

For Character Levels 3 and Up

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Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®
2nd Edition

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Ravenloft™

Official Game Accessory

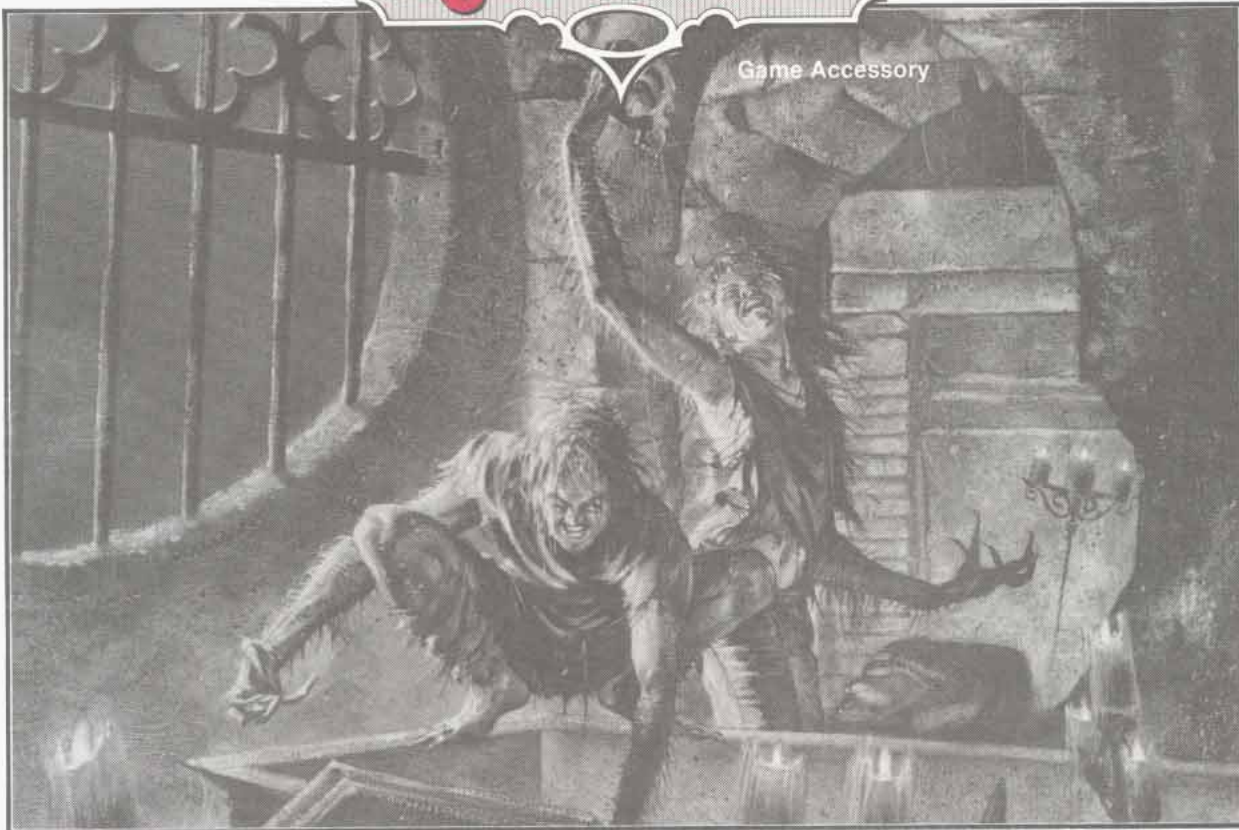
Book of Crypts



BOOK OF CRYPTS

Ravenloft™

Game Accessory



By Dale "Slade" Henson with J. Robert King

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ISBN 1-56076-142-3

9336XXX1501

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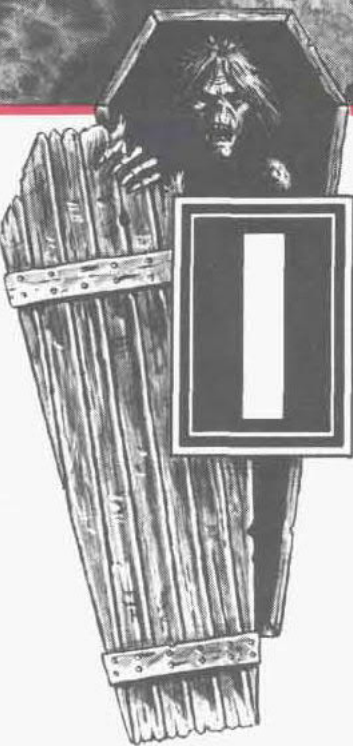
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Fear and Horror



Orongrod sits in a dark corner of the squalid tavern, sipping warmish ale and eavesdropping on the whispered talk of locals. Evidently a gruesome murder occurred last night: a body has been found, its skin meticulously stripped away by a common hunting knife. A knot of revulsion forms in Irongrod's stomach. As he takes another sip, the storyteller

continues, describing the man who fled the murder. With a sinking sense of dread, Irongrod realizes that the description exactly fits him. Another local speaks up now, saying that a knife was discovered beside the body. Irongrod drops his hand from the sweating stein of ale before him, feeling for his hunting knife. It is gone. Anguish begins its slow burn within him.

Suddenly, Irongrod hears an unfamiliar voice in his head, "Don't worry, Irongrod—you're innocent. Sure, I used your body for the crime, but you were asleep. No matter: it won't be your body much longer."

In this scenario, Irongrod experiences the two emotions critical to successful RAVENLOFT™ game adventures: horror and terror. Horror is the revulsion, dread, and anguish that results when a character confronts something that shouldn't be: Irongrod felt horror when he heard of the murder, matched the description to himself, and discovered that his knife was missing. Terror, on the other hand, is the extreme fear that arises when creatures or events immediately threaten one's life: Irongrod felt terror when he heard the voice in his head threatening to take over his body. The interaction of horror and terror is critical to

successful adventures in Ravenloft.

DMs accustomed to running adventures in other AD&D® game settings often excel at inspiring terror in their PCs. Terror is a natural result of deadly combats and lethal traps, both of which abound in adventures in AD&D® game worlds. *Book of Crypts* is no exception, loaded with deadly combatants such as doll golems, ermordenung, evil treants, madmen, liches, werewolves, necromancers, illithids, maniacal jesters, minstrels of death, vampires, and more. The adventures here also brim with terrifying traps—both physical and psychological. Terror should, therefore, come easily to *Book of Crypts* DMs.

In addition to bone-rattling terror, though, Ravenloft DMs should make the most of horror. Horror hints at and prepares characters for the terror to come. The terror Irongrod felt at hearing the voice in his head would be far less intense if he had not first felt the creeping horror of his guilt. In the same way, the terror of hack-and-slash combat with a vampire is tripled if the PCs first feel the mounting horror of something stalking them.

Tormented heroes; tragic villains; dark pasts; secret vices; evil presences; sounds in the shadows . . . this is the stuff of gothic horror. In addition to spicing up adventures, the mood of gothic horror greatly intensifies the terror of combat. The mood, though, is fragile: subtlety is key. If a DM says, "the grass upon the grave before you stirs uneasily, despite the dead calm in the air," the characters may feel horror. If a DM says, "the grass upon the grave before you whips in wild frenzy as the soil bubbles and convulses like boiling flesh, even though the air is as still and putrid as a dead man's rotting heart," the PCs may well laugh.

Make no mistake—thrilling combat is the heart of most Ravenloft adventures. If your characters thrive on hack-and-slash, feel free to add more battles to the adventures contained here. But remember, horror spices up adventures and intensifies combat. In other words, slash all you want, but don't forget the horror!

Chapter 1: Bride of Mordenheim

Setup

This adventure is designed for four characters of 2nd to 4th level. During the scenario, the characters meet a hauntingly beautiful woman named Katrina Von Brandthofen.

They are soon flung into an insidious plot devised by Doctor Victor Mordenheim, who is trying to restore life and beauty to his cursed wife. Her body is now mutilated and broken. The Dungeon Master is encouraged to read the information regarding Victor Mordenheim and his wife in the RAVENLOFT™ boxed set. This data is located in Chapter 13, "The

Who's Doomed of Ravenloft." See "Lamordia" in Chapter 11 for a description of the domain, and the card titled "Mordenheim's Estate" for details on the setting.

The Adventure

The characters' travels take them to a dark and misty beach.

You stand on a sandy beach in the fading light of early evening. Dark, murky waves lap at the shore. Seashells and the decaying remains of small jellyfish lie scattered about like broken toys, and fiddler crabs scurry about in search of food.

Bordering this beach, sharp, jutting rocks reach stiffly into the magenta-tinged, midnight blue sky; they are resolute against the crash of the white-capped waves. In the distance, a lone woman kneels on the sand, retrieves a shell, and throws it back into the sea. It disappears into the surf, then she gracefully pulls her boots off and begins wading in the lapping currents.

She takes only a few steps before she stops, noticing you. Her gaze riveted on you,

she rushes to the shore, retrieves her boots, and cautiously approaches.

Her beauty comes into focus as she closes the distance.

This is Katrina, who will try to draw the PCs into this sorrowful adventure. If the characters draw their weapons as she advances, she stops, stares wistfully at them, then turns around and runs away. If the PCs do not catch her and show they are peaceful, the adventure ends before it even begins.

However, if the PCs do not threaten her, she strides toward them and asks, "To whom do you owe alliance?"

If the characters say they owe alliance only to themselves or to no individual, she relaxes and claims that she is aligned with herself—and all that is lawful. While she speaks with them, she searches for any symbols of evil that may be visible on the party. She questions any clerics about their gods. Katrina is trying to make sure the PCs are not evil. She will not deal with an evil party.

Katrina's Story

The woman sighs, and a smile tugs at the corner of her rose-tinted lips. "I believe you are without evil," she states softly. "I truly hope you are. My name is Katrina. In this land, it is difficult to determine who is evil and who is good—except by one's actions. I am willing to give you a chance."

If the characters ask why she is here, she tells them her story. This is detailed in the NPC roster at the end of the adventure, but it is also paraphrased here for the Dungeon Master's convenience.

"I am searching for my maternal aunt, Elise. She was my mother's twin. Aunt Elise married a man, Doctor Victor Mordenheim,

Bride of Mordenheim



who lost his mind in his work shortly after they were married. My aunt disappeared several years ago, and I have been looking for her ever since. It is rumored that he performed grotesque experiments on her, and I am here to seek vengeance if this is true. I have been unable to locate his private laboratory, and my travels have led me here. All the rumors point to this area, so I believe he is close. I ask your help, if you will give it."

If the characters ask for payment, Katrina explains she has barely enough to cover her lodging and food expenses for the next few weeks. If the characters refuse to help without promise of payment, she offers to pay them with a portion of anything they may find at Mordenheim's residence. If they still refuse, she bids them farewell and sets off on her own.

However, if the characters decide to help her, she is relieved. She suggests they set up camp (the nearest town is 10 miles away) so they all can get an early start in the morning.

If any of the PCs stand watch, they observe something strange during the night. If no one stands watch, the DM should roll randomly to have one character awoken. The PCs observe small streaks of lightning and a glowing aura coming from a small mansion perched atop a cliff several miles away. The hill overlooks the nearby sea.

When Katrina sees the glow in the sky, she grows excited. "That is it! That's the house! I knew you were a good sign in this evil land. We shall leave in the morning and head for that hill!"

In the morning, Katrina leads the PCs in the direction of the house, eating dried fruits and jerky and sipping water from a suede waterskin as she travels.

Bride of Mordenheim

Mansion Atop a Cliff

The wind is brisk and cold, chilling you through your clothes and armor as you ascend the steep slope to the house. The deep green trees and nearly black grass absorb what weak sunlight peeks from above the dense cloud cover. The only sound is the snapping and crackling under your feet as brittle, dry branches and twigs give way under the weight of your footsteps.

Reaching the top of the hill around mid-afternoon, you see the house has a paramount view of the ocean. Below, the sea's murky surface waves and shivers from unseen forces. Only the wind in your hair and the call of lonely seagulls breaks the deafening silence that hangs in the air. Far across the ocean, a mist-laden island is vaguely visible.

The wooden door to the old mansion is reinforced with iron bars. The bars are blistered and flaking with blood-red rust; the wood is cracked and splintered with age. Shutters on the second floor bang and rattle against the house.

Unless the characters are wearing gauntlets, they suffer 1 point of damage when they knock on the door. The wood splinters mercilessly into their knuckles. It will take 2d4 rounds to remove the splinters.

The knock is never answered. The door is locked, and a thief trying to pick the lock must do so with a -20% penalty because the mechanism is rusted. The door can be battered open if 40 points of damage are inflicted upon it. When the PCs get the door open, continue with the following:

Strange Lodgings

The door rasps and whimpers painfully when opened, and a rush of stale air flows

from the building. Nearly two inches of dust fill this room, making it appear as though no one has entered this house in decades.

The dark and gloomy entry room displays rotting tapestries and paintings hanging precariously on rusting nails. Spider webs dangle from every conceivable locale, and the husks of their former residents lie tangled in their desperate strands.

From upstairs, a clanking sound cuts through the musty air. It soon stops, and a cry of terror follows, dying down to a morbid wail.

If the characters decide to go up the stairs, read the following:

As you mount the stairs, the steps creak horribly with every footfall. A spider, the size of a gold coin, drops down in front of you as if to see who intrudes. The dust on the banister flows to the floor in a spooky cascade as you vibrate the stairs with your movements.

The only way the characters can mount the stairs silently is by using a *silence* spell. A thief's Move Silently ability functions at one-half his normal ability on the rickety stairs. If the PCs have not made efforts to quiet their movements, by the time the PCs have climbed one-third the way up the stairs, the man on the second floor (Victor) hears them and begins hiding everything in sight. If the characters move up the stairs quietly, they find Victor. If, however, Victor was alerted to their movements, read the following:

Suddenly, you hear something slamming and banging overhead. Within a few short seconds, the noise has ceased. At the top of the stairs, you see only one door; its pale exterior is outlined by the glow of light cast under its fragile frame. The door is closed,

Bride of Mordenheim

and a chair sits propped tightly against the handle.

The Scientist

If the characters move the chair, the door creaks outward, exposing a brightly lit room.

The room is well lit, but very dusty. Footprints the size of those made by a giant are scattered across the floor. A bin with a hand-pumped well stands in the center of the room, where rickety and ancient tables sit at odd angles, efficiently slicing the room into equal quarters. A man stands looking at you with one eye wide open; another man squints painfully in your direction. He leans against one of the tables, nervously tapping his fingers, sending tiny explosions of dust into the air.

The nervous man appears half-starved. His thin body stoops at the shoulders. He gasps in a hoarse voice, while licking his lips with a blackened tongue.

"What are you doing here? I haven't seen or allowed visitors here for more than two years!"

If the characters mention they are looking for Doctor Victor Mordenheim, the man's eyes perk open, and his posture straightens. Wiping his mouth with a wrinkled handkerchief, he approaches the characters with measured footsteps.

He instantly looks 10 years younger and more fit. "I apologize for the charade, but I never can tell who is looking for me—or the madman they say lives here. I am Victor Mordenheim." He approaches you with an outstretched hand, waiting for your introductions. "What can I do for you?"

When the characters say that they are looking for Elise Von Brandthofen, or Elise

Mordenheim, sorrow knits across his melancholic brow.

"I am sorry to tell you that your search has ended. She died several years ago from a yellow fever plague. I was working on a serum to cure the dreadful affliction, but the remedy came too late. I was able to inject myself, but she—my wife—passed away too quickly. Since her passing, I have refused to enter the rest of the house; the memories it brings back are too painful.

"I am sorry that your travels have brought you naught, but you are free to spend the evening here, so you can leave at first light. The night brings untold horrors in this land."

If the characters agree to these arrangements—which Katrina will beg them to accept—Victor shows them to several downstairs rooms.

Victor sighs as he walks down the rickety stairs to the first floor. Moving a dust-encrusted cobweb from his path, he turns to his right. "We had many a festive occasion in this room," Victor says unwaveringly, pointing disjointedly to the room below the stairs. "We used to love to sit and watch the flames in the fireplace." He looks at the mantle where a painting of a lovely couple leans against the wall. The picture appears old, but it must be only the webs and dust that cast this illusion, for Victor has not aged since its illustration. He continues walking and stops near three doors. "Here is where you may sleep. Safe and uneventful rest to you all. Until the morn." He turns and walks sadly back up the stairs.

Katrina asks to take a room for herself; if the PCs agree, she locks the door behind her. She states that if someone wishes to guard her, she would prefer them to remain outside her door rather than inside her room.

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Things That Go Bump in the Night

Later that night, as the characters sleep, have each player roll 1d20. Those who roll one-half or less of their Wisdom scores hear noises and a muffled cry coming from upstairs. If one or more characters were on watch, they automatically hear the noises. No matter what precautions the PCs took, Katrina has been abducted. Victor stole her through a secret passage into her room. If another PC was in the room with her, the character is drugged by a sleep gas.

You suddenly wake to the noise of muffled pleas. A short scuffle ends in a soft thud, then all is silent.

If the PCs investigate, they must again walk up the squeaky stairs. If they use a *silence* spell, or if they find a way to fly or levitate up, they can sneak up without Victor noticing them. If they make noise going up the stairs, Victor again hears them coming. If no one awakens from their sleep, Katrina is lost to them forever, as Victor's experiment is concluded unsuccessfully.

Opening the door to the laboratory, you see Victor placing Katrina's limp body into a horrifying chair with straps and metallic objects across its surface. A broken and grotesque shape that looks as though it were once a woman lies next to her; it, too, is limp. Unusual and unidentifiable objects puncture the atrocious creature's body.

The characters must roll a Ravenloft Horror check when they see this sight.

If the characters do nothing to stop Victor:

Victor places a metallic bowl on top of Katrina's head, and another bowl on the pathetic creature's head. Muttering incomprehensible incantations, Victor injects

a vile yellow substance into Katrina's arm. A few moments later, Katrina opens her eyes. She looks at Victor lovingly.

"My husband. How long it has been? It is true that we now can be together?" Katrina sits up and looks into Victor's eyes.

"Yes, my darling. It is now time." Victor reaches for the woman's hand and gently caresses it. Katrina, seconds thereafter, writhes in agony and drops to the ground. The contorted body on the table nearby stiffens and convulses. Both Katrina and the creature become unnaturally still. Victor flies into a rage of anger and grief.

If the PCs try to stop Victor from conducting his heinous experiment:

Victor raises a butcher knife above Katrina, threatening to kill her if they do not leave him alone.

Victor desperately explains that he wants to use Katrina's body as the new vessel for his decrepit wife's soul. He points to the creature on the other table. He has no intention of murdering Katrina.

If the characters still try to stop him, he attacks them with the butcher knife. After defeating Victor, to save Katrina, the PCs must cast a *neutralize poison*.

If the PCs investigate the grotesque body of the woman known as Elise, they find she is kept alive only by the contraptions that jut from her skin. Elise wants to die, and will encourage the PCs to disconnect her. However, the powers of Ravenloft want her kept alive to continue Victor's torture. Elise cannot die. No form of healing can cure her.

Resolution

If the characters save Katrina's life, the PCs each receive 300 experience points and have gained an ally in Ravenloft. Katrina will not join them in their travels to escape Ravenloft. She instead chooses to return to her home, where

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she plans to rejoin the family she has not seen in years.

As the characters leave Victor's mansion, they are spotted by the beast that Victor Mordenheim created long ago—Adam. He takes an immediate disliking to the PCs, assuming they may have harmed his beloved Elise. The DM should refer to the *Who's Doomed of Ravenloft* chapter in the RAVENLOFT™ boxed set for more information on this creature.

NPC Roster

Victor Mordenheim

0-Level Human Male

HP 55	THACO 20	
AC 7	Age 34	AL NE
Str 10	Dex 17	Con 10
Int 18	Wis 7	Cha 12

Mordenheim has been blessed—and cursed—with a permanent *regeneration* spell. It is almost impossible for him to permanently die. After being “killed” by the PCs, he will be back again within a week—to continue his never-ending experiments. If the characters *disintegrate* his body, his soul wanders the demi-plane of Ravenloft, looking for the body of another human. When he finds one, which he certainly will, he returns to his home within a week, the body slowly changing to once again resemble Victor Mordenheim. Victor is essentially immortal.

Katrina Von Brandthofen

4th-Level Human Diviner

HP 20	THACO 19	
AC 6	Age 24	AL LN
Str 12	Dex 18	Con 13
Int 14	Wis 16	Cha 17

Spells: *detect magic, detect undead, identify, read magic; detect evil, detect invisibility, ESP*

Katrina is Victor Mordenheim's niece by marriage. Victor's wife, Elise Von Brandthofen, is Katrina's maternal aunt.

Katrina is a hauntingly beautiful woman. She wears loosely fitted shirts and tight jerkins that accentuate her athletic figure. She is very agile and quick.

Though her family escaped Ravenloft when she was young, a few years ago, Katrina was drawn in again, arriving in Valachan. Katrina has been looking for her missing aunt since that time. She believes that the Doctor, her aunt's husband, has performed some terrible experiment on her, creating a zombie slave to attend to his every whim.

Katrina believes she is always right. This ferocious tenacity and independence has been with her ever since her father failed to return from war when she was a young child. Her mother alone raised Katrina and her younger brother.

Katrina's brother contracted yellow fever when he was six, and died a few painful weeks later. This destroyed Katrina's mother. She soon broke down into a catatonic state, unable to eat. She died three weeks later.

When her mother died, Katrina was taken to an uncle's house; he took the time and patience to raise his niece. This helped Katrina readjust to life without her parents. However, she yearned for the company of her aunt, the twin of her deceased mother.

Years later, Katrina still searches for her aunt. She has failed to locate the elusive Doctor Mordenheim. During her travels, she learned several disturbing rumors that have tightened a hatred in her heart for the man she has never seen. Several of these yarns tell of Elise, her aunt, being turned into a horrid and twisted beast to guard his private laboratory. Another tells that her aunt is nothing more than a mindless zombie.

Katrina has found, during her short lifetime, that she can trust very few people in Ravenloft. She is very wary of those she meets on the road. She rarely trusts anyone enough to tell of her life and of her travels.

Chapter II: Blood in Moondale

Setup

This adventure is designed for three to six characters of 3rd to 5th level. The party may be currently in Ravenloft, or the DM may adjust the scenario so that the party stumbles unwittingly into Ravenloft.

In *Blood in Moondale*, Captain Alec Rapacion, leader of the county militia, has enlisted the player characters and two other warriors (Eldon and Ravewood) for brief terms of service. A rash of werewolf incursions on local villages has forced militia leaders to form brute squads to hunt down

the vile creatures. The PCs have participated with the militia for several days.

The characters are on maneuvers with Eldon, Ravewood, and Captain Alec when they are caught by nightfall and a sudden snowstorm while investigating a woodland. Luckily, they discover a small village named Moondale where they can spend the night. Here the adventure begins.

In place of Alec Rapacion, the DM might want to use an NPC that the characters already know: hooking a party up with a stranger may cause characters to prematurely suspect their leader.

Adventure

The air is cold and charged with snow, and the wind howls severely through the tall conifer trees. Far ahead, the dim lights of a small village flicker invitingly toward you through the thickening flurries. The captain, plodding at the head of the party, shifts direction toward the lights. As you enter the town, the snow falls thicker, in large pillowy flakes. A sudden chill runs through

you like cold steel, but as quickly as it came, the chill passes.

The streets are barren. Nary a footprint or carriage track marks the deepening shroud of snow over this silent town. Bringing up the rear of the party, Eldon and Ravewood trudge along, their heads bent to the ground like weary horses and their breath forming ghosts of moisture in the frigid air.

Though the shutters of every house are secured against the night, here and there light spills between the shutter slats, casting prison-bar shadows upon the drifting snow. Ahead, a creaking sign bears weathered lettering—*Moondale Inn*.

The Moondale Inn

The captain, seeing how weary his troops are, gazes upward to gauge the severity of the deepening storm. He decides there is nothing else to do but enter the inn to wait out the storm.

As you walk up to the front door of the inn, the stairs shake and rusted nails moan beneath the tread of your feet. The doorknob, however, turns silently and the hinges whisper as the door opens, spilling warm light into the night.

You stamp inside and close the door. A small fire burns lazily in a large hearth on the right side of the room. The flames cast dancing shadows across the bleak, tan walls. To the left, a worn set of stairs leads up to the second floor. A man, apparently the inn's proprietor, sits in an oversized rocking chair, smoking a stale-smelling pipe. Though his tunic is blotched by years of tobacco (and other unidentifiable) stains, you can tell it had once been white. Several tables and chairs stand in the path between you and the innkeeper.

Blood in Moondale

When the characters approach the man, he lazily stands. "Caught in the white maw of winter, were we? Come on in and thaw out your eye-lashes. I'm Dante Lysin, and this is the Moondale Inn. You're welcome to stay, if you've got coin, that is."

If the characters do not decide to stay the night, they find the storm has suddenly worsened and that the town has no other inns. If they do decide to stay for the evening, Captain Alec Rapacion pays for the company's rooms. He seems to feel somewhat guilty about getting the group stuck in the snowstorm and so offers a separate room for each character (though they can double up if they want).

As you ascend the stairs to your rooms, the hallway becomes darker with every step. The candle that Captain Rapacion holds cast only a dim, flickering light into the dusky hall. He guides you one by one to your rooms and waits with the candle until you light a lamp in your room. The rooms are furnished with single beds and a dresser with a porcelain wash basin. Two cob-webbed candle sconces hang upon the walls, each holding five withered, wine-colored candles. An even layer of dust coats everything: you get the impression the inn entertains few guests.

The beds have sheets and pillows, though neither seem particularly fresh. The dressers have nothing in them except a few dust-choked cobwebs in the bottom drawers. The husks of dead flies, earwigs, and the webs' deceased tenants lie tangled in the once-sticky strands. PCs may perform whatever tasks they wish before going to bed.

Screams in the Night

During the early hours of night, a woman's terrified screams awaken the characters. The screams come from the house across the street,

and do not abate for one full turn. If the characters go to investigate, the woman stops screaming to tell her story.

If the PCs knock on the captain's door before heading out, they receive no answer and his door is locked. If they later question him about his failure to respond, he will claim to have run to investigate as soon as the screams started. If the PCs don't question the captain, he will pretend he was with them the full time.

Eldon and Ravewood join the PCs in the hall as they prepare to leave the inn to investigate.

As the party enters the street, 2d4 villagers join them in seeking out the source of the screams.

If the characters check the street as they cross, they discover the tracks of a man's bare feet leading from the inn to the house where the screams arise. With every step, the impression of the heel grows smaller until it disappears, the print of the ball shrinks to a small triangle, and the toes seem to sprout sharp claws. Soon, the tracks perfectly resemble those of a wolf. If the characters do not look for tracks, the DM should not point them out.

If the characters are together in one place and intentionally count heads, they will notice that the captain is not present. Otherwise, the DM should not suggest this information.

The door to the house swings easily open, and in the shadowy room within, you find a woman racked with tears and jibbering incoherently. Your attempts to calm her down only make her more hysterical.

If characters check the door, they see no sign of forced entry. If characters draw weapons and search the house for intruders, they find only a ravaged corpse (the woman frantically follows on the heels of the character who makes this discovery). If this is the case, read the next box to the PCs. If, however, the characters do not search the house, the woman unsteadily turns and wanders from the front room. If the

Blood in Moondale

characters follow her, she leads them through the house, and, with blood-stained fingers, points out a ravaged corpse lying on the carpet. Read the next section.

A brutally mutilated corpse is lying upon the floor of the pantry. Upon seeing the mangled form, the woman again bursts into uncontrollable tears. The corpse looks as though a wild beast ravaged it. Shreds of clothing trail across the floor from the front door to where the remains now lie.

Only after this latest spasm of grief does the woman settle down enough to speak. "My husband and I—we—we were locking the house for night. I went to the front door. The porch lamp was lit—went to put it out—opened the door. There was a man—a dark robe over him. Couldn't see his face. Just eyes staring at me. Walking straight for me. But not a man—a wolf! I saw him change—saw the robe fall away. He was—he was hideous."

DM's Note: The werewolf snatched up the robe in its jaws when it fled the house—thus, the characters would not have noticed the garment in the street.

The woman starts crying again and jibbering uncontrollably. During this time, the captain noiselessly joins the party and, unless characters had noticed his absence before, acts as though he had been with them all along. If the characters noticed his absence, he says the innkeeper woke him to tell him of the screams and he left the inn before the PCs.

The characters can elicit nothing more from the woman unless they cast *remove fear*, *forget*, or *emotion* on her. If they cast one of these, she continues. Otherwise, skip the following box.

"The beast forced the door open before I could close and lock it. My husband heard

the commotion and rushed into the room with his sword drawn. The beast, in its fury, trampled me and caught my husband in the throat with its teeth, dragging him across the floor to here. I hid behind the stair until I heard the beast breathing and chewing no more. Then I found the courage to scream."

Further investigation of the body shows that the claw and bite marks are several inches deep. The beast that attacked this man was very strong and lethal, indeed. Investigating anything further turns up nothing relevant.

The captain suggests that the party check the snow to see if the tracks can reveal anything else. The characters find, however, that their own footprints and the falling snow have obliterated the tracks of the man-wolf. The captain assigns Eldon to move the corpse out into the snow and remain to guard the woman. The rest of the evening is uneventful. In the morning, the characters find Eldon asleep and the woman dead. If questioned, Eldon says that she screamed out once in the night, but by the time he reached her, she was already dead. From the terrified look frozen on her face, the PCs can only guess that she died of some terrible fright or nightmare.

Elements Against Them

To make matters worse, word comes that 12-foot snowdrifts have sealed off the valley. The sporadic drifts within the village are not nearly as dramatic as those on the wind-swept passes. The captain leads the party to the snowdrifts to see if they can clear a path.

The captain's face wears a mask of grim determination as he studies the impassable trails. He appears to be calculating whether your ill-equipped band could survive the passage. Resignation finally softens his iron features, "We must remain here until the

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passes clear. In the meantime, though, we have two murders to solve—perhaps more before we are through. With the roads blocked, we are the sole constabulary in this village. The task thus falls to us: it is our sworn duty. We must find and slay the beast before it commits further butchery. Consider this your first assignment.”

As you march back into town, the straggling buildings of the village seem almost smothered beneath the heavy blanket of snow. Flakes spin in tiny whirlwinds between the buildings, borne upon a wind that pierces even the thickest clothing. The frigid air stings your nostrils when you inhale. The sun provides precious little warmth, hidden behind leaden clouds. Just enough light filters through to illuminate the tiny valley.

Whenever the characters try to ask villagers for information regarding the deaths, they turn away in fear. The PCs do manage to learn that

no werewolf attacks had occurred before the militia unit arrived. But the more characters urge townfolk to help them, the more widespread and intense the people's suspicions of the militia become.

If characters seek out Dante Lysin, the innkeeper of the Moondale Inn, they find he is curiously absent. If characters ask his assistant where Dante is, he says Dante is on the other side of the village helping his elderly parents install more locks on their doors. He says he should return by nightfall.

If the characters become utterly frustrated by the lack of help from villagers, Captain Rapacion commands them to do what soldiers always do when in doubt—patrol.

DM's Note: Captain Rapacion should assign the characters to two or three different patrol routes. He assigns Eldon and Ravewood to a different patrol route unaccompanied by a PC.

Eldon and Ravewood are to be the next victims of the werewolf. If a PC should insist upon accompanying them, the DM will need to find a way for the two militiamen to become

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separated from the PC.

Whether the characters are told by the captain to patrol, or are patrolling on their own, read them the next box.

Woman in a Drift

As you patrol a snow-choked road near the edge of the village, your eyes scan the bleak and glaring snowscape. A spot of color in the snow catches your eye. There seems to be something bluish in an oddly shaped snowdrift to the right of the road. As you approach, you see that the mound is not a drift at all, but a loose pile of snow that looks like it was kicked into place. With horror, you realize the patch of blue is a human hand! Frozen droplets of blood cling to the rigid fingers.

If the characters brush away the snow or pull the body out of the mound, they find the ragged corpse of a young and beautiful maiden—beautiful except that her lifeless face is fixed in a grimace of fear. She is cold, but not frozen, and rigor mortis has not yet set in. Tracks of a single wolf lead away from the scene. If the characters follow these paw prints, read the following:

You follow the mazy trail away from the village where the creature's pace seems to slow. Then gradually, the tracks broaden into those of human bare feet. These new tracks lead to a secluded spot between a deep woodland and the windowless side of a remote barn. There, the trail of prints broadens into a trampled area. On the edges of this area you see marks in the snow where clothing had been discarded. You also find two sets of booted footprints—one approaching the secluded area at a run, and the other striding boldly away.

