affliction White Fever. They believe that it is transmitted by insect bites, which explains the puncture wounds. Since the victims frequently don't remember the baron's attack, they don't contradict this explanation. Those who do remember are usually charmed and willing lie for their master.

If the victim is reduced to a Constitution of 2 or less, then he is at death's door. Only a direct blood transfusion will save him. The victim continues to lose a point of Constitution a day. When his Constitution reaches 0, he dies. If the

VON KHARKOV

baron's victim is left alive and with a Constitution of 3 or more, he regains 1 point every two days until he reaches his original Constitution score. Baron von Kharkov rarely kills his victims. He prefers to drink from several victims each night and not deplete the population of his land.

Anyone who dies from being drained by Baron von Kharkov becomes a nosferatu vampire (see the RAVENLOFT® boxed set). This creature is completely under the control of the baron. It must do his bidding in all things, but it can follow the letter rather than the intent of those commands. Such disobedience is usually rewarded by slow destruction at the hands of the baron. He keeps no more than four such vampires at any given time, and rarely lets them survive more than a decade.

The eyes of the baron can charm anyone who gazes into them. The victim does get a saving throw, but with a -3 modifier. The baron has another gaze attack that acts as a *forget* spell. The three rounds before the gaze are blurred and forgotten. He can use these two attacks while draining, which is why his victims never accuse him of attacking them.

Anyone who has been bitten by Baron von Kharkov is vulnerable to his call. This call is a telepathic charm that enables von Kharkov to give them instructions from anywhere within Valachan. He cannot see through their eyes, nor can they communicate to him in any way. The bitten victims are allowed a saving throw (no penalties) to resist the charm. They remain vulnerable to his call for the rest of their lives unless a *remove curse* is cast upon them by a priest of at least 14th level. Over half the population of the domain has been bitten at one time or another.

Baron von Kharkov has all the other powers and weaknesses common to vampires. He has a Strength of 18/00, which gives him a +3 attack roll bonus and a +6 damage roll bonus when using a weapon. He owns a *sword +1, +2 vs. enchanted creatures*. Most nosferatu vampires have no normal melee attack when unarmed.

The baron has retractable claws like those of a cat. These are immediately obvious to anyone who sees his bare hands (or anyone who sees his fully extended claws poking through the fingers of his gloves). He can attack twice in a round with his hands and inflicts 1d3 points of damage with each.

It takes a weapon of at least +2 enchantment to harm him. Even when harmed, he regenerates 3 hit points per turn. If reduced to 0 hit points, he is forced to assume a gaseous form and flee to his coffin or resting place. He must remain there for eight hours before he can rise again, fully restored. If he cannot reach a coffin or appropriate resting place within two hours, he is utterly destroyed.

Like most undead, Baron von Kharkov is immune to *sleep*, *charm*, and *hold* spells. He is immune to poison and paralysis. Spells based upon cold or electricity cause only half damage. He cannot spider climb at will like other vampires.

The baron has the power to shapechange at will into a black panther or a gaseous form, but not into a wolf or a bat. As a cat he retains all of his immunities and his regenerative powers. He cannot use his gaze or draining attacks. In panther form he can move with complete silence. As a panther he can leap up to 30 feet in the air, much higher than an ordinary member of the species. He can summon 1d4 + 1 normal black panthers to serve him. Use the *Monstrous Compendium* entry for leopards, under "Cats, Great."

Kharkov's panther form: Int Genius; AC 6; MV 18; HD 3+2; hp 50; THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1d3/1d3/1d6; SA rear claws, 1d6 + 1/1d6 + 1; SD surprised only on a 1; SZ M; AL LE

Ravenloft granted the baron strange powers with all kinds of cats. He can place his mind inside that of any cat anywhere in his domain. He cannot control the animal in any way, but he experiences everything that the cat experiences. His human body is in a trance

VON KHARKOV

during this process and is completely unaware of its surroundings. Only the pain of a wound can bring him out of the trance before he decides to break it.

He is strangely vulnerable to attacks by the *Cat of Felkovic*. Damage from this creature/magical item can only be regenerated by draining. Although he has no proof, the baron is convinced that the cat can destroy him as surely as sunlight.

Baron Kharkov is unaffected by garlic, wolfsbane, or mirrors. He does not cast a reflection in mirrors, but he doesn't recoil from them either. A strongly presented holy symbol will keep him at bay, but not force him to flee. The same object lying on a table is not an obstacle, although he suffers 1d6 + 1 points of damage if he touches it. Holy water also causes 1d6 + 1 points of damage if splashed upon him.

Running water is not a barrier for the baron. He can cross it at will, and even walk through it. However, if he is completely immersed in running water, he loses 15 hit points per round (and does not regenerate) until he is destroyed. Sunlight has a similar effect. He can withstand up to four consecutive rounds of direct sunlight, but he is destroyed upon the fifth.

Another known way to kill him is to drive a stake made of bone through his heart. This pins and paralyzes the baron until the stake is removed. Once pinned, his head must be cut off and the mouth stuffed with holy wafers. Once this ritual is completed, he is utterly destroyed.

Normal vampires need to be invited into a home by a resident before they can enter it. Baron von Kharkov owns the entire domain and is not restricted in any way from entering homes in Valachan. Any vampire that he creates must still obtain an invitation, however.

Castle Pantara

The castle sits atop a rugged hill. The keep was here when the domain was formed. Since that time, the baron has built on several additions. From below, its profile resembles that of a crouching panther.

Beyond the castle is the dense forest of Valachan. The trees grow to within 100 feet of the blackened walls. Lights are rarely seen in its windows. Its battlements are never patrolled by living guards. Many of the buildings have stone cats and gargoyles decorating the corners and peaks.

The walls and towers are in good shape, although very little attempt is made to keep them in good repair. Somehow the castle does not seem inclined to fall apart. The courtyard is overgrown with weeds, but not so much that it impedes movement. A few small trees actually grow inside there, struggling to reach the tops of the walls. Claw marks and other signs of large cats can be found in the courtyard. The baron sometimes lets the panthers of the forest roam within its walls.

The castle has never held a standing garrison of soldiers. Most of the towers and outer rooms have never been inhabited.

Map Key

1) The Ascension: Also known as the tail, this winding staircase provides the most common access to the castle. The castle walls loom over the trail, ready to defend it against would-be attackers. Midway up the ascension is a small guard tower. The crenelations on top provide cover from enemy fire from below, but not from the castle walls.

2) Cat's Paws: These squat towers were once an important part of the castle's defenses. Now they are merely extensions of the keep containing guest and entertainment rooms. Between the buildings is a small shrub garden.

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3) Keep: This is the oldest building of the castle. Most of its rooms are designed for ceremonies and functions of rulership. There are throne rooms, ballrooms, banquet halls, and the like. Inside its dark and narrow halls is the entrance to the dungeons and the family crypts. The highest rooms in the tower are the baron's private quarters.

4) The Rake: This long, low building overlooks the last portion of the ascension. It was designed to pour out a deadly hail of

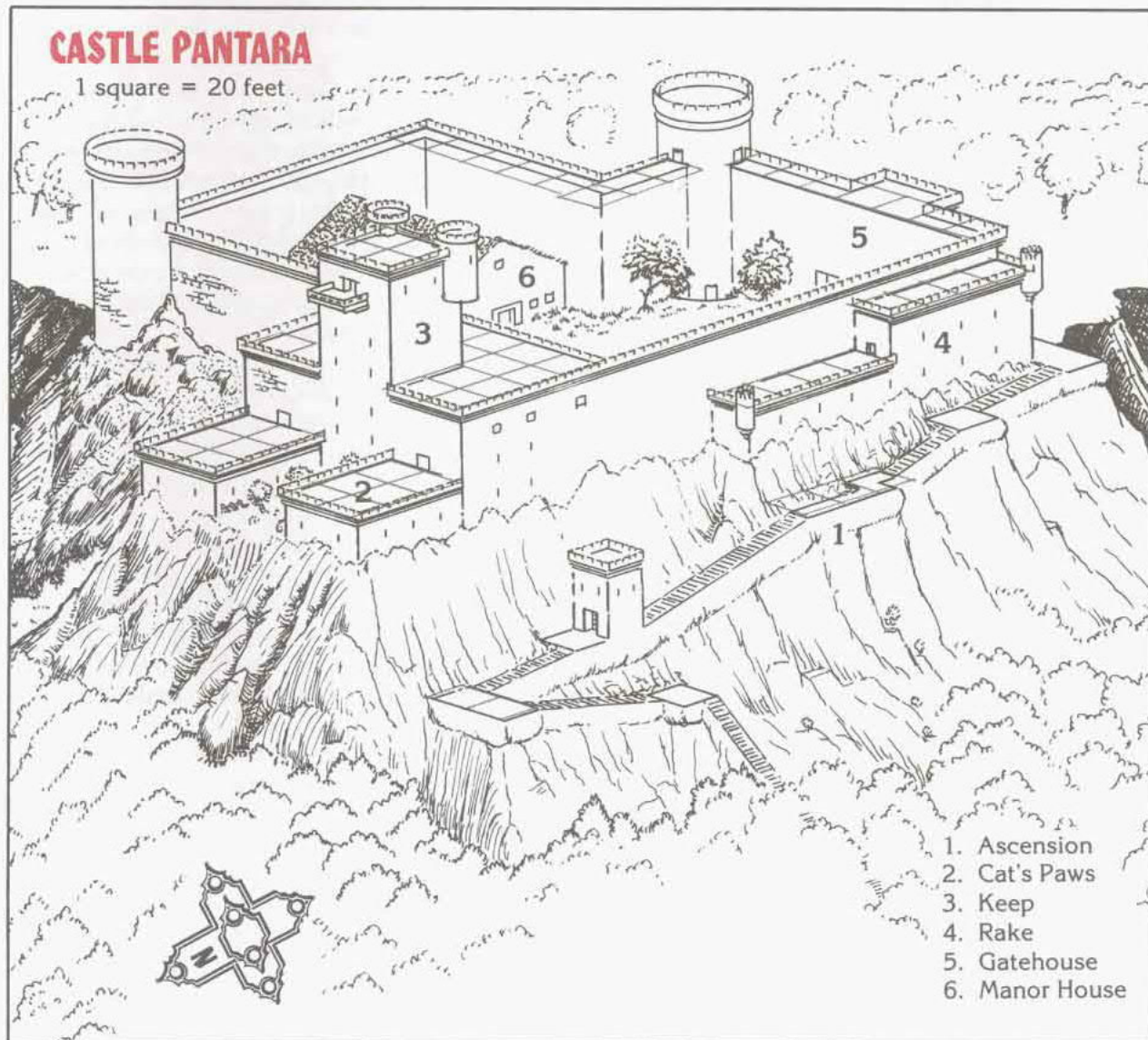
arrows onto potential attackers. It also was designed to house a garrison.

5) Gatehouse: Thrusting out from the castle wall, this small building has a sturdy oaken door and an iron portcullis. It is the only obvious entrance to the castle. There are rumored to be several secret exits and even a tunnel leading deep into the woods.

6) Manor House: A few of the rooms here are well kept. However, some have not seen a human shadow in several decades.

CASTLE PANTARA

1 square = 20 feet



1. Ascension
2. Cat's Paws
3. Keep
4. Rake
5. Gatehouse
6. Manor House

O

f all the tragedies in the world, there is nothing so horrible as the death of an innocent. So profound a loss can only be made worse, however, when the young innocent is not allowed to rest in peace, but is forced to become one of the dreaded, night-stalking undead.

Appearance

Merilee Markuza looks just as she did at the time of her death some 150 years ago. She stands just under five feet tall, though her slight build gives her the appearance of being somewhat shorter. She has long, golden hair

that falls to her waist and is always worn in a pony tail.

Her eyes are a pale grey and from a distance they seem to have the sparkle that one would expect of a curious little girl. When examined more closely, however, something of Merilee's darker side can be seen. Those who pause to look deeply into her eyes will find that they are indeed windows onto her soul. Every year of her agonizing unlife is reflected clearly in these cold pools of shimmering gray.

Merilee takes great care to appear as the child she once was. All who see her believe that she is perhaps ten years old and is in no way unusual. She even takes this charade to the point of carrying around a doll or stuffed animal with her when she moves about in public.

Background

Merilee Markuza was born to a wealthy family in the city of Caergoth on the world of Krynn. Her early childhood was full of the happiness one would expect for the only daughter of a couple not opposed to spoiling their pride and joy a little bit.

On her tenth birthday, however, the

happiness of Merilee's youth was destroyed in a matter of seconds. While on a picnic to celebrate this joyous event, the family was attacked by outlaws. As the frightened girl watched from hiding, the bandits killed her parents and removed every item of value that they could find from the family's carriage.

As the brigands were about to depart, one of them spotted the young girl. In terror, she turned and fled. Her tiny feet had not carried her a dozen yards before a pair of crossbow bolts brought her down. Certain that she was dead, the criminals collected the last of their spoils and rode off.

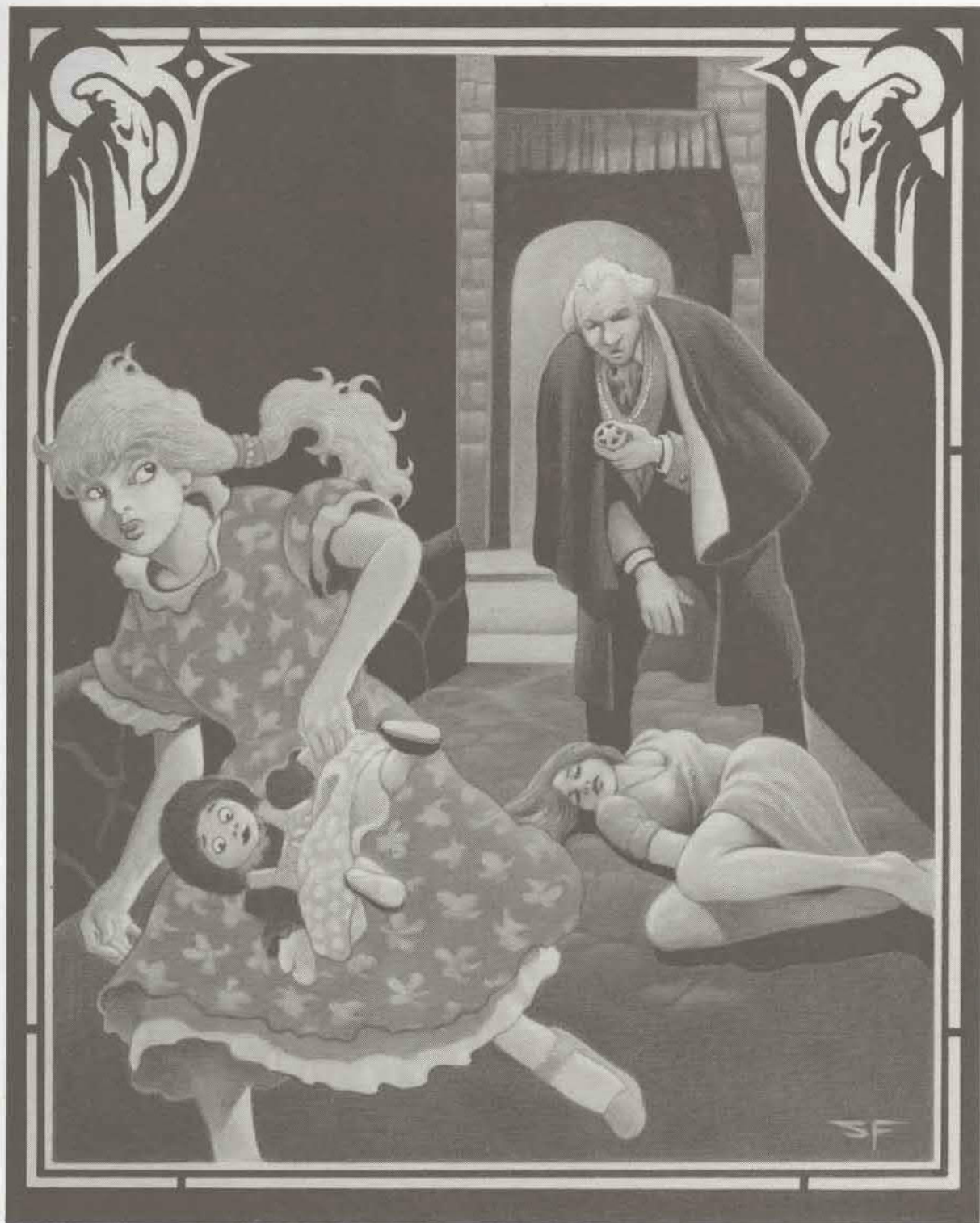
Some time later, as the last of the child's vital energies were draining away, a dark figure came upon the wounded girl. The mysterious shadow seemed to move quickly over the scene of the murders, taking care to note something here or there. Merilee was too weak to call out for help, but managed a moan of pain. The stranger flashed to the side of the girl with supernatural speed.

Over the course of the next few days, Merilee was to learn much about her "rescuer." The mysterious figure was a tall, slender woman named Keesla. Many years before, Keesla had become a vampire. When she found Merilee, the woman *knew* that there was no earthly way to save the girl's life. Seeing in the innocent child a striking resemblance to her own daughter who had died decades earlier, she decided that Merilee would not die. Bending over the wounded girl, Keesla began the process that would eventually transform Merilee into a vampire.

Gradually, Merilee came to accept her transformation and the strange aspects of her new life. She mourned the loss of her parents, but found nothing else in her past life that held much meaning for her.

As the months went by, Merilee's innocence was gradually stripped away from her by the unnatural life she now led. She began to grow less playful and more callous. The innocence and purity that had marked her natural life

MERILEE



MERILEE

began to be replaced with the corruption that marks the eternal suffering of the undead.

When it became obvious to Merilee that she was forever trapped in the body of a ten-year-old child, she began to hate Keesla. Every day, as she made ready to enter her coffin and sink into the deep slumber of the undead, she would think about revenge. Merilee vowed that Keesla would be repaid for the wrong and suffering that her meddling had caused.

One morning, as the two were traveling overland and the sun was starting to lighten the sky, Merilee acted. When Keesla moved to enter her coffin, Merilee delayed her with conversation. Three times she did this and only when the first sliver of sunlight began to show itself did she seal herself into her own coffin and allow Keesla to do the same.

