

WARLOCK

8



UNDEAD

WARLOCK

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THE DRY LANDS: THE PLANE OF MOT



By Wolfgang Baur



Most branches of the great World Tree are noisy and full of powerful spirits: the battle cries of Valhalla, the shrieking of various hells and planes of torment, the fulsome chorus of celestial planes devoted to the harmonious celebration of the divine. By comparison, Evermaw, the plane of the dark god Mot (and the equally notorious Vardesain and Anu-Akma, fellow gods of the dead), is notable for its silence—a plane of enormous deserts of bones, dunes of dust, and rivers of blood and tears. These are the Dry Lands, the plane where life extends past its appointed span, where fate itself is thwarted with regularity, and where liches, vampires, and ghouls gather in enormous numbers to praise their patron and the font of vileness, to cheat death, to praise their protection against a certain voyage into the hells and the joy and strength of the god of the undead and his near-infinite legions.

Cheating Death and Praising Unlife

While most gods depend on the prayers and offerings of the living, Mot derives his power from the praise of the undead and the animated—from skeletons and zombies compelled to ape out thousands of near-meaningless (yet still efficacious)

masses and sermons and from the much richer work of vampires in Morgau or the god-kings of Nuria-Natal in their deep and hidden crypts where their prayers and invocations echo year upon year through the centuries, offering praise to Mot and staving off true death for but a little longer.

Entering the Dry Lands

The plane of Mot itself is easy to reach for the undead; spells such as *skull road* open the pathway between any tomb and the Dry Lands. Gnolls and the priests of Anu-Akma are familiar with this path, said to be a ley line that was corrupted millennia ago, perhaps at the founding of Nuria itself, to lead not to other planes or to shadow but directly into the River of Tears and thus to the Eternal Palace.

The dry lands are home to several varieties of extremely strange terrain, rarely found elsewhere other than sometimes in particular hells. These are described below for the possible warning of future travelers.

Bone Deserts: The most common terrain within the Dry Place is bone desert; its sand is powdered bone and pebbles of bone not yet worn quite so small. Dunes, ramparts, and pebbled stretches of bone extend for miles. In some places, the bone itself is



transformed by magic or the blood of the living into a cement-like material, suitable for building towers, castles, and walls. As undead require very little in the way of rest or nourishment, most buildings are built for reasons of status, display, or trade.

Caverns of Unmaking:

Tunnels and passages within the Dry Lands are often filled with raw necrotic energy that pulses through narrow spaces in waves. These inflict a body-wracking 3d12 hp necrotic damage (DC 16 Constitution for half). Undead find these caverns welcoming and healing; the necrotic damage restores both their energy and their sense of purpose. So many such caverns are inhabited by intelligent undead.

Cliffs of Gathered Memory: Undead who have fallen into a state of minimal energy are often brought to this famous orange stone, carved to resemble a sort of honeycomb, miles wide and over 500 feet tall. Each small, hermetic chamber of the cliffs gathers memories from the undead and preserves their spirit, keeping it from advancing (or more to the point, descending) to other planes of being. The voices of millions can be heard within the cliffs. Distinguishing any particular voice or speaking with a particular undead spirit is impossible without *speak with dead*, *ancient shade*, or similar magic.

Living creatures that enter the small chambers suffer a powerful psychic attack that can both paralyze and weaken them.



The white and orange walls within are soothing to undead, but living creatures find them stultifying, mind numbing, and oppressive. Unless a living creature makes a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw, they become immobile for 1 hour and take 2d12 hp psychic damage, their minds filled with visions of decay and death. Affected creatures must make another saving throw after 1 hour if still in the chamber or suffer the same effects again. Creatures that make a successful saving throw are permanently immune to the psychic attacks of that particular chamber.

Crackling Forests: The forests of the Dry Lands are not green but rather cartilaginous masses of splintered bones and dry, leathery

leaves covered with fine black hair. These conglomerate into enormous, fernlike and treelike structures that the undead find impossibly beautiful and stirring and that living creatures find quite revolting or at least disturbing. Entering such a crackling forest requires a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw; those who succeed overcome their revulsion while those who fail must either be blindfolded or must take a long rest and try again—the place is simply hideously repellant.

When cut or broken, the trees themselves bleed a black milk that undead find nourishing and pleasant. Ghouls, vampires, and other corporeal undead delight in cracking open the hairy bark and gorging themselves on this thick syrup. For such creatures, devouring 1 pint of black milk is as restorative as devouring a living creature.

Eyes of Mot: While all gods have servants, those of Mot are especially obvious: flocks of undead vultures circle his realm at all times and are occasionally sent into the mortal world to see the success or failure of some plot or scheme that might further the dark god's goals. These undead can be treated as **hawks**, though they rarely enter combat. Their ragged feathers keep them above the fray, and their keen vision allows them to see and report on events anywhere in the realms of Undeath.

Eternal Palace of Mot: The Eternal Palace is a maze within a tomb, boxed into a labyrinth and hidden under miles of bone and dust. The entrance is a rather plain cavern guarded by two enormous, hulking gnolls with skeletal grins and halos of dark green runes (treat as void giants from *Creature Codex*). The interior is made of various rich materials, all supposedly taken from tombs, including golden couches and rich carpets, ebony tables and a throne of pure silver chased with a smell of dust and decay and embossed with shadows and

motes of pure necrotic fire. The rooms are all quite grim under their gilding, reminiscent of tombs and mausoleums. A few bedchambers and kitchens are provided for those guests who require food and sleep, but most of the halls are kept bone-chillingly cold at night, and the air itself is rank; undead do not trouble to heat the palace nor to ventilate it properly.

River of Blood: This peculiar river reeks of iron and decay, like old blood or a butcher's abattoir. Undead are the only creatures able to enter its waters without risk; all other creatures suffer 2d6 necrotic damage for each round spent touching or immersed in it. The river itself is a muddy red tone, and undead often cluster along its banks. Small sections of congealed, scab-like material line the edges of the river. Undead from the plane of Evermaw call it Mother River or just the River. Its course meanders through hundreds of miles and ends in an enormous cataract said to lead directly to the Hell of Blood.

Some vampires and other blood drinkers find it very difficult to leave the River of Blood. They continue to feed over hours and days, growing to enormous, swollen sizes and attaining a distended appearance similar to an engorged tick. Their limbs and body often take on a bruised hue, and their hands, feet, and belly are often so round as to make mobility difficult. In some cases, these “deep drinkers” float along the river until reaching the planar cataract mentioned previously. Most undead believe that these undead are reborn as devils in the Hell of Blood.

River of Tears: Flowing around the roots of the World Tree as well as through many planes leading from the mortal world to the outer realms of gods and afterlife, the River of Tears does wind through the plane of Evermaw and does about the Eternal Palace and its various fortifications and temples.



Indeed, it is one of the best ways out of the plane, as the River of Tears is trafficked by ferry demons and angelic guides, both eager to win souls to their own destinations. Boarding their craft requires the customary 2 copper pennies, though the destination is not always an improvement. A number of ferry demons have (it is said) become adept at spinning various celestial-seeming illusions; these disguises only fall away when the demon arrives at some place outside Evermaw—this might be Yggdrasil or Asgard but more often is one of the Hells or some hideous demonic demi-plane.

