

Ravenloft®: Mist Hunters

BENEATH THE NEW STAR

RMH-12

By Steffie de Vaan

1 AN ADVENTURE FOR 7TH LEVEL CHARACTERS 2

BENEATH THE NEW STAR

A Ravenloft: Mist Hunters Adventure

Newfound knowledge brings you to the domain of Darkon. Alanik is certain Azalin Rex is behind the dark plot, but time is running out to stop them. The detective charges you with venturing to the ruins of Castle Avernus to learn what you can. Hopefully, it isn't too late.

The thirteenth in the *Ravenloft: Mist Hunters* series of adventures.
An adventure for 7th-level characters.



CONTENT WARNING: possible phobia trigger (insects). Mentions torture, gaslighting, murder, nonconsensual reanimation of the dead, and murder of one's adult child.

Reference the [Mist Hunters' Safety Kit](#) article and *Van Richten's Guide to Ravenloft* for tips and tools on running a safe and fun game.

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ADVENTURE PRIMER

There is no castle in the world where fear is not the reason it was built for!

—Mehmet Murat ildan

This adventure can be played by **three to five 7th-level characters** and is optimized for **four 7th-level characters**.

Beneath the New Star starts in Dementlieu and takes place primarily in Darkon.

BACKGROUND

ALANIK RAY has a theory about who's behind recent events, and all signs point to **AZALIN REX**, the former **DARKLORD OF DARKON**. However, Azalin disappeared during the **HOUR OF ASCENSION**: a cataclysmic event that led to the destruction of Azalin's seat of power, **CASTLE AVERNUS**, and the appearance of a new star, the **KING'S TEAR**.

While he's sure Azalin is behind everything, Alanik is unsure as to the Darklord's ultimate goal. Considering his interest in the **APPARATUS** and the **ROD OF HOUTRAS**, the elf detective believes Azalin aims to ascend to godhood, or, at the least, escape his imprisonment within Darkon.

The detective calls upon the characters to venture to Castle Avernus, and discover what they can regarding the Darklord's whereabouts and his plans.

OVERVIEW

The adventure's story is spread over **two parts** and takes **3 hours** to play. The adventure begins with a Call to Action scene. "Extending Play" sidebars in the adventure provide guidance on how to expand the adventure to occupy a four-hour time slot. These estimations don't include time spent in pregame and postgame discussion:

Call to Action: To Darkon (20 mins). The investigators gather at the Ray Agency, where Alanik charges them to investigate the disappearance of Azalin Rex, former Darklord of Darkon. They meet with Radaga before they leave, and she lends them a magic item to aid their investigation.

Part 1: Lower Castle Avernus (60 mins). The characters arrive in Lychgate and must make their way to Castle Avernus. They come across a settlement of Avernus's survivors and meet with the ghost of Irik Zal'honen.

Part 2: Upper Castle Avernus (120 mins). The investigators navigate Castle Avernus's treacherous rooms to meet with Ebbasheyth—a black shadow dragon and the only creature aware of Azalin's plans.



STORY AWARDS

At certain points in the adventure, this glyph appears with an entry describing how the specified story award is earned or how it impacts the story. Ignore the entry if it refers to a story award none of the characters have. If the entry refers to a story award the characters just earned, it instead provides information for you and the players.

CHARACTER HOOKS

Investigators who played previous Mist Hunters adventures have Alanik's trust; he's keen to return them to the team. Rounding out the roster are characters new to Alanik, and he's less discerning this time; needs must, but the investigators are welcome to their share of Castle Avernus's treasure so long as Alanik can have its secrets.

CRIMINALS AND SAGES

It isn't every night you enter a Darklord's castle to see what you can find. Especially when said Darklord isn't home (one hopes), and with competent backup! This is exactly the kind of quest that draws people greedy for treasure and hidden knowledge. Characters with the criminal or sage background have advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks to find hidden objects and doors.

DARKONIAN CHARACTERS

Darkon is dying, torn apart and slowly devoured by the Mists. Characters may not know the Domain is reacting to Azalin's Ascension (because what use a prison without its prisoner?). They do, however, know the trouble started when Azalin disappeared or ascended or whatever it was he did. Castle Avernus could hold the key to saving the domain—or consigning it to the Mists and oblivion.



CALL TO ACTION: TO DARKON

Estimated Duration: 20 minutes

The adventure begins in Alanik's chateau in Dementlieu. The characters learn that Alanik believes Azalin Rex is behind recent events, and, worse yet, that the Darklord seeks to ascend to godhood or possibly escape Darkon. He charges the characters with going to Azalin's fortress, Castle Avernus, in search of the Darklord's whereabouts.

Themes: Quiet before the storm, once more into the fray

DEMENTLIEU: DOMAIN OF DECADENT DELUSION

Darklord: Saidra d'Honaire

Hallmarks: Masquerades, decadent aristocracy, social decay, illusions, impostor syndrome

Every night brings another glittering affair in Dementlieu, whose citizens live glamorous and exciting lives. They enjoy the finest clothes, elegant jewels, grand ballrooms, and most extravagantly, the Grand Masquerade hosted by Duchess Saidra d'Honaire every seventh day at her island estate. Everyone who is anyone attends the duchess's balls, and everyone who longs to be someone tries to wrangle an invitation or sneak in uninvited. But Duchess Saidra's wrath upon those who dare to set foot where they don't belong is truly horrible—and inevitably fatal.

For more information about this domain and the people who reside there, refer to *Van Richten's Guide to Ravenloft*.

CHARACTER INTRODUCTIONS

Allow each player a minute or so to introduce their character, describe their appearance and mannerisms, and establish the reason why they're working with Alanik and Kabe. Be sure to give everyone equal time in the spotlight and be prepared to gently stop players if they run on. Character introductions are crucially important for the players to understand who the other characters are, to build a basis for roleplaying opportunities, and for you as DM to learn more about the characters so you can create story elements that really speak to them.

Award inspiration (explaining what inspiration is and how it works) once everyone's had a turn.

PROMOTED!

Impressed by the characters' investigation in previous adventures (or by their reputation, if this is their first *Ravenloft: Mist Hunters* adventure), Alanik promotes the characters to lead field operatives within the Ray Agency. While this means additional duties—such as searching for the urn—it also means opportunities for greater rewards and other possible benefits, firsts and foremost being the removal of the gp limit on nonmagical equipment that the characters have access to.

OUTFITTING FOR THE INVESTIGATION

Before proceeding on this leg of their investigation, the characters decide what they brought with them on their journey:

Mundane Equipment. The Order of the Guardians has offered the characters access to its substantial resources to aid in their investigation. Each character has access to any mounts and equipment from the *Player's Handbook*, as well as the material components for any spell they have prepared (or known for casters who don't prepare spells). Following the characters' promotion, the gp limit on these acquisitions has been removed. The characters are still bound by the normal encumbrance rules and, at your discretion, might find themselves unable to haul around too much—while the Order's resources are great, it discourages frivolous requests.

Magic Equipment. As the characters adventure, they unlock magic items for later use. The group begins this adventure with one copy of each unlocked item and then decides who'll use them. At the end of the adventure, each item is returned to the character who brought it with them. Magic items that lose their magic or are destroyed, such as a quaffed *potion of healing* or an exploded *horn of blasting*, however, are removed from the character's investigation journal and are no longer unlocked; the character must find another one if they want to use it in a later adventure. The character who brought an unlocked item to the table has final say on who gets to use it. They should, however, note that their investigations require teamwork and cooperation.

EXAMPLE: OUTFITTING FOR INVESTIGATION

Peter's character, Gregov the Fighter, is preparing for his next adventure. He requisitions a greatsword, a longbow and arrows, and a suit of plate armor. He's also heard rumors of werewolves, so he asks for a silvered dagger just in case. In his previous adventures, Gregov unlocked a *horn of blasting* and a *potion of healing*. The group decides who should carry the horn and the potion. At the end of the adventure, both items are returned to Gregov. However, if a character uses the potion, or if the *horn of blasting* explodes during the adventure, Peter crosses it off the investigation journal where it was unlocked.

ORDER OF THE GUARDIANS RING

Characters with this magic ring (more information can be found in the [Mist Hunters Safety Kit](#) article) can obtain another dose of the anti-charm tonic from Alanik, provided they've used the last dose they obtained.

THE RAY AGENCY

The characters arrive at the Ray Agency in Dementlieu to answer a summons by Alanik.

STUDY FEATURES

Alanik's study has the following features:

Dimensions and Terrain. The study is 40 feet long, 20 feet wide, and 10 feet high. Large windows cover the western wall, while shelves displaying books, scrolls and loose stacks of paper cover the eastern wall. Double doors lead out the room to the south, and an oaken desk sits in front of the fireplace built into the north wall.

Lighting. Oil lamps along the walls illuminate the room. A fire burns in the fireplace.

Weather. Heavy rain beats against the windows. Occasional lightning briefly lights up the study.

Sounds. Rain drumming against the windows, crackling fire in the fireplace, the crack of thunder.

Oaken Desk. The desk is cluttered with books, scrolls, and notes. Chairs are set in front of it.

Read or paraphrase the following as the characters arrive:

Arthur Sedgwick, Alanik's husband, opens the door, his mouth set in a thin, worried line as he waves you in. He checks the street as you come in, then firmly bolts the door behind you.

Entering Alanik's study reveals your friend and mentor at his desk. He looks pale and haggard, with bags under his bloodshot eyes. Strewn across the desk are reams of paper, journal entries, letters from Mist Hunters, scrolls, and ancient tomes. It takes Alanik, usually so perceptive, a moment to notice you and look up.

NPC INFORMATION

Tired and entrenched in his studies, it takes Alanik an uncharacteristically long time to notice the investigators. Arthur welcomes the investigators with tea and biscuits, but mostly ignores them as he worries over his husband. Kabe stands quiet and alert to the side of the study, briefly nodding to investigators as they walk in.

ARTHUR SEDGEWICK

Human doctor

Arthur (ARE-fur SEDJ-wick) is compassionate and sympathetic to the horrors the denizens of Ravenloft are subjected to on a daily basis, and has devoted his life to easing them as best he's able. Arthur is broad shouldered and muscular, with chestnut skin and close-cropped black hair. More information on Arthur can be found in *Van Richten's Guide to Ravenloft*.

What They Want. Arthur has grown increasingly concerned over Alanik's well-being; he knows Alanik's work is of the utmost importance, but it's taking a toll on his husband.