When Keesla reached the coffin and tried to open it, however, she found that it had been nailed shut. Enraged at this betrayal, she began to claw at the wood. With the sunlight falling upon her and her vampiric abilities fading away, she managed to open the lid. The instant that her gaze fell upon the soil within, she knew that she was lost. The unholy earth that Keesla needed to sleep upon was gone. The coffin was nothing now but a wooden box that offered no refuge from the sun.

That night, when Merilee opened her coffin, she found no trace of Keesla. The sun, it appeared, had done its work.

Over the course of the next several nights, she struck at the campsite of the brigands who had killed her parents. Each brigand died slowly, knowing full well that it was the daughter of the Markuza family who was destroying them. Merilee, no longer a child in anything but physical form, relished the demise of her enemies.

The cruelty of her revenge was enough to earn the notice of the dark powers. When she awoke from her daylight sleep a week later, she found herself in Ravenloft.

Current Sketch

Merilee currently resides in the domain of Lamordia. Unlike the other creatures in this book, she is neither the lord nor a prisoner of the domain in which she dwells. However, she often keeps company with Adam, Lamordia's lord. Both are outcasts who despise their physical forms. Apparently, the two have found comfort in each other.

Those who think of Merilee as a child are sadly mistaken. She is now almost 90 years old, although she still retains the body of a ten-year-old girl. While she may act the child in order to lure victims close or secure pity and mercy as it suits her needs, she is never as innocent as she appears.

Long ago, Merilee realized that she would never evolve into the physically powerful creature that other vampires were. Aware of this, she decided that she would divert her energies into intellectual pursuits instead. Thus, she has attained a keen intelligence and a natural wisdom that far surpass those of most other creatures, living or undead. She makes the most of her wits, especially when she hunts.

Confronting Merilee

Human Vampire, Neutral Evil

Armor Class	1	Str	5
Movement	6	Dex	15
Level/HD	4+3	Con	5
Hit Points	18	Int	19
THACO	15	Wis	19
No. of Attacks	1	Cha	17

Damage/Attack: 1d3

Special Attacks: See text

Special Defenses: See text

Magic Resistance: Nil

As a human vampire, Merilee has many of the normal powers and abilities associated with such creatures. Because of her child's body, she

MERILEE

does not possess the magnificent physical strength (and associated melee bonuses) normally found among the undead.

Merilee's gaze is, conversely, more powerful than that of a normal vampire. This is, it seems, due to the fact that her fictional innocence conveys a sense of helplessness and sympathy to her victims. Thus, all who roll saving throws against her *charm* power do so with a -4 penalty.

While Merilee can transform herself into a wolf or bat, as can normal vampires, the animal forms she assumes are as immature as her natural one. Thus, she appears as a wolf pup or a young bat.

The creation of other vampires is forever beyond the power of Merilee. The infusion of Negative Material plane energy required to accomplish this is draining for even a normally robust vampire and would certainly be fatal to so fragile a specimen.

Merilee's high Intelligence and Wisdom scores bestow upon her certain special immunities above and beyond those normally associated with a vampire. She is, for example, wholly immune to the effects of 1st-level illusions. Further, spells such as *cause fear*, *command*, *friends*, and *hypnosis* have no effect upon her. Of course, as a vampire she is already immune to all manner of *charm*, *sleep*, and *hold* spells.

Apart from the differences above, Merilee's other vampiric powers function just as they do for normal undead creatures.

Combat Tactics: Merilee, keenly aware of her own physical weaknesses, seldom engages in toe-to-toe fighting. Instead, she uses her cunning and innocent appearance to lure victims close before she strikes. Often, she does this by appearing to be lost or injured. When someone comes to her aid, she leads them to a secluded spot and strikes.

An Account of My Meeting with the Child-Vampire

By Dr. Rudolph Van Richten

We had come across a young girl slumped in one corner of the alley. She looked so pale and weak that even my old man's heart was moved. Claudia, my assistant, went to the girl and knelt beside her. "There is no pulse," she called to me, "we are too late to help her!"

Suddenly, the creature within revealed itself to us. This young thing that looked in such peril sprang to her feet and struck at Claudia. The blow was not savage, but coupled with the life-draining power of the vampire it was more deadly than the ball of a musket!

Claudia fell back, slain before she hit the ground, and the creature turned its foul gaze upon me. I felt a burning compassion in my soul. Here was not a foul thing of the night, but rather a young cherub that needed my care and nurturing. I knew, deep in my heart, that these were not my thoughts, however. No, they belonged to the vampire and she was sending them to me via her compelling gaze.

I set my will against her and brought forth the holy star that is always about my neck. Seeing this symbol and feeling the strength of my faith, she was repulsed.

With a guttural hiss of rage, she turned and fled into the night, leaving me with only the memory of this unholy creature and the loss of my dear Claudia.

MONETTE



T

he rolling seas are a place of wonder and awe. Since the beginning of time, they have called to the brave and the adventurous, promising vast treasures and unfathomable mysteries. Unfortunately, sometimes what is found is not treasure but nightmares.

Captain Monette was a life-long mariner. He is said to have visited all points on the compass and even looked over the edge of the world and watched the sea plunge into eternity.

Appearance

Captain Monette is a wererat and, as such, has two distinct forms. His natural shape is that of a slender, rugged-looking man. Monette is quite tall, standing just under seven feet in height, and very thin. Some of his shipmates have remarked that he is more skeleton than flesh.

Monette's face is set and grim. A long, snaking scar cuts diagonally across his features. His eyes are a cold steel gray, the color of the sea on an overcast day.

For dress, Monette favors the uniform he wore in his days as captain of the privateer *Ouragan*. This blue uniform is so dark that it can be easily mistaken for black. The gold buttons sewn onto the jacket are kept brightly polished and the uniform as a whole is immaculate.

Monette's second form is that of a hybrid nightmare. Half-man and half-bat, he stands slightly under six feet in height. His body is covered in a thick coat of coarse fur, and his face is the twisted snout of a bat. The unusual scar that so marks his human face is fully visible and recognizable in his hybrid form. It is in this shape that Monette prefers to enter combat.

Background

Monette was, as has been mentioned, the captain of a privateer named *Ouragan*. His crew quickly learned two things about their captain. First, he was very much an able seafarer. No form of peril, be it natural or artificial, could daunt him. Monette was a master of the treacherous waves.

The second thing they discovered, however, was that their captain was a cruel and violent man. He expected his orders to be obeyed without question or delay and the penalty for failure was often a brutal beating before the ship's company. No man served aboard *Ouragan* without learning fear at the sight of the captain's shadow.

Eventually, Monette went too far. His crew mutinied and seized control of the ship. They lashed their former captain to a series of line and keelhailed him. Three times they threw his body into the sea and dragged it along the length of the ship and three times, to the wonder of his crew, Monette survived.

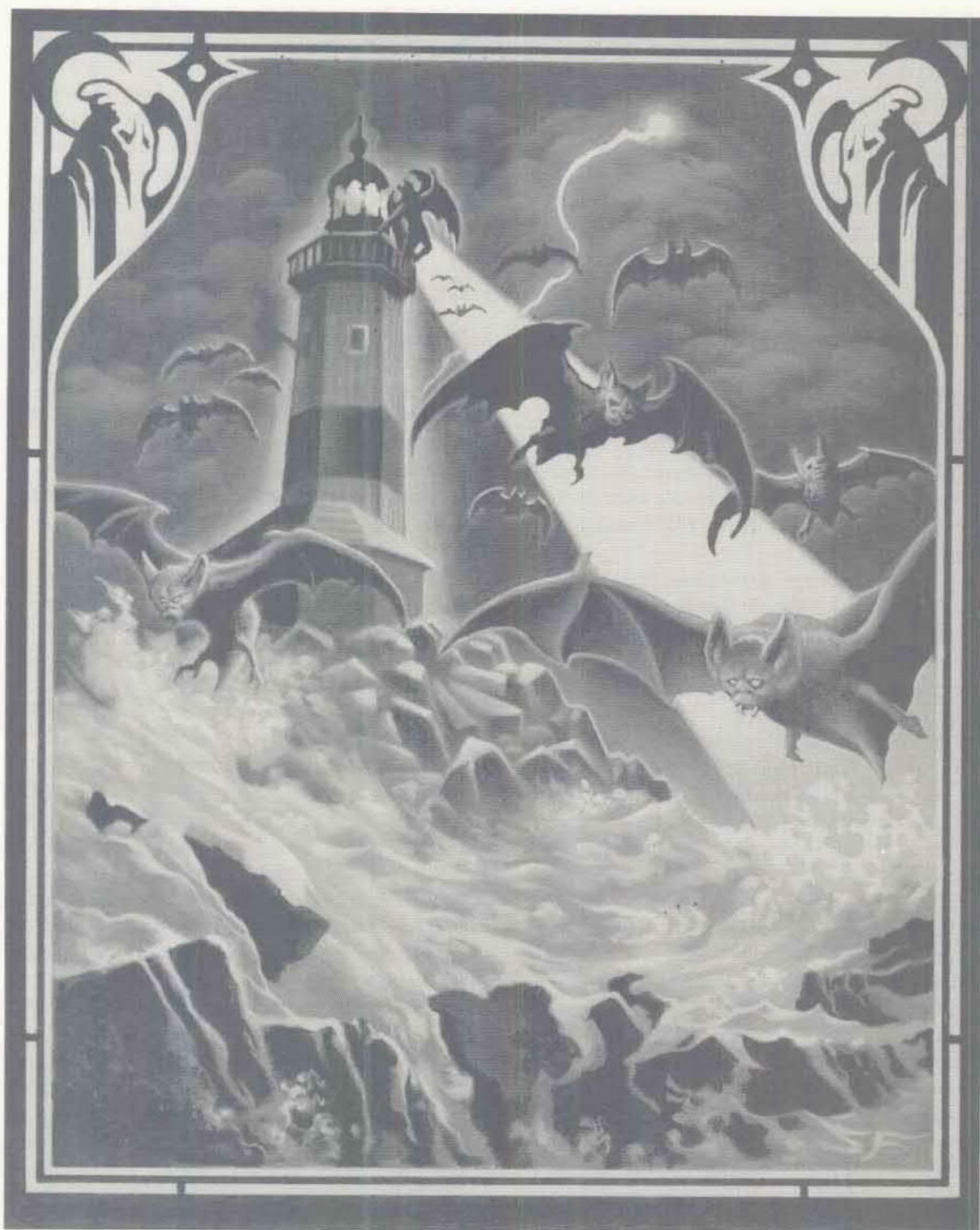
Following the keelhauling, Monette was lashed to a mast and flogged. The punishment went on for over an hour, but the stern mariner was too strong to cry out or call for mercy. When at last he lost consciousness, vowing to avenge himself on the rebellious company, his bleeding body was tossed into the sea.

His crew watched in amusement as the body of their former captain drifted away from the ship. When at last it appeared to vanish beneath the waves, a great cheer went up from the ship's company. Unbeknownst to Monette or his crew, however, the currents that carried his body away whisked him into the demiplane of dread.

Monette's body came to rest in the dark confines of an isolated sea cave that was filled with bats. One by one, the flying bats dropped down on him and drank from his many wounds. When he awoke, the captain found himself covered with the nightmarish creatures.

Too weak to attempt escape from the cave,

MONETTE



MONETTE

Monette survived from day to day by capturing and eating some of the bats. Just as he had satisfied their hunger, now they gave him the strength to live on.

What Monette did not know, however, was that his close association with these creatures was causing him to change. Each night when he slept, the bats would drop down and taste his blood. With the coming of the day, he would catch them and take it back when he fed. In the end, he all but became one with them.

Current Sketch

With the coming of the high tides each day, Monette finds himself transformed into a wererat. He has no control over this change, for he is, in essence, an infected lycanthrope. It is while he is in this state that Monette seeks out his victims and feasts upon their flesh.

Monette delights in luring ships to crash upon the reefs and shoals that litter the sea around his island. Those who survive the shipwreck are stalked and killed by the evil Monette, who takes great care to see that he never leaves a victim alive.

The one thing that Monette craves more than anything else is the high adventure and travel that he enjoyed as a seaman. He cannot stand his isolation and the thought that he is forever stranded on this island. However, each time that he attempts to sail away, he find himself growing weaker and weaker. It is certain that he would die before he ever lost sight of the island.

Since coming to Ravenloft, Monette has built for himself a large lighthouse that he calls the Eye of Midnight. Atop it, he has placed a skull that is enchanted with a *continual light* spell. On the nights of the full moon, he sends out a beacon from this eerie lantern. Mysteriously, this beacon of light has the power to beam into the Prime Material plane.

Seafarers who do not recognize the light for what it is and decide to follow it or investigate it are doomed. The moment the decision is

made to pursue the phantom light, the ship and its crew are drawn into Ravenloft.

When they come across the island that is at the heart of Monette's domain, they are almost certainly shipwrecked. Monette has absolute control over the currents in the sea, and the waters in his domain hide many savage reefs and shallows upon which unsuspecting craft can be dashed.

The Domain

Monette's domain is an island known as L'ile de la Tempete (pronounced LEEL duh lah tah-PET). It is some ten miles long and roughly kidney shaped. Covered with scrub forests and rocky soil, its temperate environment makes the place similar to the islands one might expect to find in a northern climate.

Near the center of the island, a rocky spire breaks above the otherwise low geography. Standing atop this monolith of stone is the lighthouse that Monette uses to lure seafarers to their deaths.

There is little animal life on the island, although insects, such as flies and gnats, are common enough. Most of the plant life suffers from the overly salty soil that covers the island.

Those who try to sail away from the island find only endless sea. Still, in the minds of many, it is better to die like a sailor at sea than to fall victim to the cruel fangs of the wererat.

L'ile de la Tempete is surrounded on all sides by a harsh and rocky coast. The surf crashing against the shore sends shivers throughout the entire domain. Anyone taking the time to search an area of the coast finds evidence of



MONETTE

countless shipwrecks here. Bits of metal and wood lodged in cracks, bones from dead sailors, fragments of sailcloth, and the like litter the entire place.

Confronting Monette

Werebat, Lawful Evil

Armor Class	10 (5)	Str	15
Movement	12 (9/FI 15 D)	Dex	14
Level/HD	8	Con	14
Hit Points	71	Int	15
THACO	13	Wis	10
No. of Attacks	1 (3)	Cha	12

Damage/Attack: See text

Special Attacks: See text

Special Defenses: See text

Magic Resistance: Nil

Numbers in parentheses above are unique to his werebat form. Other numbers apply to both forms.

When engaging in combat, Captain Monette prefers to fight in his hybrid form. When he must do battle in his human form, he makes use of a brightly polished cutlass (treat as a short sword). He is also an expert with the arquebus.

In his hybrid form, the evil captain cannot employ weapons effectively, so he attacks unarmed. His sharp claws and needle-like teeth are more than a match for most adventurers. In each round he may strike twice with his claws (inflicting 1d4 points of damage with each). In any round that both of these attacks hit, he follows up with a bite that inflicts 2d4 points of damage (normal attack roll required).

In either form, Monette can be harmed only by silver or magical weapons.

In addition to the normal powers associated with a werebat, Monette has several powers as a darklord. His lighthouse can lure victims from other worlds. (See "Current Sketch.")

Furthermore, he can control the currents in the seas that surround his island (at will). Thus, he can make it impossible or deadly to attempt swimming or boating.

Excerpts from the log of the merchantman *Dragon's Gold*

10th day of Ches, Year of Sunsets: I fear that I have made a dreadful mistake. Last night the man on watch spotted a faint beacon in the darkness. Fearing that it came from another ship in distress, I ordered the helm to come about and make best speed to rendezvous.

Now, we draw nearer to an island that is not on our charts. The navigator says that he can find none of the stars we know and curses his inability to fix our position. I curse too, but it is myself that I blame for all our failings.

11th day of Ches: What more can go wrong? The ship has run aground on a shoal and torn open the hull. Our best man says that he may be able to fix it in a week or ten days.

17th day of Ches: Last night marked the sixth attack of the creature. Half of our crew is dead and I suspect that most of the others are on the brink of madness.

I have seen the creature myself now. It is a large thing that resembles a foul cross between a bat and a man. How I wish that we had a wizard with us on this voyage, for I have little knowledge of such things. I suspect that if I knew more, though, I would only be more despondent.

29th day of Ches: Only myself and the second mate are left alive. We have agreed that we will not let the evil that rules this place taste of our blood. I can only pray that the gods will forgive us for what we are about to do, but we dare not fall victim to this unholy monster.

At least the end will be quick.

THE PHANTOM LOVER



W

ishes born of love and pain, whispered anxiously to the night, can lead to deadly results. These words often penetrate the fabric of darkness, arousing loathsome spirits who are only too eager to respond.

So it is with Ravenloft's Leederik, known in other realms as the Phantom Lover. When a grieving bride longs for the return of her dead husband, the Phantom Lover goes to her side, to forever ease her misery.

Appearance

The phantom is a creature of countless faces and forms, most of them human. He takes the appearance of a lost loved one—a husband or a sweetheart. The guise is utterly convincing; he is the mirror of his victim's love in size, shape, and even voice. Only one aspect fails to ring true: his left foot is the foot of a small, black-scaled dragon.

The phantom lover may also take the shape of a reptile, such as a black snake. His true form has never been seen by any who lived to describe it. Legends say that he is neither man nor beast, but something in between, blacker than can be imagined. No one knows for sure.

Background

In the Forgotten Realms, near the mountains of Cormyr, the following tale is told. A young woman, newly betrothed, was grieving deeply, her tender hopes destroyed by the sudden, savage death of her fiancé. By day she was silent and withdrawn. By night, she passed the hours longing for her husband's return, praying that time would reverse itself, or that she would somehow wake from the wicked nightmare that caused her despair. She cursed the gods who had wrought such sorrow, and

vowed she would sacrifice anything to see her love return. The woman began to wish that she, like her fiancé, were dead.

Her pleas did not go unnoticed. A villainous phantom, native to a darker realm, came to her in the night. He took the form exactly of her beloved, with a single exception: his left foot was cold, flat, and wide, like that of a reptile. The long, clawed toes were covered with shiny black scales, and joined by a velvet black webbing. In her dreamy enthrallment, the woman failed to notice. Each night, the phantom visited her in her bed chambers. Their meetings left her ever more listless and pale. Slowly but surely, he took her life and her will; she gave it willingly, so lovesick had she become.

