

# THE BOOK OF SHADOWS

## A NETBOOK FOR THE RAVENLOFT AND GOTHIC EARTH SETTINGS

*Edited by the Kargatane:*

**Joe Bardales ☒ Andrew Cermak ☒ Andrew Hackard  
John W. Mangrum ☒ Stuart Turner ☒ Andrew Wyatt**

*Articles Contributed by:*

**Christopher Adams ☒ Daniel Bandera ☒ Eldred Black ☒ Timothy S. Brannan ☒ Andrew  
Cermak ☒ James “The Madman” Dalton ☒ Eric Daniel ☒ Luis Fernando De Pippo ☒ Dion  
Fernandez ☒ Robert A. Gombach ☒ Friedrich Gothe ☒ Mark “Mortavius” Graydon ☒  
Andrew Hackard ☒ Jaleigh Johnson ☒ Stefan MAC ☒ John W. Mangrum ☒ Ari & George  
Marmell ☒ Michael Massey ☒ Hugo Viegas Nascimento ☒ Ryan Naylor ☒ Luiz Eduardo  
Neves Peret ☒ Dustin “Grigg Deadbreaker” Rathbun ☒ Wes Schneider ☒ Andy “Socko”  
Snow ☒ Mike S.W. ☒ Stuart Turner ☒ Andrew Wyatt**

### **Notes from the Kargatane:**

All submissions have been edited to use Americanized spelling. This was done simply to give **THE BOOK OF SHADOWS** a more coherent appearance, and should not be meant as a slight against our Anglicized authors.

**THE BOOK OF SHADOWS** Release Date: October 31, 2000 (taking the gremlins into account).

### **Legal Notice:**

**AD&D, DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, D&D, DUNGEON MASTER, RAVENLOFT, MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH, and DARK SUN** are registered trademarks owned by Wizards of the Coast, Inc. This book does not represent a challenge to any Wizards-held trademarks. Wizards of the Coast is not officially affiliated with the content of this book in any way. All articles are copyright 2000 by their respective creators unless otherwise noted.

This netbook may be reproduced for personal use, but may not be used to generate revenue.

Visit the Secrets of the Kargatane at <http://www.kargatane.com>, the Official Home of Ravenloft on the Net!

# THE BOOK OF SECRETS

## RAVENLOFT

<b>PREFACE</b>	4.	<b>PLACES</b>	
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	5.	<b>Tsuu-Y-Teke</b>	96.
<b>RUNNING RAVENLOFT</b>		By Luiz Eduardo Neves Peret	
<b>Even More Fun &amp; Games</b>	13.	<b>Vultharesk</b>	104.
By Andrew Hackard		By Ari Marmell with George Marmell	
<b>Terrible Transformations</b>	17.	<b>Mictlan</b>	110.
By the Kargatane and the Ravenloft-L List		By Ryan Naylor	
☠ <b>Fear and Loathing in Third Edition</b>	29.	<b>THINGS</b>	
By John W. Mangrum		<b>New Monsters for Nosos</b>	117.
<b>PEOPLE</b>		By Luis Fernando De Pippo	
<b>The Tale of the Lady of the Lake</b>	40.	<b>Owlmay</b>	120.
By Ryan Naylor		By Hugo Viegas Nascimento	
<b>Father Guran</b>	46.	☠ <b>Children of the Nightless Land</b>	123.
By Christopher Adams		By Andrew Wyatt	
<b>Eduard Duvoir</b>	49.	<b>Skeleton, Hive</b>	134.
By Stefan MAC		By Dustin “Grigg Deadbreaker” Rathbun	
☠ <b>Dr. Henry Wollcote</b>	52.	☠ <b>Under the Hands of Hags</b>	136.
By Friedrich Gothe		By Wes Schneider	
<b>Umbran, the Shadow Lich</b>	55.	<b>Weregutton</b>	140.
By Eric Daniel		By Michael Massey	
☠ <b>Sir William Canifax</b>	58.	☠ <b>Patchwork Folk</b>	142.
By Andrew Cermak		By Andrew Wyatt	
<b>The Interpretation of Dreams</b>	63.	<b>Elemental Corruption</b>	144.
By Friedrich Gothe		By Mark “Mortavius” Graydon	
<b>The Red Wolf</b>	74.	<b>Spitting Cobra</b>	152.
By Andy “Socko” Snow		By Robert A. Gombach	
<b>The Society of Huntsmen</b>	78.	<b>Infestation</b>	154.
By Dustin “Grigg Deadbreaker” Rathbun		By Wes Schneider	
<b>The Order of Twilight</b>	84.	<b>Witch Ritual Tools</b>	158.
By James “The Madman” Dalton		By Timothy S. Brannan	
☠ <b>The New Guys in Vallaki</b>	92.	<b>The Mask of Sorrowful Beauty</b>	161.
By Andrew Wyatt & Andrew Cermak		By Luiz Eduardo Neves Peret	
		<b>PLAYER CHARACTER RULES</b>	
		☠ <b>The Vocalist</b>	165.
		By Wes Schneider	
		<b>INTERLUDE</b>	167.

Articles marked with ☠ utilize DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, Third Edition rules.

*For in and out, above, about, below,  
'Tis nothing but a Magic Shadow-show,  
Play'd in a Box whose Candle is the Sun,  
Round which we Phantom Figures come and go.*

—Edward Fitzgerald  
“Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám” (1859).

## MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH

### RUNNING GOTHIC EARTH

**Shadows of Blue and Gray** 176.  
By Jaleigh Johnson

### PEOPLE

**Danylo Denisovich Známia** 183.  
By Daniel Bandera

**Sir Andrew Sinclair** 185.  
By Luis De Pippo

**Dame Alice Kyteler** 189.  
By Hugo Viegas Nascimento

**The Katipunán** 195.  
By Dion Fernandez

**The Loçolico** 198.  
By Andrew Wyatt

### PLACES

**Caracas** 203.  
By Daniel Bandera

**Minnesota** 205.  
By Mike S.W.

**Bogotá** 207.  
By Daniel Bandera

**Manila** 209.  
By Dion Fernandez

**Rapa Nui** 211.  
By Hugo Viegas Nascimento

### THINGS

**H.M.S. Erebus** 216.  
By Luiz Eduardo Neves Peret

**Wang-Chi** 220.  
By Luiz Eduardo Neves Peret

### PLAYER CHARACTER RULES

**Mortician** 225.  
By Eldred Black

**CONCLUSION** 227.

**THE LIGHTS (CREDITS)** 228.

*Old age & youth, manhood & infancy,  
Mixed in one mighty torrent did appear,  
Some flying from the thing they feared & some  
Seeking the object of another's fear,  
And others as with steps towards the tomb  
Pored on the trodden worms that crawled beneath,  
And others mournfully within the gloom  
Of their own shadow walked, and called it death . . .  
And some fled from it as it were a ghost,  
Half fainting in the affliction of vain breath.*

—Percy Bysshe Shelley  
“The Triumph of Life” (1824)

## BOOK OF SECRETS: PREFACE

*“And the lamp-light o’er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;  
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor  
Shall be lifted—nevermore!”*

*—E. A. Poe, “The Raven”*

A shadow is a stab of darkness in the heart of the light. It is the eternal affirmation of night’s dominance over the day. The brighter the radiance becomes, the murkier the shadow. And when that light fades, the shadows come out to take over, their sharp edges blurring into mist.

Shadows can be your friends. A renegade soldier, pursued by Drakov’s Talons, takes refuge in a stand of trees. A small child hides in a closet, as alcohol turns his father into a monster. The cool shade of a boulder greets a lost traveler in the desert, and a few precious drops of water cling to the dark side of the stone.

Shadows can be your enemies. A frightened woman hurries home through the twilight, her pursuer’s unseen footsteps echoing from the dark alley where he parallels her path. A vampire billows from his hiding place, awaiting the end of sunlight. A party of pious priests walks though the Svalich woods, oblivious to the wolves which lie in wait beneath the trees ahead of them.

In the end, however, shadows simply are. Whether refuge or ambush, shadows hide the dark from the light. You have reached into the shadows and brought forth wisdom and learning. You have reached into the shadows and brought forth terror and evil. And, as day fades, and the fire burns down to embers, the shadows are reaching for you as well.

Welcome to the night, weary traveler.

*Andrew Hackard*

*Kargatane*

*October 31, 2000*

October 31<sup>st</sup>, 754.

# NIDALA.



**S**hadows flickered against the roughhewn stones of the chamber, dancing in time to the sputtering torches on the walls. Ponderous arches supported the low ceiling, motionlessly crushing the life from the room. The prisoner waiting in this chamber might have felt those walls pressing the very breath from his lungs, had he any concern for breath.

No prisoner's journey to this chamber had ever been kind, and this prisoner's journey had been less kind than most. The prisoner's teeth were cracked, his ribs broken. One cheekbone was smashed, causing the eye above to bulge strangely. But none of this concerned the prisoner. He was as content as he had ever been. He had traveled far to reach this chamber. He was the first of his kind to complete the journey.

The prisoner knelt in the center of the chamber, anchored to the floor by the collar of thick chains hanging from his neck, and by the heavy manacles binding his hands and feet.

Beyond the curtain of chains another ring surrounded the prisoner—a ring of men and women with broad shoulders and leathery hands. Each guard held a heavy battleaxe and wore well-tended scale mail. Ornate helmets hid the guards' faces, but the torchlight danced on the scowling eyes peering out from their dark visors.

The guards stood silent, glaring down at the prisoner. Beyond the ring of guards stood instruments of pain. Beyond these machines, with their blades and straps, a series of small doors lined three walls of the room. The doors were almost lost in the shadows, but a quiet whimpering would occasionally trickle from one or another.

The fourth wall held only a single, ironclad door. Suddenly the latch raised and the door swung open on well-oiled hinges, revealing three figures in the dim hallway beyond. The ring of guards turned as one to bow respectfully to the newcomers. The prisoner started to rise to his feet as the newcomers entered, but a guard quickly rammed the handle of his axe into the prisoner's back, dropping him back down to the floor.

A pair of women stepped inside first. Both wore identical sparkling golden gowns, marking them as sisters in service to the church of Belenus. As one, the

priestesses nodded back to the guards, then quickly stepped to either side of the door to admit the third in their party.

This third member strode into the room, a knight clad in brightly polished full plate. Reflected torches glittered on the armor like stars, but their light could not match the glory of the golden sunburst emblazoned on the knight's breastplate.

Unlike the guards, the knight wore no helm. Her raven hair framed a face that was surely beautiful and vital, but worn by a life of endless struggle. Her eyes still reflected the countless horrors they had faced.

The knight gripped the hilt of the bastard sword at her hip, while her free hand swept across the scene. Without hesitation, the ring of guards parted before her, and the knight stepped closer to the prisoner. She glared down at him, making no attempt to hide her disgust.

The prisoner peered up at the knight with his black, lifeless eyes and grinned, his battered and lipless jaws full of broken fangs. A long, pointed tongue slipped from the prisoner's maw and idly licked the leathery gray flesh stretched tightly across his smashed cheek.

"I am told," began the knight, "that you have requested an audience with me." Her voice filled the room, and even the prisoner could not help but flinch from its quiet strength.

"You are the knight?" hissed the ghoulish prisoner. "You are the *paladin*?"

The knight nodded.

"You are Elena Faith-hold, yess? You are the lasst knight of the Ssiracle?"

"I am," replied the knight, her voice cold and cruel. She leaned down towards the ghoulish face. "And in my long life I have slaughtered more of your foul kind than I could count. It is a small miracle for you that you have avoided destruction long enough to gain my ear. If any shred of your soul remains, you would do well to offer praise to Belenus for your good fortune."

The ghoulish hissed. "Belenuss wass my god in life. In death I praisse a new creator."

Lady Elena straightened, her mouth twisted into a snarl. "Do not waste what little time remains to you," she growled. "Say your peace, before I lose my patience." The hand on the sword squeezed tightly enough to make the leather bands on the hilt creak.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: INTRODUCTION

The ghoul nodded, attempting to look solemn. “I bring you word of your foess, Lady Elena. Of the banditss from the wesstern woodss.”

“The Red Wolf,” murmured a priestess, and the guards responded with muttered curses. Never taking her eyes from the ghoul, Elena threw up her free hand—and silence instantly reclaimed the chamber.

The chained ghoul leered at the guards. “Yess, the Red Wolf. That is what your people call him, is it not? The one who attackss your woodssmen?” The ghoul turned back to Elena. “The one who hass ssworn your death.”

The merest hint of a smirk pinched Elena’s cheek. “Very well, creature,” she answered. “What do you know of these brigands?”

“These is a reasson your woodssmen cannot catch them. There is a reasson you cannot starve them out. There is a reasson they continue to thrive . . . continue to sseduce your people with their evil taint . . .”

Elena crossed her arms. “I’m listening.”

“The banditss are ssupported by otherss you have never sseen . . . otherss who came here sseven yearss ago, when the Phantasmal Forest at lasst reached your realm.” The ghoul grinned wickedly. “A group of warriorss that arrived . . . with *uss*.”

The ghoul fell into silence, expecting a reply. When none came, it continued.

“These warriorss call themselss Knightss of the Shadowss. They call their ssociety . . . the *Ssircle*.”

Elena’s gauntleted hand lashed out faster than a whip, striking the ghoul across the face. A broken fang skipped across the flagstones.

“You lie,” Elena snapped. “Do you think I have heard *nothing* of the Great Kingdom in the years of my absence? The Circle was destroyed long ago. I am the last. Its burdens have fallen upon I alone.”

The ghoul glared up at the knight, spitting out another tooth before continuing.

“This is a *new* Ssircle, my lady, one that sseeks to replace the firsst. A *corruption* of the firsst. These knightss bear a ssymbol, like yours,” hissed the ghoul, nodding to the sunburst on Elena’s breastplate. “A shining ssun. But *their* ssun is devoured by darkness. They are driven by hatred, given sstrength by injustice.”

The ghoul grinned again. “They sseek one thing above all elsse, my lady. Your desstruction.”

Elena turned slightly, glancing at her prisoner askance. “What do you know of this . . . *false* Circle?”

“They are sscattered to the winds, my lady. They sspend many monthss in landss far beyond the Phantasmal Forest—far beyond your reach. But one day out of the year—*this day*—they congregate here, in the Shadowlands, before journeying into the Forest to offer succor to their masster.”

Elena leaned closer once again, sporting a sarcastic grin. “And just who is the master of this false Circle?”

The ghoul broke into a squealing titter. “It is a name from your passt, my lady, a name you will know. It is the heart of the Phantasmal Forest. It is the heart of evil in thiss realm.”

Elena clenched her jaw. “Give me the name.”

“It is a demon—*worsse* than a demon. It hass ssworn to desstroy Lady Kateri Shadowborn, and all that she ever held dear.”

Elena’s eyes grew wide. The ghoul continued, its voice dripping with glee. “And you know there was nothing Lady Kateri held more dear than . . . *you*.”

Elena took a step back. “The evil at the heart of those woods—those woods that have surrounded this land like an ooze engulfing its prey—that is the *same* evil that spurred the Heretical Wars? That *murdered* Lady Kateri in her home? That forced my hand, *forced* me to wage the bloody War of Evil?”

“*Yess*,” purred the ghoul. “One and the ssame. It is the evil you firsst knew as Muhdar ab Ssang, Grand Caliph of the Ssouthern Empire. The eternal evil now known as the *Ebonbane*. It waitss . . . in the heart of its Forest . . . for *you*.”

Elena spun away from the ghoul, her eyes reading the reactions of the helmed guards and the priestesses in gold. “Ebonbane,” she whispered to herself, her eyes wet. “Can it be? One hundred and forty years trapped in this limbo—is this at last an understanding of my fate? Two *lifetimes* of waiting; has my foe—my *quest*—at last been delivered to me?”

“I can lead your woodssmen to the Knightss of the Shadowss, my lady, to their hiding place in the Forest, where you may sslaughter them at your whim. But we must go quickly, my lady, for after thiss day they will sscatter for another year. Without the Ssircle, the bandits of the wesstern woodss will wither and trouble you no more.”

A frown darkened Elena’s face. “But why, fiend,” she asked the ghoul, without turning to face him. “Why would you tell me this? You need not bother to deny that you serve the Ebonbane as well. Why would you betray another servant of your master?”

The ghoul grimaced. “Ssuch is our nature. What does it matter if the betrayed is friend or foe? Sso long as there is ssuffering, we are content.”

Elena frowned. “But that is not the reason. This is a poor trap you have laid, creature. I ask again—why would an abomination that seeks my destruction also seek to aid me?”

The ghoul slowly rose to its feet, its collar of chains jingling. It smiled. “Because we *love* you, Elena,” it hissed, with a voice full of hate. “Because you are *one of uss*. You delight the Ebonbane as much as we. The Ebonbane sslew our ssoulss and filled our shellss with its evil. But the evil sseething in your heart is yours alone. Your ssoul was sslain by your *own*

# BOOK OF SECRETS: INTRODUCTION

hand. If not for that, you would be in the Forest, with the rest of us.”

Elena drew her sword, its gleaming blade ringing. She spun to address the ghoul. “You are filled with filth and lies,” she hissed, “just like all your unnatural kind. You are a *blight*. Your mere presence *soils* me. I feel I must be . . . *cleansed*.”

The ghoul frowned just before Elena’s sword lashed out. Its head struck the floor and rolled away just before its body crumpled, twitching. Elena held out her sword, and a guard stepped forward with a cloth to wipe the black ichor from its blade.

Elena tapped another guard’s shoulder and pointed to what remained of the creature. “Burn it,” she ordered, before moving toward the door. One of the priestesses hesitantly stepped into Elena’s path.

“Lady Elena,” whispered the priestess, “I do not wish to question your wisdom, but we already know that the Red Wolf’s brigands are supported by an outside force. Surely, do we not *wish* a confrontation?”

Elena stepped back, a look of suspicion on her face. She stared long and hard at the priestess, and the woman shuddered. Finally, Elena seemed to be satisfied, and stepped closer.

“Have you so little faith in me, sister?” Elena asked, amusement in her voice. “The Ebonbane sacrificed this messenger in vain. I *already* have eyes in the brigand’s camp.” Elena’s tone grew deadly serious. “I have had a faithful servant hidden among our foes for some time now. If this creature’s claims *were* true, then after tonight, we will know *exactly* how this false Circle serves the Ebonbane.”

Elena placed a firm hand on the priestess’s shoulder. “And once we know exactly what we face, we can destroy it utterly—on *our* terms.”



Davran’s eyes had seen scarcely more than twenty years, but already they struggled to contain anguish far beyond their due. He clutched a heavy axe to his chest, just as he had clutched a security blanket on stormy nights not so many years before. Over his patched peasant’s garb, he wore simple and somewhat ill fitting armor of stiffened leather. Davran had received both arms and armor from the Red Wolf himself, that mysterious leader of the brigands from the western woods. Davran had been taught to fear and despise the brigands who dared to prey upon Nidala’s guardians, but now, through twists of fate he dared not think upon too often, he found himself counted among their number. Now, Davran knew he even *needed* these brigands to achieve his own ambitions.

Davran watched the figures buzzing around him, drinking in their details. He had come here, with these people, these bandits; come to this place of doom.

Davran took a step backward and leaned against one of the massive dolmens that now surrounded him. Pressing his back against the cyclopean stone, he gazed skyward at the pale and distant sun. Davran felt the ancient ring of stones tightening around him, cutting him off from the world he knew. His lungs screamed for fresh air.

Hefting his axe over one shoulder, Davran turned and stormed out of the ring of stones, intent on leaving. He went three paces before he froze in his tracks, staring out into the quagmire beyond.

It was the Phantasmal Forest. Its sea of darkness surrounded this ring of stones for miles in every direction. It had been madness to come here. The Forest had always been spoken of in legends, but only some seven years had passed since the Forest proved itself to be real. It had first appeared at the far western border of the realm, so it was said, but within the year had spread outward and around the land, foot by creeping foot taking the place of the Mists that had once marked Nidala’s borders.

It was said that the marshy ground of the Phantasmal Forest was unstable, ever shifting. It hid quicksand and other perils, and consumed trails before they could grow a day old. It was said that the trees of the Forest wound their branches together so tightly that no sunlight could penetrate their canopy; that just a hundred feet into the Forest—with the sole exception of the sad little island of light within this circle of stones—it was always black as midnight, even on the brightest days. It was said that horrors roamed the Phantasmal Forest: twisted monsters, tormented spirits, and ghouls who stole into Nidala under cover of night to desecrate graves and steal away the unwary. It was said that the Phantasmal Forest was evil, in the purest of terms.

Davran now knew all of these tales to be true. He had now seen its horrors with his own eyes. And now he had seen something else, something not spoken of in the legends. It had barely been a month since Davran had joined the brigands. He barely knew his comrades’ names, much less their secrets. But one secret had revealed itself all too plainly over the past two days. They were warriors, men and women, clad in steel and bearing blades to the last. All of them wore the same black-and-yellow cape as that worn by the Red Wolf himself. They also all shared the same strange emblem he wore: an eclipsed sunburst. To Davran’s eyes, it was the symbol of Belenus, devoured by the night.

These shadowy knights had emerged from the Phantasmal Forest without warning, seeking out the Red Wolf’s camp in the western woods. There they had been greeted with open arms, and the Red Wolf had ordered his band to accompany the knights *back* into the Forest, for reasons inconceivable to Davran. Davran still struggled to believe that he had agreed to follow. During the grueling trek that followed through the murk and mire of the Phantasmal Forest, Davran had

# BOOK OF SECRETS: INTRODUCTION

learned—an overheard snippet of conversation here, a carefully worded question there—that these knights with the haunted faces returned to the Shadowlands every year. Not only were they the Red Wolf's allies, he was actually a soldier in their ranks. Davran had not yet learned what these knights sought to accomplish each year in these accursed woods, but he had not dared to press his luck in the search for answers.

These Knights of the Shadows—more than a score of them—surrounded him now, mingling with the Red Wolf's more experienced bandits, tending to the camp within the circle of stones, standing watch over the darkness of the Forest without.

Slowly, Davran realized that while adrift in his thoughts, his gaze had idly settled upon a pair of the mysterious knights standing not far away. One warrior had a narrow face and graying temples; his companion was broader, and his sunken eyes glittered from the darkness of his bearded face.

Suddenly the graying knight turned his head and met Davran's gaze with a scrutinizing stare. Startled by the attention, Davran scuttled back into the circle of stones, returning to his place pressed against the monolith. Davran tried to convince himself that he wasn't hiding.

"Who was that?" asked a voice, clipped and foreign, which just barely hovered above the din of the campsite. Davran realized that he could still hear the two knights from his position; they seemed to be making no attempt to keep their conversation hushed.

"One of the Wolf's band," answered the first voice's companion, a baritone.

There was a pause, then the clipped voice returned. "I gathered that much. Have you seen him before?"

"No. He's new. 'Davran' is the name, I think. Apparently they found him hanging in a makeshift gibbet by a burnt-out farmstead about a month ago." Davran squeezed his eyes shut as the memory was summoned.

"Anyone else found there?"

"A family, apparently. Or rather, they found the parts of a family that wouldn't burn."

The first voice returned again after another pause. "Had the boy been tortured?"

Another pause. Davran imagined the baritone knight shrugging. "Barely a mark on him, I hear. They just left him for the birds. Or the ghouls."

Another pause. Davran could not imagine a gesture to accompany this silence, but the first voice returned soon enough. "Elena Faith-hold may work in mysterious ways, but I strongly doubt she would *knowingly* help bolster the Ahltrian's ranks."

Another pause, another imagined shrug.

"So," continued the clipped voice, "do you trust him?"

"The Davran boy? The Wolf seems to trust him. That's good enough for me. Anyway, we have a few new faces in our *own* ranks this year, don't we?"

"We always do. And some of these faces we'll never see again."

"Aye," answered the baritone, his tone touching sorrow. "But that's the nature of the beast, isn't it? And it's why we need to have faith in the faces we *do* see."

Another pause. Then: "Aye." Davran though the clipped voice sounded less than convinced.

"Hey." A third voice emerged from the din of the camp. This voice was female, sultry, and markedly louder and clearer than that of either of the two knights.

"Hey. You." The voice now carried a hint of irritation, and this time was accompanied by the sensation of something dully jabbing Davran's chest twice. In a flash of panic, Davran realized that the owner of this new voice was speaking directly to him. His eyes snapped open.

At first Davran couldn't make sense of what he saw. The creature standing before him was his height, but even clad in half plate, it was gaunt, angular, and sticklike. Its head and hands were pitch black—mere silhouettes against the campfires, even in the pale sunlight. Davran's mind raced through possibilities; was it a ghoul? A wraith? Suddenly realizing that the creature was standing close enough to *bite*, Davran reflexively raised his axe to strike. The shadowy creature darted back in alarm, reaching for the sword at its hip. The rest was a blur.

Davran heard a cry of alarm. Another strange knight suddenly leapt forward from the gloom, sword drawn. In a flash, this knight used the blade of his sword to pin Davran's axe against the dolmen. Another knight—this one a full two heads shorter than anyone else in camp—now hurled itself into Davran, smashing him into the massive stone.

Within moments of raising his weapon, both Davran and his axe were held fast, pinned against the circle of stones. The taller of the two new knights, a man Davran's age with a dirty blonde moustache, glared at him with hateful eyes. The shorter knight kept his face down; from Davran's constrained point of view he remained a mass of flexing steel plates. The first shadow knight, the ebon stick figure, still stood a few steps back in a guarded stance, its sword drawn.

"Who are you?" hissed the blond knight.

"Use your head," snapped the ebon figure to the knight. The sultry female voice Davran had heard was hers. "He's obviously with the Wolf."

The blond knight sneered at the ebon woman, then turned back to Davran. "I saw you attacking her—I ought to gut you for that."

The squat knight suddenly pushed back, freeing Davran's body. Davran could now see the stout warrior's hirsute face. A long, pink scar wound down



# BOOK OF SECRETS: INTRODUCTION

the man's cheek, passing beneath an eyepatch. With no small wonderment, Davran realized he was looking at a supernatural creature.

"You'll do no such thing," grumbled the dwarf. "I've seen too many people die. I'll be damned if I'll see anyone die tonight."

The blond knight scowled at the dwarf, then turned back to Davran, still keeping the axe pinned. "What do you think you're doing?"

Davran cautiously pointed at the ebon woman with his free hand. "What is that thing?" he asked accusingly.

Davran had not expected the response. The blond knight dropped his sword, stepping back so he could keep both Davran and the ebon woman in view. "You know," he growled, "I've wondered the same myself."

The ebon woman stiffened. Taking a closer look, Davran realized that every inch of the woman's strangely thin frame was covered by heavy black cloth: gloves on her hands, a tight cowl over her head, a black veil across her face. Only her fiery, azure eyes remained visible.

The blond knight took a step towards her. He thumbed towards a cooking fire. "Who *are* you? Why don't you come with us, closer to the light? Let us get a better look at you."

The woman's head dropped, and she began to circle around the blond knight, obviously keeping him at a distance. "My name is Kosia," growled the woman. "And I must decline your offer. The shadows suit me well enough."

The blond knight narrowed his eyes. "I think I have to *insist*, Kosia. You never know *what* might try to sneak into our camp."

The dwarf was suddenly between the two, and he thrust out an arm to block the blond man. "Do you simply not *care* who you kill, lad? Ever stood by and had to watch as all your friends died around you? I have, and I'll be *damned* if I ever stand by again. She's wearing the eclipsed sun, so she's one of us. If you want to cut her, you'll have to carve your way through me first. You understand?"

The heat drained from the blond knight's face. "Better than you might think, dwarf."

"Übrig," corrected the dwarf.

The baritone voice suddenly joined the scene. "What's going on here?" Davran spun to see the newcomer—as did the three shadow knights surrounding him. The two knights who had been discussing Davran were now striding into the circle of stones. The leading knight glared at all assembled with his dark, sunken eyes. "Are we having some sort of trouble here?" he asked, in his baritone voice. Davran connected his face to the voice.

"No, there's no trouble here," grumbled the blond knight.

"Then what *is* going on?" asked the narrow-faced knight in his clipped accent.

The ebon figure—Kosia—pointed at Davran. "I was going to ask him a question, and he lunged at me."

All eyes turned to Davran, and he felt his cheeks turn hot. "I thought she was . . ." he began, before stumbling to a halt. "She looked . . ." Five pairs of eyes continued to glare at him. Davran dropped his head. "She surprised me. I thought she was a ghoulish." He added a hasty, "I'm sorry," of dubious sincerity.

"It's a mistake I might have made myself," growled the blond knight. Davran looked up again to see him jutting his chin at Kosia. "What exactly *are* you hiding under that cowl?"

"Nothing that need ever concern you," spat Kosia in reply.

"Enough!" barked the baritone knight. "You're all new, aren't you? I haven't seen any of you at this camp before." Kosia, Übrig the dwarf, and the blond knight all nodded reluctantly. This surprised Davran, who quickly admitted that he was new as well.

"Well, that's the problem, isn't it?" The baritone knight smiled. "You're all strangers to each other. Introduce yourselves. I am Barloc, and I call Valachan my home. My friend here is Rohmer"—Rohmer nodded in greeting—"from Borca. Now, who are all of you?"

Kosia and Übrig quickly supplied their names; Kosia came from a land called Tepest; the dwarf from somewhere known as Necropolis. The blond knight identified himself as Julian, and called his homeland Dementlieu. None of these places were even remotely familiar to Davran. All eyes turned to him.

"My name is Davran. The Red Wolf took me in when . . . when Lady Elena's woodsmen burned my family." Davran found it difficult to meet the others' gazes.

Kosia quickly looked away. The others nodded. It was not a gesture of sympathy, but of recognition.

Barloc smiled once again. "Now that you've been introduced, you are no longer strangers. All of you are now friends and allies. The gods know that a true friend is a treasure in this life, and should be treated as one."

Rohmer turned his head to Kosia, and gestured to Davran. "What were you going to ask him?"

Kosia eyed Davran suspiciously for a moment before answering. He could see her eyes sparkling like jewels. "I could tell he was one of the Wolf's men, so I was going to ask him why we're sitting in this camp in the middle of this hellish swamp. I was told that the annual conclave was of vital importance, but now we aren't *doing* anything." She looked at Davran again. Her face remained hidden, but her voice softened. "Now I see he doesn't know any more than *I* do."

Barloc's face grew stern. "The conclave *is* of vital importance. Actions of vital importance are, in fact, being taken as we speak."

# BOOK OF SECRETS: INTRODUCTION

“For the moment our role is merely to sit, wait, and protect this camp,” continued Rohmer. “The time to *act* will come soon enough.”

“What are we waiting for?” asked Übrig.

Barloc took up the baton. “I assume you were all educated in the history of our order?” Davran watched the others nod. “While we wait here, Gondegal is collecting magical . . .” Barloc paused as he glanced at Davran. “. . . offerings. That is his sworn duty as the leader of the Circle. Once he returns, it falls to the rest of us to take those offerings into Shadowborn Manor, at the heart of the Phantasmal Forest, and there give succor to the heart to our order. If we fail in our responsibilities, all that we stand for is doomed.”

“So,” grinned Julian, “our fearless leader gathers some trinkets, and then we grunts have to cart them into the maw of the Abyss? I see how this works.”

Rohmer stepped forward. “Julian, do you have any idea *where* Gondegal is collecting these . . . trinkets?”

Julian’s smirk suddenly vanished. He had the look of a man realizing he had just stepped in beartrap.

Rohmer continued, his voice firm but calm. “Gondegal has gone to Tergeron Manor, there to meet with Morgoroth the Black.” Davran’s face went pale as he recognized these legendary names. Rohmer noted this and directed the rest of his comments to him.

“Before *our* Circle, there was another. A band of holy knights who served Belenus with piety and wielded the will of their god as their sword. They were *all* slain, in one night. In *one* battle. By *one* man.”

Rohmer turned back to Julian. “Our leader, Gondegal, has gone alone to bargain with a mage who could destroy him with a word, and who possesses the inclination to do so. As leader of the Circle, Gondegal must bargain with this monstrous wizard for the four offerings we require. No one else possesses the magic we need. It is a task requiring subtlety and grace.

“These are traits which *some* of us,” Rohmer said, frowning at Julian, “have not yet acquired. Once Gondegal succeeds, *our* task is relatively simple.”

“Entering Shadowborn Manor simply requires courage and fortitude,” smiled Barloc. “Traits I think everyone here has demonstrated amply through their mere presence in the Phantasmal Forest.” He glanced briefly at the neophyte knights. “No one here has anything to prove, no matter how you might feel.”

A commotion sprang to life at the far side of the circle of standing stones. Davran turned to see as a massive warrior, armored and bearing the symbols of a Knight of the Shadows, trudged into the camp. His armor was splattered with muck and slime, but his bearing was proud, and his face held a look of triumph. He held something that Davran first thought to be some sort of odd scourge. He soon realized that the knight was actually carrying a cluster of four small boxes, each a few inches to a side and crafted from brass and

rosewood. Each was tied to a long leather strap, and it was these straps that the knight held in his hand.

As the others rushed over to greet the knight’s arrival, Davran realized that he must have been looking at Gondegal, the leader of the Circle. *That’s one task down, then*, he thought. Davran turned slightly and realized that Rohmer was still standing next to him, a serene look on his face.

Rohmer noted him. “Yes, the offerings are in those boxes,” he mused.

Davran frowned. “What do you do with them? What’s waiting for you in Shadowborn Manor? That Julian seemed . . . afraid, if you ask me.”

Rohmer looked at Davran again, this time with a note of amusement in his eyes. “Shadowborn Manor is a prison. A prison made by . . .” He shrugged as his voiced trailed off. “. . . gods, perhaps. Or passion as powerful as the gods.”

Davran’s frown deepened. “A prison? For what?”

Rohmer grinned slightly. “For an entity so monstrous that *demons* fear its coming. Our offerings keep it contained. But the beast continually lashes out, trying to corrode the chains that bind it. That is why we need to replenish our offerings each year. Without our tending, and within a year—perhaps two at most—the beast would be freed to rampage across the Shadowlands, and from there, *anywhere* it pleased.”

“What is this beast?”

“*Ebonbane*. It cannot be described beyond that.”

Davran stared at the clustered knights greeting their returning lord. “I want to see it. I want to face it.”

Rohmer looked at the lad, raising an eyebrow. “Davran? What do you live for?”

Davran was startled. “What do you mean?”

“I know your family was killed. All of here share a history of death and tragedy. What gives you the strength to go on? To wake up in the mornings?”

Davran stared at the ground. “I don’t know.” Rohmer’s silence pressed upon him. Sensing this answer would not suffice, Davran added, “Nothing, I suppose.”

“That’s not true,” Rohmer replied, quietly. Davran looked back up at him. “That’s not what I see in you. That dwarf, Übrig. I can see it in him. Right now he’s a walking corpse. He wishes he’d died with those lost friends of his. It’s in his eyes. I’d be very surprised if we ever see him again after tonight. He’ll probably throw his life away on some hopeless cause before the year is out. And he’ll *thank* whatever beast it is that slays him. Look deeper within yourself, Davran. Tell me what gives your heart the will to beat.”

Davran’s face slowly hardened as he searched for an answer. At length he looked up and turned to face Rohmer fully. His voice was low and gravelly.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: INTRODUCTION

“I want to kill Elena Stranglehold. I want to kill her with my bare hands. And before she dies, I want to make her suffer like she’s made so many others suffer.”

“Ah,” mused Rohmer, smiling. “Your life’s spark is Hatred. Well. At least your hate is more . . . *focused* than Julian’s. I doubt we’ll ever see him again either.”

Davran scowled. “Is there a point here, old man?”

Rohmer smiled back at him, sadly. “It’s a lesson we all need to learn. If we don’t learn it, we die.”

“Learn what?”

“That the hate you feel is not enough. We’ve all been where you are now, boy. Right now the hate is a fire in your belly, driving you forward. It gives you resolve. It gives you strength. But if you allow that hate to keep burning, it will *consume* you. The day will come, and soon, when there will be nothing left of you *but* the hate.” Rohmer looked deep into Davran’s eyes. “On that day, you will be *just like* Elena Faith-hold.”

Davran’s jaw dropped slightly, and he stepped back. Rohmer maintained his gaze.

“You need something *more* than vengeance,” continued Rohmer. “Something *greater* than hate. If you can find *that*, you will find the calm you need.”

Davran cocked his head. “What have *you* found?”

“A woman’s love was ripped from me once,”

Rohmer replied, a wince in his voice. “That is what set me on my path. Finding that love again is what gave me the will to go on.” He smiled. “Love keeps us human.”

Davran blinked at him, dumbfounded.



The knights and bandits trudged through the hip-deep mire of the Phantasmal Forest. Once Gondegal had returned, camp was broken, and the collected band moved on, deeper into the formless swamps. That had been hours ago.

Davran could see Gondegal heading the group, holding out a lantern before him. Davran had doubted the usefulness of the lantern at first; in the beginning it had been so dim he could barely even see it in the murk. But with each passing hour, the lantern’s light had grown steadily. Now it blazed with scarlet light, and Davran realized it too must be some kind of magical trinket, like the boxes Gondegal still had wrapped around his wrist. Somehow, the lantern was leading the group to the Ebonbane. Davran had heard some of the knights, and even some of the other brigands he knew, nervously discussing how the path to Shadowborn Manor seemed different each year; how the Phantasmal Forest truly had no shape. How the scattered islands of solid land, like the Shadowborn Manor, and Tergeron, and even Nidala, just floated about like bubbles in an oily pool.

Davran kept his eyes focused on the gloom pressing in on the party. Several packs of ghouls had

attacked the group, but quick action and overwhelming numbers had prevented casualties so far. Yet the raids were growing in frequency; Davran knew he wasn’t the only one hoping the lantern would deliver them to wherever they were going, *soon*.