Whichever set of tracks the characters choose to follow, they are led away from the barn and toward town. Once they reach a main street, the tracks mix and are lost amid the tramping footprints of other villagers.

The cold seems to have intensified as you tromp through the streets, straining your eyes to pick up the trail again. The tracks are hopelessly trampled. Out of the corner of your eye, you see a dark form approaching. It is the captain. His hands hold the tall collar of his cloak tight to his cheeks, and his face looks grim and ashen with the cold. "Tell me you have found something to bring this fiend to the noose!"

Captain Rapacion carefully listens as the characters recount their findings. Afterward, the DM should read the following.

When your story is finished, the captain shakes his head in obvious irritation. "We've removed the other bodies to the last stall in the stables behind the inn. Bring this body too, and place it with the others. The village elders have asked that the bodies be preserved until the passes open and a doctor can arrive to give them proper burial. Since we've so far proven incapable of rounding up the murderer," he says with a stern glare, "rounding up the bodies is the least we can do. I shall see you back at the inn. This cold has run me through." He turns, stomping his booted feet, and heads toward the inn.

Stables and Stories

When the party reaches the stables after retrieving the woman's body, the DM should read the following.

The stables are lit by a solitary lantern, and are mercifully warmer than the frigid wind outside. You trudge down a central,

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straw-strewn passage with stalls lining either side. As you drag the woman's body past one stall, the great black stallion inside it catches the scent of death and rears. Its whinney sounds like the scream of a woman. In the meager lamplight, you glimpse its crimson eyes and foam-flecked muzzle. Steeling your nerve, you take a few more steps, reach the final stall and swing the door open. Inside are four corpses, not two. Beneath the gored bodies of the man who died last night and his wife lay the rigid forms of your comrades, Eldon and Ravewood.

If the characters question Captain Rapacion as to how Eldon and Ravewood died, he says, "It was obviously the beast. A farmer found them in his field. Tripped over their bodies on his way out to milk the cows." If the party questions Rapacion further, they find that the tracks around the militiamen's bodies proved impossible to follow once they entered the village.

In the evening, Dante returns to the inn. He expresses his regrets to the characters on the loss of their men and brings them each an ale "on the house."

He recounts the story his assistant told of how he spent the day helping his elderly parents fortify their house, and indicates how the whole town, including himself, was spooked by the late butcheries. He then asks the characters what they have discovered.

Dante is intent upon the characters' every word. If they accuse him of being a lycanthrope, he denies it. "I have been called many things in my day, but never a killing beast." He stands and pours himself a drink.
DM's Note: Unknown to the characters, Dante is a nosferatu vampire. He sustains himself on blood drained from the stabled mounts. He carefully bites animals in the throat, and partially drains their blood into a clean pail. Then he stores it until needed. In warmer weather he drinks the blood of cattle and

sheep, but in colder weather, prefers the mounts of his guests. He is very careful not to endanger the animals' lives. Unlike most creatures suffering from vampirism, he despises his condition. See the NPC Roster at the end of this adventure for more information on this man.

After the characters eat dinner with Captain Rapacion, he announces he is going to retire early. He claims that trudging through the snow and cold looking for clues has made him very tired. He excuses himself and walks up the stairs to his room.

Dante, the innkeeper, settles happily in with your group and, recognizing a captive audience, begins to spin a yarn about the village. "Feel like a spooky tale on such a bleak night? Have you heard the tale of my arrival in Moondale? It was thriving then, but in a few years, everything changed. A foul batch of needle-toothed, feral-faced vampires crawled out of their dark holes and came here. They sucked the life out of this place. Parasites. We hanged them and burned them—poisoned, disemboweled, decapitated, gored them—but they kept coming back. Within months, the town had shrunk by half.

"Then a stranger came to town. He taught us how to slay the salty-breathed fiends, and how to keep them dead. We felled an acre of timber making holy symbols and stakes, and eventually killed several of them. But the rest moved on before we could finish the job. Even though the danger was behind us, another batch of the townfolk left, fearing the life-suckers would return to wreak vengeance. That was five years ago, and we've not seen so much as a bat's ear since.

"But now this nonsense crops up. I say we should—"

Terrified cries erupt on the street outside. Dante leaps to his feet, wrenches a coat from the rack on the wall, and rushes into the night.

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If the characters follow, read the following.

About 60 yards down the street in a dim pool of lantern light, you glimpse the beast—a wolf, easily the size of a worg. It's hackled back glistens with frozen spikes of blood as it arches fiendishly over its latest prey. Two bodies lie quivering in the red-speckled snow beneath the beast. The wolf's meaty jaws scissor mercilessly and its knifelike teeth slash into the bodies. Over the wail of the wind you can hear its slaverous gulping. Then the beast raises its dripping muzzle, pinning you with its eyes. It sniffs the wind, turns, and dashes away.

Lycanthrope, Mountain Loup-Garou (1): Int High (15); AL CE; AC 3; MV 15 (18); HD 7; hp 50; THACO 13; #AT 3 (1); Dmg 1-4/1-4/2-8 (2-8); SD Hit only by gold or magical weapons; SA Surprise; SZ M (6' tall); ML Elite (14); XP 4,000.

If the characters investigate the bodies, they find only lifeless shells. The Loup-Garou flees at

its fastest possible movement rate. The only way the characters can attack it is with magic or missile fire (remembering that it is nighttime). Within two rounds, the werewolf turns to the left between two buildings and disappears. If a character happens to have a gold or magical weapon on hand and wounds the werewolf, Captain Rapacion suffers the same damage.

If the captain is injured, he will feign arthritis or illness in order to conceal his wound. He will not allow the PCs to discover his injury.

The Innocent Captain

DM's Note: The DM should stage events similar to the one above, in which the captain is absent from the PCs during an attack, until the characters suspect their captain. Then the DM should run the following encounter. The characters may be anywhere, but they hear more of the now-familiar cries of pain ringing out from two blocks away. If they decide to investigate, read the following.



Blood in Moondale

You rush through a gray-black maze of barricaded buildings, searching for the werewolf's latest victim. After rounding a snow-clogged corner, you stop dead in your tracks. Thirty feet down the alley, the wounded body of a man is couched in a crimson snowdrift. As you approach, you notice that his hands are working futilely to stem the flow of blood from deep gashes in his arms and calves. It is your captain. He gazes weakly up at you, biting back the pain, and stammers, "I had him . . . had him right in my grasp! Got a blow in with my blade . . . across his brisket . . . but he got away. By the gods, this hurts!" The red glow of pain in his eyes seems to dull, and a cloud passes over his gaze. He slumps, unconscious. But ghosts of warm breath still swirl from his nostrils.

DM's Note: Alec Rapacion mauled his own limbs (taking 10 points of damage) to allay the PCs' suspicions. He does not want them believing he is the werewolf: he knows he cannot defeat the whole party at once.

If the characters see through their captain's ploy and try to slay him while he is unconscious, they find that only weapons that are magical or made of gold cause injury to him. If they use gold or magical weapons on him, he awakens with the first blow, transmogrifies during the first round, and attacks as a werewolf.

If the party does not attack but merely leaves the captain to bleed to death, he will awaken after they are gone, then hunt them down one by one that night until he or they are dead.

If the party binds Rapacion's wounds and carries him back to the inn, the night passes without further incident.

Frustration and Fear

The next morning, the captain sleeps late. If the characters take this opportunity to inspect the inn's stables, they notice that something has further fed off the deceased bodies. The frigid weather has staved off any decomposition.

If the party inspects the streets for more bodies, they notice that the townfolk watch their every move. The good folk of Moondale now do not go out without a sword, dagger, or any vaguely weaponlike tool they can find. Should the characters provoke a fight (the villagers will not initiate combat) the townfolk battle as 1st-level fighters. The 25 villagers are prepared to fight whatever is slaying them; if the party seems culpable, they will let the battles begin.

Late in the day, the characters discover another body, this one on the roof of an abandoned two-story public house. Because of the ice on the wooden walls, the characters cannot climb the building unless they have a grappling hook, nor can they leap from any nearby buildings (there are none). The party can reach the roof through any normal magical means. However, the party does notice several scratches and large gouges in the walls. The claw marks appear as though the werewolf carried something heavy as it scaled the wall.

Through the day and into the evening, if the characters split up to cover more ground in their search, the Loup-Garou hunts the weakest character. Because the werewolf is Captian Rapacion, he knows full well which party member is weakest. The DM should read the following excerpt to that character.

As you trudge through the trampled snow that fills the lanes, you hear the crunching of footfalls behind you. You turn to look, but see no one. Only the ever-present wind speaks. The moment you turn back around, a black blur of teeth and claws drops upon you.

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The lycanthrope has initiative, with a +4 bonus to the first round of attacks. It continues the assault until it loses 50% of its hit points or the character is dead. Though the beast's morale is very high, it will break off the attack before it becomes so weak that one or two more blows could defeat it.

The werewolf's main intent is to slow, weaken, or kill the characters. Thus, attacking lone characters is its best strategy. If the character cannot wound the werewolf for half its damage before being killed, the beast feeds until other characters arrive. When the werewolf first catches the scent of other characters approaching, it flees, returning to the inn in a roundabout way.

The wolf heads to the inn's stable, changes back to his human form, dresses (his clothes are stashed beneath hay bales), and heads into the inn. If the PCs have secretly posted a guard at the stable, the guard sees the werewolf change into the captain. In werewolf form, the captain has a 20% chance of sniffing out hidden guards and attacks any unhidden guards.

Wild Goose Chase

If the PCs tell the captain they suspect the innkeeper, Rapacion supports their suspicions, saying "I do not trust a man whose face is hidden when the sun rides high. At night—yes, at night we see him, and more than we would like!"

If the characters question the innkeeper, he defends himself mildly.

"No one is truly what he seems. Were I to pry into your lives, I would find sins that you too shelter from the sun. Though the list of my transgressions may be long, I assure you that cold-blooded murder is not numbered among them.

"Let me also assure you that the deaths in this town started the moment your company

arrived. The village is set to hang you all. Unless you find the culprit soon, the townfolk will test their theories by killing you all and seeing if the murders cease."

Dante pours himself a drink and settles behind the bar counter in a somewhat uncomfortable-looking chair.

If the characters probe further regarding Dante's past, he refuses to answer. He knows the characters would kill him if they knew his true condition, despite his abhorrence of it.

Later that evening, the captain complains of a wood splinter under one of his nails. If the characters make the connection between the claw marks they discovered on the public house earlier and the captain's splinter, they have nearly solved the murders. However, they need proof.

If the players still do not suspect the captain, have Dante complain to them that the captain's room smells like a mortuary.

Into the Lair

Should the PCs inspect the captain's quarters, a thief must make an Open Locks skill check, or the PCs can roll against Strength to batter the door open. A total of 25 points of Strength rolled among the battering PCs is required to open the door. If the party is successful, the DM should read the following.

The room within smells of rot and lies in disarray. To your right sits the porcelain wash basin, draped with clothes and spattered with blood spots. Beside the basin rest a dozen dulled and nicked straight razors. Damp piles of clothing cover the bed, and the dresser beside it emits an acrid odor.

DM's Note: If the characters open drawers in the dresser, in the bottom drawer they find a half-consumed forearm that reeks of rot. Whether they discover the forearm or not, read

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the next section during the party's investigation.

The ominous sound of moaning hinges strikes your ears. The door swings slowly open, and framed in doorway is the hulking form of your captain. He strides purposefully into the room and closes the creaking door behind him. He fills his lungs with the putrid air of the room and speaks, "You have made such good warriors. Ours is a friendship of give and take: you give me the freedom to find sustenance as I must, and I shall not take your lives. I will ignore your indiscretion if you will ignore mine."

If the characters agree to these terms, the captain allows the characters to leave his room. But that night, he will stalk and slay each character. He will not stop until he or they are dead. On a roll of 3 or less on 1d6, PCs awaken before the captain butchers them.

If the characters refuse the captain's terms, he transmogrifies immediately. Each PC must make a Ravenloft fear check or flee. Fleeing characters have a 50% chance of trying to push past the captain—otherwise, they must jump out the window and fall two stories to the street below, suffering 2d4 points of damage on impact (damage is reduced slightly due to the snow on the ground). Characters cannot use climbing abilities or proficiencies to flee: panicked people do not look for toe holds. The Loup-Garou werewolf will track down and slay every last party member.

Dante Joins the Battle

If the tide of battle turns against the characters, the DM should feel free to bring the innkeeper into the battle.

Vampire, Nosferatu (Innkeeper Dante Lysin): Int Very (12); AL CN; AC 1; MV 12, Fl 18 (C); HD 7 +3; hp 59; THAC0 13, 11 w/weapon; #AT 1; Dmg By weapon, +4 Strength bonus; SA

Charm gaze, Constitution drain through blood sucking (See RAVENLOFT™ boxed set); SD hit only by magical weapons; SZ M (5'6"); ML Champion (16); XP 2,000.

As long as the werewolf is alive, Dante Lysin attacks him only, not the characters. If the werewolf is slain and if the party has learned Lysin's secret, he attacks the characters.

Despite Dante Lysin's abhorrence for his vampirism, his is an eternal curse: only death can release him. But this is a cure he is not willing to undergo. Thus, unless the characters can convince him they pose no threat to him, he will attack until reduced to 0 hit points, then take on gaseous form. He then returns to his coffin in the cellar of the inn, regenerates, and will later move to a new town. If PCs destroy his coffin before eight hours pass, Dante is truly destroyed.

NPC Roster

Captain Alec Rapacion

8th-level Human Fighter

AL CE; AC 3; MV 15 (18); HD 7; hp 50; THAC0 13; #AT 3 (1); Dmg 1-4/1-4/2-8 (2-8); SA Surprise; SD Hit only by gold or magical weapons; SZ M (6' tall); ML Elite (14); XP 4,000.

Str: 18	Dex: 16	Con: 18
Int: 15	Wis: 12	Cha: 17

Alec Rapacion was born a Mountain Loup-Garou Lycanthrope. (See the RAVENLOFT™ boxed set for full information regarding the Loup-Garou.) Alec, being a true lycanthrope, has full control over his curse, though he does consider it a curse. Two of his three brothers were lycanthropic as well. They, however, were killed in their teens when the people in Alec's home village realized their condition. Alec barely escaped with his life.

The city, outraged by the boys' infirmity, slew both his father and mother to keep the condition from spreading. Alec witnessed the

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slayings from the safety of the surrounding woods.

Angered by the murder of his parents, Alec vowed vengeance upon all nonlycanthropic humans. Before entering Moondale, he had butchered over 1,000 people. Being a military captain, he customarily enters a town, makes a few kills, and blames the murders on an innocent resident. Typically, superstitious townfolk are so eager to be rid of the menace that they zealously hang whomever Alec fingers.

Even though he is a true lycanthrope, Alec Rapacion does not have the standard facial hair or long, thick arms associated with lycanthropes. His charisma, unusually high for werewolves, is the main reason he has not been caught yet.

Dante Lysin

6th-level Retired Gladiatorial Fighter

AL CN; AC 1; MV 12, FI 18 (C); HD 7 +3; hp 59; THACO 13, 11 w/weapon; #AT 1; Dmg By weapon, +4 Strength bonus; SA Charm gaze, Constitution drain through blood sucking (See RAVENLOFT™ boxed set); SD hit only by magical weapons; SZ M (5'6"); ML Champion (16); XP 2,000.

Str: 16	Dex: 17	Con: 18
Int: 12	Wis: 14	Cha: 15

At the age of 13, Dante Carare was abducted from his home by a fight promoter. This man honed Dante's innate fighting ability through mental and physical abuse. Dante soon became the most popular villain in the local arenas, where he fought for 13 years.

When he escaped the barracks, he slew his promotor and stole the money he had won over the years. After endless days of wandering, he found himself in Moondale and bought the Moondale Inn from a dying man. The previous owner wanted to will his two daughters enough money for comfortable dowries.

During the next few years, nosferatu

vampires plagued the village. During one midnight battle, a nosferatu drained Dante dry and he died. Shortly after, Dante's slayer was killed, but not before Dante fell under the vampiric curse. He awoke within a coffin and used his newfound strength to escape. Angered by his death and the curse left with him, Dante changed his surname to Lysin, which means *destroyer of blood*.

In the following years, he worked to control or eradicate his curse, but to no avail. He has not approached a temple for cure because no temples exist within fifty miles; that is what he tells himself. Although he abhors his condition, it is slowly corrupting him, changing him to chaotic evil.

As a vampire, he knows that a lycanthrope is responsible for the bloody death of the man killed on the PCs' first night in town, but he does not discover the werewolf's identity until the PCs do. What he says about never murdering a man is patently false, as he spent 13 years doing so. And if the PCs threaten him, he will murder again.

Eldon and Ravewood

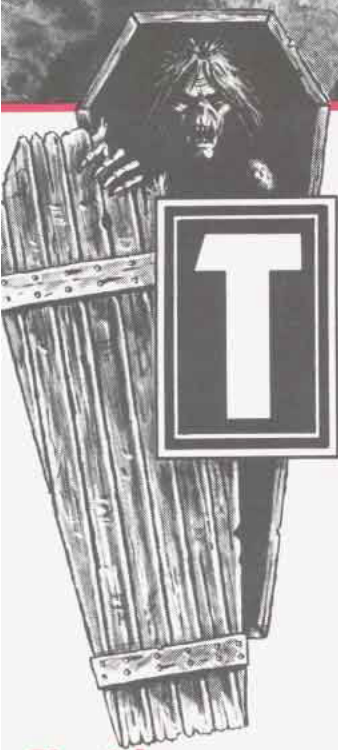
3rd-level Human Fighters (Militiamen)

AL N; AC 8; MV 12; HD 3; hp 14 each; THACO 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (long sword); SZ M (5'10"); ML Average (9); XP 10.

Str: 12	Dex: 11	Con: 14
Int: 9	Wis: 10	Cha: 11

Eldon and Ravewood know each other casually, and have served on the militia together several times before. They follow the captain's commands within reason, but will not undertake jobs that put their lives at risk for no reason. They will take orders from the PCs if their reasoning is sound and the PCs treat them respectfully.

Chapter III: The Dark Minstrel



Setup

his adventure works best for three to five characters of 3rd through 6th level.

In "The Dark Minstrel," the characters become trapped in the netherworld study of a dark minstrel and must discover a way out—or wait 100 years to again see the light of day.

The Adventure

The DM can begin this adventure whenever the party has successfully completed another adventure, regardless of whether it is in Ravenloft. Wherever the PCs bed down, be it in a deep forest or an elegant inn, the DM should read them the following.

Haunting Melodies

As you lie down, exhaustion wells up like thick syrup in your weary muscles. A cool breath of air wafts across your face, and your breathing grows relaxed. In that nethermind between waking and sleeping, a sound flows into your thoughts, like the quiet murmur of a brook. Not the song of water, though, but of plucked strings—yes, it is the whisper of music. The melody, gentle and somber, seems to wrap itself warmly about your drowsy mind. The song seems a kind of natural nocturn, like wind in tall grass, or the patter of rain. Yet an undeniable sadness clings to the sound, and as your slumber deepens, the sadness grows haunting.

If the characters rise to investigate the sound, their movements drown out the song. If they hold perfectly still, they can again hear the sound, but it seems to come from nowhere and everywhere at once. Even if they wander, they will not find its source.

Invitation to Doom

Whether the characters sleep through the rest of the night or spend it trying to hunt out the music, the sunrise finds them in a town in Ravenloft called Claviera (regardless of where they were in the evening). A messenger boy hunts them down, knocking on the door if they are in a private room, or flagging them down in public if they are not. The messenger hands one of the PCs a small, fine, vellum scroll that radiates Alteration magic if detected. The text on the scroll, penned by a refined hand, is written in gold ink and edged with detailed tracteries of red, blue, and green lines. The scroll reads as follows (the DM should fill in the PCs' names and their most recent adventure).

*To the Esteemed and Honorable Company of [PC's Names]—
Righters of Wrongs, Avengers of Evil, Purlainers of Treasure,
Etcetera—*

*From the Worthy and Magnanimous Baron Lyron Evensong,
Master of Neverwere Manor, Benefactor of Claviera, Lord of Lute
and Lyre, Etcetera—*

Greetings!

*In praise and honor of your distinguished and valorous service in
your late adventures, I request the honor of your presence at a
banquet this noon at my manor house. Please arrive at the stroke
of noon and bring hearty appetites, a temper for songs and stories,
and bags to bear away gifts. My resources are at your disposal.*

*Awaiting your arrival,
Baron Evensong*

If the characters decide to ignore the invitation, they will soon find that the scroll was cursed; the first PC who touched the scroll will

The Dark Minstrel

experience various phobias until the party decides to go to the banquet. Every five rounds, the DM should roll on the Temporary Phobia table below to determine what happens to the character. Each phobia lasts one round and causes 1d2 points of damage to the victim due to psychological trauma.

	Temporary		Temporary
2d6	Phobia	2d6	Phobia
2	Everything	8	Music
3	Hair/Fur	9	Weapons
4	Animals	10	Insects
5	Metal	11	Skin
6	Dust	12	Any uniform
7	Voices		

DM's Note: If a character is afflicted by one of these phobias, the DM should not simply say, for example, "Now you are afraid of dust." Instead, the DM should tell the character something like, "The dust on the bookcase beside you starts to move. As you look closer, you see that the particles are alive: myriad tiny voices scream in fury and countless tiny swords flash before you. Suddenly, the army of dust leaps from the bookcase, cascading through the air toward you." This allows the PC to act out the fear.

To the Banquet

Once the characters decide to attend the banquet, they will no doubt realize that the note contains no directions for finding the Baron's manorhouse: the party will have to ask a villager for directions. When the characters ask someone for directions, the DM should read the following.

"Been asked by the Baron to lunch, have you? Not a good person to refuse, the Baron. Not entirely safe to go, neither. Here, take this talisman of Lendor—it ought to keep you safe." You notice that the villager has three or four such talismans in a pouch in addition to the one around his neck.

DM's Note: The villager will not give up any more of his talismans, but he will sell one (and only one) for 25 gp. The talisman is a necklace with an hour-glass shaped stone. Lendor is the god of time and tedium from the GREYHAWK® campaign world, a fitting god for what awaits the PCs, but impotent in the lands of Ravenloft.

The villager willingly provides the party with directions. As they follow the convoluted path through the city's maze of streets, the sound of the haunting music begins again. Any villager who glimpses the scroll in a PC's hand, pocket, or pack (or otherwise discovers that they are going to see Baron Evensong) will touch his left shoulder with the fingertips of his right hand and drag his fingers across his collarbone. (This is the holy warding sign of the local faith).

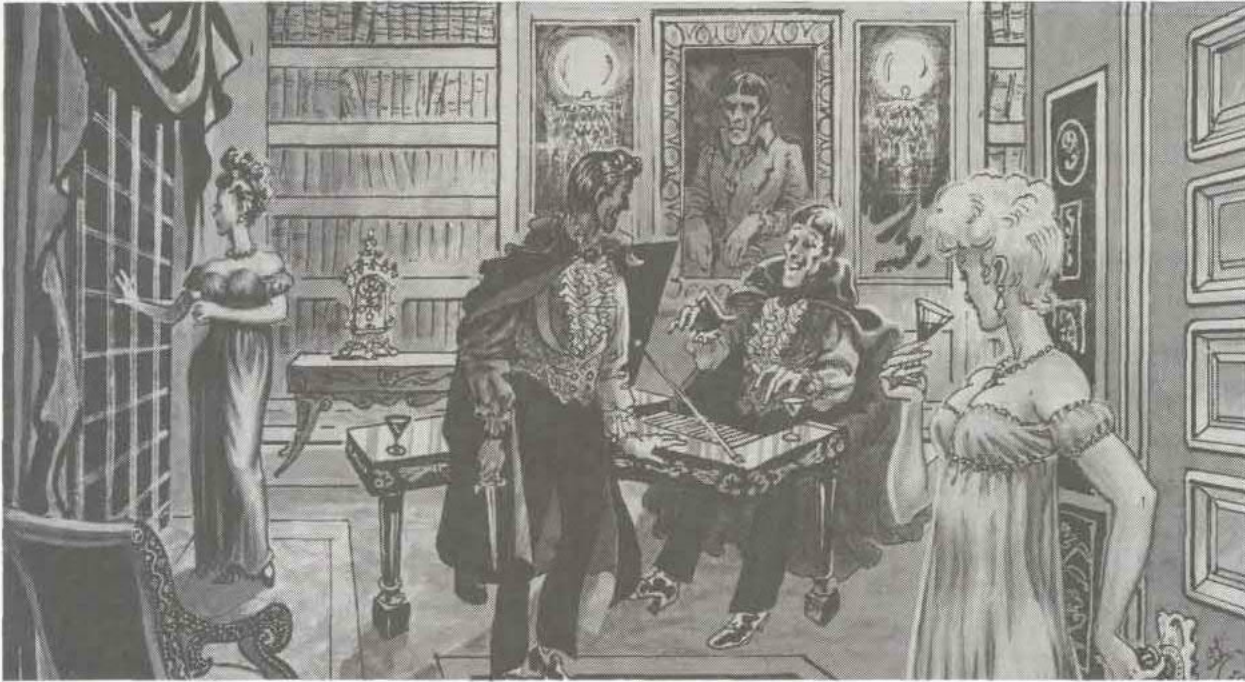
The Mansion

The PCs should reach the mansion just before noon. When they do, the DM should read the following.

You stand on a cobblestone road and peer through a wrought-iron gate toward a towering, blue-gray mansion. The black ironwork of the fence and gate contains myriad dryadlike figures that gaze out toward the street with wide, pupil-less eyes. A brick path leads through the front gate and ambles past looming willows to a pair of red doors in a great, arching entrance.

As you stand and stare, one of the doors cracks opens and a man steps onto the porch. He wears high white stockings, ornately embroidered breeches, a jerkin of royal blue, a ruffled shirt, and a three-cornered, plumed hat. He raises a bejeweled hand to remove his hat, then waves toward you, "Greetings! You must be the heroes that fill our town's gossip of late. And I see by the sun you are precisely on time! Come inside, the banquet awaits!"

The Dark Minstrel



If the characters are standing quietly, the DM should allow a Wisdom roll at half the characters' normal abilities. Thieves may attempt a Detect Noises check. Success indicates that the PCs again hear the haunting music, which seems to emanate from the mansion. If the characters decide against going in, the man at the door will work very hard to convince them to enter, but he will not leave the porch. Also, if the characters decide not to enter, the curse on the scroll intensifies so that the DM should roll on the Temporary Phobia table every round to determine the character's phobia.

The Banquet Hall

If the characters decide to enter, the man at the door graciously introduces himself as Baron Lyron Evensong.

The Baron ushers you into a stately foyer panelled in rich mahogany, which rises to a sculpted ceiling. At the end of the hall, a

broad stairway with thick crimson carpet ascends majestically to the next floor. Along one wall of the foyer stands a great mirror with a golden frame. The opposite wall is lined with hooks, benches, and cane stands. The Baron pauses here, inviting you to unburden yourselves of cloaks, capes, and larger weapons. The Baron leads you through a pair of tall double doors and into an elegant banquet hall. Banks of tall windows spill sunlight across the thick, scarlet carpet, and intricate floral patterns mark the red velvet paper upon the walls. At the room's center stands a magnificent table, draped in an ivory cloth and set with silver vessels bearing steaming food. The scents of pheasant and venison rise unmistakably to your noses as the Baron motions you toward the table. A sideboard is laden with elaborate cakes and tortes.

DM's Note: The Baron appears to have no servants, and thus the feast is not served in

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courses, but all at once. This breach of custom seems strange, given the man's station. The DM may allow an Intelligence roll for the PCs to notice this.

The Baron waits for the PCs to be seated, pulling out chairs for the ladies, then seats himself. He begins directing the PCs to pass the various dishes among themselves, filling his own plate as the serving bowls pass him. Each member of the party who eats a full meal with the Baron is immediately healed of any lost hit points. If a character does not eat a full meal, he regains no hit points. During the meal, the Baron makes conversation with the party, asking for accounts of their adventures.

After the meal, the Baron asks the party into his study to hear the latest song he has composed. If they refuse, saying they need to get on their way, the Baron seems insulted, saying, "You have eaten my banquet but refuse to grant me a moment for song?" If they are adamant, the cursed character suddenly becomes fearful of leaving.

If the PCs ask the Baron whether he knows anything about the phobias, he states that it is probably the stress of adventuring causing hallucinations. He recommends some entertainment and relaxation, which he is happy to provide.

A Study in Darkness

If the characters agree, the Baron leads them into a study. The DM should read the following.

The parlor you now enter is every bit as lavish as the dining hall, but it feels far more cozy and welcoming. The black marble floor is almost entirely covered with thick tapestries. Around these carpets stand settees, chairs, and small tables, all made of ornately carved mahogany and draped with intricately embroidered fabrics. A large globe of brass stands in one corner, and an orrery of bronze sits beside a cluster of

chairs on the other side of the room.

At one end of the chamber, a tall bank of glazed windows stands, segmented by iron mullions and transoms and topped with elegant tracery. Two fireplaces occupy adjacent walls and ivory statuary are arrayed across their prodigious marble mantles. The walls are otherwise covered with bookcases, which rise fully eight feet above the floor. Atop these crowded shelves loom numerous portraits in gold-gilded frames. Elaborate embossing and reliefs sprout out where the walls meet the ceiling, and a candle chandelier hangs from the room's center.

In a corner beside the bank of windows stands an elegant white harpsichord. Baron Lyron sits at the bench, motioning for you to pull up seats around the instrument. Once all are seated, he begins to play and sing a peasant jig.

*There once lived a bard with a beautiful voice
And a harpsichord sweet as the sunrise.
He played it all day, singing songs of his
choice,
Telling tales to the fools and the wise.*

The plectrum harmonies of the instrument die away, though the song is obviously unfinished. After a moment, Lyron rises and paces pensively about the room. At length he speaks, "I so enjoy your company, and am glad you have stayed this long. I do hope our pleasant friendship can continue, as we will be here together for the rest of your lives."

As the words leave his lips, he gestures toward the bank of windows, which, you now see, have turned utterly black.

"Do make yourselves comfortable and avail yourself of whatever you will in this room, for this is your home now. As you have come to know, I am a very moral man, and I will not stand for evil acts in this room."

DM's Note: The room is now separated in time and space from all other places in the

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lands of Ravenloft. The room is no longer part of a mansion, nor does it exist in a town or on a world. It merely floats in an endless void. This is all because of Lyron's curse (see the end of this adventure). The room will be thus removed for 100 years before it rejoins the mansion in Claviera on the next sunrise. Thus, while 100 years pass in the room, only one night passes in Claviera.

The PCs can escape this room only by discovering that the harpsichord is the source of Lyron's power and then destroying it. The clues about this escape lie throughout the chamber: the rest of this adventure allows the PCs to discover these clues at their own pace.

Regardless of what the PCs intend to do, Lyron will take a keen interest and hover about, asking questions about the PCs' personal and professional lives. Lyron's body is of an immaterial form (although the PCs must discover this fact on their own).

The party may attempt to have some members distract Lyron while others check for clues. If at any time Lyron suspects a character of knowing too much (i.e., of discovering the secret of the harpsichord) he will try to isolate the character in one corner, take a round to materialize, stab the character, then take a round to dematerialize again. He does not intend to slay the character, only to make him fearful and teach him obedience.

The Clock

A stately grandfather clock stands in one corner of the room. It never falters in its ticking, and the minute and hour hands appear to move at normal speed. With ordinary grandfather clocks, the weights must be pulled up daily or weekly to keep the clock wound. The moondial rotates slowly, tracking the phases of the moon. Lyron's clock, however, keeps perfect time but the weights and moondial never move. This is a constant reminder to Lyron that time seems to be passing for him but not for the world he knows.

When next he views the light of day, the weights and moondial will move as if a single day passed.

The PCs can observe a day's passing by watching the clock tick away 24 hours. If they were to record the 24-hour periods, they would eventually tally up 100 years before the world around them would return. For the sake of game mechanics, the DM should treat one 24-hour period as a normal day (i.e., hit points are healed, spells are regained, etc.)

Questioning Lyron

The players' most likely questions appear below, along with Lyron's responses. If other questions are asked, the DM should devise an answer from Lyron's description.

What has happened outside? "I am not certain. All I know is that this room has been separated from all other places and times. There is void all around us."