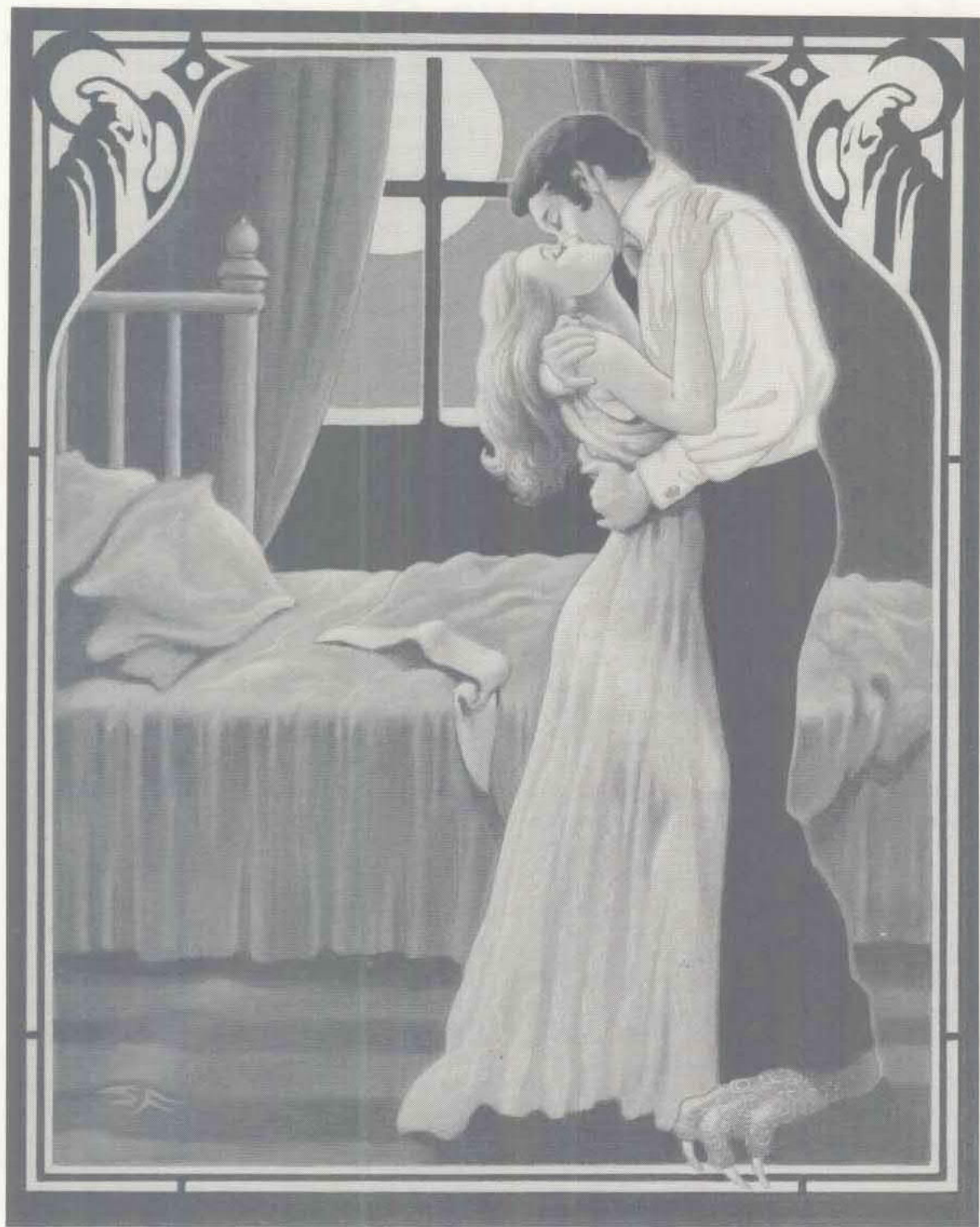
At last, after a fortnight had passed, the phantom said that he could come to her no more. To ensure their togetherness, he said, she would have to follow him before the dawn. Then, and only then, could they marry, and be as one until death did them part.

She put on her wedding dress and followed. He led her to a cemetery, to a grave that seemed freshly dug. This, he said, was her marriage bed, and together they disappeared into the pit. Her handkerchief was later found upon the cold, frosted ground nearby. The woman was never seen again. She was a victim of Ravenloft's Phantom Lover, and she is now married to the night.

Current Sketch

Like many of Ravenloft's lords, the Phantom Lover feeds on sorrow and pain. A small part of his domain slips into other worlds each night, drawn by the anguish of a woman grieving for lost love. Her chamber becomes his domain. A moist haze marks the invasion—like the faint mist formed by a steaming kettle. It carries a sweet, heavy smell. When the haze disappears, so does he, though the odor lingers faintly until morning. The phantom can never stay behind with his intended when the sun

THE PHANTOM LOVER



THE PHANTOM LOVER

breaks the horizon, nor can he step outside her room and wander the rest of her home. He is bound by the Mists of Ravenloft.

When the phantom visits his victim, he stays no more than an hour—and then only so long as his victim allows it. He can do nothing that she does not agree to; she does only that which she believes is her own wish. The deeper her grief, however, the more desperate she is to please him, for fear he will come to her no more. If the connection between them is strong, his power extends into the daylight; she will steal, lie, and even kill for him while he is away from her. Never will she reveal him to another, so strong is their bond. (She is under the effects of a powerful charm, which cannot be magically detected or dispelled. Victims may still roll a saving throw, but with a -4 penalty.)

Each night he comes, draining her Strength (1 point per night) and eroding her will. When nearly all is lost, he beckons to her to forsake all other things and follow wherever he leads. She must agree or he cannot take her. Yet in her weakened state, intoxicated by the dark love he brings her, she can hardly refuse.

The phantom's domain can penetrate one other place in his victim's world: a nearby graveyard. Somehow the victim knows this, for she is likely to haunt the place by day, searching for him. She will not explain her true reason for being in the cemetery, except to say she is visiting her lost love. Many are apt to think she is simply visiting her real love's grave, as a grieving widow might do.

It is to the graveyard that the phantom takes his victim, on the eve following her vow to go with him. They appear together at the gates of the cemetery (via *teleport without error*) and wander to an uncommon grave. There, before the headstone, lies a gaping, rectangular pit, descending into the ground. No bottom can be seen. The phantom leads her into the depths. (They teleport to the lowest level of his underground labyrinth.) In the graveyard, a piece of clothing or something she carried lies behind. The woman herself, in most cases, is

never seen again.

Though he could surely drain all life from his victim and leave her stiff body behind, the phantom rarely does so. Perhaps it is actually a perverted longing that compels him, for he always refrains from killing her, so that he might draw her alive into his realm. If it is company he seeks, he will not have it long.

His victim cannot survive in his domain. She languishes there, in a dark, damp realm that few can describe. She cannot leave. Some say she is simply too weak to do so; others claim she is paralyzed by the realization of what she has done. It is said that she may appear before her parents as a vision then, telling them not to worry and bidding them goodbye. Soon thereafter, she dies. Her spirit is trapped in Ravenloft, like those of the victims who knew the phantom before her.

The Domain

The Phantom Lover's domain is unlike most others in Ravenloft. Its foundation is a small, underground labyrinth, upon which a round tower is seated, rising up from the ground and extending into the night sky. Water drips from the walls of the labyrinth, and darkness pervades. All normal light is extinguished; torches sizzle and smoke as if they were drenched with rain. Even magical light is diminished here; it only serves to surround its user with a faint, unearthly red glow.

The tower atop the labyrinth is constructed of polished black stones. The uppermost room of the tower is the phantom's lair, where the living are kept. The tower has no windows, but a small stair in the tower room leads to the crenelated roof. The stones there are slick and shiny. Beyond the tower lies perpetual darkness and fog. The ground is not visible, and a pebble dropped from the tower plummets with no sound to mark the end of its fall. Those who leap from the tower fall into the Mists of Ravenloft, which return them to the labyrinth below.

THE PHANTOM LOVER

The land is distinguished by its ability to extend an arm of itself into other realms. It can invade the room of the grieving victim. When this occurs, the room becomes nearly as dark as the phantom's labyrinth. For a moment, the victim sees the phantom in the shape of her beloved. Then candles are immediately snuffed, oil lamps sputter and go out. She can still hear and feel him, but his shape is little more than a shadow, made distinct by the faint blue light that streams in her window. The doors and windows of the room lock automatically, becoming impenetrable by others except by great or magical force. The victim can open them herself, however—if she chooses to do so.

The Portal: As noted above, the phantom's domain can penetrate one other location outside Ravenloft: an earthly place of the dead. The phantom carries his victim to a graveyard, teleporting from her room to the graveyard's gates, with no chance of missing his mark. He slinks across the cemetery to a certain tombstone. There, a portal leading to his domain takes shape, hidden in the shadow of the headstone. The portal is his victim's only entry into Ravenloft, and she must step through it willingly.

The portal forms as soon as the phantom begins his seduction of the victim. It appears to be the same as the shadows that stretch out before the other tombstones in the light of the moon. On the night during which the phantom intends to steal his victim away, the portal becomes an open grave. Anyone who steps into the grave with purpose enters the phantom's realm in Ravenloft; those who merely stumble upon it fall to the ground beside the grave, paralyzed with uncontrollable fear for 1d6 rounds, suffering 1d10 points of damage from shock (no saving throw).

The portal exists only at night. It appears when the phantom goes to his victim. When the first light of dawn shimmers on the horizon, the portal disappears.

It is possible to rescue a victim by following her and the phantom through the portal. First,

the rescuers must find her within the labyrinth. Then they must lead her back to the portal, if they can. If the sun has begun to rise in her world, the rescuers can take her only to another domain in Ravenloft—provided they escape before the sun clears the horizon. When the sun has fully risen, she is lost, and they are trapped until the phantom visits another victim, opening a portal to that world.

Confronting the Phantom

Phantom Lover, Lawful Evil

Armor Class	0	Str	16
Movement	12	Dex	12
Level/Hit Dice	5	Con	17
Hit Points	6	Int	17
THACO	15	Wis	14
No. of Attacks	1	Cha	12 (18*)

Damage/Attack: 2d4

Special Attacks: Strength drain (1 pt./night), *charm* (-4 penalty for victim), control over doors (see text), *sleep*, etc.

Special Defenses: Change to mist, snake, gargoyle; command snakes and gargoyles (2d8); 75% Hide in Shadows; +1 or better *blessed* weapon to hit; control over doors (see text)

Magic Resistance: 10%

* *Charisma in the eyes of his victim*

The phantom shares many traits with vampires, and is classified as one by some scholars. Like a vampire, he drains the life from his victims and erodes their will. Though he drains spirit rather than blood, the effect is virtually the same. He erodes their willingness to live and brings them fully under his influence. His victims, like those of a vampire, begin to shun the daylight, wanting only the dark. They become addicted to his attentions, so much so that they are blinded to all but their desire for him. Eventually, they will sacrifice anyone—killing family and friends, even themselves—to do the phantom's will.

THE PHANTOM LOUER

These are not the only similarities between the phantom and common drinkers of blood. Like a vampire, the phantom can assume many shapes. He can become mist. In addition, he may take the form of an animal—although not the traditional wolf or bat, but rather a black, vile reptile. The phantom may appear to be a large black snake, for example, among a swarm of smaller, identical snakes that do his bidding. Or he may take the shape of a small black dragon, among many similar grotesque, living gargoyles that he can summon from the skies in his realm to protect him.

Those who watch a woman grow more listless with the passing of each night may suspect she is the victim of some unholy visitation. (She loses one Strength point per night, as desired by the phantom.) If it is a vampire they imagine, they may place garlic over her windows, or place a holy symbol around her neck. Garlic does nothing to deter him. The holy symbol offends him, and it may cause him to hesitate momentarily, but if the phantom asks her, the victim is certain to remove it.

Moving the woman to another room does not thwart the phantom; he simply invades the new chamber. Only keeping her in the open air can dissuade him. The victim must be kept outdoors for three consecutive nights, else the phantom will return. The victim will resist staying outside until his spell is broken; she will steal away to her chamber if she can.

A *protection from evil* spell will not sway or halt the phantom unless he fails a saving throw vs. spell with a +2 bonus. *Negative plane protection* has no effect.

As noted above, those who attempt to check on the woman during the night will find the door to her chamber locked; only acts of extraordinary strength or magic will budge it. (For example, a successful open doors attempt or *knock* spell would do the trick.) This is not the only door the phantom can affect. He can cause any portal in the house he visits to shut and lock, one following the other, though anyone can open these doors with a key or a

brawny shoulder.

The door to his victim's room may do more than simply prevent access from the outside. When someone's hand is on the knob, the phantom can change the knob's shape, so that it holds fast to the person's hand and strives to crush it even as it heats to sear the skin. The wood of the door may twist and warp to form another hand that reaches for the throat of someone nearby, gouging the skin with shards of wood (THACO 20; damage 1d6 points). If someone attempts to guard the woman by staying in her room, the phantom still comes, darkening the room as he arrives. He attempts to put the onlookers to sleep (they must roll a successful saving throw vs. spell with a -5 penalty; elves and half-elves have a 45% resistance to this spell). Those able to resist his power may be paralyzed with horror (roll a horror check with a -4 penalty; a failed roll results in paralysis) as they watch the phantom's actions and feel their own bodies growing cold by the nearness of death (1d6 points of damage per round). In this vulnerable position, their throats may be cut by the phantom's intended, for she will do it if he asks.

In the Graveyard: If the phantom is in danger, he retreats to the cemetery. The nearer he is to his domain in Ravenloft, the more powerful he becomes. In the graveyard, he can create a force that hurls a victim through the air (if a Strength check is failed) and slams him against a tombstone (1d4 points of damage). The phantom can also animate the dead, who will claw their way out of the earth to grasp the ankles of passersby, and then slowly rise up to attack, like common zombies.

The phantom can summon the black snakes whose form he mimics, using them to confound his pursuers. (Use combat statistics for a common poisonous snake; the phantom's creatures are no more than a foot long, however.) These creatures may either slither up from the graves or drop down from the trees.

The phantom's gargoyles (he can summon 2d8) come with him into the cemetery each

THE PHANTOM LOVER

night, and wait there for his return. If he is in danger, they attack; otherwise they usually only threaten. They favor swooping onto a victim from behind, landing on his back, and then raking his face and neck with their claws. Even after the phantom himself has left the graveyard, the gargoyles may remain behind until the portal disappears. They lurk in the trees and atop mausoleums, their leathery wings fluttering occasionally.

None of these brute actions may be necessary, however. The phantom may well elude his pursuers. Wherever he goes, he can create low, drifting veils of mist that help to conceal him. In the graveyard, he can slip from shadow to shadow, with a 75% chance of seemingly disappearing (though pursuers may still hear a rustle of leaves, marking his—or a minion's—progress).

In the Lair: Characters who follow the phantom into his lair are unlikely to encounter him there; he avoids combat. If forced to do battle there, he takes on the visage of someone his attackers know—either one of them, or a companion who recently died.

Destroying the Phantom: Only magical weapons with a +1 bonus or better can harm the phantom. These must be blessed, however, or they have no effect. Holy water thrown upon him causes him to halt for one round, but inflicts no damage. If he is reduced to 0 hit points, he retreats to a hiding place in his lair. A *dispel evil* or *sunray* spell will also drive him back into his realm, although he can make a saving throw vs. spell to avoid it. It is unlikely that he will return to the same victim again after this is accomplished.

Despite such efforts, the Phantom Lover can never truly be destroyed. As long as there are sorrows and grief of immense proportion, he will return to the realm of the innocent, seeking out a new victim.

Fragments of a Diary

20 Jan. '01 — *I knew life could not be so cruel, that the fates could not rob me of him on the day of our vows. Am I blessed or am I cursed? It matters not. Thirteen days of mourning have yielded miracles and joy. His love is undying, and that is what has brought him back into my welcoming embrace. Under a blanket of shadow, my warm kisses will erase the chill of death.*

23 Jan. '01 — *If I am dreaming, let me never wake. If I am mad, bar sanity from returning. Fear dissolves with the night, and reason along with it. I no longer wish to think, only to feel. I am filled with such yearning, unbearably bittersweet. Darkness fills my chamber like a sea of black, and he will follow on its currents soon.*

2 Feb. '01 — *I have lost all desire for the daylight. The sun no longer warms my flesh; it only reminds me how cold and empty the days without him have become. These hours before the night leave my body weak, my heart aching with loneliness and despair.*

3 Feb. '01 — *My friends, not understanding my behavior, try to urge me from my room for idle recreation, as if that could erase him from my thoughts. My brothers, in whom I confided, seek only to deny my happiness. They tell me he is dead, and that only by accepting this lie can I hope to be well. But I do not wish to be well!*

If he is Death, then I welcome him only more, for it is only in darkness now that I can know love; it is only in that black corner of the night, where no one but my beloved and I can go, that I am alive.

5 Feb. '01 — *Why hasn't he come? My spirit is dark and my flesh grows cold. The sun is fading, and so am I, withering without his touch. If he does not come I shall disappear altogether, melting away in the misery of his absence.*

7 Feb. '01 — *I leave my family behind, and with these words I ask their forgiveness. I must follow where my love takes me. I cannot know life without him; indeed I would sacrifice my own if it would take me to him now. Do not weep for me, for I am giving myself to an undying passion, and will thereby find myself happy at last.*



D'POLARNO

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mbition can grant much wealth and fame, but the price of such rewards is often quite high. For the darklord of Ghastria, a small domain on the western border of Sithicus, the cost of ambition was his soul. Luckily for him—and sadly for those who accept an invitation to one of the marquis's masques—he has found a way of recovering, if only for a time, what ambition cost him.

Background

Several hundred years ago, Stezen D'Polarno was an influential courtier in a land far removed from the dark domains of Ravenloft. In the court of one King Oderic IX, Stezen held great power. Much of that strength was afforded the marquis by the commoners of his realm. Stezen appeared to the masses as a benevolent, even philanthropic nobleman. He openly championed the causes of the peasants and fought for lower taxes, fewer public beatings, and greater, more spectacular festival entertainments.

Stezen's greatest asset was his vibrant personality, his overwhelming love for life. Commoners recognized this energy as a clear mark of greatness; the nobility saw his *joie de vivre* as a refreshing spark in their often stultifying court life. The marquis's parties were always the best attended, his public addresses the most well received. His movements were followed as closely as the sun's.

In actuality Stezen was a very shrewd, duplicitous politician. He publicly supported popular causes while privately working for personal gain. He kept his real alliances carefully hidden. Anyone from the court who threatened to reveal Stezen's agenda to the people turned up dead. None of these murders could ever be traced back to the marquis, but it was said that he was responsible for more than

one hundred political assassinations in his life—even before he entered Ravenloft.