Healer of Body; Healer of Heart. He yearns for nothing more than to tend to the wounds of others—whether physical or emotional. None are turned away from his care, regardless of their ability to pay or their perceived worth.



ALANIK RAY

Elf investigator

Alanik (Ah-LAHN-ick RAY) is confident and insightful, a shrewd investigator, and one of the most well-traveled mortals in the Domains of Dread. A master of insight and deduction, Alanik can learn details about others after a few moments of meeting them. For example, he can almost instantaneously deduce a character's native domain from their accent and mannerisms. An accidental fall during an investigation caused a spinal injury that paralyzed Alanik's legs. Alanik uses a custom wheelchair he created with the assistance of his husband, Arthur Sedgwick. More information on Alanik can be found in *Van Richten's Guide to Ravenloft*.

What They Want. Alanik's immediate concern is discovering to what end Azalin Rex has orchestrated recent events.

No Loose Ends. Having solved Radaga's disappearance, Alanik has moved on to investigating the reasons behind it.

KABE WHIPPOORWILL

Lightfoot halfling interdomain scout

Alanik Ray's scout, associate, and friend, Kabe Whippoorwill (KAYB WIP-er-wil) is also secretly a member of the Keepers of the Feather (a fact known only to Alanik). Alongside a quick smile and a mean right hook, Kabe possesses a Dark Gift that allows them to traverse the Domains of Dread. Acting as both a guide for the characters and a field contact, they're an invaluable member of the investigative team.

What They Want. Kabe's line of work is dangerous, so they want to ensure everything goes smoothly. Losing an agent is never the desired outcome.

Mist Walker. Kabe is Alanik's scout, investigatory partner, friend, and an invaluable member of the team. They also work as the characters' field contact.

The investigators have a moment to survey the room, observe Alanik and Arthur, or make small talk. The desk is cluttered with papers eschewing any kind of order. Characters might spot letters and reports from Mist Hunters (including themselves), tomes on the Dark Powers and on divine ascension, and the history of Azalin Rex.

If asked how things are going, Alanik's and Arthur's responses amount to "Fine," but a character who makes a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check notices Arthur is concerned about Alanik, something he confirms if pressed. Alanik, however, insists that he's merely been working hard.

Alanik tells the investigators he now believes Azalin Rex is behind the recent dark events. The Darklord is missing, which strikes Alanik as the perfect excuse to execute plans in secret. He suspects Azalin found a way to escape Darkon or possibly ascend to godhood, and he needs the characters to travel to Castle Avernus and either confirm or deny these suspicions.

Alanik lets the investigators ask any questions they have, or simply finish their tea in peace. The elf doesn't know much more than he already revealed, but he can tell them the following as it comes up in conversation: Castle Avernus, the seat of power in Darkon, was rent apart in a magical explosion. Since then, Azalin Rex, a notorious necromancer and the domain's former Darklord, has been missing. The castle's halls and rooms are strewn about, floating on magical eddies and not all connected through time and space. Alanik has no advice on navigating the castle, beyond being careful as some of Azalin's terrible creations likely remain.

Alanik charges the characters with bringing him any nonmagical scrolls, tomes, journals, and other writing they find in Castle Avernus. He tells them to visit Radaga in the library, and then Kabe will take them to Darkon.

RADAGA, DARK OUTFITTER

After their conversation with Alanik, investigators should meet with Radaga. She waits for the characters in the library, if they can find her. Read or paraphrase the following:

You enter the usually immaculate Ray Agency library. The shelves stand almost bare, the books instead piled atop reading desks and chairs, and in teetering stacks across the floor. As you observe the chaos, you hear rustling behind two stacks and Radaga emerges. She ducks back the moment she sees you, only to reappear moments later carrying a wooden box with her crawling claw familiar tapping excitedly on its lid.

The scholar lends the characters the contents of the box, a *bone compass*, a powerful magic item infused with the essence of undeath. Give the players handout 1.



RADAGA

Human scholar of the Dark Powers

The initial subject of the Order of the Guardians' search, Radaga (rah-DAH-gah) is a scholar and an arcanist who has delved far into the nature of the Dark Powers—some say a bit too far. She's brilliant but obsessive in her desire to catalog the sinister, as well as a bit possessive of her knowledge. Radaga has pale skin and dark-red hair.

What They Want. Radaga is driven by her research into the Domains of Dread. Partnering with the Ray Agency gives her opportunities to gain knowledge while staying out of harm's way.

Obsessed with Forbidden Knowledge. Radaga is angry at and laments the loss of time due to her recent possession. She's champing at the bit to return to her life and studies.

BONE COMPASS

Wondrous Item, Rare (Requires Attunement)

This bone-wrought compass mask melds into your flesh to become a macabre mounted bracelet. While attuned to the compass, you have resistance to necrotic damage and Undead have disadvantage on attack rolls that target you.

As an action, you can command the compass to point toward an Undead or group of Undead within 120 feet. The needle swings around, pointing to each Undead and changing color based on its strength relative to you. Green denotes an easy or medium encounter, red signals hard or deadly.

Curse. Spells and abilities that affect or target Undead also affect and can target you. While attuned to the compass, you don't regain hit points when you complete a long rest or when you spend Hit Dice at the end of a short rest.

PARTING THE MISTS

Once the characters have met with Alanik and Radaga, and have finished their tea, it's time to go. Kabe leads the characters to a carriage waiting outside the front doors. The carriage starts rolling with a jolt as the characters settle inside. "Darkon, here we come," sighs Kabe with a worried look on their face.

Roll on the Misty Visions table in appendix A.

PART 1: LYCHGATE

Estimated Duration: 60 minutes

The characters arrive in Lychgate, Darkon and behold the devastation that followed in the wake of the Hour of Ascension. Ahead, visible from afar on its mountain peak, the exploded ruin of Castle Avernus hangs in the air, suspended by powerful magic. The golden light of the King's Tear shines down from the night sky.

Themes: Gloom and suspense

DARKON

Darklord: None (formerly Azalin Rex)

Hallmarks: Dark fantasy, magical fortress, arcane secrets

The domain of Darkon is failing. Ageless monuments and magical wonders crumble before the Shroud—the Mists turned hungry. The former Darklord, Azalin Rex, largely ignored his duties as ruler of the domain, dwelling in seclusion while attempting to discover a way of escape.

Recently, a magical event, the Hour of Ascension, shook the entire domain, and Azalin hasn't been seen since. When this happened, the King's Tear, a strange golden star, appeared the heavens above, and the Mists surrounding the domain have begun to consume it.

For more information about this domain and the people who reside there, refer to *Van Richten's Guide to Ravenloft*.

LYCHGATE FEATURES

Lychgate has the following general features:

Terrain. Filled with tombs and ruins, Lychgate is a testament to things long dead. The terrain is littered with sharp, jagged rocks, pointing outward from the castle like spikes. The whole brings to mind a landscape broken, or possibly liquefied, in an explosion then frozen midmovement.

Sounds and Smells. The land around Castle Avernus is both impossibly loud and impossibly still. Not a single creature moves underfoot or behind jagged rock—nothing draws breath here except the investigators. Within this stillness, the heavy rain is deafening. The smell of death hangs in the air.

Lighting. It's nearing dark when the investigators arrive. The King's Tear hangs solitary against the firmament, blotting out the light from all other stars. Its golden light bathes the area in a glow equal parts eerie and beautiful.

Weather. Rain falls heavy and incessantly, as if taking offense at the investigators' presence. Lightning flashes silently overhead, unaccompanied by thunder. Unless the investigators take measures, they'll be drenched within moments of leaving the carriage.

APPROACHING THE CASTLE

The Mists part to grant access to Lychgate. It's twilight as the characters arrive, and their progress across the difficult terrain is much slower than Kabe had hoped.

Finally, aware the Shroud will soon envelop Darkon, Kabe decides they must return to Dementlieu—leaving the investigators to traverse the remaining distance on foot.

Read or paraphrase the following:

Kabe guides the carriage with a steady hand, the horses flicking their ears back and forth, yet unwavering in their trust. Even so, the halfling must admit defeat against the rocky terrain.

Castle Avernus lies in the distance, rooms thrown outward in a spiral full of jagged edges and impossible corners, open staircases weaving in between with no regard for up or down. An immense, winged creature circles Avernus's spires, which hold themselves aloft despite their missing towers.

Between you and the castle stands a litany of tombs and ruins, their architecture wildly discrepant from one to the next, as if the concept of tearing down the old is foreign to this land. You see small balls of light dart to-and-fro between the ruins.

While the Mists surround Darkon during the day, the Shroud that rises at night is deadly. Remaining any longer would effectively trap Kabe in Darkon until morning, and they have other work to do. Kabe can tell them this, or characters can figure it out on their own with a DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check.

CREATURE INFORMATION

A dark, winged shape (**Ebbasheyth**) soars in the chaotic sky above the ruined castle. In the distance, small balls of light (three **will-o'-wisps**) flit to-and-fro among the ruins surrounding the castle.

A character who makes a successful DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check identify the creature circling the spire as a black dragon—specifically as a black shadow dragon, if the check succeeds by 5 or more. Darkonian characters who succeed on this check recognize the dragon is Ebbasheyth, a close advisor to the Darklord. The dragon alights in the castle's ruins as the characters watch. A character who makes a successful DC 11 Intelligence (Arcana) check identifies the balls of light as will-o'-wisps.

The will-o'-wisps keep their distance, and occasionally lose interest and float off, but it's apparent they're searching for trespassers. If the investigators attack the will-o'-wisps, three more arrive in 1d6 rounds, drawn by the sounds of combat.

THE BARRIER

As characters pick their way across the ruins toward the castle, emphasize both the rain and the stillness of the



landscape. If anyone survived the Hour of Ascension and the explosion of Castle Avernus, there's no sign of them here. Not even moss or lichen clings to these rocks so rife with necrotic essence. The will-o'-wisps still hover in the distance, but especially if they were attacked previously, they stay out of reach.

Lychgate seems intent on driving you back, rain pelting down viciously and sharp rocks underfoot keen to stab the soles of your shoes. You've carefully picked your way so far, but now the road becomes nigh impassable. Whatever force broke the landscape kicked broken rocks into the sky. They hang before you by the thousands—some as large as a carriage, others as small as a splinter, all with razor-sharp edges. This barrier stretches to your left as far as the eye can see. To your right, you see the malicious mists of the Shroud.

The investigators must choose whether to pick their way through the floating rock field, or trek through the Shroud. Each path takes 1 hour to traverse.