Has this happened before? "Yes, it happened a century and a day ago ago, and a century and a day before that."

How long will the darkness last? "One hundred years, if this time is like the last time, and the time before."

What did you do when this happened before? "Waited."

How many times has this happened to you? "At least 13, though I've lost count."

What keeps you from starving during the century? "The meal we just ate: it will keep me alive for the next century, and you for the course of your natural lives. True, a century is a long while to crave the taste of food, but you also needn't worry about latrines."

"Of course, if one of you didn't eat fully, you will not last more than a few days. Sadly, even among those who gorge themselves at the banquet, none have seen the hundred years through."

What happens when the candles burn out or the fires consume all the air or fuel?

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"I do not know. The candles have never burned down to their nubs nor the fireplaces consumed the wood. The ink in my inkwells has likewise never run dry, nor the wine in my wine cabinet been exhausted."

Isn't there any escape? "None that I, or any of my guests, have ever found."

Did you lure us here purposely? "The darkness grows very lonely. As things stand, not a one of you will see me through this dark century."

How does your song end? [See the section on *Poems of Baron Lyron Evensong* in the description of the bookshelves.]

Fighting Lyron

If a PC tries to attack or even touch Baron Lyron, the PC's weapon or limb simply passes through him as though he were shadow. Otherwise, Lyron appears perfectly solid. Lyron, believing himself to be lawful good, will never attack the characters himself unless they begin to destroy his harpsichord. He then takes one round to materialize. After that, he can attack and be hit normally.

Baron Lyron keeps a dagger in a sheath at his waist and keeps a club beside the fireplace among the wood. Even if the Baron is slain, the PCs cannot escape until the harpsichord is destroyed.

Escape Attempts

If ever the characters attempt to open a door, smash through a window, or so forth, they find that the room is floating in a lightless, airy void. Everything outside the room is utterly black and ethereal. Thus, the characters cannot climb out one window, around the room and into another window because the structure itself does not exist in the void outside. The room has inner walls, but no outer walls, so to speak. If the PCs drop an object outside the room, it falls at a normal rate, but the object never hits bottom.

Destroying the Room

If the characters grow frustrated and begin to indiscriminately destroy things in the room, or set off something that produces catastrophic damage (such as a *fireball*) in the room, the items become increasingly more resistant. On the first round, they suffer full damage; on the second round, they suffer half damage; in the third round, quarter-damage is suffered; no damage is suffered thereafter. This reflects part of Lyron's curse: were he to destroy his room, he would have nowhere to return to Claviera after his hundred years.

If, however, the characters make an intentional, concentrated assault on the harpsichord, this diminished damage rule does not apply: the fabric of Lyron's trap is not jeopardized.

Investigating the Bookshelves

When characters want to check the bookshelves for clues, the DM should have them roll 1d20. If the roll is anything but a 9, 10, or 11, the DM should read the PCs one of the titles in the list that follows and devise a likely discription of the book's contents from the title.

Numbers 1-8 and 12-20

Great Composers
Form and Line in Music
Physical Properties of Sound Production
Musical Instrument Construction
Modes in Music
Poetry of the Masters
Sonnets
Assonance and Alliteration in Poetry
Advances in Anatomy
Vertebrate Biology
Sketching Nudes
Portfolio of Birds
Principles of Perspective
Art of Architecture
Treatise on Free Government

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Decline of Feudal Holdings
Philosophy of Death
Study in Darkness

Roll of 9, 10, or 11

On such a roll, the PCs discover one of the following books. If a PC is willing to study such a book for one hour, the DM should reveal the information beneath the title.

Diary of Baron Lyson Evensong, Vols. 1-5

After spending an hour studying these pithy volumes, the PC has a headache from scanning the heavily stylized, though elegant, handwriting.

From the first volume, the characters glean that Lyron considers himself a very moral bard. He came from Krynn, where he was utterly intolerant of moral offenses and thus began, in vigilante fashion, to slay such offenders. Shortly thereafter, he and his harpsichord were swept into the lands of Ravenloft and subjected to the time-shifting curse he now suffers.

Volumes 2, 3, and 4 contain long and tedious accounts of previous centuries spent in the void. Baron Lyron evidently spent the first century in utter solitude, during which he penned the first volume of the diary.

In Volume 5, the PCs find two passages that seem significant. (The DM may wish to photocopy these, cut them out, and hand them to the PCs.) The first passage speaks of the "guests" Lyson had in the previous century.

"Wealsun 5, Year 27 of Flocktime 3: Today I slew them. I cannot help feeling sad, not only because I must now face the next 73 years alone, but also because I had developed an affection for Lady Windall and her retainer, Rannow. Even so, they had come too close to discovering my weakness. While my back was turned, the dear lady, in her desperation, raised my own club to bring about my ruin. I, however, wrenched the bludgeon from her lily hands and brought it

to bear upon Rannow, bringing him down with one stroke. Then I drew my dagger, a far more human weapon, and sunk it deep in her lovely heart."

The other passage appears as the last entry of the book:

"Flocktime 4: At last, the sun has risen! My calculations this time had slid only a fortnight. Immediately I summoned a messenger boy up from the street and offered him an orb for the news. He said a band of adventurers had entered Claviera just this morning. He related to me the tale of their renown, and I was pleased at the prospects. I gave him the scroll to deliver to the adventurers, promising the boy two orbs with completion of the task.

"I do hope they come. I want never again to spend a century alone. Ah, here comes the rap of little knuckles upon the door—I go now with the promised orbs."

Poems of Baron Evensong

This work contains the many bits of verse the Baron has penned during his centuries of darkness. The skill of poetic execution is certainly questionable, but, after an hour of study, the PCs discover several scratches of verse that seem particularly important. The final stanzas belong to the song the Baron began to sing before the sky went black.

"Death—that long, phantasmal sleep—
Has strings and harp that gently weep
When plucked. Let its sound ring again
Like droplets in the springtime rain."

"Stay from my heart! Though thou, dark
beast
Doth live with me, doth share my feast,
I will not give thee leave today
To crush my precious keys, not least
Myself, with your foul fist and flay!"

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"Music gives me life, though life be long
And tiresome. If I could not sing and play,
I would die. And bitt' rest of all songs,
The song of death, would end my days."

"I draw my power from you, dear friend,
Your plectrum tones like heartbeat strums.
Were you to meet untimely end
By hands of those who've shared my bread,
They would, in their smashing send
Me too to live among the dead."

Ode to Lyron Evensong

"There once lived a bard with a beautiful
voice
And a harpsichord sweet as the sunrise.
He played it all day, singing songs of his
choice,
Telling tales to the fools and the wise.

"But the people who heard proved too
stupid to heed
The truth in his eloquent singing.
The bard, recognizing their terrible need,
Set to teach them morality's sting.

"He slew falandering husbands and wives,
And killed to stop babies from crying.
He poisoned the rulers who led greedy lives;
Maimed guards who were guilty of spying.

"The blood would not wash from his
fingernails there
Though he scrubbed with all of his might.
As he played his harpsichord, all unaware,
He was sent into eternal night.

Imbuing Instruments With Magic

After flipping through this book for about an hour, the PC finds a small star pencilled in the upper corner of one page. The article on the page speaks of processes for imbuing an instrument with magic so that whenever it is played, the listeners must obey the player. The article cautions, though, that if performed incorrectly, the instrument could take over the life force of the player.

Studying Portraits and Sculptures

If a PC takes an hour or so to look around the room at portraits and sculptures, he discovers a number of things.

- At a glance, the portraits appear to represent numerous persons; however, the PC learns that all the portraits and sculptures depict Lyron.
- Every portrait or sculpture somehow contains or alludes to Lyron's harpsichord, whether prominently in the foreground, obscurely in the background, in shadowy double image, or obliquely (e.g., in one sculpture, Lyron carries a set of tuning pins).
- One sculpture on a mantle seems from a distance to be a half-melted candle, but if the PC approaches it and picks it up, he finds it is ivory. The statue depicts a destroyed harpsichord with an anguished Lyron sitting amidst the rubble. Half of Lyron's face appears to have melted away.

Destroying the Harpsichord

If the characters attack the harpsichord, it suffers 100 points of damage before it is destroyed enough to release the characters from their temporal prison. If characters show any sign of attacking the harpsichord, Lyron will discreetly solidify and attack them, using all his weapons and spell abilities. If the characters destroy the harpsichord, the DM should read the following.

A sudden shudder rattles through the room. The candle chandelier sways, jarring up and down, then drops to the floor. Bookshelves topple, spilling tomes upon tapestries, which quickly ignite in the flames of the fallen candles. Cracks snake their way across the walls and chunks of brick and plaster break free.

With a deafening rumble and the choking spray of plaster powder, the walls fold up

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around you. The ceiling falls in terrible chunks. Cold blackness from without streams into the room. You fall to the floor, and all becomes a chaos of motion.

When the rumbling finally stops, you see stars in the black vault of sky above. Gazing out past the terrible rubble of splintered wood and fractured stone, you see the town of Claviera, draped in cold night.

Townfolk are running toward you, torches and lanterns in hand. One of them shouts, "Look at the Baron's mansion! It is in ruins!" Another shouts, "There are people alive among the toppled stones!" The crowd pours over the gates, running toward you.

DM's Note: The crowd seeks to help the PCs. They have long feared and hated Baron Evensong and count the party as heroes for ridding Claviera of him. However, if attacked, the crowd fights as a mixture of middle-class men and constables, as listed in the *Monstrous Compendium* entry for men. If the party chooses to end their adventure in this ignominious fashion, they will have to stave off the townsfolk's attacks long enough to escape (i.e., they cannot defeat the townsfolk, because more keep arriving).

Baron Lyron Evensong

9th-level Bard

AL NE (but believes himself to be LG); AC 5 when solidified, cannot be hit while immaterial; MV 12; HD 9; hp 45; THAC0 11; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (dagger) or 1d6 (club); SA Solidify; SD Nonmaterial; SZ M; ML Fanatic (18); XP 7,000.

Str: 16 Dex: 15 Con: 15
Int: 14 Wis: 12 Cha: 17

Spells: *charm person, color spray, hypnotism; forget, mirror image, pyrotechnics; hold person, slow.* Lyron can use each spell once per "day" (a day according to the clock in his study).

Lyron Evensong was originally a bard on Krynn. His musical genius arose at least in part from his unsettled psyche and utter self-absorption. In fact, Lyron has always been incapable of seeing other people as anything but objects. This incapacity led the neutral evil bard to believe he was, in fact, lawful good, for his despicable disdain for human life seemed utterly right to him.

In hopes of drilling his twisted ethos into the minds of his listeners, Evensong hired a mage to enchant his harpsichord so that those who heard it would be forced to obey his messages. The mage's spell-shaping went awry, drawing Lyron's life force into the instrument.

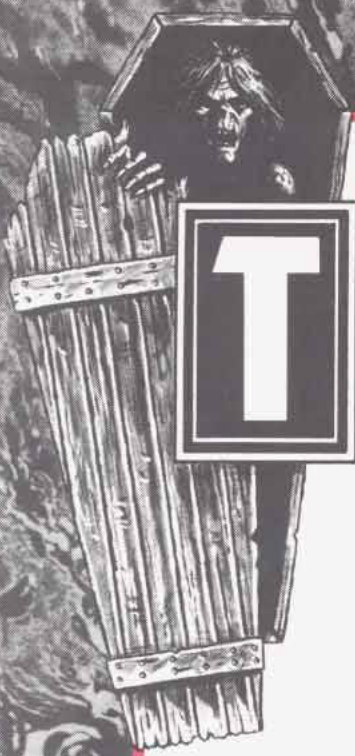
Now a shadowy anima whose life resided in a frame of wood and wire, Lyron found a new way to enforce his twisted ethos. Though songs and poems failed to inspire morality in his listeners, Lyron's dagger and club worked powerful persuasions.

When Lyron's dark ministrations of death reached their peak, the lands of Ravenloft took notice. As he played his harpsichord, the mists rolled in. When they retreated again, Lyron found himself Baron of Claviera.

That night, however, he learned the curse that came with the blessing: he would live through a century in dark solitude, confined to his study for one hundred years for every one day he spends in Claviera. Thus, when a week passes in the outside world, Baron Claviera has lived 700 years in his study. Ravenloft let him live, but denied him human company.

He found he could never leave his mansion and that, no matter where he was in the mansion, when the sun went down, he appeared in the study. Giving up hope for escape, Lyron plotted to lure others in to spend the century with him. He has done so now at least 13 times. Not even Lyron knows how long this shall continue, but it seems at least that he shall live a full life of 75 years, one century at a time.

Chapter IV: The Cedar Chest



Setup

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his adventure is designed for two to five characters of 4th through 6th level and assumes the PCs are already in Ravenloft.

The constabulary of a harbor community calls upon the party to locate a missing person and thus solve several deaths he (or she) has committed. As tension mounts and the party closes in on the killer, one of the characters discovers that the murderer resides within him (or her).

"The Cedar Chest" only minimally lessens player control over the "possessed" character.

The adventure does, however, give the character a twisted alter-ego of which he had been previously unaware. Because "The Cedar Chest" affects the recent history of a player character, the DM should carefully select either a trusted and well-liked NPC, a PC whose player cannot attend a game session, or the PC of a good role-player to subject to this Jekyll-and-Hyde curse.

The DM should review the character's statistics and game information before starting the adventure. He should feel free to add any subtle clues to the mystery that suit the character and the party.

The adventure begins after the characters have stayed in Armeikos (or a similar town) for a few days.

The Adventure

After the characters spend a few days in Armeikos, the captain of the city constabulary approaches them. If the party successfully completed the "Blood in Moondale" adventure, the DM can use the party's reputation from that adventure for the captain's motivation. Otherwise, the DM can refer to some other successful adventure.

Jovis Blackwere

A tall man garbed in a black great-coat approaches you. His eyes fasten gravely upon you, "I am Jovis Blackwere, captain of the guard. It has come to my attention that your adventuring band is—how shall I say—*effective* in dealing with murderous beasts. I have just such a beast that needs tracking. If you are interested, I am prepared to pay 3 gp per person per week."

If the characters negotiate the price, Jovis offers no more than 6 gp per week. Once the payment schedule is arranged, Jovis leads the party to the constable station (location 1 on the map) before briefing them further. The DM should then read the following.

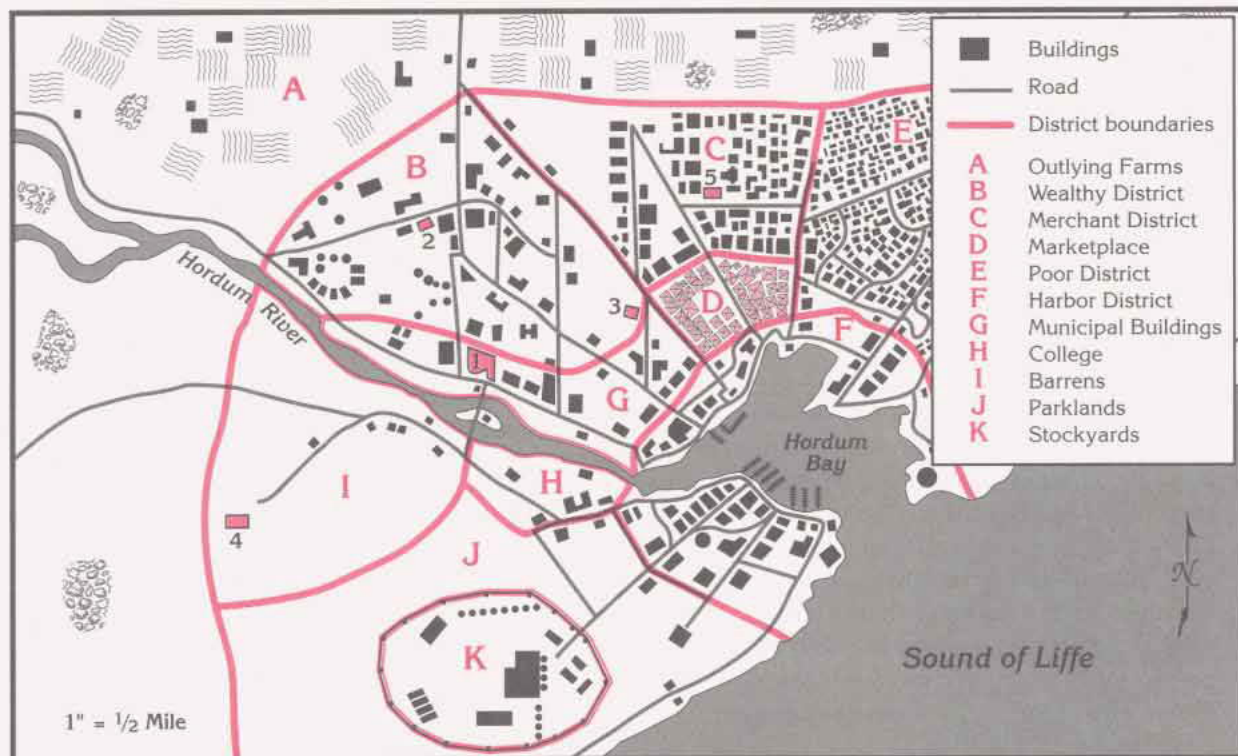
The main room in the constable station is crowded and dust-choked, with yellowed papers stacked high upon time-scarred desks. The captain sits at one desk, fiddling distractedly with a quill pen. "The murdering beast we are looking for is named Ejrik Spellbender. About six months ago, he committed a string of atrocious murders, then vanished. We all hoped he was dead. But now the murders have begun again."

The captain abandons the quill, rises to his feet, and begins to pace the room. His heels thud hollowly upon the worn floorboards. "What makes his murders so savage is his penchant for gouging out the eyes of his victims, then torturing them before he kills them. He seems to consider the slaying a work of art." The captain stops pacing, opens the drawer of one desk, and scatters a handful of twisted paper scraps upon the desktop, adding "He always leaves these."

Slips of Death

The messages on the scraps of paper are written in a very refined hand. There are five

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scraps, each of which is signed "Ejrik Spellbender":

- "Her fear was delicious, though the bouquet of her death lacked subtlety."
- "His blood seemed a perfect crimson, utterly capturing the red-hot fear and agony within him."
- "This one had a rapturous voice. She sung her terror so beautifully that it moved me to tears."
- "Dwarven deaths lack sophistication: this one died with the melancholic clang of a splitting bell."
- "Here was a poetic soul. His implorings awoke such wonder in me—opening clear views into exotic lands of pathos."

DM's Note: When the PCs learn that one of them harbors the spirit of Ejrik Spellbender, they may wish to compare their own handwriting samples to the notes. None of the samples will match, however.

Jovis's brow folds in frustration as he eyes the papers. "These scraps are the only way we know Ejrik's name. And we have no description of him—Ejrik may be a female for all we know! The only witnesses to these crimes never saw him, only heard a husky, masculine voice." He turns from the desk in obvious irritation and strides to a window. "Most recently, Ejrik slew a mage named Eron Nalwand and a woman named Thea Gyntheos.

"Since my investigation is at a dead end, I will allow you to examine the murder sites yourself with a fresh perspective. But first, let me take you to a good starting place for your hunt. A spiritualist named Alisia has aided our department often in the past. Though she has so far been unable to help us on this case, each of you bears a unique destiny that may hold new clues."

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The House of Alisia

Jovis leads the party to building 5 on the map, then departs. The house is a rambling structure of twisted oak beams, white-plastered walls, and an aggressive canopy of thatch. On a slouching porch sits a bald man with a lazy eye, guarding the open door. He carefully looks the characters over, and asks them to place their weapons on the floor before entering “the sanctuary.”

After you have removed all visible weapons, the balding man leans back in his creaking chair and, with a sweep of his corpulent hand, gestures you through the open door. The sharp tang of incense strikes your nose as you enter the sanctuary, and the sirenlike wail of boiling teapots assaults your ears. A statue-still woman is arrayed comfortably upon pillows in the center of the room. The colorful silk scarves about her head float oddly in the still air, and on the floor around her lie tools of divination like dutiful attendants. At length, she motions for you to sit before her.

“Your fates are strong and dark: I sense they are bound inextricably together.” She pauses, and seems to sniff the air lightly. An enigmatic smile spreads across her face. “Captain Jovis brought you here, didn’t he? Then you must wish to learn of this Ejrik Spellbender.”

She clasps a deck of cards and begins methodically laying them out in a bizarre pattern. The symbols on the cards are ominous: a black-robed specter, a dagger, a disembodied eye. Alisia examines them closely, then begins her dark telling.

“Though you seek a man, do not look for that man. He hides within the mask of another. He battles the owner of the mask. Tear away the mask and you will find him.

“His is a mind of lusts—lust for blood and lust for murder. His greatest weapons are

secrecy and sleep.” She pauses, her eyes settling on the card of the disembodied eye. A minute ripple of fear crosses her features, then she lifts her gaze to your party.

“One of *you*—one of you has a hidden past. Ejrik Spellbender dwells within one of you!”

DM’s Note: At this point, the victim of the curse does not know of his plight.

Alisia’s demeanor of calm control has decayed. Beads of sweat dot her brow, and her hands begin shaking. She quickly gathers up her cards and asks the characters to leave. If the characters comply, the DM should skip to the “Speaking With the Victims” section. If the characters ask for their personal fortunes to be told, Alisia resists, saying that she does not want to become Ejrik’s next victim. If the party is persistent, reminding her that her cowardice could cost others their lives, she relents, but asks 1 gp from each in advance.

Dark Divinations

The DM should read the divinations randomly to the characters.

Divination 1: “If your companions seek to slay you, they will find themselves mistaken.”

Divination 2: “Remain ever wary. Fight until your strength is gone.”

Divination 3: “Your companions suddenly fear you. Beware a knife in the back!”

Divination 4: “Death haunts your every step: turn to look and it remains behind you.”

Divination 5: “Suspicious hem you in like a lamb in the pen of slaughter.”

Divination 6: “Beware your closest friend, who may slay you at the last.”

If the characters ask specifically which one of them is Ejrik Spellbender, Alisia says the cards

The Cedar Chest

refuse to reveal that, telling only that it is one of them. Whether or not the party asks for any more assistance, Alisia becomes adamant that they leave immediately. She calls in Carl (the bald man) to help enforce this. (The DM should remember that the characters are currently weaponless).

Carl, 4th-level Human Fighter: Int Low (6); AL LN; AC 7; MV 12; HD 4; hp 18; THACO 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (club); SZ M; ML Steady (12).

Speaking With the Dead

As the party leaves, Alisia seems stricken with guilt. She produces a scroll bearing the spell *speak with dead* from her robes and hands it to a priest or wizard character. "With this scroll, you can speak with Ejrik's victims. It contains only a few uses, so use it carefully. Now, please, leave and do not return." This scroll works per the 3rd-level priest spell at the lowest level of function and contains three spells.

For the DM

The rest of this adventure is designed to give the characters maximum freedom while investigating the heinous murders committed by Ejrik. To do this, the chapter is arranged in scenarios. Each is a mini-encounter with someone who can help the party determine the identity of Ejrik Spellbender.

Each of the following scenarios corresponds with a location on the map of Armeikos. Parties can find their way to these locations either by asking constables or locals, or by consulting the map of Armeikos at the constabulary.

The DM should attempt to not allow the party to visit any one place twice during the first day. If they try to return to a location, the DM should have Jovis encounter them in the streets, claiming that in his fluster, he forgot to have them sign the writs that authorize them to

investigate. Jovis will also strongly urge the PCs to return to their lodgings before the sun sets, and to stay together—otherwise, Ejrik might hunt them down.

Though the following planned encounters are important, the DM should allow the characters to wander the town, giving them descriptions from the areas on the map. Allowing the characters to wander gives time for them to role-play their paranoid suspicions of other characters.

Encounters of the First Day

Building 2: Home of Eron Nalwand

After following cobbled streets past stately homes and overgrown gardens, you reach a more modest residence of whitewashed brick, fronted by a rusty iron gate. Within the wrought iron filigree, you spot a letter "N," apparently for "Nalwand."

The home has only one floor. The cherry-red door of the house stands slightly ajar.

If the party knocks, no answer comes. If they enter, the DM should read the following.

The interior of the house is shabbier than the outside would suggest and smells of dust and old books. The door opens onto a once-impressive parlor with walnut paneling and piles of books. In the center of the room, a constable drowzes beside a coffin-sized pine box. As you enter, the constable startles awake, lurching to his feet, "My replacement didn't show up . . . I opened the door for air . . . who are you and what do you want?"

If the characters say that Jovis Blackwere sent them, the man ceases his suspicions and tries to explain why he was sleeping on the job. If the characters ask to look over the house, they find a kitchen, a sitting room, and two

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bedrooms, one of which serves as laboratory and library. The lab equipment is dusty; Eron's blindness has prevented him from experimenting. In the bedroom, the PCs find signs of a struggle: a pool of blood, overturned furniture, and a broken window.

A back door leads out of the house, and a worn dirt path leads to a leaning outhouse at the back of the yard.

If the characters ask to see the body, the constable opens the box lid.

The crate creaks slowly open, and the putrid smell of decay rises quickly into the room. Within the box lies a tall, angular man with a bony face. His eye sockets lie empty, with scarred skin grown over the places where his eyes had been. His brow is knotted in anguish and his lips are still parted from his dying scream.

"Brutal, really," the constable mutters, "to drive a knife into a blind man's heart."

If the characters use the *Speak with Dead* scroll on the corpse, they may ask two questions. The DM may draw answers from the following box of text, or he may read the entire box to enhance the mood of the mystery. If they ask about Ejrik, or Eron's death, the life force returns, rasping out its message through the death-dry lips.

"Gods, I had hoped never to hear that voice again. He, who stole my eyes when last he came. He seized me from behind and gouged out my eyes. Demanded that I help him—work magic to slay his host. Grew angrier, more enraged. Said he would kill me unless I helped. Said his *magic jar* went awry. Said he was trapped. I tried to flee, but he knocked me to the ground. He would have killed me then, but my neighbor kicked down the door. Ejrik ran out the back.

That was six months ago. My eye sockets had healed over. But just yesterday, he came

back. Asked if I'd reconsidered. When I refused him, he slew me. Find him—slay him—avenge my death."

If the characters ask any other questions, the corpse repeats some part of what is listed above. If the cursed character asks the corpse a question, the corpse seems not to hear the question.

Building 3: The Home of Thea Gyntheos

The din and odor of the nearby marketplace grows as you approach the house of Thea Gyntheos. The cacophony of buyers and sellers seems barbaric, like the sounds of battle. Thea's house, a two-storied structure of graying wood, is perched upon the rim of the sprawling market. In front of the house stands a weathered cart hitched to a stamping plow horse. Several men in black overcoats emerge from the house, bearing a large wooden box between them.

If the characters identify their association with Jovis Blackwere and insist on viewing the body, the men relent. The men will carry the coffin back into the house if the characters insist.

Within the dark box lies a once-beautiful woman. Thea's paper-white face has been robbed of its eyes, though scarred skin has mercifully grown over the sockets. Her long and beautiful tresses of raven-black hair are fouled with dark-brown, congealed clumps. As you scan for the source of these, you see that the tender flesh of her throat bears a brutal gash, and her waistshirt is deep maroon where it soaked up the flow.

If the characters use the *Speak with Dead* scroll on Thea and ask about Ejrik or her own

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death, the DM may either answer questions or may read the passage that follows. The life force returns to her husk, and, in a gurgling voice, reveals the following.

Ejrik—I loved him so. How could he have done this to me? He had once been so kind, so loving, so protective of me.

It was Ejrik who saved me from certain death. Eight months ago, as I returned from the house of my friend, Sinara Doom, a fiendish thief fell upon me, gouged out my eyes, stole the pittance of gold I had, and left me for dead. I would have died, too, had not Ejrik happened upon me, carried me home, and cared for me. I grew to love him deeply, and I think he loved me as well. At first, he would kiss me like a ravenous beast, but over time he became less and less interested in my touch.

Then he left me altogether—gone for six months, until yesterday. I was happy to hear

his voice again, but I never suspected the cruelty native to his heart. He battered me, demanding that I plead for my life. He beat me until I screamed and implored that my life be spared. Then—gladdened far more than my kisses could have made him—he slit my throat and bathed his hands in my blood.

If the characters ask any other questions of Thea, she repeats something vague about how she loved him and how he destroyed her. If the cursed character asks a question, Thea does not respond.

If the PCs enter the house, they find a large pool of blood on the floor of the main room. The house is otherwise well appointed, with ornate wooden kickboards and moldings, a marble-inlaid fireplace, and many cabinets filled with china. If the PCs search the house, their only worthwhile discovery is Thea's diary, which is in a roll-top desk in the main room. It holds her thoughts over the past year. Her



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handwriting deteriorates drastically at the time when she lost her eyesight. The passages are difficult to read and words and phrases often overlap. The last entry reads as follows.

I had a strong feeling something bad would happen to me today. I will go to Alisia to see what she can divine for me. If she cannot help me, I will find someone to take me to Sinara Doom. I will write what they said when I return.

Building 4: Visit to Sinara Doom

Sinara Doom dabbles in the mystic and the unknown, and is as distrusted as she is respected by the common folk of Armeikos. Her house seems like a hoary, old galleon cresting a wave upon a sea of grass. The road that leads to her house is merely a pair of weed-choked wagon ruts.

As you approach the once-grand house, you realize that large sections of it are empty and untended. In more than one place, the tiled roof has crumbled beneath the pounding of time and weather, and most of the windows stand vacant, empty of glazing. Only the central section seems still occupied, and only because of the worn path of earth leading to the front stoop. The door stands open, and beyond, you glimpse all manner of things hanging from the ceilings: mandrake roots, chicken feet, and scrolls of papers moving listlessly in the breeze. As you approach, a voice cracks the silence.

"What can an old woman do for such fine young folk?" The voice came from within the dark house, and as you peer past the door you see a bent old woman with sightless eyes—white spheres like two eggs in her head.

The woman is dressed in bright, cheerful colors and seems welcoming, but an aura of

caution ebbs about her. She invites the party in, gesturing to the books on her myriad shelves, "Would you believe I read these all? Perhaps that is why I am blind today. But I can still answer most any mystic question you may have." If the characters ask her about Thea Gyntheos, she tells the characters, "Thea was a good friend of mine. She would still be, too, but for that wicked man. I met him only once, in the market, but I sensed a twisted nature within him even before Thea introduced him as Ejrik Spellbender. But poor Thea was in love and wouldn't believe me."

If the characters ask Sinara what she knows of Ejrik Spellbender, she says that she knows a good deal because his first bizarre killing attracted her attention. She wondered about a mystic connection to his strange method of killing, but found no mystical connection. Since then, she has been studying his case as best she can, despite her age and blindness.

Sinara Doom agrees to answer questions regarding him if the party pays one silver piece for each question asked, adding "A lady has to look after her own interests, these days." If the PCs bargain with her, she will answer three questions for 2 sp.

The DM should draw Sinara Doom's answers selectively from the information about Ejrik found at the end of this adventure, making sure *not* to divulge the part about the small chest containing the heart. If asked who Ejrik Spellbender inhabits, Sinara Doom does not know.

When Night Falls

Wherever the characters decide to spend the night, Ejrik uses his *sleep* abilities on the whole party and takes control of the cursed character. Regardless of characters' intentions or abilities to stay awake, Ejrik's *sleep* ability overpowers them (see his description at the end of this adventure). Then, unbeknown to the players or the characters, Ejrik slips away to commit the foul murder of Alisia. When the party awakens

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in the morning, the cursed character is again with them.

Encounters of the Second Day

Though the DM is encouraged to allow the party to wander on the second day, the encounters that follow proceed in a definite order.

If the party decides to investigate any location in town again before they have paid another visit to Alisia, they are approached en route by Jovis Blackwere. He tells them, "There has been another murder. Please come with me." He then leads the characters to the house of Thea Gyntheos, and the DM should skip to the boxed text that follows.

If, however, the party heads to see Alisia before they return to check the house of Thea Gyntheos, they find Jovis Blackwere outside Alisia's home, his face grave. He tells them, "You had better have a look inside."

Death of Alisia

The once-airy sanctuary beyond the door now wears the reeking aspects of a slaughterhouse. Blood is spattered on everything. Upon the pillows scattered about the floor lies a mammoth crimson corpse that you recognize immediately as Carl. His empty eye sockets seem to be weeping ruddy tears. In his ponderous arms, cradled like a child, rests the woman he spent his life protecting: Alisia. She, too, is rubied in blood, sightless unto death. Her scarves are now starched with the red stuff. From the bloody streaks across their clothing and on the floor, you can tell that they were posed in this position.