King Oderic never liked the marquis's grandstanding, especially since Stezen often seemed to have more popular support than he. Still, the king saw that having one highborn politician dear to the people was better than none—for Oderic was certain that he lacked the marquis's talent for lying to the commoners. For a time, the monarch let his courtier appear to be the peasant's friend, and he used Stezen to quell unrest. The masses were far less likely to revolt when they thought that they had some voice in government.

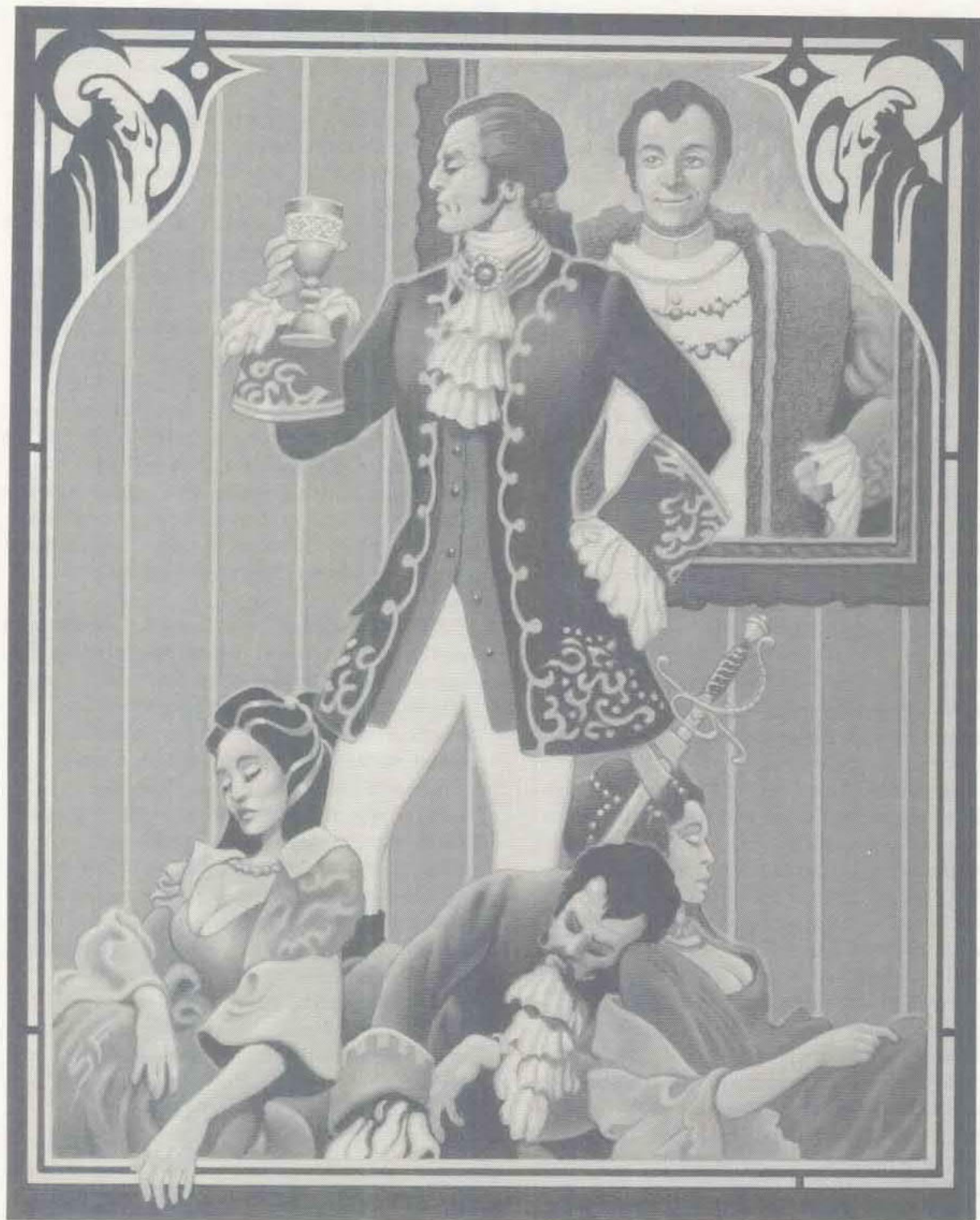
Still, it was obvious to Oderic from the start that Stezen would eventually try to use his popular support for his own gain. That time came during a winter in which public grain stocks were dangerously low and unrest was dangerously high. Stezen revealed that the king had a secret, bountiful store of food. Riots broke out, carefully orchestrated by the marquis and his followers. Yet the king was prepared; his loyal nobles shattered the rebellion before it gained momentum. Key rebels were executed, the rest of the population given a share of the grain (which the king claimed was being held in trust for them), and Stezen was cast into the dungeons.

King Oderic didn't know what to do with the rebellious nobleman. While Stezen's best allies abandoned him once the attempted coup was crushed, the people still looked to him as a hero. It was clear that to kill the marquis was unwise—at least until the harsh winter was over and the people had food again—but Oderic also knew that Stezen would abuse his position again if left unchecked.

The solution came from one of the king's mistresses, a practitioner of evil magic.

Oderic's mistress cast a complicated variant of *trap the soul* upon Stezen. Through this spell, only part of the marquis's life force was stolen and caged within a magically prepared painting. The king was specific about what facet of Stezen's character he wanted siphoned

D' POLARNO



D'POLARNO

from the dangerous courtier: his vibrancy and love for life. The evil deed done, the prisoner was released. The king had various protective spells cast on the portrait, then had the canvas put on display in his throne room.

Marquis D'Polarno became a drab, vindictive, blatantly self-serving politician. He shuffled unhappily through Oderic's court, offending both peasant and nobleman. The king had his revenge; even though the marquis was still alive, he soon alienated the masses and the few courtiers that still supported his cause. Stezen could do nothing against the king directly, however. Oderic made it clear that any attack on the royal family would mean that the marquis lost all hope of regaining his soul.

A year passed in which the soul-less courtier was made the brunt of all criticism against the court. Realizing that the little spirit he had left was atrophying quickly, Stezen rallied himself for a final revolt against the king. Using a trick that would make Ivana Boritsi, the "Black Widow" of Borca, proud, the marquis poisoned the entire royal household during a feast.

Stezen D'Polarno regained the painting that still held a fragment of his soul, but found that he could not release his trapped lifeforce; the canvas could not be destroyed nor the curse removed by any means.

What it was that directed the attention of the Dark Domain to Stezen is unknown. It could have been his murder of Oderic's court or his great sorrow at the seemingly permanent loss of his soul. All historians of Ravenloft know is that Stezen was transported from his home. As he sat emotionless in the great hall of Oderic's castle, the grim-faced corpses of his victims sprawled around him, the Mists engulfed the marquis and brought him to Ravenloft.

Though he had entered the demiplane of dread, he was not yet a darklord, but Ravenloft recognized the marquis's potential for great evil. Once he was in the demiplane, he found himself in a manor house much like a country estate he owned on his home world. The enchanted portrait hung in a hall full of similar

paintings of the D'Polarno family. According to legend, the paintings sometimes speak to Stezen, haunting him with voices only he can hear.

Stezen stood in the hall, absolutely baffled by his present whereabouts. He wondered if some other of the king's mistresses had cast yet another spell upon him or if he'd just woken from a very bad dream. As if meant to sooth his confusion, a lovely young serving girl entered the hall and presented Stezen with a drink. The marquis questioned her extensively, but all she could say was that they were in the village of East Riding in a land called Ghastria and that Stezen himself was ruler of the tiny domain.

Stezen dismissed her, his mind reeling. As the girl bowed demurely and went on her way, a single thought presented itself to the marquis: *if my heart were not so dead, I would seduce this girl. I wish I had my soul back once more.* But before she left the room, the girl glanced at the portrait of Stezen. She froze in place as if mesmerized.

A ghostly fog streamed from the girl's mouth and nose, then flowed toward the painting. The portrait glowed blood red as the fog hit it, and Stezen himself was rocked by a surge of emotion and energy. For the first time in many, many months, the marquis felt alive again. Faster and faster the fog bled from the girl until, at last, she crumpled to the floor, dead.

The marquis fell to a riot of revelry and debauchery, but he quickly learned that the effects of the wondrous event were short-lived. Within an hour, his soul grew cold again. He forced all the servants he found in the manor house to gaze at the painting, but nothing happened—until three months later, when autumn turned to winter in the land of Ghastria. Only then did the painting work its magic again.

D'POLARNO

Current Sketch

Once a season, Ravenloft allows Stezen to regain his love of life; when people are gazing at the painting, the marquis need only wish to have his soul returned to him. The painting then drains the lifeforce from the unwary victims and deposits that energy with the darklord. Up to 50 people can be drained by the painting at one time, and Stezen gains one hour of renewed vigor for each person so attacked. His ability and combat scores are not altered by this transfer, but his personality changes radically.

Anyone looking at the painting when Stezen makes his wish will lose his lifeforce, then die. Player characters who are bound for some particular fate after death—a specific plane, for example—are free to travel to whatever awaits them in the afterlife.

The painting casts a modified *magic jar* spell, similar to the one used to capture Stezen's soul. No saving throw is allowed against the potent attack since it is a gift to Stezen from the Dark Powers themselves, but an *amulet of life protection* will save a person from losing his lifeforce. A psionicist can use the *mind bar* power against this assault, with a -3 penalty to his power score.

Virtually nothing can destroy the painting. Flames lap at it harmlessly. If it is slashed, it mends itself. If it is removed from the domain, it returns. Only if the marquis dies can the painting be destroyed, for then its powers are lost.

Over the years, the marquis has learned two things. First, the curse has seemingly made him immortal. Stezen has incredible powers of regeneration (5 hit points per round), and even if he is dismembered and burned, his body will reform. Nor does the marquis age. Not a single gray hair has graced his head since he appeared in Ravenloft.

This invulnerability does not apply when Stezen has been rejuvenated by the painting; during those hours, he can be attacked and

killed as any normal fighter of his level of experience. Obviously, the marquis is very careful about the danger to which he exposes himself during those brief hours each season.

Stezen has also learned that it is unwise to expose a large number of locals to the painting. Apart from the animosity the murders tend to generate toward Stezen, it lessens the work force too much. He realized long ago that he needs peasants to work the orchards and grain fields that surround the manor.

The Domain

Ghastria is a relatively green domain, with fields of wheat, orchards, and vineyards common. Yet the food harvested from the domain's soil mirrors its lord's curse: it's lifeless and bland to taste. The natives have learned, however, that food taken during certain times of each season tend to have a more lively taste. The truth is that anything gathered during a time in which Stezen is experiencing renewed vigor is far more flavorful. Such produce gathers a high price at the marketplace in East Riding, but most of it is taken as tax-payments by Stezen himself.

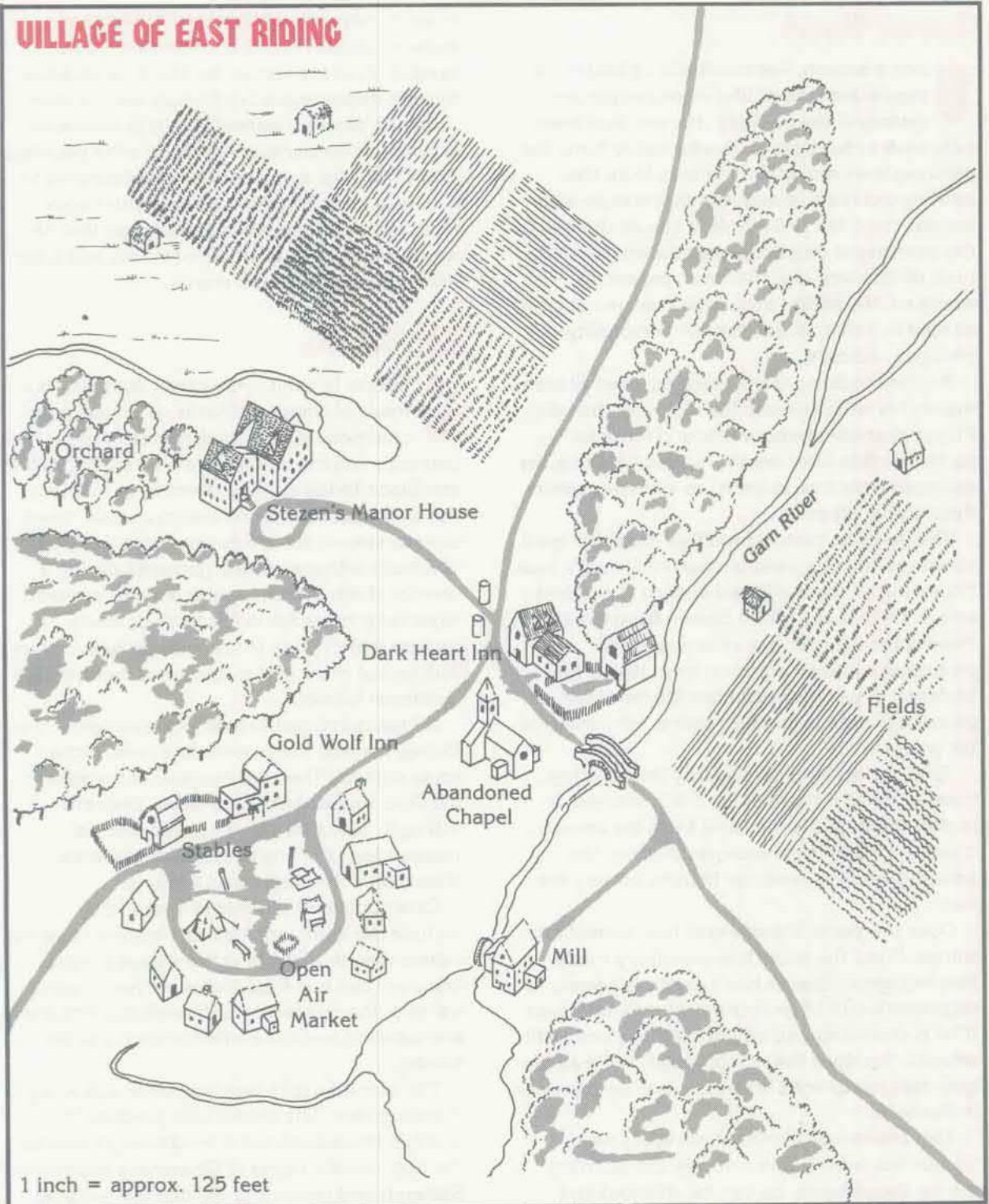
All roads in Ghastria lead to the village of East Riding, the only major gathering point in the small domain. There are two inns at the village, the Gold Wolf and the Dark Heart. Both are willing to take strangers as guests, but the marquis learns of any newcomers' presence shortly after they register at either inn.

Other points of interest in East Riding include the large, open-air marketplace and the ruined church that sits at the village's center. Travelers can buy food and some handcrafted wares at the marketplace, though the victuals are tasteless and the craftsmanship is rather shoddy.

The burned-out church was once a thriving meetingplace. The clerics who practiced their worship there imparted a certain happiness to the oppressed citizens of Ghastria, a happiness Stezen found unsettling. He had the building

D' POLARNO

VILLAGE OF EAST RIDING



D'POLARNO

put to the torch and hung the clerics outside his manor for a fortnight, claiming they had stolen money from his coffers.

By day, there is a 30% chance of an encounter in Ghastria. The chance rises to 50% at night. Common encounters include bandits, bats, rats, snakes, and wolves. Rare encounters include carrion crawlers, ghosts, ghouls, and wights.

Stezen rules the domain apathetically so long as the crops are harvested and he has enough to eat and drink. Unless crimes involve strangers—who interest the darklord for other reasons—he lets the local law deal with the problem. Local law, in this instance, means mobs with lots of rope.

The marquis can usually seal the domain at will. If he so wishes, the borders of Ghastria are replaced by huge paintings, much like the flats used for plays. These paintings appear as panoramic, twisted landscapes, and only by walking into one does a player character discover it's not real. The paintings rise higher than player characters can fly and deeper than they can dig. They cannot be harmed or breached in any way. The borders of Ghastria can't be closed when Stezen is under the rejuvenating influence of the portrait.

Confronting D'Polarno

Human Fighter, Neutral Evil/Chaotic Evil

Armor Class	0 (-2 Dex bonus)	Str	14
Movement	12	Dex	16
Level/Hit Dice	8	Con	11
Hit Points	49	Int	14
THACO	13	Wis	10
No. of Attacks	3/2	Cha	17

Damage/Attack: By weapon

Special Attacks: Nil

Special Defenses: Regeneration

Magic Resistance: 25%

To gather victims, Stezen holds a seasonal party to which all strangers in Ghastria, especially those new to the village of East Riding, are invited. At the masque, the marquis treats the guests in high style, but in mid-revel, he gathers the unwary together and unveils the painting. Some guests, particularly attractive young women, are spared from the art show so Stezen will have someone with whom he can spend his new-found energy.

The casualties from the party are often disposed of quietly. If a particular group of adventurers or locals has been troublesome of late, Stezen will invite them to the party, then leave their corpses at the crossroads in the village center. This has been known to keep the villagers in line from time to time.

Usually the marquis is encountered in his manor, and, since he can use the energy-draining powers of the portrait only once every three months, he often appears as a listless, depressed, tactless nobleman. He always dresses neatly, though his somber moods often make him appear less dashing than he really is. His hair is stylishly cut, with long sideburns. A rapier is standard armament for Stezen (1d6/1d4; size M; type P). Among his collection of these weapons is a special blade—a *rapier of quickness* (which functions as a *short sword of quickness*). D'Polarno also carries a dirk, concealed in his high leather boots.

After the restorative powers of the portrait have been used, the marquis is an outgoing wastrel. Since the renewed vigor is fleeting, he is greedy for any new sensation he can experience. For these few hours, Stezen is driven by whim and his alignment changes to Chaotic Evil; he would be equally likely to reward a stranger with a gift as he would be to murder him on the spot.

TIYET



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

—Keats

People of the Black Land believed that death was only a journey to another existence. In the afterlife, all would remain essentially as it had been before, provided one had been good and kind, provided one's heart had been true.

This is the story of a woman for whom that cycle held no comfort. Because her heart had been fouled with misdeeds, she knew that only horrors would await her. Terrified of judgment, she sacrificed life and spirit to avoid it. In the end, she only condemned herself to a fate that was far worse. She became one of the living dead, a mummy whose beauty is everlasting, but whose heart and hope are lost forever.