THE BARRIER

Floating rocks create a barrier of razor-sharp edges and vicious spikes. One by one, characters who traverse the field must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or take 4 (1d8) slashing damage. If the saving throw fails by 5 or more, the entire field is set adrift; further saving throws to avoid the rocks are made with disadvantage. The field grows thinner further up in the sky, granting characters who can fly advantage on their check.

THE SHROUD

The Shroud pours into the characters' clothes as they walk, seeping under their armor, filling their lungs with every breath. It transforms into a mass of insects as the characters continue, writhing against their skin as small, chitinous bodies pour into their mouth and nose. The character must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or gain 1 point of Stress (see *Van Richten's Guide to Ravenloft*).

MAUSOLEUM

Night falls as the characters come across a settlement of survivors.

Darkness has fallen, and cold draws over the land as the last rays of an already weak sun dip below the horizon. The rain shows no signs of abating, slowly covering the broken land with sleet. You still catch glimpses of will-o'-wisps in the distance, waiting for a moment of vulnerability. Lightning flashes overhead to illuminate three figures tending a field of lichen: one man, and two skeletons that mimic his work exactly. They run toward a sprawling mausoleum when they see you.

The mausoleum is vast, interring Azalin Rex's family and favored servants. It didn't wholly survive the Hour of Ascension, but enough stands to give the survivors a roof over their heads. The survivors have even coaxed life back to the rocks by using a fertilizer of excrement and humanoid remains. Their work force is supplemented by skeletons.

CREATURE INFORMATION

Roan (a **commoner**) is farming the fetid soil alongside a pair of skeletons wielding farming implements. The characters can let the farmer and **skeletons** escape to the mausoleum, or give chase.

Later, the characters meet the de facto leader of the survivors, Anastasia (a half-elf **noble**). A dozen **skeletons** under her control protect her and the other survivors (**commoners**) taking shelter within the mausoleum.

Beginning the Chase. If the characters give chase (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide*), Roan has a 30-foot head start and advantage on his initiative check as he bolted the moment he saw the characters. Roan hightails it for the mausoleum, ignoring the plentiful ruins he might otherwise hide behind, and unless stopped, reaches the mausoleum after 3 turns. If Roan holds out until then, or even wins, he flees into the mausoleum and the doors slam shut behind him. If the investigators catch him, the mausoleum doors close with the farmer and investigators still outside. The skeletons follow Roan and don't fight unless attacked first.

Initiative. Roan, ever a timid fellow, has already made a break for it; he begins the chase 30 feet ahead of the characters, and has advantage on his initiative check.

Seeking Cover. Though the area is filled with ample ruins behind which to hide, Roan hightails it for the mausoleum.

Skeletons. The skeletons, act on the same initiative count as Roan (losing ties), and follow him toward the mausoleum.

Chase Complications. Each participant in the chase rolls a d20 at the end of their turn and consults the table below. If a complication occurs, it affects the next participant in the chase. Either the participant who rolled the die or the participant affected by the complication can use their inspiration to negate the complication. At your discretion, characters can create their own complications to shake off pursuers.

CHASE COMPLICATIONS

d20	Complication
1	Bone hands burst from the ground to grab you. You must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw or be restrained. If restrained, you can use your turn (starting next) to make a DC 10 Strength saving throw to break free.
2	You nearly run into an open grave. You must make a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to jump across. On a failure, you fall prone in the grave.
3	A low tomb blocks your path. You must make a successful DC 13 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to vault across. On a failure, you take 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage and fall prone.
4	You stumble over the remains of a headstone. You must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw or fall prone.
5	You run into a patch of bones, loose and slippery with rain. You must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw or the next 10 feet count as difficult terrain.
6	You run close to a tomb and one of its stone gargoyles takes a swipe as you pass: +4 to hit, <i>Hit</i> : 5 (1d6 + 2) slashing damage.
7	You run into a tomb. To burst through the rotting door and then out the decorated window on the other side, you must make a successful DC 13 Strength check. On a failure, you bounce off the door and fall prone.
8	A slab of rock breaks underfoot to reveal a mass grave. You must make a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to jump across. On a failure, you fall prone amid the collected bones.
9	A ghost rises from the ground and you run straight through it. You must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened. If frightened, you can use your turn (starting next) to make a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw to shake the effect.
10	The stench of death and rot invades your nostrils. You must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or you spend your next turn retching and gain 1 point of Stress.
11-20	No complication.

ENDING THE CHASE

The chase ends if the characters catch up with and stop Roan, or at the end of Roan's third turn, when the farmer reaches the mausoleum and the doors slam shut behind him. The mausoleum door are barred when the investigators arrive, but characters can catch glimpses of people through the boarded-up windows, nervously wielding sticks and farming implements, hoping the characters won't enter. The doors can be forced open with a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check, but the settlement's occupants defend themselves in return.

TREATING WITH THE SURVIVORS

If caught, Roan calls for the settlement's leader, Anastasia (a half-elf **noble**). She arrives at the doors to the mausoleum



a few moments later accompanied by twelve **skeletons**. Similarly, if the characters bang on the door or otherwise ask for someone to show themselves, she arrives.

Anastasia speaks to the characters through the barricaded doors. She was Azalin's majordomo, responsible for the day to day of castle life, and fled with the other servants to avoid the power struggle following Azalin's disappearance. She's tight-lipped, but a successful DC 13 Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) check coaxes her to reveal that Elzebeth (an "unliving necromancer") and Samael (an elf "oathbreaker") both vie for the position of regent in Azalin's absence. She fears a purge if either consolidate their power, or when the dragon Ebbasheyth inevitably grows tired of their fighting.

ADJUSTING THE SCENE

Here are some suggestions for adjusting the scene:

Weak: Remove two **skeletons**.

Strong: Add one **minotaur skeleton**.

If the characters press for more information on Azalin's affairs or indicate that they're investigating Azalin's disappearance, Anastasia genuinely knows little of his plans, but knows someone in the mausoleum who does—unfortunately he's unable to leave the mausoleum. If treated with peacefully, or if the characters make a successful DC 13 Charisma (Intimidation) check, Anastasia grants them entry. When the characters enter the mausoleum, read or paraphrase the following:

You enter the mausoleum, where a single-entry room gives way to six passages. Clustered before you stand a gaggle of people dressed in once-fine livery, six skeletons, and a golden-brown half-elf with thick-lensed glasses nesting on her thin nose. Her steely eyes glare through the frames and the dark-brown ringlets that cascade from a tight updo. She introduces herself as Anastasia.

Among the crowd, a four-foot-tall human woman whose umber skin is lightened by age shoos off two men—a human with bright-pink skin and a pear-shaped, black tiefling—to return to their work. She and Anastasia eye the rest of the crowd, strongly suggesting they do the same. You spot several children—humans, tieflings, elves, dwarves, and goblins—exposed by the crowd's exit after having been clustered in between the adults, hiding behind skirts and clinging to legs.

Anastasia is taking a huge risk letting strangers into the shelter; she's nervous about doing so and keen to get rid of them, something a character with a passive Wisdom (Insight) score of 13 or higher can tell. The skeletons are under Anastasia's control by virtue of a Dark Gift granted to her by Azalin. She's reluctant to name the one who can help the characters investigate Azalin's disappearance (Irik), for fear that Azalin would be angry about her dealings with Irik, but identifies him if pressed for more information.

ANASTASIA DREYK

Majordomo of Castle Avernus

Anastasia (ah-nah-STAY-sja) is ambitious and cunning, and is building a vast network of friends, allies, and people who owe her favors. Azalin's Ascension left too many contenders in its wake, upending Anastasia's previous relationships.

What They Want. Anastasia wants to escape Lychgate with her power base—the people who follow her—intact. She's willing to sacrifice some passing the barrier or the Shroud but won't venture forth alone unless she's absolutely desperate.

All Smiles. Anastasia became majordomo to a Darklord by picking her battles carefully or, if she could help it, by not picking them at all. She's the mistress of a thousand small kindnesses, hoping people will remember her favorably as they rise to power.

IRIK'S TOMB

Anastasia's directions lead the characters into the oldest part of the mausoleum. Thick, iron-banded oak doors lead to tombs on either side of dusty, winding hallways. Moans rise on the air, and investigators can hear chains and bones rattling. The sturdy doors, however, keep the restless dead at bay.

You arrive at an open passage—hinges on the wall revealing where a door once sat. The marbled edifice around the doorway is richly decorated with carvings of withered leaves dying on the vine and scowling skulls. Despite the ornamentation, you see no name proclaiming its occupant.

A lone sarcophagus stands in the center of the room, with a statue of a young man lying supine atop it. Where the eyes, nose, and mouth should be, there is only smooth stone. Opposite the entrance, on the far side of the sarcophagus, a young man stands with his back toward you. His slender shoulders are hunched and his silver-blond hair hangs loose. Everything about him is pale, colors washed out as if he's barely there.

CREATURE INFORMATION

Irik Zal'honen (a **ghost**), the spirit of Azalin Rex's son, stares forlornly at a blank wall. Irik keeps his back turned to avoid inadvertent use of his Horrifying Visage, but a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check convinces him otherwise. Characters who know of Irik's story or are particularly sympathetic to the prince have advantage on the check. Forcing him to show his face sends him into a rage, however.

The nameless edifice and faceless statue both owe to the same reason: Azalin Rex wanted to trap Irik in this tomb and deny him his due recognition in the afterlife, but Irik has no way of knowing this. A successful DC 13 Intelligence (History) check reveals the tomb's style dates back to early Darkon, when the lich's reign had just begun.

Irik is open about who he is, though his memory is fading with time. He recalls his father, who was a great father and a terrible king. As a reward for helping his father become a virtuous and fair king, Irik was executed. Irik is certain that was all his fault though.

Irik is aware Castle Avernus has been destroyed but doesn't think it's been completely abandoned; some of his father's Undead and Construct experiments surely survived, as may have some of his living servants. He's spoken to Anastasia once, but she didn't speak of the castle's recent affairs. Irik has a low opinion of Anastasia, Elzebeth, and Samael. He can't imagine Azalin confided in any of the three, but he's convinced his father confided in the dragon Ebbasheyth. Irik resents Ebbasheyth, who held more of Azalin's respect than his own son ever did. He tries not to show it though, stalwartly referring to the dragon as his father's most trusted advisor. If anyone knows of Azalin's plans or current whereabouts, she will.