Entering the waters of the River of Tears without powerful magical protection strips away memories and the fuss and ambitions of a mortal life from any non-planar creature. Each round that a creature begins while within or touching the waters of the River of Tears, they must make a DC 12 Charisma saving throw; each failed saving throw reduces their level by 1 and removes a year's worth of its memories and character. After five failed saving throws, it is always reduced to a "new planar" state, remembering only its name, its former profession and some basic skills, and either 1) its patron god if it was a priest or especially devout worshipper or 2) a single great goal, secret, or ambition of its former life (if it was unconcerned by divine matters).

Skull Ziggurats: Piled as much as 50 or 60 feet high, the skull ziggurats are places of sacrifice, though in many cases the creatures being offered to the gods are skeletons or zombies or other lesser undead, rather than living creatures or people (both quite rare in Evermaw as one might expect). These ziggurats are usually claimed for either Mot, Vardesain, or Anu-Akma, but they are often abandoned except during unholy conjunctions or ancient festivals that are obscure enough that even most liches and specters do not know what their original purpose was. These include the Festival of the Third Voyager (Anu-Akma), the Feast of the Greater Cages (Vardesain), and the Transference of the Ebon Idol (Mot).



Spells of the Undead

While necromancy is practiced heavily in the Dry Lands, some spells seem especially common there. These spells are usually available to wizards and priests (but not bards or druids).

ANCIENT SHADE

5th-level necromancy

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 10 feet

Components: V, S, M (burning candles of planar origin, 500 gp)

Duration: 10 minutes

You grant the semblance of life and intelligence to a pile of bones or even bone dust of your choice within range, allowing the ancient spirit to answer the questions you pose. These remains can be the remnants of undead, including animated but unintelligent undead such as skeletons and zombies (intelligent undead are not affected). It can have died centuries ago, though the older the spirit called, the less it remembers of its mortal life.

Until the spell ends, you can ask the ancient spirit up to five questions if it died within the past year, four questions within ten years, three questions within one hundred years, two questions within one thousand years, and but a single question for spirits more than one thousand years dead. The ancient shade knows only what it knew in life, including the languages it knew. Answers are usually brief, cryptic, or repetitive, and the corpse is under no compulsion to offer a truthful answer if you are hostile to it or it recognizes you as an enemy. This spell doesn't return the creature's soul to its body, only its animating spirit. Thus, the corpse can't learn new information, doesn't comprehend anything that has happened since it died, and can't speculate about future events.

ETERNAL ECHO

3rd-level necromancy

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V

Duration: Concentration

You gain a portentous voice of compelling power, commanding all undead within 60 feet that fail a Wisdom saving throw. This overrides any prior loyalty to spellcasters such as necromancers or evil priests, and it can nullify the effect of a Turn Undead result from a cleric.

REASSEMBLE

5th-level necromancy

Casting Time: 1 hour

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (1 gallon of black milk of Evermaw; consumed)

Duration: Instantaneous

You touch an undead creature (dust and bones suffice) destroyed not more than 10 hours ago; the creature is surrounded by purple fire for 1 round and is returned to life with full hit points. This spell has no effect on any creatures except undead, and it cannot restore a lich whose phylactery has been destroyed, a vampire destroyed by sunlight, any undead whose remains are destroyed by fire, acid, or holy water, or any remains affected by a *bless* or *gentle repose* spell.

This spell doesn't remove magical effects. If they aren't removed prior to casting, they return when the undead creature comes back to life.

This spell closes all mortal wounds but doesn't restore missing body parts. If the creature doesn't have body parts or organs necessary for survival, the spell fails.

Sudden reassembly is an ordeal involving enormous expenditure of necrotic energy; ley line casters within 5 miles are aware that some great shift in life forces has occurred



and a sense of its direction. The target takes a –4 penalty to all attacks, saves, and ability checks. Every time it finishes a long rest, the penalty is reduced by 1 until it disappears.

SKULL ROAD

5th-level conjuration

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V, S, M (ivory worth at least 500 gp)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You conjure a portal linking an unoccupied space you can see within range to an imprecise location on the plane of Evermaw. The portal is a circular opening, which you can make 5–20 feet in diameter. You can orient the portal in any direction you choose. The portal lasts for the duration.

If your casting is at 5th level, this opens a pathway to the River of Tears, to the Vitreous Mire, or to the Plains of Bone—travel to a settlement can take up to 7 days (1d6+1). If cast at 7th level, the *skull road* spell opens a portal to a small settlement of gnolls, ghouls, or shadows on the plane near the Eternal Palace of Mot or a similar settlement.

Undead casters can use this spell in the reverse direction, opening a portal from Evermaw to the mortal world, though with similar restrictions. At 5th level, the portal opens in a dark forest, cavern, or ruins far from habitation. At 7th level, the skull road leads directly to a tomb, cemetery, or mass grave near a humanoid settlement of some kind.

STAFF OF VIOLET FIRE

4th-level evocation

Casting Time: 1 bonus action

Range: Self

Components: V, S, M (mummy dust)

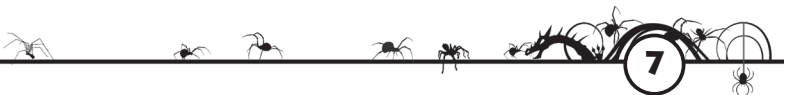
Duration: Concentration, but see description

You create a quarterstaff of pure necrotic energy that blazes with intense purple light; it appears in your chosen hand. If you let it go, it disappears, though you can evoke it again as a bonus action.

This staff is an extremely unstable and impermanent magic item; it has 10 charges and does not require attunement. The wielder can use one of three effects:

- By using your action to make a melee attack and expending 1 charge, you can attack with it. On a hit, the target takes 27 (5d10) necrotic damage.
- By expending 2 charges, you can release bolts of necrotic fire against up to 3 targets as ranged attacks for 8 (1d8+4) necrotic damage each.
- By expending 3 charges, you can negate any radiant spell as a reaction or dispel an angelic ward as an action (see *Midgard Heroes Handbook* or *Deep Magic: Angelic Wards*).


At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 6th level or higher, the melee damage increases by 1d10 for every two slot levels above 4th, or you add one additional ranged bolt for every two slots above 4th.



THE ORDER OF THE EBON STAR



by Kelly Pawlik



When the Ghoul Imperium lent aid to the vampires of Morgau and Doresh, filing out of tunnels beneath Tannenberg Castle and assisting them in the taking of Krakova, now Krakovar, they did so at the directive of their Emperor Nicoforus the Pale, and they did so without question. When the emperor sent his forces northeast to Wallenberg, they went without hesitation. And as a result, the taking of Krakova was swift. Darakhul forces rejoiced in their success, and the emperor, through his alliance with the vampires, was the most fruitful of all.

It is said all ghouls are faithful to their emperor, but even among creatures that can see in the dark, some details are missed, some actions left unseen. While the Ghoul Imperium appeared stronger and more successful than ever, some of the forces instrumental in the shift of power, including Hesstia Daarmirve, began to question the emperor's concern for them and became uneasy with the vampire alliance. And so was born the Order of the Ebon Star.