Davran glanced at the other faces he knew. Übrig and Julian were both off at the edges of the group. Davran realized that Rohmer was right. Both men were *hoping* for another ghoul raid. Both wanted to be on the front lines in an attack. Davran craned his neck, and spotted Rohmer and Barloc near the back. Both men were keeping their eyes focused on the surrounding wilds, but Davran could see them still mouthing comments to each other. Barloc chuckled.

Finally Davran’s gaze fell back upon Kosia, the scarecrow with the azure eyes. He found himself wanting ever more to see what lurked behind that veil, though he no longer quite understood why. Picking up his pace a bit, Davran sidled up to her.

Kosia faceless head snapped in his direction. Her glittering eyes observed him coolly. “What do you want? Come for another swing at my neck?”

Davran’s cheeks burned, and he looked away. He started to speak, but choked on a dry throat. Finding his voice, he turned back to Kosia, but kept his gaze low.

“I’m . . . sorry,” he mumbled. “I really am. I was daydreaming, and you . . . you frightened me.”

Kosia laughed bitterly, and threw Davran a glance. “I frighten a lot of people,” she murmured. Her eyes were guarded. “Don’t worry about it. Forget it.”

“I don’t . . . That’s not what I want to . . .” Davran found himself hopelessly fishing for something to say. Rohmer’s words resonated. “Kosia?”

She sighed. “What.”

“What do you live for?”

Kosia’s head snapped back to face him, her eyes wild. But the jewels softened, and Kosia turned away again. “I almost died once. The man who . . . saved me, was a Knight of the Shadows. He helped me . . . heal, and brought me into the fold.” Kosia’s voice darkened. “And then he was killed. For saving me.”

Kosia raised her head high. “I live because to do otherwise would make his death a waste. I live to honor him.” She turned back to Davran, her eyes hard. “Is that the answer you wanted?”

Davran struggled for a reply. “That’s . . . *good*, I think.” He offered her a grin. “It’s better than mine.”

Something shifted under Kosia’s veil, and she laughed again, without bitterness. Davran trudged alongside her, a lopsided grin still on his face.



In the middle of nowhere stood a wall. In the gloom and slime of the Phantasmal Forest, the wall was white and pristine. Its stones fit together seamlessly. Its

# BOOK OF SECRETS: INTRODUCTION

purity was obscene. The Knights of the Shadows had reached their goal. With the ground growing more solid in the presence of this slightly curving wall, the entourage had started to set up a new camp. Davran lingered near the faces he knew.

“So this is it?” asked Julian. “We finally get to see the heart of darkness?”

Barloc turned to him, amused. “No, not you. Only four will enter. And *never* those who are making this journey for the first time.”

Davran frowned. “What about me?”

Rohmer shook his head. “You aren’t a Knight of the Shadows. This isn’t your burden. You and the rest of the Red Wolf’s men have already done far more than your share.”

Julian kicked a stone into a fetid pool, and Übrig shrugged helplessly. Davran knew how both men felt. Barloc consoled them. “Only four go in, because the task can be completed by *one*. And they might *all* die. We can’t risk decimating our ranks. For every Knight who does not return, some homeland loses their steward. We only send in more if *none* come out, to ensure that the task is complete.”

Davran cocked his head. “How do you pick who goes in, then? Does Gondegal choose them?”

Rohmer shrugged. “Gondegal always selects one, a Knight who’s entered the Manor before. The group will need that guidance. The rest are chosen by random draw from the experienced knights.”

Übrig trudged up to the others. “So what do the rest of us do? Just sit on our hands, helpless?”

“You’ve already made enough of a sacrifice for one year,” offered Barloc. “It’ll only get worse from here. You aren’t being punished. Think of it as a gift. The gift of another year of life. Assuming you survive the night, that is.”

Übrig perked up. Barloc and Rohmer shared a stifled grin. “The Ebonbane’s ghoulish Ahltrian certainly won’t stop harassing us now that we’ve reached their master’s lair. Those who remain here must protect everyone in the camp—must make sure there still *is* a camp when the four return.”

Übrig grinned. “I can do that.”

Davran examined the wall. “How do you get inside? It’s so dark I can’t even see the top of this thing. And these look—” he continued, reaching out to touch the perfect stones.

Barloc leapt forward and grabbed his wrist. “*Don’t touch that!*” he cried. Panting, he continued once he had released the shocked Davran’s arm. “This *thing* is not a wall, merely a border. Once you pass through it—or even brush against it—there’s no turning back until our task is complete.”

“So what *is* behind here,” asked Kosia, as she cautiously examined the wall herself.

“This is where the world ends,” intoned Rohmer.

“And what?” quizzed Julian sarcastically. “—Where the Abyss begins?”

Rohmer shook his head sternly. “Measure the Abyss by how far the Ebonbane can reach, and we’ve been slogging through it all day. No, this is much worse. This where the world ends and *Ebonbane* begins.”

A murmur passed through the assembled crowd; the choosing ceremony had begun. Gondegal announced that he had selected a pale and towering woman, Emileeza, to lead the group; she had apparently entered Shadowborn Manor twice before. From the look on her face, Davran doubted she was overly pleased about having to dare it once again.

The rest of the eligible knights then placed their marks on slips of parchment, which were then collected in a passed helmet. Both Barloc and Rohmer were selected, each accepting the news with a mixture of excitement and dread on their faces. A stout and heavily tattooed knight from yet another foreign realm Davran had never heard of filled the fourth post.

Gondegal handed one of the small rosewood boxes to each knight, and the chosen party then traded all of their swords, knives, and daggers for axes, maces, and various sundry weapons. When Davran asked Kosia why, she explained in grim tones that within Shadowborn Manor, all swords became foes, all knives assassins. This was, apparently, merely a sample of the Ebonbane’s powers within its realm.

The four knights were given a grand salute by the entire company, then turned to face the monstrosity perfect wall. Emileeza and the tattooed knight both whispered quiet prayers to themselves. Barloc murmured something to Rohmer, and they both turned to their little group of neophytes, giving them a wink.

Then the foursome stepped forward into the wall, passing through the stones as smoothly as they would have slipped into a milk bath.

Davran saw Julian tensing. He could sense what Julian felt: the need to follow; the need to see what lay beyond that wall; the need to *do* something. He felt it himself; he was fighting the same urge to simply rush forward and plunge himself into that white hell.

A black hand came down on Julian’s shoulder. Kosia turned him away from the wall.

“It’s not your time. You heard Barloc. You’ve been spared. After tonight, go back home. Take another year of life. You’ll always get another chance to die.”

Davran slumped against a twisted tree, turning away from the wall. Kosia might as well have been speaking to him, and she was right. He thought of his home, and of Elena. He imagined all the lands he had never seen, and all the wonders they held. He imagined the games he had played as a child.

After all, Death would still be waiting next year.



# EVEN MORE FUN & GAMES

## CARDS, DICE AND DARTS IN THE LAND OF MISTS

by Andrew Hackard  
andrew@kargafane.com

*"It's all fun and games until somebody  
puts an eye out."*

—Maligno the Carrionette



In a moonless night, several merchants and traders and two families were crouched near the small fire in the taproom of the Wingless Tressym, in Kantora. Their attempts to keep out winter's chill were foiled when the door slammed open. Amid the snow and the chill wind, a figure dressed in green and blue strode to the bar. Two fur traders hurried to close the door behind him.

"Milady," said the stranger to the woman behind the bar, "I am a humble entertainer from a far-off land, recently arrived in your fair city." He ignored a snort from one of the fur traders. "My name is Samele. Perhaps I could entertain your clients, in return for a drink and a bowl of that delectable-smelling stew." He gazed deeply into her, with his deep violet eyes, as she fixed a bowl of the stew and pulled a mug of stout.

Then Samele turned to the crowd, his voice golden with honey. "What might I sing for you first? Perhaps a lay about a warm summer's day I shared with a lady many years ago? Or the tragic tale of Alexi Shadow-born and Elena Faith-hold? Or," turning to the enthralled children, "the story of Prince Othmar and his faithful friend Sir Tristen?"

"Or maybe," growled a voice from behind, "you could shut your hole and come over here to earn that dinner."

Samele turned slowly to see three burly men, dressed in identical clothes, of a cut more reminiscent of Richemulot than Nova Vaasa. "Gentlemen," said the

minstrel, "do you have a request? Perhaps a marching song for the long trek home?" One of the men stood up and pulled a chair from the next table.

"Tell me, fop, do you play cards?"

Samele smiled. Loosening his coin purse and fluffing his sleeves, he sat down. "Do I play cards, gentlemen? Simply name the game . . ."

**Author's Note:** Some people have asked why the Vistani would put up with people using tarokka decks to gamble with. My answer is simple. Historically, our own playing cards were derived from tarot decks, though the symbolism is now far removed. It stands to reason that Ravenloft might have a similar process. Rather than create a whole new deck, however, I've chosen simply to use the tarokka as the path of least resistance. Assume, if you prefer, that this is the "fake" tarokka used for playing games, rather than the "real" tarokka used for telling fortunes.

## Swords

### A Game of Strategy and Luck

This four-player game requires a deck of tarokka cards. The high deck is not used. The forty cards of the low deck are shuffled and dealt around the table, starting with the dealer's right. Once all cards are dealt, the player to the dealer's right bids on how many tricks she thinks she can take. Bidding then proceeds around the table, ending with the dealer. Players sitting opposite each other are partners, and the partnership contract is the total of the two individual bids.

Play is simple. The first player may lead any card, and the other players must, in turn, follow suit if possible. The highest card played of the suit led wins the

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

trick, which is placed face down in front of the winning player. (Archetype cards beat all others in their suits.) This player then leads for the second trick. If a player cannot follow suit, she may discard any other suit, or may play a card from the suit of swords. These cards are trump, and any sword card beats any other card (with higher swords beating lower ones, of course).

When all ten tricks have been played, the hand is scored. A partnership that did not make their joint bid loses five points for every trick bid. A partnership that made their contract gains ten points for every trick bid, minus two points per extra trick. So if the bid is four and the partnership made six, they would score forty for the bid, minus four for two extra tricks, for a total of 36.

There are two special bids, however, that alter these scoring rules slightly.

Any player may make a bid of "Lose." This bid means that she is going to set out to lose all the tricks. She must still follow all the rules about following suit. If she does, in fact, manage to lose all the tricks, she scores 50 points for her partnership. However, if she takes even one trick, she loses 50 points instead. The partner of the "Lose" bidder must make her bid on her own, while also "protecting" her partner. However, in this case she is not penalized for excess tricks (although the opponents still are). Any tricks taken by the "Lose" player do not count toward the partnership total.

The other bid is open only to the dealer. After hearing the other three bids, the dealer may make a bid of "Break." This bid means that she thinks she can "break" the opponents' contract (i.e., cause them to take fewer tricks than they bid). Further, the "break" bidder is not required to follow suit, and may play whichever card she wishes. As in the "lose" bid, any tricks taken by the dealer do not count toward her partner's bid, and any overtricks taken by her partner are not penalized. If the "break" is successful, the dealer scores 100 points and the opponents score zero. (They are not penalized, however.) However, if the "break" is unsuccessful, the opponents score 20 points for each trick bid, plus a bonus of five points per overtrick. The dealer scores zero.

Games can be played for a certain number of hands, usually twelve, or to a certain number of points, usually 300. It is common for games of swords to be played for money, usually a copper per point, but other stakes can and have been used. Rumor has it that Malocchio Aderre once surrounded a Vistani camp with his men, then forced the raunie's two sons to play a game of swords with him and his lieutenant using the raunie's tarokka deck. For every hand the Vistani youths won, Malocchio allowed one Vistani to go free. For every hand Aderre won, the raunie lost another finger.

## Wolf Cubs

### A Game for Children

This is a very simple game, requiring nothing beyond two children and some small candies. Each child is given the same number of candies (usually five or ten). They sit on opposite sides of the table. Each child holds up their hands, one in a fist and one hand open. They strike their fists into their palms eight times, in time with the following chant:

*"Wolves in the forest,  
Wolves in the trees.  
How many wolves  
Does the shepherd boy see?"*

On "see," the children bang their fist into their hands for the eighth time and extend any number of fingers from zero to five. If both numbers are even or both numbers are odd, then the player with the lower number has to give the other player a piece of candy. However, if one number is odd and one number is even, then the player with the higher number has to give up a piece of candy. If both players show the same number, they each eat a piece of candy. The game is over when one player runs out of candy.

What is not often remembered is that the chant is based on a true incident. A young shepherd boy in Verbrek ran from the fields to his parents' house, saying he had seen several puppies playing in the woods. His parents opened the door to see him holding a wolf cub . . . with the mother wolf about ten feet behind him, ready to pounce. Terrified, his parents slammed the door in their son's face. His body was never found.

## Caltrops

### ("Running With the Pack")

#### A Game of Dice

This game is for five people, each with a four-sided die in a different color. The sequence of play is as follows:

1. All five players put a coin (usually a silver piece) into the pot and throw the dice.
2. Each player then puts a number of coins into the pot equal to the number thrown. (In other words, if your die shows 3, you put in three coins.)
3. Any player who matches the number thrown by another player is out for that round. (Players with matched dice are called "packs.")
4. If no player has an unmatched die, all players add a coin to the pot and throw again.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

5. If only one player has an unmatched die (called a “lone wolf”), he gets the pot for the round.
6. If two or three players are lone wolves, however, then strategy comes into play. A lone wolf may suggest a split of the pot with any other lone wolves before any throw. If they agree, then they split the pot and the round ends. (The split must be even, so any extra coins stay in the pot for the next round.) If even one lone wolf does not agree, however, the remaining lone wolves must throw their dice again.
7. A player who matches dice thrown on previous rounds is said to have “joined the pack,” and is out for the round. Players who match each other are also out for the round. If all players match, then the round is over and a new one begins with all players putting a coin into the pot. If at any time there is a single lone wolf left, he wins the pot. Lone wolves may elect to split the pot before any throw rather than continue.

**Example of Play:** Our five players are imaginatively named A, B, C, D, and E.

- ❖ Before the first throw, all five players put a coin into the pot. **Pot:** 5.
- ❖ **First throw:** A 3, B 4, C 2, D 2, E 1. **Pot:** 17. C and D are out; A, B, and E throw again.
- ❖ **Second throw:** A 4, B 2, E 3. **Pot:** 26. B is out. A suggests a split, E declines.
- ❖ **Third throw:** A 3, E 1. **Pot:** 30. A suggests a split, E declines.
- ❖ **Fourth throw:** A 1, E 1. **Pot:** 32. A and E match, so are both out (and A kicks E under the table).
- ❖ A new round begins, so all five players put a coin into the pot. **Pot:** 37.
- ❖ **First throw:** A 2, B 1, C 1, D 4, E 2. **Pot:** 47. All players but D are out, so D takes the pot.

## General Rules for Darts in Ravenloft

Dartboards in Ravenloft are somewhat different than dartboards on Earth. They lack the bull’s-eye, and the grid is painted on rather than formed with wire. Also, there is only one ring, about one-third of the way in from the edge of the board (about where the triple ring is located on a standard dartboard, but a little closer to the edge). This ring counts double. The 20 is at the top of the board, and the sequence of sectors goes clockwise as follows: 20, 7, 17, 13, 3, 10, 19, 9, 5, 15, 1, 14, 4, 8, 18, 11, 2, 12, and 16.

As many gamers can’t be trusted with sharp objects, it’s a good idea to simulate dart games rather than actually roleplay them with standard equipment. A

d20 and d10 in matching colors work nicely for a single dart (so three pairs would work well for the usual three-dart throw). Roll the d20 to determine the sector of the dartboard hit, and the d10 to determine *where* that sector is hit. A roll of 1, 2, or 3 is a hit off the board. A roll of 0 is a hit in the double ring. Anything else is a single hit in that sector. (For games where it’s relevant, 4–6 is outside the double ring and 7–9 is inside.)

This is a simple and easy system. However, if you want a slightly more complex system, you could allow any or all of the following:

- ❖ Allow the player to use his or her character’s missile adjustment (from Dexterity) as a modifier to any one die roll, in either direction. So, if a PC has a +2 missile adjustment, that player may change any single die by 0, 1, or 2 units in either direction. An especially kind DM will allow splitting this bonus.
- ❖ Allow the player to make a Gambling proficiency check. On a successful check, the player may adjust any one die by a single step.
- ❖ If a PC has dart proficiency (or even specialization), then he may forgo the simple system entirely and make a “to hit” roll instead. Any specific sector should be considered to have AC 5 (AC 15 under D&D third edition rules). Attempting to hit a specific part of a sector should be considered a called shot, imposing penalties to the “to hit” roll. (I suggest a penalty of –4 to hit the outer or inner section of a sector, and –8 to hit the double ring in a specific sector.) Otherwise, just roll a d4, counting a 4 as hitting the double ring in the sector hit. Use of magical darts would, of course, be a gross breach of protocol.

Here are three dart games commonly played in taprooms across the Demiplane of Dread.

## Head to Heel

### A Game of Speed

Each player attempts to be the fastest to hit the numbers in sequence three times: once outside the double ring, once inside, and once in the double ring. A player’s first sequence may start with either 1 or 20, but the other two sequences must start with that number as well. The winner of the game is the first one to end his third sequence. Traditionally, the player least far along is granted the privilege of buying the next round of drinks.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

## Crosses and Rings

### A Game of Greed

Before the game starts, the players agree on a range of values (usually 15 to 20). Each dart hitting one of the target numbers goes toward “closing” that number; it takes three hits to close a number. (The name of the game comes from the usual scoring method; the first hit is marked with a circle, the second with a horizontal slash through the circle, and the third with a vertical slash through the circle.) A hit in the double ring counts as two hits. Hits to non-target numbers are wasted.

Once a player closes a number, he may then start to score points by hitting it again. Until the opposing player(s) close out the same number, every hit scores that many points. For instance, if Francis has closed out 17 but Ernest has not, Francis can score 17 points by hitting 17 with his darts. When all players have closed out a number, it becomes “dead,” scoring no points for anyone.

The game ends when one player closes out all the target numbers. He receives a 50-point bonus for doing so. The player with the most points wins the game.

## Ter Quaf Ter

### A Game of Reduction

The name of the game is patterna for “three four three,” or 343. This number is  $7 \times 7 \times 7$ , and therefore holds great mystic significance for the Vistani. However, the dart game is completely unrelated to any magical properties of this number; it’s simply the starting score of all the players.

The goal is to be the first player to reach zero points. Every number hit reduces your score by that many points (double if you hit the double ring). A player can’t go below zero, so if the number hit is larger than the number of points remaining, he regains *all* points lost during that throw and is finished. (In other words, if Denys has 10 points and throws an 8 and a 4, he goes back to 10, and his turn is over.) The first player to reach zero exactly wins the game. (It doesn’t matter on which dart the winner reaches zero; it’s assumed he intentionally misses with any remaining darts.) Often, it is played for money, with every losing player giving as many copper pieces as he had points remaining to the winner.

A common variation on this game requires players to “enter” and “exit” with doubles. This means that the player’s score cannot be reduced until he hits the double ring, and that he must hit the double ring to go out. (The double ring, taken as a whole, is AC 0 in AD&D second edition and AC 20 in D&D third

edition.) So, if a player’s score reduces to exactly one point, he can’t go out. Most taprooms will play that, in such a case, he loses the throws for that round, just as if he went below zero. However, some places (usually the rougher joints) will force the player to go back to 343 and start over.

*The three large men surveyed the body of the minstrel from across the room.*

*“Well, I still say he had it coming to him. Trying to cheat us, hmph.” The speaker produced a nine of swords from the minstrel’s sleeve, then let the minstrel’s arm fall to the floor.*

*“Yes, Henrik, but what a mess. And the innkeeper lost all that business from the other patrons. How are we supposed to make that up to him?”*

*“Well, for starters,” said Henrik, “he’ll have some more of that fine stew tomorrow.”*

*The three men glanced over at the minstrel and grinned.*





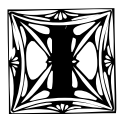
# TERRIBLE TRANSFORMATIONS

TWENTY TERRIFYING TERROR TRACKS TO TEACH AND TAUNT

by the RAVENLOFT-L Mailing List and Stuart Turner

[stu@kargatane.com](mailto:stu@kargatane.com)

## INTRODUCTION



In mid-2000, the Kargatane ran a competition for Terror Tracks—the ten-stage process introduced in *Domains of Dread* that can be used on heroes or nonplayer characters as a result of failed power checks. Many entries later, we Kargatane have selected our favourites and presented them below for your enjoyment. A big “thank you” to everyone for their inspired entries!

## Ernst Turagdon’s Diary

15th September, 754

It never ceases to amaze me how people want to see reflections of humanity in monstrosity. Stories of women turning into spiders, sailors turning into ravenous fish-beasts, and scholars turning into amorphous mist-creatures—they all seem absurd, yet we are forever receiving reports of such “transformations.”

Personally, the only convincing transformation I’ve seen was when Monsieur Flauteur in Dementlieu turned that lovely lady in her underclothes into a small rabbit. I don’t know what arcane magical device he kept in the back of that closet, but it is surely more impressive than most of the stories that walk in (but rarely out) of our bookshop here in Vallaki.

Still, the number and variety of these stories does warrant comment to Lady Kazandra. I think I shall compile a report for her on this phenomenon. Perhaps she can understand the strange occurrence that warps people’s minds to believe in these supposed horrible physical transformations as punishment for evildoings. (If this were even remotely true, I am sure I myself would have suffered considerable tortuous mutilations

in the course of my corrupt and malicious existence—why in the Mists would I escape such “punishment”?)

As usual, I will have to cover up the ineptitude of the rest of the riff-raff I must work with in this bookshop. Were they to write the report, Lady Kazandra would receive ridiculous stories about Urik von Kharkov turning into a great cat, and Tristen Hiregaard turning into an insane murderer!

Thank the Mists I have more sense than to peddle such rubbish.

## Contest Winner

### Track of the Skin Thief

By Dustin “Grigg Deadbreaker” Rathbun

[dustinrathbun@hotmail.com](mailto:dustinrathbun@hotmail.com)

**Application:** This track is for those PCs who assume false identities or pretend to be someone they are not; not necessarily for some far-reaching scheme to gain power or fame, but for as little as a single night manipulating others into giving away something of value. For example, one using the name and identity of a nobleman in order to secure free lodgings, food fit for a king, a horse, or perhaps to seduce a young maiden for the night, might be fit for this track.

**Stage I:** The PC becomes adept at playing the role of another, gaining the disguise proficiency. If the PC already possesses the proficiency, he gains a +2 bonus to disguise checks. However, the PC’s skin becomes itchy and he suffers the effects of an *irritation* spell (*Player’s Handbook*) whenever he maintains a disguise for more than an hour’s time.

**Stage II:** The PC’s fingernails become thick and black, acting as small claws. The PC now gains a +2 damage for unarmed combat. The PC also develops an

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

interest in shiny jewelry, particularly expensive rings and bracelets.

**Stage III:** The PC's skin becomes tougher, giving him a +1 bonus to AC. A patch of dry skin, however, roughly one foot in diameter, develops somewhere on his body. This patch is similar to sunburn that has begun peeling, and reduces the PC's Charisma by one point to those who notice the deformity.

**Stage IV:** Overnight, the PC's claws become even thicker and grow up to four inches long. The claws now inflict 1d4 damage. The claws may be trimmed, but they grow back extremely quickly, at the rate of about one inch per day. Unless trimmed or somehow hidden, these claws reduce the PC's Charisma by one point.

**Stage V:** The PC gains one point of Strength, but small nubs begin to form between the PC's fingers, causing all checks requiring manual dexterity or fine manipulation to suffer a -2 penalty. Spellcasters must make a successful Dexterity check in order to cast spells with somatic components.

**Stage VI:** The PC's skin becomes even more durable, granting him a +2 bonus to AC. The patch of peeling skin triples in size, and coarse hairs begin to force themselves out of the affected area. The finger nubs also continue to grow. The PC's deformities are now nearly impossible to conceal, and he suffers an additional loss of 2 points of Charisma. The PC begins to have disturbing nightmares of being skinned alive by his own hands.

**Stage VII:** The PC's finger nubs develop into full, clawed fingers. The PC now causes 1d6 damage with his claws, which now measure between 6 and 8 inches long. The new fingers are now fully flexible, and former penalties caused by the nubs disappear. The patch of deformed skin grows even larger, and now begins to peel off in sections several inches in diameter, leaving patches of thick fur beneath it, like the pelt of an animal. Viewing the PC's peeling skin is grounds for a horror check. The PC becomes desperate to discover a way to hide his monstrous appearance, and may fly into a berserk rage if it is exposed.

**Stage VIII:** The PC gains large, sharp teeth, and can bite opponents for 1d4 damage, but the PC's face becomes twisted and bear-like. Charisma is reduced another 3 points. The PC is now only capable of gaining sustenance from raw meat.

**Stage IX:** The PC's arms lengthen, and his Strength increases by 2 points (max of 18), but his mind becomes more bestial and savage, reducing his Intelligence by 2 points.

**Stage X:** The PC gains the ability to fashion a skin suit from a living being. The PC's true skin completely sloughs off (taking away all AC bonuses gained from his dark gifts), revealing him to be a true skin thief.

## Semi-finalist

### Track of the Banshee

By Stefan Costilow

Mac\_costilow@hotmail.com

**Application:** While the "natural" banshee is the spirit of an evil female elf, the dark powers might curse any female character to this fate. Likely candidates would include those who show marked contempt or intolerance for those around them. As the character descends into evil and undeath, those feelings deepen into a hatred of all living things, until she no longer recognizes or accepts even her fellow party members.

**Stage I:** The PC gains 25% magic resistance, but is unaware of this at this time. She exudes an aura of contempt that animals notice, making them nervous around her.

**Stage II:** The PC gains the ability to sense the presence of living creatures up to five miles away. Animals now totally avoid her presence, and when forced to stay near, will flee at the first opportunity.

**Stage III:** The PC's natural Armor Class is reduced to 0. The aura of contempt now extends to people, leading to a -1 reaction adjustment.

**Stage IV:** The PC can now only be harmed by magic or weapons of +1 or better enchantment. The aura that surrounds her intensifies to the point where the reaction penalty increases to -2, with no reaction better than neutral.

**Stage V:** The PC becomes immune to all forms of sleep, charm or hold spells, but she suffers a -1 Dexterity penalty in the presence of holy symbols or holy water due to discomfort.

**Stage VI:** The PC's magic resistance increases to 50%, and she becomes aware of its existence. Her aura deepens so that flowers and other delicate plants within 100 feet will wither and die over 1d6 turns.

**Stage VII:** The PC gains immunity to all forms of cold or electrical damage. Holy symbols and water that strike her now deal 2d4 damage.

**Stage VIII:** The PC's aura of hatred is so intense that it marks her features, causing all who view her to save vs. spell or be affected as a *cause fear* spell. Her body becomes completely incorporeal, shutting off her last links to the physical world.

**Stage IX:** The PC can now deal 1d8 points of damage with her touch, but she can now be turned as special undead.

**Stage X:** The character finally gains the ability to keep once per night, forcing all that hear her to save vs. death magic or die immediately. She is now vulnerable to the *dispel evil* spell, which can instantly and permanently destroy her.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

## Semi-finalist

### Track of the Boneless

By Wes Schneider

Dendread@home.com

**Application:** Cowardice as a personality trait can be acceptable for farmers and city dwellers, but, by definition, is not a quality of a hero. Turning tail in the face of danger not only jeopardizes the life of the coward but all those who rely on him. This track focuses on the “spineless” character and serves as punishment for criminal cowardice.

**Stage I:** The new elasticity of the PC’s skin gives him a +1 bonus to Dexterity. However, his bones begin to rot away, reducing his Constitution by 1 point.

**Stage II:** The chill of death renders the PC invisible to infravision but decreases his Intelligence by 1 point. Also, skin begins to hang off the PC’s bones, dropping Charisma by 1 point.

**Stage III:** The heightened elasticity of the PC’s flesh allows him to stretch appendages by ten inches; this makes walking more difficult, reducing movement rate by 2.

**Stage IV:** The PC can now change his height by nearly two feet; however, pale drooping flesh in any form lowers his Charisma by 2 points. His bones also continue to disintegrate, lowering Constitution by another point.

**Stage V:** Loose skin allows the character to slap for 1d4 points of damage; however his dying body lowers both Intelligence and movement rate another 2 points.

**Stage VI:** The character’s features become malleable, duplicating the effects of a *change self* spell, but holy water and items now do 1d4 damage.

**Stage VII:** The majority of the PC’s bones dissolve, rendering him immune to bludgeoning attacks but dropping movement rate by another 2 points and lowering his Charisma by 4 points.

**Stage VIII:** The PC is able to run at his original movement rate using legs and arms, but is now affected by spells affecting the undead.

**Stage IX:** With a successful attack roll, the PC can constrict an opponent in a crushing hug for 2d4 damage per round until the foe escapes through a successful Bend Bars roll. The PC can now be turned and is damaged by holy water for 1d8 damage.

**Stage X:** The character loses another 2 points of Intelligence, but can compress his boneless body into tiny spaces and through narrow gaps.

## Semi-finalist

### Track of the Chosen One

By Wes Schneider

Dendread@home.com

**Application:** This terror track is suited to a servant: he who unswervingly and unquestioningly follows the orders of a single master. Any who use orders as an excuse to explain their heinous actions or allow themselves to be completely dominated by another (either PC or NPC), are suitable for this path. Others who may be appropriate candidates for this track are members of military groups and those who originate from a domain steeped in foul magics.

**Stage I:** The PC’s fingers elongate by half their current size. Because of these longer, more slender fingers all Dexterity checks involving the use of one’s hands gain a +2 bonus (adjustments to thieves’ abilities apply). However, this abnormality is difficult to hide and inflicts a Charisma penalty of –1 if not disguised.

**Stage II:** The PC’s skin hardens and becomes leathery, dropping his natural AC by 1. This new trait is accompanied by stiffness not found in natural skin. As such, the natural flexing and movements of joints and muscles causes the skin to crack in several areas forming countless small wounds. This affliction causes a –1 Constitution penalty.

**Stage III:** As if to match the growth of the PC’s fingers, his nails elongate nearly two inches, ending in needle-sharp points. This change allows the PC to perform a raking attack capable of inflicting 1d4 points of damage per hand. By this point the PC begins to take on the mentality of the creature he is becoming; thus it is more difficult to resist the orders of his master. If the character wants to defy an order there is a 30% chance that he will be unable to and must fulfill the command to its fullest extent.

**Stage IV:** The PC’s body continues to change; skin stretches, eyes darken and sink, bones subtly warp, and features begin to twist. Overall these changes lower the PC’s Charisma by another 2 points. The PC’s bodily fluids become toxic. Those who come into contact with his blood, spittle, etc, must save vs. poison or suffer an immediate 1d4 points of damage.

**Stage V:** The PC’s teeth sharpen until his mouth is filled with jagged points. This alteration allows the PC to make a bite attack for 1d4 points of damage. Though most would never consider biting into their foes, this change accentuates the PC’s brutish nature over his intellect, dropping his Intelligence by 2 points.

**Stage VI:** The PC’s skin continues to harden, dropping AC by another point. This change brings on even greater stiffness than before, causing constant

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

sores and gashes to cover the body, lowering Constitution by 2 points due to constant pain and infection.

**Stage VII:** The feral nature exposed by the change allows the PC to make a brutal attack, 2 claw slashes and a bite in a round. However, due to the savagery the PC now exhibits, he is unable to retreat from combat for any reason until he or his opponent is slain.

**Stage VIII:** The PC's teeth continue to elongate into vicious, blackened fangs, allowing his bite attack to inflict 1d8 points of damage. This obvious growth, as well as the fearsome contenance the PC now possesses, drops his Charisma by another two points.

**Stage IX:** The toxic nature of the PC's bodily fluids increases to a point that anyone bitten by the character must make a successful saving throw vs. poison or take an additional 1d8 damage for each of the next 1d6 rounds. The PC now becomes even more likely to follow the will of his master. Thus he now has a 60% chance to be unable to defy his master's wishes.

**Stage X:** At this point there is a 20% chance that the PC will turn on his master, hunting him with singleminded ferocity. However, it is more likely (80%) the PC will stay subservient to that master. There is a 1% cumulative chance that per round, per battle, the character will turn on his master as above.

## Semi-finalist

### Track of the Dream Spawn

By Wes Schneider

Dendread@home.com

**Application:** This terror track is the result of a single mortal attracting not just the attentions of the dark powers, but also those of the enigmatic Nightmare Court. Any character who has encountered one or more members of the Nightmare Court and has proved interesting or amusing to them could be a valid victim for this gradual change into a dweller of nightmares. At the completion of this track the character will have transformed completely into a lesser dream spawn of the shadow morph variety.

**Stage I:** The PC's hands grow distinct claws and elongate noticeably. Though this does give the PC the ability to make a claw attack for 1d4 points of damage, this highly visible deformity lowers his Charisma by 1 point.

**Stage II:** The PC's gradual shift into a dream creature attracts several other morphs. Though the creatures will not appear to him or aid him in any way, their constant whispering grants the PC a 30% chance to understand their language. These continuous voices in the PC's mind cause a constant distraction; as such

all rolls suffer a -1 penalty, and the PC suffers a -50% penalty to all Detect Noise rolls.

**Stage III:** The needs of shadow morphs begin to complement the PC's natural diet. As such, any time another character fails a fear or horror check the PC regains one lost hit point. A more immediate result of this failed check is a swift change in skin color to a light gray, reducing Charisma by another 1 point.

**Stage IV:** The PC gains suction cup-like growths on his palms, revolting viewers and lowering his Charisma another 2 points. However, these growths allow the PC to make an intellect drain attack with a successful attack roll. Victims of this attack sustain no damage but temporarily lose 1d4+1 points of Intelligence. This lost Intelligence is transferred to the PC in the form of thoughts, memories, fears, etc.

**Stage V:** The constant whispering of hidden dream creatures finally bears fruit, allowing the PC to understand, but not speak, their dreamlike language. The downside is that the voices, which were once simply gray noise in the back of his mind, become a constant, questioning chorus. This causes all rolls to suffer a -2 penalty. The character automatically fails all Detect Noise rolls, unable to hear above the din.

**Stage VI:** The PC begins to phase in and out of reality, but is able to control this to a limited degree. As such, the PC may assume *wraithform* up to five times a day for up to a half an hour each use before he is naturally thrust back into corporeal form. However, if the PC does not assume *wraithform* for the full two-and-a-half hours each day, during the next day he will phase in and out at random times to make up for the time lost the day before. The current day's requirements are not met by time spent in *wraithform* catching up for the previous day.

**Stage VII:** The PC gains the ability to polymorph into any form for up to a three turns, five times per day. As per the *wraithform* ability the PC must spend his maximum time in another form or the ability activates randomly the next day. This constant changing from shape to shape causes the PC to gradually lose his concept of an original form; as such his ability to deal with others decreases, lowering his Charisma another 2 points.

**Stage VIII:** The PC gains a morph's immunity to attacks made with weapons of less than +2 enchantment. However, morphs rely on their constant positions in the realms of dreams to maintain this defense, as such the character partially fazes into the realm of dreams. From this point on the character acts as though under the effects of a permanent *wraithform* spell and is unable to make any physical attacks, except his intellect drain, on all but ethereal and dream creatures.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

**Stage IX:** This step completes the PC's physical transformation into a shadow morph. He now gains the ability to make a horror attack, solidifying himself into his true form and bellowing out a dreadful screech that causes all who see him to experience a fear check.

**Stage X:** The character gains full mastery of Dream Language and phases completely into the realm of dreams, becoming a servant of one or more members of the Nightmare Court.

## Finalist

### Track of the Effercap

By Kevin Rogers

[gjr@cs.monash.edu.au](mailto:gjr@cs.monash.edu.au)

**Application:** This track would be appropriate for any character who wilfully abandons or condemns others to wilderness hazards such as quicksand, predators, exposure or starvation. Bandits, assassins, fallen rangers and characters who use poison would also be potential candidates for this track.

**Stage I:** The PC can now move silently and hide in dense wilderness surroundings with a 50% chance of success. He becomes uneasy when in exposed in outdoor locations such as plains or the open road. All proficiency checks and saving throws suffer a -1 penalty in such surroundings.

**Stage II:** The PC gains 1 point of Dexterity, but loses 1 point of Intelligence as instinct begins to replace reason.

**Stage III:** The PC's saliva becomes mildly poisonous, causing 1d6 points of damage and inflicting a -1 penalty to hit unless the target saves vs poison. The PC must consume at least two pounds of raw meat each week or lose 1d3 hit points per day until he does.

**Stage IV:** The PC gains the ability to communicate with normal and giant spiders, and such creatures react to him one category better than they otherwise would. His voice becomes a disturbing chitter, causing him to suffer a loss of 1 point of Charisma.

**Stage V:** The PC develops a thick, leathery hide tufted with wiry black hair. His natural Armor Class becomes 8, but he now constantly smells of decaying organic matter, resulting in a -1 reaction penalty and betraying his presence unless he is in a wilderness environment.

**Stage VI:** The PC gains a bite attack that causes 1d8 points of damage, and may inject his poison. His features become brutish and disfigured, reducing his Charisma by another 2 points.

**Stage VII:** The PC can now go without food and water for up to three weeks if he first consumes his own body weight in raw flesh. During the first week the

character's Dexterity and Charisma each suffer a -3 penalty and his movement rate is reduced by 25%. Whenever sufficient raw meat is available, the PC must succeed in a Wisdom check or gorge himself as above.

**Stage VIII:** The PC's back hunches and his arms become elongated and spidery. He gains 2 points of Dexterity, and two claw attacks causing 1d3 points of damage each with a reach of six feet, but suffers a -1 Strength penalty on any action using his arms, and a -2 penalty to Charisma due to his grotesquely misshapen body. Normal armor and clothing will no longer fit him.