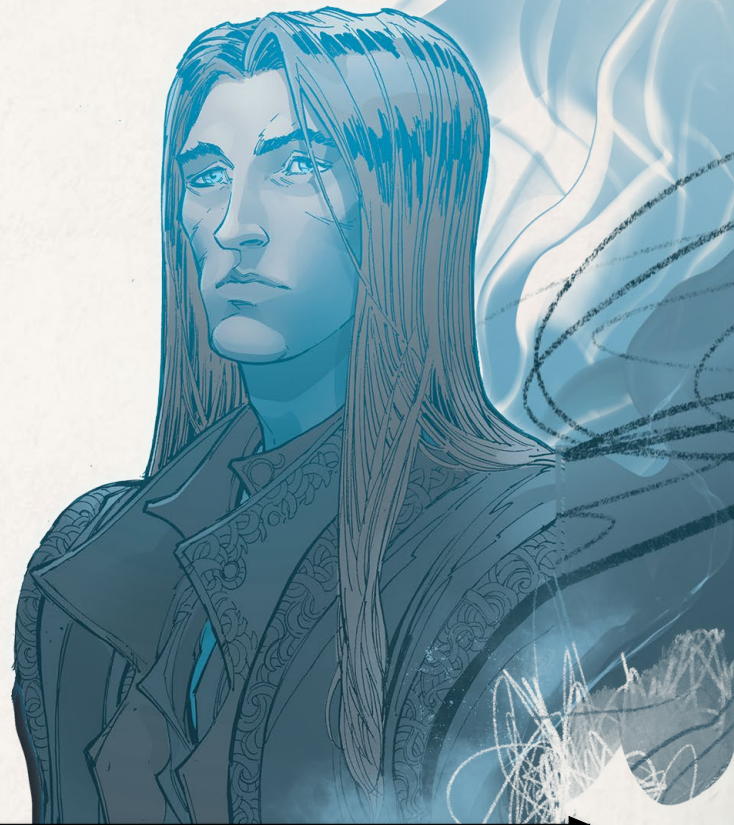
Azalin built a secret passage from Castle Avernus to Irik's tomb, so he could visit his son any time he wanted. Irik knows this much but doesn't know its exact location as Azalin never visited. A successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the hidden door in the west wall.

TREASURE

A *potion of necrotic resistance* lies in a pile of detritus a few yards into the secret passage.

TO THE CASTLE

Investigators can continue to Castle Avernus above ground, climbing across the shattered terrain of the mountain's steep incline. It's a cumbersome route and makes for slow going, but the characters make it without incident. If they spoke with Irik and found the hidden passage, they can continue underground. In either case, the investigators arrive at the shattered ruins of Castle Avernus in part 2.



IRIK ZAL'HONEN

Ghostly reminder of past evils

Irik (EER-ick) has conflicted feelings about his father. While he loathes Azalin for his misdeeds, he's also prone to periods of self-blame, believing he "should" have done more to "make his father become a better person." Irik appears as he did in life: with pale, silvery skin and long, blonde hair that frames a thin, angular face.

What They Want. Irik still holds out hope that Azalin will, despite everything he's done, repent and assume the mantle of a benevolent ruler.

Tied to the Land. Irik is doubly troubled by recent events. Since the Hour of Ascension, Irik realizes the danger the domain is in, and is anxious to find a resolution to the impending doom.

PART 2:

CASTLE AVERNUS

Estimated Duration: 120 minutes

The investigators arrive, overland or via the secret tunnel, at the broken shell of Castle Avernus. They must make their way through floating rooms and flying corridors to the ballroom where Ebbasheyth sleeps, in the hopes that the dragon can tell them where Azalin went and what his plans actually are.

Themes: Exploration and danger

CASTLE AVERNUS FEATURES

Castle Avernus has the following general features:

Terrain. Castle Avernus exists as a hundred separate rooms. Some hang like blocks frozen mid-drift. Others still move, bobbing up and down or back and forth on invisible gravity currents. A few are trapped in an ever-expanding spiral away from the castle's core. For every room still on the same axis as its neighbor, another sits at a tilt or entirely upside-down. The castle still remembers being whole, and new bridges and corridors twist and grow to link rooms back together.

Gravity Currents. Castle Avernus's chaotic gravity eddies make it impossible to fly from one room to another. Ebbasheyth only manages because she's spent her time since the Ascension mapping the currents.

Sounds and Smells. The smell of death and rot is pervasive, with ozone and acid permeating the nasal background. Castle Avernus is loud as rooms slowly tear themselves apart in expansion or collide into each other.

Lighting. It's night, but Castle Avernus is lit by countless lights. Several magic lamps still burn, and survivors have lit new lanterns in the ruins. Will-o'-wisps create their own light as they hunt for victims. The King's Tear shines its golden radiance directly over the castle.

Weather. Rain still pours down, lightning flashes silently overhead. The castle's gravity wells and shifting rooms create sudden and erratic gusts of wind.

CREATURE INFORMATION

The characters can clearly see Ebbasheyth (an **ancient black shadow dragon**) making a show of sleeping in the remains of a grand, now open-air, ballroom. She knows exactly what's going on in the castle—both Elzebeth and Samael have begged for her support and watches the investigator's journey with feigned disinterest. Ebbasheyth ignores all missives sent her way. If the characters want to speak with her, they must put in the effort to reach her.

NAVIGATING CASTLE AVERNUS

With Castle Avernus's rooms adrift, there's no single path to Ebbasheyth. Instead, the characters participate in one encounter and one trap as they navigate the treacherous ruins.

TRAPS

As the characters navigate the ruined castle, determine which trap they encounter by rolling a d6: 1–2, the Bone

Room; 3–4, the Chamber of Wounds; 5–6, the Death Scarabs. Alternatively, you can choose.

Treasure. Characters who search the area and make a successful DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) check find a hidden compartment containing a *spell scroll of raise dead*. Each trap describes this compartment. The characters can obtain this treasure only once.

EXPANDING PLAY

You can expand play by adding encounters or traps, as drifting rooms change the investigator's path to Ebbasheyth. If the players are inclined to roleplay, consider expanding the encounters with Elzebeth and Samael—including the possibility of arranging a meeting between the two and negotiating a resolution.

BONE ROOM

The castle's destruction set this room on its side. The floor (formerly the wall) is set with delicate, 5-foot-wide hexagonal glass chambers. Each chamber contains a tiny sliver of magical bone: one of Azalin's failed attempts to make regenerating skeletons. The slivers of bone are small and require a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to spot. The bones radiate an aura of necromancy. Ten feet from the entrance, a large window in the center of the floor provides a gap in the field of hexagons.

Exploding Bone Trap. The glass face of each hexagon can bear 10 pounds before breaking, and the window can bear 100 pounds before breaking. Both the hexagons and the window have AC 8, 5 hit points, vulnerability to bludgeoning damage, and immunity to poison and psychic damage. If exposed to air, the slivers of bone explode in a 5-foot-radius sphere. Each creature in the area must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 11 (2d10) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The explosion is likely to break nearby hexagons, which explode in turn. The characters can traverse the safely area with a successful DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check.

Treasure. The treasure is in a small hidden compartment near the entrance.

CHAMBER OF WOUNDS

This chamber holds six mutilated bodies (four in black robes, two in red) roughly bent and bound into supplicated positions before a statue in the center of the room that depicts a tall, foreboding man in stylish robes. A successful DC 13 Intelligence (History) check determines that this statue depicts Azalin Rex. Darkonian characters automatically succeed on this check. The statue radiates an aura of necromancy.

Pressure Plate Trap. There are several pressure plates around the room, all which are revealed with a successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check. Avoiding the pressure plates requires a successful DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. As an action, a pressure plate can

be disabled by wedging a spike or another thin, durable object under the tile. If six or more contiguous plates are disabled, it creates a safe path through the room. Stepping on an active pressure plate unleashes a wave of necromantic energy from the statue. Each creature in the room must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, taking 16 (3d10) necrotic damage and gaining 1 point of Stress (see *Van Richten's Guide to Ravenloft*) on a failed save, or half as much damage and no additional effects on a successful one. The necromantic effect can be disabled by casting a *dispel magic* spell on the statue.

Creature Information. Characters with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 13 or higher notice one of the black-robed victims is still breathing. She awakens if she regains any hit points. Emelia (a **noble**) reveals that Elzebeth and Samael use this room to punish people. After being tortured by Elzebeth and left to die by Samael, Emma is keen to leave with the characters, or to venture to Anastasia's settlement on her own if the characters tell her about it.

Treasure. The secret compartment is located in the base of the statue.

DEATH SCARABS

The ceiling of this wood-paneled corridor is partially collapsed and open to the outside. The corridor is lined with vats, each rigged with a single tripwire that crosses the hallway. Both the vats and the tripwires are plainly visible. The sound of scuttling insects fills the hallway, but not all the vats are filled with scarabs. A character who listens at a vat and makes a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check determines whether the vat contains scarabs. A skeleton clad in red robes lies on the floor beneath one vat, a gleaming, black scarab crushed in its hand.

Scarab Vat Trap. A character can immobilize a trip wire with a successful DC 13 Dexterity check using thieves' tools, made with disadvantage due to the sheer number of trip wires in the hallway. If a wire is tripped or a check to disable it fails by 5 or more, the attached vat overturns and releases the death scarabs within. On initiative count 20 (losing ties), the scarabs attack: +8 to hit, *Hit*: 10 (3d6) necrotic damage. The scarabs disperse after 2 rounds.

Treasure. The secret compartment is located behind a panel painted to resemble the front of a vat.

ENCOUNTERS

The characters participate in one of the following encounters as they navigate the ruined castle. Characters can use the *bone compass* to determine that two possible paths take them past Undead (the sword wraith commander in the laboratory and Elzebeth in the library—the needle turns green for both), while one doesn't (Samael in the temple). If the characters specifically take a route with an Undead encounter, roll a d6: on a roll of 1–3, the characters encounter the laboratory; 4–6, they encounter the library. If the characters specifically try to go around the Undead, they go through the temple.

If the characters don't use the *bone compass*, or don't care either way, roll a d6 to determine which location they encounter: 1–2, the laboratory; 3–4, the library; 5–6, the temple. Alternatively, you can choose.

Treasure. The characters can find *Starshard*, a beautiful *sun blade* here. Doing so, however, requires examining the room or interacting with its occupants (or perhaps

both). The characters can find *Starshard* only once, replace further mentions of the item with a *potion of greater healing*.