Hesstia Daarmirve

The dragonborn-darakhul assassin, Hesstia Daarmirve, led a small, stealthy contingent of cutthroats from the ghouls' dark empire into the bowels of Tannenberg Castle. From this staging area, the darakhul swiftly

slaughtered the castle's unsuspecting guards while taking few losses. This gained Hesstia the notice of her superiors and the task of leading the ghoul vanguard into Wallenberg. Once again, her initial assault left little for the Knights Incorporeal to mop up when the time for the full assault came.

In the weeks following the taking of Krakova, Hesstia began to resent her ruler. Despite all their efforts, Hesstia and her surviving companions saw little reward, yet rumor surfaced of Emperor Nicoforus the Pale being surrounded by more bodies than ever to feast on. It seemed promises that had been made were being delivered, but Hesstia felt uneasy and, for the first time, questioned her ruler.

Shortly after this, while walking above ground just before the first rays of the sun appeared on the horizon, Hesstia had a vision. A woman surrounded by swirling stars as dark as the darkest sky can be spoke to her and offered her the chance to walk unhindered by day. The being promised aid in exchange for Hesstia taking up her mantle. Both questioning her ruler and awed at the power of the being who granted the sleepless darakhul a vision, Hesstia agreed without hesitation.

Born a dragonkin and turned shortly after puberty, Hesstia is a smart, fierce individual who showed much promise in her days with the Ghoul Imperium. Her height and

commanding presence give her an air of authority, and her divine connection to one who grants her followers freedom from their daylight sensitivity has made her a leader to those who seek change. Until embracing her vision, Hesstia was unwaveringly loyal to the Imperium; her dedication to the Queen of Night and Magic is steadfast.

Hesstia is an **assassin** with the following adjustments:

- Darkvision 60 ft.
- Damage Resistance: necrotic
- Damage Immunity: poison
- Condition Immunities: charmed, exhaustion, poisoned
- Skill: Persuasion +3

The Order's Organization

Comprised entirely of darakhul defectors, the order is hunted as much as it hunts, and for this reason, it exists in small mobile cells, remaining at one location no more than a few days or weeks before moving on.

Units are usually comprised of: an **iron ghoul** (see *Tome of Beasts*); a **mage***; and 10 **Imperial ghouls** (see *Tome of Beasts*).

Specialized groups of the order exist and can be comprised of **darakhul shadowmancers** (see *Creature Codex*), **knights***, **blood mages** (see *Creature Codex*)*, and **black knight commanders** (see *Tome of Beasts*)*.

Other members of The Order work away from their fellows, scouting out potential ways to strike at the vampires and the Ghoul Imperium. These individuals may enact their plans on their own, call on a unit to assist them, or work with groups outside of the order. In the case of the latter, the group may or may not be aware of the order's existence or assistance. Sometimes multiple units of the order converge, assisting each other with mission of significant import.

*Add Hesstia's adjustment

Worship of Sarastra

Members of the Order of the Ebon Star follow the Queen of Night and Magic, who aids in their fight against the ghouls and vampires who wish to push them into servitude. Shrines to Sarastra can be found in areas the order has laid roots for a time, and each member of the order wears a crest of an ebon star to denote their dedication.

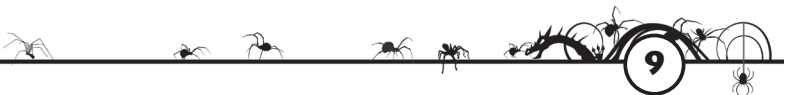
The order has an uneasy alliance with the churches of Sarastra. Most of her other followers have difficulty understanding what their queen wishes from these undead servitors and, while they have little desire to question their fickle goddess's whims, they also wish to protect their own lives. For this reason, the order remains insular, keeping to itself and avoiding contact with outside parties when possible. Churches of Sarastra that have lent aid to the order have done so only briefly, sheltering those who are too wounded to continue their travels.

Outside Relationships

Viewed as traitors by other undead and feared by the living, the Order of the Ebon Star has few allies, and those they do have are tenuous.

Darakhul defectors are quickly replaced in the Ghoul Imperium, so those defecting do not reduce the emperor's numbers, but their treacherous actions upset the Imperium. Most ghouls and vampires attack the order on sight, and few parlay even briefly with these deserters. The order, eager to survive, has no love lost for allies of Emperor Nicoforus the Pale.

The reaver dwarves based at Skorgarholm and Jozht wish to see their own territory expand and the undead fall, but they have little interest in working with other undead to accomplish this. The order gives the dwarves a wide berth, and in return, the dwarves generally avoid killing those



undead bearing the dark eight-pointed star.

Queen Urzula views the order as an enemy on since most of its forces played a part in her defeat. She has been unwilling to even parlay with members, and an alliance with her and her people seems impossible.

Adventuring parties eager to fight back the undead have managed to work with cells of the order with varying degrees of success. Those groups wishing to destroy all undead or who attempt to trick members of the order into an alliance before attacking them find the order unamenable to such activities. Those who are willing to use less conventional means of striking out at the vampires and darakhul in the region find the Queen of Night and Magic's undead followers eager to assist.

Reclaiming Their Rights

The Order of the Ebon Star focuses much of their wrath on vampires: the undead creatures who live so easily on the surface, the foul beasts who convinced their kind to join forces with them. While the darakhul continued to serve the emperor, their undead partners began to live a life of opulence. The order can see the battles they faced were fought for the vampires alone, and any benefits the darakhul have gained have been negligible in comparison and often at great expense. The vampires have corrupted the Imperium; their forces must be dwindled, and Emperor Nicoforus the Pale must be removed from his seat of power.

Growing Forces

Swaying the minds of the subservient darakhul is no easy task, but some members of the order endeavor to do just that. Infiltrating the Imperium they were once a part of, these brave undead seek out any cracks they can widen, separating individuals from the misled mass.

Given the difficulty of this task, members of the order have been known to turn to creation in order to reinforce their numbers. This is not lightly done and must be done carefully so as to indoctrinate those who are to be turned to their cause. Often, these new recruits are either vampire-hunting experts or victims of undead that follow the emperor's rule—or sometimes both.

The most notable of these recruits is Tyrik Benion, a **graveslayer** (see *Creature Codex*; add Hesstia's alterations) who at a young age found his parents brutally murdered by a hungry vampire. Vowing vengeance, Tyrik devoted his life to the destruction of these undead abominations. After numerous foiled attempts to kill the vampire and with a wake of dead innocents behind him, Tyrik was approached by Hesstia herself. The persuasive dragonkin ghoul offered the dispirited dwarf a chance to continue his crusade against his hated vampire foes. Forever.

SARASTRAN GHOULS (VARIANT: +0 CR)

The eyes of darakhul who have truly embraced the worship of the Queen of Night and Magic darken to near black with white motes that seem to swirl and drift across their pupils. They find they no longer suffer from the sunlight sensitivity plaguing others of their kind.

The Code of the Order

Members of the Order of the Ebon Star are tricky and deceitful. Forced for much of their existence to live in the shadows, they now find much solace in their worship of the Queen of Night and Magic. Their tenets include the following affirmations:

- Vampire-kind has infected the Ghoul Imperium. We save what we can and cleanse what we must.