**Stage IX:** The PC can now use glands on his abdomen to secrete silk similar to that used by spiders. He gains the equivalent of the set snares proficiency, but any attempt to communicate verbally requires an Intelligence check if the situation is even slightly stressful. Combat, interrogation, debates and haggling are all considered stressful situations.

**Stage X:** The PC's poison now causes death in 1d4 turns unless the victim's save vs. poison succeeds. The PC can now only digest raw, still-warm meat, and no longer receives a Wisdom check to resist gorging himself if the opportunity presents itself.

## Semi-finalist

### Track of the Gargoyle

By Derek Longjurny

[Longjurny1@aol.com](mailto:Longjurny1@aol.com)

**Application:** The track of the gargoyle could be applicable to any character who exhibits a lack of compassion for those in need, especially those who are supposed to be under their care. This is especially fitting to PCs who fail in their duties as guardians of their faith (priests) or protectors of the populace (city guard) through neglect, greed, or by turning a blind eye to those who seek their help. Alternatively, a PC who exhibits a bestial nature, causing undue carnage, taking advantage of helpless people and practicing torture may be destined for this terror track.

**Stage I:** The PC develops excellent night vision, able to see with the smallest light source, but finds that bright light imposes a -1 penalty to attack rolls.

**Stage II:** PC no longer has any need to eat or drink, and any attempt to do so causes violent illness.

**Stage III:** The PC's Strength increases by 1 point. Wisdom, however, decreases by 1 point.

**Stage IV:** The PC grows claws granting the ability to inflict 1d4 points of damage in unarmed melee. These nonretractable claws reduce Dexterity by 2 points when attempting fine work, and disrupt spells with a somatic component.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

**Stage V:** The PC's skin becomes thick and stony, giving a base Armor Class of 5, while reducing Charisma by 2 points.

**Stage VI:** The PC's face becomes distorted and grotesque, causing Charisma to drop to half of its current value, but granting the ability to bite for 1d6 points of damage.

**Stage VII:** From now on, +1 or better magical weapons are required to hit the PC. Every check made to determine the reaction of an NPC automatically shifts one step towards hostile.

**Stage VIII:** The PC grows a set of horns; he can attack with these horns to inflict 2d4 points of damage. The sight of the PC is cause for a horror check.

**Stage IX:** The PC becomes a hulking, feral beast. All three physical ability scores increase by 2 points each, but all mental ability scores drop by 2 points each.

**Stage X:** The PC sprouts great stony wings, which enable him to fly at a rate of 15 with maneuverability class C. His bestial nature is complete and Wisdom and Intelligence scores each drop by 2 points. Ability scores cannot be reduced below 5.

## Semi-finalist

### Track of the Ghoul

By **Freidrich Gothe**

[fgothe@hotmail.com](mailto:fgothe@hotmail.com)

**Application:** Grave robbers, cannibals, and necromancers are all suitable candidates for this terror track. Also, characters who exhibit an interest in the macabre or delight in torture and mutilation may find themselves slipping down the dark twists of this particular road through the Mists.

**Stage I:** The PC can smell any rotting corpse, undead, carrion, or diseased person within 60 feet, but normally pleasant smells become repulsive. In areas where such smells are concentrated, such as in a flower garden or at a gathering of perfumed ladies and gentlemen, the PC must save vs. spell or become nauseated until he leaves the area. Success leaves him uncomfortable and with a -2 to all rolls until he leaves.

**Stage II:** The PC gains immunity to all toxins, but his skin takes on a cold, clammy feel as the body's living functions slow. Others who touch the PC must make an immediate reaction roll with a -4 penalty.

**Stage III:** The PC gains infravision to a range of 60 feet, but he becomes sensitive to bright light, suffering a -2 penalty to all rolls in bright areas.

**Stage IV:** The PC gains immunity to all mind-affecting spells, but he must eat carrion and refuse. If the PC ever sees a corpse he must save vs. spell or eat his fill. Onlookers may be subject to horror checks.

**Stage V:** The PC gains a necromantic touch. When used, the victim must save vs. wand or lose 1 point of Dexterity each round. The victim is paralyzed when Dexterity reaches 0. Lost points return at a rate of 1 per hour. The PC's skin becomes chilled and numb. Normal life functions cease, but the dark energies of undeath preserve his body and allow the character to heal normally. The DM should now keep track of the character's hit points and allow the player to think he has become immune to normal damage.

**Stage VI:** The PC gains the ability to bite for 1d6 points of damage, and the victim must save vs. poison or lose 1 Dexterity point each round, as above. Lost points return at a rate of 1 per hour. The PC's face develops a macabre smile stretching from ear to ear, invoking a horror check for those who see it.

**Stage VII:** The PC gains the paralyzing touch of a ghoul, though it only affects humans. Holy items now horrify the character. He is susceptible to turning, holy water, and the full range of undead weaknesses.

**Stage VIII:** The PC's ghoul touch now has the capability to affect demihumans and causes *contagion* in humans (as the 4th-level wizard spell). Over the course of a few weeks, the PC's muscles and connective tissue atrophy and decay, imposing a -4 penalty to Strength and Dexterity. Outwardly, however, the character's flesh does not rot.

**Stage IX:** The PC becomes immune to weapons of less than +1 enchantment. His brain, however, begins to rot, reducing Intelligence and Wisdom by half.

**Stage X:** The PC becomes a lord of the undead, and can create ghouls and control other undead types as a cleric of equal level.

## Semi-finalist

### Track of the Grimlock

By **James Hardie**

[confiscator@hotmail.com](mailto:confiscator@hotmail.com)

**Application:** This track is appropriate for characters who are violent and barbaric, choosing combat over more peaceful options.

**Stage I:** The PC gains 1 point of Strength but becomes easily irritated, losing 1 point of Charisma.

**Stage II:** The PC gains 1 point of Constitution but becomes more barbaric, losing 1 point of Intelligence.

**Stage III:** The PC gains 1 point of Dexterity but becomes less caring and compassionate, losing 1 point of Wisdom.

**Stage IV:** The PC grows claws which inflict 1d6 points damage with a successful attack. He also becomes more aggressive, suffering another -1 penalty to Charisma.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

**Stage V:** The PC gains a +3 bonus to natural Armor Class, but his skin becomes gray and stony, imposing another –2 penalty to Charisma.

**Stage VI:** The PC gains a +3 bonus to THAC0, but he becomes increasingly irrational, losing another 2 points of Intelligence.

**Stage VII:** The PC gains an exceptional olfactory sense, and can track creatures by scent. He now suffers double the impact of scent-based attacks (such as *stinking cloud*) and saves against scent attacks with a –4 penalty.

**Stage VIII:** The PC becomes immune to surprise, but becomes blind, suffering only a –2 penalty to attack rolls due to his heightened scent.

**Stage IX:** The PC gains exceptional hearing; he can now “see” in total darkness like a bat, and suffers no penalty to attack rolls in combat. He now takes 1 extra point of damage per die from sound-based attacks and saves against such attacks at a –4 penalty. Loud noises “blind” him for 1d6 rounds.

**Stage X:** The PC gains 3 points of Strength, but is now easily enraged; he must save vs. spell in tense situations or fly into a destructive rage for 1d6 rounds.

## Finalist

### Track of the Heucuva

By Christopher Adams

[mhacdebhandia@yahoo.com](mailto:mhacdebhandia@yahoo.com)

**Application:** The track of the heucuva would be most apt for the corruption of those PC clerics whose lack of real faith causes them to be disillusioned and bitter, or for those who simply use their faith as a tool to be twisted to their own devious and selfish ends. It would be especially applicable for those priests who mask their true manipulations behind the facade of a kindly spiritual figure.

**Stage I:** The PC gains a +1 bonus to all saving throws against spells mind-affecting spells, but his holy symbol becomes tarnished, tattered, or otherwise worn, defying any attempts to repair the damage.

**Stage II:** The PC’s Strength increases by 1 point, or by 20 percentile points (to a maximum of 18/00), while any healing spells the character casts carry a penalty of –1 to each die (to a minimum of 1 hit point per die healed).

**Stage III:** The PC’s bonus to saving throws against mind-affecting spells increases to +2, while his Charisma suffers a –1 penalty when interacting with other priests of his own faith.

**Stage IV:** The flesh on the PC’s hands and arms becomes thin, pale and translucent, warping his fingers into claws that can inflict 1d4 points of damage. The

flesh on the PC’s face and neck also grows transparent, reducing his Charisma by 1 point.

**Stage V:** The PC becomes completely immune to all mind-affecting spells, but the holy symbols of his faith are now capable of repelling the character if he fails a save vs. paralyzation.

**Stage VI:** The PC can now be hit only by weapons of silver or +1 enchantment. Any clothes the PC wears will tatter and fray within a few hours, hanging loose like robes and darkening to brown, gray, or black.

**Stage VII:** Any natural attack the PC makes with his or her finger-claws can infect victims with a disease that drains 1 point of Strength and Constitution per day if they fail their save vs. poison. The PC loses all ability to heal, including that provided by the healing or herbalism proficiencies.

**Stage VIII:** The PC’s finger-claws now inflict 1d6 points of damage, but his hands and arms are now wholly skeletal, with only tattered scraps of flesh clinging to them. The PC’s arms must be concealed within gloves and voluminous sleeves if he wishes to avoid discovery.

**Stage IX:** The PC’s natural Armor Class falls to 3 as his bones become incredibly durable, but he loses all spellcasting and turning powers and the ability to speak.

**Stage X:** The PC can now be turned as a wight. The PC gains the ability to *polymorph self* up to three times per day, assuming the form of either his original appearance, that of someone he has recently encountered, or a wholly skeletal appearance. Anyone using infravision to view the PC will always see the skeletal form, even when the PC is polymorphed.

## Semi-finalist

### Track of the Lich

By Jason Karl Wolfe Leisemann

[jkwleisemann@yahoo.com](mailto:jkwleisemann@yahoo.com)

**Application:** The track of the lich is applicable mainly to characters who are obsessed with gaining magical power, ideally mages who focus more on their magic than their comrades. Alternatively, spellcasters who seek immortality may find themselves becoming liches, even if they normally couldn’t qualify.

**Stage I:** The PC gains ability to cast one 1st-level wizard spell per day (one extra 1st-level spell slot for mages). His skin begins to dry and wither, reducing Charisma by 1 point.

**Stage II:** The PC can see even in magical darkness, but his eyes begin to glow red, reducing Charisma by another point.

**Stage III:** The PC develops resistance to cold (–1 point of damage per die, minimum 1 point per die), but

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

his skin looks mummified, imposing another –2 penalty to Charisma.

**Stage IV:** The PC's Intelligence rises to 18. The PC develops headaches that make him excessively hot-headed, reducing Wisdom 1 point.

**Stage V:** The PC causes *fear*, as per the standard lich ability. The PC cannot control this fear aura, which affects friend and foe alike.

**Stage VI:** The PC's touch becomes frigid, causing 1d10 points of damage on contact. Clerics can now turn the PC as an undead creature of the same number of Hit Dice as the PC has levels.

**Stage VII:** The PC becomes immortal. His most precious treasure becomes his phylactery. Anyone in possession of the phylactery can control the PC.

**Stage VIII:** The PC casts necromantic spells as if he were specialized in their use. Unlike normal lichs, the PC loses the ability to cast illusions.

**Stage IX:** The PC can only be hit by weapons of at least +1 enchantment or creatures of at least 6 Hit Dice. Destruction of the PC's phylactery will utterly destroy the PC, with no resurrection possible.

**Stage X:** The PC gains a *magic jar* ability, and his soul retreats to his phylactery upon "death." The PC also gains vulnerability to weapons forged of cold iron.

## Finalist

### Track of the Mist Horror

By Wes Schneider

Dendread@home.com

**Application:** Perhaps the most merciful terror track, the dark powers give those who descend down this path exactly what they want. This track is suitable for any character with an interest in discovering the mysteries of Ravenloft's Mists, the dark powers, and/or the demiplane itself. Such arcanists and other investigators of the occult are indoctrinated into perhaps the most secret society in all of Ravenloft, becoming minions of the Mists themselves.

**Stage I:** The PC's hair turns stark white and his skin grows pale, lessening his Charisma by 1 point. The PC can detect the alignment of anyone who comes within a five-foot radius (within the usual restrictions applicable to Ravenloft).

**Stage II:** The very bonds of the PC's being begin to break apart, making him amazingly light but causing his Constitution to drop by two points. However, his new physical instability allows him to *feather fall* from any height if he is unencumbered.

**Stage III:** The magic disrupting mental wave of a mist horror begins to emanate from the PC in a limited sense. Spells cast within a ten-foot radius of the PC

have a 20% chance of failing; this affects both beneficial and harmful spells.

**Stage IV:** The PC gains the ability to assume gaseous form for one turn, three times a day, due the continuing breakdown of his corporeal body. As a result, the PC loses another two points of Constitution.

**Stage V:** All color completely flees from the PC's body, leaving him a blank, pale white. This drops his Charisma by a further 3 points. However, he gains the ability to attack while in gaseous form by solidifying a single tendril of mist that inflicts 1d6 points of damage.

**Stage VI:** Being farther than a mile from the Mists causes the PC great mental pain, forcing him to suffer a –3 penalty to all rolls. The PC can now gain a general impression of what most terrifies anyone within a twenty-foot radius.

**Stage VII:** The PC may now turn invisible by taking gaseous form and dispersing himself to a point so thin as to be completely undetectable. The PC finds that he is unable to heal from wounds or regain hit points unless surrounded by mist (of any sort).

**Stage VIII:** The PC's magical disruption fully matures so that all spells cast within twenty feet have a 50% of failure.

**Stage IX:** The PC's physical body ceases to be his primary form, and as such he must concentrate to maintain his corporeal form and may do so for only one turn at a time, three times a day. The PC is now immune to all weapons of less than +2 enchantment.

**Stage X:** The PC finds that he is completely unable to leave the Mists in any way and cannot take corporeal form. He may now attack twice a round, doing 2d6 points of damage, and can communicate telepathically, sending emotional suggestions.

## Finalist

### Track of the Reaver

By Wes Schneider

Dendread@home.com

**Application:** The depths of Ravenloft hold enough horrors without seafaring peoples adding to them with attempts at piracy and raiding. As such this terror track is designed for any character of a seafaring population or participating in a nautical campaign. As the reaver is a brutal killer, warriors are probably best suited to this track.

**Stage I:** The PC gains increased muscle mass, adding 1 point to his Strength. His skin, however, develops an oily aspect and glistens as if constantly wet, lowering his Charisma by 1 point.

**Stage II:** Water becomes a second home to the PC, and as such he can now move at the same rate in the



# BOOK OF SECRETS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

water as he does on land. However, the PC now develops a taste for raw flesh.

**Stage III:** The PC's Strength rises by 2 more points. Unfortunately, primal instincts begin to control the PC's actions, lowering his Intelligence by 2 points.

**Stage IV:** The PC's hands and feet develop thick webbing, allowing him to swim at a movement rate of 18, but halving his movement rate on land.

**Stage V:** The PC's skin develops thousands of small scales that effectively lower his natural AC to 4. However, if the scales are not kept moist they chafe the PC, causing a -2 penalty to all rolls if he spends more than two hours out of water.

**Stage VI:** The PC's face flattens and widens, especially around the mouth, and he grows a second row of teeth, lowering his Charisma by another 2 points. This change gives him the ability to attack with a vicious bite, inflicting 2d4 points of damage.

**Stage VII:** The PC's nails harden and elongate allowing him to make two slashing attacks per round that do 1d6 damage. However, the length of the nails make the use of any other weapon very difficult, inflicting a -4 penalty on all attack rolls.

**Stage VIII:** The PC's eyes widen to huge black spheres, gills emerge, and his scales grow, taking on a highly noticeable green-black color, dropping his Charisma by 3 points. However, he is now perfectly suited to operate underwater without need for light or air.

**Stage IX:** The PC's scales become razor sharp so that any physical contact the PC has with another character inflicts 1d3 points of damage to the victim. This damage can be more severe if the PC grapples with or hugs his victim.

**Stage X:** Higher thought and memory fades away so that the PC has, at highest, 7 points of Intelligence. Also, the character's claws further elongate and harden, raising the damage done by his two attacks to 2d6. At this point a desire to seek out others with similar traits and abilities arises within the PC, and he will most likely seek to find a colony of reavers.

## Semi-finalist

### Track of the Red Widow

By Wes Schneider

Dendread@home.com

**Application:** For at least half of the world's population one of the fastest and surest forms of persuasion is through the means of seduction. This terror track suits those characters that use their charms and physical assets to achieve their goals, often at the expense of

those they feign affection for. Only female characters can become Red Widows.

**Stage I:** The PC's hair grows longer and turns a shining red, offering +1 to her Charisma, but a small crimson spider tattoo forms somewhere on her body.

**Stage II:** The PC's muscles grow taut and she gains a flawless complexion, granting her +2 to Charisma, but she becomes nocturnal, suffering a -2 modifier to all rolls during the day.

**Stage III:** The PC can summon a swarm of spiders at will, as per the spell *summon swarm*, cast at her current level. Every week, however, she must ingest 3 hit points' worth of fresh blood.

**Stage IV:** The PC gains a +2 bonus to saves vs. paralyzation and can no longer be restrained by webs of any kind. Many small spiders begin to follow the PC, becoming constant nuisances.

**Stage V:** The PC can now *spider climb* on any surface, but is compelled to brutally kill anyone she takes to her bed.

**Stage VI:** The PC gains the ability to communicate with all arachnids but must now ingest 14 hit points' worth of blood a week to survive.

**Stage VII:** The PC can transform into a giant red spider, with only the abilities described above. She also develops the capacity and desire to lay eggs in her deceased lovers while in spider form.

**Stage VIII:** The PC develops a poisonous bite in spider form, and must now ingest 21 hit points' worth of humanoid blood each week to survive.

**Stage IX:** The PC's spider form can now spin a silken *web* (as per the spell) but must fully drain a humanoid of all body fluids once a week in order to survive.

**Stage X:** The PC develops a lair in an urban area and begins seducing men nightly for both food and procreation.

## Semi-finalist

### Track of the Sea Spawn Master

By Raul Perez

theshade\_@exite.com

**Application:** This terror track could be applicable to any character who is actively involved with the sea (a fisherman or a sailor), or someone who lives near it. Those who manipulate others to do what they desire, using them as pawns, are the most common type of people to suffer this transformation.

**Stage I:** The PC's fingers and toes develop thin membranes, granting the swimming proficiency, but base movement rate drops to 9 due to the character's awkwardness on dry land.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

**Stage II:** The PC's eyes grow thin membranes, which allow normal sight underwater, but his Charisma drops by 1 point.

**Stage III:** The PC grows claws, which can inflict 1d6 points of damage, but his Dexterity and Charisma scores drop by 1 point each. The claws are so sharp they tear through gloves.

**Stage IV:** The PC can communicate via telepathy to those within 30 feet, but his throat can no longer produce sounds. This mutation is slightly visible, and it lowers the character's Charisma by 1 point.

**Stage V:** The PC's mouth grows a double set of fangs, which can inflict 1d10 damage in a bite attack. In addition, his victim must make a save vs poison or be infected with a disease which makes natural healing impossible. This change is clearly visible, so the PC's Charisma drops another 2 points.

**Stage VI:** The PC's body produces a loathsome mucous which acts as *oil of slipperiness*. This prevents him from being held or tied, but he must succeed at a Dexterity check each time he handles an item or drop it.

**Stage VII:** The PC develops gills that allow underwater breathing, but his Charisma drops by another 4 points (but cannot drop below 3).

**Stage VIII:** The PC's body is covered in scales, which lower his base AC to 5, but his Dexterity and Charisma scores drop by another 2 points each (but cannot drop below 3).

**Stage IX:** The PC can summon aquatic monsters twice per day, but he must now eat raw flesh from a sentient being at least once a week or suffer 1d6 points of damage per day gone without eating.

**Stage X:** The PC gains the ability to create slugs (sea spawn, 1d6 per night), but he will die if he leaves the sea for more than 1d6+10 turns at a time.

## Semi-finalist

### Track of the Shadow

By Ken Hart

[khart60@altavista.com](mailto:khart60@altavista.com)

**Application:** The track of the shadow could apply to a wizard (especially a shadow mage or necromancer) who likes to hatch dark schemes. It could also apply to a more combat-oriented mage who prefers violent battle to scholarly research.

**Stage I:** The PC gains infravision to 60 feet (doubled if he already possesses infravision). He shuns intense light or sunlight, finding it unpleasant.

**Stage II:** The PC gains a 90% to Move Silently as per the thief ability. His facial features take on a grayish skin tone, causing a -2 Charisma penalty.

**Stage III:** The PC's outline begins to shift and waver during combat, as per the *blur* spell. The PC becomes more prone to senseless violence and anger, imposing a -2 Wisdom penalty.

**Stage IV:** The PC becomes completely resistant to cold-based attacks. However, his own shadow permanently twists into that of a hulking beast.

**Stage V:** The PC gains immunity to sleep, charm, and hold spells. Daylight and intense light are now painful, imposing a -2 penalty to all saving throws when exposed.

**Stage VI:** The PC becomes invisible when in shadow. His face is now constantly draped in shadow; his features become visible only under intense light.

**Stage VII:** The PC can assume Shadowform (as per the psionic ability) once per day for one turn. The forces at work upon him also drive him insane: He becomes schizophrenic, and his alignment shifts to Chaotic Evil under stress. (See *Domains of Dread*.)

**Stage VIII:** The PC can drain one point of Strength with a successful touch attack. Further, he must drain at least two points of Strength from living creatures each day in order to survive.

**Stage IX:** The PC can only be hit by weapons of +1 or better enchantment, and he can be turned as an undead creature with Hit Dice equal to his level.

**Stage X:** The PC's mortal form fades into undead shadow. His touch can inflict 1d4+1 points of damage as well as drain Strength, and he is filled with a hatred of all living creatures.

## Semi-finalist

### Track of the Werejackal

By Ken Hart

[khart60@altavista.com](mailto:khart60@altavista.com)

**Application:** The track of the werejackal is applicable to any character (especially one from desert regions such as the Amber Wastes) who shows a tendency toward cowardice and cruelty. The track would also be appropriate for someone who envies the adoration shown toward stronger, more popular people.

**Stage I:** The PC can extend his fingernails into sharp, black claws at will. The PC can attack twice per round with his claws, inflicting 1-3 points of damage each. The PC also becomes more agile (+1 Dexterity). However, he now snarls like an animal when insulted or provoked, and his eyes are consistently bloodshot (-1 Charisma).

**Stage II:** The PC can extend his canine teeth into fangs at will, inflicting 1d4 points of damage with a successful attack, and his manner becomes more calculating and cautious, granting +1 to Intelligence. He

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

always has a sinister leer on his face, and thick, brown hairs grow on his ears, imposing another –1 penalty to Charisma.

**Stage III:** The PC becomes far cleverer, his Wisdom increasing to 18, yet his personality turns cruel. His fingernails become permanently black and sharp, even when not extended into claws.

**Stage IV:** The PC can cast *sticks to snakes* and *snake charm* once per day as an innate ability, as per a 6th-level cleric. The PC's mouth and jaw elongate slightly, creating a snout-like appearance, and causing him to lose another 2 points of Charisma.

**Stage V:** The PC can cast *cause disease* once per day as an innate ability, as per a 6th-level cleric. He must eat decaying meat at least once per day.

**Stage VI:** The PC can control undead as though he were a 6th-level cleric. (If the character is already a priest with this ability, he can command as though one level higher.) He must also cause someone extreme pain each day; failure to do so makes the character timid and fearful (–2 penalty on all saves, proficiencies, and fear checks for 24 hours).

**Stage VII:** The PC can only be hit by magical weapons of +1 or better enchantment, although he is still vulnerable to nonmagical bronze weapons.

**Stage VIII:** The PC can cast clerical spells as a cleric of half his level. (If the character is already a cleric, he receives a specialist mage's bonus to all spells of the Necromancy sphere.) He is also compelled to worship the god Anubis, and he is restricted from casting spells of the Sun sphere.

**Stage IX:** The PC can now shapechange at will into his hybrid werejackal form (with resulting changes to Armor Class, attack modes, etc.), but he becomes more fearful (–2 penalty to all fear checks).

**Stage X:** The PC's human form loses the physical punishments of the earlier stages (although the blood-shot eyes and the reductions to Charisma remain), and he can create followers by infecting others with his lycanthropy. Indeed, the character now feels compelled to find followers to spread the cult of Anubis. In combat, a morale check is required each round if the character faces a superior force.

## Semi-finalist

### Track of the Wererat

By Mark Branson

stormcrow@ou.edu

**Application:** This track is applicable to any character who is particularly greedy or secretive. Thieves often follow this track.

**Stage I:** The PC gains the ability to Pick Locks as a 1st-level thief (add any appropriate racial and Dexterity modifiers), but his eyes become beady and his nose narrows, reducing Charisma by 1 point.

**Stage II:** The PC gains 18/51 Strength, but becomes violently allergic to the smell of fresh flowers; rose petals in any form become poisonous to him.

**Stage III:** The PC gains the ability to command rats (any number, simple commands only), but he can no longer gain any sustenance from anything other than raw meat.

**Stage IV:** The PC's Dexterity becomes 19, and silver weapons now inflict double damage against him.

**Stage V:** The PC gains the ability to summon rats; a constant retinue of 1d6 mice or rats now follows the character, even when unwanted. These vermin impose a –6 reaction adjustment when dealing with most people.

**Stage VI:** The PC gains the ability to Pick Pockets and Climb Walls as a 1st level thief (again, Dexterity and racial modifiers apply), but becomes fascinated by any item of great value. The PC must make a saving throw vs. spell or be captivated by the item for 1d6 rounds, often trying to buy or steal it.

**Stage VII:** The PC gains the ability to transform into a giant rat at will, healing 10–60% of current damage, but feels an uncontrollable urge to construct a hidden lair within the sewers of a major city.

**Stage VIII:** The PC can only be hit by weapons of silver or +1 or better enchantment, but is now stricken with severe agoraphobia, leading him to avoid any large open spaces. The PC will still frequent these areas if they are filled with crowds of people, though uncomfortably at best.

**Stage IX:** The PC gains the ability to transform into a half-rat, half-human hybrid at will, healing 10–60% of current damage, but now transforms into this form when exposed to a certain trigger (i.e. the full moon or the presence of a loved one). When transformed by the trigger, the creature immediately enters bloodlust (a berserk rage imposing +2 to attacks, +2 to damage, and –2 to AC).

**Stage X:** The PC gains the ability to infect his victims with lycanthropy, with a 2% chance per hit point of damage done. This includes damage done by the PC weapon attacks. A strong smell of sewage now follows the PC everywhere, dropping Charisma another 3 points, and causing nausea in those that fail a saving throw vs. spell.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

## Semi-finalist

### Track of the Wraith

By Wes Schneider

Dendread@home.com

**Application:** This track is suited for the power-hungry character: he who holds his own ambitions over the well being of others. As the character's quest for power is manifested in this change, he becomes a creature that feeds off the very lives of others. Any purely sadistic, immoral, or downright evil character of strong personality could also be suited to this track.

**Stage I:** The PC gains the ability to see in the complete darkness, but his eyes take on a reddish tint, glowing in the dark, lowering his Charisma by 1 point.

**Stage II:** The PC's skin turns a flat coal black, lowering Charisma by 2 points, but giving him a +20% bonus to attempts to Hide in Shadows.

**Stage III:** The PC's touch is deathly cold and inflicts 1d6 damage with a successful attack. Animals refuse to come near the PC.

**Stage IV:** The PC becomes immune to all poisons and paralyzing attacks but is also now unable to benefit from clerical healing.

**Stage V:** The PC now regenerates lost hit points at a rate of one per eight hours, but the character develops an intense sensitivity to sunlight, suffering a -2 penalty to all rolls made while exposed.

**Stage VI:** The PC gains all undead immunities to spells, but holy water and symbols now cause 2d4 points of damage.

**Stage VII:** The PC gains the ability to take on *wraithform* three times a day, but is now affected by spells that only affect the undead.

**Stage VIII:** The PC becomes permanently incorporeal and is vulnerable only to silver or +1 or better magical weapons. The spell *raise dead* can kill him.

**Stage IX:** The PC now drains one XP level with his touch and can be turned as a wraith.

**Stage X:** The PC becomes an undead sprit with an intense hatred for all life. Victims killed by the PC's energy drain rise up as new wraiths loyal to the PC.

## Semi-finalist

### Track of the Zombie Lord

By Grant D. Penrod

GDPENROD@AOL.COM

**Application:** The track of the zombie lord could apply to a PC who pursues pleasure and riches not only at the expense of others but also without regard to himself. Eventually he gains the power to take all he wants but loses the ability to enjoy it. Once he treated himself

and those around him like pieces of meat—and that's exactly what they'll become.

**Stage I:** The PC gains the ability to see in darkness, but his eyes appear clouded, like the eyes of a corpse.

**Stage II:** The PC gains a telepathic link with any undead within a 20-foot radius, and his features become drawn and gaunt, imposing a -1 Charisma penalty.

**Stage III:** The PC is able to control zombies within a 20-foot radius, but his skin becomes gray and lifeless, imposing an additional -2 Charisma penalty.

**Stage IV:** The PC can create zombies from humanoid corpses (once per day) but is no longer able to benefit from healing magic or potions.

**Stage V:** The PC can *speak with dead* (as the spell) by touch three times per day, but emits a strong odor of rot and decay. Unless heavily perfumed, the stench causes retching and nausea.

**Stage VI:** The PC can use the senses of zombies under his control within a one-mile radius, but is surrounded by swarms of flies and carrion insects, making it now totally impossible to pass unnoticed among the living.

**Stage VII:** The PC gains incredible strength and resilience (unarmed melee attacks do 2d4 damage and natural AC is 6) but he can now be turned as a vampire.

**Stage VIII:** The PC is now immune to sleep, charm and hold spells but is burned by holy water or contact with a holy symbol.

**Stage IX:** The PC's odor is now so strong as to require anyone within a 90-foot radius to make a save vs. poison. Those who fail roll 1d6 to determine the effect: 1: *weakness* (as spell), 2: *cause disease* (as spell), 3: -1 to Constitution, 4: *contagion* (as spell), 5: unable to act for 1d4 rounds due to nausea, 6: victim dies and animates as a zombie

By this point, the PC's flesh is so rotten that his Charisma drops to 0.

**Stage X:** The PC gains his most terrible power, the ability to cast *animate dead* once per day on a living victim of fewer hit dice than the PC (save vs death magic to negate). In addition, he must now consume rotting flesh to survive.



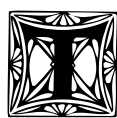
# FEAR AND LOATHING IN THIRD EDITION

## NEW RULES FOR FEAR, HORROR, AND MADNESS

by John W. Mangrum

iggy@kargafane.com

### OVERVIEW



he following system is an update for the rules for fear, horror, and madness checks found in Chapter Six of *Domains of Dread*, written by William W. Connors and Steve

Miller, and utilizes rules found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* and the *Monster Manual*. Terms sufficiently detailed in those sources have not been repeated here.

In DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, Fear, Horror, and Madness checks are considered Will saves in all respects. In fact, the terms “Fear check,” “Horror check,” and “Madness check” are just shorthand to differentiate between the different causes and effects of these three Will saves. Anything that modifies a Will save likewise modifies Fear, Horror, and Madness checks.

Fear, Horror, and Madness checks all use the same basic mechanic. When the situation calls for a character make any of the three types of check, make a Will save against a specified DC. Specific DCs depend on the situation and type of check being made, and are provided in the following sections.

If the character succeeds at the Will save, then there is no effect (the character is not frightened, horrified, etc.), and she is immune to that specific source of fear, horror, or madness (depending on the successful check) for one day.

If the character fails the Will save, then the result is determined by how much she failed the saving throw. Subtract the number rolled (including modifiers) from the DC; this result determines whether the character suffers a minor, moderate, or major effect.

### Failure Margin

1–5 points  
6–10 points  
11–15 points  
16+ points

### Effect

Minor  
Moderate  
Major  
Major, plus additional effect  
(see below for specifics).

When determining the results of failed Horror and Madness checks, the player will also need to roll 1d4 to select a specific effect.

Characters cannot take 10 or take 20 on Fear, Horror, or Madness checks. They can take 10 on any attempts to recover from failed checks, however.

Creatures without Intelligence scores are immune to fear, horror, and madness.

Lastly, remember that Fear, Horror, and Madness checks are always optional. If players roleplay the terror of their PCs without prompting, no check is needed.

### FEAR CHECKS



character should make a Fear check when facing overwhelming odds and/or immediate, dire physical danger. Fear checks can also be used to test the morale of the PCs' foes. Some common fear triggers are:

- ❖ The party is badly outnumbered or outclassed by monsters. (The EL is 4+ higher than the party level.)
- ❖ The most powerful character in the party or half of the party's members are killed.
- ❖ A menacing monster is immune to the party's weapons and spells.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

- ❖ A menacing monster is at least two size categories larger than the biggest member of the party.
- ❖ A menacing monster has the Fearsome Presence special quality.
- ❖ The character is threatened by immediate death and seems to be helpless. (A character trapped underwater; a character who looks up to see a massive deadfall trap hurtling towards her.)

Remember that appearances are everything; if characters don't know that they're in dire peril, then they have no reason to make a Fear check. Likewise, if the players *think* their PCs are doomed, even if they aren't, a Fear check may be warranted.

## Determining DC

When a Fear check is prompted by a menacing creature, the DC is equal to  $8 + \frac{1}{2}$  the creature's HD + the creature's Charisma modifier. (If the threat has the Fearsome Presence special quality, add 10 instead of 8.) If the DM is in a rush or doesn't want to bother with the math, she can just set the DC to the menacing creature's CR + 8, which will net a roughly similar target.

When a Fear check is prompted by multiple creatures or a menacing situation, the DC is equal to the obstacle's EL + 8. This requires some judgment calls on the part of the DM; while a simple pit trap won't send anyone into a wild panic no matter how wide it is, having sliding walls slowly push the PCs into a pit filled with whirling, gnashing blades might.

Situational modifiers often factor into Fear checks. All situational modifiers apply to the die roll and stack with each other.

## Fear Check Modifiers

- +4 Character or party possesses a weapon, form of magic, or bit of lore which has been *proven* to be useful against the threat.
- +2 Character or party possesses a weapon, form of magic, or bit of lore which is *believed* to be useful against the threat.
- +4 A loved one is endangered.
- +2 A friend or ally is endangered.
- +1 An innocent is endangered.
- +1 Character defeated a similar threat in the past.
- +1 Character is in close quarters (no place to run).
- 2 Character has faced and been defeated by a similar threat within the past 24 hours.
- 1 Character has faced and been defeated by a similar threat in the past (but not within the past day).
- 1 Character is alone.
- 1 Character has lost more than half of his or her maximum hit points.

## Failure Results

If the character rolls below the DC by a margin of 1–5 points, she is Shaken. If the character misses the DC by 6–10 points, she is Frightened. If the character misses the DC by 11–15 points, she is Panicked. (See Chapter Three of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for further explanation of these terms.) If the character fails the Fear check by 16+ points, she is Panicked and must make an immediate Horror check at (failed Fear check DC – 5).

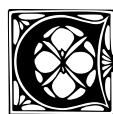
## Additional Failures

Fear effects are cumulative, as detailed in Chapter Three of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

## Recovering from Failure

Fear effects have a duration of 5d6 rounds, after which time the character returns to normal. If the character fails additional Fear checks while suffering Fear effects, add the durations together. Numerous spells and magical effects (such as *modify memory* or *remove fear*) can also remove all Fear effects.

## HORROR CHECKS



Choosing exactly when to make a Horror check can be a delicate affair; see *Domains of Dread* for guidelines. As a rule of thumb, make a Horror check when a character witnesses scenes of terrible cruelty or betrayal, or beholds events which simply *should not be*.

*Examples:* Seeing someone burned at the stake; watching a friend transform into a werebeast; realizing that you murdered someone while possessed by an evil spirit.

## Determining DC

Horror checks are typically prompted by unusual, unique situations rather than creatures, so unlike Fear checks there's no quick formula to determine the DC. Instead, the DM should use her best judgment to apply a DC to the scene. As a rule, the more gruesome, abnormal, and/or insane the scene, the higher the DC should be. A few examples follow:

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

## DC Horrific Scene

- 5 Signs of violence (a drying pool of blood, a splintered door, etc.).
- 8 Finding a decaying body.
- 10 Witnessing a scene of pain or suffering (a beggar ravaged by disease).
- 12 Finding a freshly slain corpse.
- 15 Witnessing a scene of terrible agony (torture, involuntary transformation).
- 20 Witnessing a scene of evil, cruelty, and madness (finding dismembered bodies that have been turned into marionettes).
- 25 Malign paradigm shift (see below).

A “malign paradigm shift” is a situation where a character discovers that an important element of their surroundings is not only drastically “wrong,” it has been so all along, unbeknownst to the character.

Examples include PCs realizing that they are the only people in a crowded inn who *aren't* evil shapeshifters, or discovering that the carriers of a plague epidemic are actually all the victims of rampant vampiric feeding—and are all still under the vampires’ control.

Situational modifiers often factor into Horror checks. All situational modifiers apply to the die roll and stack with each other.

## Horror Check Modifiers

- +4 A loved one is clearly endangered by the threat.
- +4 The victim of the threat is a despised foe.
- +2 A friend or ally is clearly endangered by the threat.
- +2 The victim of the threat is a foe.
- +1 An innocent is clearly endangered by the threat.
- 1 An innocent is participating in the scene (but not threatened).
- 2 A friend or ally is participating in the scene (but not threatened).
- 4 A loved one is participating in the scene (but not threatened).
- 4 Character is inadvertently responsible for the scene.
- 1 Character is of good alignment.
- +1 Character is of evil alignment.
- 1 Character is in close quarters (no place to run).
- +1 Character is in an open area (room to run away).
- +2 Character has been warned about what he or she’s about to see.
- +1 Character has overcome or endured a similar event in the past.
- 2 Character has failed a Horror check prompted by a similar scene within the past 24 hours.
- 1 Character has failed a Horror check prompted by a similar scene in the past (but not within the past 24 hours).