LABORATORY

The laboratory was part of Azalin's private chambers. Now, it's a single floor suspended in the darkness. The windswept platform is slick with rain and inlaid with elaborate bone sigils. Thick shadows swirl about the floor in a semblance of life.

Creature Information. A sword wraith commander materializes once the last character enters the room. She's been charged with killing anyone that enters other than Azalin, a duty she carries out with professional enthusiasm. She's a boastful creature with a lust for battle and a warped sense of honor, even going so far as to grant the characters a round to draw their weapons—though she attacks immediately if any character casts a spell. If the characters refuse to draw their weapons, she eventually attacks. Convincing the sword wraith to allow the characters passage requires a compelling argument and a successful DC 15 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check. Praising her sense of duty grants advantage on the check. Attempts to intimidate her fail and provoke her anger.



Treasure. A character who investigates the bone sigils and makes a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check notices a catch that reveals a hidden compartment. A creature able to see magic auras has advantage on the check. The compartment holds several journals, which turn to ash if anyone but Azalin Rex touches them, and *Starshard*. The sword wraith commander attacks any creature that draws *Starshard* from the trove.

LIBRARY

Elzebeth has claimed the library, which consists of two separated floating rooms with bone ladders strung between. The east room still has three walls and a roof and contains the most valuable books. The west room drifts at an odd angle; half its books have fallen from their shelves into a pile in one corner.

Creature Information. Elzebeth (a **deathlock mastermind**), who wears dark-red robes, pores over scrolls and tomes at a table in the east room. Characters who watch the situation for more than a few minutes see red-robed **acolytes** bringing items, books and scrolls for Elzebeth.

Impersonating an acolyte requires a successful DC 15 Charisma check made with a disguise kit, though the check automatically fails if the character isn't wearing red robes (characters can acquire robes in the Chamber of Wounds). Spells like *disguise self* can also be used. Sneaking past Elzebeth requires a successful DC 14 Dexterity (Stealth) check, though there's ample cover to facilitate this. Characters in the west room have advantage on the check due to the clutter.

Alternatively, Elzebeth offers to not only grant the characters safe passage if they bring her proof of Samael's death, she'll even let them pick through the treasure pile as a reward. If the characters agree, Elzebeth summons an **invisible stalker** to take them to the temple and make sure the investigators fulfill their part of the deal.

Treasure. A pile in the east room contains different items Elzebeth has found no use for. *Starshard* lies in the pile.

ELZEBETH NIRUM

Undead necromancer

Elzebeth was always ambitious, offering her soul to anyone who could grant her power. Azalin took the young mage under his wing, turning her into an Undead—the better to control—as her talent grew into skill. Elzebeth spent the rest of her long existence caught between gratitude for Azalin's patronage and resentment for the chains he placed upon her.

What They Want. The king is dead, long live the queen.

Elzebeth doesn't believe Azalin is coming back, but she plans to be firmly entrenched if he does.

On the Cusp. If Azalin doesn't return, Elzebeth's ruthlessness and ambition give her a chance to become Darkon's new Darklord—which might restore coherence to the domain.

TEMPLE

Samael has claimed the Temple of Azalin Rex as his domain. The temple, now missing two walls and part of its roof, remains an impressive (if gaudy) dedication to Azalin Rex. A huge statue of the lich dominates the room. A successful DC 13 Intelligence (History) check determines that this statue depicts Azalin Rex. Darkonian characters or those that identified the statue in the Chamber of Wounds automatically

succeed on this check. Altars and offering bowls dot the room, each representing a different aspect of the lich.

Creature Information. Samael, a tall, muscular elf (a **blackguard**) kneels before the central altar in prayer. Characters who watch the situation for more than a few minutes see black-robed **cultists** bringing reports to Samael before leaving.

Impersonating an acolyte requires a successful DC 15 Charisma check made with a disguise kit, though the check automatically fails if the character isn't wearing red robes (characters can acquire robes in the Chamber of Wounds). Spells like *disguise self* can also be used. Characters can use the shrines and statues as cover to sneak past Samael with a successful DC 12 Dexterity (Stealth) check. Alternatively, Samael offers the characters safe passage as well as *Starshard* if they capture and bring Elzebeth to him. If the characters agree, Samael calls an armor golem (a **Strahd's animated armor**) to take them to the library and make sure the investigators fulfill their part of the deal.

Treasure. The altar holds nonmagical prayer scrolls, incense bowls, and other offerings to Azalin Rex. A character with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 13 or higher, or a character who can see magic auras, spots *Starshard* on one altar.



SAMAEL BIRCHWOOD

Elven blackguard

Samael (SAM-ey-ehl) is a devout man who dedicated his entire existence to his god. Unfortunately, even before the lich's ascension, that "god" was Azalin Rex. Samael was tortured and murdered in service to his god, and is convinced Azalin's disappearance is a test of faith. Samael is tall, muscular, and gaunt, with ashen skin and fine—yet antiquated—clothing.

What They Want. Samael fervently awaits Azalin Rex's return, and only seeks the regency because he doesn't trust Elzebeth.

Zealot. Samael believes in Azalin Rex. Any suggestion that the lich is fallible—or indeed merely a lich rather than a god—enrages him.

EBBASHEYTH

The characters have made their way through the disjointed castle, and finally arrive in Ebbasheyth's ballroom.

BALLROOM FEATURES

Ebbasheyth's lair has the following features:

Dimensions and Terrain. This former ballroom is vast, the remains of its walls resplendent in silken wallpaper with delicate patterns, and the fishbone wooden floor scored with huge claw marks. A large crystal chandelier lies shattered on the floor, with gemstones almost casually swept up in the fine silver chains.

Lighting. Ebbasheyth likes darkness. The only illumination comes from stark and intermittent lightning flashes overhead.

Sounds and Smells. Black lichen grows in the perpetually wet room, giving off a musty, earthen scent. The wind howls outside.

Wet Floor. The ballroom is missing its roof, but Ebbasheyth enjoys the rain anyway. The slippery floor is difficult terrain for the investigators.

CREATURE INFORMATION

Ebbasheyth (an **ancient black shadow dragon**) is here, and now the characters have made the effort to reach her, she no longer feigns sleep.

The dragon being, well, a dragon, doesn't suffer others to touch the things she holds precious, specifically, the shards of the chandelier or the gemstones. Those are hers alone to admire.

Ebbasheyth has watched the characters struggle through the castle with amusement. Their actions, successes, and failures determine how she treats them now. She's cautious of those who lied to Elzebeth, Samael, or the sword wraith commander in the laboratory; these characters have disadvantage on checks made to persuade Ebbasheyth. She mocks the softheartedness of any who saved Emelia from the Chamber of Wounds. Either way, she's curious why they're here—and willing to talk.

The dragon has been privy to Azalin's plans to escape Darkon since their inception and reveals them casually to the characters, taking pride in being the only creature the lich trusted enough to confide in. That said, she didn't think Azalin would succeed as he had, or else she would have tried to stop him. While it could be described as a friendship, Ebbasheyth's relationship with Azalin is extremely toxic and she's bored without him. What she won't admit is that she's upset Azalin's success has widened the power gap between them in the lich's favor. The largest reason for wanting Azalin back, she admits, is simple: if Azalin escapes Ravenloft, she believes the domain of Darkon, as Azalin's personal prison, will no longer have a purpose, and it, along with every creature in it, will cease to exist.

If attacked, Ebbasheyth defends herself with shocking ferocity, sparing no one, but flees if reduced to 90 hit points or less.

TREASURE

Once the characters have no more questions, Ebbasheyth asks a favor of the characters. She's in possession of a magic dagger belonging to Alcio Metus (a vampire crime



EBBASHEYTH

Draconic advisor

Ebbasheyth (EBB-uh-shayth) is unfathomably old, and held in high esteem by Azalin. While not necessarily absent-minded, it takes her a few moments to scour and access aeons of collective knowledge and wisdom. The dragon isn't benevolent by any means: her desires take precedence over others', and she's willing to use violence against those she feels have wronged her.

What They Want. Ebbasheyth wishes for Azalin to return to Castle Avernus, even if it means stymieing the lich's grand plan.

Trusted Advisor. Ebbasheyth has seen and learned more than most creatures that dwell within Ravenloft. She's a nigh-bottomless font of information about the workings of the Domains of Dread.

lord). The dragon borrowed it many years ago and has yet to return it. She asks one of the characters (favoring anyone who lied to the sword wraith, Elzebeth, or Samael) to return it to Alcio, suggesting that Alcio is likely to reward them handsomely. If none of the characters accept the task, Ebbasheyth acts nonchalant, but seethes with anger inside.

WRAP-UP: RETURN TO DEMENTLIEU

Upon learning what they can from Ebbasheyth, the characters return to the Ray Agency using the Mist Talisman they've become so familiar with. Alanik, after hearing their report, is now certain Azalin Rex is behind the recent upheaval, and that the lich is manipulating events from within the King's Tear.



TOUCHED BY SHADOW

A character who ends the adventure with Ebbasheyth's dagger in their possession gains this story award. When they awaken the following morning, the dagger is gone.

But they notice a strange black tattoo on their forearm in the form of a dagger.

DENOUEMENT

Upon finishing the session, read the following:

As you sit in Alanik's study, discussing your findings, evil is afoot in Darkon. A cold wind rushes across the dread realm and the golden countenance of the King's Tear slowly turns a deep crimson, bathing the land below in eerie red light.

INVESTIGATION JOURNAL

Provide each player with a copy of handout 2: Investigation Journal. Before the session ends, each player must choose which item found during the adventure they want to keep, and cross out the others.



DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The following NPCs feature prominently in this adventure:

ALANIK RAY

Elf investigator

Alanik (Ah-LAHN-ick RAY) is confident and insightful, a shrewd investigator, and one of the most well-traveled mortals in the Domains of Dread. A master of insight and deduction, Alanik can learn details about others after a few moments of meeting them. For example, he can almost instantaneously deduce a character's native domain from their accent and mannerisms. An accidental fall during an investigation caused a spinal injury that paralyzed Alanik's legs. Alanik uses a custom wheelchair he created with the assistance of his husband, Arthur Sedgwick. More information on Alanik can be found in *Van Richten's Guide to Ravenloft*.

What They Want. Alanik's immediate concern is discovering to what end Azalin Rex has orchestrated recent events.

No Loose Ends. Having solved Radaga's disappearance, Alanik has moved on to investigating the reasons behind it.