- The Queen of Night and Magic guides us. With her aid we see what our fellows cannot.
- Enemies of our enemies can be allies, but we must always be ready for their inevitable betrayal.
- There is a new way, if only one is willing to open their eyes and embrace the queen.

Herald of the Ebon Star (Rogue Subclass)

Through a mixture of training and personal experience, you have mastered the art of killing not only vampires but any undead who fear the sun's light. Some heralds of the ebon star see themselves as righteous freedom fighters, battling to receive what they feel is their due, but just as many are simple thugs and thrill seekers, vying to pit themselves against worthy foes. Regardless of their motivations, they are largely viewed as heretics by their own people and with tentative suspicion by most others.

Heraldic Proficiencies: When you choose this archetype at 3rd level, you gain proficiency with lances, longbows, and shields. You also gain proficiency in either History or Religion.

Faith's Weapon: Also at 3rd level, you can wield a longsword as a light weapon, provided that you have either a shield or nothing heavier than a light weapon in your other hand. When you use a longsword to make a sneak attack against a vampire, you use d8s as your sneak attack damage dice. For instance, if a 5th-level herald of the ebon star wielding a longsword makes a sneak attack against a vampire, they deal an extra 3d8 slashing damage rather than the



CHARRED STAR

Wondrous item, rare

These fist-sized blackened rosewood stars are worn by many officers of the Order of the Ebon Star. While held in the hand, you can use a *charred star* to detect the approximate distance and direction of any shadow roads within 1 mile. As an action,

you can use a *charred star* to transport yourself and up to ten other creatures of medium size or smaller onto a shadow road within 10 feet of you. Once you have returned to the mortal world from the shadow realm, you must finish a long rest before using a *charred star* in this fashion again.

extra 3d6 slashing damage they would deal to a non-vampire.

Gloom Runner: When you reach 9th level, you can shroud yourself in shadows to misdirect those that would strike as you reposition yourself. As a bonus action, when you move out of a creature's reach, it has disadvantage on opportunity attacks against you as nearby shadows gather around your form and mask your motion. If you take the Dash or Disengage actions while using this ability, all creatures that make opportunity attacks against you have disadvantage on their attack rolls.

Black Star Blazon: At 13th level, when a creature strikes you with a critical hit, you can make a Constitution saving throw with a DC equal to 15 or half of the damage dealt, whichever number is higher. If you succeed on the saving throw, the attack against you is resolved as a normal hit rather than as a critical hit. In addition, you can make a Constitution saving throw in place of any other saving throw. You must finish a short or long rest before using this ability in this fashion again. This ability does not function in areas of complete daylight or where there are no shadows present.

Black Sun Blade: Starting at 17th level, when you are wielding a longsword, shortsword, or dagger, you can use your bonus action to wreath its blade in coiling tendrils of black flame. A blade wreathed

in such a fashion is treated as a *sun blade* with the following exceptions. The blade does not emit bright light; instead it oozes a seeping gloom that creates a magical darkness in a 15-foot radius and dim light for an additional 15 feet. While the black flames persist, you can use an action to expand or reduce the area of darkness and dim light by 5 feet each, to a maximum of 30 feet each or a minimum of 10 feet each. The wielder of the black sun blade can see through the magical darkness it creates. The black flames cease to exist when the wielder wills them to or when the *black sun blade* is not being wielded in hand. A herald of the ebon star can create only one *black sun blade* at a time; if a new one is created, the previous effect ends immediately.

Ghoul Imperium Deserter (Background)

You have served your emperor and his officers dutifully, and it has brought you nothing. The rewards you have been promised—a herd of fattened manlings for feasting upon, a troupe of skeletons to serve your needs, and possibly a zombie or three for light security—all of these things and more have failed to materialize in whole or in part, and now you want what you feel is coming to you, even if you have to live among the feeble mortals of the surface lands to get it.



While some Ghoul Imperium deserters are found amongst vampires and their dhampir progeny, most frequently they are darakhul ghouls, many of whom are veterans of the constant conflicts with the ghoul emperor's many enemies, both above and below the surface of the world. You are viewed with suspicion if not outright hostility by the majority of the people you meet.

Skill Proficiencies: Intimidation, Performance

Tool Proficiencies: One gaming set of your choice

Language: Umbral

Equipment: a bag of caltrops, a hunting trap, a gaming set of your choice, a humanoid skull or femur, and a pouch with 25 gp

Feature: Alter Ego

You have a second identity that includes documentation, established acquaintances, and disguises that allow you to assume this persona. Additionally, you have a safehouse in one of the cities or towns of the Crossroads region. This safehouse is of average quality and is registered in the name of your alter ego.

SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

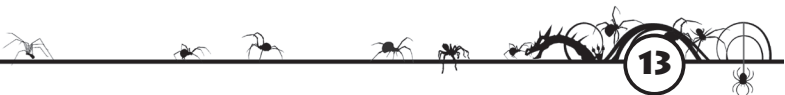
While benevolence isn't completely unknown to the darakhul of the Ghoul Imperium, deserters are often marked with a streak of selfishness or unbridled self-interest. Often their ideals and bonds are shaped by the type of company they keep.

D8 PERSONALITY TRAIT

- 1 I will do whatever it takes, barring personal harm, to get what I want.
- 2 Caution is as necessary on the battlefield as in the bargaining chamber.
- 3 If no one saw this, it didn't happen.
- 4 If you have what I want, I will take it.
- 5 Trickery and persuasion are the same thing.
- 6 I am owed a blood debt that will be repaid with interest.
- 7 Happiness is as pointless as sorrow.
- 8 Killing should be done in the bloodiest fashion possible.

D6 IDEAL

- 1 **Power.** Those weaker than myself deserve neither mercy nor pity. (Evil)
- 2 **Control.** I know what is best. Kneel and do my bidding. (Law)
- 3 **Selfishness.** If I get what I desire, there may be some little thing left for you. (Evil)
- 4 **Benevolence.** We were free creatures in life. It does not have to be different in un-life. (Good)
- 5 **Anarchy.** If everyone rises up as one, they cannot strike at all of us. (Chaos)
- 6 **Fairness.** We toil for our masters, and what does it gain us? When do we see reward for our efforts? (Neutral)



D6 BOND

- 1 My standard bearer has been with me through hell and high water. I will see to it that he makes it through this too.
- 2 I take a fingertip from each dwarf I slay and string them on a thong I wear around my neck.
- 3 After I fell in battle near Triolo, my husband remarried and took our children to live with his new wife. I will find and recover my children while punishing his betrayal of my memory.
- 4 This rose engraved blade has seen my family's fortunes fall. It will now see them rise again in eternal life.
- 5 The gnomes of Neimheim took me in when I was near my second death. I will protect gnomes wherever I find them.
- 6 I was branded a traitor and driven into exile. I will return in force and bring glory to my name.

D6 FLAW

- 1 I can only stomach meat that is cut from living prey.
- 2 When I am telling the truth, it seems like I am lying.
- 3 I cannot help but to be deceitful when I am speaking to an authority figure.
- 4 My tone is loud and aggressive, even when I am feeling calm.
- 5 I cannot read my mother tongue, but I will not admit this fact.
- 6 When living people are near me, I lick my lips and salivate profusely.