- 1 Character is alone.
- 1 Character has lost more than half of his or her maximum hit points.

The DM will have to make judgment calls when applying some of these modifiers. For example, if a villager suddenly grabs a PC’s betrothed and starts to transform into a werewolf, the DM should apply a +4 bonus to the PC’s roll (loved one threatened). On the other hand, if the PC’s *betrothed* suddenly starts to involuntarily transform into a werewolf, the DM may apply a –4 penalty (loved one involved) instead.

Characters typically do not need to make Horror checks when witnessing the aftereffects of their own intentional actions. As an example, if PCs defeat a band of goblins in battle, they do not need to make Horror checks when examining the slain bodies. The same is true for monsters with *their* victims.

## Failure Results

If a character fails a Horror check by a margin of 1–5 points, she suffers a minor effect. If a character misses the DC by 6–10 points, she suffers a moderate effect. If a character misses the DC by 11–15 points, she suffers a major effect. If a character fails a Horror check by 16+ points, she suffers a major effect and must make an immediate Madness check at (Horror check DC – 5).

Once the effect category is determined, the player should roll 1d4 to select a specific symptom of Horror.

*Player Tips:* You can speed up Horror checks by rolling the d20 and the d4 at the same time. (If you succeed at the Horror check, you can just ignore the d4 roll.) Alternatively, if you and the DM both agree that a specific Horror effect in the category you rolled is particularly suited to the scene, you can ignore the d4 roll and simply select that effect.

*DM Tip:* When a character fails a Horror check, you should make a note of the cause of the failed check, the failed check’s DC, and the date in your campaign’s calendar. (A sample note might read: “Rotting body, Oct. 31, DC 8.”) Horror checks have long-term results, and this information will come in handy later.

## Minor Horror Effects

1d4 Effect	1d4 Effect
1 Aversion	3 Frozen
2 Fearstruck	4 Nausea

## Moderate Horror Effects

1d4 Effect	1d4 Effect
1 Nightmares	3 Rage
2 Obsession	4 Revulsion

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

## Major Horror Effects

1d4 Effect	1d4 Effect
1 Fascination	3 Mental Shock
2 Haunted	4 System Shock

### Aversion

The character is Frightened. Although the Fear effect only has a duration of 5d6 rounds, for as long as the character suffers from this Horror effect she is automatically Shaken whenever she comes within 50 feet of the location where she failed this Horror check or any identical places.

### Fearstruck

The character is Panicked. This Fear effect has a duration of 5d6 rounds, but the character suffers no further effects.

### Frozen

The character is momentarily overwhelmed by the scene before her, and can take no action for 3 rounds. She also loses any Dexterity bonus to AC for the duration.

### Nausea

The sight causes the character to become physically ill. She suffers an effective decrease of 1d4+1 points of Constitution. For an equal number of rounds, she cannot cast spells and can only take partial actions as she struggles to retain her last meal. The character regains these lost Constitution points at the rate of 1 per hour.

### Nightmares

For the moment, the character is merely Shaken. This Fear effect has a duration of 5d6 rounds. However, the next time the character tries to go to sleep, the horrific events of this scene will begin to play themselves out again, causing the character to wake with a scream after only 5d6 minutes. The nightmares return every time she tries to sleep, preventing rest. For as long as this Horror effect lasts, the character cannot regain arcane spells, and each full day without rest incurs a cumulative -1 penalty to all attack rolls, saving throws, ability checks, and skill checks, to a -4 maximum penalty.

Lack of sleep also wears down the character's health. Without rest, she cannot regain hit points through natural healing.

The *sleep* spell can grant dreamless rest, allowing the character to regain spells and negate accumulated penalties. If the character does not receive a *sleep* spell every night, however, the nightmares begin again.

Elves neither truly sleep nor dream, and thus are immune to this effect; they should reroll the d4 or choose another moderate effect instead.

### Obsession

The character is unable to shake this horrific memory. She continually replays the events in her mind, mumbles about them under her breath, and tries to bring all conversations back to this terrible topic.

Her obsessed mind becomes clouded, and she seldom sleeps. With each day of restless obsession, she suffers a cumulative -1 penalty to initiative and to Search, Spot, and Listen checks, to a maximum penalty of -4.

The character ignores her health while obsessed. She cannot regain hit points through natural healing, and each full week without rest also inflicts 1 point of effective Constitution decrease. Once the character recovers from Obsession, lost Constitution points return at the rate of 1 per day. (See Recovering from Failure, below.)

### Rage

The character's mind reverts to a primitive, mindless fury, directed towards the source of horror. She must drop anything in her hands that is not a weapon, then rush forward to attack the object of her hatred in melee. This blind fury acts as a barbarian's rage ability, with the following exceptions:

Unlike a barbarian, the character is not in control of her actions. She cannot retreat from battle and will not stop attacking the subject of her rage even if it is destroyed. She must also move towards the subject in the shortest distance possible, even if this means passing through threatened areas. If anyone—even an ally—tries to block her path and she cannot move around them, the character must fight her way through them.

The rage lasts a number of rounds equal to 3 + the character's (heightened) Constitution modifier. When the rage ends, the character comes to her senses (regaining control of her actions), but she is fatigued (as detailed under the Barbarian in the *Player's Handbook*).

### Revulsion

As with Aversion, except that the character is Shaken if exposed to anything that merely *reminds* her of the horror scene.



# BOOK OF SECRETS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

## Fascination

This “Renfield effect” remains largely unchanged from *Domains of Dread*. Don’t make a Madness check if either Wisdom or Charisma drops below 3, however. Instead, the character becomes a Lost One (see Additional Failures for Madness Checks).

## Haunted

Witnessing the horrific scene shatters the character’s ability to see any good in the world. She suffers the Obsession effect, and in addition suffers an effective decrease of 1d6 points of Charisma as her spirit becomes hardened and withdrawn. Once the character recovers from the Haunted effect, these lost Charisma points return at the rate of 1 per day. (See Recovering from Failure, below.)

## Mental Shock

The character’s mind simply shuts down, unable to comprehend what it is witnessing. While suffering from mental shock, the character loses any Dexterity bonus to AC and can take no actions. She will walk if dragged along, but cannot run.

Mental shock has a duration of three rounds. At the end of that duration, the character must make another Horror check at the same DC to escape the effects. If she fails, she can keep retrying the save once every three rounds until she succeeds. If the horrific scene is no longer present, the character gains a cumulative +1 morale bonus to each retry until she succeeds.

## System Shock

The shock proves to be too much for the character’s heart; she must make an immediate Fortitude save against the same DC or suffer 3d6 points of Constitution damage. Lost Constitution points return at the rate of 1 per day.

## Additional Failures

Some Horror effects (such as Rage or Mental Shock) have outburst durations that can be measured in rounds, but all Horror effects actually linger for days. (See “Recovering from Failure” for long-term durations.)

A character can only carry a single Horror effect at a time. If an additional failed Horror check indicates a result of equal or lesser severity, use another outburst of the existing effect. If a failed Horror check indicates a result of greater severity, remove the existing effect and default to the greater one instead. Horror effects do not stack.

*Examples:* A character fails a Horror check, resulting in Rage (a moderate effect with a duration of two weeks). During these two weeks, any additional failed Horror checks indicating a minor or moderate effect automatically default to another bout of Rage. If the character fails a Horror check indicating a major result, then determine it normally. (In this case, a d4 roll comes up with Haunted.) The Rage effect is then removed, and Haunted becomes the new default.

Horror effect durations superimpose; the duration is measured from the time of the latest failed Horror check.

## Recovering from Failure

Minor Horror effects have a duration of one week. Moderate effects have a duration of two weeks. Major effects have a duration of 30 days. At the end of this period, the character rolls another Horror check. Use the DC of the original Horror check with a –2 modifier, since time and distance heals all wounds. If the character succeeds at this check, the Horror effect is removed. If she fails, the Horror effect persists for another duration period (another 7 days for a Minor effect, for example). A character can retry failed attempts to recover from Horror each time she reaches the end of a duration period. The –2 DC modifier is cumulative with each attempt.

*Example:* A character making a Horror Check at DC 18 rolls a 14, including modifiers: a failure. Since the character failed by four points (18 – 14 = 4), this results in a minor effect. After one week, the character can make another Horror check at DC 16 (DC 18 – 2) to shake off the effects. If the character fails this check, she can try again in another week at DC 14 (DC 18 – 4), and so on, until the character succeeds.

Numerous spells and magical effects (such as *modify memory* or *remove fear*) can also remove all horror effects.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

## MADNESS CHECKS



ailed Madness checks can cripple a character; fortunately, they're also the rarest type of effect. Make a Madness check in the following three situations:

- ❖ The character makes mental contact (using spells, special abilities, etc.) with any domain lord, aberration, elemental, ooze, outsider, plant, or an insane mind (a character suffering from any Madness effect). Druids and clerics with the Plant domain need not make Madness checks when contacting plants.
- ❖ The character is the victim of "gaslighting," a purposeful attempt by another party to drive her insane.
- ❖ The character suffers a total catastrophe. This can include witnessing the brutal destruction of the rest of the party, leaving the character to face the threat alone; a paladin being stripped of her powers for her misdeeds; suffering an involuntary alignment change; being subjected to a horrific physical transformation (such as being turned into a broken one).

### Determining DC

A Madness check's DC is determined on a case-by-case basis.

### Mental Contact

If a Madness check is prompted by contact with an alien mind, the DC is  $(10 + \frac{1}{2} \text{ contacted creature's HD} + \text{contacted creature's Wisdom modifier})$ .

### Gaslighting

Gaslighting comes in two varieties. If an opponent tries to drive a character mad with a spell or other magical effect (such as *bestow curse* or *wish*), then default to the saving throw indicated by that spell (typically a Will save). This saving throw stands in for the Madness check.

One character can also gaslight another through nonmagical means. To do this, the perpetrator must gain the victim's trust and remain in close proximity to the victim for 30 days, using that time to slowly convince the victim that her sanity is slipping away.

At the end of the 30 days, the perpetrator and the victim must make opposed Will saves. If the victim fails this opposed save, she has been driven mad; as with other Madness checks, the degree of failure

determines the result. (Subtract the victim's Will save result from the perpetrator's.) If the victim succeeds at the opposed Will save, she is unaffected. If she succeeds by a margin of 10 points, she immediately becomes aware of the perpetrator's failed gaslighting attempt. If the perpetrator is not detected, he can try again (with each retry taking another 30 days).

### Total Catastrophe

Lastly, Madness checks prompted by "personal catastrophes" can be thought of as a particularly shattering form of Horror check. The DM should use the recommended DCs and modifiers listed under Horror checks, though this will often require the DM to make a judgment call.

### Failure Results

Failed Madness checks can quickly hinder or cripple a character. In addition to the effects listed below, all failed Madness checks cause effective ability decreases to Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma. (Roll separately for each ability score).

If a character fails a Madness check by a margin of 1–5 points, she suffers a temporary decrease of 1d6 points per ability. In addition, the player should roll 1d4 to determine a minor Madness effect. The character regains one point in each ability score per hour.

If a character fails a Madness check by a margin of 6–10 points, she still suffers an effective decrease of 1d6 points per ability, but these points cannot be regained without effort. (See *Recovering from Failure*, below.) The player must also roll 1d4 to select a moderate Madness effect.

If a character fails a Madness check by a margin of 11–15 points, she suffers an effective decrease of 1d10 points per ability. These points cannot be regained without effort. (See *Recovering from Failure*, below.) The player must also roll 1d4 to determine a Major Madness effect.

If a character fails a Madness check by 16+ points, her mind is shattered. Unable to function, she immediately drops to –1 hit points (and is dying). If she survives this shock to the system, she suffers an effective ability decrease of 1d12 points per ability and must roll 1d4 to select a major Madness effect.

### Minor Madness Effects

1d4 Effect	1d4 Effect
1 Blackout	3 Horrified
2 Denial	4 Unhinged

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

## Moderate Madness Effects

1d4 Effect	1d4 Effect
1 Delusions	3 Hallucinations
2 Depression	4 Paranoia

## Major Madness Effects

1d4 Effect	1d4 Effect
1 Amnesia	3 Schizophrenia
2 Multiple Personalities	4 Suicidal Thoughts

All Madness effects described below are in addition to the effective ability decreases detailed above. As a note, minor Madness effects tend to be forgiving, and pass within a few hours. Moderate effects can be troubling, but typically PCs can continue to function. Characters suffering from major Madness effects often pose a danger to themselves and to others, and require close supervision.

## Blackout

The character is merely Shaken at first. However, she will not recall anything in the time period between (and including) the scene that prompted the Madness check and when she regains the last of her decreased ability scores. (Thus, she'll remember nothing from a period of 1–6 hours.)

If the character is alone, the DM may simply cut to when she “comes to,” wandering and alone, with no memory of how she came to be in her current location. Some spells, such as *modify memory*, can restore lost memories.

## Denial

The character's mind refuses to accept the existence of the threat that prompted the Madness check. Until she regains all decreased ability scores, she acts as if this threat simply does not exist. This provides the character with an effective +4 bonus to any Will saves against that threat's attacks, but otherwise offers no protection. When all ability scores are regained, the character once again acknowledges the existence of the threat (but loses the Will save bonus).

## Horrorified

The character suffers a moderate Horror effect (determined randomly). This Horror effect's duration lasts only until the character regain all decreased ability scores, rather than the usual two weeks.

## Unhinged

The portion of the character's mind that *should* have gone mad simply shuts down instead. This leaves the character able to function but affects her personality. She receives an effective +2 morale bonus to all Fear and Horror checks, but her alignment changes (roll 1d8 to randomly select a new alignment, omitting the character's original alignment from the options). A Sense Motive check at DC 25 can reveal that the Unhinged character is “not quite herself” (assuming this isn't obvious). The character regains her normal alignment (but loses the morale bonus) when all decreased ability scores are restored.

## Delusions

The character believes something about herself which is simply not true. The nature of this delusion is usually tied into the event that provoked the Madness check. Examples include: a character who believes she has endless wealth (paying for services with pebbles she insists are rubies); believing she transforms into a wolf under the light of the full moon (and insisting she must be caged); believing that she is a specific NPC (“I'm Ivana Boritsi! Bow before me!”). The character can only perform actions if she can rationalize them within the context of her delusion. For example, a character who believes she is actually a vampire would not be willing to expose herself to sunlight.

If a character ever performs an action that should be “impossible” within the context of her delusion (in other words, the player cannot immediately provide a rationalized explanation for the action), the character must make an immediate Horror check at DC 15.

## Depression

The character is overcome by a deep melancholy, sapping away her will to live and her interest in the world around her. Such a character just wants to be left alone; she will not suggest ideas, give commands, or otherwise “lead” other characters. In fact, in any given situation, the character must make a Will save at the same DC as the failed Madness check to take any action whatsoever. If the character fails this Will save, she will do nothing at all, even in dangerous situations; in a combat situation, she loses any Dexterity bonus to AC and cannot take attacks of opportunity.

Even if the character can be motivated to act, she does so listlessly and reluctantly. She can follow the instructions of allies, but suffers an effective –4 penalty to all attack rolls and Reflex saves. On the other hand, the character's utter lack of interest in her surroundings

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

actually provides her with an effective +4 bonus to all subsequent Fear, Horror, and Madness checks.

## Hallucinations

The character perceives something in the world that simply does not exist. In a sense, Hallucinations can be considered the “external” companion to the “internal” Delusions effect. As with Delusions, the nature of the hallucination is usually related to the event that prompted the failed Madness check.

*Examples:* A character might believe that she can see ghosts, or that biting insects have infested her armor, or that illithids visit her at night, or she might even occasionally encounter an NPC who actually exists only in her mind.

In a sense, a hallucination can be thought of as a phantasm spell on the level of a *major image*, but one where the insane character is both caster and subject. As with illusions, the DM should present hallucination episodes as real events when they first manifest. Menacing hallucinations may provoke Fear or Horror checks. (DC depends on the specific scene; see the sections on Determining DC for Fear and Horror checks.) Hallucinations can even attack the character, though they can only inflict subdual damage. (The character merely *believes* she is being harmed.)

Characters have little mental defense against their own inner demons. Thus, a hallucinating character suffers a –2 penalty to all Fear and Horror checks provoked by her own visions.

If a character somehow becomes aware that her hallucinations are just that, she must still concentrate to convince herself that the visions are not real. This works just like disbelieving illusions; to dispel a hallucination, the character must make a Will save at DC (13 + character’s Wisdom modifier). Unlike illusions, however, a hallucinating character cannot receive any bonus to her Will save from the reassurances of allies. An attempt to disbelieve a hallucination is a standard action, and can be retried each round.

If a character successfully disbelieves a hallucination, the episode still continues for another 1d4 rounds. That hallucination can no longer provoke Fear or Horror checks, however, nor can it inflict subdual damage.

*DM Tips:* One way to present hallucinations is to secretly inform the other players of the nature of the character’s madness. Later—once those players know that the episode the DM described won’t be real—the DM can present the episode to the group as a real event, and only the hallucinating character will react as if the threat is real—adding to the hallucinating character’s confusion.

The DM can then enhance this “rubber reality” scenario by letting the hallucinating character see a *real* threat that mimics a recurring vision. As an example, a character who hallucinates about monstrous wolves might be on watch, alone, when she spots a real pack of worgs skulking around the campsite. The other characters would then have to guess whether she was merely “crying wolf” again.

## Paranoia

The character believes that she is at the center of a conspiracy dedicated to her destruction. No amount of rational argument can convince her otherwise. Although the character’s madness does not extend to actual hallucinations, the DM should present all NPCs and conversations with other characters in a menacing light. The DM might drop subtle visual clues that other characters are inhuman, or thread vague threats into NPC conversations. (Think of all the different ways to deliver the line, “I would hate to see you get hurt.”)

As with hallucinations, the DM may want to give the other players secret signals that the scene is not being presented quite as it actually exists, or the DM may want to focus on the paranoid character’s interaction with NPC when alone. (This avoids the extra work of explaining what’s *really* happening to the other players.)

The paranoid character must succeed at a Will save with a DC equal to that of the failed Madness check in order to place any trust in any other characters. If the character fails the Will save, she must refuse all offers of help (for being “obvious traps”).

If a paranoid character ever does come upon actual evidence that she has been betrayed or that others are conspiring against her, she must make an immediate Horror check at (DC 12 + character’s Wisdom modifier).

## Amnesia

A much more disabling form of the Blackout effect, Amnesia is the result of an affected mind’s desperate attempt to shield itself from the memory that provoked the Madness check. Throwing the baby out with the bathwater, the amnesiac character immediately blocks out all memory of the maddening event—along with many of the months or years that came before it.

If a failed Madness check ends in an Amnesia result, the DM should roll d%. Multiply this percentage times the character’s total levels (rounding down). The character then receives that many negative levels.

Although an amnesiac character still has access to all of her skills, the character loses all memory of events since gaining those levels. A character who

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

acquires a number of negative levels equal to her character level regresses to childhood.

*Example:* A 15th-level fighter fails a Madness check, resulting in Amnesia. The DM rolls d%, with a result of 48. The fighter then acquires seven ( $15 \times 48\% = 7.2$ , rounded down) negative levels. This fighter would not remember any events he has witnessed or any people he has met since becoming an 8th-level fighter.

*Restoration* spells cannot remove these negative levels; they are caused by memory loss, not negative energy.

## Multiple Personalities

The character's psyche makes a desperate attempt to contain the mental trauma it has suffered by splintering into separate identities.

The Multiple Personalities effect remains largely unchanged from *Domains of Dread*; the character retains a core personality, 10d10 fragments, and 2d10 alter egos.

The core personality is the character's original persona. It has access to all of the character's memories, skills, and abilities.

Fragments are partial personas, easily described in a single phrase, such as "coin collector," "sleepy child," or "talented dancer." The player can assign a single skill or ability to each fragment. Fragments can use their one talent if called upon, but they always ignore anything that has no relation to their single subject.

Alter egos are fully formed personalities. Each alter considers itself a distinct individual, but alters often believe that their race, class, or even gender differs from the core personality. As with Delusional characters, these alters cannot be convinced that they are not as real as the core personality. The player should flesh out the persona of each alter, using Tables 11–14 in Chapter Six of *Domains of Dread* for ideas. Alter egos also have access to all of the core personality's skills and abilities, but they will not use them if doing so is "out of character." For example, a wizard's alter that believes itself to be a simple-minded ogre wouldn't cast spells.

The player should write a numbered list of her character's fragments and alters for ease of reference.

Whenever a character suffering from Multiple Personalities has to make a Will save (including Fear, Horror, and Madness checks), she must also make an immediate Will save equal to the failed Madness check's DC or randomly switch personalities (as a free action). The character should also make a Will save (DC 15 + character's Wisdom modifier) each time she rests. If the character succeeds at the Will save, she wakes up as the core personality. If she fails, she switches to a random persona.

The core personality has no conscious memory of time spent in other personalities, but the character does not acquire negative levels as with Amnesia. Alters typically *are* aware of each other, and can "leave messages" for each other if they wish. It is not uncommon for alters to dislike each other or the core personality.

## Schizophrenia

The character's personality suffers a serious collapse. As the character's sense of "self" erodes, she can suffer drastic and unpredictable personality shifts. Once every week, and whenever the character makes a Will save of any kind (including Fear, Horror, and Madness checks), the character must succeed at a Will save (DC 15 + character's Wisdom modifier). If the character fails this save, her alignment immediately and randomly changes. Use Table 10 in Chapter Six of *Domains of Dread* to determine the character's new alignment. A character might be a saint one moment, a monster the next.

## Suicidal Thoughts

This is a more serious form of the Depression effect. In addition to all of the effects detailed under Depression, the character's will to live hangs by a thread. If the character fails any subsequent Fear, Horror, or Madness checks, she will soon (within an hour) make an attempt to take her own life. The character makes the suicide attempt via the most efficient means at her disposal: leaping off a high balcony, drinking poisonous chemicals, flinging herself into a river, etc.

A character can also use a piercing or slashing melee weapon to inflict a coup de grace against herself. (This may also be possible with some ranged weapons such as crossbows and firearms.)

## Madness and Campaign Styles

To gain their full effect, Madness effects depend heavily on the players' willingness to roleplay various forms of mental damage. This probably won't be a problem in a campaign utilizing a great deal of personality and character development (the "Deep-Immersion Storytelling" style of play mentioned in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). On the other hand, if your group prefers "Kick in the Door" gaming, many Madness effects run the risk of actively impairing the fun of the game. If the players aren't interested in roleplaying Madness effects, it's best to simply remove those effects from the game. In this case, failed Madness checks only cause effective ability decreases, as described above.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

## Additional Failures

If a character fails another Madness check while suffering the effects of a previous failure, do not roll 1d4 to determine a new effect; the character's mind, already insane, will merely sink deeper into its existing dementia. Ability score decreases are cumulative with multiple failed Madness checks, however.

If any of the character's mental ability scores ever drop below 3, she becomes what is commonly known in Ravenloft as a "lost one"—a walking catatonic whose mind was shattered by memories too horrible to bear. The character becomes an NPC until she has at least a 3 in all mental ability scores; until then, the character will eat and drink if fed, will walk if led, and may occasionally mumble some gibberish, but otherwise can take no actions.

The DM can shape a lost one's personality by looking at which ability score has dropped to 1 or 2. A lost one with minimal Intelligence may seem like a cheery and friendly fellow—but he might have absolutely no short-term memory, never remembering anything about anyone from one minute to the next. A lost one with minimal Wisdom might remember conversations he had years ago, but could be completely stymied by any kind of external task, such as opening a door latch or changing his clothes. A lost one with minimal Charisma might wander in a daze, writing strange poetry to himself, but seemingly unable to register the presence of other people.

If any ability score drops to 0, the character slips into complete catatonia (see Chapter Three of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). If all three ability scores are raised above 0 again, the character wakes up as a lost one.

## Madness and Alignment

Some Madness effects like Unhinged and Schizophrenia can cause a character's alignment to temporarily change. This is an involuntary alignment shift, but does not require an additional Madness check. Some classes require specific alignments, such as the lawful good paladin or the non-lawful barbarian. In these cases, the insane character should be considered an effective "Ex-" member of that class, and may or may not lose class abilities. (For example, an ex-barbarian loses the ability to rage, whereas an ex-monk still retains all abilities.)

This loss of class abilities is only temporary; because the alignment change is involuntary, the character is not considered to have actually abandoned the class. When the Madness effect causing the alignment change is removed, the character's original alignment is restored and she can continue to gain

levels in that class as normal. Some religious classes, such as the druid or paladin, may be required to atone first, however.

## Recovering from Failure

In most cases, the road from madness to recovery is long and difficult. All Madness effects are removed when all ability points lost to the failed Madness check are regained. In the case of minor Madness checks, this period is mercifully short; never longer than six hours, as detailed above. Moderate and major effects require much more effort to shake off. Several methods are available to characters in need of recovery:

### Peace and Quiet

If the character rests for 30 days without failing any subsequent Will saves (including Fear, Horror, and Madness checks), she can make another Madness check against the same DC. If this check succeeds, she regains one point in one of her decreased ability scores. While the player can choose which ability score to place the point in, the fastest road to recovery typically lies in restoring Wisdom to normal first.

The character can attempt a new Madness check once per restful month against the original DC until Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma return to normal. However—particularly if the character's Wisdom score was drastically lowered by the Madness check—the DC may be so high that the character cannot succeed. In these cases, the character will need to turn to outside help.

### Magic

If available, magic is the quickest and most efficient method of recovery. *Restoration* can restore drained ability scores, but requires three castings to remove a Madness effect (one casting to restore each ability score), while the spells *greater restoration* and *heal* can each cure madness at a stroke. Note that of these spells, only *heal* can restore memories lost to a Blackout or Amnesia. *Modify memory* can also restore lost memories, but may require multiple castings to recover all lost memories.

### Hypnosis

If the character does not have access to magic, having access to a character with the Hypnosis skill is the next best option. The *hypnotism* spell can be used in the same way; use this system, but the spell's increased efficiency grants the subject a +2 bonus to her Madness check.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

Hypnosis is a new technique, first developed (and still largely limited to) the doctors working in Ravenloft's handful of asylums and sanitariums. Were magic more plentiful in Ravenloft, this skill would be even less known—it is primarily a non-magical substitute for the *hypnotism* spell.

When curing madness, the DC of a Hypnosis skill check is equal to the DC of the subject's failed Madness check. The hypnotist may benefit from the modifiers listed on Table 15 in Chapter Six of *Domains of Dread*. If the hypnotist has at least 5 ranks in Healing, she gains a +2 synergy bonus to the skill check.

Characters can retry Hypnosis checks once per week (per subject) until the subject recovers. (This means that the aid of a successful hypnotist can give the insane character four chances to make recovery attempts each month, rather than just one.) A character cannot use Hypnosis on herself.

A successful Hypnosis check garners two results. First, the subject can attempt an immediate Madness check to regain a single ability point, as detailed under Peace and Quiet, above. Second, each successful use of Hypnosis reduces the DC of the Madness check by 1 point.

*Example:* A villager has failed a Madness check at DC 24. Sadly, the villager's total bonus to his Will save is only +2; it was +3, but he lost 2 points of Wisdom when he failed the original Madness check. Even if he rolls a 20 on his Will save, the best he can do is a 22; without help, he'll never recover from his madness.

Fortunately, a local doctor and skilled hypnotist takes the villager under his wing. In their first treatment session, the doctor makes a Hypnosis check against DC 24. With his total bonuses, he rolls a result of 27; a success. Future Madness checks on the villager's road to recovery will now only be DC 23. The villager still can't make that, but another successful hypnosis session the next week would reduce the DC to 22, and so on—and the villager's chances for recovery would start to grow.

## Sanitariums

A few sanitariums are scattered across Ravenloft. While their purpose is to lift the affliction of madness, more often they simply serve as prisons for the insane. Recovery in a sanitarium works just like hypnosis (in fact, that's the typical method of recovery used), but the sad truth is that a patient in a sanitarium is unlikely to receive the careful attention she requires. Each sanitarium offers a flat 1d8–5 (between –4 and +3) modifier to all Madness checks made on the road to recovery in their care. As the modifier indicates, many patients in Ravenloft's sanitariums would be better off locked in their nephews' attics.

Patients in a sanitarium can make one Madness check per month, adding the modifier above. Each success restores one point in one decreased ability score (player's choice) and reduces the DC of future Madness checks made in that recovery process by 1 point. (This bonus is cumulative.)

## New Skill

### Hypnosis (Cha; Trained Only)

You have studied the hidden workings of the human mind and can unlock its secrets. Hypnosis is a class skill for monks, sorcerers, and wizards. Experts can choose Hypnosis as one of their class skills if they wish.

**Check:** You can use hypnosis to induce a deep, calming trance in your subject. The effects of a hypnotic trance are identical to those created by the *hypnotism* spell. Unlike the spell, however, the skill only allows you to hypnotize one subject at a time (who does not receive the –2 penalty to her Will save). The subject need not be willing, but each attempt to use hypnosis requires one hour, so this skill cannot be used in combat, and an unwilling subject might need to be restrained.

To hypnotize a subject, you must make an opposed roll: your Hypnosis check against the subject's Will save. (Willing subjects can always voluntarily fail their saving throw.) Loud or distracting surroundings grant a +2 situational modifier to the subject's Will save.

Once the subject is hypnotized, you can either plant a suggestion (as per the *hypnotism* spell), or you can aid in the recovery of a subject who is suffering from the effects of a failed Madness check. The latter option is detailed under the "Recovering from Failure" section of Madness checks, above.

**Retry:** Yes, but if you fail a hypnosis check, the subject automatically realizes that you were attempting to lure her into a trance (if she didn't already know). Additional attempts to hypnotize unwilling subjects generally don't work. Retries are a vital part in the process of helping subjects recover from Madness effects, however; see above.

## New Feat

### Courage [General]

You are particularly fearless in the face of danger.

**Benefit:** You get a +4 bonus to all Fear checks.



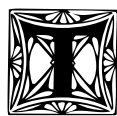
# THE TALE OF THE LADY OF THE LAKE

## A SONG OF SORROW FROM CASTLE ISLAND

by Ryan Naylor

Schadenfreudel3@hotmail.com

### Biography



There are few forces in the world that are stronger than love. Love can redeem, strengthen, and save. If it is soured, however, there is little that can stand in the way of the emotions that are unleashed—jealousy, bitterness, rage and the lust for revenge. When the creature whose love is lost is formed purely by emotion, then the consequences can be terrifying. The Lady of the Lake is one such soured spirit, who sacrificed everything to avenge her lover's death.

### Appearance

The Lady of the Lake, as an elemental spirit, has no constant appearance. She can appear as whatever she desires, although she does have favorite forms. Before the destruction of Demnach Keep, she normally appeared as a delicate, aristocratic woman with hair so blond that it was almost white. Since her imprisonment on Castle Island, however, she has begun to adopt the more disturbing form of a woman with the blue-white skin of the recently drowned and greenish hair like kelp. She continues to wear the elegant flowing gowns she wore in happier times. Despite her unnerving appearance and the lines of anger and frustration that mar her face, she is still incredibly beautiful in whatever form she chooses. Her eyes are the only constant features. They are always blue and flecked with gold.

### Background

In the Mountains of Misery in Darkon, there was once a lake. The valley that contained the Lake had been carved from the side of the mountain centuries before by a glacier. Thermal springs mixed with the cold mountain water and warmed the mineral rich soil, creating a fog-enshrouded paradise on the side of the bleak mountain. The valley was so uniquely beautiful and the Lake so pure that two spirits arose from its waters, to protect the Lake and the creatures that depended upon it. The Lady of the Lake arose from the water like an angel. She took the form of a beautiful woman, and the entire valley was so enchanted by her beauty that it reflected her moods. When she was angry, the wind roared and animals hid in their burrows. When she was happy, the water itself seemed to sing. In the entire valley there was only one person who didn't suffer the tempestuous passions of the Lady. The Avanc, gifted with the power of prophecy and a kind and generous spirit, was the calm center to the Lady's spirit, and she loved him dearly.

In the year 600 BC, King Azalin ordered a castle to be built, guarding a pass between the mountains. The pass was rarely used, but Azalin did not care to leave any flank unguarded and he had rarely regretted being too cautious. Still, in recognition of the small chance of invasion, he entrusted the area to the Demnach family and forgot about it. He was reminded of the tiny castle and its attendant village only rarely, when a scion of the Demnach family journeyed out to combat evil. The noble family took their role as defenders of Darkon seriously, although often the creatures of the night proved too strong for them.

Unlike Azalin, the Lady of the Lake and the Avanc in their secluded paradise above the village did not forget about the humans. On the day the first Demnach



# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

rode forth from the castle, the Avanc fell into a deep trance.

“A man will be born of that family that will be possessed of such goodness that he can save all within the Lands of the Mists,” the prophet intoned when he awoke. The pair of spirits began to watch for this virtuous man, and gradually the humans became aware of them. Although the superstitious peasants held the spirits in fear and awe, occasionally one brave soul would journey up to the Lake, seeking the Avanc’s advice. They brought back tales of the beautiful Lady and her wise consort, and finally the lord of the castle himself rode up to the secluded valley. He saw the Lady dancing among the trees, singing with the joy of life, and was bewitched. Remembering the Avanc’s prophecy, the Lady spoke to the man. Her beauty hypnotized him, and he sat, spellbound, for the entire afternoon, listening to her musical words. When night fell, the noble returned to the castle, where he told everyone of the enchantress he had met.

At the time of the Great Upheaval, the Demnach line had dwindled to a single man, Johann. All the elders of the village agreed that of all his virtuous and noble family, Johann was the most virtuous and noble. On the day of the young lord’s marriage to Helena, a lady from another noble family, a pale stranger came down from the mountains to the south, seeking the wise Avanc. Cloaked in shadows, the man sat at the edge of the Lake and waited. The Avanc stared for a long time at the man, and said, “You are deluded, Prince of Shadows. If there is any justice in this dark world, you will never see your father again.” The Prince’s face twisted with rage, and he viciously cursed the prophet. The fog around them roiled, and the Avanc screamed. Twisted fins burst from his sides and his bones melted and reformed. The Prince watched with malicious glee as the Avanc dragged his bestial form back into the Lake. The Lady tried to comfort her consort, telling him that she had become pregnant, but the Avanc’s anguish only increased.

The pale stranger slipped from the valley, the Lady’s consoling song echoing in his ears, and sidled into the castle’s main hall. Johann’s heart fell as the man told him of the monster that had appeared in the Lake, but he knew his duty. Johann gallantly rode forth to protect his charges from the beast. The Lady found her lover’s reptilian body hacked to pieces in the shallows of her Lake. She cradled his monstrous head in her lap and wept for his pointless death. She wept for the daughter that would never know her father. Her wails of anguish echoed through the benighted forest, felling trees and slaying animals with its sorrow. Her tears fell cold and dark into the Lake and the plants died and the thermal springs froze. When the valley was as wretched as her ravaged heart and she could cry no more, the Lady arose. She cursed the land that had

brought her and her consort forth, cursed the humans that had murdered him. Holding her bitterness within her heart, she vowed to destroy the man who had murdered her lover.

That night, the Lady stilled her endless song and left her Lake for the first time. She walked through the valleys and hills and forests until her feet bled, but she never faltered. Her lust for revenge drove her on. The Lady emerged from the mountains and sought out an unassuming little cottage in the forests of Tepest that even she in her hidden Lake had heard about. Too enraged to feel fear, she stumbled over the old bones that were strewn about the garden. The Lady marched up to the cottage and threw open the door.

“I have come to see the sisters Mindefisk,” she said. Stepping inside, the Lady coolly stared at the Three Hags, who were shocked and delighted that such a delicious morsel should simply walk into their parlor. The Lady began to sing. While the sisters sat, open mouthed, the Lady sang of her rage and frustration, her desire to destroy all those who had taken part in her lover’s murder. She poured out her hatred in a venomous song, and when she had finished the sisters sat and stared at her in silence. Perhaps the Three Hags saw in her the potential to cause more of the evil and mayhem they delighted in; perhaps their cruel hearts had been moved by the Lady’s passionate tirade. They allowed her to go unharmed.

“Help me get my revenge upon all of Demnach Keep, and I will bring you a man to use as you will every day for a month,” the Lady said bluntly. Still shocked, the Hags agreed.

The Lady walked Tepest for a month, charming everyone she met and delivering them to the cottage in the woods. The three sisters worked at their cauldron, distilling potions dark and fearsome. At the end of the month the Lady returned, her figure swollen with the Avanc’s child. She brought with her three beautiful children as a final gift for the sisters. The Lady felt no pity for the children as she watched the Three Hags devour them. The part of the Lady’s soul that felt such tender emotions had shriveled and died with the Avanc, and she despised the superstitious peasants of Tepest almost as much as the villagers of her home. She simply sat down on the Sisters’ ancient table when they had finished their gory meal, and removed her gown.

“My children will be spirits like me,” explained the Lady. “I need a human woman, who can master magic I cannot, and who can help me bring about the downfall of Demnach Keep.”

Cackling, the Hags smeared her belly with their foul paste. “You would sacrifice your child, and all their children, and all their children, to achieve your revenge?” asked one of the three.

“I must live forever without my husband. His death feels as though something has been torn from me. How

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

can I bear to look at my children and see him, every day for the rest of eternity? Without a father, there is no point to their lives. If they can avenge his death, our sacrifice will have been worth it.” The Lady’s face twisted with such venom that the Hags laughed amongst themselves.