ANASTASIA DREYEK

Majordomo of Castle Avernus

Anastasia (ah-nah-STAY-sja) is ambitious and cunning, and is building a vast network of friends, allies, and people who owe her favors. Azalin's Ascension left too many contenders in its wake, upending Anastasia's previously hoarded relationships.

What They Want. Anastasia wants to escape Lychgate with her power base—the people who follow her—intact. She's willing to sacrifice some passing the barrier or the Shroud, but won't venture forth alone unless she's absolutely desperate.

All Smiles. Anastasia became majordomo to a Darklord by picking her battles carefully or, if she could help it, by not picking them at all. She's the mistress of a thousand small kindnesses, hoping people will remember her favorably as they rise to power.

ARTHUR SEDGEWICK

Human doctor

Arthur (ARE-fur SEDJ-wick) is compassionate and sympathetic to the horrors the denizens of Ravenloft are subjected to on a daily basis, and has devoted his life to easing them as best he's able. Arthur is broad shouldered and muscular, with chestnut skin and close-cropped black hair. More information on Arthur can be found in *Van Richten's Guide to Ravenloft*.

What They Want. Arthur has grown increasingly concerned over Alanik's well-being; he knows Alanik's

work is of the utmost importance, but it's taking a toll on his husband.

Healer of Body; Healer of Heart. He yearns for nothing more than to tend to the wounds of others—whether physical or emotional. None are turned away from his care, regardless of their ability to pay or their perceived worth.

EBBASHEYTH

Draconic advisor

Ebbasheyth (EBB-uh-shayth) is unfathomably old, and held in high esteem by Azalin. While not necessarily absent-minded, it takes her a few moments to scour and access aeons of collective knowledge and wisdom. The dragon isn't benevolent by any means: her desires take precedence over others', and she's willing to use violence against those she feels have wronged her.

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Undead necromancer

Elzebeth was always ambitious, offering her soul to anyone who could grant her power. Azalin took the young mage under his wing, turning her into an Undead—the better to control—as her talent grew into skill. Elzebeth spent the rest of her long existence caught between gratitude for Azalin's patronage and resentment for the chains he placed upon her.

What They Want. The king is dead, long live the queen.

Elzebeth doesn't believe Azalin is coming back, but she plans to be firmly entrenched if he does.

On the Cusp. If Azalin doesn't return, Elzebeth's ruthlessness and ambition give her a chance to become Darkon's new Darklord, which might restore coherence to the domain.

IRIK ZAL'HONEN

Ghostly reminder of past evils

Irik (EER-ick) has conflicted feelings about his father. While he loathes Azalin for his misdeeds, he's also prone to periods of self-blame, believing he "should" have done more to "make his father become a better person." Irik appears as he did in life: with pale, silvery skin and long, blonde hair that frames a thin, angular face.

What They Want. Irik still holds out hope that Azalin will, despite everything he's done, repent and assume the mantle of a benevolent ruler.



Tied to the Land. Irik is doubly troubled by recent events. Since the Hour of Ascension, Irik realizes the danger the domain is in, and is anxious to find a resolution to the impending doom.

KABE WHIPPOORWILL

Lightfoot halfling interdomain scout

Alanik Ray's scout, associate, and friend, Kabe Whippoorwill (KAYB WIP-er-wil) is also secretly a member of the Keepers of the Feather (a fact known only to Alanik). Alongside a quick smile and a mean right hook, Kabe possesses a Dark Gift that allows them to traverse the Domains of Dread. Acting as both a guide for the characters and a field contact, they're an invaluable member of the investigative team.

What They Want. Kabe's line of work is dangerous, so they want to ensure everything goes smoothly. Losing an agent is never the desired outcome.

Mist Walker. Kabe is Alanik's scout, investigatory partner, friend, and an invaluable member of the team. They also work as the characters' field contact.

RADAGA

Human scholar of the Dark Powers

The initial subject of the Order of the Guardians' search, Radaga (rah-DAH-gah) is a scholar and an arcanist who has delved far into the nature of the Dark Powers—some say a bit too far. She's brilliant but obsessive in her desire to catalog the sinister, as well as a bit possessive of her knowledge. Radaga has pale skin and dark-red hair.

What They Want. Radaga is driven by her research into the Domains of Dread. Partnering with the Ray Agency gives her opportunities to gain knowledge while staying out of harm's way.

Obsessed with Forbidden Knowledge. Radaga is angry at and laments the loss of time due to her recent possession. She's champing at the bit to return to her life and studies.

SAMAEI BIRCHWOOD

Elven blackguard

Samael (SAM-ey-ehl) is a devout man who dedicated his entire existence to his god. Unfortunately, even before the lich's ascension, that "god" was Azalin Rex. Samael was tortured and murdered in service to his god, and is convinced Azalin's disappearance is a test of faith. Samael is tall, muscular, and gaunt, with ashen skin and fine—yet antiquated—clothing.

What They Want. Samael fervently awaits Azalin Rex's return, and only seeks the regency because he doesn't trust Elzebeth.

Zealot. Samael believes in Azalin Rex. Any suggestion that the lich is fallible—or indeed merely a lich rather than a god—enrages him.

CREATURE INFORMATION

ACOLYTE

Medium or Small Humanoid (Cleric), Any Alignment

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 9 (2d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)

Skills Medicine +4, Religion +2

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages any one language (usually Common)

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Spellcasting. The acolyte is a 1st-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). It has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *light*, *sacred flame*, *thaumaturgy*

1st level (3 slots): *bless*, *cure wounds*, *sanctuary*

ACTIONS

Club. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage.

ANCIENT BLACK SHADOW DRAGON

Gargantuan Dragon (Chromatic), Typically Chaotic Evil

Armor Class 22 (natural armor)

Hit Points 367 (21d20 + 147)

Speed 40 ft., fly 80 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
27 (+8)	14 (+2)	25 (+7)	16 (+3)	15 (+2)	19 (+4)

Saving Throws Dex +9, Con +14, Wis +9, Cha +11

Skills Perception +16, Stealth +16

Damage Resistances necrotic

Damage Immunities acid

Senses blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 26

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 21 (33,000 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +7

Amphibious. The dragon can breathe air and water.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the dragon fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Living Shadow. While in dim light or darkness, the dragon has resistance to damage that isn't force, psychic, or radiant.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the dragon has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dragon can use its Frightful Presence. It then makes one Bite attack and two Claw attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (2d10 + 8) piercing damage plus 9 (2d8) necrotic damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d6 + 8) slashing damage.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d8 + 8) bludgeoning damage.

Frightful Presence. Each creature of the dragon's choice that is within 120 feet of the dragon and aware of it must succeed on a DC 19 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the dragon's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.

Shadow Breath (Recharge 5–6). The dragon exhales necrotic energy in a 90-foot line that is 10 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 22 Dexterity saving throw, taking 67 (15d8) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. A Humanoid reduced to 0 hit points by this damage dies, and a shadow rises from its corpse and acts immediately after the dragon in the initiative count. The shadow is under the dragon's control.

BONUS ACTIONS

Shadow Stealth (Only in Dim Light or Darkness). The dragon takes the Hide action.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The dragon can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The dragon regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Detect. The dragon makes a Wisdom (Perception) check.

Tail Attack. The dragon makes a Tail attack.

Wing Attack (Costs 2 Actions). The dragon beats its wings.

Each creature within 15 feet of the dragon must succeed on a DC 23 Dexterity saving throw or take 15 (2d6 + 8) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone. The dragon can then fly up to half its flying speed.

BLACKGUARD

Medium or Small Humanoid (Paladin), Any Alignment

Armor Class 18 (plate armor)

Hit Points 153 (18d8 + 72)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	11 (+0)	18 (+4)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Wis +5, Cha +5

Skills Athletics +7, Deception +5, Intimidation +5

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages any one language (usually Common)

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +3

Spellcasting. The blackguard is a 10th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). It has the following paladin spells prepared:

1st level (4 slots): *command*, *protection from evil and good*, *thunderous smite*

2nd level (3 slots): *branding smite*, *find steed*

3rd level (2 slots): *blinding smite*, *dispel magic*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The blackguard makes three Glaive attacks or three Shortbow attacks.

Glaive. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d10 + 4) slashing damage.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) piercing damage.

Dreadful Aspect (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). The blackguard exudes magical menace. Each enemy within 30 feet of the blackguard must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened for 1 minute. If a frightened target ends its turn more than 30 feet away from the blackguard, the target can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success.



COMMONER

Medium or Small Humanoid, Any Alignment

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 4 (1d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages any one language (usually Common)

Challenge 0 (10 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

ACTIONS

Club. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage.

CULTIST

Medium or Small Humanoid, Any Alignment

Armor Class 12 (leather armor)

Hit Points 9 (2d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Deception +2, Religion +2

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages any one language (usually Common)

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Dark Devotion. The cultist has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

ACTIONS

Scimitar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) slashing damage.

DEATHLOCK MASTERMIND

Medium Undead (Warlock), Typically Neutral Evil

Armor Class 13 (16 with *mage armor*)

Hit Points 110 (20d8 + 20)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)

Saving Throws Int +5, Cha +6

Skills Arcana +5, History +5, Perception +4

Damage Resistances necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't silvered

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 120 ft. (including magical darkness), passive Perception 14

Languages the languages it knew in life

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +3

Innate Spellcasting. The deathlock's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *detect magic*, *disguise self*, *mage armor*

Spellcasting. The deathlock is a 10th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). It regains its expended spell slots when it finishes a short or long rest. It knows the following warlock spells:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch*, *mage hand*, *minor illusion*, *poison spray*

1st–5th level (2 5th-level slots): *arms of Hadar*, *blight*, *counterspell*, *crown of madness*, *darkness*, *dimension door*, *dispel magic*, *fly*, *hold monster*, *invisibility*

Turn Resistance. The deathlock has advantage on saving throws against any effect that turns Undead.

ACTIONS

Deathly Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (3d6 + 3) necrotic damage.

Grave Bolts. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +6 to hit, range 120 ft., one or two targets. *Hit:* 18 (4d8) necrotic damage. If the target is Large or smaller, it must succeed on a DC 16 Strength saving throw or become restrained as shadowy tendrils wrap around it for 1 minute. A restrained target can use its action to repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success.



GHOST

Medium Undead, Any Alignment

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 45 (10d8)

Speed 0 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (-2)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)

Damage Resistances acid, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities cold, necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages any languages it knew in life

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Ethereal Sight. The ghost can see 60 feet into the Ethereal Plane when it is on the Material Plane, and vice versa.