Jovis Blackwere, his nose covered with a rag, mutters, "Happened sometime last night. He left this." The captain waves a scrap of paper in your direction.

The message is written in the same hand as the other messages Jovis showed you. It states, "Such a touching pair, these two, like father and daughter they died. But as statues, they carry that elegant pathos to the grave. Ejrik Spellbender."

If the characters search the room, they find that Alisia's hand holds a slip of paper. The characters can pry her rigged hand open enough to pull out the following hastily scribbled note, addressed to the characters:

"I have rethought my resolve not to help you. Ejrik is too evil to let him roam. I remembered a clue that Thea Gyntheos told me: Ejrik once gave her a small cedar chest to keep, but made her swear never to open it. I hope this helps. Alisia."

If the characters try the *speak with dead* scroll on Alisia or Carl, they discover that they cannot answer. Alisia's own magic prevents any spells from operating on their bodies.

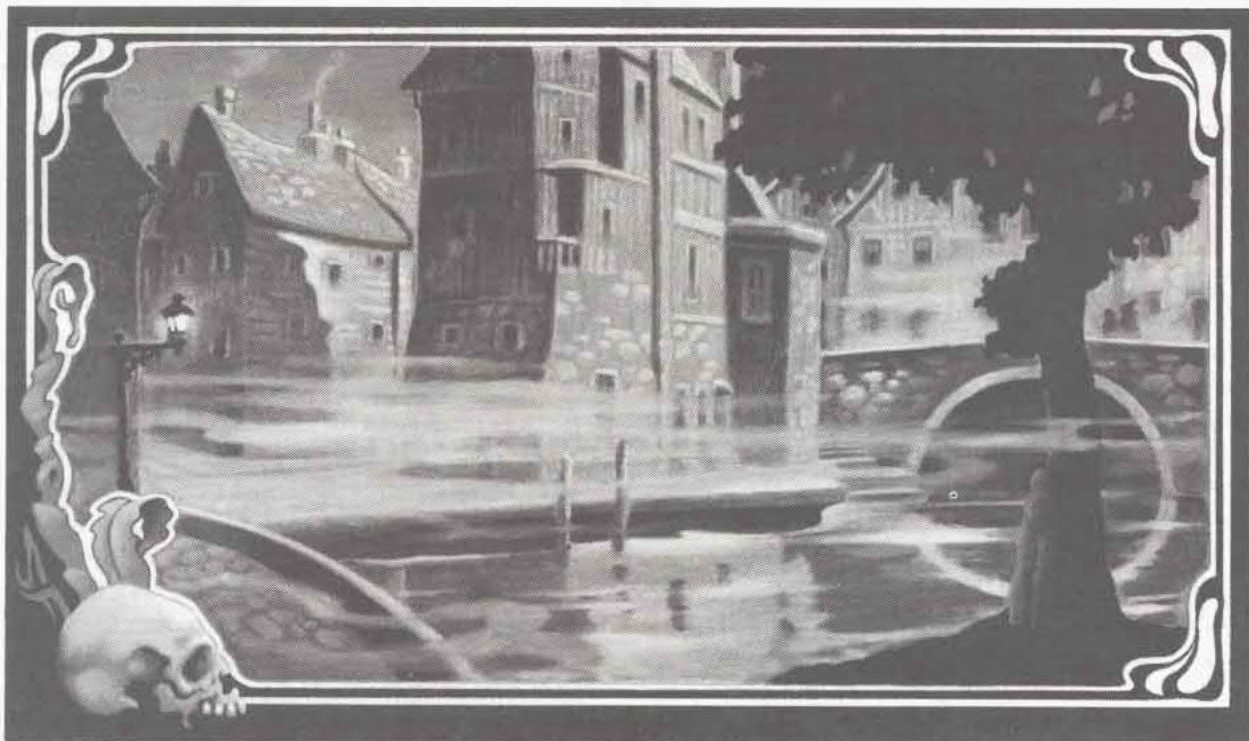
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If the characters return to the house of Thea Gyntheos to look for the cedar chest, they find several signs posted in the yard proclaiming all access forbidden by rule of the constabulary. The house, however, is currently unguarded.

If the characters rummage through the house, they may each roll a Wisdom check once per turn to locate a trap door under a rug in the kitchen. The door leads to a five-foot square cellar with walls and floor made of packed earth. The room is empty except for the chest. It measures 4 × 3 × 6 inches. The box is closed with a small lock.

If the characters pick or break the lock (20 points of damage), it still does not open: the chest is *wizard locked*. Once this protection has been dispelled, the box opens easily. If the party does not have a *dispel magic* at their disposal, they can sneak the box off the premises or smash the wood to open the box (30 points of damage).

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The stench of blood and rot pours from the chest as the characters open it. Inside this well-crafted box lies a human heart. A tiny, stained scroll protrudes from one of the red-brown arteries.

When this scroll is removed and unraveled, the name of the cursed character unmistakably appears. If the named character reads his name or hears it being read, the DM should take him aside immediately and read to him the NPC Roster entry for Ejrik Spellbender. (As he reads, the DM should replace mentions of "the adventurer" with the word "you.") After this reading, the DM should require the character to roll a Ravenloft horror check. If the character fails, the DM should tell the player, "You suddenly realize that Ejrik is taking control of you and plans to fight the party to keep from being captured." The character should be allowed to reroll the horror check for each round of combat until he succeeds. When the

roll succeeds, the character will regain control. Thereafter, horror checks will be required each round to maintain control.

If Ejrik takes control, he fights the party with all the nonmagical abilities that the cursed character has. If during the battle (or at any other time) the heart from the cedar chest is destroyed (burned, stabbed, sliced, crushed, etc.), Ejrik will be driven from the body immediately and permanently. Until then, however, the character will have to keep rolling horror checks to try to regain or retain control.

If Ejrik doesn't take control immediately and the characters don't destroy the heart, the cursed PC will have to make a Ravenloft horror check each round to remain in control.

If the characters don't think to destroy the heart, the DM might suggest a visit to Sinara Doom. She will tell them to destroy the heart.

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The NPC Roster

Jovis Blackwere

8th-level Human Fighter (Rank: Captain)

HP: 77 THACO: 13
AC: 6 AL: LN
Str: 17 Dex: 14 Con: 15
Int: 17 Wis: 16 Cha: 16

Jovis Blackwere is 46 years old and the captain of Armeikos's constabulary. Born of poor parents, he deems himself lucky to have a place of authority in the town.

When a band of marauding thieves killed the previous captain, the town held a vote, electing Jovis Blackwere to the position. Twenty years later, he daily proves to the town that they made a wise choice.

Jovis Blackwere is widowed and has three children who are in their mid-twenties.

Ejrik Spellbender

HP: 45 THACO: 18
AC: PC's AL: NE
Str: PC's Dex: PC's Con: PC's
Int: 18 Wis: 18 Cha: 14

Ejrik's study of necromancy began late in life when his strength was failing and his life force ebbing away. Before that time, Ejrik had no interest in magic. But, like a dragon with its horde, Ejrik eventually grew jealous of anyone who might thief away his troves of mortal pleasure. And so he turned to necromancy to conquer the greatest thief: Death.

Sadly, the inexorable decay of his body out-paced his advances in arcane knowledge. At 96 years of age, he stood defenseless upon the threshold of death, lacking the magical arts needed to become a lich. So he devised another plan. He cast a series of *animate dead* spells on successive nights, sending skeletons into the streets of the local village. Soon an adventurer (the chosen PC) took the bait, seeking out the evil necromancer to slay him.

But Ejrik was ready for him. With his own modification of the *magic jar* spell, Ejrik could take over the body of another character and be wholly immune to the effects of *dispel magic*. The immunity came at a price: one of the material components was the still-beating heart of Ejrik's old body. That heart would become the magic jar, within which Ejrik had to conceal a small scroll with the name of the victim. Ejrik had no chance to rehearse this spell.

When the adventurer entered Ejrik's lair, the decrepit necromancer fooled him into revealing his name, then cast the spell. All went as planned, and Ejrik, in his new body, sliced the still-beating heart from his old, slumbering body and placed the scroll with the victim's name within it. He then locked the heart in a small cedar chest, placed it in his pack, and set out for adventure.

Ejrik's depravity caught the attention of Ravenloft's powers, and he was ushered into the land. Once there, Ejrik discovered that the spell had not functioned as well as he had hoped.

First, the spell rendered him incapable of enjoying the carnal delights he treasured so. Because he owed his present state to slaying an adventurer, only murder provided him pleasure.

Second, the spell took from Ejrik his power to memorize and cast spells, save for the low-level *sleep* spell, which had been part of the improved *magic jar*. He thus gained the power of inducing sleep in a manner greater than the spell (his spell can affect up to 10 Hit Dice or levels of creatures).

Third, the *magic jar* spell had failed to remove the adventurer's life force and place it into Ejrik's old heart. The victim's mind, stunned though it was, still occupied the adventurer's body. And soon the mind, being native to the body, took it over again. Now Ejrik was trapped, and could only take control when his host slumbered. Eventually Ejrik learned to use his *sleep* ability to force his host to black out, then he took control more often. As time passed, Ejrik grew stronger, hoping one day to slay his host's mind altogether.

Chapter 0: Corrupted Innocents



Setup

This adventure is designed for three to five characters of 5th to 7th level. The party should ideally contain a lawful good character, but the adventure also works if at least one PC is of a good alignment.

In *Corrupted Innocents*, the characters unwittingly enter Ravenloft while traveling a trail through a deep forest. There, they meet a lost little girl whose “guide” through the forest has been seized by an evil treant. The party will hardly suspect that the aristocratic child is in fact an ermordenung

created by Ivana Boritsi of Borca (see the RAVENLOFT™ boxed set), or that her doll is a ruthless golem. At any time in this adventure, if a character attacks the child without good reason to suspect her evil nature, the DM should make a Ravenloft powers check for the character at 10%.

The Adventure

The trail you follow winds deeper into the woods, weaving a slender thread into the gathering night. Enormous trees crowd the path, their massive trunks like the columns of a temple for fell beasts. Except for the tread of your feet, the dusky air is smothered in silence. The last glow of day glimmers upon the canopy of leaves high above, like light upon the water.

For a moment, light flees the leaves, as though an impenetrable cloud has engulfed the sun. Under the heavy trees, it is dark as night for a few seconds. Then the glow returns, grayer now, and a strange breeze suddenly moans through the forest.

You look to the ground to check your bearings, but the trail seems to have

vanished. Though you stopped in your tracks when the light failed, the path has inexplicably disappeared.

Screams From the Woods

No matter what methods the characters use to search for the trail, they cannot find it. The breeze has turned into a chill wind, and its moan deepens. Upon the wind the party hears the unmistakable screams of a small child nearby, coming from about 200 yards away. If they ignore the cries, the screams intensify and continue for three rounds. If the party still does not go to investigate, the child comes running through the woods, discovers the party, and relates the horrible incident described following. The DM should then skip to the section “The Girl-Child.” If, however, the party rushes immediately to find the child, the DM should read them the following.

The cries pierce like a beacon through the thick forest, growing stronger and clearer as you thread your way through the maze of trees. The way seems easier ahead. After passing a few more trees, a clearing opens.

There, framed between the ponderous trunks of two ancient trees, stands a small girl. Beyond her trembling silhouette, an enormous tree pitches maniacally from side to side, as though caught in some otherworldly gale. As you draw near, you see that the tree’s branches do not move with the randomness of wind, but instead with calculating and sentient evil. Even the brawny roots stir, pulling from the stoney ground, lashing out across the clearing, and sinking down again.

Now you catch sight of the body of a man, snagged among the higher boughs and seeming to writhe in a futile struggle to break free.

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Treant, Evil (1): Int Very (12); AL CE; AC 0; MV 12; HD 11; hp 54; THACO 9; #AT 2; Dmg 4d6; SA Nil; SD Nil; SZ H; ML Elite (13); XP 13,000.

More information on evil treants can be found in the *Monstrous Compendium Appendix* for the RAVENLOFT™ setting. DMs who don't have this appendix may refer to the entry for the normal treant in the *Monstrous Compendium*, noting that evil treants are carnivorous, chaotic evil, and have elite rather than champion morale.

Upon encountering the evil treant, the party members may need to make a fear check (as per instructions in the RAVENLOFT boxed set).

If the party attacks the treant, it fights back. However, as soon as the treant inflicts 10 points of damage to any one character, it chews up and swallows the man the party was trying to rescue. The treant also consumes the man if it (the treant) suffers 20 points of damage. Therefore, regardless of whether the party slays the treant, they do not save the man or recover the body. If the treant suffers 27 points of

damage (half its total), it flees.

Once the man is consumed, the party may continue the battle until the treant flees, or the party may flee with the child. The treant will be too busy eating and digesting the man to worry about pursuing.

The Girl-Child

Once the party and the young girl escape from or kill the treant, the DM should read the following.

Now that you have made your escape in the failing light of dusk, you finally get a good look at the child. She appears to be about seven years old, with bronze-colored hair that emerges from beneath a frilly hat and flows smoothly to her shoulder blades. An aristocratic beauty hovers elusively about her, despite the fact that her eyes are wide with fear and she is shaking all over. Her complexion is pale and smooth, and her eyes

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are a deep azure. She wears a long box coat of fine red wool, with brass buttons and a stand-up collar. From under the cuffs and collar protrude a finely embroidered sateen waistshirt. Upon her hands are silk gloves. In one had she holds a few torches, and in her other hand she holds a doll in a lacy dress. The girl's walking skirt is made of royal-blue wool and she wears thick stockings and high-button boots.

In addition to her understandable terror, you notice a marked sadness that haunts the child's features—a sadness that seems to extend beyond the terror of what she has just seen.

The child becomes insistent that the PCs light one of her torches, even if the party is carrying other sources of light. She says that fire will keep her safe from the bad things. If the characters ask her name, she tells them she is Elenia Windalla. If they ask her how she ended up in such a predicament, the DM should read the following.

Tremors of fear and distress play across her smooth face, and horrible images seem to stream past her eyes, like the reflection of racing storm clouds. At length, the child gathers her strength and begins to speak:

"Mother and father were poisoned and Uncle Dory came to take me away but he said we have to go through the bad woods and he says if we have fire we'll be safe but the bad things didn't come at us for one whole day so Uncle Dory says we'll use torches only at night but then the tree started moving and grabbed him and now who will take care of me in the bad woods?"

Elenia begs the PCs to escort her through the woods to her uncle's house. She is all alone and will surely be killed in the woods unless someone protects her. She will not stop crying and pleading until the PCs agree to see her to

her uncle's house.

A character who casts *detect lie* on Elenia receives a confusing response that cannot be interpreted. The DM may suggest that her agitated state might be contributing to the confusion. (Elenia wears a *ring of mind shielding* that is hidden under her glove.)

If a character casts *detect magic* on Elenia, a moderate radiation of magic can be detected, but the particular school cannot be discerned. If a PC asks her about the magic detected, she says that just before the treant attacked, Uncle Dory cast a spell on her "to protect her from bad things." According to Elenia, her uncle was a dabbler in magical arts.

If the characters try to *detect evil*, they get no sensation of evil from Elenia. If they cast *know alignment*, Elenia can secretly save vs. spell—even if she fails, the characters detect only lawfulness. If a character casts *true seeing* or has a *gem of seeing*, Elenia looks no different as a result of either. (Though Elenia has two natures, the child nature is dominant unless she is attacked.)

If the PCs volunteer to take care of her, they realize that the night has grown too dark and the forest too thick for Elenia to determine which direction she was headed. If the characters ignore her plea for help and try to abandon her in the forest, the DM should make a Ravenloft powers check at 2% for each character.

Fires and Further Threats

Whatever the party's response, the DM should read the following.

Something huge and shapeless shifts in the shadows beyond the ring of trees. Though the breeze is gentle, you hear the unmistakable sound of branches crunching and striking against each other. The child screams and throws her torch onto a dead branch lying near the center of the clearing.

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She mutters frantically, "Need fire! Need fire!" Flames leap up on the branch, casting fiendish shadows upon the trees around. The motion beyond the clearing ceases. Then comes a slow, grating sound as though an enormous monster is backing away from the clearing.

The child dashes about the woods and begins to gather more wood, piling it on the flames. Frightened, she tries to convince you and herself, "We'll be safe if we have fire!"

If the party helps Elenia build the fire and decides to set up camp for the night, all will be safe as long as the fire lasts. If they decide to pursue and attack the beast, or leave the clearing, they encounter an evil treant with identical statistics to the first treant. If they stay in camp, but let the fire die, the evil treant will return and attack. The party cannot prevent the fire from going out unless it posts watches.

Night of Dreams

Any character who sleeps during the night—even those who sleep only for moments—will dream. Elenia casts a *dream* spell on each party member, against which the slumbering targets receive no saving throw. But because Elenia's magic is so deeply rooted in evil, her *dream* spell fails on the character whose alignment is closest to lawful good. This character's dream will differ radically from the dreams of the other PCs.

The DM should secretly read one of the following dreams to each of the characters upon whom the spell succeeds. If there are more than four players, the DM may invent additional dreams or repeat any of the dreams below.

Dream 1

As you sleep, your mind cycles through phantoms and fragments of your recent

adventures—battles and monsters, darkness and dawn—shreds of sensations tumbling like leaves through your mind. Then a tide of fear slowly seeps over the whirling memories, fear darker than night. The terror congeals, black and hard, into a depthless, suffocating night.

Suddenly, a glimmer of hope, like a piercing searchlight, slices through the black terror. You feel you may go blind staring at it, but it is too beautiful to tear your eyes away. As you gaze deeper into the radiant hope, you see that Elenia is its source.

Dream 2

You dream of the innocent child—Elenia—sitting quietly upon a grassy hillside. As far as you can see, all is fair and beautiful. Fragrant peace hangs in the air. The world is a massive—indeed endless—plateau of hope in the dark waters of despair.

But suddenly, a shadowy figure steals up the hillside, approaching Elenia unawares. Though you can't see its face, you somehow know the shadow is one of your companions. It raises an awful scythe and slays the innocent child. With a mighty roar, the plateau sinks into the inky waters of despair. You are drowning.

Dream 3

You dream you are flying. Above you hangs the blue vault of the heavens, and below you drift mountainous clouds on a continent of air. Not by wings or magic do you fly, but by holding to the hand of a child. Elenia soars beside you, lending power to your flight. She smiles at you, her eyes filled with joy and hope.

Then something goes terribly wrong. Elenia is pitching unsteadily. A stream of crimson issues from her back. You spot an

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arrow that has shot through her. Suddenly you are plummeting, and the sky and the world below turn to blackness.

Dream 4

You dream that you are falling from a cliff. The rocky face tears your body apart as you tumble hopelessly downward. When you smash into the ground, you are merely a broken pile of bones and flesh. Yet you live, and you suddenly have to wonder if you cannot die.

The merciless sun pounding down on you is abruptly eclipsed. It is Elenia, leaning over your broken form, laying her hands upon your wounds. You feel life-energy course like fire into your frame. Gashes close, broken bones fuse, and the terror and pain in your mind turn to joy. You are whole again—whole as you never have been before.

Dream for the Good PC

Elenia casts the *dream* spell on all the characters, but the spell fails on the PC whose alignment is closest to lawful good. The following dream should be read *only* to that character.

You dream vividly. Elenia appears to you in a deep woodland. You see that her heart is black as coal, and she knows you know her secret. The child-guise she wears peels away. Beneath the innocent exterior, she is a withered, craggy sorceress of evil. Her fingertips are black with poison and her clawlike nails are sharp as daggers. She swipes viciously at you. Her claws sink in deeply. You feel the poison seep into your blood. All goes dark.

In the final ebb of your dying mind, you realize that Elenia must die! Elenia must die . . . must die . . . must die. . .

The PCs are likely to have a number of reactions to these dreams. If the lawful good character attacks Elenia, she seeks protection from the others. If they all attack Elenia, the DM should go to the "Fighting Elenia" section. If the characters quietly discuss their dreams among themselves or keep their silence, the DM should read the following.

A Little Child Shall Lead Them

The morning dawns cold and damp. As you stretch your aching muscles and gather your provisions, you note great troughs and scars on the ground around the edge of the camp. From the massive disruption of soil, you can see that at least one evil treant circled the camp a few times last night.

Elenia stands in the midst of the camp, gazing up toward the canopy of leaves. At length, she announces to no one in particular, "Uncle Dory said go toward the dawn."

Though you cannot see the sun because of the thick forest, you can tell that dawn came in the direction the little girl is pointing.

The DM should allow the PCs to make any preparations they wish. When the party is ready to move on, the DM should read the following.

All through the morning, the child leads your party through the dark and rambling wood. She insists upon carrying a torch, and looks to every side for more attacks, but none come.

By noon, you reach a narrow, weed-choked road. A stone's throw down the road, you see a gypsy wagon. Its canary-yellow wheels and cherry-red sideboards starkly contrast the oppressive grays and greens of the forest. Then you spot a gnarled woman draped in a ratty but colorful shawl sitting beside the caravan. She is motioning for you to approach her.

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If the characters approach the gypsy, Elenia protests, saying that her Uncle warned her to stay away from gypsies. Even if the party doesn't approach the gypsy, the old woman will call to them and invite the characters within, offering to tell their fortunes for two silvers. If the characters refuse to have their fortunes read, the DM should tell the characters they hear a violent rustling approach from the woods. Elenia shrieks and begins to climb a tree. The DM should then turn to the "Lupine Attack" section (following). If the characters agree to have their fortunes read, Elenia still protests and refuses to go inside the caravan. If the characters enter the wagon, the DM should read the following.

Dark Scryings

Despite the cheerful colors and cleanness of the wagon's exterior, the interior feels cramped and cluttered, and carries the weary smell of a place that serves as bedroom, kitchen, parlor, and transport. The bent old woman moves through the wagon with a surprising deftness that bespeaks a lifetime of such confinement. She arranges small crates and rickety stools, enough for the party and herself, then settles like a vulture upon a low seat. She produces a small crystal ball from her robes, then sets a piercing eye upon you. Her withered hand is out before you, palm up.

If the characters inquire, the Vistani woman says her name is Madame Nygar. She does not remove her outstretched hand until the PCs give her two silver pieces. She will not read their fortunes separately, for she does not read palms. However, she will scry in her crystal for the fate of the whole group. The DM should read the following.

The old gypsy woman leans laboriously into her task, her craggy hands caressing the



clear crystal with amazing delicacy. The glass ball seems to be another eye for her. Although the crystal does not glow, you suddenly realize that the room has become unsettlingly dark. Then the crone's voice rings out:

Much darkness . . . much darkness . . . one among you is deceived . . . one among you thinks to do the right thing, but does evil . . . one among you, though good once and kind has been turned to great evil by this land . . . one among you must be slain to save the others. . . .

The shrill shriek of a horrified child rings out from the woods outside. The crone leaps up, jostling her crystal ball, and rushes for the door. Glaring daylight spills into the dark wagon as the gypsy rushes out.

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As the party pours from the caravan to investigate the screams, the DM should read the following.

Lupine Attack

The child screams in fear as she tries to scramble up a tree, dropping her torch onto the road below. From the thick undergrowth lining the road, four black forms suddenly surge. They are wolves, snarling and drooling. In moments, they reach the base of the tree, and carefully skirting the torch, they leap for the screaming girl. One catches hold of her dress. For a moment she loses her hold on the tree branches and slips down lower. She shrieks in terror as another set of slaving jowls clamps brutally on her dress, yanking her down.

DM's Note: These wolves were summoned by Elenia herself using the *conjure animal* spell. They will not harm Elenia, but only appear to mean her harm.

Wolf (4): Int Semi (2-4); AL N; AC 7; MV 18; HD 2+2; hp 10; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 2-5; SZ S (2'-4'); ML Average (10); XP 65 each.

If the PCs attack the wolves, the creatures release Elenia and engage them. Meanwhile, the cowardly gypsy woman climbs aboard her wagon and flees as quickly as possible. After the first round, no trace can be found of the wagon.

If the party does not attack the wolves, the hem of Elenia's dress rips away and she is able to climb out of reach. The wolves then turn on the rest of the party and attack, and the gypsy rides away. As soon as a wolf sustains 5 points of damage, it flees.

The wolves will not battle past the 8th round. If a wolf is slain, its body disappears in the 13th round. Elenia will work hard to lure the party away by that time.

If at any time the lawful good character (the character who had the dream revealing Elenia's true nature) attacks Elenia, she will plead for help from the other party members. If they refuse to help or also attack, the DM should skip ahead to the "Fighting Elenia" section.

The rest of the day passes without further incident as the party wanders along the road. The DM should allow PCs ample time to discuss among themselves the nature of their little companion.

The Second Night

As night begins to settle in, the DM should read the following.

Darkness deepens among the trees. Occasionally you hear fell sounds—sounds of creatures shifting in the woods beyond the flickering torchlight. You look ahead to where Elenia marches along and you can see she is trembling, either from fear or cold. A bestial cry rings out from the forest, a mile away. Elenia stops in her tracks, spins around to face you and says, "We must make a fire. Uncle Dory said we'd be safe if we have a fire!"

If the party agrees and begins to build a fire, Elenia will be placated and will begin settling in for the evening. If the party refuses, Elenia builds a fire herself and refuses to continue. If the party continues on without her, she will wait until they are out of sight, then will stalk them and cast *sleep* on all but the lawful good character (or character closest to lawful good alignment). The DM should then skip to the "Fighting Elenia" section.

If the party decides to set up camp and assign watches, Elenia will pretend to sleep, waiting for the watch of the lawful good character. She will then cast *sleep* over any other characters who remain awake, arise, and confront the lawful good PC. The DM should read that character alone the following section.

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The Seduction

It is the darkest hour of the night and the other party members lie absolutely still. A slight movement catches your eye. It is Elenia, rising slowly to her feet and fixing her piercing gaze upon you. "I am afraid," she mutters sadly. "The night is dark and scary. Can I sit with you? I would feel so safe to sit beside you. You are the nicest person in this group."

She picks up her doll by one hand and takes a step toward you, "Please, can I sit by you? I'm so afraid."

Before Elenia slips out of her blankets to approach the PC on watch, she casts *stoneskin* on herself. If the wakeful PC lets Elenia approach, she will try to snuggle up next to him or her and steal a kiss on the PC's lips. If kissed, the character must make a save vs. poison with a -4 penalty to the roll.

Elenia's statistics are listed at the end of this adventure. Since she has already used spells during the day, her current spells are listed here.

Current Spells: *Charm person* (×2), *ray of enfeeblement* (×4), *hold person* (×4), *stoneskin* (×2), and *dream* (×5).

Elenia is an *ermordenung*—an ordinary human transformed by Ivana Boritsi of Borca into a lawful evil creature with a poisonous touch (see the *Monstrous Compendium* page at the end of this book and the NPC Roster at the end of this adventure). She is, in truth, not a child, but a wicked sorceress seeking to win the acceptance of the party, then slay them with her kiss of death.

Fighting Elenia

If Elenia is attacked (and only *while* she is under attack), the attacker can see her true nature: she is actually a hoary, withered

sorceress. If attacked, Elenia activates her doll golem to attack the party (the golem wins surprise unless the party knew it was a golem). Statistics for the doll golem are listed at the end of this book. Then, if she hasn't already, Elenia casts *stoneskin* upon herself, then *sleep* on all but one of the characters. While the golem engages the conscious character, Elenia casts *charm*, *hold person*, or *ray of enfeeblement* upon him.

If Elenia's spellcasting fails, she will let the golem fight while she remains out of harm's way and pleads with the character. If Elenia's spellcasting succeeds, she will call off the doll golem and lock her victim in a powerful embrace (she has Strength of 18/50), then speak softly and soothingly to the character. To any character caught in such an embrace, the DM should read the following.

Elenia's Plea

Though she holds you in a vicelike grip, her voice is still soft, loving, and childlike. "Why are you struggling? I love you! Why do you hate me so? I just want to be your daughter. I just want us to be happy together. Swear you will stay with me, love me and will never leave me, and I will let you go."

If the character refuses to swear to these things, Elenia says, "Farewell, my loving father [or mother]" and plants the kiss of death (see Elenia's statistics). If, however, the character swears to love and care for Elenia, Elenia will release him or her. If the character attacks, Elenia will reactivate the doll golem and will attack with her poisonous touch.

The Sleepers

The other party members will not awaken until the spell expires or unless the PC kicks or shakes them. If they are awakened, Elenia will

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try to cast *charm*, *hold person*, or *ray of enfeeblement* upon them. If successful, she locks her victim in a powerful embrace and speaks her plea (the DM should refer to “Elenia’s Plea” above) before administering the kiss of death. Because her *stoneskin* is susceptible to magical attack, Elenia will embrace an awakened mage or priest first. The first 10 nonmagical attacks against Elenia are turned by her *stoneskin*. Then she casts the spell on herself again.

If the golem is destroyed, Elenia pleads with the remaining party members not to hurt her, for “she loves them and only wants to be their daughter.” If characters attack her after her golem is destroyed and her spells are all used, she returns the attack, lunging to touch their skin with her old, gnarled hands. (Remember, anyone attacking Elenia can see her true form.) Anyone she touches must make a saving throw vs. poison with a +4 bonus. If successful, the character suffers 10 points of damage. Failure indicates that the character dies.

If Elenia or her doll golem slays the first PC before any of the others can be awakened, Elenia will awaken another PC. Breathless with feigned fear and horror, she will lead the PC to the slain body, then in feigned terror clutch tightly to the PC’s leg and burst into tears. If the character bends down to comfort her, she will attempt to grapple him with her 18/50 strength and then make her plea (see “Elenia’s Plea” above). If the character suspects Elenia and attacks her before she can grapple the PC, Elenia summons the doll golem and the process begins again.

The night continues in this fashion until the whole party, or Elenia herself, is dead, or until someone agrees to act as her parent. If someone agrees to become her parent, Elenia will become inseparable from that person and slowly poison him or her (the PC loses 1 point of strength per week until Elenia is slain or the PC escapes). If Elenia is killed, she reverts to her twisted adult form. If anyone checks Elenia’s dead form, they find a *ring of mind*

shielding on her finger.

When morning comes, the DM should read the following to the survivors if he wishes the PCs to exit Ravenloft. If he wishes them to remain, he should skip the box that follows and simply describe the scene to the players.

The morning dawns cold and clear upon the camp. The once-blazing fire now smolders dimly, sending a sickly smoke into the hazy morning sky. The ground and the trees around bear the marks of the horrible battle. As you gaze at the forest canopy—its leaves moiling in the early breeze—the world seems to go black for a moment. When the light returns, you look down to find the bodies and the fire gone, and the scarred ground healed.

As accidentally as the characters arrived in Ravenloft, they have departed it.

NPC Roster

Elenia Windalla

Ermordenung

Int High (14); AL LE; AC 9; MV 15; HD 12; hp 40; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or poison 10; SA Poison touch (victim saves vs. poison at –4—success indicates 10 points of damage, failure indicates death); SD immune to all poison except that of other ermordenung; SZ S (4’ tall); ML Champion (16); XP 1,000.

Str: 18/50 Dex: 16 Con: 14
Int: 14 Wis: 13 Cha: 17

Spells: *Charm person* (×2), *sleep* (×4), *ray of enfeeblement* (×4), *hold person* (×4), *stoneskin* (×2), *dream* (×5), *conjure animals* (×1).

Elenia’s beginnings are shrouded in mystery. All that is clear is that she came from somewhere beyond the dark pale of Ravenloft. But whatever her childhood, it must have been horrible, for it led her to the domain of Borca

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and the dark arts of sorcery.

Elenia—now an old, withered, and evil mage—grew envious of Lady Ivana Boritsi, ruler of Borca. Elenia coveted the lady's throne and her youthful beauty, and so plotted to kill her and take her place. But being cowardly, Elenia was fearful of carrying out the task herself. So she traveled the lands of Ravenloft, seeking out an evil priest to construct for her a doll golem. Once Elenia had commissioned her golem, she returned to Borca and awaited an opportunity to use it.

That opportunity came when Lady Ivana invited her people to appear before her to present gifts of their esteem and ask favors of her. In truth, Ivana planned this occasion to pick out handsome men, then seduce and slay them. But Elenia had different plans for this day. She *polymorphed* her old and ugly body into the form of a beautiful girl-child, then took her doll—the most precious gift the child could offer the lady—and set out for Ivana's home.

When Ivana received the gift and saw the child's beauty, she was so taken by them both that she immediately imprisoned Elenia in the manor house and performed upon her the dark and brutal process that made her an *ermordenung*. Elenia was trapped in her childish form, her skin now turned poisonous to the touch. And all that remained of her powers of sorcery were the spells she had memorized, which were now imprinted upon her mind and regenerated every morning.