THE WENDESTAL DEVIL

by *Chris Harris* 

The principalities of Morgau and Doresh fell under the control of the vampiric Prince Lucan some three hundred years ago, condemning the people of those lands to lives of horror so constant that most have grown numb to the mundane fears which plague ordinary people elsewhere. Since taking power, Lucan, now styling himself a king, has tripled the lands under his sway, spreading the undead nightmare of his reign north to the shores of the Reaver Coast and the Bay of Ghed.

Though the armies of Morgau and Doresh, now called the Blood Kingdom, spend little effort expanding eastward, few see the point in doing so. No permanent settlements of any real size stand to be conquered on the Rothenian Plain unless one counts Demon Mountain—which no one does. What wealth exists on the plains and steppes rests either in the hands of Khazzaki warriors who move constantly and live to make war, Kariv bands who offer little in the way of plunder but much in the way of sorcerous consequences, and wandering bands of centaurs willing to fight anything at all, sometimes for no discernible gain.

A Long History of Vampirism

Yet Lucan cannot be blamed for every nightmare in the region. Indeed, the lands between the Cloudwall Mountains, the Black Hills, and Grisal were no stranger to vampirism prior to his usurpation of power in Morgau and the spreading of his Shroud-Eaters across these lands. Though no one could conceive of the possibility of his terrible reign until it happened, the people of these lands were known for folklore and customs concerning the undead going back as far as history records, and the charms now proscribed by Lucan's edicts, which once protected them against those of the vampire's kind, were handed down from generation to generation for hundreds of years, if not longer.

Some 350 years ago, at least one band of vampires, possibly more, haunted the edge of the farmland surrounding the Krakovan city of Lodezig, frustrating efforts to put an end to their predation by retreating to the foothills of the Cloudwall Mountains at the first sign of organized pursuit. The dark reputation of the mountain range usually wore down the courage of their pursuers long before their horses grew tired, and the few times courage won out, the mountains delivered on their dark promises. The first the Krakovars knew of the outcome of such

hunts came at dawn in the following days when the rising sun revealed the scarecrows guarding their crops had lost their hats in the night and acquired blood-spattered Krakovar helmets in their places.

As the years passed, reports of vampiric attacks spread south from that region to include points all along the eastern foothills of the Cloudwalls. The southernmost remote communities to experience such predation were almost completely helpless to defend themselves, and the grisly process of insuring those who died from such attacks would not rise again became almost as routine as herding their cattle out to graze.

The Khazzaki people of the grass-covered expanse stretching from the Margreve Forest and the Cloudwalls to the fabled lands of Leng roiled like an angry hive of bees while Achaz the Horned attempted to consolidate his control over the Khazzaki khans 112 years ago. Those who chafed the most at the notion of a “Khan of Khans” took their warriors and families to the farthest edges of the lands that their people traditionally roamed, either to await the outcome or plot their own bids for power. One such khan made the fateful decision to winter with his people on the grasslands within sight of the Cloudwalls. There, he and his three sons debated amongst themselves and their lieutenants whether or not to swear loyalty to Achaz or to keep their distance. Over the cold, windy months, divided opinions led to sharp words, and one night the talk deteriorated into violence. The khan met his death at his own fireside, slain by his own trusted hetman, whose followers murdered the khan’s most loyal warriors and spread throughout the camp to assert their control over their people. They met with sharp resistance led by two of the khan’s sons, who had escaped the initial round of killings. The eldest remaining son fell soon after, but the youngest son, Matvei, fought his way free of the melee with his dead father’s sword, and

made for the darkness at the edge of camp, hoping to circle around outside the firelight to reach his horse.

Unbeknownst to the khan’s son, many pairs of cold and ravenous eyes kept watch on the camp from the shadows on the plain, their bloodlust rising as the slaughter escalated before them. In Matvei’s haste, he stumbled right into the waiting arms of one of the creatures who seized him in a steely grip and whirled him away from the others of its kind coming closer. The creature which grappled him hissed like a cat at its fellows and spoke, “The horse-princeling wishes to join our little family. Go and take his pursuers as you will, but let us not be rude to our new brother.” A sharp pain in his throat, and his old life ended to the sound of war cries giving way to shrieks of surprise and terror.

The following night, Matvei awoke in an earthen burrow surrounded by his new, terrifying family, and the freedom he’d once known on the plains and steppes was lost to him for 50 years.

After picking off many of the survivors of the Khazzaki conflict over the next month, Matvei’s new master returned to taking his coterie of vampires back and forth across the Cloudwalls according to whims he never bothered to explain. Those decades remain a painful blur of slaughter and dwindling hope as everything he once held dear, even his devotion to Svarog and the other gods of his people, proved lost to him or of no help. As time passed, he began to hate these things he once loved, his people and his gods, and as he and his companions fed on their prey, his resentment toward his own past devotions made those of all people seem fruitless and hateful. What good did these things do these hapless peasants when their lives were fated to end in order to extend his own pointless existence? Such people prayed at their country shrines and wove their charms against him, but neither of these things did

more than prove a nuisance, and the gods lifted nary a finger to save them when their final moments came at his hands.

When those years of monotonous horror came to an end, he wasn't surprised. He'd long expected some trap would catch them overconfident and unaware. Neither was he shocked to find himself once again the sole survivor of a family, even one as wretched as his undead companions. What did surprise him, and so much so that he was nearly caught and destroyed several times soon after, was what killed his fellows and the reason why.

Matvei's master so rarely consulted his spawn beyond immediate tactical matters that whatever he knew of the world around them he kept largely to himself. Whatever awareness the old vampire had of Prince Lucan's reign and the expansion of his demesne he kept to himself. And whenever Lucan became aware of others like himself but independent and free of his own Tree of Chains, he sent hunters to track them down and destroy them. The destruction of Matvei's coterie was simply part of a last bit of "cleaning up," and the constant movement that kept them whole for so long had also kept them unaware of the extent of the danger coming their way.

The Rise of a Monster

Once Matvei escaped pursuit thoroughly enough to grant him time to think, he became outraged. His degenerate family, even though he bore them no love, died not for their crimes but because some greater monster would tolerate no competition even leagues from his home.

A combination of indignation and curiosity drove Matvei to spy on this kingdom of which he'd barely been aware. He took to stalking the wild places near the outskirts of civilization not simply to feed but to observe.

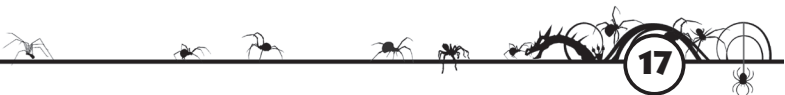
What he saw only made him angrier. He saw the grotesque aping these horrors made of the lifestyles of the soft nobles his Khazzaki forebears made such short work of, and though he had learned their capabilities the hard way, he could not shake his disgust at what he saw as a pretense. He watched the worship of Marena spread across the land and the barely concealed terror on the faces of expectant mothers visiting her temples, knowing as they must that one day the child they bore stood a fair chance of being drained to a husk by the very priestesses who ushered them into the world. He saw all of these things, and Matvei hated all of it.