Appearance

Although some might think of Tiyet as a mummy, the wrappings of the grave are gone, and she is no more withered than a living woman of 20 years. She is slender, standing only five feet three inches tall, yet her attitude is imposing. Her skin is brown, smooth, and polished. Her large, almond-shaped eyes are dark and rimmed with a lead-based kohl, the lids tinted with a malachite shadow. Her fingernails are gilded, her thick hair blackened with oil and laudenum. Her lips are dark red, stained with a mixture of red ochre, tallow, and blood.

Tiyet dresses in flax-linen sheaths with straight, narrow straps covering her breasts. The left strap partially conceals a faint white scar, which marks the incision made to remove her heart. Most of the garments Tiyet wears are white. She may also wear a diaphanous linen gown made with a flowing, pleated fabric. Her feet are sandaled but otherwise bare. Her body is always adorned with jewelry—a wide gold collar inlaid with turquoise, lapis-lazuli and other semi-precious gems, silver arm and ankle bracelets, hair ornaments, and rings.

Background

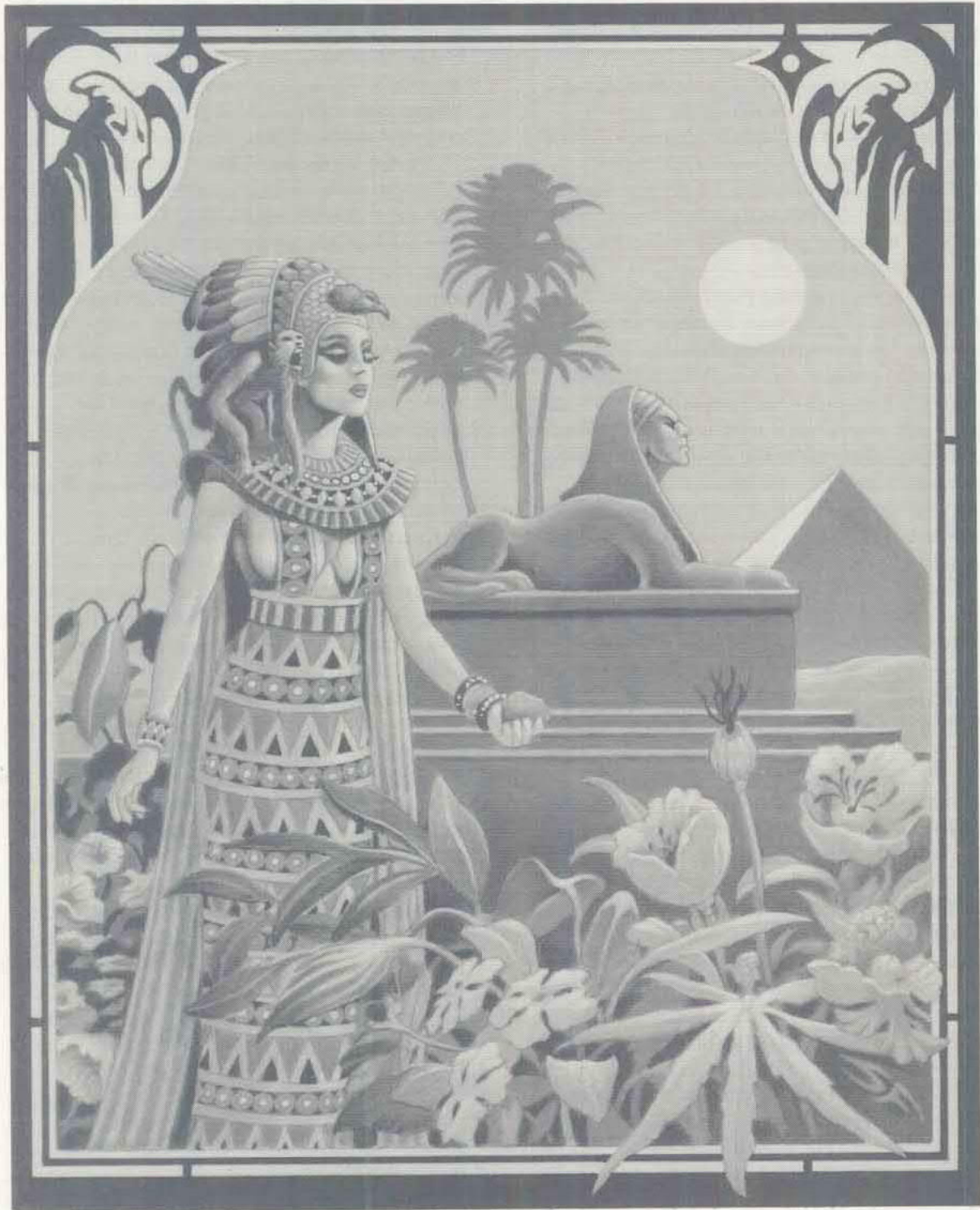
Tiyet once lived in a desert kingdom whose history was over 1,000 years old. Her father was a scribe who served Khamose, fourth son of the pharaoh. Khamose could not fail to notice Tiyet when she visited his estate to see her father; she was lovelier than any woman he had seen before. When Khamose asked for Tiyet's hand, she agreed without hesitation, for she was as ambitious as she was beautiful. One day, she believed, she might live in the palace of the pharaoh. Marrying Khamose brought her closer to that goal.

Tiyet was not Khamose's first wife. His half-sister, Nufneri, held that honor, and was therefore known as his Grand Wife. (Marriage between family members was not uncommon among nobility.) Although Khamose called Tiyet his wife, she was little more than an esteemed concubine, just as Khamose's mother had been. Tiyet shared a chamber with two silly harem girls. Nufneri's chamber was located beside her husband's.

This arrangement did not suit Tiyet well, and she sought to change it. Through clever manipulation, she placed Nufneri in a compromising position with a male slave. Khamose, his honor stained, ordered that Nufneri suffer the fate of all adulteresses: death.

Though Nufneri pleaded her innocence, she was thrown into a pit filled with wild jackals. Her remains were burned upon a pyre in public.

TIYET



Tiyet herself was in the crowd, observing with great satisfaction. Now she was Khamose's Grand Wife.

None suspected Tiyet—none, that is, but a powerful priest. This man, known as Zordenahkt, was well acquainted with Tiyet's beauty, and he wanted her for himself. Zordenahkt was not a good man, nor were the gods he secretly worshiped beneficent. Armed with the knowledge of Tiyet's crime, he coerced her affections from her.

In time, this unlikely pair fell in love. Tiyet succumbed to his power, Zordenahkt to her charms. Tiyet tired of her husband, and lost interest in promoting him, thinking him too stupid to rise above the pharaoh's other sons. Each day, she disappeared, under the pretense of taking offerings to the tomb of Khamose's ancestors. In truth, she entered the nearby Temple of Apophis, God of the Darkness, devourer of the sun. There she and Zordenahkt would enjoy clandestine meetings.

Tiyet was now an adulteress as well as a murderer. At night, the weight of her wrongs began to play on her mind, and she slept fitfully. One night she dreamed of her journey to the Underworld—a journey that all members of her nation would take. She joined Anubis, the jackal god, on a barque that floated upon the River of Darkness toward the Hall of Judgment. As they journeyed, foul creatures clawed at the barque—creatures hungry for Tiyet's body and soul. One managed to gouge her ankle, and she saw black, thick blood bubbling from the wound.

In the Hall of Judgment, Osiris sat in observance. Maat, goddess of Truth, stood before a balance, holding a feather. Tiyet was about to undergo the test of truth, a test that all had to take before passing into the afterlife. Maat took Tiyet's heart from her body. If the heart weighed less than the symbolic feather, Tiyet's afterlife would be peaceful. If the heart was heavy with sin, it would tip the scale, and only a second, more horrid death would await its owner.

In Tiyet's dream, the scale tipped toward the heart. The fiendish serpents and creatures closed in around her, tearing her flesh from her bones. One placed its claws at her heart, and began to pull the organ from her body. At that moment in the dream, Tiyet awoke.

The following day, Tiyet told Zordenahkt of her nightmare, and begged him to find a way to prevent this from happening. There was only one method known to him, he said—a procedure that would forever bind her to the earth above, and prevent her from passing into the Underworld. He explained that this could be performed only on the newly dead—not the living. And he was not willing to try it, for the true consequences were unknown. The nightmare did not return, and Tiyet did not mention it again. She and Zordenahkt continued to meet each day, rapturous in each other's company.

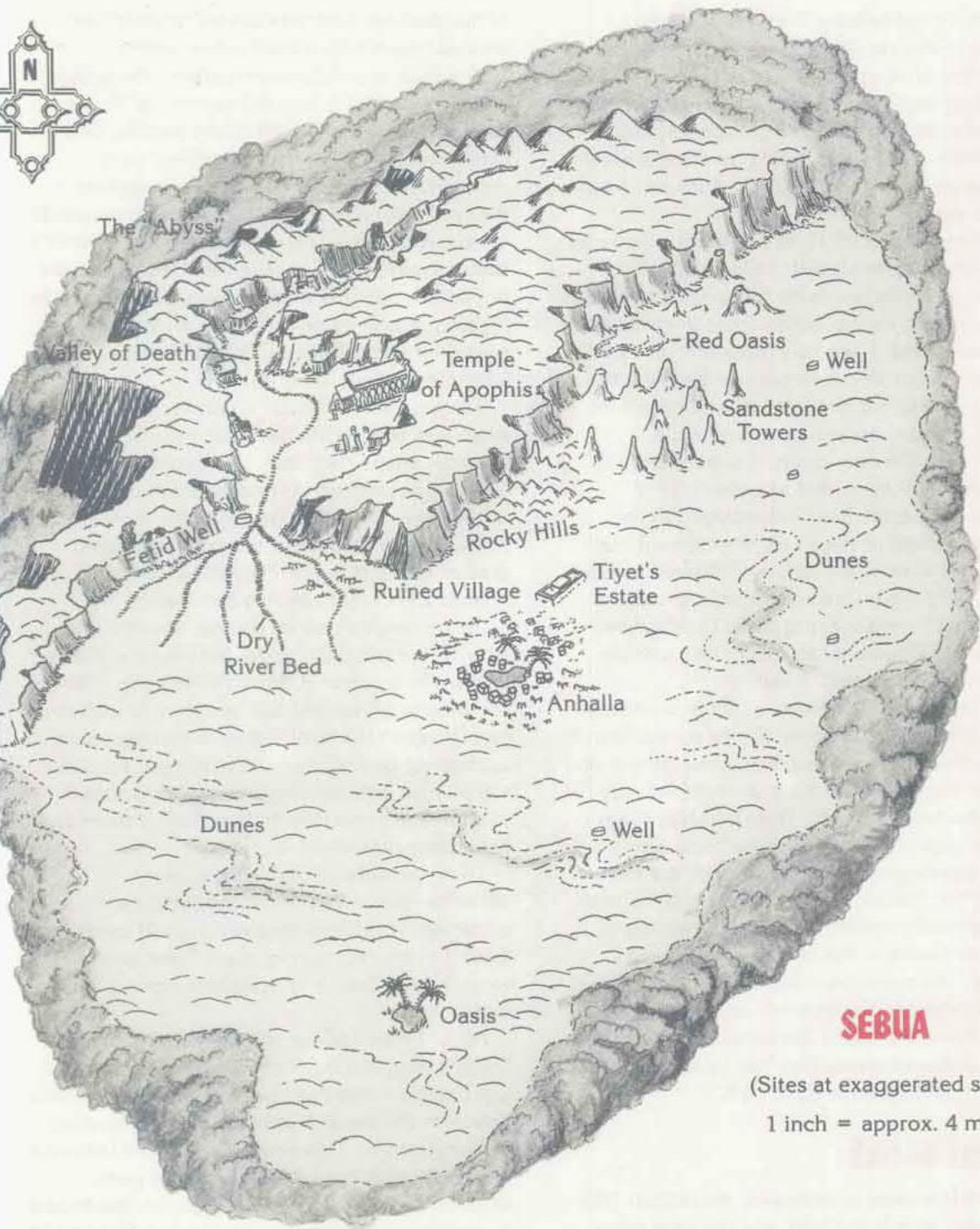
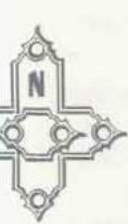
Khamose was not as foolish as Tiyet imagined. He noticed that her attentions, once ample, had waned. He assigned a young servant to spy on her, to learn how she spent her hours. The servant followed her successfully to the temple. Hiding in the antechamber, he listened to Tiyet and Zordenahkt as they spoke.

When Tiyet returned home, she overheard the slave talking with Khamose, revealing her secrets. Khamose was incensed, and vowed that Tiyet would face a death even more horrid than Nufreri's before her. Tiyet knew this was true. She also knew that a second, still worse, fate would follow.

Tiyet returned to the temple and sought out Zordenahkt. She begged him to kill her, and perform the ceremony that would save her from terror in the Hall of Judgment. When Zordenahkt refused, she drew a dagger from her gown. Begging for the mercy of the god Apophis, she plunged the dagger into her chest.

Deep within the temple, Zordenahkt performed the ceremony that she had desired. He bathed Tiyet's body in the precious oils of a nobleman's embalmer, reciting a common spell

TIYET



SEBUA

(Sites at exaggerated scale)

1 inch = approx. 4 miles

TIYET

to preserve her beauty. Then he made an incision in her chest, and removed her heart.

The idol of Apophis looked on, as it had looked on each day Tiyet and Zordenahkt met in his temple. It was a great, black serpent, made from cedarwood. Inlaid jewels and black glass served as its scales. Two rubies set in onyx were its eyes.

Zordenahkt placed Tiyet's heart in a stone jar filled with oils. He placed the jar before his serpent god. The words he spoke offered Tiyet's heart in return for her safety from torment in the Underworld. Then he wrapped Tiyet's body in linen, and carried it to his own family tomb. There he poisoned himself with the venom of an asp, and laid down beside her to die.

Tiyet rose the next night. She pulled the strips from her eyes, and saw the body of Zordenahkt beside her. Still wrapped in the linen swaddling of the dead, she crossed the desert and went to the estate of Khamose. Each heart within the house was audible to her, beating with a maddening pace. Loudest was the heart of Khamose, sounding like a drum, compelling her to seek it out.

Tiyet stole into his room, silent as a shadow. She placed her hand upon his chest, and found that the heartbeat slowed. Khamose stirred, and his eyes opened wide. His mouth gaped, but before he could scream, Tiyet paralyzed him with her gaze. Then, even as he lived, she reached through his chest and drew out his heart. Tiyet placed the bloody mass to her red lips and swallowed it. The audible beating of the other hearts in the household stopped; satiated, she could hear them no longer.

Tiyet returned to the tomb and lay down beside the still body of Zordenahkt. When she awoke, she was alone. She had become the lord of Sebu, a domain in Ravenloft.

Current Sketch

Tiyet has lived in Sebu for more than 100 years. She is the lord, but she only rules the dead; there are few living inhabitants

of her domain, and they are no more in her control than visitors from other realms.

She lives in a nobleman's estate; the palace she once sought is beyond her reach. There, she may sometimes hold grand parties, like those the wealthy in her native land once enjoyed. No one comes; she only imagines them. The land of Ravenloft creates the sounds of guests and their revelry for her. Zordenahkt's voice is sometimes among them, but it speaks not to her, and it is elusive, fading as quickly as it came. Pity the person who is drawn by these sounds and the lights of Tiyet's home, intending to join the guest list.

Tiyet is a lonely, bitter creature. Yet even when someone visits the oasis near her estate, Anhalla, she is reclusive. She may be seen only fleetingly, standing for one moment at the edge of the pool, then disappearing as suddenly as she was seen. It is not that she is shy. Tiyet prefers not to mix with the living, and she resents their intrusion into her realm.

She is now a creature of dark desires, one who craves not only blood, but also the pulsing organ which drives it through the body. Though she despises what she has become, she often cannot resist the temptation of a living heart. Its beating can drive her to madness, shutting out all else but that singular desire to stop it from beating—to stop it by pulling it from its haven and devouring it.

Tiyet controls all the dead in her domain—the mummies in the temples, in particular. It is likely that visitors will confront these terrors before they meet Tiyet herself, even though they may see her watching from a distance.

All this may change if Tiyet needs to feed. Once a year, she must eat a human heart. She will not die if this does not occur, but she is still driven to the deed. Tiyet can hear the beating of living hearts. This ability (described below) is enhanced with time. The longer she goes without devouring what she requires, the louder a nearby heartbeat will sound to her. She will be consumed by an obsession to feed, her body

racked with unbearable pain. When she does find a victim to finally satisfy her desire, she may not be satisfied with just one. Like a starving man who finds a meal, she may gorge herself even after her physical hunger is relieved, even until the shock of it makes her sick.

The Domain

Sebua is a small wasteland, less than 40 miles from one border to the other. It is a desert but not without variety, including soft dunes, rocky flats, and steep granite cliffs. Waterholes and small oases are scattered across the domain, but a third are dry, and yet another third are foul.

The Valley of Death lies in the northeastern quarter of Sebu, cutting from north to south like a scar across the face of the domain. Once the bed of a river, the valley's floor is now a red, barren expanse that bleeds into the desert. The earth is dry, cracked, and scattered with stone. An occasional small flower, dark and thorny, pushes up from between the cracks.

Sandstone cliffs from 500 to nearly 1,000 feet high form the valley's walls. The rock is warped and brooding. In the crannies, sand periodically spills from the ledge far above, cascading to the valley floor with a soft hiss. At the northernmost end of the valley, the walls meet, forming a trap from which the only escape is retreat. Few who walk here will ever leave this valley, however, for its residents are no longer living.

The valley was once the site of great temples honoring the gods of Earth, Sky, and the Underworld. Here, too, is the Temple of Apophis, which holds Tiyet's heart. The heart is not unguarded, however. Shadowy little asps (poisonous black snakes) fill the inner chambers. Furthermore, a great, black-scaled creature sits before the stone jar that contains the oily, shriveled heart. This creature is the manifestation of Apophis himself, devourer of light. (Use the combat abilities of a purple worm.)

Of all the temples in the valley, only that of Apophis still stands. The others lie in ruin, their tall columns still standing, their walls and roofs fallen. When the sun is high, the ruins are a contrast in light and shadow. Only the tops of the columns are bright. Illumination between the columns is gray and diffuse. Behind them, it is black.