The process of becoming an *ermordenung* was so horrible that Elenia went insane. Forgetting her past as a sorceress, Elenia became convinced she was a parentless child.

She stole back the doll golem and escaped Ivana, who had been cruel to her. Then Elenia traveled Sturben and Levkarest, seeking someone to become her parent. She latched onto anyone she happened upon, hoping the person would adopt her. Invariably, though, her target learned her dark secret and sought either to slay or escape her. After several such experiences, Elenia learned always to cast

spells upon the potential parent, hold him or her in a tight embrace, and plead to be taken as a daughter. If the person did not agree, Elenia administered the kiss of death.

Soon the townsfolk learned of her and an angry mob drove her into the woods. Since that time she has wandered the woods, latching onto any travelers she happens upon and trying to win her way into their hearts. When the party of PCs happens into Ravenloft, Elenia has just pulled the poisoned corpse of an unwilling father into the reach of an evil treant. She used his body to bait her hook for the PCs.

Combat: Elenia retains some of her wizardly abilities, including her Hit Dice. In addition to her spellcasting abilities, Elenia has the normal *ermordenung* combat abilities: poison skin, a powerful embrace, and the "kiss of death." If Elenia touches exposed flesh in combat (i.e., makes her attack roll), the victim must save vs. poison with a +4 bonus. Success means 10 points of damage; failure means death. If Elenia's attack roll is a natural 20, she causes 20 points of damage with a successful save.

In noncombat situations, Elenia will embrace a victim with her 18/50 Strength. Characters weaker than herself must save vs. paralysis with a -4 penalty in order to pull away; characters of equal strength make a normal save; and stronger characters save with a +4 bonus.

Once in a hold, the victim may receive from Elenia a "kiss of death," for which he must save vs. poison with a -4 penalty. A successful save means 30 points of damage, whereas a failed save indicates death.

Chapter VI: The Rite of Terror

Setup

This adventure is recommended for six to eight characters of 5th to 8th level. A map of Aferdale is found on page 51, which the Dungeon Master can photocopy for the players' use. Each building is detailed in the "Aferdale" section.

During the course of the adventure, the player characters discover a monastery that is not what it seems. Its thick stone walls hide a temple dedicated to Malar, the Beast Lord, an evil deity in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign world. Malar's worshipers cloak

their society in secrecy because they are shunned and often hunted for their heinous religious rites. They search out and attempt to destroy druids and rangers, and they relentlessly terrorize civilized areas.

Malar is a demipower from the planes of Tarterus. He is not a popular god, and his many devoted followers invoke him only to prevent his intercession in their affairs. These dread invocations are heralded by the capture of wild beasts that are slaughtered by the dark god's priests.

By the time the PCs encounter Aferdale, nearly every wild beast within three-days' travel of the monastery has been eliminated by Malar's malign followers. The worshipers have resorted to more drastic measures to acquire the animals needed for their dark rites—*polymorphing* Aferdale's residents into wild beasts and sacrificing them instead.

This band of Malar's priests is lead by an illithid named Malisha; her contemptible mannerisms make her a figure to be feared and hated.

The Adventure

The scenario begins as the player characters enter Aferdale.

As you approach the outskirts of town, you see a bulky, weathered sign. The name *Aferdale* has been burned into the wood. Beneath the name, a series of descending numbers has been haphazardly scratched into the molding planks. The first number is 1,183; the last number is 1,008.

Ahead of you, on the town's main street, you observe several dozen commoners walking behind pallbearers carrying a pallet. There is no casket, but the pallet is strewn with flowers. The procession weaves its way between battered houses and dry, rotting barns.

The sad wails of the mourners float through the town and all but drown out the music made by a group of young boys and girls who pluck stringed musical instruments as they follow the grief-stricken adults.

The cavalcade shuffles to a graveyard, where a priest presides over the gravesite. The people stand around a flat, grassy, untouched patch of ground.

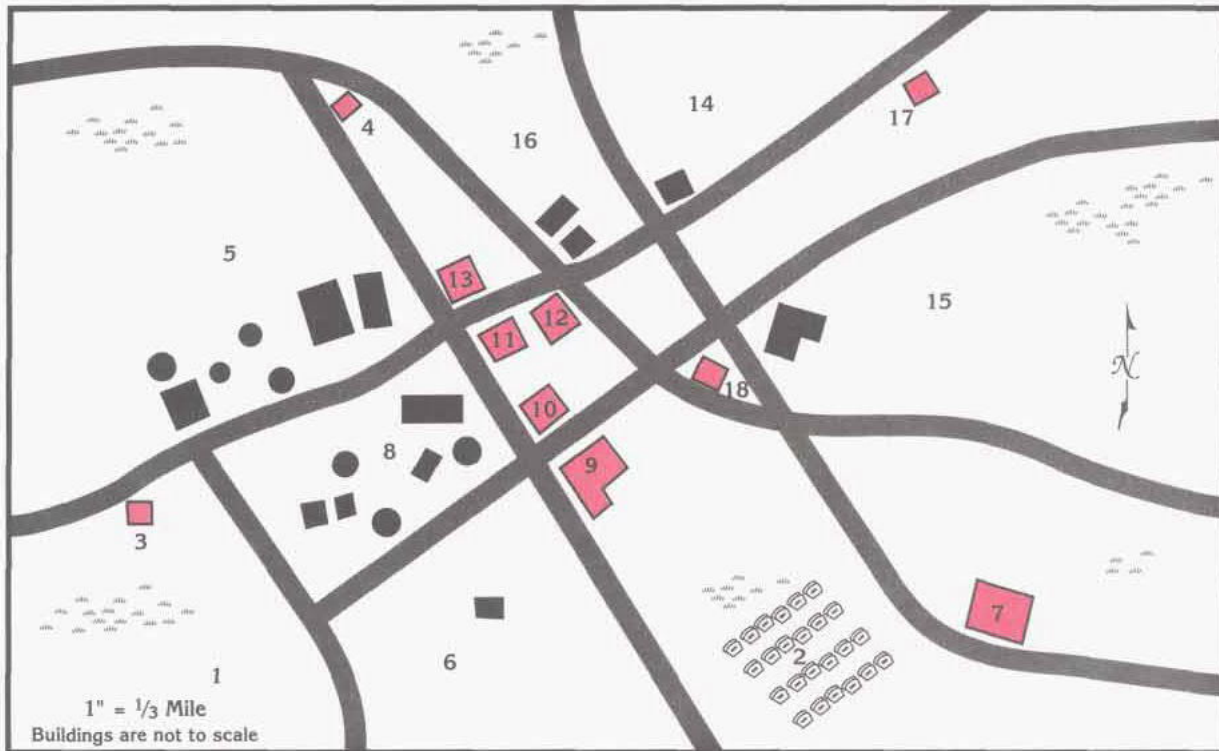
Since there is no casket, there is no need for a hole. A chipped, marble stone marks the gravesite.

Once the ceremony is finished, the priest steps over to a small cluster of townsfolk and bows to them. Wiping a tear from his eye, he leaves the site, solemnly walking back into town.

If the characters approach the priest, the man stops, introduces himself as Abane, and talks with them.

"The ceremony you witnessed was for a boy of twelve, a lad loved by all. We had no body to bury, and now we have only

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memories. In Aferdale, if someone is missing for more than 60 days, his memory is buried to put the family at peace." The priest trembles and rubs his hands together. Visibly pale, he looks at you and offers a weak smile.

"The boy we just laid to rest was the 12th victim this month. I would have liked to hold out hope that the youngster would return, but I could not put off the ceremony any longer. You see, the people here are a superstitious lot. They believe that if the dead are not buried within two months, their spirits are forever cast into Tarterus, where all the forsaken and forgotten stay for eternity."

Abane is a tall man with uneven, mousy-brown hair. He uses a dagger to cut his hair, and keeps it cut short. His beard is also short. The priest dresses simply, usually in gray robes. His sandals expose road-hardened toes and yellowed nails.

If the characters ask who is responsible for the deaths, the priest is unable to give an answer. "If you could find those accountable, the town would be forever in your debt."

Aferdale

Location #1

This is a small family farm owned by a short, plump man named Baggs. A variety of vegetables and grains are grown in well-tended fields. The predominant crops are wheat and barley.

Baggs and his family will be friendly to the player characters and will go on at great length about how the recent deaths have thrown the town into despair. Baggs is certain that the people living in Building 10 are responsible for the disappearances. "They are such a rough, unfriendly crowd," he says.

Baggs' family has experienced one loss—a teenage girl who was working as a farmhand

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disappeared six months ago. The town's residents presume that she, like the other missing youngsters, was kidnapped.

Baggs does not know that the girl was killed by a farm hand (and Malar worshiper) from Location 8. One year ago, Baggs decided to grow alfalfa on several acres of unused land to compete with the farm at Location 8. The girl was hired to tend the alfalfa and chase away birds in the fields. As harvest time approached, she was killed when the Malar worshiper set the field on fire. Her charred body lies in the prairie grasses, and her ghost now haunts the field.

If the characters enter the field, the ghost rises from the dark soil, wailing a sad melody of pain and misery. The ghost tries to scare the characters. Those who do not flee in terror can speak with her. She fights only if attacked.

"I am Dara, and I was killed," the ghost wails in hauntingly beautiful tones that waft over the barren field. "I was killed by an evil man who sought to ruin this field. Alfalfa and a dark god filled his life, and for that I was killed. I now search for my murderer so that I can rest."

If the PCs ask her about the disappearances of townsfolk or the absence of wild animals, she offers a clue:

"I have witnessed masked men carrying struggling bodies to the east, across the cattle ranch and toward the cemetery. Evil is involved, that I sense, for evil and death walk hand in hand somewhere in Aferdale. I know nothing more. I am trapped here until my butcher is dead."

Ghost (1): Int High (13); AL N; AC 0 or 8; MV 9; HD 10; hp 70; THAC0 11; #AT 1; Dmg Age 10-40 Years; SA Special; SD Special; SZ M; ML Special; XP 7,000.

Location #2: The Aferdale Cemetery

The graveyard is bordered by a stout wrought iron fence that casts shadows of prison bars across your feet. Weeping willows draped with budding grape vines dot the well-tended land and shade many of the crumbling tombstones.

As you open the gate, the rusty hinges groan. The ground is moist, and your feet sink into the marshy grass as you walk into the cemetery. There are several hundred graves here marked by hand-chiseled stones of many sizes. A few of the stones are tall, almost monolithic, but the majority are short and worn. Each eulogizes the deceased's life in a single sentence.

Dominating the graveyard is a large expanse, edged by a narrow ravine to the south. Hundreds of uniform stones stand like soldiers across it.

The inscriptions on the stones vary. Consult the list below.

1. "Our missing beloved"
2. "Until our paths again meet"
3. "We have not lost our hope"
4. "We wait for our reunion"
5. "Until the patrons bring us together"
6. "Our souls weep for your return"

Location #3

The proprietors of Weppe's Inn prey upon adventurers and travelers. All prices here are double those listed in the *Player's Handbook*.

A moss-covered sign hanging crookedly from a grounded stake proclaims this building *Weppe's Inn*. The steps to the front door creak and bend under your weight.

Inside, the inn is quiet. The patrons and employees gape at a dead body that lies near the doorway. The dead man is dressed only

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in a pair of worn trousers, and just above his waist, a dagger protrudes from his abdomen. Despite the blood that continues to pour freely from the wound, you know he died of another cause—a quarter-inch hole punctuates the middle of his forehead.

Although the corpse lies in the tavern room, barmaids continue to serve the patrons. If the PCs state they are scanning the crowd, have each character roll 1d20. Anyone rolling one-half of their Wisdom score or less notices a barmaid lifting coins from a man's pocket.

The barmaids will not chat with the PCs, as they are working and do not want to have their wages docked. They refer all questions to the innkeeper. The innkeeper is friendly, outgoing, and will freely talk to the PCs if they buy something to eat and drink. The innkeeper is not as suspicious as most of the townsfolk. He believes people have been disappearing simply because they are starting a life elsewhere, where there are more opportunities.

The innkeeper knows the dead man in his establishment was Daniel Hireman, an investigator employed by Baggs. The investigator was searching for a teenage girl who was one of Baggs' farm hands. The innkeeper claims he does not know how Daniel died. Further, all the patrons and barmaids say they don't know what happened, either. No amount of questioning will reveal additional information. If the patrons are threatened, however, they claim a black-robed stranger rushed forward, killed Hireman, then bolted from the building. They say they did not interfere, as they prefer not to get involved in personal disputes. Further, one of the patrons sarcastically suggests the PCs ask old, dead Hireman what happened.

If the PCs cast *Speak with Dead*, they can discover the information that follows. For the sake of mood while in Ravenloft, the DM may read the following passage rather than answer the PCs' questions.

Scared and livid, Daniel Hireman's ghostly gaze darts from one of you to another. "There is more to this town than meets the eye," he whispers. "Do not trust anyone. Everyone is guilty of something. They either steal each other's belongings, or they steal each other's lives.

"My life was ripped from me because I was closing in on Dara's murderer. I was to meet with a man tonight who promised to sell me vital information that would close the casket on this case." His body shudders, then he continues. "When I entered this establishment, I was ushered to a woman dressed in black. Her eyes pierced my soul like a cold steel blade, and I felt her mind caress mine. The next thing I knew, I felt a hot scalpel carve my insides. As my life drained from my body, I saw those who were once my friends remove my boots and clothing. Deathly cold hands rummaged through my pockets. I think I was closing in on something bigger than just a simple murder."

Location #4

Adventure's Rest is another inn which preys upon strangers. The owner charges prices triple those listed in the *Player's Handbook*.

Adventure's Rest, a large, multi-story, stone building, stands sullen in the dying evening light. The roof is flat, and archers and ominous strongmen with tattoo-riddled bodies walk about on it, peering down into the street. A portcullis hangs open above an open wooden door. The bright light from within splashes against the darkening street.

If the characters try to simply walk in, the guards slam the door shut in front of them. A moment later, a burly man with chest hair as bushy as animal fur opens the door. His arms are as thick as hams, and he screams at the

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characters, "What do you want?" If they state anything other than the fact that they are looking for murderers, they are allowed inside—under the stern brows of the doorman and his two identical twin brothers. If the PCs say anything about looking for a murderer, they are shoved roughly into the street and ordered to stay away.

If the PCs knock on the door, the triplets open the door and block the view to the inside with their cattle-like frames. They ask the characters for the password, and the center brother extends a hand, palm upward. If the characters do not contribute at least three gold pieces, the three men slam the door.

If the PCs force or kick the door open, they are met by the three burly triplets mentioned above. The trio loves to fight. They are here to keep "riffraff" out. Because the door has been damaged, they must now be bribed in excess of 10 gold pieces before they let the PCs in.

If the PCs defeat the guards, they can walk in without a problem.

10th-level Fighters (3): Int Average (8); AL NE; AC 2; MV 12; HD 10; hp 74, 70, 68; THAC0 11; #AT 2; Dmg 1d8 + 4/1d8 + 4 with swords; SZ M; ML 16; XP 1,400 each.

The inn is full. Along three walls, fragile female dancers in leather and shackles parade about on elevated stages. The patrons scream and whistle toward the unfortunate entertainers, who do all they can to dodge food and bottles thrown their way. The inn's proprietor is a young drow named Dronom. He tends bar in a darkened corner of the inn, near a set of rickety stairs that lead to the basement.

Dronom will converse with the player characters only if they purchase food and drink or rent a room. Rooms cost 12 sp per night per person. The drinks are watered down and range from 4 sp to 2 gp per glass.

Dronom, twirling a gold piece, claims he knows nothing about the disappearances of the townsfolk. However, if the PCs offer him 5 gold

pieces or more as a bribe, he picks a random location and places the blame on the people there. There are 18 locations on the map; the DM should roll 1d20, ignoring 2, 7, 19, and 20, and choose that spot. "Yes, I have seen them luring young people there with gifts of food and refreshment. I have told many people this story, but no one wishes to believe a drow. So the murders continue and the disappearing souls increase."

Dronom attempts to mislead the characters because the Malar priests have him under close scrutiny. The three burly guards at the entrance are Malar worshipers—and they have threatened to kill the drow if he reveals any information about the temple. If the characters threaten Dronom, he slowly points at the triplet guards and says "they are the toes of a bigger evil." Later that evening, the characters find Dronom's body pegged to a weeping willow near the center of town.

However, if the PCs have defeated the triplet guards, Dronom tells them to seek the temple of the wind god. "The wind that blows there is hot and dangerous," he says. "The temple is not what it seems."

Location #5

This is a horse ranch with an ample supply of stock. The Malar priests leave farm animals alone, as they believe only wild animals work in their rituals. Though expensive, all the horses for sale are of fine quality. The current offerings include:

- * 22 draft horses at 250 gp each
- * 10 heavy war horses at 700 gp each
- * 12 medium war horses at 400 gp each
- * 24 light war horses at 280 gp each
- * 30 riding horses at 110 gp each
- * 10 ponies at 60 gp each

If the characters inspect the grounds, read the box that follows.

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As you wander through the fields and ravines of this ranch, you notice several graves on the premises; most of these filled holes are extremely old and have long grasses covering their tell-tale mounds.

If the characters dig up these sites, they find old human corpses and skeletons. While prowling the area, the characters hear the crack of a twig behind them. A single man stands looking at them. He is unarmed.

"What are you doing? This is private property!" A man, slightly balding, strides cautiously around you, inspecting the ground. He is dressed in baggy trousers and a bright blue shirt.

If asked about the graves, the man says, "We do not use the cemetery. We are born, live, and die on the land, so we are buried here. It is only proper to return to the land that cared for us. Do you not agree?"

The man, Waldo, is the owner of this ranch, and he knows nothing of any murders or disappearances in the town. He avoids what he considers the hustle of city life. He and his hires keep to themselves.

Location #6: Cattle Ranch

Hundreds of head of cattle roam treeless plains, feeding on the tall prairie grasses. As you approach the fence, a dozen ranch hands walk toward you, one waves a friendly hello.

"Good day to you all! Are you in need of jerky?" The ranch hands are rough-looking, but seem congenial.

The beef they sell is of good quality, tender and not too stringy. They butcher cows before they become too old to fetch a good price for their meat. A butchered cow costs 24 gold; a quarter of beef costs 12 gold. In addition, the

ranch sells live cows at 20 gold a head, a calf for 12 gold.

They jerky much of their meat, selling it for 1 gp per pound.

If the characters ask questions about the disappearances, the workers become unfriendly, saying, "we don't know nothing," and go back to work.

However, later that night, the cattle workers harass the characters, attempting to hurt them so they will give up their quest and go home. The workers are priests of Malar.

Malar Priests (12): Int High (14); AL LE; AC 5; MV 12; HD 7; hp 36 each; THAC0 16; #AT 12; Dmg 1d4 with fists and kicks; SZ M; ML Average (10); XP 975 each.

The Malar priests operate this farm to provide food for the worshipers. They sell the excess cattle to common residents and travelers who are willing to pay their prices. The priests have been making a reasonable income from the farm; with the wild animals in the area gone, the residents are forced to buy cattle if they want meat.

Location #7

This is the secret temple of the Beast Lord, Malar. His followers are the culprits who have been kidnapping the people in this town. The followers *polymorph* these people into wild boars, wolves, bears, mountain lions, and other animals to be sacrificed to their evil god. The priest's leader is named Malisha.

This building appears well kept. The shutters are newly painted and properly hinged. The walls are covered in fruit-bearing grape vines that reach for the eaves twelve feet overhead. The front door is open.

If the characters watch the temple, they see a pair of blue-robed priests carrying a struggling deer inside. If the PCs question the priests, they

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explain they are having venison for dinner. A while later, the PCs will see more priests bring in a struggling bear cub; the priests explain this animal has no mother and needs to be looked after. The PCs should realize something is wrong, as there are no wild animals near the town. These animals are actually townsfolk who have been *polymorphed*.

The PCs will not be able to learn any more information without going inside. The temple is a simple complex of four rooms and a cellar, detailed below. If the PCs elect to enter the temple, read the following:

Just inside the stoop, you notice an insignia resembling a clawed paw against the wall to your left. To your right is a mural of a cloud in an azure sky. As you enter, a stunning woman approaches you. She is dressed in a flowing blue robe and an ornate fur cloak. "Welcome to the temple of Weeshy, god of the wind. Although you may worship who you wish in our monastery, the Wind God reigns here. Our abode is yours. If you need anything, feel free to ask. My name is Malisha."

To the common traveler and to the majority of the town's residents, the temple appears to be dedicated to Weeshy, the god of wind. It is doubtful the player characters will have heard of this god, as the Malar priests made him up. They did not want to masquerade as followers of an actual deity, fearing that deity would investigate the temple and take action against Malar.

Several dozen followers live and worship here. When venturing out in public or when meeting the public within the temple, they wear blue robes with a cloud design stitched on the right shoulder. When spoken to, they profess the wonders of the wind.

However, within the inner confines of the temple, the priests wear black robes embroidered with tigers, lions, and other wild animals. There is a constant power struggle

between the higher priests, because each one wants to rule the temple. It is their belief that only the strong should command.

The Temple

The temple's main room is cavernous and takes up half of the complex. It is 120 feet wide by 150 feet long. The building's other three rooms are each 120 feet wide by 50 feet long, and they are each connected to the main room via an ornate wooden door.

1. Worship Room. The polished wooden floor is dotted with woven rugs showing clouds, rainbows, and birds. The walls are covered with tapestries depicting the sky; half are blue and filled with clouds, the others are black and have lightning bolts and stars scattered through them. In the center of the room is a table laden with fruit and pitchers of cool water. The Malar priests in this room all wear blue robes.

There are eight priests in this room. They act cordially to the PCs, especially if Malisha escorted them inside. She quickly exits the main room, entering Room #4, then retreats to the cellar—leaving the characters in the hands of her underlings.

The priests offer the PCs fruit, which is drugged with sleep poison. This is how they get some of their victims. Newcomers arrive at the temple, eat the fruit, fall asleep, and the priests *polymorph* them into animals. The water in the pitchers is not drugged.

Any PC who eats a piece of fruit must save versus poison or fall into a deep slumber. PCs who successfully save are aware of a tingling sensation in their limbs, and they should get the message that something is not right.

The priests discourage the PCs from entering any of the other rooms, claiming they are only for the priests. If the PCs insist, the priests attack them.

Initially, the priests use spells such as *hold person* and *command*, then they melee with them, fighting to the death.

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4th-level Priests (8): Int High (14-16); AL CE; AC 3; MV 12; HD 4; hp 20 each; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6 by staff; SD Nil; SA Spells; SZ M (6' tall); ML Elite (14); XP 175 each.

Each priest has the following spells memorized: *command, create water, cause light wounds, charm person, hold person.*

2. Sanctuary. Here, priests of Malar rest and concentrate on spells. If the PCs enter, there are two black-robed priests lecturing a pair of fighters on how best to sacrifice animals. If the priests hear a commotion in the large temple room, they wait two rounds, then send the fighters in to attack. Next, they prepare spells so they are ready to meet any intruders who burst into the sanctuary.

6th-level Priests (2): Int High (16); AL CE; AC 3; MV 12; HD 6; hp 36 each; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1-2 (fist); SD Nil; SA Spells; SZ M (6' tall); ML Elite (14); XP 575 each.

Each priest has the following spells memorized: *command, detect good, locate*

animals or plants, charm person or mammal, heat metal, silence 15' radius, dispel magic, hold animal.

10th-level Fighters (2): Int Average (8); AL NE; AC 10 (wearing robes); MV 12; HD 10; hp 65 each; THAC0 11; #AT 2; Dmg 1d8+4/1d8+4 with long swords; SZ M; ML 16; XP 1400 each.

3. Inner Chamber. Simple rituals are carried out here. The walls of this room are specially enchanted with a permanent *silence* spell. No sounds leave the room, and noise from rooms elsewhere in the temple cannot be heard. Because of this, the room's occupants are oblivious to the PCs' presence.

There are two priests in this room preparing a wild boar to be the evening's offering.

Opening the door, you are greeted by a horrid sight. Two men in flowing black robes decorated with the visages of snarling animals stand over a boar tied to a small



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marble altar. The animal is struggling fiercely, but the ropes do not yield. One of the men looks up at you and smiles evilly. The other draws a dagger and raises it above the terrified animal.

If the PCs do not act immediately, the priest slaughters the boar, which is actually a commoner who had been *polymorphed*. If the PCs try to prevent the sacrifice, the second priest attacks, interposing his body in an attempt to allow the ritual to proceed.

4th-level Priests (2): Int High (14); AL CE; AC 3; MV 12; HD 4; hp 32 each; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4 by dagger; SD Nil; SA Spells SZ M (6' tall); ML Elite (14); XP 175 each.

Each priest has the following spells: *invisibility to animals*, *protection from good*, *remove fear*; *flame blade*, *speak with animals*.

4. Altar Room. The walls of this room are also enchanted with *silence* spells, as the loud screams of the animals might disturb commoners outside or in the main temple. Stairs lead from this room down to the cellar.

Dried blood covers the massive altar in the center of the room and the floor around it. A slaughtered mountain lion lays atop the altar, its blood spilling from its sliced throat. Your senses spin as you attempt to accept what you see. Tapestries on the walls depict black-robed priests sacrificing animals. They look similar to the men who stand about the altar. "Intruders!" a man shrieks, as he gestures in your direction. "More sacrifices for Malar!" With that, the priests yank the hoods away from their faces and advance.

The priests begin their assault by casting spells—directed first at the PC wizards and clerics. Next, they attempt to immobilize the fighters with *hold person* and other spells. The priests will not melee unless the PCs close.

15th-level High Priest (1): Int High (16); AL CE; AC 3; MV 12; HD 15; hp 65; THAC0 12; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6 (dagger); SD Spells; SA Spells; SZ M (6' tall); ML Elite (14); XP 5,000.

Spells remaining in memory: *animal friendship*, *cause light wounds*, *light*; *chant*, *enthral*, *flame blade*, *speak with animals*; *dispel magic*, *feign death*, *hold animal*, *meld into stone*; *animal summoning I*, *call woodland beings*, *divination*, *neutralize poison*, *tongues*; *animal growth*, *commune*, *cause critical wounds*; *blade barrier*; *fire storm*.

The high priest wears *bracers of defense AC 3*, carries a specially-designed *wand of polymorphing* usable by clerics, and has a dagger coated with Type M poison.

4th-level Priests (9): Int High (14-16); AL CE; AC 3; MV 12; HD 4; hp 25 each; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4 by dagger; SD Nil; SA Spells; SZ M (6' tall); ML Elite (14); XP 175 each.

Each priest has the following spells in memory: *animal friendship*, *command*, *invisibility to animals*; *flame blade*, *spiritual hammer*.

Cellar. This large, open room contains the animals the priests use in their sacrifices. There is a massive iron cage with four mountain lions inside it, a pen holding a dozen wild boars, and a small iron cage containing two badgers.

Malisha, detailed at the end of this adventure, is in the cellar looking over the animals. If she hears the PCs coming down the steps, she hides in the shadows, plans her assault, and attempts to kill them with her spells and illithid abilities. If her own life is in jeopardy, she uses her spells to escape or to feign death.

Captured Heroes: If the priests manage to better the characters in battle, the PCs are bound, gagged, and healed to the point of consciousness. They are taken to the cellar and put in an empty pen—minus their weapons and armor. The priests plan to have them

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polymorphed soon. The PCs should be allowed an opportunity to escape, and depending on their actions, they might still have to face the temple's occupants. If the PCs do not escape, the high priest uses his special wand to *polymorph* them into boars, and they are held prisoner to be sacrificed in a special ceremony. **Resolution:** If the PCs capture and question any priests, they learn that the townsfolk are being *polymorphed* into animals, and that the animals in the cellar are, in reality, commoners, farmers, merchants, and youths. If the PCs are successful in defeating the priests and stopping the threat of the Malar worshipers, the town declares them heroes. *Dispel magic* will return the animals to their human forms.

Location #8

This is an alfalfa farm. At present, the alfalfa is almost four feet tall, ready for harvest.

The people here are good and kind, except one worker who is a Malar worshiper. Everyone but this man tries to be as helpful as possible. They suggest the characters investigate the monastery at Location 7, as they do not trust the people who worship the wind. However, the Malar worshiper suggests they investigate the temple to Milil.

The Malar worshiper at this location is responsible for Dara's death (Location #1). No one knows he is the culprit.

Location #9: Temple of Milil

Abane, the priest who buries the town's dead and performs ceremonies for the missing, is the high priest of this temple. Everyone is welcome to worship their own gods here, although they will first hear a sermon about the benefits of worshipping Milil.

The priests will attempt to be helpful to the player characters. The priests are disturbed about the missing townsfolk—and puzzled, as spells indicate that some of the missing people are dead, and that some of the missing people are still within the confines of Aferdale.

The priests are suspicious of the owners of the inns, as they believe people are charged too much in the establishments. They do not approve of the other temple in town. The Milil priests assume the town only needs one temple—theirs. The Milil priests and the "Weeshy" priests are not on friendly terms.

Location #10

This is the *Parsed Lip*. Most villagers do not frequent this establishment because it appeals to the rougher crowds. The *Parsed Lip's* main clientele includes travelers and adventurers.

Nansen, a 13th-level fighter, manages the tavern. He has three 10th-level fighters as partners who also serve as bouncers. Refusal to pay for a drink or meal guarantees the patron a broken arm or leg. These men make sure patrons pay for what they order—or the patrons leave the establishment unable to walk or work.

If the PCs ask too many questions about the disappearances, murders, or anything else, the bouncers order them to leave. If the characters refuse, the bouncers fight them.

If the characters defeat the three fighters, Nansen offers them jobs as bouncers, and provides them with a little information about the area. Nansen knows that wild animals began disappearing several months ago. This frustrated him, as he enjoyed hunting wild boar and large bucks. About three weeks ago—the time of his last hunting expedition—he couldn't even spot a rabbit.

Location #11

This is the *Yearning Goblet*. Townsfolk congregate here for ale and dinner. This is also the local rumor-mill. If anyone is looking for information, this is the best place to find it.

The tavern is managed by Rose and Markus Silpher, a middle-aged couple who are Aferdale natives. Their knowledge of the world outside is sketchy, but their awareness of what transpires within the town's boundaries is second to none.

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If the PCs ask questions here, they will learn the following:

- * The Middle Inn is full of cockroaches.
- * Nansen is a confirmed murderer. He's probably the one killing everyone, but don't quote me on that, I don't want to get killed.
- * The temple of the wind has a new leader, somebody named Malisha. Ain't never seen the guy's face, though, but I hear he is really ugly, with weird growths on his face and everything.
- * The priests of Milil don't get along with the priests of the wind god. Aren't clerical types supposed to like everyone?
- * The worshipers of the wind god must be doing something right—hunters from their temple are always snaring deer and boars. We haven't been able to find a wild animal anywhere around here.
- * I hear Marinetta is having an affair with the Constable. Imagine that.
- * Ain't seen wild animals anywhere around for quite some time. I wonder if there's something big and nasty in the woods frightening them away. At least the cows and horses seem safe.

Location #12

The *Middle Inn*, a well-kept, two-story building, is the nicest inn in the city. Their prices are 1 silver per person per night. The price does not include a breakfast like many inns provide. The man who runs this inn, Darak, is a little unusual. He talks in circles constantly and rarely makes sense as a result of a head injury several years ago (he fell down a flight of stairs). If the characters question him, roll 1d12 on the following table for his answers:

- 1 The brain-suckers are back in town.
- 2 It sure is cold today.
- 3 I wish it would cool down because the cows are upsetting Captain Bristol's Kara Tur navigation charts.
- 4 Have you heard from Aurelia lately? I sure miss her a lot. Haven't seen her in, oh, probably 128 summers.
- 5 Put down that knife!

6 How about a meal? Are you hungry?

7 When is Daddy coming home?

8 Malisha is your woman. Malisha is innocent.

9 What's your name? I'm Darak, usually.

10 Rooms are only 1 silver piece, yes, only 1 silver. One silver will get you a room. Would you like a room for 1 silver?

11 My head hurts.

12 Yeah, Malarites everywhere—you have to watch your back.

Location #13

This is the *Wagon's Rest*. It is a small, one-story inn—with an insect problem. The price is 1 silver piece per person per night, including a breakfast in the common room. Marinetta runs this inn, and leaves only to get supplies. She knows no one except the ranchers and farmers around town. She cannot give the characters any information, but she is worried about the disappearances.