Once the witches’ magic was complete, the Lady arose from the table. The tallest sister began to explain again that the baby would be born a human of great magical skill and beauty, but she would live out her whole life in the space of a few years. The Lady waved her away and returned to her Lake. By the time she got there, her stomach was grotesquely distended. The birth was long and painful, but finally the Lady held her daughter. She named her baby Katherine. As the Sisters had promised, the girl grew to adulthood in less than a month. Katherine was a liar and an enchantress of unsurpassed skill, although she possessed none of the fey powers of her mother. Her daughter was truly human. The Lady watched her progress through the magical arts with a satisfied smile.

Once she was prepared, the Lady took Katherine to the court of the Demnachs and presented her to Johann. Despite his virtues, Johann was still a man, and he was smitten with the beautiful woman. He did not realize that her delicate features and creamy skin hid a heart as black as the Hag’s cauldron which had created her. Katherine began to worm her way into Johann’s affections.

Skillfully, as her mother had taught her, Katherine led Johann to neglect his wife and forsake his duties, until finally she seduced the gallant noble. From a hidden pocket in her discarded gown, Katherine drew forth an envenomed dagger. She placed the knife between Johann’s broad shoulders, and licked her lips in anticipation. She was about to plunge it into the sleeping knight’s back, when Helena burst into the room. The noblewoman screamed in horror and despair, startling Katherine. Johann spun around and managed to catch Katherine’s wrist and wrestle the knife from her. The witch savagely clawed at Johann’s eyes and pulled her arm from his grasp. With a bitter curse, Katherine jumped through the bedroom window, scaled down the castle walls and vanished into the night. Johann turned to his wife, but Helena stared at him with such disgust and hurt that he could not speak. With a sob, she turned and fled as well. Johann remembered Katherine’s lips upon his and his soul shook at the grievous sin he had committed.

The Lady comforted her weeping daughter, telling her that it was not her fault that Johann had rejected her, and that soon they would be revenged. As the Lady spoke, Katherine began to understand that Johann had wronged her, and deserved to die now more than ever. The Lake became whipped by a bitter wind that echoed the Lady’s voice. Katherine began to swell with

Johann’s child, even as the Lady poisoned her mind against its father.

In his castle, Johann’s powers as a holy warrior began to manifest. In Castle Avernus, King Azalin paused in his endless experiments, feeling the first glimmers of Johann’s divine might. Obsessed with his Grim Harvest, however, and seeing no threat from the petty noble, the lich-lord did nothing. To atone for his adultery, Johann and his knights began to quest forth from the castle, combating evil in all its forms. Many were slain in the process, but Johann brought hope to the dreary lives of many. Whenever he returned to Demnach Keep, however, Helena refused to see him. She was deeply hurt by her husband’s adultery, and time did nothing to heal her wounds.

For a long time, Helena battled with her anguish. Overcome with pain and fearing for her sanity, she made her way up the steep mountain to the dying Lake to speak to the wise spirits. Although the barren rocks and mournful song frightened her, the noblewoman called the Lady from the water. The Lady heard her story and smiled. Instantly Helena felt her heart lift with hope. The Lady told her that if Johann truly loved Helena, the gods would see that they were united again. It was written in the stars that, although they would be tempted, true love would always reunite them. Helena’s eyes widened—how simple it seemed—and she gratefully kissed the hem of the Lady’s gown.

“But how can I return to the castle now?” Helena asked. “I see the wisdom in what you say, but I am still so angry. How can I face Johann?”

The Lady laughed tolerantly, and offered to let the human stay in her magic kingdom under the Lake until she was prepared to confront her husband again. In the eternal peace of the Lady’s realm, she would quickly find herself full of hope and forgiveness once again. The Lady told her that as long as she held onto her hand, she would be able to breathe water as easily as air.

“But what will happen when we reach your realm, Lady?” asked Helena. “Surely I can’t hold your hand under the water forever?”

The Lady laughed, and told her that in the place they were going, she had no need of breathing. After a moment, Helena took the Lady’s hand. She led her into the murky water of the Lake, and the human found she could breathe easily. When they reached the deepest, most black part of the Lake, the Lady abandoned her. The screams that stole the last of the air from Helena’s lungs bubbled up around her, and the Lady smiled.

As she swam to the surface, the Lady began thinking about the saccharine advice she had given Helena. She laughed bitterly, remembering her own true love. Memories of the Avanc’s tender touch and the sound of his voice rose in the Lady’s mind, and for the first time she felt uncertain. She remembered the

## BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

Avanc's prediction of the Demnach that could save them all. Was this truly the best way? Was it what her consort would have wanted? Thinking deeply, she moved to the shallows of the Lake where the Avanc had been slain. The mud had swallowed the Avanc's carcass, leaving no trace; it was as though he had never existed. The Lady stared at the oozing mud for a long time, then turned her back on it. Disease finally conquered the last tree in the valley, and it crashed to the ground. All the animals had long since left the area or been killed. The winds moaned a dirge through the valley, echoing the song in the Lady's barren heart. The Lady of the Lake saw the desolation and found it fitting.

When Johann learned that Helena had fled the keep, he was broken hearted. He returned to his dark and empty castle. Everything he saw reminded him of his wife. He remembered his dalliance with Katherine and compared that fleeting pleasure to Helena's sense of betrayal. He cursed Katherine viciously, blaming the witch for his pain and sinfulness. All hope and piety left him; he began to doubt his holy mission. He simply sat in the court and mourned.

One of the few remaining knights dashed into the main hall where Johann sat. Stuttering with fear, the knight told Johann that an army of monsters was attacking the castle. Johann felt a mighty rage build within him when he learned that Katherine was with them. The beasts had spewed into the pass from the forests of Tepest, burning and murdering all they came across. Already, many villagers had been slain by the loathsome fiends. Katherine, her unnatural life nearly ended as the Hags' magic made her age faster and faster, led the army at the side of her son Madchen. Madchen was a feral, hulking brute. The residue of the Hags' magic had worked through him before his birth, sapping him of any light or nobility of character and leaving a rabid monster. The Lady of the Lake had groomed him lovingly, preparing him for the ultimate climax of her revenge.

The Lady watched from a hilltop as Madchen's creatures assaulted the castle. The beasts swarmed around the walls in a black tide. Katherine shouted her magical commands, and a bolt of lightning blasted from the sky. The goblins screeched in triumph and poured through the gap in the castle walls she had created. Suddenly, Johann appeared on the keep's single tower. He shouted his defiance at the barbaric horde, drew his bow, and fired. Katherine gasped in pain and crumpled to the ground. Blood began streaming from the arrow wound in her stomach. Through eyes that blurred in agony, Katherine dimly saw the Lady staring imperiously down at her. Hope filled the witch's heart, and she lifted a hand towards her mother. The Lady turned away. She strode into the dying castle, ignoring her daughter whose last breath was spent begging her

for help. Inside, hordes of goblins rampaged through the halls, tearing the knights apart or being hacked to pieces beneath their swords. The Lady watched the carnage, and found that it pleased her. All the mortals would suffer today, she vowed. She would be revenged upon those who had forced her to live alone forever. She made her way into the main hall.

In front of the Demnach throne, Johann and Madchen met in a clash of sparking steel. The Lady smiled cruelly. The Avanc's prophecy of the Demnach who would redeem the world rose to her mind as she watched the lord and his sole heir struggling in the throne room. If she had to live alone for eternity, everyone would experience the pain she felt. There would be no mighty savior born to this family.

The pair battled on. Although Johann was aided by the magic of his ancestral sword of speed, Madchen had been trained from birth for this moment. The Lady watched as Madchen stabbed Johann, who with his last strength cut down his son.

"Lady . . ." Johann gasped as he collapsed to the ground. The Lady knelt beside him, and gently stroked his hair. She pulled a crystal vial from the bodice of her robe, and raised it to Johann's lips.

"Here, drink this," she whispered. Johann nodded and blood bubbled from between his lips, mingling with the magical potion the Lady had formed from the waters of her Lake. "Once, my Lake contained only the purest water. A single mouthful was enough to heal the most grievous wound. Now, it simply prevents death, without healing injuries. There is no healer for you here. For the rest of eternity you will survive in agony, wishing for death, while I visit every torture I can imagine upon you. Three years ago you desecrated my Lake and murdered my lover. I should have spent eternity with my husband; instead, I shall spend it with you." The Lady smiled, and Johann saw for the first time the malice and rage that filled the Lady's heart. Tears welled in Johann's eyes as he saw how he had been deceived and his holy course diverted. He closed his eyes, and thought of his wife. The Lady threw back her head and laughed. Mists filled the hall.

For a long time, the Mists blinded the Lady. She heard the groan and crack of masonry, mingling with the screams of the few mortals who had survived the battle. The Lady reveled in the beautiful noises, and added her own song to the symphony of destruction. When the air finally cleared, she found the destruction even more complete than she had hoped. A huge lake had rushed into the pass, drowning everything but the main hall and its surrounding rooms beneath its dark surface. The fraction of the castle left above the lake's surface was irreparably ruined. For a long time, the Lady wandered euphorically through the ruins, marveling at how complete her victory was. She moved into the black waters of the lake, and swam through the

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

ruins of the drowned village. Suddenly, she found herself back in the main hall of the castle. She transformed into the shape of a gull and flew in another direction, only to be transported back to the island again. To her horror, she found she could go no more than a quarter of a mile from the newly created island. In a rage, she stormed into the keep's hall, screaming abuse at the fallen knight, blaming him for trapping her on the island. She found Johann dead with a blissful expression upon his face. The Lady screamed in frustration and fell upon his body, tearing at him with her fingernails. She was still trapped on the island.

## The Lady of the Lake

### Demilord of Castle Island

#### Siren, Chaotic Evil

<b>Armor Class</b>	3	<b>Str</b>	13
<b>Movement</b>	12, Swim 24	<b>Dex</b>	16
<b>Level/Hit Dice</b>	7	<b>Con</b>	13
<b>Hit Points</b>	40	<b>Int</b>	14
<b>THAC0</b>	13	<b>Wis</b>	9
<b>No of Attacks</b>	1	<b>Cha</b>	18
<b>Damage/Attack</b>	By weapon, typically 1d6+2		
<b>Special Attacks</b>	Intelligence drain		
<b>Special Defenses</b>	Charming song, fog cloud, polymorph self, improved invisibility		
<b>Magic Resistance</b>	20%		

### Current Sketch

The Lady of the Lake has been trapped on Castle Island since the year 744 BC. She is consumed with bitterness at her imprisonment. Cheated of her lingering revenge by Johann's death, eternity grates at her unbearably. She has come to believe that her prison was a last trap of Johann's, and spends days at a time cursing him for the drab life she is forced to live now. Freeing herself from Johann's snare and revenging herself upon all mortals have become her sole motivations. The endless tedium relents only occasionally when a fisherman lands or washes up on the island. Once the Lady has captured these poor souls, she vents her frustrations upon them. She has become quite inventive and skilful in her torture, often using psychological as well as physical means to break her victim's spirits. If they survive long enough for the Lady to lose her inspiration, she allows them to starve to death or leaves them to the sea zombies that prowl the lower levels of the castle. These brief diversions do little to relieve the Lady's boredom. Compared with the glorious plans for revenge that she had prepared for Johann, tormenting peasants seems an empty way to spend eternity.

To her disgust, she has discovered from these captives that the island has been moved to Lake Kronov in Tepest. Although she currently has little to do with the Tepestani, the idea of being trapped among the superstitious bumpkins where she sacrificed her daughter chafes at her endlessly. The Lady is unbelievably arrogant for someone in her position, and cannot tolerate the peasants she is forced to live near.

Far more agonizing to the Lady than her endless boredom and the occasional trips the Hags make to the edge of her domain to taunt her is the dark form she sees swimming through the murky lake water. To complete the Lady's curse, the Dark Powers have raised the Avanc from the dead. However, the Avanc's spirit has come to match his monstrous form. He prowls restlessly up and down the Lake, attacking everything he finds. This means fewer and fewer people venture onto the lake, depriving the Lady of what little entertainment she has. The Lady desperately wants to be reunited with her husband, not realizing how different he is from the consort she remembers. She, however, cannot leave the waters surrounding the island and the Avanc refuses to come within a mile of it. The reappearance of her husband has led her to begin questioning the wisdom of her plot. Trapped in her tiny prison, with only her venomous thoughts for company, the Lady of the Lake is consuming herself with rage and frustration.

### Closing the Borders

When the Lady wishes to seal her domain, she begins to sing. A dense fog rises from the surface of the lake. As the escapees try to push on into the thickening mist, it begins to dance and shift, twisting itself into contorted scenes. The Lady's wailing dirge moans in the ears of those trying to leave, drawing out all the secrets and emotions hidden within them. If they do not return to the island, these dark frustrations and sorrows inevitably consume them, turning them into murderous, psychotic wrecks. Even the noblest characters destroy themselves in an orgy of violence. Those who flee under water or somehow block out the Lady's song must contend with the Avanc and the other monstrous lake denizens, who are drawn to the domain's borders by the Lady's siren song.

### Combat

Despite her unrelenting boredom, the Lady still clings desperately to the hope she can find a way to be free and pursue her revenge. She has no desire to end her empty existence. As such, she will rarely engage visitors to her island in combat. Her favorite tactic is to use her song against the interlopers while protected by

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

an improved invisibility spell. The Lady's song is more versatile than that of most sirens. As well as charming all those within 30' who fail a saving throw versus spell (even those engaged in combat with her), the Lady can use her song to manipulate her victims, as though using an emotion spell. She tries to sow discord amongst landing parties by casting the hate, hopelessness, and sadness forms of the spell.

If the Lady is convinced there is little danger to her, she will attack those who remain unaffected by her charm, using the magical *short sword of quickness* she stole from Johann's corpse. Should events turn against her, the Lady quickly flees under the cover of a fog cloud or by polymorphing into the shape of a sea bird. She then dives into the lake, lurking in the submerged levels of the castle until she can catch the mortals off guard. If she manages to capture the intruders, a touch of her hand is enough to drain the Intelligence of her victims to 2 if they fail a save versus poison. Towards these captives she is unbearably arrogant, often stressing that she is immortal while they will soon die or that she manipulated the downfall of the castle. Despite her hatred of all mortal beings, she is still vain enough to enjoy their fear and respect, and one or two are allowed to survive to serve her. They inevitably starve to death. After her victims finally die, they often rise as undead. Many shuffle off to the village hidden under the lake. The Lady's charm remains even after the deaths of these poor souls, binding them to her as sea zombies. Despite their usefulness, the Lady despises her repugnant slaves.

The Lady of the Lake has infravision to 120 feet, and can breathe water and air with equal ease. She can use her spells once per day as though she was an 11th-level wizard. She makes all her saves at the same level, with a +2 bonus against poisons. She is immune to gas attacks.

## Further Reading

The Lady of the Lake was introduced briefly in the adventure *Servants of Darkness*. The Avanc is detailed more fully in *The Shadow Rift*.



# FATHER GURAN

## A FALLEN PRIEST FOR RAVENLOFT

by Christopher Adams

[mhacdebhandia@yahoo.com](mailto:mhacdebhandia@yahoo.com)

### Biography



ather Guran is a rather unique form of the undead heucuva. For his crimes performed under the cover of a healer's work, for the countless innocent lives he brought to an end while professing only to heal, Guran has been cursed with life as a diseased, undead abomination—ripe fruit for the dark powers to pluck from the tree, as indeed they have . . .

### Father Guran

#### 8th-level Heucuva Cleric, Chaotic Evil

<b>Armor Class</b>	3	<b>Str</b>	17
<b>Movement</b>	9	<b>Dex</b>	12
<b>Level/Hit Dice</b>	8	<b>Con</b>	14
<b>Hit Points</b>	55	<b>Int</b>	16
<b>THAC0</b>	15	<b>Wis</b>	17
<b>No. of Attacks</b>	1	<b>Cha</b>	13
<b>Damage/Attack</b>	1–6	<b>XP</b>	6,000
<b>Special Attacks</b>	Disease, spells		
<b>Special Defenses</b>	Hit only by silver or +1 weapons, spells		
<b>Special Vulnerabilities</b>	Turned as a spectre		
<b>Magic Resistance</b>	Immune to all mind-affecting spells, plus as noted above		

### Background

In the days following the War of the Lance on Krynn and the return of the true gods to that world, Revered Son Guran was known far and wide for his compassion, piety, and charity, all in the name of his noble patron deity, Paladine. Though his healer's skills saved many lives, the humble priest would accept no rewards, professing that his true reward was the knowledge that he had saved lives and brought them to the grace of Paladine. As the years passed, many young acolytes of the faith came to study under him, and thus his fame spread to all corners of the world, borne by those who

had seen the man himself and come away feeling blessed and enlightened. Guran was renowned as a paragon of benevolence and mercy.

Behind the pure white facade of "Paladine's faithful servant," however, beat a heart blacker than any man could have credited the "kindly" old priest with. In truth, for all the years Guran had wandered the countryside preaching of Paladine's mercy and healing the sick, his soul had been deeded to black Morgion, god of disease and decay. Morgion himself shielded his servant from those rare few who doubted the old man's true intentions; though it cost the evil god much, Guran avidly sought to justify his dark lord's confidence.

For every sick child that Guran healed of the fever, a score more would wither and die in the prime of their youth. For every mother safely delivered of a difficult birth, dozens would die in agony as they labored desperately to bring a twisted and malformed child into the world, one who could offer no solace to a grieving father. Everywhere he traveled Guran brought with him Morgion's most fiendish plagues—diabolic maladies that rotted brains, wilted limbs, cast some into the fires of raging fever and chilled others to the bone with icy fingers clawing at their hearts. Each of these plagues spread like a summer grassfire, leaping from village to village in a chain of death and ruin. Always the kindly old cleric was halfway across the continent of Ansalon and several months away, for the most insidious element of these diseases was their slow action, removing all taint of suspicion from Guran himself. Often Guran would hasten back to the villages afflicted with his own plagues, arriving like a miraculous savior to heal the few who had managed to last long enough—his open sorrow over every life he failed to save convinced even the most suspicious of his good intentions.

Yet tongues wagged and people talked. The common folk of Ansalon began to believe that Guran must have been cursed to always be dogged with disease and death wherever he traveled—yet Guran's wiles turned even this to his advantage. As these rumors reached his ears, Guran began hinting that it was in fact the other way around: that he had dedicated himself to

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

pursuing and eradicating plague all his life, and that some dark force was in fact dogging his steps and mocking him by infecting those he had already healed. This version of the story spread, and Guran's fame grew as people spoke of his dedication to his healer's work and his determination in the face of his dark adversary.

One day in late autumn, however, all was revealed. Blind chance caused a young serving girl to come across Guran at his fiendish work in the servant's quarters of Tallgaard Keep in southern Solamnia; though Guran immediately struck her down with all his god's cursed power, her gurgling death-cries alerted the castle to the priest's activities. As he fled the castle, Morgion stretched out his rancid hand and cursed his failed servant, striking him down with a terrible rotting sickness. Such was the price Guran paid for his failure.

Morgion's curse was slow in working, though every day was a hell of torment for the dying priest. In desperation, Guran turned to the only one who could preserve his existence—Chemosh, lord of the undead, Morgion's fellow in the ranks of the evil gods. Chemosh accepted Guran's dying plea, and transformed the cleric into a heucuva. As the flesh sloughed from Guran's bones and he looked on the world with the empty sight of the undead, the Mists rose and claimed him for their own.

## Current Sketch

Now styling himself "Father," Guran does not yet realize that he is in a place where neither Morgion nor Chemosh hold sway. Thus he wanders the domains of the Core, seeking both to atone for his failure in Morgion's service and justify his new lord's gift of undeath. He continues the evil work of his mortal life, though no longer does he shield his depravity behind Paladine's name; having learned that the name means little or nothing to most of the folk of this strange land, but wary of those travelers who have recognized the name in the past, Guran prefers to invent a deity on the spot when questioned.

Unlike normal heucuva, Guran has no particular hatred of priests. Certainly, as an undead abomination he fears their holy power over his kind, and loathes them for their ability to upset his secret work, but he retains formidable clerical powers of his own, and his true obsession is death and disease. Who can say how many of the plagues that have ravaged the domains of the Core in the last forty years or so have been Guran's work? His cold, dead hand could be behind any one of them.

As the years have passed, Guran has sunk into a kind of madness. The depravity of now almost seventy years' worth of evil, the passage from life to undeath, and the sudden shift to the strange land of Ravenloft

have all taken their toll on the fallen priest's sanity, and he has developed certain irrational fears. Chief among his phobias is a pathological avoidance of the domain of Sithicus; half-remembered tales of Lord Soth that chilled even Guran's black heart in life have mixed with confused dreams and imaginings to make the death knight a figure of overpowering, all-consuming evil in the heucuva's mind—Guran now believes that the death knight was sent by Paladine into undeath to pursue the man who blasphemed that noble god's service. This is pure fantasy, of course—Soth never even heard of Guran during his reign, nor would he have cared about the fallen priest were he to have learned of him—but Guran's fear remains strong, and the fallen priest will not voluntarily approach within a mile of the border of Sithicus. Of course, Guran refuses to believe the reports that Soth has utterly vanished, believing them to be nothing more than lies intended to lure him to his doom.

Guran largely spends his undeath polymorphed into mortal form, appearing just as he did in life. He appears as a kindly old man with gray hair shading to pure white, with compassionate brown eyes that seem to absorb the suffering of those he tends. He invariably wears snow-white robes. In his true form what little flesh remains hangs from his cracked and rotting skeleton in tattered shreds. His white robes are torn and stained with blood and pus.

## Combat

The dark powers have gifted this unique heucuva with several powers beyond those his kind normally possesses. Guran has retained the intelligence and capacity for speech of his mortal life, deranged as he may be, and he has even retained the spellcasting powers of an 8th-level priest. His spells are invariably connected to undead or disease. Guran also has the capacity to control all forms of lower undead, including skeletons, zombies, ghouls, and ghosts. This latter power is seldom used, however, given its potential to compromise his preferred disguise.

The rotting sickness that Guran's claws spread is more powerful than that of the "normal" heucuva; any character struck by Guran's sharp fingers must save vs. poison at -4, and Morgion's curse saps Charisma as well as Strength and Constitution. Any character that dies at Guran's claws whose body is not destroyed by flame or sanctified with holy water will rise as a free-willed heucuva within six days of death; Guran has no power to command those he slays, though sometimes they might travel with him of their own accord like a kind of ghoulish acolyte.

Just as Morgion protected Guran's secret in life, so too do the dark powers protect their plaything in undeath. No kind of detection spell or psionic power

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

that might reveal Guran's true nature will work at all; only in direct combat will Guran shed his disguise, and his spells are powerful enough that this is not always a necessity.

## Adventure Ideas

- ❖ The PCs answer a call for help from a village in the throes of a virulent plague. When they arrive they find that Father Guran—whom they may already know by reputation—is also tending the sick. Despite their best efforts, however, people continue to die, though a few are saved. When Guran appears at the scene of several epidemics in succession, the PCs may become suspicious, though proving the heucuva is at fault will be difficult indeed . . .
- ❖ Should the whims of the Mists deposit Father Guran within the Sithican borders, there is no telling what his reaction will be. It is possible that he might even attempt, in desperation, a confrontation with Lord Soth himself. Such a quest is purest madness, of course, but the PCs might be swayed by the kindly old priest into lending their aid . . .





# EDUARD DUVOIR

## THE LOWEST FORM OF PREDATOR

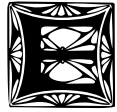
by Stefan MAC

mac\_cosfilow@hotmail.com

*When there is a lack of honor in government, the morals of the whole people are poisoned.*

—Herbert Hoover  
New York Times, August 9, 1964

### APPEARANCE



duard Duvoir is a small, unremarkable man who owns a tailor's shop in Lekar, Falkovnia. Although he is only thirty years old, his hair is already thinned, and what remains is short and wiry. His eyes dart around nervously when talking, and his nose twitches almost constantly. Despite his nervous appearance, he has a friendly, outgoing personality, and is able to make friends almost at first meeting. Despite his friendliness, he has never married, nor has he ever shown any inclination to.

Lately however, those around him have noticed a subtle change in him, and neighbors talk of how he will sometimes close his shop during working hours for no apparent reason. They have also noticed that his shop, once the epitome of tidiness, has been afflicted by disorder, with supplies piled haphazardly on any flat place, and clothing flung over furniture, or dangling out of order on the display racks. Some customers have even spotted mice scampering among the wares.

As he is a wererat due to a curse, he is only able to change into the form of a giant rat. His appearance is of a rat approximately two feet from nose to rump, but with the same wiry, thinning hair as his human form. The lack of hair and the wiry nature of what is left combine to make him quite hideous when in this form. Despite his bestial form, he continues to exude a

friendly personality, although his eyes in rat form always glitter malevolently.

Although his family originally came from Dementlieu, Eduard was born in Falkovnia. As such, he bears a hawk brand on his forehead, marking him as a native.

### Eduard Duvoir

#### Maledictive Wererat, Neutral Evil

<b>Armor Class</b>	5	<b>Str</b>	14
<b>Movement</b>	12	<b>Dex</b>	18
<b>Level/Hit Dice</b>	5	<b>Con</b>	15
<b>Hit Points</b>	27	<b>Int</b>	13
<b>THAC0</b>	15	<b>Wis</b>	9
<b>No. Of Attacks</b>	1 or 2	<b>Cha</b>	15
	(see below)	<b>XP</b>	975
<b>Damage/Attack</b>	1d4 or 1d6		
<b>Special Attacks</b>	See below		
<b>Special Defenses</b>	See below		
<b>Special Vulnerabilities</b>	See below		
<b>Magic Resistance</b>	Nil		

### Background

Eduard Duvoir was born a tailor's son, and while his father had been fortunate enough to gain a commission from the army to provide uniforms, life was still hard for his family. When he reached manhood, Eduard followed in his father's trade, and upon the elder's death, continued to supply clothing to the Falkovnian troops. Due to his skill and personality, his shop soon became a regular place to have a drink and socialize, and Eduard made friends among nearly every level of society.

As he grew up, he saw the way the people were treated. Often he had been forced to watch as entire families were rounded up for imaginary crimes and carted away to execution. At first the spectacle bothered him, and in researching the lives of these supposed "criminals," he found more often than not that they were innocent of any wrongdoing. As these were his friends and neighbors, he found himself more and more

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

frustrated by the way the military was treating them. Often, he would visit the ones that had not yet been executed, offering what comfort he was able. Due to the fact that he had tailored nearly every uniform in the city, he was even able to gain enough influence to supply blankets or coats to those in the most desperate need.

As time went on, he began to rationalize the motives of the army. As he watched more and more citizens carted away on trumped-up charges, he tried not to notice their eyes as they were carried past. The Falkovnian government was the only one he had ever known, and his father had always stressed to him that the family's living depended on the good graces of the military. He began to convince himself that if these people were being arrested, then there must be a reason for it somewhere. These attempts at justification led him to think that even if the prisoners were innocent of the crimes they were accused of, surely they must have done something to deserve punishment.

One day, one of his regular customers stopped by to have a cloak repaired. The man seemed very ill at ease, and, as the two were close friends, Eduard offered him a drink and asked what was wrong. To his shock, his friend revealed that he was a half-elf, and that the army was about to arrest him and his family. Eduard's first thought was to denounce him immediately, but the years between the two caused him to rethink the ideas he had set for himself. Before he knew what he was doing, he had offered the other a hiding place in his cellar.

As the half-elf and his family made themselves comfortable, he pleaded with Eduard to accept some of his family's jewelry in payment. Eduard was awed by its quality, and that night resolved to gain the rest. His long and close friendship with the man was forgotten as Eduard once again convinced himself that if the army wanted them, then they must be guilty. He was even able to rationalize a feeling of betrayal, in that in all the years the two had known each other, his friend had hidden his "tainted" blood. However, he did not wish to lose the chance of getting the rest of the family's wealth. With that in mind, he resolved that as they were already guilty in the eyes of the law, he would spare the authorities the trouble of trial and execution.

The next morning he told his friend that he knew of a way that they could escape, but that it would cost a great deal. The half-elf immediately offered everything the family had, and Eduard took it, promising to return with help. That night, he escorted the family to a warehouse where he kept his bolts of cloth, and showed them the secret cellar where he kept his more valuable merchandise. He assured them they would be able to make themselves completely at home, as the walls would hold in the noise. He then locked and barred the door, and abandoned them to starve. As he had told

them, the walls held in the noise. No one heard their pleas for help.

Two weeks later, he was in the warehouse looking for a specific shade that had been requested by a favored customer. He was unable to find any in his stock, but remembered that the half-elf's wife had once worn a dress of just the shade he wanted. Unlocking the door, he took the dress, and realized that the rest of the family's clothes were also salvageable. Without the least remorse, he helped himself to the trunks, and even robbed the remains of his victims. Later that night, he returned, stuffed the bodies into crates that he normally kept bolts of cloth in, weighted them with stones, and dumped them into the Vuchar River. Realizing that there would always be those desperate enough to try and escape Drakov's rule, he cleaned the room, and then let it be known that he had ways to help those in danger of arrest.

The final step in his corruption was when he hid a woman and her children who, again, had elven blood. As they died around her, she cursed Eduard:

*Vermin you are, and shall always be, until the day your victims go free!*

Even though he was all the way across the city he heard the words, and rushed back to the room to find that the woman was already dead. Unnerved by the curse, he destroyed the clothing and all of their possessions along with the bodies, hoping to separate himself from it. As the days passed, and nothing happened, he decided that he had jumped to conclusions, and gave no more thought to the matter. Three weeks later, he had another family in "hiding."

To his horror, late one afternoon his body was suddenly racked with pain, and he transformed into a huge rat. In panic, he hid in his attic until nightfall, at which time he returned to his human form. Recalling the half-breed's words, he hurried to his warehouse and found that the family's youngest son had died that afternoon. As the rest of them starved, he found that he changed into a rat at the moment of each death, and remained so until dusk. Completely shaken, he destroyed the bodies as usual and returned to his shop to try and understand his new predicament.

## Current Sketch

Eduard detests his condition. As a man obsessed with neatness, he sees his shop and home descending into disorder as his rat side gains strength. Furthermore, the mice and rats drawn to him are constantly making off with small items and making nests in his stock. The more he tries to exterminate his unwelcome followers, the more they flock to him, and were it not for the fact that he is the best tailor on the area, his customers would long since have stopped their patronage.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

Even worse, the army is aware that someone in Lekar is aiding fugitives, and Drakov himself is beginning to take notice. Eduard is constantly worried that his odd behavior is going to attract the notice of the authorities, despite the precautions he takes. He requires that relatives of the fugitives he “helps” not contact him about their kin, and refuses to disclose where has “relocated” a family. So far, he has been able to keep his tracks covered, but he is beginning to realize that it is only a matter of time before someone catches on to his scheme.

To end his curse, he only needs to help a family escape from the militia. He knows this, but every time he takes another under his “protection,” the money he stands to make from their effects and their clothing sways him from his purpose, and once again, he changes as each family member dies. To avoid this, he has taken to poisoning or smothering some families outright (so that he transforms only once), but he hates doing this, as it will usually ruin the clothing for further use. So far, he has not fed on the bodies of his victims, although he experiences the urge every once in a while.

## Combat

Eduard is classified as having maledictive lycanthropy, as per Van Richten’s guidelines. As such his change is triggered by the death of one of his victims, and he remains in rat form until sunset. However, he is also able to voluntarily change form three times per day. When he does so, he can change back at will. He will rarely if ever use this ability, as he hates his condition. He is unable pass on his curse to others, and is also unable to summon normal rats. Those that infest his house and shop are merely pests and have no ties or loyalty to him, coming only as a side effect of his new condition.

He has never liked fighting, and if there is any possible means of escape he will change into rat form and flee. If he is forced into battle, he will bite once per round for 1d4 damage. However, three times per day he can partially change his forepaws into half-rat, half-human claws. With these he can make two attacks for 1d6 damage, and anyone hit by him must make a save vs. poison or be afflicted by a painful infection that reduces Dexterity and Strength by 2 points for 1d4 turns.

Eduard regenerates 2 hit points per round, and is unaffected by silver. He is also immune to any form of disease or poison. If he is reduced to 0 hit points, he will immediately change to rat form and flee until he has returned to full health. If he is hit for any amount of damage at this point, he falls into a death-like state until the next sunrise, at which time he awakens with 1d6 hit points.

Any damage dealt to him by one of the tools of his trade (scissors, needles, etc.), cannot be regenerated, and they are the only way he can be truly killed.

## Adventure Hooks

- ❖ Adventurers often come to the attention of Drakov and his army, and a chance to escape the domain may entice those who have been defeated in the past, or who know that an outright confrontation would be beyond their power.
- ❖ The PCs have tangled with the Falkovnian army before, but need to pass through the domain to complete a mission. Someone who knows of Eduard’s activities tells them to contact him for help, not knowing what that help entails.
- ❖ A friend of the PCs living in Falkovnia needs to escape and goes to Eduard. The PCs later try to find him, and are directed to contact a certain tailor in Lekar for information. An interview with Eduard should let them know that something is wrong. Alternatively, they may not suspect anything, and begin directing fugitives to him.



# DR. HENRY WOLLCOTE

ANGEL OF MERCY, HERALD OF DEATH

by Freidrich Gothe  
fgothe@hotmail.com

*Not mine own fears nor the prophetic*

*soul*

*Of the wide world dreaming on the*

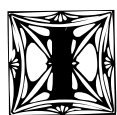
*things to come*

*Can yet the lease of my true love control,*

*Supposed as forfeit to a confined doom.*

—William Shakespeare  
Sonnet 107

## Introduction



I was twelve years old when I first met death. I remember so clearly, even now, thirty years hence, the moisture of the earth and the faces of the men.

They stood in vast formations preparing themselves for death—waiting for death to claim them. White and gaunt crying men, men that prayed, men that tore their guts out, men like ghosts, men whose dreams became as the hushed whispers rolling out across the grass, they all had their way of reconciling with death. I did not understand the scarlet banners with the falcon's head nor why men were willing to die for them. And when they rolled out, those doomed soldiers, thundering in great herds across the plane, I knew I was witnessing something magnificent and terrible.

When the Darkonian army met with the Falcons there was a great clash and suddenly the entire first line fell beneath the churning swords. Some of them were not dead, but the stampede crushed those who were still alive. I remember wondering why we had no medics,

but I know now. Drakov's generals knew what was waiting for them on the other side. They knew none of us were coming back.

A half-elf with a choke collar and a falcon branded into his forehead told my team no one was to be saved. We were instructed to burn the corpses as we came to them. I was given a torch, and I began running about setting fire to the bodies. The muddy earth was soaked with blood; my boots slogged about in the mess. I was caught in a daze just then. I saw some of the injured men rising from the ground and killing the medics. The screams were terrible. I was so frightened that I ran into the thick billows of black smoke to hide. When I finally stopped running I heard someone next to me ask for help. He was Darkonian.

He was lying on his back in a pool of blood. One hand was out stretched feebly, the other was over a dark black stain on his stomach. I stood still, paralyzed with fear for a moment, but for some reason I felt drawn to him. I knelt at his side and took his hand. He was crying and begging for help; so, I looked at the wound. I was quite surprised to find that, except for the wound, his entire body was clean. His hands, his face, his chest— not a drop of blood. He began to pray as he died, and when he did I saw death in his eyes. I prepared to burn the corpse, but this one did not rise like the others. He looked peaceful, so I left his body amid the ashes.

I had seen that day, in that soldier's eyes, what no man was meant to see, and I knew then too, death had a name. Somehow in my epiphany I had defeated death. I became a doctor years later. I performed the impossible.

I cheated death over and over. Where the gods failed I succeeded. I claimed not to have known how I managed to consistently defy medical knowledge, but in truth, I knew that it had been because of what I had seen back in the Dead Man's Campaign. I tried to forget. I thought it was over . . . until I met death a second time.



I was married to Maria Joyce Helcyna in 748 BC, but often I was away on missionary activities. I spent a

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

year in Valachan after the dissolution of Darkon, another year in Borca experimenting with toxin antidotes, and I was to return home to Mordent after a brief tour of Hazlan. These were happy times for me. I was enjoying my . . . “gift,” and thoughts of death were the farthest thing from my mind.

My entourage and I were staying in the city of Toyalis, near the Balinoks, when I met death for the second time. It was in the eyes of a little Rashemi boy who was sick with a festering rot. Even if I were to have saved him, he would have been disfigured or worse from the canker. Since the boy had been sick others in the town were catching the disease. It was spreading like the plague. They called it the rot. I could find no cure. All of my powers failed me when I needed them most. The Mulans seemed curiously immune to the disease, but that did not stop them from taking the opportunity to exterminate the sick. When the Rashemi boy died, I saw death in his eyes too. He begged me to save him, but who can withstand the architect of doom?

My despair lasted for days until I met a street scavenger. He said that the plague was all my fault; that death was seeking revenge against me for all the times I had cheated it. I wanted to ignore the old man’s accusations, but I could not deny his charges. Each accusation brought back the memories from my childhood that I labored to forget. At night I dreamed of death. I saw him in the windows. I saw him in the dark corners. I saw him everywhere. And one night during a terrible storm I decided I would hunt death.

It was not hard to pick up his trail. I tracked him by his sent—that moldy nausea that accompanies him wherever he treads. I followed him into the Balinoks. I chased him until finally, I saw him once more standing before me. He was a huge figure, at least a head higher than I. He was draped in rotten fur pelts. I drew my sword and ran to him; I would kill death. But death would not die. My sword past into his withered frame and no more. Death seized me by the lapels and gazed long into my soul. Then, in a flash of thunder and lightning, he threw me to the rocks and was gone. But in that last instance I caught a glimpse of something most horrible. I saw my wife in a hellish nightmare. Death was about to punish me by destroying the only thing I loved!