The valley is also the site of great tombs, belonging to former kings, nobles, their officials, and their families. These tombs are cut into the walls of the cliffs, most showing only their great facades to the valley itself. At night, shadows run about outside the tombs—shadows of men, racing. Some, no doubt, were once inhabitants of Sebu. Others, perhaps, tried to rob the stores of wealth in the tombs.

The massive rock formation from which the Valley of Death was carved marks the northwestern border of Sebu. Explorers who manage to scale the heights to reach this border see that the mountains end abruptly, plunging into an abyss that seems to have no bottom. Dark, heavy clouds hug the wall of the precipice several hundred feet below the edge.

The city of Anhalla lies near the center of the domain, not far from the mouth of the valley. Like the temples in the Valley of Death, most of the city has been ravaged by time and the forces of Ravenloft. Buildings that were once several stories tall are now marked only by their foundations, and perhaps a stone arch, still bearing an intricate design in red and blue paints. At the center of Anhalla lies a vast oasis. Although the great buildings that once surrounded the oasis are gone, small mud-brick houses have taken their place. In the 100 years since Sebu's formation in Ravenloft, these houses have been built.

Weather: By day, Sebu's deserts are scorched with heat. Even so, the sky is often dark. Storm clouds gather in the morning, lowering in the sky. By afternoon, the clouds may release a brief, intense torrent, which quickly seeps into the ground. More often, the

TIYET

clouds simply dissipate, leaving a hot hazy sky that eventually clears as it gives way to the night.

Sometimes it is not rain that the dark sky portends. At any time, the sky may turn first from green and then to black. This signals the coming of a sandstorm, more dangerous than rain.

Nights in Sebuia are cool and breezy, but not frigid. Only in the valley is it truly cold, because an icy draft spills down from the cliffs and settles on the valley floor. The sky is black but virtually starless. The moon is always orange, casting an amber glow upon the rocks and sand.

Life: Sebuia has few natives. Despite the newly constructed homes in Anhalla, no one but a handful of shy, elusive, wild children live in the city now. The only remaining residents of Sebuia are nomads, traveling from water hole to water hole with their herds of camels. (It is rumored that they may even leave this domain. If this is so, they travel only to Har'Akir, another desert domain in Ravenloft.) A small group of the nomads comes to Anhalla perhaps once each month, staying no more than a day. They can be seen by the oasis, gathering dates, *slaying a wild goose, or milking their camels.*

The nomads dress entirely in black. Their robes hang to the ground. Their headcloths are drawn across their faces, concealing all but their dark eyes. These people are not friendly. No matter where they are encountered, they are unlikely to speak to anyone who approaches. Though they will allow a stranger to take water from a source, spears are raised in defense.

While human and other races are uncommon in Sebuia, animal life is abundant. Like the nomads, most animals are inhospitable. Vultures soar over the desert, forming lazy circles in the sky. Black clouds of locusts cross the land once every seven years, devouring plants and even clothing. Scorpions are commonplace; often they swarm from a fetid waterhole when the stone that covers the well is pushed aside.

The temples and tombs of the Valley of Death are filled with Sebuia's bats—ugly, hairless creatures with pale, translucent skin that reveals the veins below. Brown beetles with shiny carapaces cover the floor beneath the bats, subsisting on their dung as well as the flesh of their dead. A dead bat will fall to the floor, where it is quickly covered with a moving brown carpet. At nightfall, the bats stream from the temples, *flying down the valley and into the village to feed.*

Ill-tempered monkeys and vicious baboons overrun the village of Anhalla, stealing and marauding at the oasis. Their numbers are curbed only by the occasional assault by a pack of wild jackals.

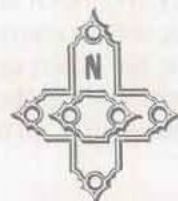
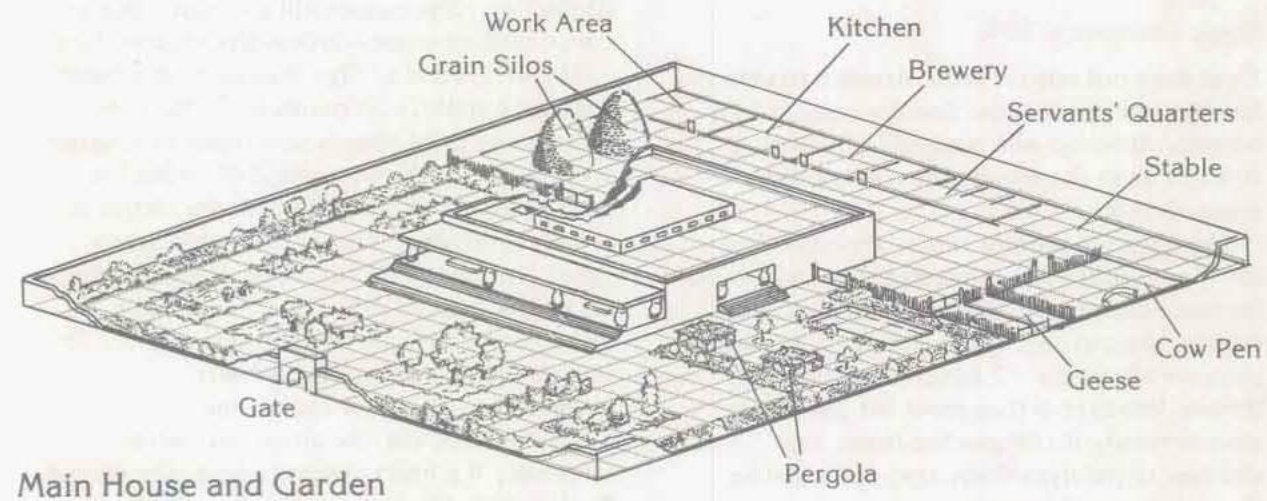
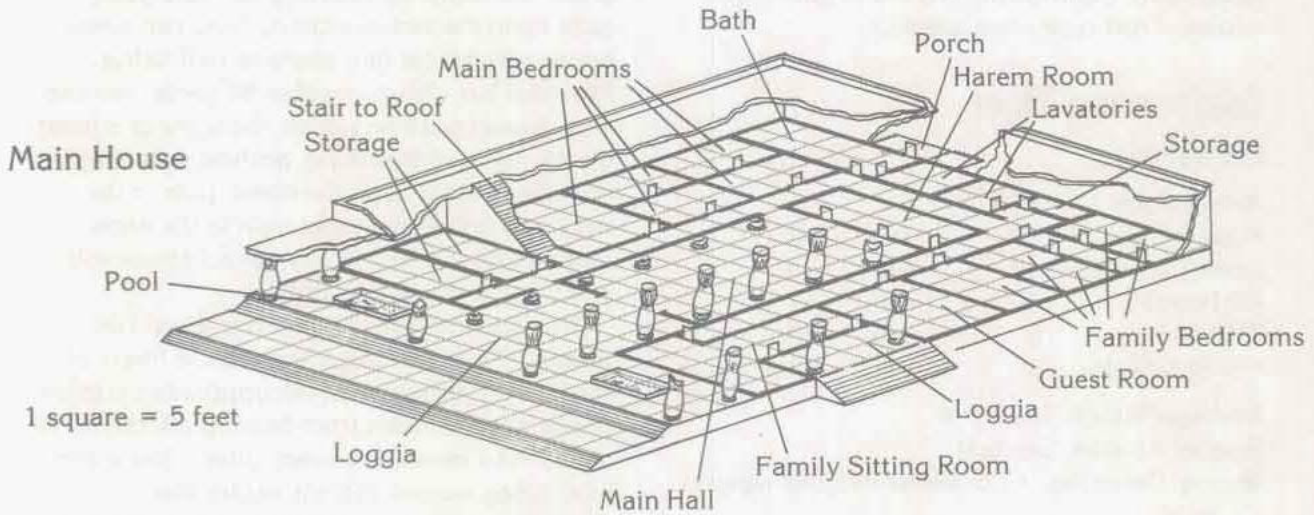
Most oases in Sebuia are fringed with reeds, where hordes of bloodthirsty mosquitoes breed and hatch. Each night, the sky above the oases is filled with these creatures, along with the hairless bats that feed on them. Along the eastern edge of the hills is a small lake, its waters tainted red by mineral deposits. The mosquitoes at this lake are especially vampiric, coming out after sunset to form black clouds darker than the night sky. Cloth and thin leather are no defense; the female's long, slender feeding tube can pierce through them. A character's face, unless completely covered, is especially vulnerable to these insects. In less than a minute, exposed eyelids can become swollen shut.

The Estate: Tiyet's home is a nobleman's estate not far from Anhalla. A high wall surrounds its well-ordered grounds. The house itself is one story, with a grand porch at the front, followed by another, somewhat higher porch. The walls of the house are built from sun-dried brick, which has been plastered and whitewashed. The roof is flat, with a low stone barrier surrounding the edge. The barrier is adorned with a stylized lotus-flower relief.

Beyond the front entrance is a wide hall, which opens into a large formal living room used for entertaining. The roof of this room is

TIYET

TIYET'S ESTATE



TIYET

higher than that of the rest, and clerestory windows at the top let in light. The windows, like all those in the house, are covered with a heavy iron screen.

To the side of the living room, a stairway leads to the roof. Beside it are Tiyet's bedroom and bath. Rooms on the opposite side of the house were traditionally offered to guests. (Of course, Tiyet rarely has guests.)

Confronting Tiyet

Neutral Evil

Armor Class	10	Str	8
Movement	12	Dex	12
Level/Hit Dice	12	Con	13
Hit Points	60	Int	12
THACO	8	Wis	10
No. of Attacks	1	Cha	17

Damage/Attack: 1d10 + 4

Special Attacks: See text

Special Defenses: +1 or better magical weapon to hit

Magic Resistance: 20%

Tiyet does not rely on brute strength to take the hearts from her victims. She is a small, slight woman. Although she is supple, she is no stronger than she was before she became a creature of Ravenloft.

She does not require brawn, however. The land has granted her other strengths, which are far more impressive. Her gaze can paralyze anyone she can see. Those who do not meet her gaze are allowed a +2 bonus to their saving throws, however. If they meet her gaze, they save normally. If she touches them, and chooses to paralyze them, they roll a saving throw with a -2 penalty.

Tiyet's touch can have other debilitating effects. (She may use only one touch attack per round, however, including the paralysis.) If she chooses to inflict damage, her touch can cause 1d10 + 4 points per round. This can be delayed, however, up to two hours, so that the

victim may not understand what has caused his affliction.

Tiyet's kiss—a third touch attack—drains 1 Strength point per round. This loss is permanent as long as the victim remains in Sebuia.

Tiyet's most frightening powers directly affect the heart. By focusing her paralyzing gaze upon the victim's chest, Tiyet can wreak havoc with his (or her) physical well-being. Provided her victim is within 60 yards, she can slow a heart until he suffers the signs of a heart attack: labored breathing, profuse sweating, a crushing weight upon the chest, pain in the neck and jaw, and intense pain in the arms, particularly the left. She needs no attack roll, and there is no saving throw.

With four minutes of concentration (1d4 rounds), Tiyet can cause the muscle fibers of the heart to twitch in an uncoordinated fashion, preventing the heart from beating effectively (if at all). As a result, the heart quivers like a can of writhing worms. (This is ventricular fibrillation.) She cannot kill a victim—that is, cause cardiac arrest—unless she touches him.

The first round of Tiyet's assault on a heart reduces a victim's hit points by 25%. The second and third rounds accomplish the same, leaving the victim with only 25% of his hit points remaining. At this point, the victim is unable to move on his own; the pain is too great. During the fourth round, the character's hit points drop to 10%. This is as great a reduction as she can cause in this fashion. To kill her victim—stopping his heart completely—she must touch him.

Tiyet kills by cardiac arrest only when necessary. If a heart ceases to beat, she cannot feed upon it. For this reason, she usually paralyzes a victim. With her unique ability to reach through his chest, she draws out the heart, which, miraculously, continues to beat outside the body. Only a beating heart can satisfy her need.

This lord finds it difficult to ignore her curse. Heartbeats of any intelligent, humanoid

TIYET

creature within a mile are audible to her until she feeds. Then, only hours later, she can hear the beats again, first faintly, then ever stronger. If she has not fed for 11 months, the sound is painfully loud, echoing inside her skull.

Tiyet's remaining powers seem mundane in comparison to such horrors. Only magical weapons with a +1 bonus or better can harm her. Once a day, she can create a sandstorm, using a unique form of the *control weather* spell. The storm covers up to a square mile, and lasts up to two hours, depending on Tiyet's wishes. She can move the sandstorm as she pleases. She requires three rounds to create the storm, but her powers are not restricted during that time. The Dark Powers augment this ability when Tiyet wishes to close the borders of Sebua, creating a storm that exists only along the boundaries of her domain.

Once each day, she can summon a swarm of beetles. Some will attempt to crawl into the ears and noses of their victims, driving them mad with pain until the insects are removed (victims must roll a successful saving throw vs. spell or be incapacitated for 1d4 rounds).

Three times each day, Tiyet can change shape to assume the form of a huge white owl with almond-shaped eyes. Like an owl, she can see keenly at night; by day in this form, she sees as well as a human. As an owl, she can fly across her domain to seek out a victim, or cross the skies at night to observe intruders from above.

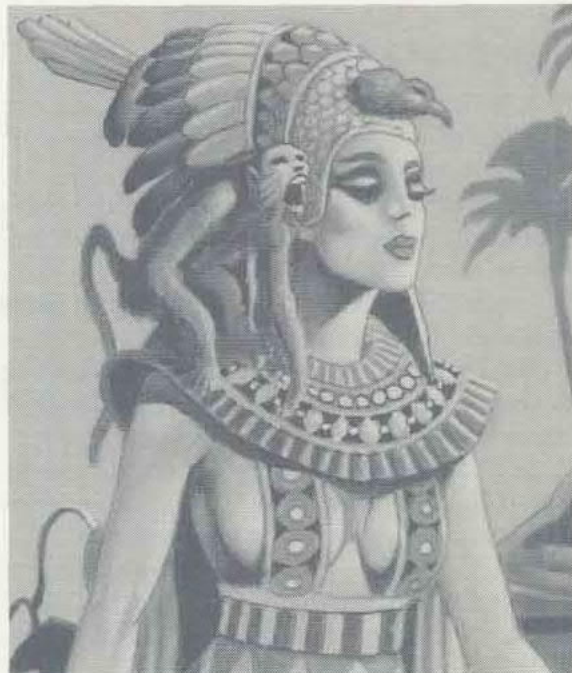
Tiyet also has another form. At will, she can assume the form of a small monkey with sharp little teeth. She appears this way only if she desires to hide among the many monkeys that roam her gardens and her domain. It is also useful because it allows her to get close to otherwise cautious victims, who may think the monkeys are cute when the creatures offer fruit to a visitor. In this form, her touch can still inflict damage, and she can delay the effects to avoid detection.

Mummies in Sebua can be controlled by Tiyet, just as zombies and skeletons may act at

the bidding of an evil sorcerer. Since travelers and grave robbers occasionally destroy her mummies, Tiyet sometimes creates new mummies, using the bodies of her victims. Death alone does not create them; she must mummify them in the common manner. At her disposal are the vats and supplies in an embalmer's house, which lies on the outskirts of Anhalla. Visitors may sometimes find a body drying there. (See "A Recipe for Fine Mummification" on page 11 for details.)

Weaknesses: There is only one way to destroy Tiyet: trick her into eating her own heart. (The organ still lies where Zordenahkt left it long ago—in the temple of Apophis.) If the heart is brought to her lips, it begins to beat, and she cannot resist it, no matter how recently she has fed.

Only magical weapons with at least a +1 bonus can harm Tiyet. If she is reduced to 0 hit points, she has been defeated but not destroyed. Her body crumbles into a pile of glittering sand. Within a month, Tiyet's body re-forms somewhere in her domain's Valley of Death.



L

ong ago, when the world was still firmly rooted in Chaos, men sought the power of beasts. Prehistoric hunters wore caribou skins upon their backs, so that they might gain the speed of the caribou they hunted. Centuries later, Norse warriors donned bearskins in battle, so that they might be as fierce as the creatures they emulated.

This is the story of a young man who also sought the powers of a beast. He desired the wolf's keen senses, and wished that he, too, might catch the scent of prey across miles. He coveted the wolf's ferocity and wished that he, too,

might down a creature twice his size and rend its flesh with ease.

Unlike the hunters before him, Gregor Zolnik gained everything for which he asked. In doing so, he sacrificed his humanity. He became a *loup du noir*, a new breed of werewolf in Ravenloft.

Appearance

In his human form, Gregor looks like any swarthy man, except that his dark eyes are bloodshot and cruel. He is burly, as might be expected of a hunter. By day Gregor usually takes his human form, although he is not limited to human form during daylight hours.

At night, Gregor most often goes to his secret cave and crawls into his wolf skin. (This process is described later.) Like natural lycanthropes, he is not bound by the moon; he can transform himself anytime he wishes to. He becomes a huge black wolf weighing just over 150 pounds. His white fangs are unusually large. Saliva drips from his maw, and his dark eyes become piercing and yellow. The transformation to wolf form requires a full round, and it causes Gregor acute pain. When he becomes a wolf, however, he is healed of all damage.

Background

One year, winter came early to Gregor's village, with a snow so heavy and deep that the ponies could not drag their sleds through it. The temperature plummeted. The wind did not blow hard, but it penetrated the heaviest cloak and chilled the marrow in a man's bones.

The hamlet of Vorostokov was starving. The heavy snow had covered the fields before the haying was done, and late crops were ruined in the field. Stores were low; the previous year's crop had been meager. Four months later, in the dead of winter, oxen were weak and the goats gave no milk.

Hope for survival lay with the hunters. Each day they braved the cold, but to little avail. Their tracking led them only to the carcasses of elk and caribou, which the wolves had downed.

Then fate intervened on Vorostokov's behalf. A young hunter, Gregor Zolnik, was making his way home, having stayed far too long in the forest. The trees were casting dark blue shadows upon the white snow, signaling the approach of twilight.

Not far from the village, he came across a lone black wolf that had been injured while taking down a bull elk. The wolf lay next to the elk's carcass, too weak to leave with its fellows after the feast. Gregor watched the dying animal for several minutes, envying the prowess of its kind. "If I had your stamina and sharp senses," he said to the wolf, "I would not now be starving with the rest of my village. I would kill enough to feed my mother and sisters—and then I would kill some more."

Gregor recalled a legend that his grandfather had told him long ago. It was a tale of men who could change into wolves.