To be sure, he had no real sympathy left in him for the peasant folk on whom he'd fed for so many years, and he continues to feed on them as he must to this day. However, his tastes have long since run to things he knows will cause panic and outrage, not among the simple folk but among their undead masters, and he kills far more often than necessary for his continued unlife. He prefers to feed on what mortal clergy he can find. Matvei also preys on the attendants and underlings of undead nobles whose habits leave them vulnerable. When opportunity has presented itself, he has destroyed a handful of vampiric nobles less powerful than himself, and he isn't above setting the odd fire on the off-chance of such a result.

Matvei also creates his own spawn only to abandon them immediately, hiding them in places where they rise confused and ravenous, and he revels in the chaos they cause before their destruction.

When hunted, he hides himself in places few would think to look, like the catacombs or the earth itself beneath the temples he has just offended or the hollow trees of abandoned sacred groves destroyed by Marena's devotees.

While most active in the Wendestal Forest, he maintains no permanent lair, viewing



the notion as a death trap. His attacks have taken place as far east as Lengrove, north to the farmlands near the Commandery of Lost Souls, and south near the Blood Vaults.

Though speaking of his crimes is forbidden to the mortal peasantry, those west of the Cloudwalls whisper tales of the Wendestal Devil, named for the vast forest from which he often strikes. In the eastern foothills of that range, he is called the Lengrove Butcher after a series of grisly attacks close by.

MATVEI, THE WENDESTAL DEVIL

Medium undead (shapechanger), chaotic evil

Armor Class 18 (+2 studded leather armor)

Hit Points 187 (22d8 + 88)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Dex +9, Wis +9, Cha +8

Skills Perception +9, Stealth +9

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

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Kariv, Khazzaki, Trade Tongue

Challenge 15 (13,000 XP)

Special Equipment. Matvei wields a *shashka of wounding*. He wears an *amulet of proof against detection and location* and a suit of +2 studded leather armor.

Shapechanger. If Matvei isn't in sunlight or running water, he can use his action to polymorph into a Tiny bat or a Medium cloud of mist or back into his true form.

While in bat form, Matvei can't speak, his walking speed is 5 feet, and he has a flying speed of 40 feet. His statistics, other than his size and speed, are unchanged. Anything he is wearing transforms with him, but nothing he is carrying does. Matvei reverts to his true form if he dies.

While in mist form, Matvei can't take any actions, speak, or manipulate objects. He is weightless, has a flying speed of 20 feet, can hover, and can enter a hostile creature's space

and stop there. In addition, if air can pass through a space, the mist can do so without squeezing, and it can't pass through water. It has advantage on Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution saving throws, and it is immune to all nonmagical damage, except the damage it takes from sunlight.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If Matvei fails a saving throw, he can choose to succeed instead.

Misty Escape. When he drops to 0 hit points outside his resting place, Matvei transforms into a cloud of mist (as in the Shapechanger trait) instead of falling unconscious, provided that he isn't in sunlight or running water. If he can't transform, he is destroyed.

While he has 0 hit points in mist form, he can't revert to his vampire form, and he must reach his resting place within 2 hours or be destroyed. Once in his resting place, he reverts to his vampire form. He is then paralyzed until he regains at least 1 hit point. After spending 1 hour in his resting place with 0 hit points, he regains 1 hit point.

Regeneration. Matvei regains 20 hp at the start of his turn if he has at least 1 hp and isn't in running water. If he takes radiant damage or damage from holy water, this trait doesn't function at the start of Matvei's next turn.

Spider Climb. Matvei can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Vampire Weaknesses. Matvei has the following flaws:

- **Forbiddance.** Matvei can't enter a residence without an invitation from one of the occupants.
- **Harmed by Running Water.** Matvei takes 20 acid damage if he ends his turn in running water.
- **Stake to the Heart.** If a piercing weapon made of wood is driven into Matvei's heart while he is incapacitated in his resting place, he is paralyzed until the stake is removed.

ACTIONS

Multiattack (Vampire Form Only). Matvei makes three attacks, only one of which can be a bite attack.

Shashka of Wounding (Vampire Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 +4) slashing damage



or 10 (1d12+4) slashing damage when used with two hands or while mounted.

Unarmed Strike (Vampire Form Only).

Melee Weapon Attack: +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage. Instead of dealing damage, Matvei can grapple the target (escape DC 18).

Bite (Bat or Vampire Form Only).

Melee Weapon Attack: +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one willing creature, or a creature that is grappled by Matvei, incapacitated, or restrained. *Hit:*

7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage plus 14 (4d6) necrotic damage. The target's hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the necrotic damage taken, and Matvei regains hit points equal to that amount. The reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0. A humanoid slain in this way and then buried in the ground rises the following night as a vampire spawn under Matvei's control.

Charm. Matvei targets one humanoid he can see within 30 feet of it. If the target can see Matvei, the target must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw against this magic or be charmed by him. The charmed target regards Matvei as a trusted friend to be heeded and protected. Although the target isn't under Matvei's control, it takes his requests or actions in the most favorable way it can, and it is a willing target for Matvei's bite attack.

Each time the vampire or the vampire's companions do anything harmful to the target, it can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success. Otherwise, the effect lasts 24 hours or until the vampire is destroyed, is on a different plane of existence than the target or takes a bonus action to end the effect.

Children of the Night (1/Day). Matvei magically calls 2d4 swarms of bats or rats, provided that the sun isn't up. While outdoors, Matvei can call 3d6 wolves instead. The

called creatures arrive in 1d4 rounds, acting as Matvei's allies and obeying his spoken commands. The beasts remain for 1 hour, until Matvei dies, or until Matvei dismisses them as a bonus action.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Matvei 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. Matvei regains spent legendary actions at the start of his turn.

Move. Matvei moves up to its speed without provoking opportunity attacks.

Attack. Matvei makes one weapon attack, not including his bite attack.

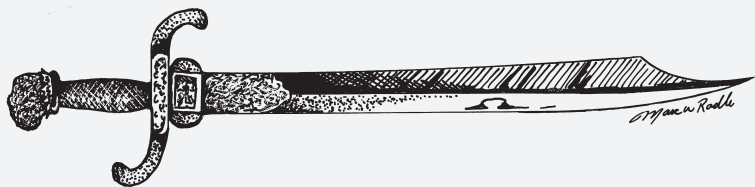
Bite (Costs 2 Actions). Matvei makes one bite attack.

Shashka

Cost: 20 gp; **Damage:** 1d8 slashing; **Weight:** 4 lb.; **Properties:** versatile (1d10), special (1d10 when wielded one-handed while mounted or two-handed on foot).

A cavalry saber employed to great effect by mounted Khazzaki warriors, the shashka can be swung while on horseback in a repeated, looping downward arc. When riding through enemy ranks, a Khazzaki employs a one-handed, whirling swing, crisscrossing the rider's pommel to strike at enemies on foot on both sides in a downward double arc. This method of mounted strike has made

Khazzaki charges infamous for their unpredictability as the horse warriors may suddenly break to one side or the other in layered waves, the first chopping away at the spears meant to break their charge, and the following waves chopping into the enemies behind them, to be followed by a direct charge as the first waves clear the line. One observer described such a Khazzaki charge that turned near the last second and raced across instead of through the enemy line during hostilities with the tsar of Vidim 140 years ago as, "like a smith's grinding wheel applied to a block of cheese."