I quickly assembled my entourage and rushed back to Mordent. We raced against the sands of time. I madly hoped that somehow, we could beat death to my home. But we were too late. My wife had fallen to the rot three days past. I asked to see her, I thought perhaps I would cheat death once more. But alas! death would not suffer my impingement any longer. I have sought death ever since that day. I have tracked him to the far reaches of the land, and some day I shall find him once more—for even death must sleep!

## Dr. Henry Wollcote

**Human, 1st-level Warrior, 7th-level Expert (Doctor)**

<b>Strength</b>	9 (–1)
<b>Dexterity</b>	10 (0)
<b>Constitution</b>	14 (+2)
<b>Intelligence</b>	13 (+1)
<b>Wisdom</b>	17 (+3)
<b>Charisma</b>	12 (+1)

<b>Fortitude Save</b>	+6
<b>Reflex Save</b>	+2
<b>Will Save</b>	+5
<b>Alignment</b>	Neutral Good
<b>Speed</b>	30 ft.
<b>Size</b>	M (5’10”)

<b>Initiative</b>	+0
<b>Armor Class</b>	10
<b>Hit Points</b>	38
<b>Melee Attack</b>	+5/+0
<b>Ranged Attack</b>	+6/+1

**Skills:** Alchemy +11, Climb +3, Diplomacy +9, Heal +16, Knowledge (medicine) +14, Knowledge (anatomy) +10, Knowledge (disease) +10, Ride +4, Spot +5.

**Feats:** Great Fortitude, Skill Focus (heal), Skill Focus (medicine), Toughness.

**Special Equipment:** Medical kit (+2 heal checks).

**Special Abilities: Raise dead (Sp):** See below.

Proficient in all simple and martial weapons, all armor, and all shields.

## Appearance

Dr. Henry Wollcote is forty-four years old, although he appears to be about sixty. He has thin gray and white hair. He is plump and a very monotonous dresser. Rarely does he ever wear anything other than brown pants, a white shirt, and his tweed jacket. He carries a small black bag with medical supplies everywhere he goes.

## Background

Henry Oslow Wollcote III was born in 712 B.C. to a struggling Mordentish family. When Henry was six, his mother succumbed to a terrible illness and died. Henry’s father, wanting his son to grow up in a household that could provide opportunities, sent Henry to live with his grandfather, Henry Oslow Wollcote I,

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

and grandmother who were living in Falkovnia at the time.

When war broke out between Darkon and Falkovnia in 724 B.C., Drakov ordered that all foreigners of eligible age in the city of Levkarest and Sturben be conscripted into the army. Since Henry was so young at the time, he was assigned along with the other children to a team whose primary duty was to burn corpses to prevent them from rising and attacking on the side of the Darkonians. It was during this time that he claims to have met death.

Henry survived the war and attended medical school in Lamordia. After he married he spent several years in foreign countries healing the sick and dying. During this time Dr. Wollcote won incredible fame by saving even the most hopeless patients, but all that changed after his stay in Hazlan.

What occurred in Hazlan is at best uncertain, but most think that the doctor was suffering from some mild, temporary madness. He cut short his tour of Hazlan after claiming to have had a vision of his dead wife succumbing to a disease known as “the rot.”

## Current Sketch

Since the death of his wife, Dr. Wollcote has entered into a deep depression. He has left his estate and forsaken his wealth to help cure the ills of the poor. He has become more reclusive over the years during his crusade to destroy a monster he calls “death.” Often, when speaking with the doctor, it is difficult to tell whether or not he is speaking metaphorically. More recently the doctor has begun to show signs of the rot himself.

## Personality

Before the death of his wife, Dr. Wollcote was very arrogant and prideful. Often he would boast that he had conquered death. After his time in Hazlan he had a nervous break down. The doctor often appears to be morbid, somber, and reclusive, but is at heart very kind and warm.

## Combat

The doctor still possesses some fighting skill from his time in the army, but despite his skill with a weapon, Dr. Wollcote avoids combat at all costs. Although he will defend himself, he will absolutely not kill any living thing even if it means sacrificing his own life.

Dr. Wollcote’s greatest power is his ability to *raise dead*, as the spell. This ability is useable at any time, but any target who has been dead for longer than seven hours (one hour per Expert class level Dr. Wollcote

possesses) cannot benefit from the power. The procedure requires 3d4 hours to perform. No one is allowed to attend the procedure. If crafty PCs do manage to spy on the procedure, the DM should demand a Horror check at least though a Madness check may be more appropriate (some things are not meant to be seen). Dr. Wollcote contends that his ability is nothing more than amazing medical skill, but the DM is encouraged to expand upon the source of his power. One thing is clear, however. The doctor’s ability definitely first appeared after his stint as a Falkovnian “*medic*” in the Dead Man’s Campaign.

Dr. Wollcote’s ability to raise the dead does have some drawbacks. It cannot raise anyone who has died from “the rot” and certain other magical diseases at the DM’s discretion (e.g. mummy rot). Furthermore, each time Dr. Wollcote uses his ability, he must make a Fortitude save (DC 20) or suffer 1d4 points of Constitution damage from the disease which has infected him (see below). Since his infection, the doctor has exercised more judicious control over his power. Dr. Wollcote cannot recover from the Constitution loss by natural means; magical healing such as *restoration* and *greater restoration* has a 40% chance of healing the ability damage as per the spell’s description. Nothing, not even a *wish*, will cure him of the disease.

## The Rot

**Infection:** Ingested

**DC:** 15

**Incubation Period:** 3 days

**Damage:** 1d4 Constitution

**Special:** Anyone who takes 4 points of Constitution damage is wracked with convulsions. Make an immediate Fortitude save (DC 20) or die. Successful healing checks do not help a patient combat the disease. *Remove disease* does not help a victim although *restoration*, *lesser restoration*, and *greater restoration* work normally. A victim who dies from the rot is permanently dead. Only a *limited wish*, *wish*, *resurrection*, or *true resurrection* have a chance of restoring the victim to life.

Early symptoms of the rot are oral warts, profuse sweating, and dry skin. As the disease progresses the victim becomes dehydrated. Flesh withers, blackens, and sloughs away. Violent convulsions attack the victim randomly. These fits are the most dangerous aspect of the disease and usually result in death. The most common vector for the disease is drinking water.

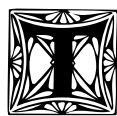


# UMBRAN THE SHADOW LICH

A TENBROUS VILLAIN WHO LURKS BEYOND THE LIGHT

by Eric C. Daniel  
fgothe@hotmail.com

## BIOGRAPHY



he Land of Mists has many forms of darkness: the darkness of night, which covers the land all too often; The darkness of an evil soul, which can hide within the most innocent of façades; the darkness of ignorance, which keeps the common folk in superstition and fear. All of these forms of darkness can provide power to the one who wields them skillfully. This is the tale of one such hopeful who sought to wield the power of darkness, the power of shadows themselves, and what it caused him to become.

## Appearance

Umbran resembles the mortal being he used to be, except his skin has taken on a shiny black-gray color, much like polished hematite, and his eyes are nothing but black pits. He tends to wear black, midnight blue, deep brown, or royal purple robes. Unlike other liches, he does try to take care of his appearance, and repairs or replaces any items of clothing that become tattered and worn.

## Umbran

**18th-level Shadow Lich, Lawful Evil**

<b>Armor Class</b>	0	<b>Str</b>	9
<b>Movement</b>	12	<b>Dex</b>	13
<b>Level/Hit Dice</b>	18/11	<b>Con</b>	12
<b>Hit Points</b>	72	<b>Int</b>	18
<b>THAC0</b>	9	<b>Wis</b>	16
<b>No. of Attacks</b>	1	<b>Cha</b>	15
<b>Damage/Attack</b>	1–10 + special (see below)		
<b>Special Attacks</b>	Spells, see below		
<b>Special Defenses</b>	Spells, see below		
<b>Magic Resistance</b>	Nil		

## Background

A century and a half ago, Marcus Shadowmehr was born to one of the rich merchant families of Il Aluk. His parents were primarily wine merchants, gathering vintages from across the Core, and reselling them in Darkon and elsewhere. They were also devout followers of the Eternal Order and the various superstitions that gave rise to them. They raised their son to appreciate fine quality, to always use his mind, and to respect the traditions of the Eternal Order. They told him to always respect the dark forces, and avoid their temptations lest he join them.

Marcus learned his lessons well, becoming an expert wine taster and smoothly taking over the family business when he came of age. However, he formed his own opinions about the darkness. He saw how the nobles oppressed the people for their own gain and pleasures. He also saw how those of an evil bent gained power in the land. Even the dead, who held so much power over the minds of Darkonians, were said to be rapacious and evil. Marcus observed all of this, and came to the conclusion that darkness and evil held great

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

sway in the Land of Mists. He wanted to know more and gain some of that power himself.

Marcus began to study wizardry. He hired excellent tutors to teach him the basics, and then began his own studies and projects. His family's business, which was still doing well, helped fund these studies. Marcus also used some of the enchantments he learned to gain advantages over rivals, increasing his fortune even more.

Wanting to know more about the darkness that hid true power and controlled the lands and rulers of the Land of Mists, Marcus started by studying its most obvious avatars: shadows, night, and gloom. He learned spells for controlling and banishing light, and how to use the essence of shadow to lend an edge of reality to his illusions. Marcus's studies laid the basic groundwork for a new type of specialist mage unseen before in the Land of Mists, the shadow mage.

During this time, his fortunes started to grow, as he continued to use the magic he learned to aid his business. Marcus's business practices also started to become more ruthless and cold-hearted, using blackmail and other unsavory methods against competitors. Eventually, after amassing a huge fortune, he sold the family business and retired to a small vineyard and manor in northeast Darkon to devote all his time to his studies.

Marcus's hunger for knowledge only grew after becoming a full-time wizard. His studies of physical and magical darkness gave him glimpses of the spiritual, utter darkness he was searching for, but no definite proof, no true picture. This lack of knowledge frustrated him to no end.

During this time, he found certain tomes that indicated that one with sufficient power could alter his form and merge with the essence of shadow to become a creature known as a shade. Marcus decided to try this process, since by becoming a shade he would have an eternity to work in, and be that much closer to the darkness he sought.

To begin the transformation, he started collecting items and creatures of shadow in order to study their connection to what he called the "essence of darkness" so he could access it himself. Marcus gathered tomes and other items of power, experimented on many victims, and finally captured a particular shadow to examine.

While Marcus had summoned and controlled shadows before, this shadow was supposed to have spontaneously risen from the corpse of a man. Magical divinations indicated this was once a living man. Marcus enacted magical protections to keep him safe from the shadow's supernatural powers, and began his experiments. Unfortunately, this shadow had not been created by magic, but by the shadow virus (see *RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM Appendix III*).

This was not something Marcus Shadowmehr knew about or could prepare for, and this was his undoing.

During the experiments, the shadow managed to strike the wizard several times and Marcus, protected from most of the shadow's powers, took no notice. But these strikes were enough to infect him with the shadow virus. Marcus didn't realize this until seven days later when his own shadow fractured and vanished. This put him in shock until the full possible consequences came to bear. Marcus subsequently began to step up his experiments, trying to gain immortality before dying. (He did not know that victims of the virus become shadows themselves.) The result of the experiments, which destroyed the original shadow, was a black and bilious concoction. This was supposed to strengthen his connection to the realm of shadows, exchanging his flesh for the essence of shadowstuff, granting him eternal life and freedom from the disease. By this time, most of his body was immaterial, so Marcus had little to lose by drinking it.

The potion itself was vile, and his reaction to it was horrible. After screaming and losing consciousness, Marcus spent two weeks in a coma. The potion he created reacted with the shadow virus in his veins, creating something quite new that was neither shade nor shadow, but comprised of the essence of both, and yet more powerful than either alone. Marcus Shadowmehr was no more. In his place, Umbran, the Shadow Lich arose.

## Current Sketch

Umbran, as he now calls himself, is still devoted to research. A cool, clinical, and detached scholar, he will experiment on living and undead subjects alike without concern for their comfort or health. He still searches for the essence of evil that permeates the Land of Mists, and embraces his new form to extend his research indefinitely. Umbran still resides in the vineyard and manor, but has expanded his lair below the manor to include many laboratories, libraries, and other rooms whose purpose only he knows. The valley his estate resides in has grown somewhat wild over the decades, and shadows, both sentient and not, stretch far and wide under the grapevines that seem to cover the valley floor. This has led many of the locals to rename it the Valley of Gloom. Marcus also retains a certain fondness for art, fine wines, and other items of beauty and taste, and will sometimes cloak himself in illusion to purchase or steal such things to decorate his lair. Although he cannot taste the wines (a disturbing fact for one who had such a highly trained pallet) he does keep them in a special cellar. Marcus could be considered to have one of the finest collections of valuable wines in the Land of Mist.



# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

## Combat

Umbran avoids one-on-one combat, preferring to let his servants wear down and destroy opponents. Should combat prove necessary, however, he is more than capable of making a showing for himself.

Umbran is surrounded by an aura of power similar to that of other types of liches, causing any creature of less than 5th level or 5 HD to make a save vs. spell or flee in fear. The aura of the shadow lich also causes a all light sources within 10 feet to dim, reducing them to little more than candlelight level. Magical light sources such as *light* or *continual light* spells are also dampened, giving off no more light than a standard torch. The damaging effects of such lights on creatures such as drow or shadows are reduced to half efficiency. Sunlight is dampened down to twilight level.

Umbran's touch drains 1 point of Strength from the target, much like a shadow. This also inflicts 1d10 points of damage. Multiple attacks can drain more points of Strength, and a person completely drained of Strength must make a System Shock check or die. The victim of such a draining can be resurrected normally.

Umbran can only be hit by weapons of at least +1 or better enchantment, and is immune to all illusions and life- or mind-affecting magic. Cold, fire, and electricity also have no effect. Because of his triple planar link, (Demiplane of Dread, Plane of Shadow, and Negative Energy Plane) he is turned as "special" undead.

Umbran is a powerful spellcaster, being an 18th-level mage. Unlike most liches, Umbran is actually a specialist, a shadow mage. Like normal liches, he requires spellbooks and normal magical components. As a shadow mage, he imposes a negative modifier to subjects' saving throws against his spells. Unlike other shadow mages, this modifier is fairly constant because of his darkening aura. In full daylight, apply a -1 to others' saving throws, under the effects of *light* or *continual light* apply -2, in all other conditions, apply a -3. Umbran has a number of magical items, some that he himself has created, and others that he has collected over his unlife.

Destroying Umbran is a bit more involved than destroying other liches. Umbran keeps his life in his shadow, which remains intangible and unable to be affected on the Prime. The process of transformation caused the lich's flesh to be replaced with shadowstuff, so when enough damage is inflicted on the lich to "kill" it, the shadowstuff around his bones dissipates, causing his skeleton to fall to the ground. His shadow remains unaffected and hides under the bones. When the lich's life is totally in his shadow, he is said to be in shadowform. While he is in shadowform, he is mobile and should be treated much as a standard shadow, save

with its original lich aura and damage capability and greater immaterialness (still takes +1 to hit).

After 1d3 days, Umbran manages to accumulate enough shadowstuff to wrap around his bones and reanimate them. If his skeleton is destroyed as well, (Truly destroyed, such as by a disintegrate or wish spell, not simply chopping up the bones—if the bones are simply broken up, the lich can "glue" them back together with shadowstuff) the lich's shadowform retreats to his lair or some other place of darkness, away from the adventurers that damaged him so. After 1d3 weeks, he regenerates enough of this shadowstuff substance to return to the Prime. There he will search for a new set of bones to wrap his shadowstuff around and reanimate over 1d3 days. The only way to destroy him is to trap his shadowform in an area he cannot slip out of, and use a combination of continual light, bless, and dispel evil to completely dissipate his spirit.

**Spellbook (5/5/5/5/5/3/3/2/1):** 1st—*armor, cantrip, change self, chill touch\*, detect magic, detect undead, grease, identify, read magic, sleep\*, spook\*, unseen servant, wizard mark*; 2nd—*blur\*, continual darkness\*, darkness 15' radius\*, death recall♠, detect invisibility, ESP, knock, ray of enfeeblement\*, scare\*, spectral hand\*, wall of gloom\*, wizard lock*; 3rd—*clairaudience, clairvoyance, dispel magic, Lorloveim's creeping shadow\*#, nondetection\*, phantom steed\*, spirit armor\*, wraithform\**; 4th—*bestow curse, dimension door\*, enervation\*, Evard's black tentacles\*, fear\*, magic mirror, minor creation\*, shadow monsters\**; 5th—*demishadow monsters\*, know value♠, major creation\*, Mordenkainen's faithful hound\*, passwall\*, Rary's telepathic bond♠, teleport*; 6th—*blackmantle\*♠, Bloodstone's spectral steed\*, death fog, demishadow magic\*, disintegrate, enchant an item, legend lore, Lorloveim's shadowy transformation\**; *true seeing*; 7th—*duo-dimension\*, phase door\*, power word: stun, shadowcat\*, shadowwalk\*, teleport without error, vision*; 8th—*analyze dweomer#, permanency, maze\*, screen, shadowform\*♠, symbol*; 9th—*energy drain\*, power word: kill, shape change, wish*

\* Shadow Magic spell

♠ From *The Complete Wizard's Handbook*

# From *PLAYER'S OPTION: Spells & Magic*



# SIR WILLIAM CANIFAX

## A HUNTER WHO PAID THE PRICE OF KNOWLEDGE IN FLESH

by Andrew Cermak  
cermak@kargafane.com

### Introduction



Autumn had come quietly to Mordent, the summer heat trailing off lazily through the month of September. The leaves had only recently started to turn, and relatively few dotted the forest floor.

James Martigan stared out at the trees through the carriage window. He tried to remain as impassive as he could through the jostles induced by the cantering horses and the debris dotting the lightly maintained road. The trip from Mordentshire was nearing its end; what good came of it remained to be seen.

Finally, Canifax Manor came into view, sitting squarely at the zenith of Canifax Hill, an unimpressive landmark that had gone nameless until one Sir William Canifax decided to settle atop it. The driver eased the horses to a slow trot to better traverse the slowly inclining terrain.

The carriage finally reached the zenith of its destination. Martigan slowly and carefully exited the carriage, leaning on his cane for balance. He looked up at the manor for a moment, and was unimpressed as always. For a man of money and breeding, Canifax had a surprising disinterest in architectural splendor. The manor was all right angles, built with practicality, reliability, and frugality aforethought. Martigan hobbled slowly through the open iron gate and to the manor door. He rapped three times on the door with his heavy cane, and stood uncomfortably as he waited for a response. Even the slight autumn breeze chilled him more than he was eager to endure for long.

A few minutes later, the door opened with a barely audible creak. A young man with a somber face peered out. "I'm sorry, sir, but Master Canifax is not . . ."

Martigan loudly cleared his throat to cut the man off, and stuck the end of his cane through the doorway. "I'm sorry, young man, but Master Martigan is not waiting out in this cold for another second, and he is certainly not turning around and going home. Now stand aside, if you please. I've important business with William."

The young man stood there a moment, mouth agape, and slowly moved out of the doorway. Martigan stepped inside. "Thank you. Now go fetch me some hot tea. I'll find William on my own." The young man nodded slightly and hurried off.

It had been a long time since Martigan had walked the hallways of Canifax Manor, but he found that little had changed. The décor was still an odd mix of the austere and the eclectic. Foreboding paintings depicting grim visions rested on the walls, while brightly colored and whimsical figurines from faraway lands stood watch from the corners. Canifax's studies into the arcane had developed in him a taste for the dark and the exotic; or perhaps it was the other way around.

Martigan soon found Canifax, seated in the corner of his study with a book in his lap, turning the pages with a gloved hand. A small fire burnt in the hearth beside him, providing the room's only light; the curtains were shut tight. Canifax had always preferred to read by firelight.

"Hello, James." Canifax said brusquely, not looking up from his book.

"Hello, William," Martigan answered with equal brusqueness as he stepped fully into the room. "I didn't think you could see me."

"I couldn't. I heard your cane tapping against the wood floor as you approached. And no one else could have cowed Marcus into letting them in." Canifax stopped his reading, closing the book softly as he looked up at Martigan. "What is it you want?"

Martigan scowled. "What makes you so certain I wanted anything from you? I seem to remember that we were good friends at one point. Must all my visits be selfish?"

Canifax rested his chin in his hand. "No, I'm sure they mustn't. But somehow it seems they always are. It's the merchant in you, James. There's no profit in social calls." Canifax gestured to a chair in the opposite corner of the room. Martigan nodded his thanks and took his seat.

"It's difficult for me to be as angry with you as I should," Martigan said, "since your accusations are on the mark. I do need your help with something."

## BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

Canifax exhaled sharply and stared at Martigan for a moment. "I hope this has nothing to do with the arcane, James. My retirement was not meant as a brief vacation."

"This is important, William. You could at least hear me out."

Canifax nodded but said nothing.

"You may have heard that I have started taking adventurers under my wing." Canifax continued to stare, giving no indication either way. "One of them has vanished. I would like you to find him for me, if you can."

Canifax cursed softly and looked down at his gloved hands, which were now folded in his lap. "How old is he?"

"Nineteen. Is that important?"

"Not where the spell is concerned, no. It just gives me an idea of exactly how foolish you've become in your old age."

Martigan bristled at the remark and started to rise from his chair, but felt a pain in his hip and thought better of it for the moment. "Foolish, am I? For doing what I can to see that other fathers need not lose their children in the night?"

"No, for sending idealistic and impressionable children to fight the battles for you."

Martigan dismissed the retort with a wave of his hand. "The 'children' would have fought the battles without my assistance. I do what I can to give them a fighting chance. It's no different than what Rudolph did with his guides."

Canifax shook his head. "I question Rudolph's wisdom on that count as well. But at least he could temper his acolytes' enthusiasm with his personal experience. You never raised a sword against evil, James. You send children to the lion's den and can't even tell them what a lion looks like."

Martigan snorted. "I forgot I was in the presence of a hero. I should have bowed."

Canifax chuckled softly. "Where was he lost?"

"Lamordia. Neufurchtenburg, to be precise. He was investigating some unusual disappearances, and he's been out of contact for two weeks. Naturally, I have concerns. Do you think you can find him?"

Canifax sighed. "Perhaps. I'll need something belonging to him."

Martigan thought for a moment and then reached into his pocket. He pulled out a small silver disc and flipped it to Canifax, who caught it deftly and held it in his palm, examining it.

"It's a Kartakan coin," Martigan said. "He keeps it as a good luck charm, but accidentally left it at my home when he departed."

Canifax looked up from the coin. "Not much of a traveler, is he? I have a sackful of these." Canifax put

the coin in his own pocket. "Regardless, it should be sufficient. Now we must go to Lamordia."

"Martigan frowned. "Why 'we'? Can't you cast the spell here?"

"I could, but it wouldn't do any good unless he's in Mordent. To find someone lost in Lamordia, the spell must be cast in Lamordia."

"What? Why? Are you telling me magic is slave to political boundaries?"

"That is precisely what I'm telling you."

Martigan was incredulous. "But why should that be so?"

Canifax paused thoughtfully. "There are numerous theories. The most popular is that magic is affected by the force of belief. Political borders may be imaginary lines on a map, but they are very powerful nonetheless. A man who crosses the border from Mordent to Dementlieu takes only a single step, but with that step his view of his surroundings changes completely. It's as if he has traveled to a separate world. Some believe that magic is affected by that change in perspective."

"I see. Is that what you believe?"

Canifax was silent for a long time, staring at his folded hands once more. At last he spoke. "No. I have . . . reason . . . to believe that something is consciously limiting magic. What exactly, I cannot say, but I believe that there is an outside force that does not want mages to be . . . too powerful."

Martigan was quiet for a moment as well. "You make it sound quite sinister. Is that such a bad thing?"

Canifax didn't answer, instead rising to his feet. "We're wasting time discussing speculations. Let me gather some things, and we'll head to Lamordia.."

Martigan nodded and slowly stood himself, grunting as he did so.

"But let me make one thing clear, James." Canifax crossed his arms and regarded Martigan with a stony face. "My decision to retire was not made lightly. I had compelling reasons, and it is only our friendship and concern for a young man's welfare that lead me to set them aside today.

"But it only for today. I do not expect to be asked a favor of this sort by you again. As my friend, I would expect you to respect my wishes even if you do not understand the reasons."

Martigan said nothing, and walked slowly from the room. Canifax knew that was as much acquiescence as he could expect James Martigan to show. When Martigan was out of sight, Canifax slowly removed his padded leather gloves. He held his withered, bony hands in front of his face, the fingers twisted and splayed, the bone-white flesh cracked and bleeding.

He knew all too well the price of magic.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

## Sir William Canifax

**Human Male, 12th-Level Wizard**

<b>Strength</b>	11 (0)
<b>Dexterity</b>	12 (+1)
<b>Constitution</b>	10 (0)
<b>Intelligence</b>	17 (+3)
<b>Wisdom</b>	13 (+1)
<b>Charisma</b>	9 (-1)

<b>Fortitude Save</b>	+4
<b>Reflex Save</b>	+4
<b>Will Save</b>	+9
<b>Alignment</b>	Lawful Good
<b>Speed</b>	30 ft.
<b>Size</b>	M

<b>Initiative</b>	+1
<b>Armor Class</b>	11 (+1 Dexterity)
<b>Hit Points</b>	26
<b>Attack Bonus</b>	+6/+1

**Skills:** Alchemy +5, Balance +1, Climb +1, Concentration +12, Hide +1, Intimidate +3, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Knowledge (constructs) +3, Knowledge (Mordent) +4, Knowledge (shapechangers) +7, Knowledge (undead) +7, Ride +3, Scry +5, Search +1, Sense Motive +3, Spellcraft +16, Spot +1, Swim +3

**Feats:** Combat Casting, Empower Spell, Quicken Spell, Silent Spell, Spell Mastery (*detect magic*, *dispel magic*, *magic missile*), Spell Penetration, Still Spell

**Languages:** Mordentish, Balok, Darkonese, Falkovnian, Lamordian, Kartakan

## Appearance

An unusually tall man at 6'4", Canifax often appears even taller by virtue of the top hat he is rarely seen without. He favors dark clothing of Dementlieu origin, and wears a black cloak whenever the temperature permits.

His hair is dark, but his neatly trimmed beard is streaked with white. His eyes are hazel; he is slightly near-sighted and makes occasional use of a monocle.

## Background

Sir William Canifax was born the son of wealthy landowners in southern Mordent, in the Barovian year 698. Southern Mordent is lightly populated, home to scattered villages and farmland, and the Canifax family was not particularly powerful or wealthy in the larger scheme of things. Still, William's parents had more than enough means at their disposal to provide for their

son's well being, and William wanted for little as a youth.

As he grew older, William began to tire of provincial life. He was a brilliant child, and his parents made certain that he received the best education within their means, but while William excelled in academic pursuits he found little in them that was capable of capturing his interest.

William began to withdraw from his family and peers, spending most of his time alone with his thoughts.

His parents were naturally concerned by William's distance, and searched for ways to spark his attention. Desperate for ideas, William's father began collecting rare and exotic books, hoping that he might find something William would take an interest in. Eventually, he did.

It was a small primer on the arcane, poorly written and even more poorly researched, but William found it fascinating. The concept of magic captivated him. At the age of thirteen, William Canifax became a voracious consumer of arcane writings. His parents were not exactly thrilled with the nature of his newfound interest, but given that William seemed happy for the first time in years they continued to support his interests.

As the years passed, with much study and travel, William became a competent wizard. He also found himself becoming bored with life once more. The more he studied magic, the more bored he became with its theoretical aspects, and there seemed little of a practical nature he could do with it and stay within the bounds of morality. In 727, however, the practical side of magic began to open itself up to William.

The normal tranquility of southern Mordent was broken by a rash of robberies and murders along the areas few roads. Remains of several victims had been discovered, butchered and stripped of all belongings. Several of the bodies had what were unmistakably teeth marks. Had the victims not been robbed, the deaths might have been attributed to wild animals, but the evidence of intelligent design made it clear something far more sinister was at work. Local villagers were terrified, and travel through the region ground to a halt.

William, on the other hand, was intrigued, and convinced himself that he could do something about the murders. Armed with some of his most potent spells, and little else, William began patrolling the nighttime roads. He barely escaped with his life.

Before he knew anything was there, he found himself set upon from the shadows. A pack of small figures, impossible to make out clearly in the moonlight, surrounded his horse and began slashing at its legs, trying to cripple the beast. Stunned at first, William regained his composure and began an incantation. One of the creatures fell to the ground as

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

two shafts of golden energy streamed from William's pointed finger and struck it in the chest. The remaining beasts jumped back warily. In the brief flash of light, William saw the faces of what he was dealing with. Twisted, bestial monstrosities, with maws full of sharp teeth, clutching small, barbed daggers . . . Terrified, William spurred his horse, and it galloped ahead as best it could. The beasts didn't bother to pursue, and were soon left far behind.

Though his first monster hunt had hardly been a success, William was not disheartened. In fact, now that the danger was passed, he found that he had rather enjoyed his brief encounter with danger. Only a week later, William returned, and the remainder of the Gblynn Robbers of Mordent were destroyed.

William would spend the next 22 years hunting monsters, developing his arcane skills and becoming a true force to be reckoned with. After the death of his parents, he moved away from the village of his birth and built a new estate on a hill deep in the woods, where he could carry on his unusual hobby in peace and without disturbance. While he would never attain the fame of the great Van Richten, or Mordent's other native son George Weathermay, William Canifax would go on to have a truly distinguished career as a slayer of monsters . . . one that would end in tragedy.

William had been hunting the monster for several months, along with two young, strong warriors he had brought along to ensure that he had the time and space necessary to cast his spells. The beast was a werewolf, an unusually clever brute that had been marauding the countryside of Mordent and Richemulot. They had flushed the beast out into an open field and were preparing to slay it at last.

Minutes later, the two warriors were dead, their slashed and broken bodies laying in the grass, while William sat crouched between them, hands clasped to the gash in his leg, mouth mumbling an incantation. The beast had been stronger and faster than they could have imagined, and now it looked down at William, seemingly reveling in his desperation and amused by his continued efforts.

William had prepared this particular spell just in case such a disaster had occurred, to buy himself the time necessary to bring more powerful enchantments to bear. He had never employed magic of this nature before, but he saw no other recourse. William completed his spell, and reached out his hands to touch the corpses of his allies. Suddenly, the bodies jerked and rose to their feet, animated by William's magic.

The beast stepped back, surprised by this turn of events, and as his zombies moved to engage the monster William began casting a new spell . . . when he felt a sudden coldness settle into his chest. His vision blurred, as if clouded by mist, and inaudible whispers seemed to buzz just outside his ears. The coldness in his

chest traveled down his arms, settling in his hands, where he felt the flesh crack and shrivel. The skin of his hands paled to a nauseating white, and the fingers curled and gnarled as he watched. The incantation died in his throat, replaced by a gasp of pain. William looked up to see the beast once more standing over the corpses of his departed allies, rent anew, and the beast seemed to grin as if recognizing his pain and confusion. Their eyes locked for a moment, and then the beast turned and fled into the night.

The next day, confused and terrified by what had happened, William decided to retire not only from monster hunting, but from the practice of magic entirely. He had devoted so much of his life to the pursuit of the arcane, and to have it betray him under such dire circumstances was a terrible shock. Even worse, Canifax felt something that night . . . something had descended on him, something intelligent and vengeful, and he resolved never to attract its attention again. So far, he has been true to his word.

## Current Sketch

Canifax has retired to the seclusion of his estate. His only regular associate is his servant, Marcus Luckman, and it would be an exaggeration to call them friends. Though he wouldn't admit it, Canifax's withdrawal from the outside world is an attempt to minimize his guilt over his retirement. While his reasons for giving up the practice of magic are genuine, he can't help but feel like a coward whenever he hears of an incident that could have been prevented with his aid. Minimizing his contact with the world outside lets him pretend that his help is not needed.

When something happens to disturb his seclusion, Canifax's reaction is mixed. Outwardly, he is surly and uncooperative, but a small part of him brightens at the chance to be a difference-maker once more.

## Personality

Canifax is not a personable fellow. While he is not completely without tact, he does tend to be direct and brusque in conversation. He also carries himself with a hint of intellectual arrogance that can be off-putting.

His stodgy personality is partially offset by the genuine and abiding sense of responsibility he feels toward his fellow man. As a young man, Canifax led a charmed life, and to this day he feels as if he owes something to the world. His alienation from magic has left him without the greatest skill he had to offer, and this has left him feeling like an inadequate shell of what he used to be. Without this outlet, he tries to find other ways to express his feelings of debt, and can be far

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

more kind and generous than his demeanor would lead one to believe.

## Combat

Although he retains his abilities as a wizard, Canifax does not make frequent use of them any longer. He no longer prepares spells except in unusual circumstances. When he was younger, he preferred subtlety in his spell selection. The schools of abjuration, illusion and divination were his favorite, but he made a point of keeping a few combat spells prepared as a precaution.

Should Canifax take up his spellbook again, he would be able to cast five each of 0, 1st, and 2nd level spells, four 3rd level spells, three each of 4th and 5th level spells, and two 6th level spells each day. He will not prepare necromantic spells under any circumstances.

As a result of the powers check Canifax failed, whenever he casts a spell with somatic components, roll 1d6. On a roll of 1, Canifax's withered hands were unable to properly execute the required gestures, and the spell fails. He can use the Still Spell feat to circumvent this difficulty. However, all spells he casts with a touch range take effect as if he were one level higher as a wizard. This only works if he makes skin-to-skin contact with the target.

Because of his current reluctance to use magic, Canifax is not a particularly effective combatant. He has some rudimentary knowledge of hand to hand combat, but not enough to hold his own against a trained fighter. He prefers to talk his way out of trouble when possible, or, better yet, avoid situations where trouble is likely to be found.

## Using Canifax

Canifax can be a wonderful source of knowledge and advice to any wizard or monster hunter, if one can convince him to be forthcoming. He does not usually hesitate to share what he knows of monsters, but he may be disinclined to answer questions of a magical nature. He does not want to encourage anyone down that road. Still, if lives are on the line he will tell what he can.

If Canifax's help is needed in a more tangible nature, things become more difficult. If the heroes are persistent and the cause is worthy they can probably garner his aid, but he will not be pleased and will make them realize it with every word and gesture. He will also make it clear that the characters are now in his debt.

✖

# THE INTERPRETATION OF DREAMS

## FOUR VICTIMS OF THE NIGHTMARE COURT

by Freidrich Gothe  
fgothe@hotmail.com

### FOREWORD BY DR. FREIDRICK LOUIS



For the latter half of his life, Dr. Gregorian Illhousen devoted himself entirely to the study of nightmares. He believed that dreams could seep into reality and affect the waking world. He first discovered the phenomenon in patients who were afflicted by terrible nightmares, and what he learned in those initial years lead him to suspect that malevolent, external forces were responsible for their illnesses. The doctor later wrote a journal which unmasked the group of dark entities responsible. Known as the Nightmare Court, these beings had the power to pervert dreams toward their own wicked ends. Dr. Illhousen's quest to expose and destroy these monsters led him to journey beyond the Mists on more than one occasion to their realm of surreal horror, but seemingly in the end, the darkness claimed him.

But the good doctor's fight is far from finished. Before he left us in 749 B.C., when I had the dubious honor of taking over as head of the clinic, Dr. Illhousen was working on another major piece titled *The Interpretation of Dreams*. He intended it to be an expansion on his journal, but as a result of massive revisions to the paper as well as his own failing health, *The Interpretation of Dreams* remained in the shadows for half a decade.

Now, with some semblance of sanity returning to the clinic, I am able to present to you Dr. Illhousen's final disquisition. Following Dr. Illhousen's own notes, I have assiduously compiled what I think he originally intended for the journal—a series of in-depth patient analyses. Unfortunately, some texts have been

damaged, lost, or were simply left unfinished, but I think that what follows will still remain an invaluable resource for those seeking to ward off the darkness.

*In memoriam somniat,*

*Dr. Freidrick Louis*

*755 B. C.*

Each of the following chapters of Dr. Illhousen's treatise serves to develop an NPC for a Nightmare Lands campaign. At the end of each chapter the DM will find roleplaying notes and adventure ideas for each character. Hopefully, they will enrich your campaigns by bringing newer, darker terrors to life for your bedtime stories.

### CHAPTER ONE: THE CASE OF LIAM Q.

Dr. Tasker's Initial Notes, Liam Q.:



atient is extremely morose. He has told me of disgusting fantasies which could only be the result of an unbalanced mind. I recommend advanced electrical shock treatment until further notice. —H.T.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

## Dr. Illhousen's Initial Notes, Liam Q.:

Liam is extremely intelligent and well educated; patient enjoys chess. Admits to a recent suicide attempt. Shows a tendency toward aggressive mood swings (esp. at mention of women). Doubtful case is as bad as T. indicates. (mem. Work on King's Gambit for Tues.) —G.I.

## Dr. Illhousen's Clinical Notes for Nov. 5, 747 Patient Name: Liam Q.

Chess from eleven till a quarter past noon. Liam is a surprisingly skilled chess player! (mem. Watch for Kn to KR-3 with Q to rank!) After chess, asked about schooling. As expected, the patient became dour. Liam explained he was admitted to the University of Il Aluk two years ago.

Studied magic there for a year then transferred to the Academy here in Egertus where he studied alchemy for another year. I asked why he stopped studying magic and his response was that he "wasn't smart enough." The patient contends that his intellect is declining in his "old age," and that he is no longer worthy of studying the Art. Although Liam condemns himself for being an "idiotic laggard," he is nonetheless very eloquent and at times borders on the grandiose.

Liam's depression likely developed from unfounded feelings of inadequacy and frustration. He exhibits an overwhelming desire for recognition; his suicide attempt followed a series of nightmares which began on the thirteenth of last month (Note: No physical indication of Nightmare Court as of yet; however, I remain suspicious. Hypnos?) —G.I.