Incorporeal Movement. The ghost can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

ACTIONS

Withering Touch. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (4d6 + 3) necrotic damage.

Etherealness. The ghost enters the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa. It is visible on the Material Plane while it is in the Border Ethereal, and vice versa, yet it can't affect or be affected by anything on the other plane.

Horrifying Visage. Each non-Undead creature within 60 feet of the ghost that can see it must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened for 1 minute. If the save fails by 5 or more, the target also ages 1d4 × 10 years. A frightened target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the frightened condition on itself on a success. If a target's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the target is immune to this ghost's Horrifying Visage for the next 24 hours. The aging effect can be reversed with a *greater restoration* spell, but only within 24 hours of it occurring.

Possession (Recharge 6). One Humanoid that the ghost can see within 5 feet of it must succeed on a DC 13 Charisma saving throw or be possessed by the ghost; the ghost then disappears, and the target is incapacitated and loses control of its body. The ghost now controls the body but doesn't deprive the target of awareness. The ghost can't be targeted by any attack, spell, or other effect, except ones that turn Undead, and it retains its alignment, Intelligence, Wisdom, Charisma, and immunity to being charmed and frightened. It otherwise uses the possessed target's statistics, but doesn't gain access to the target's knowledge, class features, or proficiencies.

The possession lasts until the body drops to 0 hit points, the ghost ends it as a bonus action, or the ghost is turned or forced out by an effect like the *dispel evil and good* spell. When the possession ends, the ghost reappears in an unoccupied space within 5 feet of the body. The target is immune to this ghost's Possession for 24 hours after succeeding on the saving throw or after the possession ends.

INVISIBLE STALKER

Medium Elemental, Typically Neutral

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 104 (16d8 + 32)

Speed 50 ft., fly 50 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	19 (+4)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)

Skills Perception +8, Stealth +10

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, unconscious

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 18

Languages Auran, understands Common but doesn't speak it
Challenge 6 (2,300 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +3

Faultless Tracker. The stalker is given a quarry by its summoner. The stalker knows the direction and distance to its quarry as long as the two of them are on the same plane of existence. The stalker also knows the location of its summoner.

Invisibility. The stalker is invisible.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The stalker makes two Slam attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

MINOTAUR SKELETON

Large Undead, Typically Lawful Evil

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)

Hit Points 67 (9d10 + 18)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	11 (+0)	15 (+2)	6 (-2)	8 (-1)	5 (-3)

Damage Vulnerabilities bludgeoning

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages understands Abyssal but can't speak

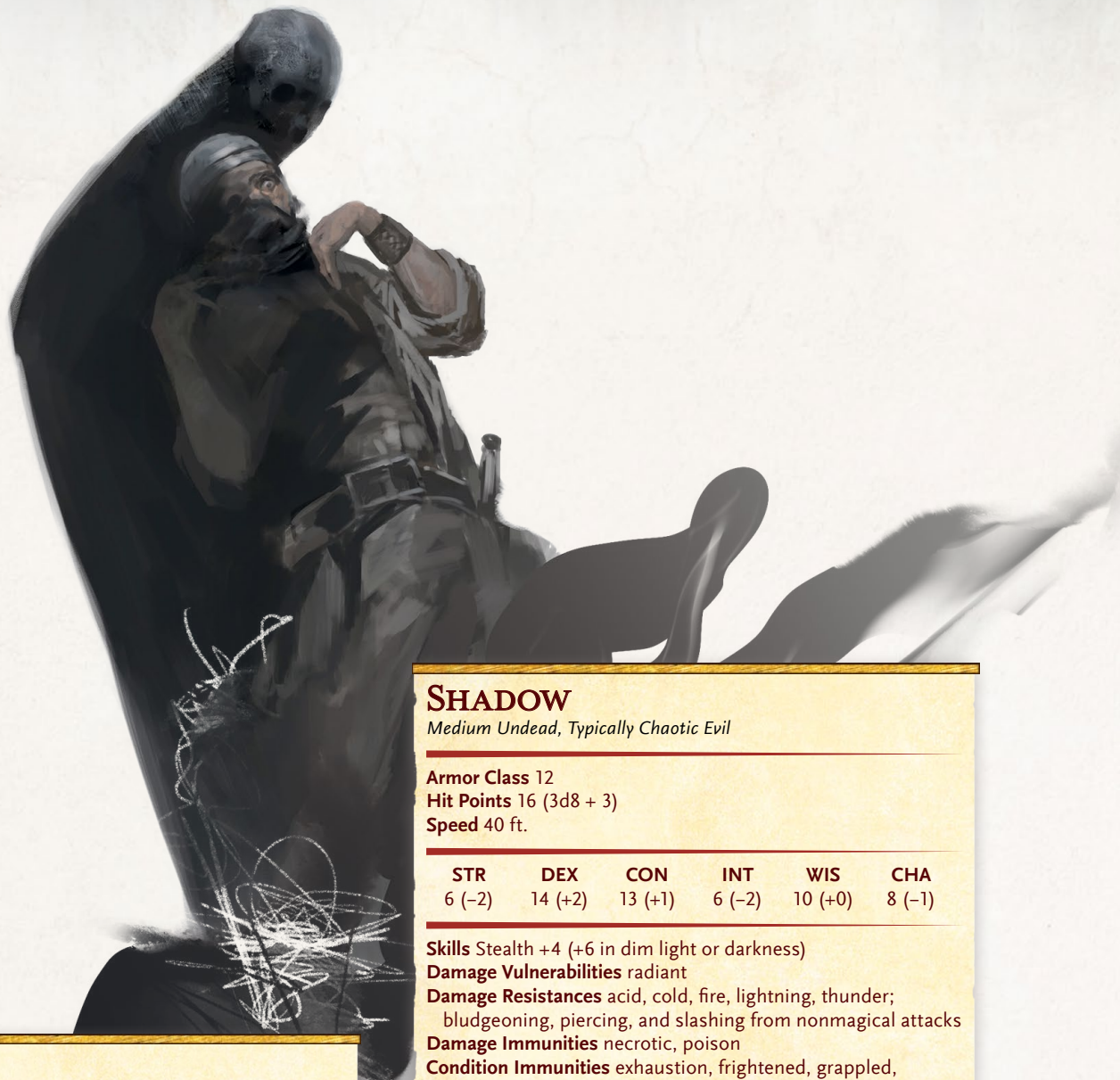
Challenge 2 (450 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Charge. If the skeleton moves at least 10 feet straight toward a target and then hits it with a Gore attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 9 (2d8) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be pushed up to 10 feet away and knocked prone.

ACTIONS

Gore. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage.

Greataxe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d12 + 4) slashing damage.



NOBLE

Medium or Small Humanoid, Any Alignment

Armor Class 15 (breastplate)

Hit Points 9 (2d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)

Skills Deception +5, Insight +4, Persuasion +5

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages any two languages

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

ACTIONS

Rapier. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.
Hit: 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage.

REACTIONS

Parry. The noble adds 2 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the noble must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

SHADOW

Medium Undead, Typically Chaotic Evil

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 16 (3d8 + 3)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	6 (-2)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)

Skills Stealth +4 (+6 in dim light or darkness)

Damage Vulnerabilities radiant

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder;

bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, frightened, grappled,

paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Amorphous. The shadow can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

Sunlight Weakness. While in sunlight, the shadow has disadvantage on attack rolls, ability checks, and saving throws.

ACTIONS

Strength Drain. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) necrotic damage, and the target's Strength score is reduced by 1d4. The target dies if this reduces its Strength to 0. Otherwise, the reduction lasts until the target finishes a short or long rest.

If a non-evil Humanoid dies from this attack, a new shadow rises from the corpse 1d4 hours later.

BONUS ACTIONS

Shadow Stealth (Only in Dim Light or Darkness). The shadow takes the Hide action.

SKELETON

Medium Undead, Typically Lawful Evil

Armor Class 13 (armor scraps)

Hit Points 13 (2d8 + 4)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	6 (-2)	8 (-1)	5 (-3)

Damage Vulnerabilities bludgeoning

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages understands all languages it knew in life but can't speak

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

ACTIONS

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

STRAHD'S ANIMATED ARMOR

Medium Construct, Typically Lawful Evil

Armor Class 21 (natural armor)

Hit Points 112 (15d8 + 45)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	9 (-1)	10 (+0)	9 (-1)

Skills Perception +3

Damage Resistances cold, fire

Damage Immunities lightning, poison

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 13

Languages understands Common but can't speak

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

Antimagic Susceptibility. The armor is incapacitated while in the area of an *antimagic field*. If targeted by *dispel magic*, the armor must succeed on a Constitution saving throw against the caster's spell save DC or fall unconscious for 1 minute.

False Appearance. While the armor remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a normal suit of armor.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The armor makes two melee attacks or two Shocking Bolt attacks.

Greatsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage plus 3 (1d6) lightning damage.

Shocking Bolt. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +4 to hit (with advantage on the attack roll if the target is wearing armor made of metal), range 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) lightning damage.



SWORD WRAITH COMMANDER

Medium Undead, Typically Lawful Evil

Armor Class 18 (breastplate, shield)

Hit Points 127 (15d8 + 60)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)

Skills Perception +4

Damage Resistances necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, frightened, poisoned, unconscious

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages the languages it knew in life

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

Turning Defiance. The sword wraith and any other sword wraiths within 30 feet of it have advantage on saving throws against effects that turn Undead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The sword wraith makes two weapon attacks.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) slashing damage, or 9 (1d10 + 4) slashing damage if used with two hands.

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

Call to Honor (1/Day). To use this action, the sword wraith must have taken damage during the current combat. The sword wraith gives itself advantage on attack rolls until the end of its next turn, and 1d4 + 1 sword wraith warriors appear in unoccupied spaces within 30 feet of it. The warriors last until they drop to 0 hit points, and they take their turns immediately after the commander's turn on the same initiative count.

BONUS ACTIONS

Martial Fury. The sword wraith makes one weapon attack, which deals an extra 9 (2d8) necrotic damage on a hit. Until the start of the sword wraith's next turn, attack rolls against it have advantage.

SWORD WRAITH WARRIOR

Medium Undead, Typically Lawful Evil

Armor Class 16 (chain shirt, shield)

Hit Points 45 (6d8 + 18)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)	6 (-2)	9 (-1)	10 (+0)

Damage Resistances necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, frightened, poisoned, unconscious

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages the languages it knew in life

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

ACTIONS

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) slashing damage, or 9 (1d10 + 4) slashing damage if used with two hands.