The old man had claimed that when some men dressed in the skins of wolves, and called upon the mysterious magic of the night, they would become beasts. To accomplish this, first they killed a wolf under the light of the moon. Then they drew a small circle inside a large

ZOLNIK



ZOLNIK

one, using the creature's blood. While sitting in the center of the smaller circle, they skinned the animal and dressed in its hide. Next they ate its brain, to gain the wolf's cunning, and ate its heart, to gain the wolf's courage. If the forces of the night responded, the men would become wolves then, and remain so until they had killed an animal. After this was done, they could become wolves whenever they wished, for as long as they wished, simply by putting a wolf skin against their own bare flesh.

Gregor decided to see if the legend was true. Though he was cold, he waited, watching the wolf's soft breathing. When the moon began to glisten on the white snow, he cut the wolf's throat with his knife, then drew the circles, following each step in his grandfather's tale.

The strange magic worked. For a moment Gregor thought he would die, for he felt a searing pain as the wolf skin fused to his own. Then he changed into a wolf, and his screams became the howl of a beast. He retained his own mind, but his body was that of a wolf. Immediately he bounded off and hunted all night, tracking down the largest caribou within 30 miles of Vorostokov. After killing it, he dragged it back to the outskirts of the village and left it near his mother's house.

Then Gregor went to a secret cave he knew and took off the skin. When he returned to the village the next morning, totally exhausted, his mother and sisters were very upset, having worried for his safety. Gregor told them where he had left the caribou and went to bed.

When he awoke at dusk, the entire village was praising him. Gregor's generous mother had shared the caribou with everyone in Vorostokov. At first Gregor was furious, for he had meant the beast to feed his mother's family and that of her sister, but he soon realized that with his wolf-magic, he could hunt again.

After dark, he slipped away from the cabin and went to the cave. There he removed his clothes and wrapped himself in the wolf skin. Once again, he became a wolf. He hunted. This time he downed a bull elk, which he left in the

village, where he had abandoned the caribou the night before.

Gregor killed an elk or a caribou each day for the rest of the winter, feeding the entire community. When spring came at last, word of his hunting prowess had spread across the kingdom. The duke himself came to visit the man who had single-handedly saved Vorostokov, for many other hamlets in the duchy had not fared as well.

It was during this visit that Gregor met the duke's third daughter, Ireena. They fell in love. The headstrong Ireena told her father that she intended to marry Gregor (though he hadn't asked). The duke, who had plenty of use for an expert hunter at his estate, gave Gregor a title. Gregor and Ireena were married that summer, and went to live at the duke's castle.

Unfortunately, Gregor found that it was easier to speak the marriage vows than it was to abandon his life of hunting. Under the pretext of visiting his mother, Gregor journeyed to his secret cave near Vorostokov. That night, he donned the skin and killed once more as a wolf. When he returned to Ireena, he took the skin with him, and hid it in a grotto on the castle grounds.

Gregor knew that he no longer had a choice; the beast was now a part of him that could not be suppressed. At night, after Ireena had drifted off to sleep, he would steal away from the castle to become a wolf, and then roam the countryside hunting.

It was not long before Ireena discovered Gregor's absences. She believed he was dallying with a peasant. Furious, Ireena took a lover to avenge her shattered pride.

Gregor was mad with jealousy when he discovered his wife's betrayal. The next night, he returned to the castle in the form of a wolf. Gregor waited for Ireena's lover to leave his wife's chamber. As the man crept along a dark corridor, Gregor attacked. The following morn, only a few shreds of clothing remained for the guards to discover.

The entire castle was struck with fear. The

ZOLNIK

duke asked Gregor to find and kill the beast that had assaulted the young noble. Of course, Gregor did not succeed, but when no more attacks occurred, the castle eventually returned to normal. Gregor continued his nocturnal hunts. Ireena found another lover.

This time, Gregor killed not only the lover, but his faithless wife as well. Ireena managed a muffled scream before Gregor's fangs tore out her throat. When a maidservant investigated, she too, was killed. Gregor had failed to change to his human form. Mad with the scent of blood, he killed again and again, taking his victims silently as they slept in the castle.

When morning broke, Gregor found himself back in Vorostokov, in human form. Winter had returned; the village was starving. It was as if Gregor had never left. Now, however, the caribou and the elk were gone, and virtually the only game he could find to feed his family was another kind—a kind that lived in the villages surrounding Vorostokov, that walked on two legs.

Current Sketch

Gregor is a tormented spirit, caught between the monster that he has become and the hero that he wants to be. Once again, he resides in Vorostokov with his mother and sisters. Now, however, his village and the surrounding region (known as the Vorostokov domain) have been transported to Ravenloft. More than ever, his village relies upon him for food. Unfortunately, by the nature of the curse that brought him to Ravenloft, Gregor finds almost nothing when he hunts—unless he ventures to a nearby village, where there is a plentiful supply of people.

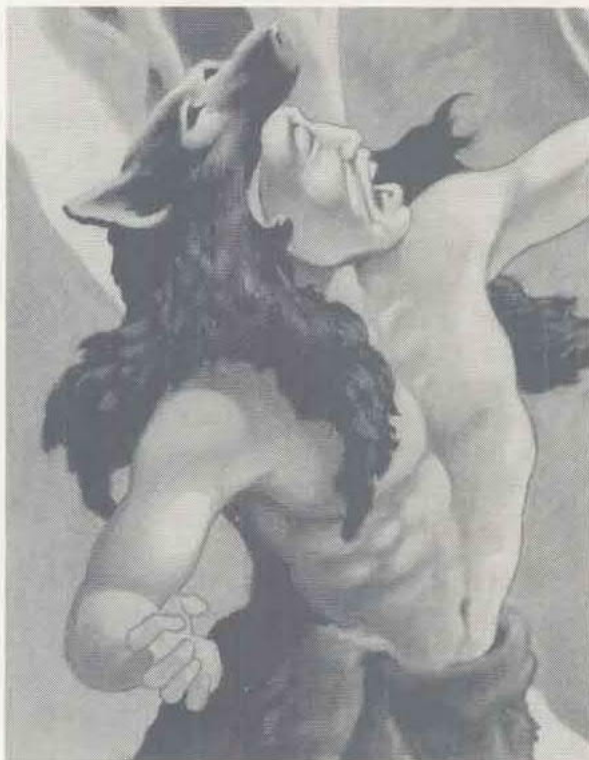
Gregor's village lies at the center of his large domain. Numerous villages encircle it, at a distance easily crossed by a wolf-lord. Those people live in fear of a great black wolf that attacks at night. Because other game eludes him, Gregor is now accustomed to killing men.

The villagers of Vorostokov must rely on

Gregor for food. His mother and sisters prepare and distribute the fruits of his hunt. Although they may call it caribou, bear, or even wolf, the meat is nearly always the same. Many of the villagers are suspicious, having deduced the true nature of their meals. Most refuse to believe it because the truth is too horrid to endure. Tensions run high. Villagers who complain about the meat get none; they must appear grateful or starve. Even villagers who ignore the true nature of their food resent their dependence upon Gregor and his family. All the villagers despise the Zolniks.

It might seem that the villagers would revolt against Gregor, or at least attempt to find food for themselves. But as strong as their hatred is, it does not overcome their fear. Gregor slays the men and women who try to hunt, leaving their bodies outside the village to be found the next morning. Needless to say, few villagers attempt to find game for themselves.

Though it is illogical and perhaps even mad,



ZOLNIK

Gregor's motive for these killings is a need for adoration. He believes that his curse will be lifted—and that he will escape Ravenloft—if he becomes a hero to his village again. Anyone who interferes with this quest, even by trying to escape to another settlement, must be eliminated.

Long ago, a brave man named Nicolai tried to kill Gregor on the village green. This met with limited success. When Gregor was almost dead, Ravenloft transported him to his secret cave. Gregor crawled into his wolf skin and was transformed. All his wounds were healed. The following night, Nicolai was killed.

Amazingly, the villagers of Vorostokov do not know that Gregor is a werewolf. No one has ever witnessed his transformation into a wolf. Instead, they view him as a malevolent, unholy force—a madman who is somehow both more and less than human. Some believe that Gregor can control one or more wolves in his domain, but this is incorrect (the rumor arose when someone saw a wolf kill Nicolai).

Gregor's Children

It is rumored that Gregor has taken at least one wife in one of the distant villages.

Though she may be unaware of his curse, his children are destined to share it. Like Gregor, they will be haunted by a desire to don the skins of wolves, and they will be consumed by a maddening lust for blood. One day, they may bring about his end. Or perhaps they will leave their father's domain behind, invading others, where their own children will perpetuate the curse. Perhaps they already have.

The Domain

The domain of Vorostokov is a vast, frozen forest of conifer trees, approximately 300 miles in diameter. The village of Vorostokov lies near the center, ringed by other small villages, which Gregor raids. The domain is perpetually buried beneath a layer of

powdery snow, which makes travel all but impossible for those who are not equipped with snowshoes (natural or otherwise).

The temperature in this domain seldom rises above -20° Fahrenheit. At night, the air is filled with the howling of wolf packs. Although Gregor can never seem to catch it, there is still enough game for a small party to survive. Certainly the natural wolves here have food.

Anyone attempting to leave the domain of Vorostokov (without first destroying Gregor) eventually runs into a range of high mountains. According to legend, there sometimes exists a pass through which the mountains can be crossed. If Gregor chooses to seal his borders, however, snowstorms and avalanches drive travelers back into Vorostokov.

Confronting Gregor

Loup du Noir Lycanthrope
8th-Level Fighter, Chaotic Evil

Armor Class	0 (varies)	Str	N/A (16)
Movement	15 (12)	Dex	N/A (14)
Level/HD	10 (8)	Con	N/A (15)
Hit Points	48 (48)	Int	N/A (12)
THAC0	11 (13)	Wis	N/A (8)
No. Attacks	1	Cha	N/A (15)

Damage/Attack: 2d12 (2d4)

Special Attacks: See text

Special Defenses: See text

Magic Resistance: 20%

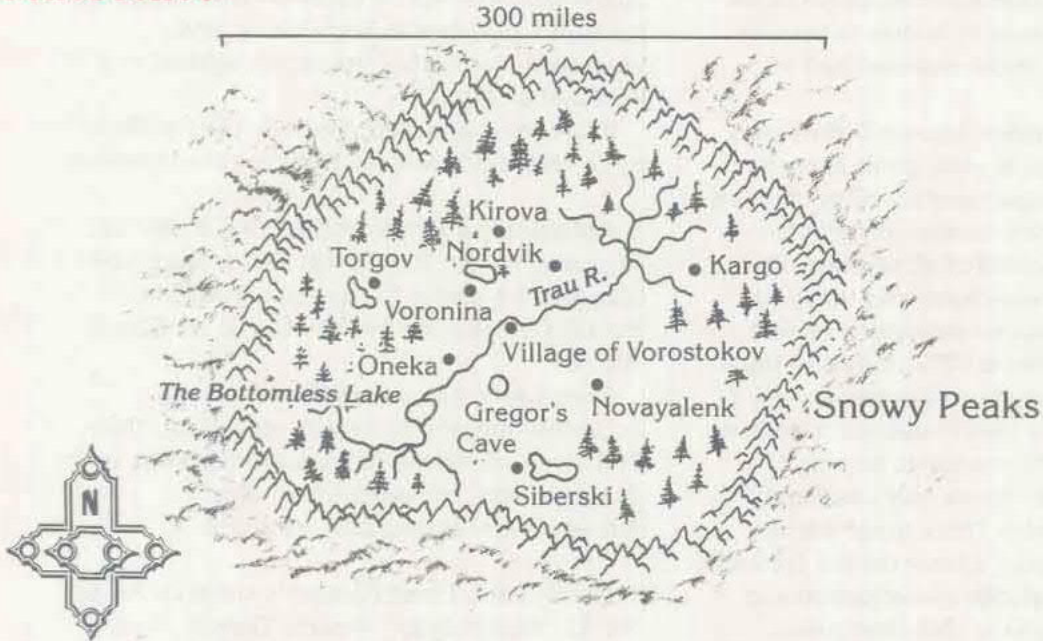
Note: Numbers in parentheses reflect his human form.

As a human, Gregor is an 8th-level ranger, with all of the appropriate special abilities. (Because he's no longer good, however, he has no species enemy.) He fights with a two-handed *bastard sword* +3, which also has the power to *heal* the wielder once per day. Gregor may also fight with a spear or bow.

If Gregor's hit points are reduced to 0 (or if he suffers any attack that would normally kill him) while in human form, his body disappears

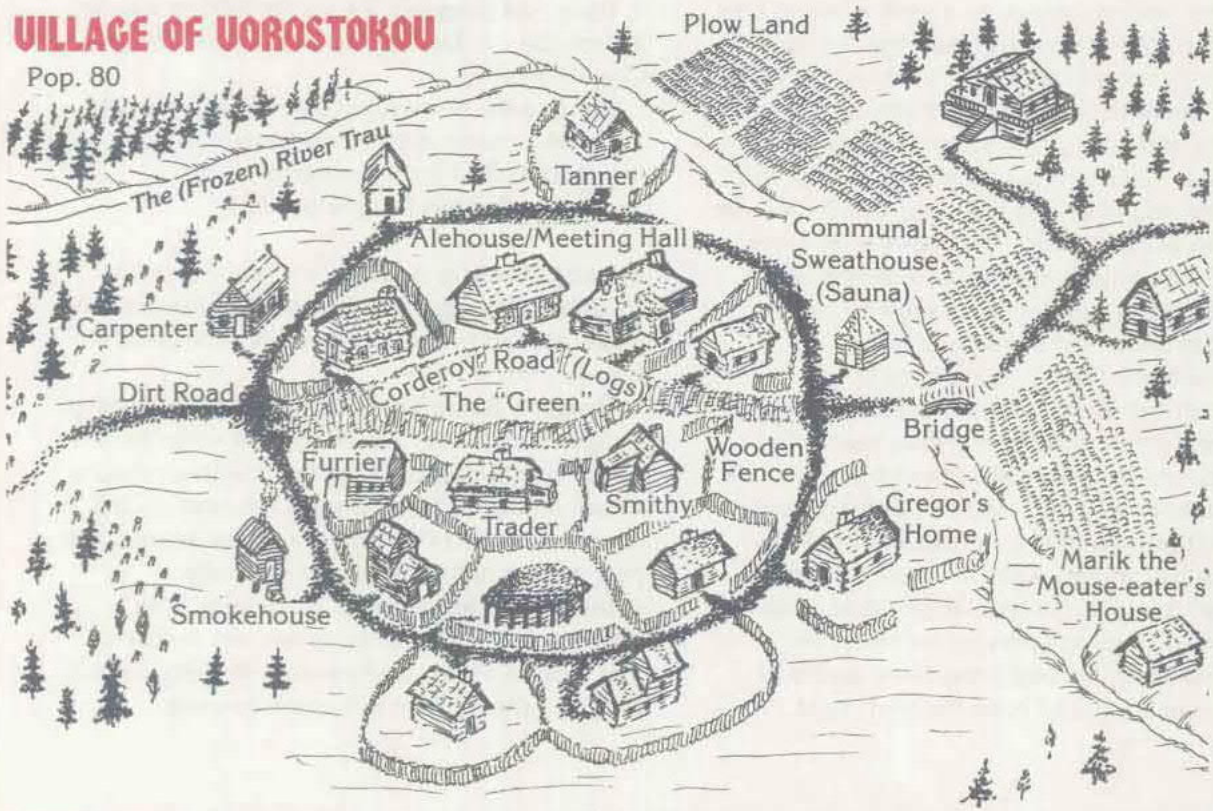
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UOROSTOKOU



VILLAGE OF UOROSTOKOU

Pop. 80



from sight. Ravenloft teleports it to his secret cave, where his wolf skin automatically covers him. When this happens, he is sure to assume wolf form and attack those responsible for injuring him.

Gregor's transformation into wolf form lasts one round. It is always acutely painful, as the wolf skin fuses to his own and his body changes shape. When the transformation is complete, however, Gregor is healed of all wounds. The change from wolf to man form also involves pain for one round, but no damage is healed.

As a wolf, Gregor has a 70% chance to track any individual (or party) over the snow, even if they enter a village or take measures to confuse him. He also has a 90% chance to hide in shadows (during night hours only), and an 85% chance to move silently. Three times per day, Gregor can pass without a trace (as the 1st-level priest spell). He can always *detect poison* and *detect snares and pits* as a 15th-level priest.

Gregor has one attack as a wolf: a horrid bite that inflicts 2d12 points of damage. If Gregor makes a successful bite attack with a 19 or 20 die roll result, he can also grab the victim by the neck and shake. The victim suffers an additional 1d12 points of damage, and he must roll a successful saving throw vs. death or suffer a broken neck. A character with a broken neck will die if he fails to receive competent help (e.g., someone with healing magic or the healing proficiency) within one turn.

In wolf form, Gregor is practically indestructible. He is immune to *charm*, *hold*, *sleep*, and other mind-controlling spells. Only weapons made of pure silver can harm him; he is immune to all other forms of damage (even direct hit point damage inflicted by spells). Unless silver weapons are *blessed*, they inflict only half damage. Should Gregor lose all his hit points to a silver weapon (or be destroyed in any other way), his body dissolves, and then re-forms in his secret cave the next night.

Gregor's evil has had its effect on his mother and two sisters, who are now witches. They are his sole supporters in Vorostokov, and vigorously defend his reputation against any who malign him.

If Gregor is attacked, they use their abilities to defend him. Their statistics are listed below:

Antonina (Gregor's mother): AC 6; MV 12; Wizard 8; hp 20; THACO 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (dagger); SA spells; SD see below; MR nil; Str 12; Dex 18; Con 14; Int 16; Wis 14; Cha 9; AL LE

Commonly Memorized Spells:

1st level—*magic missile* (x2), *chill touch*, *sleep*;
2nd level—*darkness 15' radius*, *invisibility*, *web*;
3rd level—*dispel magic*, *haste*, *slow*;
4th level—*dimension door*, *ice storm*

Natalya and Elena (Gregor's sisters): AC 6; MV 12; Wizard 5; hp 14 each; THACO 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (dagger); SA spells; SD see below; MR nil; Str 11; Dex 18; Con 14; Int 16; Wis 12; Cha 16; AL LE

Commonly Memorized Spells (each sister):

1st level—*charm person*, *chill touch*, *magic missile* (x2); 2nd level—*stinking cloud*, *invisibility*; 3rd level—*lightning bolt*

Special Defense: As long as Gregor remains the lord of his domain, Ravenloft automatically raises his mother and sisters from the dead if they are killed.