## Patient Record for Liam Q. Nov. 7, 747

Liam never misses the opportunity to point out his own shortcomings and "stupidities;" however, despite Liam's own convictions, my experience shows him to be an exceptionally brilliant individual. With each day that passes I grow more and more fretful over his nightmares. I now have no doubt that Hypnos is feeding on Liam's feelings of worthlessness.

## Dr. Tasker's Prognosis, Liam Q., Nov. 10, 747

Liam responds well to shock treatment. Patient shows signs of physical wear, but on the whole prospects are auspicious. —H.T.

## Session #1, Written Transcript Hypnotherapy, Liam Q., Nov. 12, 747

**Dr. Illhousen:** I want you to close your eyes and imagine you are walking down a stairwell counting backwards from one hundred. I want you take each step slower than the last and relax, OK Liam? When you reach the bottom, I want you to listen to the sound of my voice, and obey only that sound, understand? Good, now take one step and relax . . . and relax . . . and relax . . . all right . . . You are at the bottom of the stair well now; you are someplace else Liam, and I want you to tell me what you see.

**Liam Q. (child's voice):** I'm at school.

**Dr. Illhousen:** How old are you, Liam?

**Liam Q.:** Six.

**Dr. Illhousen:** Good. And what's going on, Liam?

**Liam Q.:** Mrs. Kiesler is giving a penmanship test! I can't do it! My hands are shaking! What am I going to do? Papa will kill me if I bring home a bad mark! Oh, I should have studied harder!

**Dr. Illhousen:** But you don't have to worry about that now, Liam. Your hands are steady and firm. They are not shaking and you are not afraid, Liam. Everything will be all right.

**Liam Q.:** No! No, I can't because he doesn't want me to pass!

**Dr. Illhousen:** Who? Who, Liam? Who doesn't want you to pass?

**Liam Q.:** The man in the coffin with the funny eye! He hates me! He's laughing at me! He says he's going to tell papa and he's going to beat me! No, no, no! I don't want to die! No, Mrs. Kiesler, I've been doing my lessons! Really, I did! Please, please don't yell at me! No, don't tell my papa I came to school naked! No! Please, Mister, please tell my friends to stop laughing at me!

**Dr. Illhousen:** Don't listen to him, Liam! Listen to me: those aren't your friends. Your friends are J.H., E.W., and B.B. They didn't get into the University, remember? Only you were smart enough.

**Liam Q.:** But they passed! They're smarter than me! No, no, no! Don't put me in the coffin with him! No, papa, no!

**Dr. Illhousen:** Wake up! Listen to me Liam, wake up!

(End of transcript.)

## Dr. Tasker's Clinical Notes, Liam Q., Nov. 13, 747

Strained a large amount of blood from patient today with leeches to reduce the large amount of black bile patient has been producing. With continued shock therapy Liam's humors should return to a normal state



# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

of balance; however, if Dr. Illhousen proceeds as he has been, I will have no recourse other than accelerating the shock treatment to cure Liam.

## Dr. Illhousen's Notes, Liam Q., Nov. 15, 747

Ordered Dr. Tasker to cease treatment of patient. Condition worsening. Further sessions have revealed dissatisfaction with social life and a certain degree of misogyny. Often patient's dreams involve being humiliated in front of females. His dreams have gravitated around two major scenarios. In his most prominent nightmare, Liam dreams he is a child taking some form of examination, but all of his answers are garbled or incoherent. Liam grows frightened and is tempted to cheat off some of the other student's papers, but the teacher, "Mrs. Kiesler," patrols the room hawkishly for cheaters. Hypnos appears in this particular nightmare as a man that "looks like a wax statue" and sits behind the teacher's desk. Hypnos never opens his mouth to speak but rather communicates mentally so that only Liam can hear his silent scolds. Inevitably, the dream scene ends with Mrs. Kiesler catching Liam at cheating. The other children laugh and point at him; then, they overbear him and nail him inside of a coffin which appears before Hypnos.

The second of Liam's reoccurring nightmares involves countless variations on the chess game. Often, the scene is straightforward. Liam plays a game of chess, but no matter how hard he thinks, he is always defeated. On other occasions, Liam is the King and he must command other human pieces around the board. Recently, I tried to stop a particular variation of this scenario wherein I am the one mercilessly defeating Liam in each game. I entered the dream with the intent of losing to Liam, but to my horror the chess pieces grew to an enormous size and proceeded to attack us.

In my next session with Liam I will try to attack his problem from a new angle. It has been my experience that intelligent people are exceptionally agile in the dream world even if they are normally clumsy. Likewise, strong willed individuals tend to become physically robust. Perhaps I do not need to get Liam to pass any tests of intellect. If I can convince him of the correlation between his intelligence and his physical prowess in the dream world, then I might be able to cure him.

## Session #2, Written Transcript Hypno-therapy (Fragment), Liam Q., Nov. 19, 747

**Dr. Illhousen:** All right, Liam, where are you?

**Liam Q. (child's voice):** I'm in my room. It's nighttime, but there's a lantern in the hall . . . I think I hear my mommy . . . And . . . someone else . . . a man.

**Dr. Illhousen:** Can you see him?

**Liam Q.:** No, I can only see his back . . . wait . . . he's got a belt! Wait! No, you're hurting my mommy!

**Dr. Illhousen:** Run to her! Save your mother, Liam!

**Liam Q.:** No, I can't! He'll grab me! I—I can't move! The man in the coffin's in my room! He says papa's beating mommy because of my bad mark! No, no, I'll do it! I'll pass, I'll pass! I promise!

**Dr. Illhousen:** Don't listen to him! You can move! You just have to want to! You are quick Liam—you are very, very quick! You can get past him!

**Liam Q.:** No, I can't! The man says you're the one beating my mommy! He wants me to kill you! No, Dr. Illhousen's a nice man! Yes, he's smarter than me! No! I don't want to hurt anybody!

**Dr. Illhousen:** Go to your mother, Liam! Go to her!

**Liam Q.:** Dr. Illhousen's killing mommy! He's hurting her! Make him stop make him stop make him stop! I'm not going to!

**Dr. Illhousen's Note:** Patient fell unconscious. Was unable to wake patient from hypnosis after he began gagging and screaming. Has possibly contributed to worsening of current condition. Alternate methods of treatment? Unknown.

(End of transcript.)

### *Last Document concerning Liam Q.*

**Liam, human male, W3:** AC 10; MV 12; hp 7; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d2 (fists); SA spells; SD spells; SZ M (5'9"); ML average (10); Str 9, Dex 11, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 7; AL CG

*Description:* Depressive, Childish

Short and pudgy, Liam resembles an ink bottle with narrow facial features. He has detectable scars along his right cheek and speaks with a thick Darkonese accent. Under most circumstances he is relatively normal, but he may become depressed if he meets anyone he perceives to be smarter than himself. He is very shy around women.

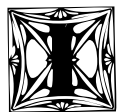
Liam presents a good vehicle for a "think-tank" adventure. In one scenario, the heroes may find themselves playing the roll of school children taking a test. The teacher's desk is decorated with a macabre, rotten apple, and Hypnos silently gazes on the class as Mrs. Kiesler paces the room searching for "cheaters." Liam sits in the center of the room, crying. The heroes must not only find a way to evade the teacher and vicious tattle-tales, but must also help Liam pass his exam (i.e. a puzzle of the DM's own machinations).

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

To vary the scenario, the DM might plan alternative dreamscapes where the dreamers are in Liam's room as his mother is being assaulted, but Hypnos guards the door. The heroes know that they must prove young Liam has learned his "lessons" before they can rush to the rescue.

## CHAPTER TWO:

### THE CASE OF FENCH



It was during the summer of 748 B.C., after a particularly draining bout with a patient of mine, that Dr. Louis suggested that I take a leave of absence. Although I was loath to leave my work at the clinic, Dr. Louis assured me that I had little cause to worry and that he could run the clinic smoothly until my return in the fall. I resisted the idea for sometime, but in truth I knew I had no reason to argue the point. My health was failing me, and I was clearly developing an overwrought temperament. The prospect of a vacation was not unappealing to my fancy, and the recent discharge of my last patient had left me with little to do. Yet, I think were it not for the sheer severity of my infirmity, I never would have consented to the leave. Over time, however, I managed to convince myself otherwise, and grudgingly packed a few belongings for the respite.

I decided on vacationing in the sunny vales of Barovia. To reassure my conscience, I brought along a few notes to continue my research into dreams during my stay. I was fortunate enough to find a small, out of the way cottage for rent from the Burgomaster of a nearby village. The place was cozy enough. It had all the pleasures of home including some rather extravagant cushions and furs, but after a week I found that these luxuries did little to sooth my yearning to return to work. Although I had grown fond of the pleasant people of the town, I would have packed my things and headed back to Nova Vaasa had I not the chance to meet a man with a most peculiar disturbance.

In keeping with the normal confidences of physician and patient, I will refer to our subject as "Fench." The thing that struck me the most when I first met Fench was his tremendous size. A robust Barovian with barrel size forearms, Fench towered at over six foot, three inches tall—well above most average men. He had a thick, black mustache, a jolly love of merriment, and was widely reputed to be the strongest man in all of Barovia. I may even say he was a celebrity within the village.

I finally had the occasion to meet Fench on formal, though inauspicious, terms one evening when his wife brought him to my cottage. Taking me aside, she told

me that for the past few days Fench had been acting like a madman. He thrashed violently about in his sleep, threw wild fits of anger, and displayed numerous symptoms of a wasting disease. The woman seemed quite worried that her dear Fench was suffering from some manner of plague; so, she brought him to me for fear that the other villagers would cast out Fench and her. I assured the woman of her wise decision and agreed to see her husband.

I was stunned to say the least by his appearance. What I saw before me was surely some sort of apparition! The man I imagined a giant stood before my very eyes in the luxury of my cottage like a wasted frame of bone and wire. His eyes were sunken too deeply inside his skull, graying pools of watery flesh sagged over the dull, vanquished sockets of his face, and an altogether anemic air clouded about him like some sort of black pestilence.

After regaining my composure I politely asked Fench if he would like a seat. Suddenly, he began to thrash and flail violently while screaming at the top of his lungs. Despite his appearance, Fench still possessed a primal strength that made me fear for my very life. He could easily crush a man's skull with his powerful hands, and I thought he might do just that until his wife, cringing in fright as well, screamed for him to stop.

Suddenly, he fell into an obsequious stoop and began to whine like a newborn pup. Were there not something intrinsically sinister—indeed perverse—about this behavior, I might have laughed at the ludicrousness of the situation. I gazed pensively at his wife who nodded permissively for me to continue.

I approached more cautiously this time. I asked Fench if he would mind me examining him, and he said, "No" in a groveling and pathetic tone. As I looked him over, Fench did not once look at me. He stood perfectly still and whimpered like a scared animal although I think I had more cause to be frightened than he. Occasionally, Fench would utter a high-pitched laugh like a tickled little girl or coo like a babe during the examination.

As I could determine no imbalance in Fench's humors, I asked his wife to leave him with me overnight (my intention being to observe him as he slept). She readily complied and looked forward to seeing him in the morning.

Already I was beginning to suspect this was work of the Nightmare Court. I observed Fench as planned, and throwing off myself the heavy coils of sluggishness that already threatened to drown me in the same realm of nightmares into which Fench had certainly drifted, I settled into my leather chair.

For the first few hours he tossed and turned struggling with bouts of breathlessness. His body shuttered against the terrors of the night in that little dark room whose wicker chairs and trussed ceiling were

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

lit only by candlelight. Several hours later Fench began to convulse and choke scratchily. I trembled—watching as his skin lightened and withered.

Suddenly, Fench's eyes flew wide open, and before I had time to react, I felt a hot sting in my right shoulder followed by a warm sensation all over my body. I found myself knocked clear of the chair, reeling upon the floor. My mind became blurred with terror, and I flew, stumbling into the darkness of the living room. Fench's massive shadow shambled after me. I heard his thick rasping as his shape loomed up from the darkness. In one swift, mechanical motion, Fench drew high a gory meat cleaver, and I raised my hands in feeble defense. My only instinct was to scream his name. Then, I heard a whimper, and when I realized I was not dead I drew the taper near. He was curled on the floor next to a puddle of green goo.

My mind was still whirling from the attack. I wondered where the cleaver had come from. I believe I knew the answer, but I was terrified to search for the weapon for I had the distinct impression that it had slithered away. A few moments later and Fench began frothing at the mouth. After I cleaned him up we sat down to some tea. Neither of us was thinking clearly. He was weaker now than before—a clear indication of the court's influence. His wife needed some soothing, but I was able to reassure her.

Over the course of that day I discovered that Fench had two distinct ways of reacting to any situation. Sometimes he will grovel and become utterly obsequious; at other times, he begins to yell at the top of his lungs. He does not do this in random bouts of anger. He is mad. Fench could not bear the pressure of being proclaimed "the strongest man in Barovia." He felt he could not rise to the expectations of the village and his reservations antagonized him to such a degree that they eventually drove him insane.

At first Fench perceived himself to be weak despite all evidence to the contrary, but as the disease progressed the madness became more pronounced. Over the course of a few weeks, Fench began to think he was becoming fat and stocky, and ultimately, he came to imagine himself as a three-inch high dwarf. Fench's misconception of his tiny size is the cause of his bizarre behavior. He is terrified of the "big people" that surround him, and he is convinced that his voice is inaudible due to his exceedingly small size.

I treated Fench for a considerable length of time. I entered into his dreams and helped him through the trials of Morpheus. Every nightmare seemed less coherent than the last. Some nights we found ourselves at the edge of a cliff trying to hoist the entire Village of Barovia with only the two of us pulling at the frayed rope. Other nights we found ourselves in a blank landscape where children would approach Fench and ask him to perform ridiculous feats of strength such as

bending an iron spike or lifting a house or even a mountain. Men with enormous strength would appear from nowhere to accomplish what Fench could not. The nightmares did all they could to torture Fench, but in the end he proved stronger than them all.

**"Fench", 0-level human male:** AC 10; MV 12; hp 12; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d2 (fists); SZ M (6'3"); ML average (10); Str 18, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 8, Wis 4, Cha 13; AL NG.

*Personality:* Loud, Obsequious

The fate of Fench is left purposefully ambiguous so that DMs wishing to use him as an NPC for a Nightmare Lands campaign can do so. Until his delusions are cured, Fench, thinking no one can hear him, yells everything at the top of his lungs. He is incredibly obsequious, even morbidly so, and follows any orders or demands sheepishly.

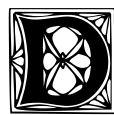
Although potential does exist for a suitably horrific scenario, an adventure to save Fench from the clutches of Morpheus could provide an excellent comic relief after a series of grim adventures. The nightmares Fench suffers from are ridiculous in the extreme and conceivably need not make any sense. The heroes might find that in order to save Fench they must help him hoist the children out of the canyon, but screaming dwarves begin to fall from the sky and attempt to weigh down the load. In other scenes a player may find that it is his own character that must be pulled from the canyon before he plummets into the churning darkness below. Alternatively, Fench could merely appear as a comic relief in another adventure in which he is not the main character.

DMs who still wish to use Fench towards a more macabre end should highlight his physical strength. PC's may make excursions into horrible nightmares while at the same time also have to be wary of an increasingly psychotic Fench who could crush their skulls with ease.

## CHAPTER THREE:

### THE CASE OF EMILY

Excerpt From the Rough Draft of Dr. Illhousen's Unfinished Paper Entitled, *Dreams of the Disturbed*.



uring the course of my research, I have seen many good people succumb to illnesses of the mind. Of these lonesome, terrible, pathetic souls, few hold my interest as well

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

as “the disturbed.” Disturbed patients suffer from a unique form of madness; they are driven insane by nightmares forced upon them by a group I call the Nightmare Court. As with any “disease” each case progresses in relatively the same fashion; however, cases which diverge markedly from the norm do occur.

“Emily” was one case who departed considerably from the expected. In most instances, the disturbed slowly descend into dementia as a result of the stress placed upon them by the Nightmare Court, but in Emily’s case the opposite was true. Emily embraced her nightmares.

Before proceeding, allow me to begin with a short history. As of the publication of this paper, Emily would be nineteen years old. She was born to an impoverished family in Kantora and was the first of three children. Her younger brother, Edward would be age five, and her sister, Faylen, would be age six. At the time of Emily’s birth her family was not as misfortunate as the majority of Kantora’s citizens. Her father had a job as a watchman and made barely enough money to house and feed the family, but when Emily’s younger sister was born, a serious financial strain was placed on the house. They moved into a squalid tenement where they were barely able to pay rent and lived mostly on refuse. A year later when Edward was born, Emily’s father had lost his job as a watchman as well as several others. The family was barely able to clothe the children at this point, and food was becoming a luxury. Emily’s father became an alcoholic and quickly absorbed what little savings the family had to feed his habit. Emily was now fifteen years old, and in the all too common custom of the city, she moved out and sold her body to the night.

Emily’s prostitution did little to revive the dying family. Most what she earned was wasted on her father’s habit. Her mother and two younger siblings were on the verge of being thrown out to starve in the cold until her father got another job. For the next two years the family managed to survive, but once more Emily’s father lost his job due to alcoholism. Also about this time, Emily’s mother contracted the consumption. The mother and children were thrown out into the streets. Soon thereafter another blow was landed to the family when Emily’s father turned up murdered. Emily’s mother fed the children by begging in the streets. The children suffered abuse at the hands of Emily’s mother. She died a year later along with Faylen who had also contracted the consumption. I do not know what became of Edward; Emily refuses to speak of his fate, and in any case, I am sure it is hardly an uplifting tale.

In the months following the death of her mother, Emily began having her first nightmares. The first nightmare occurred after a customer had departed. She dreamt of waking up next to him filled with disgust.

She said the room was swarming with rainbow-hued snakes that spoke to her. The serpents told Emily to kill the man; Emily’s anger allowed her to give in easily. Emily was able to find revenge in her dreams, but she was unaware that she was doing far more than acting out a morbid fantasy. The dreams turned to nightmares the night she did not wake up after butchering a customer.

The victim’s name was Marlin G. He was a wife beater and an usurer.

Emily dragged the body into an ally and left it there. She tried to stop the dreams, but after the murder, the nightmares only intensified. Emily tried to resist the urge to kill, but the bloodlust was unbearable. She wandered in a dream-like state for weeks unable to distinguish between the nightmares and reality. After a time, Emily thought she had gone completely mad. She decided nothing was real and gave in to her murderous impulses. In Kantora the string of butchereries was credited to Malken, a local legendary monster known for perpetrating savage murders. Emily made her way to Egertus where she was finally arrested.

At the time, I was working with a patient named Krystal who was under the influence of the Rainbow Serpent, a member of the Nightmare Court. When I heard of Emily, I recognized the work of the Serpent immediately, and I arranged to treat her regularly. Since then, Dr. Tasker and I have been able to receive Emily on a weekly basis to receive treatment.

## Dr. Illhousen’s Clinical Notes, Apr. II, 747

Today, I think I may have found the cause of Emily’s nightmares. Emily decided to tell me about the fate of her brother. As it turns out, she left Edward alone to starve to death in the streets. She wept on my shoulder for a very long time after she admitted this to me, and I think it did her good.

I think Rainbow Serpent has chosen Emily because the roles of betrayal are reversed. Instead of feeling horribly betrayed, Emily is struggling with the guilt of betraying her own brother. The Rainbow Serpent seized the opportunity to destroy Emily and those who confided in her. —G.I.

## Dr. Illhousen’s Clinical Notes, Emily, Apr. II, 747

Patient still responds with difficulty to treatment. Condition slowly worsening. The nightmares have taken an odd turn. Now the dreams revolve around strange, phantasmagoric weddings. This turn of events has left me quite confused, for as far as I can tell, these dreams have no nightmarish content.

On a slightly related note, Sylus and I shall shortly be taking a voyage which may benefit my patients—

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

Emily in particular. Dr. Tasker will take over in my absence. —G.I.

## Dr. Tasker's Clinical Notes, Emily, Apr. 18-May 13, 747

I have returned the patient to more conventional methods of treatment. The shock therapy is beginning to erase the perverse and immoral proclivities of the subject. As I suspected, my treatment has almost entirely ceased the patient's nightmares, and with any luck, surgery will not be necessary. —H.T.

## Dr. Illhousen's Personal Notes, Emily, May 20, 747

I have read Dr. Tasker's clinical notes concerning the treatment of Emily while I was away, and I am thoroughly outraged by his irresponsibility. Tasker may have very well destroyed any hope of Emily recovering. She may even slip deeper into isolation. Gods forbid if Emily begins to lash out in her nightmares once more! I wish there were some grounds on which I could have that madman arrested, but for now I will merely have to settle for removing him from this case. —G.I.

## Dr. Illhousen's Clinical Notes, Emily, May 24, 747

As I expected, Emily has receded into a shell; however, I managed to get her to speak to me under hypnosis. During our session, she began to have a dream. It began much like the dreams of weddings she had just prior to my departure. The ceremony took place in a gloomy, forested area with a number of guests who I did not recognize. Emily played the role of the bride, and curiously a local young gentleman played the part of groom. The moment the priest ordained the marriage, Emily grew snake fangs and bit into her husband's face. She drained him to a husk. I could not bear to hear any more.

The guards at the prison tell me that Emily makes quite a ruckus at night; she screams so loud that the entire prison wakes up. She has been confined to an isolated cell, and according to the guards, she has been sleepwalking and frothing at the mouth. She even managed to put out the eye of a fellow inmate; everyone seems afraid of her. —G.I.

## Dr. Illhousen's Personal Notes, Emily, Jun. 1, 747

Gossip has taken over the town. Six promising young gentlemen have been found brutally slain on the eve of

their weddings over the past week. The people fear Malken, but I know—I know—Emily is responsible!

I did not want to believe myself at first, but the truth has become undeniable. The first death occurred on day of my return session with Emily. A newly wed, Wilfred Montgomery, died from a neck wound. A day later another newly wed turned up murdered in the same fashion. I began to make the connection once the gossip finally reached the clinic. I visited the graves of the deceased, and to my horror I recognized them from Emily's descriptions in her dreams! I begged Emily to prove to me my suspicions were false, but her silence admitted guilt.

What am I to do? Turn her in? Preposterous! I cannot even be certain she realizes the extent of her powers. But if she does and if she embraces them as wholeheartedly as she has in the past, she could exercise her talents to strike at people at anyone. Nothing could stop her . . . nothing. —G.I.

**"Emily," human female, T3:** AC 10; MV 12; hp 16; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (razor); SZ M (5'5"); ML unsteady (6); Str 6, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 11; AL CN

*Thief Abilities:* PP 40% OL 33% F/RT 30% MS 27% HS 20% HN 15% CW 87% RL 0%

*Personality:* Cynical, Sarcastic

Emily is small girl now in her mid-twenties. Her hair is shoulder-length, curly, and light brown. She is marked by her cherubic features and vicious wit; however, this rough exterior is betrayed by her sad, green eyes. Before she came to the clinic she always concealed a small straight razor in her garter.

Although Emily goes to great trouble to keep people at arms' distance, she truly wants nothing more than to be accepted and loved. She has suffered abuse for many years, and the experience has scared her for life. She has trouble trusting anyone and is very erratic in her behavior patterns. She has a grudge against the whole world.

Emily treads an extremely fine line between Chaotic Good and Chaotic Evil. As a result, the DM may find that she works well as villain and equally well as a tragic figure. As a villain the DM can play up her callous nature and hatred for men. She may have mastered the ability to draw people into her dreams where she then plays a "black widow" role and seduces men to their doom. Anyone she has met can be a target for her revenge. On the other hand, Emily may be depicted as a tragic figure succumbing to impulses and powers beyond her control. In this scenario, each night when she sleeps the Rainbow Serpent draws people she loves into her nightmares where she finds herself overwhelmed by her need for revenge and kills them. Emily will slowly be driven insane for she knows that

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

every time she sleeps someone she cares for will die. The Rainbow Serpent hopes that Emily will eventually commit suicide

If heroes hope to free Emily from the clutches of the Nightmare Court, they will have to do more than just enter into her dreams. Before any progress can be made, they have to make Emily feel wanted. This is a task easier said than done, however. Emily is a lost soul and redeeming her may be a far more daunting task than any they have ever undertaken.

## CHAPTER FOUR: THE CASE OF REYMOND S.

### Excerpt from Dr. Illhousen's Unfinished Paper on Reymond S.



ince his arrival at the clinic one year ago, Reymond has been my most enigmatic patient. We received him on the night of October the third during a terrible storm, which claimed the lives of seven good men and women. It is a marvel we heard Reymond at all, and were it not for the eerie tranquility of the lunatics that night, I doubt we ever would have discovered him.

Reymond was then even as he is now—a riddle. He wore the clothes of a wealthy merchant or noble, yet they were in an incredible state of disrepair. I considered that he may be a rogue of some sort, but my intuition told me otherwise. We searched for some identifying insignia, but were unable to produce anything. No less puzzling was the question of how he managed to reach the clinic in the storm, for as we soon discovered, Reymond was unable to move or speak.

Later I found that Reymond's disability was not due to any disease of the body, but rather the result of a mind devastated by trauma. I have only rarely seen this particular form of madness, and never have I found a case as severe as Reymond S.

### Dr. Illhousen's Private Notes on Reymond S., Undated.

Attempts at communicating with Reymond S. unfruitful. Reymond's scrawls are mostly unintelligible though a few have proven insightful. Otherwise, Reymond is completely reticent except for that disturbing leer he sometimes manages to muster when accidents occur. (Note: F. and several others report dreaming of Reymond. Could he be somehow related to the Nightmare Court? Very doubtful. He has no

symptoms of disturbance. Nevertheless, something unsettles me about him.) —G.I.

### Letter, Dr. Illhousen to Dr. Morgenstern, Prof. of Ancient Languages, University of Il Aluk, Sept. 749

Old friend, a long time has passed since we have last spoken, but I write you on a matter concerning the well being of one of my patients. You have no doubt heard of the case of Reymond S. For the past few weeks, Reymond has been displaying some peculiar behavior, and for the first time he has written something intelligible! Were I less fortunate and never have met you, I might have dismissed the phrases as nonsense, but I recognized the ancient Darkonese tongue immediately. I have included a transcript of Reymond's writing in the hopes that you will translate it for me and return it posthaste.

*effusio lucis  
somnia sumque  
emersi de umbris  
et in tenebras mergeti  
lemures somniferas metu*

Sincerely,  
Gregorian

P.S. Jonathan, I think I am breaking through to him. Please let us put behind the past. I ask you not only as a doctor but as a friend. I have missed you so.

### Letter, Dr. Morgenstern to Dr. Illhousen, Physician, Clinic for the Mentally Distressed, Oct. 749

Greetings! I have waited such a long time to hear from you, Gregorian. I was acting like a child, old friend, and I hope you will accept my apology. I should have written you instead, but pride is my better. I have no excuse for my behavior and am eager to get on with our friendship.

Here is the translation you requested:

*I am the purging of light and the sleepwalker. I  
emerged from the shadows and plunged myself  
into darkness. Nightmares and sleep-bringers are  
my custodians.*

Write soon,  
Jonathan

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

## From Dr. Illhousen's Personal Journal

The staff grows even more restless. I had thought with the retirement of Madeline peace would come to the clinic, but the nurses claim they have seen “a thing” crawling in the darkness and slithering about our halls. I think I believe them. I have experienced it myself, for I have often heard its dreadful squeal creep softly to my ear whilst I lay in bed. And when I am able to muster the courage to open my eyes, I have seen it—Reymond's face leering at me through the crack in the door—ugly, malicious, horrible . . . I have hoped to see a nurse with him or some warm presence to explain his movement, but I know there is no one. There is only Reymond and the surreal, phantasmagoric slithering of his body as he passes on into the shadows. I fear the answer to this terrible riddle lies beneath the surface of Reymond's inscription.

## Letter, Dr. Illhousen to Dr. Heinfroth, Physician, Home for the Mentally Ill, Dec. 749

I am pleased to hear from you once more, Dr. Heinfroth, but quite frankly I am surprised at your inquest. I had no idea that Reymond S. interested one as esteemed as yourself. To say the least, I will be delighted to inform you of all I have uncovered up to this point.

I have come under the impression that the cause of Reymond's affliction may be the result of something . . . external. I cannot describe the effect his presence has upon a person. There seems to be an air about him that crawls over the skin and rankles the senses.

I have included with this letter a journal, which I compiled some years ago now. It chronicles my exploits with a sinister form of madness that I think a man of your breadth will find most enlightening. Reymond, I believe, has some connection with my research. I cannot place it yet, but others of my patients have said he has appeared in their dreams; for this reason, I think he has somehow mastered the power to dreamwalk. If I can somehow break through to him and unravel the secrets of his mind, I may be able to uncover more weaknesses in the Nightmare Court's defenses and have them done for good.

Sincerely,  
Dr. Gregorian Illhousen

P.S.: Thank you for your offer to help treat Reymond, but I must decline. I am managing well with him, and I fear that the transport may be a strain on his health.

## Dr. Illhousen's Personal Notes on Reymond S.

Patient does not respond to hypnotism. I desperately questioned him on the meaning of that dreaded inscription he insists on writing over and over again. No avail. I should know better. I handed him a quill and paper demanding that he write. How silly! I demanded he tell me what manner of beast he may be. Am I losing my mind? I looked down at the paper and scrawled upon it was one word—Madeline! Reymond sat ghoulishly crumpled in the chair. Grinning that thin, horrid, grotesque smile—more horrid and grotesque than the maw of death! I struck him. Heaven forgive my poor soul, I threw him from the chair only to find that thing rising before me in the darkness.

## From Dr. Illhousen's Personal Journal

By all the good gods in heaven! He—Reymond—has vanished. I have been in poor health for the last few days and during this time I have had some amazing, feverish dreams. I do not know at all if this is truth or the fabrications of a temporary lunacy brought on by the fever, but I shall with all hast recount Reymond's story as he told it to me in my dreams.

“You seek to know me, Dr. Illhousen. The answers I hold have seduced you . . . Very well, I shall unravel them for you.

“I was not a normal child. I possessed remarkable talents. I could do anything to which I applied myself. When I was five, I performed music at one of Darkon's royal balls and was commended by Lord Azalin himself. People adored and envied me. I was expected to attend the University, and I did. I hated it there. I did not have the same ambitions as my family. I found academia profoundly nauseating and the nobility utterly boorish. So, I became a cook. It was quite an incident. Everyone close to me reproached my decision and said that I was an appalling waste of talent.

“I worked for a noble family who paid me with room and board. I was very happy. They had a son, Leopold, who I cherished. I adored playing with him in the evenings after dinner. He was such a delightful child, and I loved him as I would love a brother.

“But in all of that time I never admitted to myself the real reason I became a cook. You see, doctor, I am lazy. I could have done anything. I could have helped hundreds with a scalpel or delighted centuries with a chord. Yet, I thought too much would be required of me.

“But I digress. There was a shed in the back of the house. It was rusty, worn, shabby, and rotten. Every timber was falling apart, but young Master Leopold became accustomed to playing there. Once the Lord

## BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

and Lady heard, they ordered me to take down the shack, but I procrastinated. A few days later I saw him go into the shed. I heard a scream, and I rushed to him. I found young Leopold with a broken neck. A rotten ceiling beam lay at his side.

“I was horrified. Poor Lord Simon, how I wish I could have told thee of my sorrow! How I wished to be punished. I wanted nothing more than to trade places with Leopold, but I could do nothing. I stared impotently at my deed for what seemed an eternity, and when I finally came to my senses, I realized I was paralyzed. Something had transfixed me. I suddenly found myself viewing the macabre sight from a perverse angle as if I actually had exchanged places with the boy. Then I saw the thing for the first time. It did not manifest itself in any rational fashion; I could best describe it as a visage or insinuation that had settled over the child. The experience was strange and phantasmagoric. There was nothing but the insidious revulsion of that face and that neck and those little twisted legs. Then I saw monstrous black tentacles suffuse across Leopold’s body and slowly drag him in to the darkness.

“Neither my mind nor body has ever fully recovered since that day. For all these years I have been isolated from the world. This is the curse I have visited upon myself. It is a death within a death. Guilt overcame me, and purged the light from my heart.

“But the guilt eventually gave way to nightmares. I saw the Ghost Dancer for the first time three nights after I had been committed to a hospice. I fell in love with her. How sad she was when she danced! Those little limbs and delicate strides possessed my heart and enchanted my soul! I could escape to her show each night in my dreams. She was the one beautiful thing among all that was terrible in the world, and she danced for me alone.

“But by day she was a ghost; an evanescent memory that left me alone with only thoughts of her returning. Every waking hour was possessed with her image. I was tormented by thoughts of her bruised body, of her swollen neck, and her dark eyes. Finally, the loneliness became unbearable.

I decided to approach her at the end of the next show and profess my love. But then I noticed some one else at the performance. The night was ruined. I couldn’t get my mind off him. I lost my nerve. I tried to speak to her the next night, but he was there again. Soon, others came to the performance as well. The dances became a mockery of my life at the Simon Manor; the show ended each night with the protagonist becoming crippled and then being carted away. The audience always laughed. I wanted to kill all of them. I wanted them to go away, but above all I wanted the Ghost Dancer to love me.

The dances made me sick with guilt, but over time I built up the nerve to meet her. I walked to her room at the end of a long, dark hall. Her room bore a peculiar resemblance to the Simon Manor. She received me in the den. I tried talking to her, but she did not utter a sound. She seemed frightened of me. I kept trying to make her talk until we heard her son crying. He was walking down the stairs, perhaps just waking from a nightmare. I never saw the boy in full, for she would always rush to his side and swoop him up into her arms before I could get a clear look at him. Then I would wake up. I was disappointed to learn of her son. A child? I thought. That must mean she has a husband too. He must be the reason for her bruises.

I spent the next few nights trying to convince the Ghost Dancer to run away with me, but the child always interrupted. I came to hate him. Then one night I did not awaken when her son called for her. I saw the young boy grabbing at her back and leaving a bloody palm print. Then its ugly little head peaked over its mother’s shoulder. It was Master Leopold! I rushed to my love’s side and pried the two apart. The disgusting demon rushed at me with foul, rotten teeth, but I broke off a chair leg and snapped his neck.

Guilt swamped me. I was left there to look at my deed once more and feel the horror. The Ghost Dancer rushed to his side and began to cry hysterically as I dumbly gazed on my deed.

But it did not end. I did not wake up. Her whining was creeping into my skin. Her curses and condemnations swept over me like a tide. I struck her. She turned pleadingly at me and begged that I leave her be. But I knew she would not love me. A fierce rage overcame me and I choked her to death. My arms became strong and powerful. Bruises welled up on her cheeks, and when I was finished, I awoke weeping. But I could not even cry. For nights this continued, but I learned to control myself in time. I learned to resist the unnatural compulsions she filled me with. I learned to overcome myself.

I won my battle, and now battles are all I have to fight. In time I learned how to force myself to dream and then eventually how to pass into the dreams of others. I vowed to make up for my sin, so now, very much like you, my good doctor, I walk in the realm of sleepers and nightmares and bear the candle of hope. I have plunged into the darkness and learned much about what you call the Nightmare Court. How little you do know, Dr. Illhusen. You have looked hard for the answers, doctor, but you have found none. Tomorrow I shall be gone. It wants to move on. You ask what it is? I do not know. I am at the mercy of its whims. Perhaps it was not chance that brought us together, Dr. Illhusen. Good-bye now, my good friend, for in the morning I am gone, and this shall all be nothing more than a curious, little, dream.”



# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

**Reymond S., 0-level human male:** AC 10; MV 0; hp 6; THAC0 20; #AT 0; Dmg N/A; SZ M (5'11"); ML N/A; Str —, Dex —, Con 8, Int 18, Wis 17, Cha 13; AL CG.

*Personality:* Mysterious, Sinister

**Reymond's Dream Self, human male, F5:** AC 1; (plate mail, close-faced helmet, shield, Dex); MV 15; hp 40; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (scimitar); SZ M (6'); ML champion (16); Str 17, Dex 16, Con 8, Int 18, Wis 17, Cha 13; AL CG.

*Personality:* Courageous, Stern

In the waking world Reymond is very unnerving. He has dark brown hair and eyes. He appears very frail for most of his muscles have atrophied over the years, but he can still write, albeit illegibly. Reymond's present condition is the result of a curse he laid upon himself. It has completely crippled him and isolated him from the world by preventing him from communicating in any direct way. Even if he tries to write something clearly it always comes out in a foreign language, garbled in some fashion, or highly cryptic. The only way to lift the curse is to somehow get Reymond to forgive himself for his crime, but accomplishing that feat may be a challenge worthy of only the most stalwart heroes.

In the dream world Reymond is how he envisions himself to be. Typically, he is decked in a piecemeal suit of armor that consists of a breastplate and chain extremities. The shield and scimitar he wields are very ornate. Do note, however, that the DM should feel especially free to change any of Reymond's qualities. He does not necessarily appear this way all the time. He might manifest as a courtly gentleman who carries a pistol or whatever the DM requires. His statistics and equipment are only a reflection of how he wills himself to be and in the Nightmare Lands that can be twisted very easily.

Essentially, Reymond is brought from domain to domain where he helps those afflicted by the Nightmare Court escape their grasp. He can dreamwalk into any sleeper's mind and only the direct influence of a member of the Court can stop him. Also, due to his long experience with the Nightmare Court, DMs may wish to give Reymond extra dream powers as the adventure demands.

Reymond's waking form is guarded by a bastellus. He refers to it as the "Custodian." It never harms Reymond, but it ferries him all across Ravenloft to use him as a convenient food supply. If anyone ever tries to hurt Reymond the bastellus attacks viciously until it has slain all the attackers. The creature is what is mainly responsible for Reymond appearing so creepy in the waking world. The bastellus never manifests itself directly. It is always an utterly strange, irrational

experience. For instance a hero might touch Reymond and taste his skin with his fingertips rather than feel his face, or as is the case with Dr. Illhousen, it may just cause something innocent to radiate an aura of dread. For example, in his first encounter with the creature, Dr. Illhousen heard herd a "dreadful squeaking," and later he describes Reymond's body as "slithering and seething." In typical dream fashion, however, these descriptions hold little significance to anyone other than the observer.