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage.

BONUS ACTIONS

Martial Fury. The sword wraith makes one weapon attack. Until the start of the sword wraith's next turn, attack rolls against it have advantage.

WILL-O'-WISP

Tiny Undead, Typically Chaotic Evil

Armor Class 19

Hit Points 22 (9d4)

Speed 0 ft., fly 50 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (-5)	28 (+9)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)

Damage Immunities lightning, poison

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, necrotic, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, poisoned, prone, restrained, unconscious

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages the languages it knew in life

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Ephemeral. The will-o'-wisp can't wear or carry anything.

Incorporeal Movement. The will-o'-wisp can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Variable Illumination. The will-o'-wisp sheds bright light in a 5- to 20-foot radius and dim light for an additional number of feet equal to the chosen radius. The will-o'-wisp can alter the radius as a bonus action.

ACTIONS

Shock. *Melee Spell Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 9 (2d8) lightning damage.

Invisibility. The will-o'-wisp and its light magically become invisible until it attacks or uses its Consume Life, or until its concentration ends (as if concentrating on a spell).

BONUS ACTIONS

Consume Life. The will-o'-wisp targets one creature it can see within 5 feet of it that has 0 hit points and is still alive. The target must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw against this magic or die. If the target dies, the will-o'-wisp regains 10 (3d6) hit points.



HANDOUT 1: BONE COMPASS

BONE COMPASS

Wondrous Item, rare (Requires Attunement)

This bone-wrought compass mask melds into your flesh to become a macabre mounted bracelet. While attuned to the compass, you have resistance to necrotic damage and Undead have disadvantage on attack rolls that target you.

As an action, you can command the compass to point toward an Undead or group of Undead within 120 feet. The needle swings around, pointing to each Undead and changing color based on its strength relative to you. Green denotes an easy or medium encounter, red signals hard or deadly.

Curse. Spells and abilities that affect or target Undead also affect and can target you. While attuned to the compass, you don't regain hit points when you complete a long rest or when you spend Hit Dice at the end of a short rest.



HANDOUT 2: INVESTIGATION JOURNAL

I commend you for making your way through Lychgate despite the destruction left in Azalin's wake. The political upheaval is interesting. I had not expected two contenders for Azalin's throne and a band of refugees, but it is not something we can involve ourselves in. Well done holding yourself together when faced with Ebbasheyth! The information she gave you is most valuable indeed. I'm currently researching the full implications of it, I shall call again when I know more.

Yours in reason,

Alanik Ray

PS: The item you found along the way is safe at the Ray Agency should you have need of it in the future.

Choose one item from the list below by checking the box next to it.

- Potion of greater healing*
- Potion of necrotic resistance*
- Spell scroll of raise dead*
- Starshard**

**Starshard* functions as a *sun blade* (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). *Starshard's* blade is a jagged, three-foot-long shard of white stained glass that depicts half a celestial creature. It's wrapped with a bloody strip of linen that serves as a grip. If the wielder rolls a natural 1 on an attack roll made with *Starshard*, they must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or be blinded until the end of their next turn.

STORY AWARDS

- Touched by Shadow

APPENDIX A: MISTY VISIONS

During this adventure, the characters traverse the horrors awaiting in the misty borders of the Domains of Dread. When instructed, roll on the table below. If time permits, roll once for each character. Otherwise, roll once for the entire group. These effects end when the character leaves the domain they're traveling to.

MISTY VISIONS

d20	Vision	Effect
1	Dark, malevolent shadows flit around you, moving within the Mists just beyond your sight.	You have disadvantage on initiative checks.
2	Thick, thorny vines erupt from the ground and grasp at your limbs, threatening to pull you into the clammy ground.	You have disadvantage on checks made to escape a grapple or end the restrained condition.
3	You hear the screams of friends and family crying out in fear and agony, but can't find them, despite your best efforts.	You have disadvantage on saving throws against being frightened.
4	The ground becomes wet with black, sticky mud (or is it blood?)—at first ankle-deep, then up to the knees . . .	You must spend an extra foot of movement for each foot spent moving through difficult terrain.
5	Countless clawed skeletons swarm you, rending at your flesh and clothing.	You gain vulnerability to slashing damage.
6	You bump into a stone grave marker. Examining it closer, you see your own name engraved on it.	You have disadvantage on death saving throws.
7	The stench of rotting flesh fills your nostrils. Glancing at yourself, you see dark spots of decay covering your flesh.	You gain vulnerability to necrotic damage.
8	After a moment's distraction and looking back, you find yourself alone in the Mists until you arrive at your destination.	You have disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks made to notice hidden creatures and objects.
9	A small child ahead of you coaxes you deeper into the Mists. After finally catching up with them, you find nothing but a cornhusk doll.	You have disadvantage on Wisdom (Insight) checks.
10	The Mists turn into a thick, noxious miasma that burns your eyes and throat, threatening to suffocate you.	You have disadvantage on saving throws against poison.
11	Your deepest fear manifests before your eyes.	If you fail a saving throw against being frightened, you're also blinded until the end of your next turn.
12	A bone-chilling wind fills the area, driving the warmth from you and sending your body into tremors.	You have disadvantage on Dexterity checks made to accomplish tasks that require fine motor skills.
13	The Mists coalesce into a tall, dense hedge maze that seems to go on forever, and you pass the same landmarks repeatedly.	You have disadvantage on Wisdom (Survival) checks made to navigate or to discern your location.
14	You encounter a terrified adventurer who attacks you with a rusted dagger before fleeing back into the Mists.	You take slashing damage equal to a roll of your largest Hit Die.
15	An incorporeal Undead manifests in front of you and passes through you, driving away your strength.	You have disadvantage on Strength (Athletics) checks.
16	One of your teeth loosens and falls out. One by one, more fall out and crumble into fine, white powder.	The anxiety caused by the vision imposes disadvantage on Charisma (Persuasion) checks made to positively influence people.
17	You run from beastly shadows in the night. Your heart pounds at every snarl, hiss, and howl, feeling their breath on your heels as they catch up.	You have disadvantage on Wisdom (Animal Handling) checks made to positively influence animals.
18	Everything around you withers and decays before your eyes.	If you roll a natural 1 on an attack roll made with a nonmagical weapon, the weapon breaks and becomes unusable.
19	You find yourself in a library behind your closest loved ones as they turn to you, all faceless. You open nearby books to find the answers to help them, but all the pages are blank.	You have disadvantage on Intelligence (History) checks.
20	You breathe and your lungs fill with the Mists. It flows through your body, weighing you down and weakening you.	You have disadvantage on Constitution saving throws to maintain concentration on spells.

APPENDIX B: DUNGEON MASTER TIPS

To run this adventure as a DM, you must have three, four, or five players, each with their own character within the adventure's level range (see the "Adventure Primer" section at the start of the adventure).

NEW TO D&D ADVENTURERS LEAGUE?

Information about the Adventurers League, including finding places to play, organizing events, and a list of supporting resources and documents, can be found here: https://dnd.wizards.com/ddal_general

PREPARING THE ADVENTURE

Before you start play, consider the following:

- Read through the adventure, taking notes of anything you'd like to highlight or remind yourself of while running it, such as a way you'd like to portray an NPC or a tactic you'd like to use during combat. Familiarize yourself with the adventure's appendixes and handouts.
- Gather any resources you'd like to use to aid you in running the adventure, such as notecards, a DM screen, miniatures, and battle maps.
- Ask the players to provide you with relevant character information, such as name, race, class, and level; passive Wisdom (Perception) score; and anything the adventure specifies as notable (such as backgrounds and story awards).

Players can play an adventure they previously played as a player or ran as a DM, but they can do so only once with a specific character. Ensure each player has their character sheet (if not, get one from the organizer).

PREPARING THE CHARACTERS

The adventure is designed to be played with characters of a specific level; characters of a different level should be modified accordingly. If necessary, the characters should be afforded the time needed to adjust their characters to suit.

If you have time, you can do a quick scan of a player's character sheet to ensure nothing looks out of order. If you see magic items of very high rarities or strange arrays of ability scores, you can ask players to provide documentation for the irregularities. If they can't, feel free to restrict item use or ask them to use a standard ability score array.

Characters that died during a previous adventure return to life, free of any conditions, curses, or other effects that would remove them from play—such as vampirism or lycanthropy. They keep any story awards they have, as any spells they might have copied during their adventures.

During the Call to Action, the characters are likely to review their available magic items among themselves and determine who is carrying what. Make sure they have a few moments to outfit one another.

NEW PLAYERS? NO PROBLEM!

With starter adventures like this one, it's possible you might have players new to D&D, or new to fifth edition D&D. As the DM, it's up to you to ensure these players have fun with the game, and that they learn the basics of how to play. At this level, having fun is more important than learning every rule exactly right. Be gentle with new players who make mistakes.

Make sure to keep your players smiling and rolling dice. Be positive and enthusiastic when describing the action, and you'll notice the players will quickly follow suit.

If you're a new DM, then welcome—and thank you! New DMs are the lifeblood of the D&D community. To help you run your game, some adventures include sidebars like this one that provide an explanation of the game's rules as they're used in the adventure.

ADJUSTING THIS ADVENTURE

To determine whether you should consider adjusting the adventure, assess the **party strength** by consulting the table below.

DETERMINING PARTY STRENGTH

Party Composition	Party Strength
Three characters	Weak
Four characters	Average
Five characters	Strong

SAFETY TOOLS

Safety tools help ensure players aren't pushed beyond their comfort levels. These tools let your players know you want them to have a positive experience. Some common safety tools are provided below, each with a summary of how they work. An [article about one such safety kit](#) is provided to help with further information. Ensure that you discuss these tools with your players before the game:

- **Code of Conduct.** This is a group agreement for play. It outlines desired and prohibited behaviors, confidential reporting, and possible consequences.
- **Pregame and Postgame Discussions.** Use time before the game to explain content warnings, set boundaries, and collaborate on a safety plan. Then decompress and discuss improvements at the end of the game.
- **Be Welcoming.** Welcome and encourage respectful and open conversations about issues as they arise. Show that you're listening by avoiding defensive responses.
- **Confidentiality.** Provide contact information for private and confidential conversations between players and DM. Only disclose another player's name if that player gave unpressured permission for you to do so.
- **Safety Tools.** Learn about the safety tools that TTRPG community members have created and compiled. A broad range of such safety tools are available for you and your players online, or you can get more information by reaching out to your event organizer or community@dndadventurersleague.org.