SHADE: VOICES BEYOND DEATH

by Dan Dillon

Life leaves echoes in its wake, whether crumbled remnants of a bygone civilization, tales of heroes and gods that spawn new beliefs, or even the echo of an individual soul left behind to haunt the living world. The world of Midgard is no stranger to ghosts and specters that linger beyond death, but sometimes a person's passion, purpose, and will to live are so strong, their tie to the living world so unbreakable, that their memories create a vessel for their soul after their body dies. These people are called shades. Shades can arise from any living race.

There are rumors of darakhul or other undead leaving shades behind after destruction, but there are no reliable accounts of such a creature. It is more likely that an undead creature with strong enough will to become a shade becomes a shade of the race they were in true life.

Spirit and Flesh

A shade possesses a physical body that looks, acts, and feels similar to a living member of their original race, at least superficially. Shades must breathe, consume food and drink, and require shelter from adverse weather. Despite the functional similarities to a living body, a shade isn't composed of flesh and blood. Their bodies

are a memory of who they once were, inhabited and quickened by the presence of their soul. Exhaustion, deprivation, and injury take their toll on a shade's body, disrupting their body's ability to maintain the connection to their soul. Food, drink, and air aren't necessary to nourish their bodies but merely to help them maintain the sense of being a living, breathing creature. Similarly, shades appear to sleep, but they do not require it.

The more injured or exhausted a shade, the less corporeal they appear. The colors of their body wash out to pale, desaturated tones, and light begins to pass through them. Blood from their wounds starts out as red and vibrant as any humanoid's, but closer to death, their wounds cease to bleed and seem to evaporate at the edges.

Living Memory

The strength of a shade's memory of themselves and their place in life is the core of their being. Newer shades are almost impossible to distinguish from their prior, fully-living selves. Like anything exposed to the gnawing ravages of time, however, memory fades. The older a shade gets, the memories that keep them tethered to the living world begin to fray. They might grow forgetful, losing track of where they are or



what year it is. Their memories might drift together, causing them see people around them as figures from their past.

Memento Mori

A shade's remembrance of their own life, their own self, is the key to their continued existence. When others honor their memory, a shade can draw sustenance and strength from it. Any token, gift, or even a work of art or poetry intended to honor the memory of the shade carries the giver or creator's memory and can sustain the shade.

Creating a true *memento mori* requires that the creator have a genuine desire to honor the shade. It might seem trivial for a shade's bard companion to compose poems or songs regularly, thus sustaining the shade, but such attempts fail. Memory is the key, and a creator who is in regular close contact with the shade draws more on that contact than on their own memory. A shade's traveling companion painting a portrait of the shade during their travels will never become a *memento mori*, but a handmade twine bracelet given by a villager after the shade saved their village might if the shade moves on. Above all, a true, empowered *memento mori* must carry meaning.

Memento Mori

*Wondrous item, uncommon
(requires attunement by the shade for whom it was offered)*

As long as you have the *memento mori* in your possession, you don't require food, drink, or sleep. As an action, you can draw on all the stored memory at once, and you receive the effects of a *potion of heroism*. When the effect expires, the *memento mori* loses its magic.

Many shades keep detailed memoirs, tending to them with the same devotion that any living creature shows seeking out food and water. Shades can theoretically live forever, but in practice, the memories that tether them to life can't hold out indefinitely. Journals and other personal mementos help shades keep hold of themselves and allow them to last longer, sometimes for centuries.

Shades in Midgard

The largest known concentration of shades has arisen relatively recently in the conquered kingdom of Krakovar. The death that swept from the vampires to the south and their ghoulish allies that boiled up from the earth's crevices created the perfect conditions for shades to arise. Despite their greater frequency, even in the new annex of the greater Blood Kingdom, shades remain scattered except for one place. A tiny village in the Ostre Hills, Werghart, hosts a community of shades. It's remote and completely beneath the notice of the vampire ruling nobility because a scouting force destroyed it during the conquest. The shades found it not long after and set about to building themselves a new life. The Werghart shades are cut off, but they are determined and could make powerful allies in striking at the Blood Kingdom from within.

In the Southlands, shades are more common in Nuria Natal and in Siwal the City of Gardens. Siwali shades are great assets to the gravebinders who oversee the Necropolis, often becoming gravebinders themselves.

Social/Adventure

Because they can arise from any people, shades come from all corners of Midgard and from all walks of life. Station and wealth are no guarantee to help one linger on after the body's death either. It's not unheard of for a person to die only to rise as a shade





with little understanding that anything changed. Some even hide or dispose of their original remains, sometimes suppressing or deeply denying the act at all, and resume their life with no disruption. Anyone could secretly, sometimes even to themselves, be a shade.

Some traveling shades leave their old lives behind, particularly those who were alone in life with no one to mourn them

or fuel their memory. Such shades make up the majority of adventures. Other more established shades might set out on adventure to quest for the means to restore their true life or to protect loved ones from a threat. Krakovan shades engage in endless sabotage, harassment, and even outright warfare against the occupying forces of the Blood Kingdom.

Shade Traits

Your shade character has a collection of traits that arise from being a shade as well as a few drawn from life.

Ability Score Increase. Your Charisma score increases by 1, one other ability score of your choice increases by 1. Choose one ability score that is increased by your Living Origin (see below) or by one of its subraces. That ability score increases by 1.

Age. Shades appear as the age they were when they died. They potentially have no limit to their lifespan, but practically, ancient shades grow weary and lose their hold on their memories, fading away near 750 years old.

Alignment. Shades come from all walks of life but show a tendency toward neutrality. Shades that lack contact with other people grow more selfish over time and slip toward evil.

Size. Your size is determined by your Living Origin (see below).

Speed. Your speed is determined by your Living Origin (see below).

Darkvision. Your existence beyond death makes you at home in the dark. You can see in dim light within 60 feet of you as if it were bright light and in darkness as if it were dim light. You can't discern color in darkness, only shades of gray.

Ghostly Flesh. Starting at 3rd level, you can use your action to dissolve your physical body into the ephemeral stuff of spirits. You become translucent and devoid of color, and the air around you grows cold.

Your transformation lasts for 1 minute or until you end it as a bonus action. During it, you have a flying speed of 30 feet (hover) and resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks that aren't made with silver weapons. You can also move through creatures and solid

objects as if they were difficult terrain. If you end your turn inside an object, you take 1d10 force damage.

Once you use this trait, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.

Life Drain. When you damage a creature with an attack or a spell, you can choose to deal extra necrotic damage to the target equal to your level. If the creature's race matches your Living Origin, you gain temporary hit points equal to the necrotic damage dealt.

Once you use this trait, you can't use it again until you finish a short or long rest.

Spectral Resilience. You have resistance to necrotic and poison damage, and you have advantage on saving throws against poison and disease.

Undead Nature. You have two creature types: humanoid and undead. You can be affected by a game effect if it works on either of your creature types.