Location #14

This is a large farm. Several dozen men live and work here. This farm has lost one-quarter of its workers in the past two months, and the rest of the workers are starting to think evil spirits haunt the farm. Many are considering leaving.

If the characters watch this farm, they can tell the laborers are not happy. They mill about lazily, preferring to move slowly about, and are always looking over their shoulders.

If the characters talk to the workers, most of them complain about the spirits that wander the fields at night, looking for bodies to feed upon. If the characters watch the fields, they see nothing.

Location #15

This is a farm with immense barns and grain spires. Currently, 100 workers live here, tending the grounds year-round.

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This farm has experienced the most losses in recent months—40 men have vanished. The remaining workers are considering leaving town—in force—within the next few days if the disappearances do not stop. The workers here think Location 14 is haunted, and that poltergeists there wander in search of victims.

As you look about this farm, a faint, high-pitched scream cuts through the air—it came from the vicinity of the tall wheat. It is immediately followed by the guttural bellow of a man. The farm seems to come alive with everyone rushing toward the cries.

If the characters investigate, read the following:

As you approach, you have to push your way through the crowd of farm workers. There, on the ground, lies a man in his late teens. His head and face are bloodied, his mouth frozen in fear. On the man's forehead is a quarter-inch round hole where the bone has caved in. His eyes are turned up as though they were looking toward his now-empty skull. A terrified young girl stands near the body.

Any characters looking at the body must make a saving throw versus paralyzation. Those who fail their save are stunned and cannot act for 1d6 rounds. The young girl is more than willing to talk about what happened. She says:

"We were walking, everything was quiet. Then this horrid thing came out of nowhere. It grabbed my boyfriend in its ugly arms, then Jarak went limp, and I screamed. I tried to run away, but I couldn't move."

"And that's when I showed up." A middle-aged man with thick, dirty fingernails extends his hand to you. "I saw this thing sucking the young boy's face, and I lost my

head. I hope too many people didn't hear me cry out. I have an image to maintain."

If the PCs ask for a description of the thing, the older man says it could have been a man or a monster. "Whatever it was, it wore a black robe with the outline of a tiger sewn on it."

The attacker was actually a hungry Malisha.

Location #16

A barracks-style building sits near the edge of this extensive farm. Vegetables and wheat are the farm's staple crops. Nearly 50 people work the land.

Several of the people who work here have families on the premises. They have experienced a number of missing persons, but not nearly as large a loss as the farm at Location 15. The people here know little about activities in town.

If the characters ask any of the workers about the disappearances, they say, "That farm, (pointing at Location 14), is haunted. The evil spirit steals and consumes the flesh of the young to ease its savage nature. If you want the killings to stop, you have to kill the beast and its vile owner. We have told the constable many times, but he just smiles and does nothing."

Location #17

This is the local constabulary and jail. The policing agent, Wellis Andreman, is a 9th-level ranger. He has attempted to investigate the disappearances and murders, but he has yet to find any clues.

This building stands tall, yet leans to the east at a sickening angle. Bricks near the cornerstone crumble from the unearthly weight of the sliding foundation.

Inside, a single office takes up the entire first floor. Stairs leading to barred jail cells make their way to the darkness above. A

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man drifts down from the blackness of the second floor. A second man sits alone behind an enormous desk. His rickety chair squeals as his eyes focus on you.

The man at the desk is Wellis. He believes there are several different groups working together to cause Aferdale's problems. He does not have a clue about who is responsible, but he dedicates his evenings to patrolling the area, trying to assure the people's safety. He offers the characters 20 gp each for information leading to an arrest and conviction of the villains. He guarantees 30 gold each for solving the mystery and putting an end to the ordeal.

If the characters ask for any clues, Wellis gives them the following information:

- * "No one has seen any wild game in these parts for more than 18 months."
- * "Over 100 persons are missing to date, and it seems that someone disappears every day."
- * "Even though there is a shortage of wild game, the monastery seems to find a few animals now and then."
- * "A ghost haunts Baggs' farm (Location 1). Some believe the ghost is the spirit of a long-lost employee."
- * "The bouncers for the *Parsed Lip* (Building 10) are some of the roughest customers I have seen in a long while. At night I have seen them prowling the city. When I have confronted them, they claim they are looking for the criminals responsible for the disappearances."
- * "One of the only places not experiencing disappearances is the temple of Weeshy. The priests there say the confines of their mystical walls and their oneness with their deity protects them from all harm. Yet, two persons from their temple died six years ago in a carriage accident."

Location #18

The exterior of the building is lighted and cheery-looking. Inside, however, men and

women of all ages sit within its gloomy walls, fidgeting or resting their heads on open palms.

This is the local hunter's guild. The membership has dropped in the past year because there is no game. If the characters ask why everyone looks so depressed, they are told the following:

"In the past twelve months, we have not found a single track anywhere within two days' travel of Aferdale. It's as if the wildlife just left. Even the rabbit and possum population has disappeared.

"If you ask us what's behind it, we say it is an evil someone—or many someones."

NPC Roster

Abane

10th-level Priest of Milil

HP 45	THACO 14	
AC 4	Age 55	AL CG
Str 16	Dex 14	Con 15
Int 16	Wis 18	Cha 15

Abane is the high priest of the temple of Milil. He allows everyone who worships a good deity to use his temple for worship.

Abane carries the following spells: *bles*, *combine*, *command*, *cure light wounds*; *aid*, *find traps*, *goodberry*, *slow poison*; *continual light*, *cure disease*, *prayer*; *cure serious wounds*, *divination*, *neutralize poison*; *commune*, *cure critical wounds*.

Malisha

15th-Level Female Illithid Priest of Malar

HP 65	THACO 12	
AC 2	Age 36	AL LE
Str 18	Dex 14	Con 17
Int 17	Wis 14	Cha 18

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Malisha dresses in long flowing robes embroidered with wild animals. When she leaves the temple where she resides, she always cloaks her head, hiding her tentacles from sight. This allows her to walk within Aferdale without notice.

Malisha became the head priest in the temple of the Beast Lord Malar when the former priest depleted the wild game population with his excessive Malarite ceremonies. When this happened, the other Malarite priests killed him. Malisha devised a plan to appease the deity by *polymorphing* the people of Aferdale into wild boars, wolves, bears, and mountain lions to sacrifice to their evil god. In return, she was given the right to eat their brains immediately before the ceremony.

Several dozen followers live and worship at the temple with her, with several of these lesser priests vying for her leadership position. She has successfully thwarted every take-over attempt since her induction two years ago. Unfortunately, those who have attempted to discrown her were never seen again.

Malisha has all the attacks, benefits, and limitations of normal illithids. In addition, she has the following spells currently in memory: *animal friendship, combine, cause light wounds, detect good, faerie fire, sanctuary; chant, charm person or mammal, detect charm, heat metal, hold person, spiritual hammer; cause disease, dispel magic, feign death, locate object, meld into stone, stone shape; cause serious wounds, cure serious wounds, detect lie, divination, protection from good 10' radius, tongues; cause critical wounds, cure critical wounds, flame strike, plane shift; blade barrier, conjure fire elemental; unholy word.*

Malisha wears an *amulet of proof against detection and location*, wears *bracers of defense AC 2*, and has a clerical *wand of polymorphing*.

Wellis Andreman

9th-Level Human Ranger, Constable

HP 86	THAC0 12	
AC 0	Age 38	AL NG
Str 17	Dex 16	Con 18
Int 16	Wis 17	Cha 15

Wellis Andreman is the town constable. He has attempted to find the cause of the missing persons (or murders), but has yet to find any clues or bodies.

He is a handsome individual with an amazing tenacity. He wears *elven chain mail +3* with a red eagle patch on the right shoulder. His body is riddled with tattoos depicting the major battles he fought during his youth as a soldier. He wears his brown hair in a three-foot-long braid down his back.

In spite of his failure to solve the mysterious disappearances, he has continued to look, hoping to find some clue with the next corner he turns. He has been attacked six times recently by those responsible—or so he believes. This makes him assume he is getting close. Wellis thinks there are several different groups working together because the kidnappings appear to be well orchestrated. He does not have a clue as to who is responsible—yet.

Nansen

13th-Level Male Fighter, Parsed Lip Owner

HP 115	THAC0 8	
AC 2	Age 41	AL CN
Str 17	Dex 16	Con 18
Int 16	Wis 17	Cha 15

Nansen is a rough-looking individual. He has more scars on his face, neck, and arms than most adventurers get on their whole bodies in a lifetime. A cruel man, he came to Ravenloft soon after a military campaign that left thousands dead. He is now cursed to spend the rest of his life in this forsaken land.

Chapter VIII: The Man with Three Faces



Setup

This adventure is designed for two to three characters of 8th to 11th level. At times, the characters may seem overmatched, while at others, they may find their competition unworthy of their skill. Such are the insane manifestations of the foe they are about to meet.

The PCs are about to meet Davion, an insane man with the power to change reality. As far as the PCs can tell, everything and everyone around them change without warning, but the people around them claim that nothing has happened. Are the PCs trapped

in some bizarre cycle, or is everyone around them insane? Can they convince everyone that they themselves are not insane so they can get the world back on track?

As real as the NPCs in this adventure may seem, none of them actually exist. Every object and every living creature the PCs will encounter are manifestations of Davion's alter egos. To the PCs, however, these illusions will seem unflinching real.

If the PCs cast *detect magic* at any time during this adventure, they learn nothing about the truth of their surroundings, as if the spell failed. Magical items carried by the characters reveal their magical nature normally. The PCs will not know why the spell failed until they complete the adventure and solve the mystery.

If the characters cast *know alignment*, the spell also appears to fail. The spell never functions properly in Ravenloft—it reveals only law or chaos—but in this case, not even these extremes are revealed. If the PCs attempt the spell on Davion, however, he is revealed as *both* chaotic and lawful. The PCs will not learn the reason for this until they discover Davion's secret.

Synopsis for the DM

The PCs enter a town that appears normal in all respects. However, at random intervals, all aspects of the town (architecture, businesses, people, weather, and so on) change to a completely different look. The PCs do not change geographic location, but the appearance of their location changes. Buildings remain in the same positions, for the most part, but they change to completely new buildings. If, for example, the PCs leave an object in the street, it never moves. Objects left in buildings, however, disappear when the scene changes. The mechanics of the changes are described in greater detail later.

These alterations are due to the multiple personalities inhabiting Davion's body. The DM should read Davion's complete description at the end of this adventure before proceeding.

The Adventure

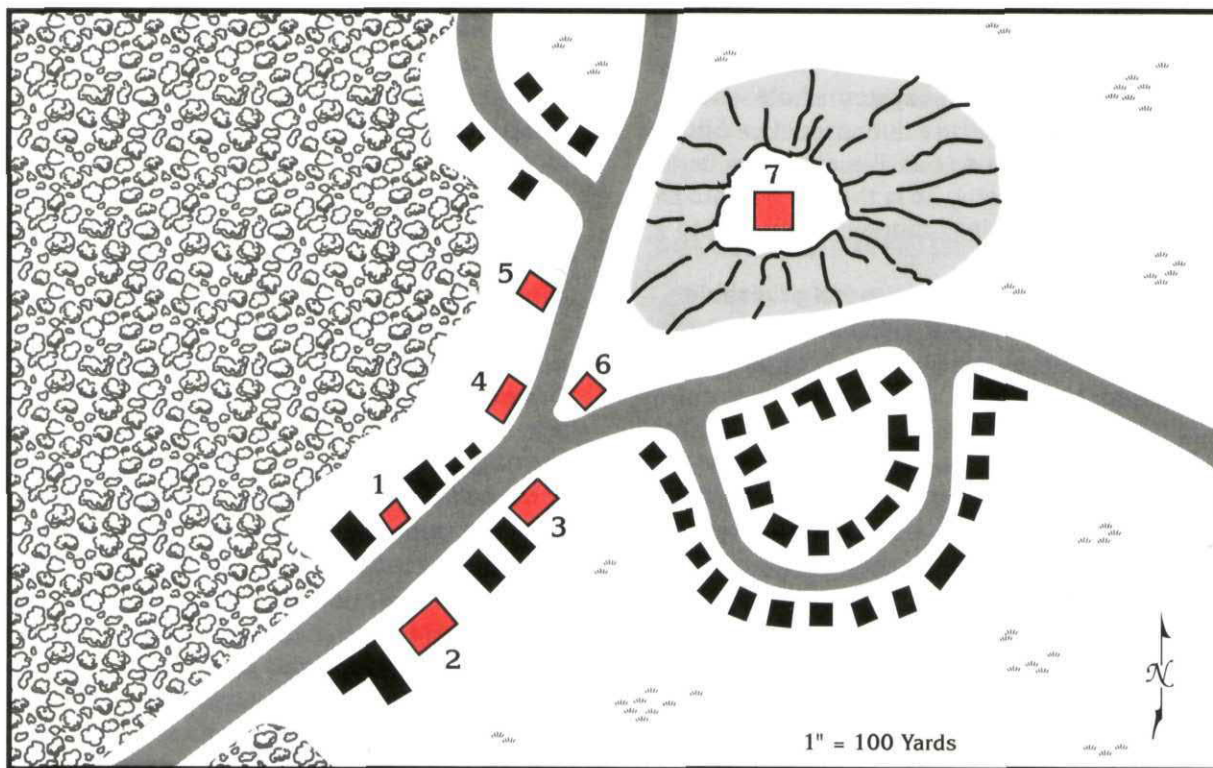
This adventure begins when the characters enter a town named Thornewood. As they approach the town, the Dungeon Master should read the following.

As you pass a vine-covered sign reading *Thornewood*, you see several buildings and streets peeking through the dense woods that surround the city. The cobblestone streets are broken and crumbling as though a massive earthquake ripped through recently. Large chunks of the ground have moved to create steps as high as four feet.

Most of the half-timber buildings sit precariously on these newly-made cliffs, while a few have splintered into useless junk that clutters dying gardens. A few people walk about and climb over the demolished sidewalks.

If the PCs try to chat with the villagers, the people are pleasant but wary. They do not stop

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to chat for long, insisting that they have business to tend to. If the PCs ask about the damage, some people say the damage has been there as long as anyone can remember, while others claim it occurred only last week.

If the characters investigate the town, they see it consists of a single road that forks into two streets. This first encounter in Thornewood is in accordance with the Davion personality.

A small grocery sits at the road's fork (Location 6); unfortunately, it is completely destroyed. Several children and a few adults rummage through the remains, looking for any salvageable supplies, especially food. When the villagers have found what they are looking for, they drop money on what appears to be the remains of a counter, and walk away.

As the PCs walk through town, a frail, elderly woman approaches them and implores their assistance. She wishes to collect some groceries, but cannot carry them home herself. (This will help draw the PCs to the ruined grocery to begin the adventure.)

If the characters so much as touch the

counter or the money—a total of 35 silver pieces—they notice the sky instantly turning black. As their eyes adjust to the dimness, they see they are now in a building that smells of newly cut pine and cedar. Around them, general merchandise and various trappings and bridles fill the store's walls. Five burly, bearded gentlemen stand around the PCs menacingly.

"I suggest you put that stolen money down." The man behind the counter, just as rugged as the others, sets a smoldering cigar in a beaten tray of copper. If the characters look in their hands, they see the coins that they touched in the ruined building.

If the characters do not return the money to the counter, these men try to take it from them.

Burly Opponents (5): Int Average (11-12); AL CN; AC 8; MV 12; HD 6; hp 48; THACO 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1-2 by fists and kicks; SZ M (6' tall); ML Elite (14); XP 270 each.

These men are not trying to kill the characters, and they do not draw any weapons.

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If the men inflict cumulative damage to the characters equal to half their full hit points, the PCs must roll successful system shock checks at a 25% penalty with each consecutive blow in order to remain conscious. If a character is knocked unconscious, he is thrown out into the street, and the “stolen” money is returned to the proprietor.

If the characters are able to kill or disable these men, they are free to keep the money or anything else they see while their opponents are unconscious.

If the characters did not touch the money, the transformation occurs anyway. The five burly gentlemen are responsive to the characters if they purchase anything. If they purchase nothing, the men grumble and complain, making it clear that the PCs are not welcome.

Change of Scene

When the characters are out in the street, or when they are again conscious, they see that the streets are made of cobblestone but are as level as if they were newly made. Every building has changed in appearance; the half-timber buildings are now red brick structures with slate roofs. What had been the demolished grocery is the general store the PCs visited. Several people mill about the streets. Some sit on benches, while children enjoy a game in the street. A new building has appeared on the scene: a temple (Location 4). The PCs have entered the manifestation of Narana, the priest.

This temple is enormous and is made of blood-red stone. Singing can be heard pouring from within.

If the characters ask anyone about the transformation they saw, the people look at each other with puzzled brows. “I’m sorry. Nothing has changed here in years. The town has been here for over five years, and before that, it was a timber colony. Are you referring to that?”

If the characters mention that a change has

occurred within the last few minutes, the people look at each other and burst into laughter. “By the Powers, lads, are you suffering from delusion? I’d have the priestess look at me, if I were you!”

The villagers continue to laugh and wander down the street. Later, they begin whispering to each other, occasionally pointing in the characters’ direction.

If the PCs approach the temple, they see a beautiful woman step out into the sunlight. Dressed in scanty armor resembling scale mail, several chains dangle from her hair and around her neck, cascading across her mail. Behind her, a half-dozen more priestesses follow.

If the characters ask the priestess about the alteration of the city, she replies, “Nothing has changed in this area for years. However, if you are not feeling well and would like me to aid you, I will be happy to do so. Remember where you are. You can trust no one but yourself; and even then, that can be unwise.”

If the characters ask what she means by *where you are*, she says, “Ravenloft, of course.” She continues down the street, followed by her priestesses. If the characters ask the priestess to help them, she says she is unable to do so now, but they should return after sundown.

If the characters try to enter the temple, they find it to be completely ordinary in all respects.

If the PCs threaten the priestess, the personality changes immediately, causing her to disappear from the street. If they do not attack her outright but badger her verbally, she merely leaves them and enters her temple.
DM’s Notes: As discussed earlier, Davion has several different personalities living within him. Each of these entities has a different perception of what this city looks like. Due to the struggles between the personalities, the city changes appearance at random intervals.

A map is provided on page 65 for the Dungeon Master. As the changes take place, refer to the numbered location and select the description for the appropriate personality. The

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building descriptions for each personality appear below.

Changing the Village

The look of the town will change without warning as the different personalities take over. The DM may choose when the town changes as he finds it appropriate, or he may determine the transformations randomly. In the latter case, the DM should roll 2d10; the town will change following that number of rounds. He should then roll 1d4 to determine which personality has taken over (see building descriptions that follow). If the roll indicates that the same personality continues to control the town, the DM may allow it or may reroll.

It is important to keep track of rounds as the characters investigate. However, the DM should not tell the PCs he is doing so. Only if the PCs announce that they are keeping track of time between scene changes should the DM give them such information.

The adventure should be allowed to continue from this point in any manner the PCs dictate. Characters should be allowed to investigate, with the DM giving the information provided and announcing the changes in the town's appearance.

Following their observations of the temple and the priestess, the characters may investigate any other building and are free to enter and react to the people. However, the people try their best to ignore them.

As the scenes change, the PCs will eventually revisit variations of the town they had visited previously. None of the villagers will remember their previous encounters, even if deals were made or battles were fought. If the PCs cast *ESP* or *detect lie*, they find nothing unusual and no evidence that the villagers are lying. Only Narana, Augustus, and Boromar (described at the end of this adventure) will remember the PCs from one encounter to the next and be able to continue conversations begun earlier.

If the characters try to leave the town at any

time, they find that they are unable to do so. Whenever the city disappears behind them, they see the city appear on the horizon ahead. This occurs regardless of the road they take or whether they walk through the woods.

Location Descriptions

Following are general descriptions of the town while under the influence of each personality. After these descriptions is information about each individual location. The DM should keep track of the PCs' position on the map. When the scenery changes, the DM should roll 1d4 to determine which personality takes over: 1 = mage (A), 2 = fighter (B), 3 = priest (C), 4 = Davion (D). If the PCs check the signpost at the entrance to the town, they will find that the name changes with the village, although the vine-covered, wooden sign itself does not seem to have been touched.

Arcanon (Mage Village)

This town has red brick streets and clapboard houses. All the buildings are in good repair but are well weathered. The weather is overcast but pleasantly cool.

Boromar's Knoll (Fighter Village)

This appears to be a pioneer town, with log cabins and log barns and shops. The street is merely a dirt road with shallow ruts. The inhabitants are accustomed to life in the wilderness. The sky is clear, but the temperature is near freezing as though winter approaches.

Pallatia (Priest Village)

This village is home to red brick structures with slate roofs. The streets are newly paved with cobblestones. The weather is warm and breezy, reminiscent of late spring.

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Thornewood (Davion Village)

The appearance of this manifestation is that of the earthquake-tortured, broken village. The houses are half-timber with thatched roofs. The streets are paved with cobblestones, but are broken and jagged and completely impassable to any wheeled conveyance. The breeze is warm, but the trees show signs of approaching autumn.

Location 1

1A: This is a magnificently stocked shop specializing in magic. Nearly every imaginable magical item valued at less than 4,000 XP is sold here. If the characters purchase anything, they lose the item once another personality alters reality. The money they spent is not regained.

1B: This is a tavern. It has three bars and all the ale is free. The people gathered here are all fighters of at least 6th level.

1C: This is a well-kept inn with seven guest rooms.

1D: This is a tavern. It is always busy, and the favorite topic of conversation is the demise of a man named Davion. The DM may offer any clues he desires from Davion's description at the end of the adventure.

Location 2

2A: This is a large gathering hall packed with the guests of a wedding. No one here will speak to the characters. They all believe the PCs are suffering from some sort of traveler's sickness.

2B: This empty lot is home to a public message board. A single signpost holds the following message: *Hear ye—The newcomers suffer from the influence of fiends. Be warned. Do not speak with them and do not acknowledge their existence. They will be burned at sundown and forever relieved from their torture.*

2C: This is a public stable. If the characters tether their horses here and the scene changes, the horses are permanently lost.

2D: This is home to a blacksmith. If he is given any work, it is permanently lost when the scene changes with another manifestation.

Location 3

3A: This is a vacant inn. No one owns it and no one lives on the premises.

3B: A field overgrown with brush stands empty.

3C: A blacksmith lives and works here. If he is given any work to be done, it is permanently lost when the scene changes to another manifestation.

3D: This is a stable. If horses are tethered here and the scene changes, the horses are permanently lost.

Location 4

4A: This tavern has three bars and all the wine is free. The people congregated here are all mages of at least 6th level.

4B: This tavern serves drinks when the other tavern closes. This bar is only open from midnight to noon.

4C: This is the red temple of Loviatar (described earlier).

4D: This is a small infirmary operated by a 2nd-level priest. He has limited healing powers and relies mainly on herbal remedies. If the priest aids any of the characters, the ailment immediately returns when the scene again transforms.

Location 5

5A: This is a small general store.

5B: This stable sells the finest horses for unbelievably low prices. Superior quality tack is also available. If the characters buy horses, however, they disappear when another personality manifests, even if the characters are riding the mounts.

5C: An empty lot is home to a single signpost. A message reads: *Hear ye—The newcomers suffer from the influence of fiends. Be warned. Do not speak with them and do not acknowledge*

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their existence. They will be burned at sundown and forever relieved of their torture.

5D: A fortune-teller (not a Vistani) lives and works here. However, the reader has the same fortune to tell everyone who visits. “You are nothing but a dream. Everything you experience is nightmare and nothing more.”

Location 6

6A: Empty lot.

6B: This building is an armory. Every nonmagical weapon and shield imaginable is sold here. If the characters buy anything, the items disappear once another personality alters reality again. The money spent is lost.

6C: This building is the general store. Manned by five hulking men, they make sure no one steals anything. If the characters purchase anything from this store, it instantly disappears when the city changes.

6D: This is the destroyed remains of a general store. Canned foods and supplies lie in the ruin, and the town’s people rummage through it in search of food.

Location 7

In all manifestations except the Davion personality, this is merely a wooded hill. In the case of Davion, the hill appears as follows.

This was formerly a house built of stone, but it is now destroyed. The first time the characters see this manifestation of the terrain, they see piles of rocks and boulders. With each manifestation of the Davion personality, the rocks slowly shift and rebuild themselves into a beautiful manor house. Only if Davion is cured or destroyed will the rocks completely reconstruct the house. If the characters enter the house within 4 hours of discovering Davion’s secret, they find a portal in the otherwise empty manor house allowing them to return to their home world (or a location of the DM’s choice). In all other manifestations of the city, this location is nothing more than a wooded hill.

Putting the Pieces Together

After the PCs spend a night in this town, whether in an inn or camped in the woods, in the morning, the characters find themselves again in Thornewood (the first setting they encountered). The streets are cracked and cliffed. A man paces back and forth in front of the inn. (This is Davion—although the characters do not know his identity yet.) He speaks to himself in soft, broken sentences. Not answering himself, he seems to receive a satisfactory answer from an invisible ally. If the characters approach him, he ignores them unless they speak to him first. If they talk with him, he glances up in horror and begins to run away. Then he settles down and walks back to them. He looks remarkably similar to the priestess they encountered earlier.

“What are your names, please?” If the characters tell him, he appears to make a mental note. Within minutes, the characters see duplicates of themselves walk past them, completely oblivious to them. The characters must roll a fear check.

If the characters stop the impostors, they look at the characters, look at themselves, and begin fighting the characters. The impostors carry the same weapons and wear the same armor as the real characters. However, their levels may not match the levels of the characters. The Dungeon Master should roll 1d4 for each character. If the roll is a 1, the imposter is one level lower than the character. If the roll is a 4, the imposter is one level higher. Rolls of 2 or 3 indicate the imposter’s level matches the character’s level. If the impostors die, they do not disappear. They fall to the ground like any other slain foe.

If the characters attack the babbling man, the impostors come to his rescue, and the man casts spells with the effectiveness of the mage detailed at the end of this adventure. The first spell he uses is *fear*.

While the characters are dealing with the impostors and fighting their fears, Davion the

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Mad runs away from the scene and physically disappears from sight. His disappearance is perfect, since it is a result of the many powers he wields.

As the characters investigate the town on the second day, the changes continue to occur as on the previous day. The DM should allow them to encounter Davion's other personalities (Narana, Boromar, and Augustus) in their own versions of the town in appropriate settings. Thus, the mage may appear in the magic shop, the fighter at the blacksmith's shop, etc. In every case, these characters look remarkably like the babbling old man they encountered on the street.

The PCs may question the three personalities freely. Each one remembers all his activities up until arriving at Davion's home to deliver what they found while adventuring. They remember that Davion was in the middle of a spell or similar activity at the time, that a bright flash ensued, and that things haven't seemed quite right ever since. Narana, Boromar, and Augustus haven't seen each other or Davion since that incident and each of them suffers memory lapses.

If the PCs ask where each of the characters lives, Augustus answers that he has lodging above the magic shop, Narana says that her rooms are inside the temple, and Boromar replies that his room is above the tavern. If the PCs break into their rooms, they find the rooms to be appropriate to the character who lives there, but they find no clues.

The DM should answer any questions or provide any clues necessary to lead the PCs to the conclusion that Davion has melded with the three NPCs.

If the PCs attack Augustus or Boromar and inflict damage on either character equalling half their total hit points, the scene changes instantly. These characters cannot be killed by the PCs; only Davion can be slain.

Below are descriptions of the reactions these three NPCs will have when encountering the party.

Augustus

Of Davion's personalities, the mage is the most receptive to the idea that the three personalities are contained within and controlled by Davion. He has been trying to learn the reason for his memory lapses, and has begun to suspect that multiple personalities are the reason. If the characters question the mage and present any evidence they have gathered in a concise and logical manner, he readily considers the PCs' hypothesis.

If the characters cast *know alignment* on the mage and tell him the results, he does not understand the reason for the result (both law and chaos are evident).

Boromar

If the PCs try to explain to Boromar the changes they have witnessed, he is the personality least receptive to the characters' idea that the three personalities are contained within Davion. Since he believes this cannot be true, he tries to avoid them. If the characters follow him, he wheels about, unsheathing his sword. "Stay away from me. The townsfolk were right about you. You must be possessed by fiends!" He then runs from them.

Later that evening, the characters see 25 of the town's inhabitants gathered together in a mass next to the sign at Location 2. If they approach, the people motion for the PCs to join them. If the characters do, the people swarm around them when they are close.

An initiative roll is required for the characters. The villagers gain no initiative bonuses. Characters who lose initiative are tackled by villagers. Characters who win initiative can run or fight.

Villagers (30): Int Average (8-10); AL N; AC 9; MV 12; HD 2; hp 12; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4 by dagger, shovel, hoe, or pitchfork, or 1-2 with fists and kicks; SZ M (6' tall); ML Unsteady (5-7); XP 65 each.

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The villagers try to subdue the characters rather than kill them. PCs who are captured soon have their hands tied behind their backs and their legs secured by rope at the ankles and knees. They are taken to the empty field where a pile of dried wood has been prepared. Stakes, four inches thick and seven feet tall, stand vertically in the pile.

The characters are led to the woodpile and are tied to the stakes. PCs are allowed a Strength Check to break their bonds.

As these ability checks happen, the people light the wood, saying, "This is the only way we know of curing your insanity. May your tormented souls rest in peace forever when the life passes from your bodies." In 3-12 rounds (rolled individually for each character), the flames begin licking at their boots. Two rounds thereafter, they suffer 1d6 points of damage per round until they are dead or rescued.

Four rounds are required to free a character tied to a stake. The DM should determine appropriate damage for the rescuers depending on the progress of the fire.

If the characters manage to escape their bonds, the people scream and run in fear. No one will give the characters assistance.

Narana

If the characters speak with Narana regarding the many manifestations of the same town, she finds this theory mildly amusing. If the PCs persist in providing evidence, she becomes angry that anyone could be robbing her of followers or of the veneration she deserves. She is extremely self-centered and will not stand for anyone infringing on what is rightfully hers.

If the PCs are persistent and Narana becomes sufficiently agitated, she uses her *ring of two wishes* to wish herself out of Davion's body. She states her *wish* mentally so the character's cannot hear what she has said.

There is a 75% chance that Davion reacts before her wish is completed. If this occurs, the



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characters see a mist crawl up from the ground and surround them. The priestess's body twists and contorts, while her hand reaches for the characters. Her face writhes in tortured agony.

Suddenly, the characters see the frame of a wildly beautiful woman separate from the body of Davion. A sickening sound like tearing flesh can be heard. The woman's body falls to the ground, sending up wisps of dust. The characters must roll horror checks.

If the body is checked, it contains no life. Davion was able to intercept the *wish* and contort its energy.

If Davion was unable to thwart the *wish*, the characters see a stunningly beautiful woman step from the body of Davion. When she sees the characters—and Davion—she eyes them with a seductive look. She slowly walks back and forth in front of the PCs, gauging their reactions. If they stand reasonably still, she quickly slaps them all across the face. With this touch, she inflicts a *pain touch*—a special ability for the specialty priests of Loviatar.

The PCs are allowed a saving throw vs. spell; those who succeed suffer no effect, while those who fail are wracked with pain for 16 rounds. During this time, victims suffer a -4 to attack rolls and a -2 to Dexterity checks.

During this time, Narana pulls a whip from her belt and begins scourging the affected characters. She can attack twice per round. She continues to do this until the characters run away—to her eternal glee—or until they fight back successfully.

With Narana separated from Davion, she loses her ability to affect the town and it immediately reverts to the Davion village. If threatened, she runs toward the temple, only to find that it has disappeared.

When Davion turns to the priestess, she suddenly becomes extremely fearful. She turns to run from him, but he casts a spell at her. The characters see a thin green beam of light follow her, then they hear a shuddering scream followed by complete silence.

The priestess is gone, but where she stood, only dust spirals in the wind. Davion has used a *disintegrate* spell on her.

Davion the Mad

If the characters approach Davion and attempt to discuss his multi-souled body, he denies it. He claims to have never heard of Narana, Augustus, or Boromar. However, if the characters pressure him, he begins to fear for his life and becomes worried that the PCs will find a way to release the other personalities. He attacks the PCs using the skills he is able to access through the other personalities.

If the characters already caused the priestess to separate herself from the conglomeration of personalities, her powers are not available to Davion. If she escaped Davion's mental prison, she is already on her way to find a new domain.

If the PCs manage to slay Davion, the domain returns to what it really is: a heavily wooded area with a stream where the roads once were. Unfortunately for the NPCs who share his body, they are also slain.