Gregor's Bane: The only way to truly destroy Gregor is to locate his secret cave while he is away, then sprinkle his wolf pelt with a mixture of salt and wolfsbane. Gregor has only a 25% chance to detect this mixture. After he puts the pelt on that night, he will be normally vulnerable to all weapons and spells. If he is killed in this state, his body will not re-form. The eternal winter enshrouding Vorostokov will end, and the domain will cease to exist.

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Bone Any	Doll Any
FREQUENCY:	Very rare	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any	Any
DIET:	Nil	Nil
INTELLIGENCE:	Non-(0)	Non-(0)
TREASURE:	Nil	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral	Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	1	1
ARMOR CLASS:	0	4
MOVEMENT:	12	15
HIT DICE:	14 (70 hp)	10 (40 hp)
THACO:	7	11
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	3d8	3d6
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	See below	See below
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See below	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil	Nil
SIZE:	M (6' tall)	T (1' tall)
MORALE:	Fearless (20)	Fearless (20)
XP VALUE:	18,000	7,000

Bone Golem

As already mentioned, the bone golem is built from the previously animated bones of skeletal undead. These horrors stand roughly six feet tall and weigh between 50 and 60 pounds. They are seldom armored and can easily be mistaken for undead, much to the dismay of those who make this error.

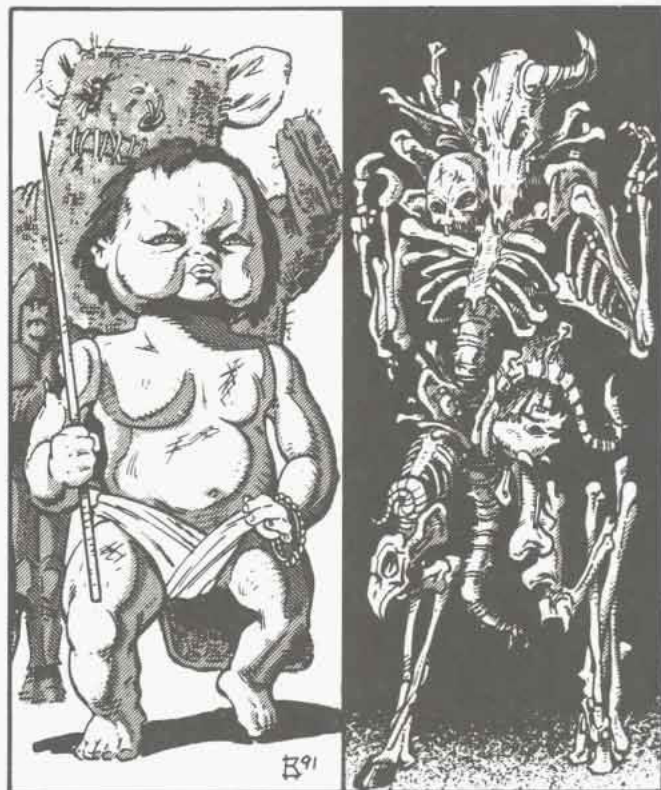
Combat: Bone golems are no more intelligent than other forms of golem, so they will not employ clever tactics or strategies in combat. Their great power, however, makes them far deadlier than they initially appear to be. There is a 95% chance that those not familiar with the true nature of their opponent will mistake them for simple undead.

Bone golems attack with their surprisingly strong blows and sharp, claw-like fingers. Each successful hit inflicts 3-24 (3d8) points of damage. They can never be made to use weapons of any sort in melee.

In addition to the common characteristics of all Ravenloft golems (described previously), bone golems take only half damage from those edged or piercing weapons that can harm them.

Bone golems are immune to almost all spells, but can be laid low with the aid of a *shatter* spell that is focused on them and has the capacity to affect objects of their weight. If such a spell is cast at a bone golem, the golem is entitled to a saving throw vs. spells to negate it. Failure indicates that weapons able to harm the golem will now inflict twice the damage they normally would. Thus, edged weapons would do full damage while blunt ones would inflict double damage.

Once every three rounds, the bone golem may throw back its head and issue a hideous laugh that causes all those who hear it to make fear and horror checks. Those who fail either check are paralyzed and cannot move for 2-12 rounds. Those who fail both checks are instantly stricken dead with fear.



Doll Golem

The doll golem is an animated version of a child's toy that can be put to either good uses (defending the young) or evil uses (attacking them). It is often crafted so as to make it appear bright and cheerful when at rest. Upon activation, however, its features become twisted and horrific.

Combat: The doll golem is, like all similar creatures, immune to almost all magical attacks. It can be harmed by fire-based spells, although these do only half damage, while a *warp wood* spell will affect the creature as if it were a *slow* spell. A *mending* spell restores the creature to full hit points at once.

Each round, the doll golem leaps onto a victim and attempts to bite it. Success inflicts 3d6 points of damage and forces the victim to save versus spells. Failure to save causes the victim to begin to laugh uncontrollably (as if under the influence of a *Tasha's uncontrollable hideous laughter* spell) and become unable to perform any other action. The effects of the creature's bite are far worse, however. The victim begins to laugh on the round after the failed save. At this time, they take 1d4 points of damage from the muscle spasms imposed by the laughter. On following rounds, this increases to 2d4, then 3d4, and so on. The laughter stops when the character dies or receives a *dispel magic*. Following recovery, the victim suffers a penalty on all attack and saving throws of -1 per round that they were overcome with laughter (e.g., four rounds of uncontrolled laughter would equal a -4 penalty on attack/saving throws). This represents the weakness caused by the character's inability to breathe and is reduced by 1 point per subsequent turn until the character is fully recovered.

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any Borca
FREQUENCY:	Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Omnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Very (11-12)
TREASURE:	W (I)
ALIGNMENT:	Lawful evil
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	10
MOVEMENT:	15
HIT DICE:	4
THACO:	17
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	Special
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	See below
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (6' tall)
MORALE:	Champion (15-16)
XP VALUE:	650



The ermordenung are a dark and evil people found almost exclusively in the domain of Borca. Here, they act as elite agents who serve Ivana Boritsi, the ruler of that dread domain. On rare occasions, they are sent on missions outside of Borca to further the interests of their mistress.

Ermordenung appear as normal human beings of surpassing beauty. The men are tall, normally no less than six feet in height, and smoothly muscled. They seem to radiate an inner power from their finely set classical features. The women are tall, often only an inch or two shorter than the men, and have the perfect features that every artist tries to create. Both sexes are marked by raven hair and penetrating dark eyes that, it is said, are almost hypnotic. Their complexion, however, is rather more pale than that common to most of the people in Borca and contrasts greatly with their dark hair and eyes.

The ermordenung speak the common language of the people of Borca. Their dialect, however, is marked by an aristocratic manner and they carry themselves with a noble bearing that sets them apart from all but the ruling family.

Combat: In combat, an ermordenung will attempt to grasp an exposed area of flesh on an opponent's body so that their deadly touch can do its work. Any successful attack roll indicates that the target has been touched and must save vs. poison (with a +4 bonus on their roll). The effects of the ermordenung toxins are felt within seconds—those who fail their saves are instantly slain, while those who succeed suffer 10 points of damage.

If the attack roll is a natural 20, the ermordenung has managed to get a firm grip on his enemy. In such cases, the victim must make a saving throw vs. poison (with no modifiers). While failure to save still results in death, success indicates that 20 points of damage are inflicted. If the target is unable to pull free of the grip (see below), they will be subject to the same saving throw each round until they are slain or they escape.

In non-combat situations, the ermordenung will often use their great physical beauty and overwhelming charisma to lure would-be victims of the opposite sex close. Once their victims are at ease, they draw them into a deadly embrace and slay the hapless souls with their toxic kiss. Victims of this "kiss of death" are entitled to a saving throw vs. poison (with a -4 penalty to their die roll). As usual, failure indicates instant death. Success, on the other hand, indicates that the victim suffers 30 points of damage.

Those who survive this horrid attack may attempt to break free of the embrace (see below), but will be kissed again on the next round if they fail to do so.

Breaking the grasp or embrace of an ermordenung is very difficult, for they are considered to have an 18/90 strength if male or an 18/50 strength if female. Weaker enemies must make a saving throw versus paralysis (with a -4 penalty to their roll) in order to pull away from their attackers. Those of equal strength need only make the saving throw itself, while those who are stronger than the ermordenung must save with a +4 bonus to their roll.

Ermordenung are immune to nearly all forms of toxins themselves. The only variety to which they have no natural resistance is that of their peers—any ermordenung is as vulnerable to the deadly touch of their kind as a normal man.

Habitat/Society: The ermordenung live as members of the ruling elite in Borca. They seldom mix with "the common folk" unless acting on behalf of their mistress, Ivana Boritsi.

The fact that the ermordenung cannot touch another living creature without causing it to wither and die causes them endless heartache. They have been forever denied the physical pleasures—the caress of a lover's hand, the embrace of a close friend, the affectionate hug of a child—that mean so much to mortal men. Their inner suffering and agony has been marshalled to make them cruel and heartless agents who carry out the orders of Ivana Boritsi without question.

Ecology: The ermordenung are normal humans who have been transformed, at the command of Ivana Boritsi, mistress of Borca, into nightmarish creatures. The process by which these creatures are created is dark and mysterious, but is believed to be so brutal to its subjects that only the most physically fit can survive it. Because of her own passionate nature, Ivana Boritsi selects only the most physically beautiful of her people for the "honor" of transformation.

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any
FREQUENCY:	Very Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Assimilation (see below)
INTELLIGENCE:	Variable (3-18)
TREASURE:	Variable
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic evil
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	8 (Base)
MOVEMENT:	Nil
HIT DICE:	8 (Base)
THACO:	Variable
NO. OF ATTACKS:	Variable
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	Variable
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	See below
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	20%
SIZE:	L to G+ (Rectangular area)
MORALE:	Fearless (20)
XP VALUE:	2,000 to 100,000+

Living walls appear to be normal walls of stone or brick, though they radiate both evil and magic if detected. Infra-vision does not detect any peculiar heat patterns. However, a character who casts a *true seeing* spell or peers through a *gem of seeing* will see past the illusion: the wall actually consists of greying and sinewy flesh—faces, hands, broken bones, feet, and toes jutting from the surface. Characters within 5 yards of the wall can hear low moans of horror, pain, and sorrow issuing from it. Even if a *silence* spell is cast, the moans still rise.

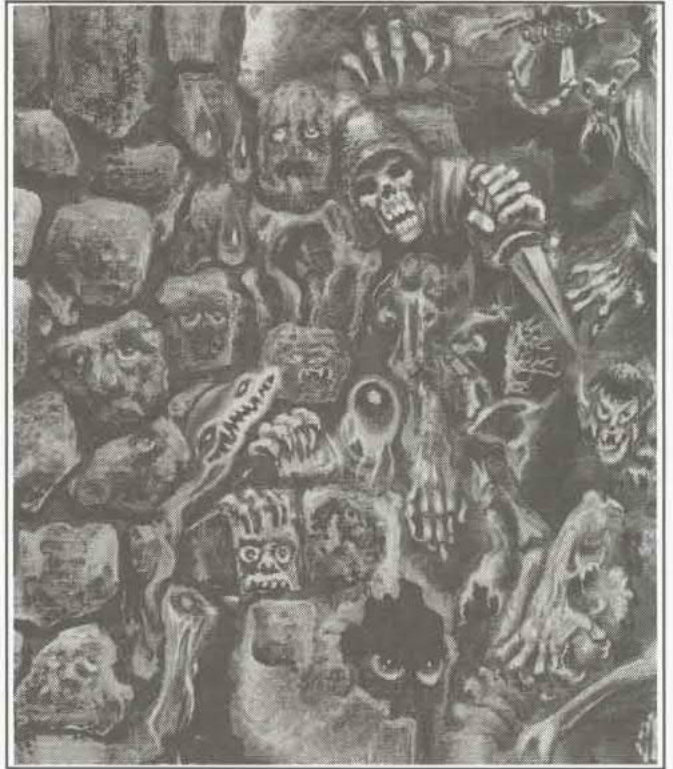
A living wall contains the melded bodies of any humanoid or monster who died within 100 yards of the wall since its creation. Thus, those who die fighting a living wall are absorbed into it and actually strengthen it. Characters and monsters retain all abilities they had in life; as part of the wall, they become chaotic evil and fight any creature that approaches to the best of their abilities.

If a wizard becomes melded with a living wall, his spell-casting abilities are retained and can immediately be used in future attacks. The wizard retains any spells memorized at the time he is absorbed into the wall; these are renewed each day. If a warrior loses his life in combat with a living wall, his fighting abilities and weapons come under control of the beast: The weapons are hidden within the wall until it attacks, then are pushed through the greying flesh to the surface. A hand attaches itself to the weapon, and eyes jutting from the wall guide the attack. If the wall absorbs characters with ranged weapons, the weapons become useless once the arrows, quarrels, or other projectiles are expended.

Combat: A living wall never initiates combat, except against its creator, whom it despises. When such a wall is attacked, every creature that is part of the wall returns one attack per strike against the wall. Thus, if a wall is made up of 12 creatures and one creature lands a blow on the wall, that creature is subject to 12 return blows from the wall.

All creatures in the wall fight according to their normal attack modes. These attacks can be magical, physical, or mental in origin. The type of attack and its damage often depend upon who or what is melded into the living wall.

If a 10th-level fighter and a 6th-level fighter are absorbed into the wall, it attacks as one 6th-level fighter and one 10th-



level fighter. For every mage or priest absorbed, the wall gains spell attacks. The spells usable, however, are only those the mage or priest had memorized (and has material components for) at the time of absorption. Each of these spells may be cast once per day. (Material components are not consumed.) Thus, if one absorbed mage has three *fireball* spells memorized and a second mage has one *fireball* in memory, the living wall can attack with four *fireballs* per day. If the wall assimilates a paladin or lawful good priest, all his special powers are reversed (e.g., *detect good* rather than *detect evil*, *harm* by laying of hands rather than *heal*, etc.).

Magical items absorbed with characters grant the wall their spell effects, though items that grant AC improvements are less effective because of the wall's size. The wall gains a 1 point improvement in Armor Class for every 3 points of magical improvement to AC. Thus, a *ring of protection +3* lowers the wall's AC by 1.

When a character is absorbed, his hit points at full health are added to the wall's base hit point total of 64.

Nonmagical armor, packs, and purses are lost by absorbed characters. The piles of loot at the base of the wall often attract bystanders, bringing them close enough to be seized by one of the wall's hands.

Though a living wall will not initiate an attack, characters who come within two feet of the wall may be grabbed by its unseen hands as the wall implores for deliverance. (The DM makes a regular wrestling roll for the wall and looks for a hold result). Sometimes PCs who hear voices imploring "help me! pull me free" grope about until they grab a hand. In either case, the character must roll a save vs. spell or become absorbed. If another character is holding onto the first character, he must also roll a saving throw vs. spell or become absorbed into the wall. If the save vs. spell succeeds, the character is able to break free. Viewing the wall's absorption of any creature requires a horror check.

Once absorbed, characters are lost forever. A *wish* spell,

worded carefully, can remove one or more trapped characters.

Passwall spells do not allow an individual to go through a living wall. Characters must either cut through or blast through using magic. This, however, allows the wall to return attacks. When cutting or blasting through the living wall, a stench rises from the exposed underflesh that is nauseating and horrifying. A saving throw versus poison is required to avoid passing out from the smell. A successful saving throw indicates the character is only nauseated.

Living walls are immune to all planar and temporal spells.

Speak with dead, *ESP*, and similar spells reveal a cacophony of tortured minds and voices. The caster learns nothing and must make a horror check.

Habitat/Society: Living walls never reproduce and always remain active until they are killed. Living walls encountered in the lairs of malevolent creatures often serve as part of a torture chamber or to cover the true openings to secret passageways or corridors.

No one knows whether these monstrosities are limited in size or longevity. Walls as large as 15 feet high, 30 feet long and 10 feet thick have been reported. Living walls do, however, seem limited to one section of wall. Thus, a cemetery or castle could not be surrounded by one large living wall. Nor could a wall section spread beyond itself: a house with a living wall in its basement will not slowly become a living house.

The wall desires, above all else, to slay the creature who created it. If it does so, or the creature meets its end within 100 yards of the wall, the corpse of the hated creator is assimilated and the beings trapped in the wall are freed to return to the peace of death. The wall reverts to being a structure of stone, with the corpse of its creator entombed within.

Ecology: Chaotic evil mages occasionally create these monoliths. The exact method is unknown, but several years of

preparation and spellcasting are required. A minimum of three corpses are necessary for the spells.

As known only to one or two inhabitants of Ravenloft, living walls also arise as rare manifestations of Ravenloft's power as response to despair and dread. These walls are born of curses, midwived by death, and nursed on massacre.

The seed for such a living wall is planted when one sapient creature willfully entombs another in a wall. The hapless victim may be bound and walled alive in a rock niche on a wind-swept mountain trail, a sill in a fetid catacomb, a corner in an asylum, a cave wall, a mausoleum facade, or any other stone or brick wall. Once so entombed, the victim will suffocate, dehydrate, or starve in utter darkness and solitude. But even this agony is not sufficient to wake the land's attention—the entombed creature, in his terror, must curse his slayer, screaming loudly enough for his voice to carry beyond his tomb of stone. Only then does the land hear his agony.

When the victim dies, his life force is trapped within the wall. As he struggles to escape, his life energy becomes soiled by the soot of his screams and curses, which thickly coat the inside of his stone sarcophagus. In a matter of days, madness corrupts the trapped life force, changing it to chaotic evil.

At this point, the bodies of any creatures that have died within 100 yards of the wall within the last month rise, shamble to the wall, and meld with it. Even corpses that have been buried will dig their way to the surface and converge upon the wall. Although the wall retains its previous appearance, it is no longer stone, but a gray and rotting bulwark of limbs, ribs, hands, bones, and faces, twisted and fused together. Bodies of any subsequent deaths occurring within 100 yards also rise and wander to the wall for assimilation.

Most cultures and all good-aligned characters attempt to destroy these creations wherever they are found. But many of these assaults merely strengthen the wall with more corpses.



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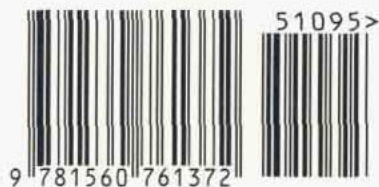
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