Game effects that raise a creature from the dead work on you as normal, but they return you to life as a shade. A *true resurrection* or *wish* spell can restore you to life as a fully living member of your original race.

Languages. You can speak, read, and write Common and one other language spoken by your Living Origin (see below).

Living Origin. As living echoes of who they once were, shades maintain some of the traits they bore in life. Choose another race as your living origin. This is the race you were in life. Your size and speed are those of your living origin.

Prominent Shades

Like any other group, shades have their luminaries and notables. These figures might serve as a mentor or point of contact for shade player characters, or as a means to tie other characters into ongoing events or even the distant secret history of Midgard.

KALADRIAN LADROSS LARENTIL

Centuries gone, the elves who once ruled over the face of Midgard fell into decline and left. Lifetimes of fighting against uprisings and infernal incursion—and the betrayal of their kin fled into Shadow—sent the elves with their magic, their armies, their empire, walking the Fey Roads back to the Summer Lands. Before the Great Retreat, in the waning centuries of the elven empire, Kaladrian Ladross Larentil lived and fought for the glory of his people in Liadmura in the Ironcrag Mountains.

Kaladrian was a general of armies, a fearsome warrior, and a wielder of the ancient elven high magic. He led his soldiers to conquest and glory and personally sacrificed defeated generals and would-be kings to Valeresh. It is said that he personally ended one hundred royal lines in the course of his devotion. It was during his time serving as advisor to the Eagle Emperor, in his fourth century of life, that an assassin's blade found his heart.

Kaladrian's shade rose from his cold blood wetting the marble of his chamber floor, just in time for him to witness the last crumbling days of the elves' power on Midgard. He is one of the few beings still walking the world who lived through those events, and it's a tragedy that he remembers almost nothing of it. He remained in Liadmura and continued to serve, but when it came time for the Great Retreat, he was left behind. There was no place for him in the Elflands in his state.

Now over six hundred years dead, Kaladrian is a fading echo of his former glory. He wanders the ruins of Liadmura, lost in the fading fragments of the memories struggling to hold his soul. Other memories of long-dead elves linger in the form of specters, ghosts, and banshees. The creatures occasionally attend their old general, but mostly leave him to his failing memory. Most of the time he mumbles and

rambles, engaging in conversations had ages ago with comrades long gone. Fading and ghostly, it won't be long before his memories fail completely and his soul sinks into true, lasting death.

On rare occasions, however, his mind pulls together, and the fog clears. In these moments, he is every bit as powerful, charismatic, and dangerous as he was during the height of his life. What causes these moments of lucidity varies, ranging from an auspicious night of the year with certain celestial alignments to the glimpse of a trinket that stirs his fading core to bright life. When his mind clears, Kaladrian understands his state and station, and he can be reasoned with or grievously offended. During all other times, he's difficult to talk to but sometimes passes ancient secrets freely in a one-sided conversation.

KALADRIAN'S SHADE

Medium humanoid/undead (shade),

Chaotic Neutral

Armor Class 14 (17 with *mage armor*)

Hit Points 210 (28d8 + 84)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	19 (+4)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	15 (+2)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Str +5, Wis +7, Cha +10

Skills History +8, Insight +7, Perception +7, Stealth +9

Damage Resistances necrotic, poison

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages Ankeshelian, Common, Dwarvish, Elvish

Challenge 14 (11,500 XP)

Insane. Kaladrian has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

Special Equipment. Kaladrian carries a *rapier of wounding* and a *mithril pendant memento mori*.

Spectral Resilience. Kaladrian has advantage on saving throws against poison and disease.



Spellcasting. Kaladrian is a 10th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability score is Intelligence (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). Kaladrian has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *blade ward, fire bolt, light, prestidigitation, shocking grasp*

1st level (4 slots): *quest of honor*, jump, mage armor*

2nd level (3 slots): *black swan storm*, blur, misty step*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell, haste, lightning bolt*

4th level (3 slots): *fire shield, shadowy retribution**

5th level (2 slots): *cone of cold, legend lore*

*Elven high magic spell (see *Midgard Heroes Handbook*)

Undead Nature. Kaladrian has two creature types, humanoid and undead. Any game effect that affects either of his creature types affects him.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Kaladrian makes two weapon attacks. He can use Life Drain in place of one weapon attack.

Rapier of Wounding. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4)



piercing damage, and the target is wounded. Wounded creatures take 1d4 necrotic damage at the start of its turn for each wound, it can then make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, ending all such wounds on a success. As an action, a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check ends the wounds. Hit points lost to the rapier's damage can only be regained by finishing a short or long rest.

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, ranged 150/400 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage.

Life Drain. *Melee Spell Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) necrotic damage, and Kaladrian regains hit points equal to the necrotic damage taken.

Ghostly Flesh (1/Day). Kaladrian becomes ghostly and translucent for 1 minute. He gains a flying speed of 30 feet (hover), and has resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage made with nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered. He can move through objects and creatures as if they were difficult terrain, and if he stops inside an object he takes 5 (1d10) force damage. He can end the transformation early as a bonus action.

REACTIONS

Parry. Kaladrian adds 5 to his AC against one melee attack that would hit him. To do so, he must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Kaladrian 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. Kaladrian regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Attack. Kaladrian makes one weapon attack.

Evoke. Kaladrian moves up to half his speed. This movement doesn't provoke opportunity attacks.

Cantrip. Kaladrian casts a cantrip.

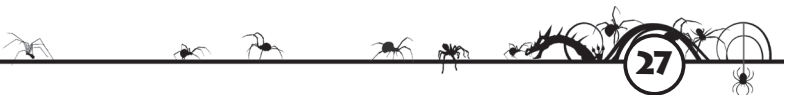
Shades of Werghart

The following are some of the shades that adventurers might encounter in or around the village of Werghart in the Ostre Hills. In each case, add the following modifications to the suggested stat block:

- Charisma +1 and any two scores (only one of which can be Charisma) +1
- Creature type is both humanoid and undead
- Add the Ghostly Flesh (1/Day), Life Drain (1/Rest), and Spectral Resilience traits.

Veyla Gheren: Female Krakovan human shade. Veyla has the statistics of a **veteran**. Veyla appears to be a human woman in her mid-30s with dark skin and black hair in tight braids. She's deadpan and flat-eyed in times of stress or uncertainty but quick to smile among friends. She is the town master of Werghart and is doing her best to keep her people safe and to strike against the Blood Kingdom when she can. She died fighting against the ghoul incursions in Wallenberg. If outsiders can earn her trust, she can offer work in the form of ambushing Blood Kingdom patrols or raids to obtain crucial supplies for the village.

Gohtras Bloodstone: Male dwarf shade. Gohtras uses the statistics of a **priest**. He's a pale-skinned reaver dwarf priest of Wotan. He's missing his left eye and claims he put it out himself to see as his god sees. His hair and beard are auburn and plaited into several long braids adorned with bits of metal taken from fallen foes. Dour and grim, the dwarf is a staunch realist and advisor to Veyla. Gohtras was a visitor to the country, joining the battle at Krakova when he found himself in the midst of a siege. He's currently collecting stories of all the shades in Werghart and composing a saga to preserve their memory.



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