The Cure

If the PCs hope to separate Narana, Boromar, and Augustus from Davion, the cure consists of a properly worded *limited wish* or *wish* spell. (Augustus does not have access to these spells.) If the PCs can get Davion's *ring of wishes*, they can use it to effect a cure.

When Boromar and Narana realize the predicament they were in, they temporarily go insane and begin fighting anyone they see. Augustus is immune to this insanity since he suspected the problem all along. The Dungeon Master should roll 1d4. A die roll of 1 or 2 indicates that Boromar and Narana fight each other and Augustus. Any other die roll indicates they attack a random character. Once the battle is over, refer to the Epilogue.

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Epilogue

Once Davion is destroyed, the land returns to its natural condition as woodland bisected by a stream. The rocks on the hill at Location 7 move to form the manor house, and if the PCs enter the manor house within 4 hours of its completion, they can find the portal out of Ravenloft.

NPC Roster

Davion the Mad, 15th-level Wizard

HP: 100	THACO: 11	
AC: 2	Age: 37	AL: CE
Str: 14	Dex: 16	Con: 15
Int: 18	Wis: 16	Cha: 17

Spells: five spells from each of levels 1-5, two spells from level 6, one spell from level 7.

These numbers represent Davion's true statistics when he is not behaving as someone else. The statistics below denote the three different manifestations of Davion, depending on his state of mind.

In all his different manifestations, Davion the Mad is the best at what he does, or so he thinks. As a fighter, he commands respect and falls to no one. As a priestess of Loviatar, he is the high priest, and as a mage, he is a superlative spellcaster. Each particular manifestation has its own powers and magical weapons that allow it to be a deadly force to anyone Davion faces. Davion owns an *amulet of life protection* and a *ring of two wishes*.

Davion's History

Davion was once a powerful and well-known mage. His scope of arcane knowledge spanned all of the eight magical schools. Yet, with all his experiences, he was still unhappy. He lusted for more knowledge and power at any price.

He hired three people to search the world over for artifacts, scrolls, books, and whatever else they could find. While they were out

searching, he discovered a *ring of two wishes*. He realized that he finally had the means to gain the knowledge that only the Powers had. He pondered the wording of his request for many months.

When he finished, he had composed nearly 100 words for his *wish*. He placed the ring on his finger and began reciting. "I, Davion, wish . . ." At that moment, his three hirelings arrived in his study proclaiming to have found a vast wealth of knowledge. In his excitement, Davion forgot the *wish*, demanding, "Give me everything you got!"

At that instant, the ring granted his wish. A bright and painful light filled the room, and all four people screamed in agony. When the light faded, only one person remained: Davion. The *wish* combined all four individuals into one entity. However, a terrible side effect occurred. Davion now had four distinct and powerful personalities entrapped in his body.

Occasionally, these personalities are given temporary control—by the powers of Ravenloft—so they can have a chance to remedy the predicament if they choose. Unfortunately, the three personalities are not aware of their situation as of yet, because they do not share a collective mind.

If the personalities are made aware of this dilemma, they will undoubtedly attempt to cure themselves, if they have the time and the tools. Meanwhile, Davion enjoys the knowledge of their existence and makes use of it. This attachment, however, has driven him insane.

When Davion is in control of the body, he can access the spell capabilities of the mage and the priest, and the fighting skills of the fighter, as well as his own wealth of spells.

Whenever a personality comes to power, the village changes to match what the current manifestation perceives it to be. The town changes randomly as the various personalities gain control of Davion's psyche. The three NPCs who share Davion's body are described below.

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Boromar, 10th-level Warrior

HP: 100	THAC0: 11	
AC: -1	Age: 37	AL: CN
Str: 18/55	Dex 15	Con: 18
Int: 14	Wis 16	Cha: 17

When Boromar's personality takes over, Davion wears *full plate mail* +2. He carries five *javelins of lightning* that cause 1d6 +20 points of damage. He also carries a *sword* +4, *defender*. Boromar can opt to use the sword's +4 bonus as defense or to improve his attack or any combination of defense and attack totalling +4.

Boromar gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls and +3 to damage because of his Strength.

If Boromar ever drops his sword, he can call it back into his hand within 1 round. Every time he manifests, he regains any lost javelins.

Boromar's personality is nothing less than mysterious. He continually talks and grumbles to himself as though complaining to an invisible ally. Whether out of caution or paranoia, he often whirls about on his heels, making sure no one follows him. His enemies are those who are unaware they caused him panic.

Narana, 16th-level Priestess of Loviatar

HP: 100	THAC0: 10	
AC: 3	Age: 37	AL: CE
Str: 16	Dex: 15	Con: 18
Int: 14	Wis: 19	Cha: 17

When Narana takes control, Davion has access to ten 1st-level spells, nine 2nd-level spells, eight 3rd-level spells, eight 4th-level spells, four 5th-level spells, three 6th-level spells and one 7th-level spell. This list includes bonus spells for high Wisdom.

Narana wears *bracers of defense* AC 3, *ring of 1 wish*, and *boots of the north*. She carries no weapons, but her poisoned fingernails (Type N poison) cause 1-2 points of damage.

Although Narana is female, her face strongly

resembles Davion. Her hair is black and straight, flowing down to her waist. Her body is unquestionably female. No facial hair grows while Narana is in control, but when one of the male characters takes over, hair growth resumes normally.

The priestess is loud and rude. She often uses profanity and crude innuendoes. She is always there to help those who have been hurt, but in the standard Loviatar way. Instead of aiding with healing spells or kind words, she kicks, claws, and whips at them with anything available. Her only wish is to create more pain and torment for her deity. If the PCs accept her offer of aid, they may be in worse shape after their meeting.

Narana refuses to believe that anyone could share her psyche. Her self-centered nature prevents her from thinking of anyone but herself.

Augustus, 12th-level Mage

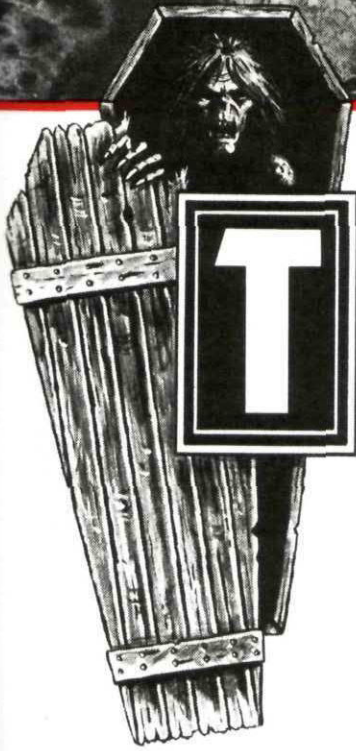
HP: 100	THAC0: 17	
AC: 3	Age: 37	AL: LN
Str: 14	Dex: 19	Con: 15
Int: 18	Wis: 16	Cha: 17

When Augustus dominates Davion, he is able to cast four spells from each of levels 1 through 5, and one spell from level 6. He wears a *robe of protection* +3. He carries a *rod of smiting* that causes 1d8 +3 points of damage with every strike. He gains a +3 bonus to all reaction and initiative rolls due to high Dexterity.

Augustus's personality is a ponderous one. Preferring to learn from the words of others, he is more quiet than talkative. However, when he feels someone is being ignorant, he lets the offender know in very blunt and concise ways.

His answers to questions are always the same; short and to the point. He hates wasting time listening to long convoluted stories when the result is all that he requires. Often in conversation he rudely interrupts to tell the speaker to "get to the point."

Chapter VIII: The Living Crypt



Setup

This adventure is designed for five to six characters of 9th through 12th level who are already in Ravenloft. This adventure is especially useful when one player cannot attend a game session, but also works for a full party.

One morning, the party awakens to discover that one of

its members (or an important NPC) is missing. If the PCs are in a place with other people, such as a village, they learn of two other abductions that same night.

Adventure

If the PCs investigate the place where the missing persons were last seen, they find signs of a struggle. There does not appear to be a forced entry, although it is obvious that the abductee made every effort to break free. There are no other clues at the crime scenes. The DM will need to fill in details as necessary depending where the PC was when he disappeared (i.e., in the woods, a jail cell, an inn, and so on). If they follow the bootprints and tell-tale spots of blood leading from the scene, the DM should read the following. Curiously, the bootprints do not show evidence that their owner was encumbered. The prints seem normal in every way.

You follow the loping bootprints through the maze of a choking forest and up a tall hill. Mountainous clouds loom overhead and the trees around you hold a nervous silence. At length, a small clearing opens upon a

grassy knoll ahead. The tracks of the heavy-booted creature head straight for the hilltop. As you approach the crest, you see what appears to be a forgotten cemetery: a once-grand archway of wrought iron that now stands twisted and rusted; the brick wall around the once-hallowed ground has crumbled to a low, ivy-strangled ridge; and the tombstones within are smothered beneath high grasses.

The bootprints pass through the gate and continue through the grasses to a crumbling edifice. The gray stone building is covered with ivy and is imbedded in the side of a hill. A formerly heavy door, now rotting, stands slightly ajar, revealing a dark interior. Upon the crumbling stoop, you notice a drop of blood. The once-still forest now seems to moan with an uneasy wind.

Into the Crypt

If the characters approach the door, they smell a sickening odor coming from inside the building. *Detect magic* reveals strong magic (10% chance of identifying alteration/necromancy) within. The wooden door contains no traps, but several species of innocuous mold and fungus live on its weakening surface.

If the characters open the door completely and enter, the DM should read the following.

The door opens stiffly, allowing a meager pool of sunlight to flow in over the uneven stone floor. Again the wind moans, but it echoes strangely louder within the building than outside. Your nose fills with the clinging mold and dust stirred by your feet and, as your eyes adjust to the darkness, you see piles of armor and other gear lining the far wall. Suddenly, across the smooth stone surfaces within, a cry echoes that could not have been merely the wind. Indeed, it sounded much like your missing companion.

The Living Crypt

The cry seems to have come through the far wall.

The room is approximately 20' by 20'. The two side walls appear ordinary, but are covered with moss and fungus in most places. The wall opposite the door appears ordinary (at first), except for the armor and gear strewn below it.

If the party moves forward to investigate the gear, they find it to be in varying states of decay. Some is practically new, while other items have probably been lying here for years. There are four suits of plate armor, two sets of studded leather armor, and five bags of coins (totalling 56 gp, 27 sp, 11 cp).

Any character who gets close enough to investigate, however, may be grappled by unseen hands and hear the distinct moaning of despondent voices. (This is the Living Wall—refer to the *Monstrous Compendium* entry for the Living Wall in the appendix of this book.)

The creatures within the wall will attempt to grab hold of anyone approaching within five feet. The victim is allowed a Dexterity check to avoid the grasp. The wall must make a successful attack roll against the victim's natural armor class. No bonuses are allowed for armor, but Dexterity bonuses apply.

The Living Wall

If one of the characters casts *true seeing* or uses a *gem of seeing* to investigate the far wall, read the following.

Beneath the illusory appearance of stone, the far wall actually consists of graying and sinewy flesh and oozes a mucilaginous substance. Across its rotting surface, human faces, eyes, ribs, spines, hands, and feet mingle with two snarling wolf muzzles and a number of razor-clawed rodent limbs. All eyes fix upon you and several gnarled,

human hands reach imploringly in your direction. Many sets of dry, cracked lips moan despondently, "Help me . . . free me!" You realize that the moaning you had thought to be the wind in truth issues from the wall.

Any character who views the true nature of the wall must roll a Ravenloft horror check.

See the Living Wall entry at the end of this book for complete information.

Living Wall: INT Variable (3-18); AL CE; AC 4; MV Nil; HD 8 (base); hp 320; THACO Variable; #AT 20; MR 20%; SZ G (200 square feet); ML Fearless (20); XP Value 15,000.

- **5th-level fighters (3):** THACO 16; #AT 1 (each); Dmg 1-8 (long sword).
- **8th-level conjurer:** THACO 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4 (dagger) or by spell; Spells *unseen servant* (×2), *Melf's acid arrow* (×2), *summon swarm* (×2), *monster summoning I*, *Evard's black tentacles*.
Note: Spells listed are renewed each day.
- **8th-level necromancer:** THACO 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6 (quarterstaff) or by spell; Spells *chill touch* (2 per day), *spectral hand* (2 per day), *vampiric touch* (3 per day), *contagion* (1 per day).
- **10th-level paladin:** THACO 11; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8 (long sword); SA and SD Abilities opposite those of a normal paladin (due to chaotic evil status—see "Living Wall" entry in appendix).
- **3rd-level priests (2):** THACO 20; #AT 1 (each); Dmg 1-6 (club, horseman's mace); SA (each priest receives the following spells) *command* (1 per day); *cause fear* (1 per day); *chant* (1 per day).
- **Dire wolves (3):** THACO 15; #AT 1; Dmg 2-8.
- **Badgers (3):** THACO 19; #AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/1-6.

The Living Crypt



This wall was created by the creature who abducted the PCs' companion—it may be the primary villain of the DM's personal campaign or the lich detailed here. The wall serves to fortify the main entrance to the villain's lair. He has abducted the PCs' companion as a material component for another living wall that will guard the rear entrance to his lair.

The party may completely avoid the living wall; because the wall does not initiate attacks, the party need not fight it unless it is grappled by it or if PCs are of good alignments and feel that they must destroy this evil creation.

Bypassing the Wall

The room the characters have entered contains a secret door in the wall to the right of the entrance. The door is trapped with an elaborate mechanical device—moments after the door swings open, a razor-sharp blade drops guillotine-fashion from the door's lintel, causing damage to anyone in the doorway. The blade causes 2d8 points of damage *minus* 1

point per point of Armor Class of the victim (shield and Dexterity bonuses are not included).

The door leads into a side passage that skirts the living wall and empties into the corridor behind it. If the party does not find this door, they must cut through the living wall, find the rear entrance to the complex (see "The Catacombs"), or leave their companion for dead.

If the characters manage to cut through the living wall or pass through the secret door, they find themselves in an utterly dark hallway. The hallway, constructed of stone blocks, slopes gradually downward. After descending 50 feet, the hall ends at a closed door.

This door is unlocked and is well constructed. It bears a *fire trap* spell that detonates in an explosion causing 1d4 + 20 points of damage centered on the stone block in front of the threshold.

The explosion engulfs everything within a 5-foot radius in flames. Creatures within the area of effect must roll a saving throw vs. spell to suffer only half damage.

The Living Crypt

If party members successfully remove the trap (or survive the blast), they may open the door to find a large chamber that is home to the DM's villain or an angry lich. The lich is in the process of creating another living wall when the party happens upon him. A DM who decides to use the lich should read the following.

Nightblood and the Zombies

Beyond the door lies a cavernous catacomb. Through a forest of stone columns, you glimpse flickering torchlight—and movement. There, across the dusky cavern and deep within a passage that leads out of the catacombs stands a haggard form in filthy raiment. He appears to be bending over a great mound on the floor and muttering darkly. Peering across the room, you see your companion lying unconscious or dead atop two other bodies. Suddenly, the hoary figure turns around and the pinpoint eyes in his skeletal face fix upon you. He raises his hands and croaks, "Drag them down to death!" At his command, a horde of zombies emerges from the stalagmites between you and the creature, and they shamble toward you.

DM's Note: The distance between the PCs and the twelve zombies is 18' and closing. The distance to the lich is about 100 yards.

Zombies, Common (12): Int Non; AL N; AC 8; MV 6; HD 2; hp 12; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8; MR Special; SZ M; ML Special; XP Value 65 each.

Nightblood's statistics are given at the end of this adventure.

Nightblood intends to immobilize the intruders and incorporate them into the living wall. He anticipated that the abduction of the party's companion would bring the foolish

party to rescue him. Nightblood has, therefore, memorized every spell allowed by his level. The DM should select Nightblood's memorized spells from his three spell books, which are listed with his statistics. The DM can devise his own strategy for spell use by Nightblood or use the following strategy.

Nightblood's Strategy

When the party entered the front door of the crypt, it activated a *magic mouth* spell (the moaning sound and cries for help) that alerts Nightblood to intruders. He immediately casts *shield* and *stoneskin* upon himself. He then casts *animate dead* to create the twelve zombie guardians from corpses stashed within the catacombs.

When the characters are attacked by the zombies, they must either flee or fight. If they flee, the zombies follow and attempt to engage them. Meanwhile, Nightblood casts spells such as *web* to fortify his position.

If the characters attack immediately, they must battle the zombies before attempting to engage Nightblood. While the zombies detain the party, Nightblood attempts a *death spell* on the characters. If this fails, he casts *web* spells to create a barrier between himself and the party. Then he strikes his *chime of hunger* to make the characters dig into their rations and allow the zombies to receive free attacks. If the party survives, Nightblood casts *summon shadow* to bring six shadows upon them. If the lich himself is forced into combat, he casts *fly* to avoid melee and *chain lightning* to attack the characters. He continues all attacks until the party leaves or is destroyed. If the battle turns against the lich, he will try to grab his spell books (see "Nightblood's Library") and *teleport* away to safety. However, he will flee only to recover and attack again.

If the characters kill the lich or force him to flee, they find their kidnapped companion to be asleep, not dead. Nightblood had cast *enervation* on the three captives to hold them

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while he worked to create another living wall. The other two captives are named Boris and Itzak (see the NPC Roster).

The Catacombs

If the party explores the cavern, they find countless ledges, niches, and crypts holding dead bodies, as well as many passages that branch away into labyrinthine catacombs beneath the graveyard. The passages lead to innumerable coffins, nearly all of which have been ransacked. Along all the walls in the catacombs, the stone carving of a beautiful maiden's face is repeated endlessly (see the NPC Roster).

The entire underground complex seems to have only two entrances: the one through which the party entered, and the one where the lich was working to create another living wall. The second entrance leads up to a *fire trapped* stone door that opens into a thorny thicket beyond the cemetery.

Three small rooms, formerly home to a dozen caskets each, branch off the main chamber. These are the library, a storage room for spell components, and the laboratory.

Nightblood's Library

The library is a small, 20' by 20' room with one bank of shelves containing numerous crumbling tomes (11 of these are detailed below). The party enters the library on its south side, through an old wooden door with no traps or locks. Directly across from the door (on the north wall) stands the shelf of books. Some of the old spines contain arcane lettering, but most are blank. Nothing can be discerned of their contents until a book is removed from the shelf.

A rickety wooden table and three wobbly chairs make up the rest of the furniture in the room. A stack of blank sheets of parchment and half a dozen ink bottles, some empty, cover the top of the table. Numerous quill pens, some

broken, lie scattered among the papers.

If the PCs decide to check through the books, ask them to roll 2d6, and tell them the result from the following descriptions. The DM should *not* allow the PCs to remove all the books at once and simply rummage through; some of the books are trapped and their effects must be played through. If a PC intentionally scoops up more than one book, the DM should use the descriptions below to detonate multiple spells at one time.

As the books are examined, the DM should pay close attention to the positions of the PCs. The *fire traps* described below detonate in various places throughout the library. Anyone in the area of effect suffers the consequences. It is recommended that the DM draw a square room to depict the library in order to best mark the locations of the traps.

2. *Alteration*: This spellbook contains a *fire trap* whose effect centers in the middle of library. Spells in this book are listed in Nightblood's description at the end of this adventure.

3. *Evocation*: This spellbook contains a *fire trap* that centers in the northwest quadrant of the library. The spells in this book are listed in Nightblood's description.

4. *Corpus Libram*: This thick volume describes and illustrates animal dissection and offers theories as to human dissection (much of it is inaccurate).

5. *Gainful Decay*: This thin book details the study and magical uses of various rotting substances.

6. *History of Death in Thay*: This tome contains a *fire trap* that centers in the southeast quadrant of the library. The book discusses disasters and wars through the land of Thay.

7. *Machination of Mortality*: This rigorously illustrated book describes machines of torture. The book contains a *fire trap* centered in the northeast quadrant of the library.

8. *The NecroCompanion*: This almanac-style book includes many fascinating articles, from moon and star charts predicting

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important events in Thay to sarcophagus jokes.

9. *Nightblood—An Auto-Necrography*: A thoughtful account of the wretched afterlife of Nightblood, written in his own hand (and not yet complete).

10. *Catalogue of Undead*: This voluminous work lists, describes, and depicts undead creatures ranging from skeletons and zombies to lichs and even dracoliches. (It contains similar background information to that found in the *Monstrous Compendium*).

11. *Death Magicks*: This guidebook tells how to create magical objects that require living creatures as material components.

12. *Necromancy*: This spellbook contains a *fire trap* that is centered in the southwest quadrant of the library. The book's spells are listed in Nightblood's description.

DMs should reveal the titles of these works *only* to characters with the Ancient Languages proficiency. Wizards may easily determine the nature of the spellbooks. Other characters can gather a vague sense of the books' contents by examining the runic appearance of the lettering or the illustrations and diagrams.

If characters roll the same number more than once, they find another book with a different title but addressing the same topic.

If the DM does not want to allow his players access to these extensive spellbooks, he can replace the *fire traps* with *exploding runes* so that the books burst into flame when read by the characters. Books that are trapped are set off when someone or something touches their cover or opens them. The books that are not trapped are warded with *alarm* spells, so they radiate evocation magic, just like the others. The spellbooks are worth 1,000 gp for their gold gilding alone.

Nightblood's Component Cache

Another room off the main chamber is sealed with a stone door that is *wizard locked*. If characters get past the door, they will find a

cache of spell components (the list follows). The DM should not read the parenthetical identification unless characters successfully use the Spellcraft proficiency, or a related proficiency (e.g., Herbalism can identify garlic). If characters smell or taste items, the DM can provide more clues (e.g., salty taste), but not positive identification.

- **Animal products:** Large barrel of bone shards, four small covered baskets containing feathers, bits of fur, grasshopper legs, and leather loops, box of cob webs, jar of (caterpillar) cocoons, jar of flesh in clear solution (raw human flesh preserved in alcohol), jar of large dark clods (bull feces), jar of rotten eggs, jar of small dark clods (bat guano).
- **Granulars (powders in stoppered glass jars):** Crystalline white (salt), glistening white (diamond), dull white (bone), gray-white (lime), red (phosphorus), gray-orange (iron), pale yellow (garlic), yellow (sulfur), green (dried peas), green-gray (lime), white-gray (saltpeter), granular gray (granite), sooty gray (vampire dust), gray-brown (hooves), brown (grave earth), shiny black (black-pearl dust), flat black (soot), ivory seeds (sunflower seeds).
- **Liquids (in glass jars):** Thick black (bitumen), thick brown (molasses), opaque red (blood), light yellow (wood alcohol), deep yellow (strong vinegar), clear (water).
- **Miscellaneous:** Basin filled with smokey quartz chips, bin of small drums, box of glass shards, box of tiny bells, bundle of miniature shovels, jar of silver stickpins, pair of large crystals, stack of miniature buckets, spool of silver wire.

Nightblood's Laboratory

The third room off the main chamber lies past an open archway. Beyond are shelves, easels, parchment scrolls, pens, beakers, burners, and so forth littering the room. It is a

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complete laboratory with everything needed to perform research for spells and magical items.

Taken together, this used equipment is worth about 6,000 gp to a wizard, though only about 1,000 gp if sold piecemeal. Even if it is sold as a complete set, it will fetch no more than 3,000 gp (the equipment has been heavily used and much of it is scarred and chipped, though it is fully functional). However, regardless of the value of the equipment, each character can carry only about 100 gp worth of it. If a wizard can find 10 helpers or can use magic to assist the process, he can lug it all away.

Other Treasure

The chamber contains little other treasure—mostly coins garnered from victims and haphazardly dumped in corners: 500 gp, 200 pp, 50 sp, and two magical items—a *ring of blinking* and *staff of the woodlands* (30 charges). Nightblood owns a *chime of hunger* which he keeps with him.

The Lich's Revenge

If the party slays Nightblood but does not destroy his phylactery, he comes back to life. The phylactery is hidden in a vault behind a small, secret door in an empty corner of the laboratory. The door is not magically trapped, so *detect magic* will neither help the party find the door nor indicate magic if it is found. However, the door *is* mechanically trapped, with a deadfall ceiling. The door is triggered to drop a 10' cube of stone upon anyone who fiddles with it. If the trap is triggered, anyone within ten feet of the door must roll a successful Dexterity roll at *half* his normal skill to escape being crushed. Inside the vault is the phylactery.

If the characters kill Nightblood, his life essence in the phylactery will try to leap out and possess one of the characters. (See the *magic jar* spell.) If successful, he will immediately attack the party again in his new

body. If his victim is reduced to 5 or fewer hit points, Nightblood will leap from him back into the phylactery, then try to possess another character.

If the characters resist Nightblood's possession, they can destroy the phylactery normally.

If the characters do not find and destroy the phylactery, Nightblood's life force will leave his phylactery and reanimate his corpse (or another, if his is destroyed) after the party leaves. If the party has stolen or destroyed any of Nightblood's spell books, the reanimated lich will hunt the adventurers down.

NPC Roster

Nightblood,

20th-level Lich

INT Supra-genius (19); AL CE; AC 0; MV 6; HD 13; hp 86; THAC0 8; #AT 1; Dmg 1-10 or spell; SA Spell casting; SD +1 or better magical weapon to hit, immune to *sleep*, *enfeeblement*, *polymorph*, *cold*, *electricity*, *insanity*, *death* spells; MR Nil; SZ M; ML Fanatic (17); XP Value 7,000.

Str: 15 Dex: 11 Con: 14 Int: 19 Wis: 12
Cha: 8

Nightblood can memorize spells as follows: five spells each from levels 1 through 5, four 6th-level spells, three spells each from levels 7 and 8, and two 9th-level spells. He can also memorize one additional necromantic spell per level (the bonus for specialist wizards). He receives a +1 bonus to his saving throws against necromantic spells and a -1 penalty to other saves.

Nightblood's Spellbooks

The spellbooks are stored in the library but are listed here for the convenience of the DM when choosing Nightblood's spells.

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Alteration: This spellbook contains *burning hands, comprehend languages, enlarge, jump, shocking grasp, spider climb; levitate, strength, wizard lock; delude, explosive runes, fly, slow; polymorph self, solid fog, stonewalk, wizard eye; passwall, telekinesis, teleport, death fog, stone to flesh.*

Evocation: This spellbook contains *alarm, cantrip, shield; stinking cloud, web; fireball; dig, fire trap, wall of fire; cloudkill, dream; chain lightning.*

Necromancy: This book contains *chill touch, detect undead; spectral hand; feign death, hold undead, vampiric touch; contagion, enervation, animate dead; magic jar, summon shadow; death spell, reincarnation; control undead, finger of death; clone, energy drain.* On several loose sheets of parchment within this tome is Nightblood's formula for the *create living wall* spell. Although Nightblood knows the entire formula and components that are necessary to cast this spell, the notes are incomplete and will not function if a PC wizard attempts it.

History

Orphaned at age four, Kael Norbin of Thay (in the Forgotten Realms) was sold to a necromancer named Coerwyn to run errands and clean his lab. The necromancer raised Kael in the way of the Red Cloth, and occasionally taught him a few paltry tricks. Kael observed his master keenly and taught himself to read and write. By the time he reached adulthood, Kael had become a 1st-level necromancer and was accepted as a member of the local cabal of the Red Wizards of Thay.

But Kael's heart was not devoted to the dark arts practiced by the Red Wizards, for he was in love. Shalla was a beautiful and quiet peasant lass, with hair as black as a moonless night. Kael began to sneak away from his master to spend time doting upon Shalla. Coerwyn resented the distraction Shalla created, and slew her.

Kael did not know what happened to Shalla until a month later when he found, among the

many gruesome items in Coerwyn's lab, the midnight tresses of his love. Upon discovering this, Kael approached his master from behind, cut off his head with a sickle, and burned the body piece by piece in the small furnace in the lab.

He then devoted himself to the magic arts of necromancy, hoping to gain the power to bring Shalla back from the dead. He learned every necromancy spell available, and many alteration and evocation spells as well. But the closest he could come to restoring his love to him was recreating her face in the stony walls around him. His infatuation turned to insanity, and he slew many an innocent maiden to provide Shalla a body for her return. When the local villagers began to hunt him down, Kael decided to become a lich and join his love in death.

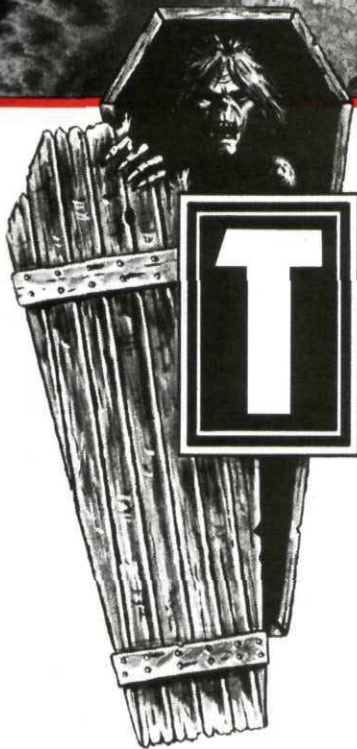
The night that he carried out this plan, the mists rolled in. When they cleared, his library and lab had been removed to a catacomb in the lands of Ravenloft. Now, even in death, he is separated from his love. He has devised the *create living wall* spell to guard his abode while he searches vainly for magic to reunite him with Shalla. But they never shall be joined again, though he will live for endless centuries. And now he calls himself Nightblood, for by night he abducts and slays villagers to fuel his dark experiments.

Nightblood's Victims

Boris, 7th-level Warrior: Int 14; AL NG; AC 2; MV 12; HD 7; hp 52; THAC0 14; #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon; MR Nil; SZ M; Equipment chain mail, shield, *ring of protection +2, long sword +1, dagger +3, mace.*

Itzak, 8th-level Warrior: Int 13; AL CG; AC 1; MV 12; HD 8; hp 58; THAC0 13; #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon; MR Nil; SZ M; Equipment bronze plate mail, *ring of protection +3, bastard sword +2, flail +1, obsidian steed.*

Chapter IX: Death's Cold Laughter



Setup

This adventure works well for three to six players of 3rd through 12th level or higher. "Death's Cold Laughter" can accommodate this wide range of levels because, in its climactic scene, the PCs enter illusionary battle with their greatest nemesis. Low-level characters might, therefore, combat a werewolf,

whereas high-level characters may face Strahd himself! The DM is recommended to read this adventure carefully before play, making any necessary preparations before the adventure begins.

"Death's Cold Laughter" serves well to wrap up an extended campaign in the RAVENLOFT™ game setting, giving the characters a last crack at a villain they could not otherwise defeat. The adventure also works well for any party with a nemesis, regardless of the world the villain truly inhabits. Because "Death's Cold Laughter" pulls a foe from the past, the DM should be sure to thoroughly review the old villain's stats, background, and combat abilities.

In "Death's Cold Laughter," the characters are accused of breaking the "laughing law" and are brought before a maniacal jester whose humorless jokes can kill. The jester poses a riddle that the characters must solve to win their freedom, but the riddle also releases the party's greatest foe upon them. If they solve the riddle, they can defeat the foe and the jester. But until they solve it, they must survive combat with their nemesis.

The Adventure

"Death's Cold Laughter" can begin anytime the characters are traveling, whether in deep woods or on a deer path, trail, or high road. The DM starts the adventure by reading the following.

Entering Risibilos

An enormous hill rises before you and, peering toward its dark summit, you see a massive, age-worn castle. Ponderous blocks of stone are piled endlessly atop each other, reaching up to ramshackle spires. The whole edifice seems to be crumbling—its blackened stone riddled by years of rain and encrusted with clinging vines. As you ascend the hill, scattered hamlets and farms appear, struggling under the same oppressive weight of time. Thatched roofs are green-gray with moss, and shutters and doors hang on ragged hinges. The unmistakable stench of piggens hangs thick in the air, mingled with the smell of crops moldering in the fields.

Further up the hill, rough-hewn cottages gather close together, forming a squalid borough in the castle's looming shadow. You enter the merchant quarter, where rambling shops overlook an open marketplace of faded tents and canopies. The mutter of voices circulates beneath the tattered canvas—a banter of buyers and sellers. City guardsmen ring the marketplace like stone gargoyles, grimly watching the proceedings.

DM's Note: This town's most critical law is the "laughing law," which states that all statements must be accompanied with "ha ha ha." Omission of this laughter is punishable by death.

If the characters wish to buy provisions in the market, they see merchants and craftsman selling most of the items listed in the equipment lists of the *Player's Handbook*; they

Death's Cold Laughter

cannot, however, find transport items, fine armor, or exotic weaponry. Any merchant or craftsman the PCs approach regards them with a very serious expression and says, "Ha ha ha, what may I get for you?" The merchant's intonation shows none of the humor that their feigned laughter would indicate.

As soon as the characters speak to anyone, if they do not include "ha ha ha" like the locals, the person to whom they speak will look utterly shocked and dismayed. If the players continue to speak in this fashion, the person to whom they speak will covertly motion a guardsman over. The guardsman approaches the PCs sternly and says, "Please come with me, ha ha ha." If the PCs converse with the guardsman without adding the "ha ha ha," or if they show resistance to following him, he will call more guardsmen over. The situation will continue thusly until the PCs are outnumbered by guardsmen, two to one. At this point, the guardsmen announce that the PCs are under arrest. The DM should remember to make the guards speak grimly and with the mandatory "ha ha ha."

Guardsmen, 2nd-level Warriors (2 per PC): Int 8-10; AL LN; AC 7; MV 12; HD 2; hp 9; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (club); SZ M; ML 10; XP 100.

Although the guardsmen are armed with clubs, they don't intend to use them. If the PCs resist arrest, the guards wrestle them. Only if the PCs draw weapons and attack do the guards use their clubs. If the PCs incapacitate or kill a guard, four more come to replace him, and murder or attempted murder will be added to their charges. If the PCs fight viciously enough to defeat 30 guards, the villagers mob and attack.

Into the Dark Castle

When the PCs are subdued (whether relenting without a struggle or losing a battle against

hordes of villagers), any remaining guards strip the characters of their weapons, wands, and so forth, then haul out shackles from the guard posts. They make the PCs sit on the ground and several guards chain them together. The DM should then read the following.

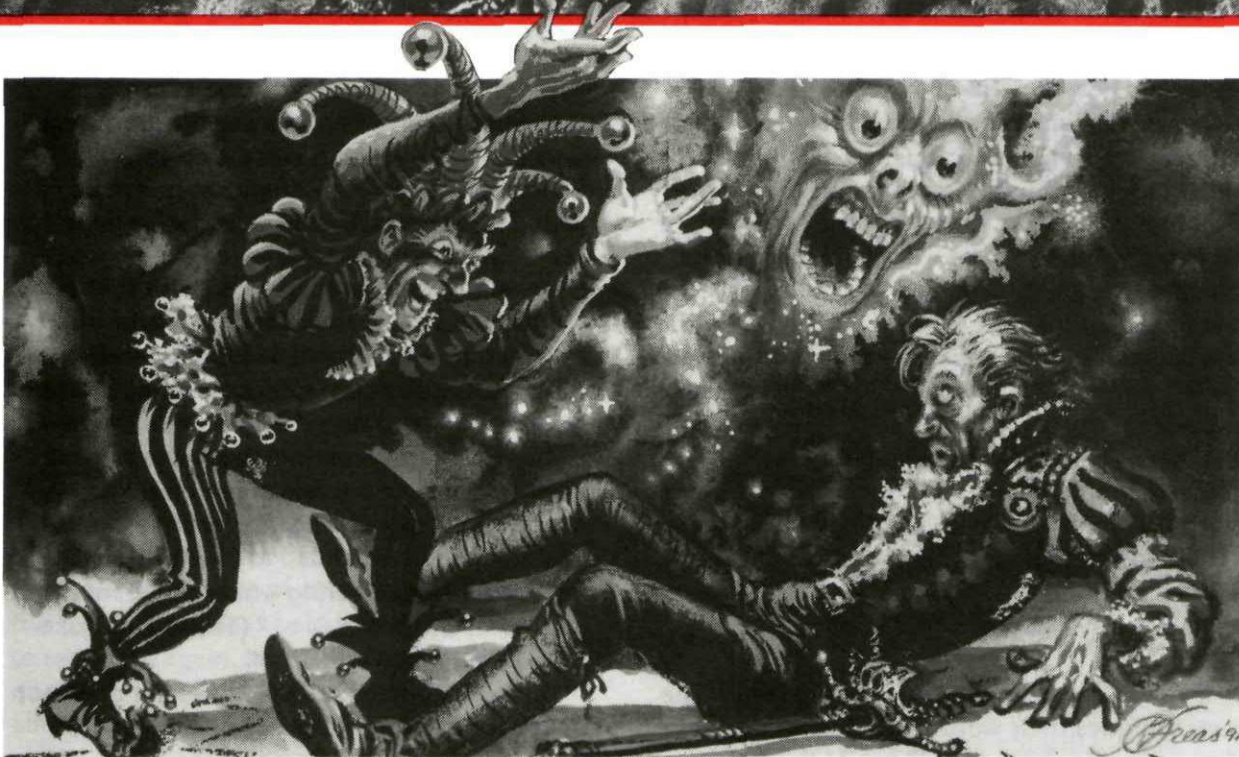
A guardsman in battle-scarred leather armor stoops over you, clamping cold iron shackles around your ankles. Rust from the thick rings of metal rubs red upon your legs. A chain of broad, irregular links joins your shackled feet to your companions' ahead and behind. The guardsman opens his rotten-toothed mouth, spits some tobacco, and offers you a hand to get up. His voice sounds harsh and serious, "Come along now, lawbreaker, ha ha ha. You've got an audience in the king's court, ha ha ha." The laughter crosses his tobacco-stained lips with no emotion as he helps you to your feet.

The guards lead your manacled band across the castle's weather-worn drawbridge, beneath a dripping portcullis, and into the crumbling castle walls. Fetid air, smelling of lichens and molds, sweeps across you. The guards march you through an empty courtyard with a barren dirt floor and imposing black walls. As you pass another portcullis, the chains at your feet jangle upon the cold stone floor.

After threading your way through a dank, winding hall, you enter a cavernous throne room. Though the chamber's high ceiling is lost in darkness, ragged banners hang from the shadows and drift hypnotically in the room's cold drafts. The black-streaked stone of the outer castle appears in the inner walls of this chamber as well. Scarlet-garbed retainers stand in weary attention along those walls. In the center of the room, a blood-red carpet runs from your feet to a dais on the far end of the chamber.

There, upon a huge and hoary throne,

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slouches a tired old king, who almost seems to swim in his brackish robes. At his side, perched upon a rambling extension of the throne, crouches a jester.

The jester is short and gaunt, dressed in curly-toed boots, red tights, bunched pantaloons, a colorful tunic, a star-shaped collar, and a floppy hat topped with a bell. As you march into the room, his leering gaze fixes upon you, and the dry rattle of his laugh echoes through the chamber.

The guards push you forward down the crimson carpet, and their leader, bowing to the king, calls out solemnly, "Your Royal Majesty, these miscreants have refused to obey your laughing law, ha ha ha."

The king does not move to respond. The jester instead answers, his grating and craggy voice echoing cold through the chamber, "Think ourselves above the laughing law, do we? Think ourselves equals of Jester Puncheron and King Doerdon, aye?"

Think we'd rather pay the ultimate penalty than laugh a little?" His voice trails away into a slow, humorless chuckle. His steely stare fastens upon you for long, uncomfortable moments. "What have we to say for ourselves?"

DM's Note: If the party killed or maimed any guardsmen during their arrest, the DM should add such offenses to the charges the guardsman presents.

Conversing with Puncheron

Whatever the PCs' response, Puncheron demands that they use the obligatory "ha ha ha"—only he and the king are exempt from the laughing law. Puncheron commands the guards to club anyone who refuses.

The likely actions of the PCs follow, along with Puncheron's responses. The DM needn't read the jester's response word-for-word. The replies appear here so that the DM will know

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generally how Puncheron reacts.

If the PCs address the king: The jester interrupts, "Kingy is too busy to deal with the filthy likes of you! [Pretends to spit to one side] Ask him yourself, and he'll say the same—right King-a-ling-a-ling?" The weary old monarch resignedly replies, "Yes, yes, of course." Then the jester laughs, "He trusts me implicitly with the execution of his estates—and his subjects. Which reminds me of a joke. . . ." (Tells a Bad Joke from the list below.)

If the PCs ask what the laughing law is: The jester answers very grimly, "Risibilos is a mirthful kingdom. By law, everyone but yours truly and King Cadaver here must laugh with every statement he or she makes. I heard a joke the other day. . . ." (Tells a Bad Joke from below.)

If the PCs' plead ignorance of the law: The jester mimics their words with dog barks, then drones in utter boredom, "I would think that ignorant folk such as you would have heard often enough that *ignorance is no excuse*. A fellow told me a joke about that once. . . ." (Tells a Bad Joke from below.)

If the PCs remark on the poverty and gloominess of the peasants: The jester becomes enraged, "What gloomy peasants? I've not seen a gloomy peasant since I came to Risibilos! When Kingy and I stroll the streets of town, everyone smiles and laughs. We've made sure of that! We've slain all the sour-natured folk before they could bear gloomy kin. I've a joke about that. . . ." (Tells a Bad Joke from below.)

If the PCs ask the king why he puts up with so insolent a jester: The jester interrupts, seizing the king in a brutal embrace and laughing pitilessly, "He puts up with me because he loves me! Am I not right, you dull-witted despot?" The spiritless king responds, "I could not live without you." The jester releases the despondent monarch and laughs coldly, "This all reminds me of a joke. . . ." (Tells a Bad Joke from below.)

If the PCs try to break their chains or otherwise escape: The PCs must make a Bend Bars/Lift Gates roll to break the chains. Puncheron meanwhile summons the guards, telling them to mercilessly beat the captives into submission. As the guards set to work, Puncheron tells a joke. (See "Bad Jokes" below.)

If the PCs ask about the penalty for breaking the laughing law: Puncheron shakes his head, a quizzical expression rippling across his face, "There's no penalty. Not until you stand trial. Of course, I will be the judge and axeman, and I've not had an entertaining execution in soooo long. My last one came yesterday morning: I had to pine away the afternoon, remembering what fun the morning had been. By the way. . . ." (Tells a Bad Joke from below.)

If the characters ask why the king does not speak for himself: Puncheron responds, "Kingy was naughty, slew and slew. Cursed he was, as seen by you."

If the characters act in a way not listed: The DM should devise the jester's response, using his other comments and the NPC Roster to create the answer. Whatever the reply, the jester should seem cruel, cynical, capricious, and childish; should speak and laugh in low, malevolent tones; and should end each response with one of the Bad Jokes that follow.

Effects of Bad Jokes

The jester has the power to target the following Bad Jokes upon 40 Hit Dice of creatures, causing them to be affected by a modified version of *Tasha's uncontrollable hideous laughter*. (See the 2nd-level wizard spell in the *Player's Handbook*.) The modifications follow:

- Plugging the ears does not stop the joke's effect.
- All saves are made at a -2 penalty. This penalty is cumulative with the Intelligence penalties. DMs may wish to calculate and record PCs' saving throws ahead of time.

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- The effect is instantaneous and lasts until the character rolls a successful save or receives a *dispel magic*.
- For each round a character spends in the throes of laughter, he suffers damage from muscle spasms and loss of breath. To calculate damage, divide a character's level or hit dice by 2 (rounding up). The result is the damage suffered by that character each round he is affected. Thus, a 7th-level thief would suffer 4 hp per round until he makes a successful save or is the recipient of a *dispel magic*.

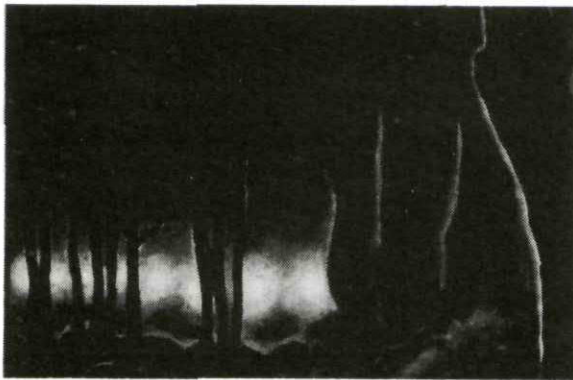
The jester tells these jokes at indiscriminant intervals, regardless of context. Once the DM has told all the jokes below, he should feel free to tell them again, beginning with some question like "Did I ever tell you the one about . . ." or "Did I ever ask you. . ."

Bad Jokes

- A woodsman needed to make a fire, so he went to chop some wood. He couldn't find any trees thicker than his leg, though. So he chopped and chopped and chopped. He finally returned to his camp to make the fire, but the leg just wouldn't burn.
- What does the priest ask the father of the bride at Strahd's wedding? "Who gives this woman to be undead?"
- Why do dwarves have names like "Fireforge?" Because they can't spell "Immolatingsmelter."
- A traveler married a peasant lass who swore she had not lost her virtue. When he found her skilled in the arts of affection he said, "I thought you'd not lost your virtue." She smiled and said "Annis hags have no virtue to lose!"
- How can you improve a *fireball* spell? Feed the orcs some beans.
- Why do elves have pointy ears? There has to be some point to elves.

- A neophyte wizard bragged to another that he could *make water*. The other wizard replied, "My dog knows the same trick."
- What is the best way to kill a lich? Thoroughly.
- If you know a vampire is stalking you, what should you do? Poison your blood.
- A peasant woman with nine sons asked the oldest to make his brothers some soup. After an hour, he came to her saying, "The youngest seven agreed, but Jeremy won't get in the pot."
- Who makes a better wife: a crabby woman or a cruel hobgoblin? The hobgoblin, because you can kill her.
- What is the fastest way to get away from a lich? Die.
- If an orc follows a halfling into a closet, what will happen? The orc will kill the halfling, then find his own gold in the halfling's pocket.
- Two bards are standing on a bridge. One creates a *stinking cloud*. The other says, "I didn't know you knew magic." The first one replies, "I don't."
- What's the difference between a king and a jester? One gets to wear a crown.

DM's Note: Whenever one of these jokes is told, whether the PCs make their saves or not, King Doerdon breaks into painful laughter and one of the red-robed (wizard) retainers steps



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forward and casts *dispel magic* on the tired old monarch. (The king suffers no damage.) Though Doerdon's retainers are all high-level mages, King Doerdon has commanded them all to memorize only *dispel magic* spells, to perform this very service. Only if a PC is near dying from laughter should the DM allow one of these retainers to "waste" a spell on him. Even so, the king will be enraged by this "waste of a spell" and will command a guard to club the offending wizard (once).

Puncheron does not bother affecting the wizards with his jokes. When he has new victims available (the PCs), he prefers to torment the newcomers. He never hesitates to taunt the king, however, as the king is his favorite victim.

Trial By Fear

Once Puncheron feels he has had enough fun torturing the PCs with Bad Jokes (DM's option), he will order the trial to begin. He commands the guards to line the prisoners up before him. At that point, the DM should read the following text.

Puncheron reaches dramatically behind the throne and pulls out an unwieldy warhammer. His short, gaunt form wobbles comically beneath the hammer's weight. Finally, he brings it crashing down upon a scarred block of stone beside the throne—obviously a place where the hammer has fallen many times.

"Come to order!" the jester shouts. The room falls to silence, save for the thunderous echo of the hammer strike. Puncheron's starkly white face glares angrily at you. A slow and sinister smile cracks across his visage, revealing long, yellowed teeth. "You have violated the only sacred law in this land!" he begins, his voice cold and harsh now, with not a trace of humor. "For long years before the advent of Puncheron the

Great, this was a cheerless kingdom. At that time, the humorless King Doerdon—a man incapable of laughter—became the butt of all jokes in this land. Feeling his power crumbling, he altogether outlawed laughter and anything that might cause levity. Death was the penalty for any who disobeyed, and countless rib-tickled and rib-tickling innocents fell to his axe.

"When the solemn slayings reached a fevered pitch, Puncheron, Jack of Jest, happened along—the first man who ever made King Doerdon laugh. And I convinced him to reverse his law, making laughter not illegal, but mandatory. Since that time, Risibilos has echoed with the long-dead laughter of her people.

"Now you folk arrive in town—from gods know where—and dare to defy the law? You dare to send this kingdom back to the times of humorless terror? What have you to say for yourselves?"

However the PCs respond, Puncheron listens carefully, as though considering the statements. After the PCs finish speaking, he sits for a long time in deep contemplation, then shouts, "Ridicule and flob-glob nonsense!!" At this point, Puncheron can tell another Bad Joke or can listen to more implorings, depending on how much damage the PCs have already suffered.

The Death Riddle

When Puncheron tires of more testimony and jokes, the DM should read the following.

"Enough!" Puncheron thunders, dropping his warhammer to the floor with a crash. "I have heard all I need to make my decision. Because of your previous ignorance of our law of laughing, I will not order your deaths outright. Rather, your guilt or innocence will be decided by a test.

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"When I speak a riddle, my guards will release you from your shackles and you will be confronted by your greatest foe. If you solve the riddle or slay your nemesis, the test will end: you will be declared innocent and can go free. If you do not solve the riddle or slay your nemesis, you will die in your guilt. I will even grant you the benefit of your weapons and spells."

Puncheron gestures toward the guards, who approach you, placing your weapons just out of reach, then kneel, ready to unlock your chains. As they do, the maniacal jester begins to laugh again, and he speaks the riddle:

I'm a shadow here among you, but how can I be slain?

DM's Note: Puncheron's riddle works to activate a *weird* spell, but allows no save and cannot be broken by disturbing the jester. (See the *Player's Handbook*.) Though the foe who confronts the PC is illusionary, he is real to the characters for all intents and purposes. Normal combat follows, in which the party must battle the foe.

The battle can remain in the throne room, range throughout the castle (the DM may use any castle plan available), or even spill over into the world outside. Regardless of where the battle takes place, neither the PCs nor the villain can damage or use anything but their weapons and spells in the battle. All else is impervious stone.

As soon as the riddle is spoken, the guards release the chains. Once the manacles clear the PCs' ankles, the guards freeze—solidifying as rock. Everything in the throne-room, animate or inanimate, likewise freezes: all except the PCs, their weapons, Puncheron, and King Doerdon. Spells memorized at the beginning of the day are restored to all spellcasters.

Then, from a dark wing of the chamber, enters the PC's greatest nemesis: Alec Lysin,

Nightblood the Lich, Elenia the Ermordenung, Ejrik Spellbender, Lyron Evensong, Malisha, Mordenheim, Davion, another Ravenloft villain, or even a foe from another campaign world. (If the villain is too large, such as a dragon, the wall of the castle seems to burst open to reveal it).

Because this battle is climactic, the DM is encouraged to have an attack plan plotted out for the villain, as well as planned contingencies to keep the PCs from being immediately obliterated.

Throughout the contest, Puncheron ridicules the characters, but does not tell any more Bad Jokes. If any of the characters attacks Puncheron, their weapons or spells go through him as though he were a shadow. He is, in fact, a shadow—King Doerdon's shadow-self incarnate (see the NPC Roster). Thus, Puncheron cannot be harmed by the characters. Because he is a shadow-self of the sinister King Doerdon, he can be killed only by killing the King. This is the answer to Puncheron's riddle:

I'm a shadow here among you, but how can I be slain?

If you slay the shadow's maker you become the shadow's bane.

Obviously, the PCs don't have to make the answer rhyme to solve the riddle: they need only realize that Puncheron is the shadow of Doerdon and that slaying the evil king will



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destroy the jester as well.

If the characters are having trouble working out the riddle, the DM should have Puncheron taunt them with one (or more) of the following lines, in the order they appear below.

"Every shadow has a caster, and I must be the same."

"Find the shadow's master, a highly honored name."

"The king and his own jester differ by a crown."

"If you kill the master, you'll bring the other down."

If the characters are still unable to solve the riddle, the DM should have the party all make Intelligence rolls. If a character succeeds, the DM should say something like, "You suddenly realize that Puncheron has never moved from the King's side, much like an incarnate shadow. . . [wait for the player to figure it out] . . . So if you kill the caster of the shadow, you kill the shadow." If the PCs still can't solve the riddle, they'd better be good fighters.

Ending the Adventure

If the PCs defeat the villain: The PCs should have little hope of defeating their nemesis: only if they battle with courage and brilliance should they defeat the villain. If they do defeat the villain, Puncheron is true to his word, allowing them to go free. If, however, any of the PCs speaks without including the mandatory "ha ha ha," Puncheron declares they are again under arrest. The party will then have to battle the guards to attack Puncheron. Once again, however, the party cannot injure the jester: they must kill Doerdon to be rid of Puncheron. As the characters battle the guards, Puncheron should goad them with the clues listed previously until they figure out the riddle.

Even if the PCs slay the villain, win their freedom, and remember to speak with the appropriate "ha ha ha," they will probably want to kill Puncheron anyway. Again, they will have to fight the guards and slay Doerdon to kill the jester.

If the PCs solve the riddle: The PCs must verbally solve the riddle *and* physically enact the solution: killing Doerdon. Until they do so, they must continue to battle their nemesis. Once the killing blow is struck against Doerdon, though, the DM should read the following text.

Beside the king, sinking slowly into dark oblivion, his shadow-self, Puncheron, begins to teeter. The jester's piercing eyes go dull and his grating laugh is stilled. He slowly, soundlessly crumples to the floor and begins to seep away into the stone like hot wax. As you watch, the stone beneath him begins to fade, becoming hard-packed earth, and then grassy ground.

Raising your eyes, you now see a grassy knoll all about you where the ominous castle once stood. Dusky breezes blow through the tall, dry grass, sifting gently from the forests below. Villagers in the nearby borough begin to emerge from their grimy hovels and peer dazedly toward the knoll. An unaccustomed light grows upon their dingy faces. Dirty, weary merchants step from tattered tents and ratty doorways to gaze astounded at your party.

Then, like the slow approach of rain, laughter, simple and genuine, begins to rise among the people. A handful of villagers bring instruments into the streets and begin playing and singing for joy. Peasant folk flood into the mud-choked lanes, dancing their simple jigs and motioning for you to join them. Though you are heroes of peasants instead of kings, you know that tonight you will feast like royalty.

Death's Cold Laughter

NPC Roster

Puncheron/Doerdon,

Jester/King

AL CE; AC 8; MV 8; HD 2; hp 9; THACO 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (dagger); SA Bad Jokes and death riddle; SD Double-image; SZ M (6' tall); ML Champion (16); XP 1,000.

DM's Note: Because Puncheron cannot be injured by weapons or spells, the AC, HD, hp, THACO, #AT, and Dmg all relate specifically to King Doerdon. Also, the MV rate is Doerdon's because the shadow-self Puncheron cannot go farther than 6 feet from the King.

Str: 8	Dex: 10	Con: 7
Int: 18	Wis: 14	Cha: 15

Doerdon, a petty king on Oerth, ruled his land intelligently and with justice, but he had one failing: he lacked a sense of humor. Nothing seemed funny to him. Recognizing his peculiar deficiency and realizing that it might jeopardize his throne, King Doerdon arranged a grand festival of laughter in his courtyards and invited the greatest bards and jesters from miles around. Throughout the fortnight of the festival, the throngs who attended laughed continuously. But the king's spirit lifted not once.

In the weeks after the festival, the king wandered the streets with his personal guard, listening for laughter and inquiring of folk what they found so amusing. He never understood their answers, though. In time, the king heard his name mentioned more and more in jokes and humorous tales.

Being unable to laugh, Doerdon certainly did not wish to become the butt of humor. Next day, King Doerdon outlawed jokes and toys—anything that might cause laughter. When this law failed (Doerdon could not himself determine what was and wasn't a joke or toy, and the shire reeves would not enforce

the law for him), Doerdon declared laughter itself illegal, punishable by imprisonment.

The jails soon filled, and yet the laughter continued. To clear the prison and end laughter for all time, Doerdon made the offense punishable by death.

Though levity fled the streets, rumors held that folk now laughed into their pillows, in deep cellars, or with their heads submerged in rain-barrels. In response, Doerdon hired an evil mage to create for him a magic staff empowered with *weird* spells. The unamused king took the staff into the streets, slaying those who even smiled.

One morning, the king awoke in the lands of Ravenloft. He found upon rising that a jester named Puncheron followed his every move, telling terrible jokes that overwhelmed the king with hideous uncontrollable laughter. Only a *dispel magic* could release him and spare him from injury. Doerdon ordered the jester slain, but the guardsmen's axes passed right through him.

Then Puncheron revealed he was Doerdon's incarnate shadow, a nether-self who would accompany the king as long as he lived. In addition to causing hideous uncontrollable laughter, the jester had assumed the power of Doerdon's staff: Puncheron had a riddle that cast a *weird* spell, and could bring almost certain death. The solution of the riddle was also the way to slay Puncheron.

By the time the party arrives, Puncheron has tormented the king with his terrible jokes for years. If the party divines the relationship between the king and the jester, or if they survive the *weird* spell, solve the riddle, and slay the king, they will escape with their lives. If not, they may well die, their ears ringing with death's cold laughter.

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 weight 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.

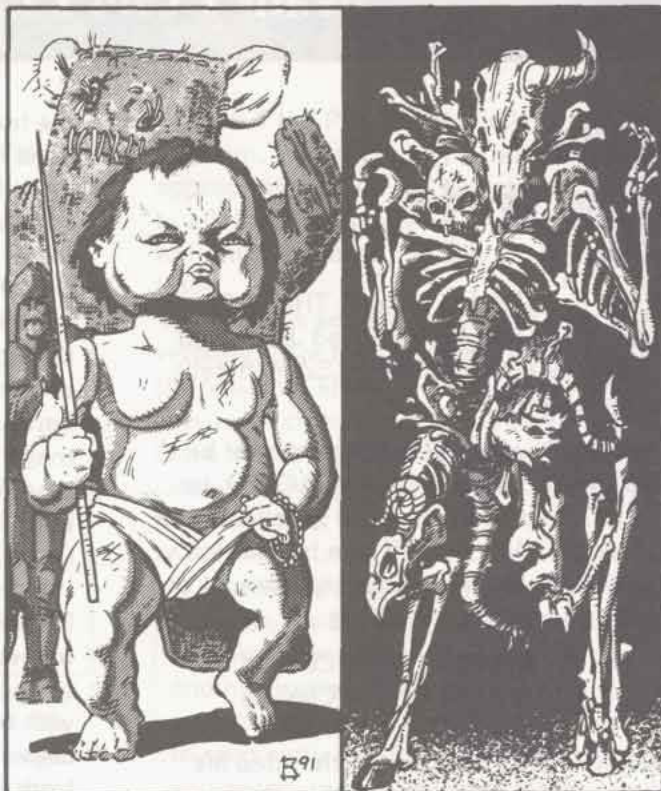
Combat: Bone golems are no more intelligent than other forms of golem, so they will not employ clever tactics or strategies in combat. Their great power, however, makes them far deadlier than they initially appear to be. There is a 95% chance that those not familiar with the true nature of their opponent 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
THAC0:	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.

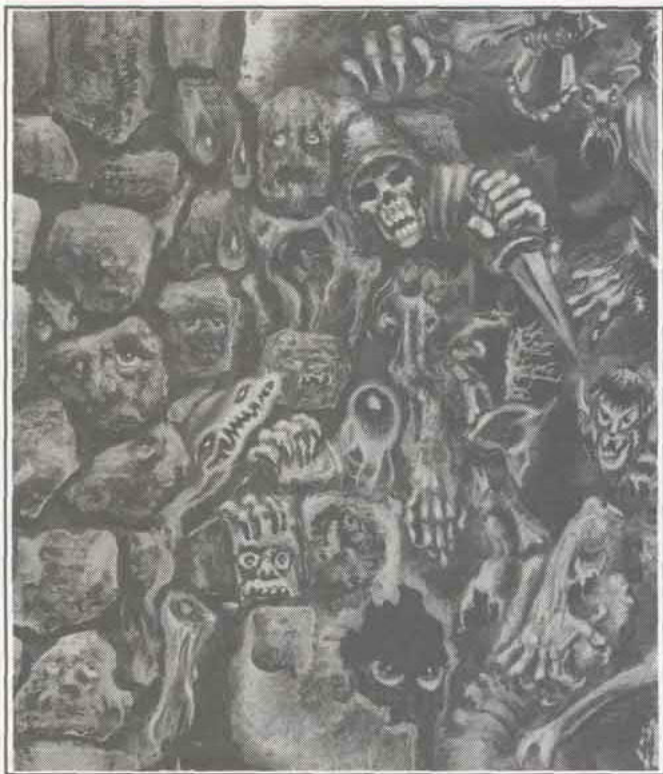
A living wall contains the melded bodies of any humanoid or monster who died within 100 yards of the wall since its creation. Thus, those who die fighting a living wall are absorbed into it and actually strengthen it. Characters and monsters retain all abilities they had in life; as part of the wall,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

Living Wall

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.

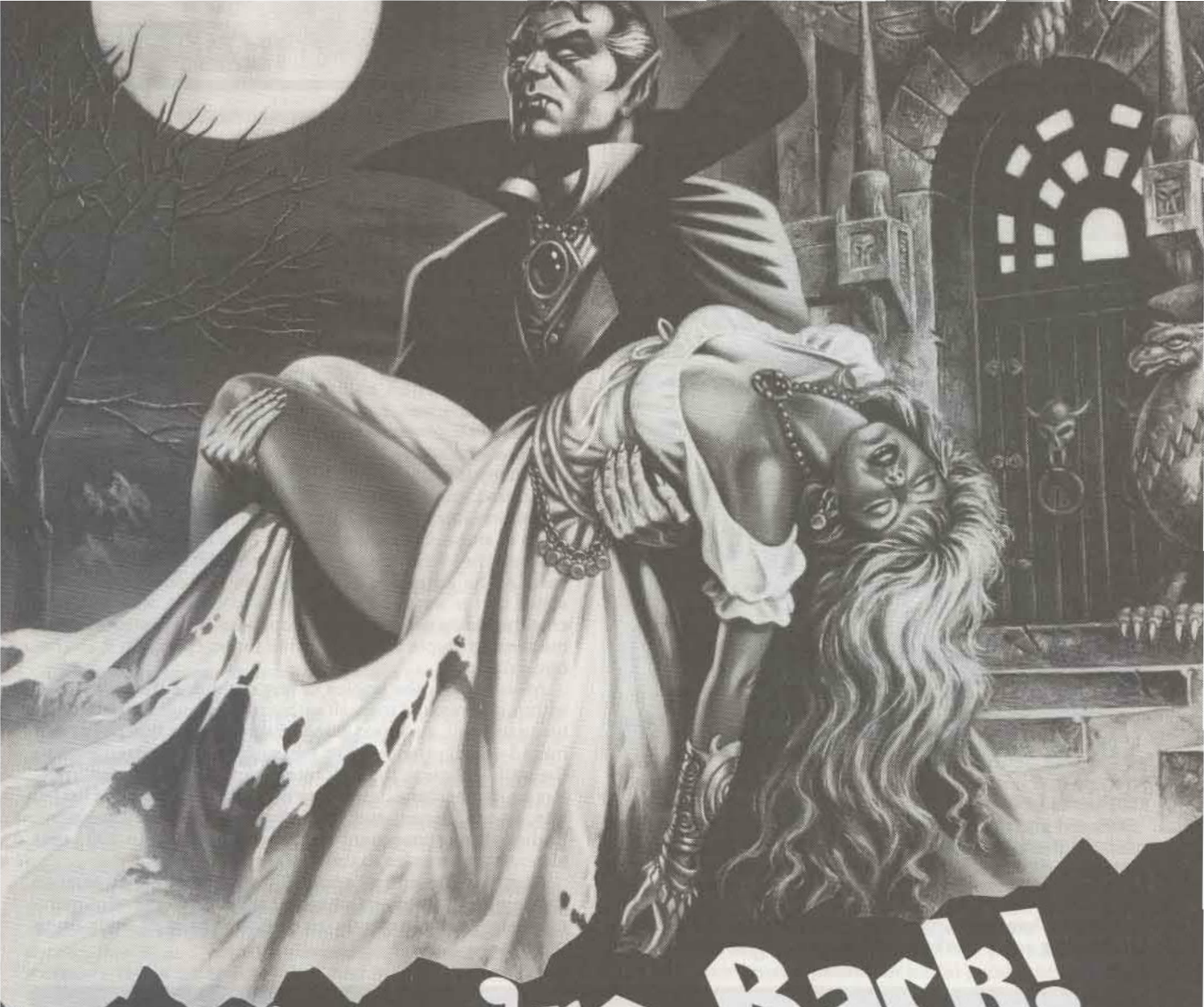
The seed for such a living wall is planted when one sapient creature willfully entombs another in a wall. The hapless victim may be bound and walled alive in a rock niche on a wind-swept mountain trail, a sill in a fetid catacomb, a corner in an asylum, a cave wall, a mausoleum facade, or any other stone 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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9336XXX1401

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ISBN 1-56076-142-3



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