Any other motives the creature might have are unknown. The bastellus may have some unusual connection to the dark powers. Perhaps they dictate where it brings Reymond. Also, it is unsure whether or not this is the same creature that stole young Leopold's body the day Reymond became crippled.

If it is the same creature, then why was Reymond unaware of its presence for so long? The DM should take special care to ensure that Reymond remains a complex enigma. He should always appear to have some sort of understanding of the situation that is vastly more clear and insightful than any of the other PCs. As Dr. Illhousen pointed out, the only thing that will ever be certain about Reymond S. is that he will forever remain the queerest form of uncertainty.



# THE RED WOLF

## THE GREAT HOPE OF NIDALA

by Andy "Socko" Snow  
count\_strahd@excife.com

### BIOGRAPHY



Always dreaming of becoming a paladin as a child, the adult Red Wolf learned that fairy tales seldom come true. Yet, even in the darkest tales, there always remains the promise of a happy ending.

### Irvyne Wolfe

**7th-level Human Avenger (Knight of the Shadows),  
Chaotic Good**

<b>Armor Class</b>	3	<b>Str</b>	15
<b>Movement</b>	12	<b>Dex</b>	11
<b>Level/ Hit Dice</b>	7	<b>Con</b>	18
<b>Hit Points</b>	63	<b>Int</b>	14
<b>THAC0</b>	14 (13**)	<b>Wis</b>	15
<b>No. of Attacks</b>	2	<b>Cha</b>	16*
<b>Damage/Attack</b>	1d8+2 (long sword)		
<b>Special Attacks</b>	Specialization		
<b>Special Defenses</b>	Bonus Hit Points		
<b>Magic Resistance</b>	Nil		

\* When dealing with natives of Nidala Irvyne's Charisma is considered 17, but when dealing with those from outside Nidala his Charisma drops to 15.

\*\* Specialized with long sword

### Appearance

Irvyne is a study in opposites. His blood-red plate mail armor and shield are perfectly kept—not a scratch or dent in them—but he does not keep himself as well groomed. His brown hair has grown into a mop of wild tendrils, and his face is tanned from time outdoors and is covered in dark stubble. At his side is his trusty silver long sword, which has served him against most evils. Under his free arm he carries a great helm shaped like the head of a wolf, forged from the same blood-red steel that formed his armor. Fluttering behind him in the breeze is the trademark yellow and black cape of his order, clasped by the eclipsed moon emblem.

### Background

Born and raised in Nidala, Irvyne Oakheart always dreamed of becoming a paladin like his land's ruler, Lady Elena Faith-hold. He held Elena in such high regard that the little boy ignored all the talk of her torturing people; obviously, they were lies created by those elements of society that Elena sought to destroy, or so thought the young Irvyne. Irvyne thus spent his entire childhood training with wooden swords and exercising tirelessly in hopes that he would someday be worthy of becoming one of Elena's warriors.

All this changed on the morn of Irvyne's seventeenth birthday. Elena Faith-hold had just returned from hunting a beast that had laid waste to a small farming community. She strode through town on her black unicorn, her woodsmen falling in behind her. The whole town lined the streets to watch her come through, including young Irvyne. When the procession reached the center of town, Irvyne decided to present himself in the most noble and knightly way he could manage. He stepped before Lady Elena and got down on one knee. With his head bowed, he spoke in a humble voice.

"My Lady, I am Irvyne Oakheart. I am but a poor farm boy, but if you would have one such as I, I would serve you until every ounce of my blood has run dry."

There was a prolonged silence as all the townspeople held their breath. Elena's eyes widened, for where the townspeople saw the love and adoration Irvyne held for Elena, all she could see was pure evil. Not being a fool, Elena invited Irvyne to return with her to her castle. The boy happily followed her vanguard until they came to Faith Hold. Once securely inside the castle walls, Irvyne was promptly imprisoned and subjected to the torture he had always thought of as myth.

What followed was three years of every type of torture imaginable. The torturers would ask questions that Irvyne had no answers to. As hard as they tried, the torturers could not break Irvyne's body or his will. Every day inside the dungeons made him harder to break.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

From the moment he had been placed in the dungeons, Irvyne had his sights set on escape from those cursed pits of torture. But the security was so tight there seemed no chance for escape.

But on one moonless night Irvyne did escape with a small group of prisoners. Irvyne knew how hard it would be to hide from Faith-hold and her troops in eastern Nidala, so the band fled deep into the western forests.

When the fugitives finally stopped, they had traveled well into the forests. After a few days' rest Irvyne decided to explore even further west. He went so far west that he entered the Phantasmal Forest, and from there, the domain of Avonleigh, with the standing stones that mark the gathering spot for the Knights of the Shadows. Only one Knight of the Shadows was present to greet Irvyne's arrival. His name was Greger, and his task was to guard the standing stones. Greger was impressed by the young man's harrowing story and decided to train him to become a Knight of the Shadows. The training was intense and forced Irvyne to new heights in combat. He was trained to forge weapons and armor, and Greger also taught him the art of guerilla warfare.

When Irvyne returned to the refugees a year later, they saw not the boy that had left them, but a warrior clad in blood-red armor.

The fugitives had suffered through the past year, however. They had lost half their number to hunger, disease or Faith-hold's woodsmen. Irvyne wasted no time teaching them how to forge weapons and armor, how to fight from the shadows, and how to use the forest as cover, as a weapon, and as a means of food and shelter. During the next year Irvyne and his rag-tag strike force drove Faith-hold's warriors out of the forest completely. Then Irvyne and his warriors began to ambush detachments of Faith-hold's men outside the forests.

Six months ago it came to Irvyne's attention that a young priestess of almost saintly virtue had arrived from a far distant realm, and was now staying in a distant village. Knowing that Faith-hold would seek to make her a servant or a victim, Irvyne acted at once. He and his raiders rode into that village and found the woman. Next they took the young woman to their forest encampment and explained the realities of Nidala to her. The woman, named Nadia Wolfe, felt that Irvyne and his warriors were serving good causes and joined them. It wasn't long before Nadia and Irvyne fell in love. They were wed on a warm summer eve, and Irvyne took his wife's surname, as is custom in his realm, though the idea seemed odd to Nadia. His men began calling him the Red Wolf, and he in turn began referring to them as the Pack.

A few weeks after the wedding, a group of wagons appeared outside the Pack's secret stronghold. Irvyne

was terrified, but his concern turned out to be without cause. These people were the Vistani and were no friends of Faith-hold's. Many of the Pack enjoyed the diversion that the Vistani brought, including Irvyne and Nadia, who both had their futures told. Both received the same odd message.

"The Warrior of Light shall be born in the land of the Unholy Knight, to a pious woman and a righteous man."

The day after the newlyweds received this prophecy the Vistani had vanished without a trace. The Pack's mage, Maureve, studied the prophecy with Nadia, and they came to the conclusion that the "Warrior of Light" refers to a true paladin, and that "the land of the Unholy Knight" is Nidala. This has given the Pack new purpose, as they attempt to make Nidala safe for the birth of the paladin.

## Current Sketch

Since hearing the prophecy Irvyne has become even more motivated. He believes that he has been chosen to protect the young paladin until the holy knight can save the people of the realm from the evil of Elena Faith-hold. Recently he has become less grim and single minded around his men, marriage and hope lifting his spirits high. When he enters combat Irvyne is even more determined and fearless than ever before, even despite his belief that the fate of the entire realm may hinge on the outcome of his battles against evil.

But only very recently did Nadia realize that she was with child, and only then did the full power of the prophecy hit her. She now knows that her unborn child will be the paladin. She has not yet told Irvyne, unsure how to tell him that he will not only protect the paladin, he will raise the prophesized child too.

A point of interest to some is the escape from the dungeons of Castle Faith Hold. Irvyne and the rest of the Pack refuse to discuss it; they may either tiptoe around the subject around allies, or they may simply silence an inquisitive enemy. Either way, they refuse to reveal how they escaped. Maybe it is a secret they plan to save for their final battle against Faith-hold? Perhaps the escape included some horrible danger they don't want others to risk? Might the escape have incurred some horrible toll? Perhaps they simply don't want to risk closing that escape route for others? Who knows? Maybe it is all of the above.

## Personality

Even though Irvyne has placed the world on his shoulders he seems to take it all in stride. Sure, he is still grimly determined to succeed, but he will not let a minor defeat drive him to depression. Instead he will

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

learn from it. When he learns of his unborn child he will be filled with pride and new zeal. The fight against evil will take a back seat to protecting the stronghold and making sure that Nadia and their child is safe.

## Combat

Iryvne is a dangerous foe in battle. He is specialized in the use of his silver long sword, granting him +1 to hit, +2 damage, and two attacks per round. He has also spent so much time observing Elena Faith-hold's forces that he has a gut feeling on what they will do next. Furthermore, against any foe who reminds him of Elena Faith-hold, including her woodsmen, he receives 5 extra hit points. If he finds himself facing Elena Faith-hold herself, he receives 10 extra hit points. It is worth noting that Iryvne is a master of guerilla warfare and will use complex hit-and-run tactics against any force of greater numbers.

## The Pack

The pack consists of twenty-five men and women, aside from Iryvne. Almost all of them are refugees from the original escape from the Faith Hold, the only exception being Nadia.

The average soldiers for the pack consist of fifteen men and women. They wear studded leather armor and wield long swords. They have all been through an average amount of training and as long as they are not caught alone will be able to put up an organized and well-planned fight.

**Average Pack Member, hm&f, F1 (15):** AC 7 (studded leather); MV 12; hp 7 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (long sword); ML: steady (12); AL CG XP 15.

The second group of warriors is better trained than the first, and they can keep their heads even while fighting alone. They also wear studded leather armor, but they wield glaives. They total six men and women.

**Elite Pack Members, hm&f, F2 (6):** AC 7 (studded leather); MV 12; hp 15 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (glaive); SZ M; ML elite (14); AL CG; XP 35.

Rupert is an elf who claims to be a native of Sithicus. He is the quiet, brooding type, who would rather be with the horses than the rest of the Pack. Since losing the better part of his soul to Lady Elena's torture chambers, Rupert wants two things out of life. First, he wants to find his ancient bow, a family heirloom, which he claims is a very powerful magic weapon. Second, he wants to see Faith-hold die by an arrow shot from that bow.

**Rupert Bramblebow, elf male, R4 (Archer\*):** AC 4 (leather and Dex) MV 12 hp: 27; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (long bow w/flight arrows); SA +1 to hit with long bow; SD resistance to *sleep* and *charm*; SZ M; ML fearless (19); Str 12, Dex 19, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 15, Cha 10; AL CG; XP 175.

*Personality:* Vengeful, Introspective

\* The Archer kit appears in *The Complete Book of Elves*.

Nadia is the Pack's lone priest, and as such finds herself treating lots of wounds. She has grown to despise Elena Faith-hold merely from seeing the scars and burns on several members of the Pack. She is as dedicated to the cause as her husband, but at times she has to soothe him, as Iryvne's hatred for Lady Elena has a tendency to blind him to common sense. Nadia originally hails from Barovia, where she was a Gundarakite priestess of the Morninglord. Though she would never admit it, were Iryvne ever to defeat Elena she would like him to come to Barovia to liberate her people.

**Nadia Wolfe, human female, C5:** AC 8 (Dex + shield); MV 12; hp 30; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4+1 (warhammer); SA spells; SD turn undead; SZ M; ML champion (15); AL NG; XP 420; S 11 D 15 C 14 I 11 W 17 Ch 16.

*Personality:* Kind, focused

**Commonly Prepared Spells:** 1st—*bless, cure light wounds, detect magic*; 2nd—*hold person, slow poison, wyvern watch*; 3rd—*cure disease; remove curse*

Maureve is the Pack's wizard. Despite the fact that she argues almost constantly with Garik, the Red Wolf's second-in-command, most members of the Pack know the couple love each other—in fact, that they only argue as a front so no one will know about the dalliances they engage in off in the woods several times each week. Maureve was raised a noble and as such is not very happy living in the woods with a bunch of woodsmen. But, she knows they are doing the right thing, so she curtails most of her complaints. *Most* of them.

**Maureve Spellweaver, human female, W5:** AC 8 (Dex); MV 12; hp 15; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (dagger); SZ M; ML champion (15); Str 8, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 17, Wis 9, Cha 18, AL GC; XP 420.

*Personality:* Friendly, Slightly Spoiled

**Commonly Memorized Spells:** 1st—*charm person, detect magic, grease, magic missile*; 2nd—*forget, invisibility*; 3rd—*protection from evil, 10' radius*

Finally there is Garik; he tried to lead the refugees during Iryvne's trek west but feels that he failed.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

Therefore, he has no problem being second in command. Garik had formerly served as a hired assassin for Elena Faith-hold, but when he awakened to the moral repercussions of deeds, he tried to quit. Of course, Garik knew too much to be allowed to simply walk away, so he was thrown in the dungeons. There, among those he had formerly hunted, Garik found humanity. He feels helping the pack is his best chance for redemption in the eyes of the gods.

## **Garik Shadowstepper, human male, T6**

**(Redeemed\*):** AC: 4 (leather armor + Dex); MV 12; hp 28; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (short sword); SA backstab; SD resistance to *charm*; SZ M; ML fanatic (17); Str 15, Dex 18, Con 13, Int 13, Wis 8, Cha 14; AL CG; XP: 270

*Thief Abilities:* PP 40% OL 55% F/RT 45% MS  
55% HS 40% DN 30% CW 80% RL 35%

*Personality:* Friendly, Religious

\* The Redeemed kit appears in *Champions of the Mists*.

## Adventure Ideas

- ❖ Elena Faith-hold may hire the PCs to root out and destroy Irvyne and the Pack. Of course when they finally catch up with the “bandits,” the PCs will discover that this group is not the sadistic army of monsters Elena made them out to be. Naturally, a discovery about the truth of Elena Faith-hold would follow; the PCs might feel obligated to help the stealthy resistance force.
- ❖ Another adventure could take place if the heroes have already run into Irvyne and the Pack (possibly in the previous adventure idea). Irvyne’s overprotective nature concerning Nadia and their unborn child has helped to lure Irvyne into a trap, and he has now been imprisoned by Lady Elena’s forces. Nadia sends for the heroes (friends of the Pack already) to lead a small strike force into the Faith Hold in an attempt to free Irvyne. This mission should utilize stealth, forcing the PCs to plan their actions carefully before they try to sneak into a dungeon where elite guards doing everything in their power to ensure that Irvyne does not try to escape. To add a sense of urgency, Irvyne may be due to be put to death in three days’ time. This would allow some time for the players to plan, and gather their forces, but might force them to launch their rescue attempt before they feel they’re truly ready, and added layer of uncertainty.



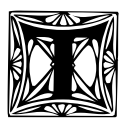
# THE SOCIETY OF HUNTSMEN

A SECRET SOCIETY SEEKING JUSTICE

by Dustin “Grigg Deadbreaker” Rathbun

dustinrathbun@hotmail.com

## INTRODUCTION



he drizzling rain stole Constable Donnelly’s strength as he handed his horse’s reins to one of his men. Or perhaps it was the dread at what he would find further down the narrow alley that chilled his blood.

Donnelly approached the second of his men as he walked deeper into the lane. The man stood pale-faced, staring down at the body that lay on the ground, covered with a now soaked woolen blanket. “How bad is it, Henson?” Donnelly asked as he approached the young deputy.

“In all my days sir, I’ve never seen something like this,” Henson replied. “How many victims does this make sir?”

“This poor man makes six,” Donnelly replied as he knelt next to the corpse. “Six men, and counting, if we do not find the Strangler.” Donnelly whipped the blanket back and looked at the body on the ground. “By Ezra . . .” was all he could mutter as he surveyed the corpse.

The dead man lay belly up on the ground, but the head was turned back, so that the face lay in the rain puddle that had formed under the body.

“Seven actually.” A gravelly voice came from further in the shadows.

Startled, both Donnelly and Henson reached for their blades. Before steel could be drawn, the figure that had spoken stepped from the shadows, and the constable stopped Henson from drawing steel against the man that Donnelly recognized as . . .

“Kranston.” As Donnelly uttered the name, Henson took a step back, still on edge from the man hunter’s unexpected appearance. “What do you mean seven?” Donnelly continued, “Have you information that we do not?”

The man hunter smiled grimly, “Constable, I always know more than you hear, and yes, there are seven victims.” Kranston approached the two lawmen. “Thirteen days before you found the first body, a petty thief named Mitcher was found by friends, with his neck broken,” Kranston said as he nodded toward the body at their feet. “Though it was not as severe as with this fellow.”

Donnelly’s hackles rose a bit at Kranston’s remark, but he swallowed his pride and responded, “Well, we shall discuss what information you have gathered at another time, but for now perhaps we should see to the identity of this man, and notify his family.” Donnelly gingerly began to turn the body at his feet over, and grimaced as the neck flopped at an awkward angle.

When the body was turned and the face revealed, Henson spoke, “This is Ackland Ternan. He is a messenger for the house McLaine, but what is that in his mouth?”

Donnelly pinched his fingers at the bit of yellow fabric that protruded from the corner of the late Ternan’s mouth and pulled. A canary yellow scarf, stained with blood, slipped easily from the dead man’s lips. Taking it by the corners, Donnelly opened it and looked upon the evidence. “There is writing on this scarf, letters, written in blood, but in a language that I do not know.”

“May I?” Kranston asked, holding his hand out to take the scarf. Donnelly looked curiously at the man hunter, and passed the fabric to Kranston’s black, gloved hand. “It is written in old Kartakan,” the man hunter observed, “It says, ‘You will not escape me. I have all of eternity to find you.’”

“By Ezra, how many more will die before this fiend finds the one he wants?” Donnelly sighed in frustration, “Seven dead, and we have no clue as to who this killer is. I have only three men at my disposal, and

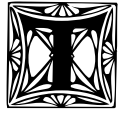
# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

their other duties keep them occupied. How in the blazes am I to ferret out this killer?"

"Not to worry constable," Kranston broke in, "I know some men who would be willing to help."

## THE HUNTSMEN

### A Chaotic Good Secret Society



he Huntsmen are a group of bounty hunters, trackers, and avengers, who wander the Core of Ravenloft hunting down and destroying the denizens of the night. Many of the Huntsmen are on some sort of personal quest of vengeance, but members of this society will almost always pause in their pursuits to aid in the hunt of a greater evil.

### Background

The Huntsmen originated in the domain of Borca, where a stalker known only as Kranston was searching for a killer loose in the city of Levkarest. The killer was inhumanly brutal, very hungry for blood, and nearly impossible to track. Never was there a living witness, and the killer proved able to escape even though cornered in a dead end alley. Kranston exhausted himself in what seemed a futile pursuit against an opponent he knew next to nothing about. It was then when, quite by chance, he encountered an avenger by the name of Turk Mader.

Mader had been pursuing a vampire which had fled from him in Nova Vaasa. The vampire had slain Mader's one true friend, and now made light of the pursuit that had become Mader's life. Mader had tracked the creature to Levkarest, but now had lost the trail in the twisting streets of the city.

With Kranston's knowledge of the city and Mader's knowledge of vampires, the duo played off of each other quite well. Eventually the pair tracked down the killer, who proved to be a fledgling vampire under the control of the bloodsucker who had been eluding Mader. After dispatching the bloodthirsty fledgling, the pair also flushed its master from hiding and forced it into the light of the rising sun. Kranston and Mader worked together for a time, and many of their peers began to seek them out in order to find aid, or perhaps to learn their trade a bit better. Eventually, the meetings of these man-hunters culminated in the formation of the Huntsman society. (Officially, the Huntsmen Society was founded in 733 BC.)

### Membership

The Huntsmen accept only good or neutral avengers (*Domains of Dread*), bounty hunters (*The Complete Thief's Handbook*), stalkers (*Dragon Magazine Annual #3*), and others like themselves. Only those who have proven themselves skilled in a hunt with a member of the society are invited to join. Temporary appointments may be given to non-man hunters on occasion, but this is a highly unusual occurrence. There are very few true members of the Huntsmen, no more than twenty-five. However, given their line of work the number is constantly in flux, as careless Huntsmen are slain, and young hopefuls join the ranks.

### Recognition

The Huntsmen do not make great efforts to conceal their existence, since they require some recognition to be effective in their jobs. The general populace within the Dread Domains has little or no contact with man-hunters, so they are usually unaware of the group's existence. However, those involved in enforcing the law have a bit more knowledge of the Huntsmen. A law keeping official has a chance (5% plus 2% per level he has gained) of recognizing a member of the Huntsmen by reputation.

Among themselves, Huntsmen tend to keep abreast of who joins the society. A Huntsman has a 10% chance, plus 5% per level he has gained, to recognize a fellow member of the society. Many Huntsmen have begun to wear a small badge in the shape of a hound, and this may become the true symbol of the society, but for now, the only true method of determining a Huntsman is to watch him at work.

Should a huntsman encounter someone wearing one of the Huntsmen badges, he is able to tell at a glance if the person wearing the badge is a member of the Society. Anyone caught wearing one of these badges that is not a member of the society must make a charisma check with a -3 penalty when in the company of a true Huntsman in order to maintain this charade. True Huntsmen are quite able to sniff out a charlatan within their midst, and are not very forgiving towards those who seek to gain a reputation by displaying something that they have not earned the right to wear.

### Headquarters

The society of Huntsmen has no true headquarters, nor does it require meetings. There are, however, a number of taverns within the core that have become recognized meeting places for members. The best known of these is known as Dengar's Retreat, located in Levkarest, the birthplace of the Huntsmen.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

## Leadership

There is no leader of the Huntsmen society, but one of the founding members of the group still lives. The stalker, Kranston, now lives in Sturben, Borca. He has retired from hunting, but he does occasionally leave his small home in search of a new challenge.

## Ronald Kranston

<b>12th-level Thief (Stalker), Chaotic Good</b>			
<b>Armor Class</b>	4	<b>Str</b>	14
<b>Movement</b>	12	<b>Dex</b>	16
<b>Level/Hit Dice</b>	10+4	<b>Con</b>	13
<b>Hit Points</b>	42	<b>Int</b>	15
<b>Morale</b>	16	<b>Wis</b>	14
<b>THAC0</b>	15	<b>Cha</b>	12
<b>No. of Attacks</b>	1	<b>XP</b>	5,000
<b>Damage/Attack</b>	B y weapon (Short sword +2)		
<b>Special Attacks</b>	Backstab x4		
<b>Special Defenses</b>	<i>Ring of mirror image</i>		
<b>Magic Resistance</b>	Nil		
<b>Thief Abilities</b>	PP 75% OL 77% F/RT 75% MS 94% HS 77% CW 99% RL 80%		

Ronald Kranston is a thin man who stands about 5'4". He is in his early sixties, but he moves as though he were a man half his age. His hair is shoulder length, but thin and white with age. The hairline has receded, laying bare the front third of his scalp. Kranston's eyes are green and clear, and little escapes his notice. Though Kranston has held up remarkably well against the ravages of time, his hearing has lessened in recent years. Kranston's first name is known only by a select group of friends. Professionally, however, Kranston is the only name that he answers to.

Kranston dresses in dark clothing often with a blue scarf and a black, wide brimmed hat. When on a hunt, he dresses in black, and wears studded leather armor. Kranston always carries a dagger on his person, but will equip himself with whatever weapons he feels will be useful during a hunt.

## Background

Ronald Kranston was born and raised in Levkarest. His parents were poor and he spent much of his time roaming the streets and back alleys. When he came into his teens, Ronald became a thief. While he made enough to help support his family, he never quite felt comfortable in the role. During his seventeenth year Ronald, quite by accident, aided the constabulary in apprehending an escaped murderer by running into the man as he fled a group of lawmen.

The killer was a well-known member of one of the local guilds, and the guild retaliated by beating Ronald

into a bloody pulp. Angered and humiliated, he now turned his talents to helping the local police retrieve escaped criminals. He infiltrated the local crime scene in order to flush out its major leaders and bring them to justice. It was during this time, he became known and feared by the underworld as Kranston.

Kranston has hunted men throughout the southern core, and has even traveled onto no less than three of the infamous islands of terror in pursuit of his prey.

## Current Sketch

Kranston has retired from the hunt, and now spends most of his time in his home, located in Sturben. He lives a simple, if lonely, life, and rarely receives visitors. On occasion he will don his old hunting gear and go into the city in order to aid in an investigation, but he leaves most of the work to younger, more able-bodied men. However, Kranston is not above teaching young upstarts that he is not as old as he might appear.

## Combat

Kranston wears *studded leather armor +1* in combat. Though not as quick as he once was, his Dexterity is still impressive, lending an additional -2 bonus to his Armor Class.

As stated above, Kranston carries a dagger with him at all times, but his primary weapon when he expects combat is his *short sword +2*, which he has named Blacktalon. Kranston also possesses a ring which can invoke the effects of the 2nd-level wizard spell *magic mirror* up to three times per day when the command word is spoken.

Kranston remains skilled as a thief, but his declining hearing has all but removed his ability to Hear Noise. Kranston can cause x4 damage with a successful backstab.

Kranston has the ability to read spell scrolls with a 75% chance to read them correctly. Kranston possesses both a *scroll of protection vs. poison* and a wizard scroll containing the spells *blink*, *identify*, and *levitation*.



# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

## Other Huntsmen

### Corden Mader

#### 5th Level Avenger, Chaotic Good

<b>Armor Class</b>	5	<b>Str</b>	15
<b>Movement</b>	12	<b>Dex</b>	14
<b>Level/Hit Dice</b>	5	<b>Con</b>	16
<b>Hit Points</b>	42	<b>Int</b>	12
<b>THAC0</b>	16 (15)	<b>Wis</b>	9
<b>No. of Attacks</b>	3/2	<b>Cha</b>	11
<b>Damage/Attack</b>	2d4+2		
<b>Special Attacks</b>	Fangscorch		
<b>Special Defenses</b>	None		
<b>Magic Resistance</b>	Nil		

Corden Mader is the son of Turk Mader, co-founder of the Huntsmen. Corden is 27 years of age, and he looks much like his father did when he was Corden's age. Corden stands at 6'3", and has the lean build of an experienced warrior. His hair is brown and shoulder length, though he often ties it back with a leather cord in order to keep it out of the way. Corden's brown eyes are dark and brooding, often giving him the look of a man who has never known joy in his life.

Corden wears a suit of chain mail armor when pursuing his prey. He wears a heavy black cloak secured with a clasp fashioned from his Huntsman's badge. At his throat, he wears a gorget emblazoned with the holy symbol of the Church of Ezra. Always at his side is his father's legacy to him, the sword Fangscorch.

### Background

Corden Mader was raised with the desire to destroy the foul undead. Since he was eleven, his father trained him to hunt them down and destroy them. Much of the time, Corden resented his father for attempting to mold him into his own image, but that changed when the minions of a vampire Turk destroyed came looking for revenge.

The vampire's minions avenged their fallen lord in the dead of night. Turk Mader and his wife were slain, and Corden was taken back to the killers' refuge. There, they had planned to use Corden as a sacrifice in an attempt to resurrect their master. The timely intervention of a group of adventurers spared the boy his life, but Corden did not sit idly by. The leader of the vampire's minions found that the boy was indeed as much of a threat as his father had been when Corden ran him through with his own ceremonial dagger.

## Current Sketch

Corden Mader has since become an influential member of the Huntsmen. He is one of the few that is considered a friend by Kranston, and it was Corden who introduced the badge of the Huntsmen. Though some of the older members of the society view this badge as nothing more than a piece of jewelry, younger members consider the badge to be a mark of honor, and the badge is quickly becoming the recognized symbol of the Society of Huntsmen.

Corden has no permanent lodgings, and he is currently traveling the core with his friend and traveling companion, Waldor Drune, in pursuit of a monstrous vampire known as Bishop Night. The vampire has thus far eluded him in Mordent, Dementlieu, and Lamordia. Mader is sure that Bishop Night will next appear in Necropolis, and has dispatched agents to Martira Bay in hopes that he will finally be able trap this monster and stop the vampire's reign of terror.

## Combat

In combat, Corden uses his father's sword Fangscorch. This magical bastard sword has been enchanted to strike vampires. The sword has no magical plusses, but is capable of wounding any form of vampire. Should Corden strike with a roll of a natural 20 when attacking a vampire, Fangscorch will stake the vampire. When Fangscorch stakes a vampire in this manner, the vampire is paralyzed and unable to move. The following round, if Corden uses the command word of "Pyre," the staked vampire is enveloped in flames. These flames will cause 2d8 damage each round to the vampire, but will not cause anything else they may touch to combust.

Fangscorch is also capable of detecting a vampiric charm upon any unfortunates who have fallen victim to a vampire's gaze. This ability manifests itself as a soft humming, and the sword's wielder must concentrate for one round to activate this power.

Other than the above abilities, Fangscorch performs exactly as a bastard sword of good quality. Corden is specialized in the use of Fangscorch, and can attack with it three times within two rounds of combat.

As an avenger, Corden gains a 5 hit point bonus when confronting agents of his quarry and those who remind him of his nemesis in battle. When confronting his main quarry in battle, Corden gains a 10 hit point bonus. These hit points are used like those in the *aid* spell, and are the first hit points lost in combat.

When pursuing his quarry, Corden can make a Wisdom check in order to determine the approximate direction in which to travel in pursuit of his chosen enemy.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

## Waldor Drune

### 3rd-level Gnomish Thief (Pistoleer), Chaotic Good

<b>Armor Class</b>	5	<b>Str</b>	9
<b>Movement</b>	12	<b>Dex</b>	17
<b>Level/Hit Dice</b>	3	<b>Con</b>	12
<b>Hit Points</b>	15	<b>Int</b>	14
<b>THAC0</b>	19 (17 w/Dex)	<b>Wis</b>	11
<b>No. of Attacks</b>	1/2 or 1	<b>Cha</b>	15
<b>Damage/Attack</b>	by weapon		
<b>Special Attacks</b>	+1 to hit goblins or kobolds		
<b>Special Defenses</b>	Gnomish constitution, small size		
<b>Magic Resistance</b>	Nil		
<b>Thief Abilities</b>	PP 40% OL 45% F/RT 40% MS 35% HS 30% DN 25% CW 70% RL 10%		

Waldor Drune is the constant traveling companion to Corden Mader. While not truly a man-hunter, Waldor has earned his place in the Huntsmen by being an invaluable aid to Corden in his hunts.

Waldor is a member of the gnomish race in his fifties. Standing at 3'6", he has a wiry build for a gnome and is quite agile. He possesses a short and scruffy beard and wears his light brown hair in a small braid. Waldor has dark brown eyes that sparkle with good humor, and he acts as quite the counter to the grim demeanor of his traveling companion.

Waldor wears leather armor and a floppy, green wool hat. At his waist he has two pistols holstered on his belt. One of them is a wheellock, and the other a snaplock. He keeps his *smoke powder* and bullets handily available on the straps that hold his small backpack, and also carries an arquebus slung over his shoulder. Waldor prominently displays his Huntsman badge on a chain around his neck.

## Background

Waldor Drune was born in the gnomish community of Mayvin in Necropolis. While he was still young, his family moved to the city of Martira Bay to open a small pawnshop. One day, a young human dressed in garish clothing brought in a fine pistol. The man stated that he simply needed to clear a debt, and would be back to claim the gun in a week's time. Waldor was fascinated by the pistol, and often took it out to get a closer look at it, taking note of all the small parts, and how they all worked together. Waldor began to read all the information he could find on *smoke powder* and the weapons that made use of it, and began saving his money to buy one of his very own. After a year had passed, and the young human never returned to claim his weapon, Waldor's father conceded to let his son purchase the weapon.

Waldor became quite accomplished with the pistol, and began entering some small marksmanship contests. Winning some of these contests earned Waldor another pistol, and the more archaic arquebus, named "Leila," which he is quite proud of.

Wills met Corden Mader in a tavern while on the way to a marksman competition in Dementlieu. Agents of the evil vampire Bishop Night had ambushed Mader in an alley outside of the window to Waldor's room. The noise of Waldor's pistol startled the attackers, while the strategic placement of the next shot, into the knee cap of their apparent leader, sent them running (or staggering as the case may be).

## Current Sketch

Waldor has traveled with Corden since that night, and considers the grim avenger to be like a brother. Joining with the avenger was, at first, a way for Waldor to capitalize on his skill as a pistoleer, but during the travels with Cody he has come to realize just how important the work of the Huntsmen can be. When Waldor received his Huntsmen's badge, it was truly an honor to him, and he has vowed to give his life to the society if need be.

Waldor has a very outgoing personality, and if PCs encounter the duo of Corden and Waldor, they will find themselves talking almost exclusively to the gnome. Should Waldor meet with another pistoleer, he will try to engage that person in a conversation. He has been known to stay up till the wee hours of the night talking firearms with other sharpshooters.

## Combat

In combat Waldor relies on his smoke powder weapons. He carries them loaded at all times, so he is always ready with at least three shots. The pistols inflict 1d8 damage per shot, and the arquebus inflicts 1d10 damage per shot. Should maximum damage be rolled for any shot, then the die is rolled again with the new result being added to the first. (Example: Waldor fires a pistol shot and hits, rolling 8 for the damage roll. He then rolls the d8 again and gets a 5. The total damage is 13. 8+5=13.) Should Waldor roll a 1 on his attack roll, the weapon misfires, inflicting damage equal to a regular shot to Waldor. Weapons that have misfired cannot be used again until at least 10 rounds have been spent cleaning the barrel.

If Waldor is exposed to a fire attack, such as a *fireball* or breath weapon, he must roll an item saving throw for whatever container he keeps his smoke powder in. If the save fails, then he will take 1d2 points of damage per smoke powder charge he is carrying.

Waldor can also backstab opponents for double damage, but dislikes shooting people in the back.

## BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

As a gnome, Waldor gets a +3 to save vs. magic due to his unique gnomish constitution. Waldor also gets a +1 to hit modifier when attacking goblins or kobolds. Opponents of large size or greater have a -4 penalty to attack rolls when striking at Waldor. Waldor also possesses infravision up to 60'.



# THE ORDER OF TWILIGHT

AN ORDER OF SCHOLARS WHO DARE TO DREAM

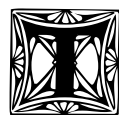
by James “The Madman” Dalton

reagulf@hotmail.com

*Who knows what will disturb this sleep  
of mine, whatever sleep it may be.*

— Robert Frost  
“After Apple Picking”

## HISTORY OF THE NIGHTMARE MAN



he campfire spat high into the air, surrounded by five still figures. Above them, the sky was a chaotic swirl of dark crimson and neutral gray. As for the surrounding terrain, it was obscured beneath layers of glowing mist.

On one side of the fire sat four figures in traveling attire. They appeared to have come from all walks of life, so varied were their appearances. Yet somehow, despite their differences, they appeared similar—a similarity that extended beyond the identical black medallions each wore around their neck. Across from them, clothed only in a loincloth, was the Abber shaman, Lives-in-Memories. His gnarled skin was nut brown and covered in a myriad of tattoos. The centerpiece of this painted menagerie was a large black raven in mid-flight, tattooed on the shaman’s chest with a single wing swooping up to touch his lower cheek. Above his nose were two milk-white eyes, exposing Lives-in-Memories’ blindness, and a single wisp of white hair atop an otherwise bald pate. Despite his blindness he was looking directly at the group, his hands rhythmically shaking an old necklace of blue beads.

For a while the gathered figures were silent, before Lives-in-Memories opened his mouth, revealing a toothless abyss, “The mists of time have parted before

my gaze. I have found the memory that you seek. Listen now, and learn of what Lives-in-Memories has seen.

“The being you know of as the Nightmare Man was once known by another name. In another world and another time, there was a gifted artist by the name of Armand Tyarré. From a very young age he painted masterpiece upon masterpiece. A gallery in the city he occupied, a city that now exists only as the ruined City of Nod, had entire rooms dedicated to his artwork. First claimed to be a prodigy and then a god of the canvas, Armand was very modest about his work. In fact, his work was all he cared about. Shuttered within a work of easels, palettes and paintbrushes, Armand had little to care about the people around him. In his mind nothing compared to the beauty he created with his brush.

“The subjects of his creativity varied greatly, for the secret to his art was his superhuman imagination. It seemed that Armand had a mental link with the fabled Plane of Dreams, a place where anything is possible. Even during the day Armand dreamt, painting as fantastic visions opened in his mind. But none of these dreams put any sense into him, despite the praise that his loved ones lumped upon him; Armand continued to ignore them. Occasionally, such as when a child was born to his sister or when his brother was married, Armand would agree to paint a memory that could be cherished forever. Alas, once the paintbrush had left the canvas, these people evaporated from his mind.

“Yes, Armand was what one would call eccentric, but no one cared, for Armand was completely harmless. Unfortunately for his loved ones, Armand’s obsession with his painting would lead to their deaths.

“One summer night the family were gathered in the ball room of their large mansion, celebrating the birth of Armand’s second nephew. Distant from the celebrants, Armand sat in his bedroom, painting away at another masterpiece. In yet another part of the house, several thieves—drawn by the wealth that Armand’s paintings were worth—were creeping around. A maid startled the thieves, causing them to drop their lanterns, which shattered on the ground. Hungry flames immediately spread out from the point of impact, devouring everything in this path. Armand, whose room

## BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

sat between the West Wing and the ballroom in the East Wing, was disturbed from his painting by the sight of the west wing blazing with fire. Inspiration took hold of him as Armand gathered up a blank canvas, some paints and his easel. Leaving the house, Armand set himself up on the front lawn and took in the glory of the burning mansion. Meanwhile the guests and family members partied on, oblivious to the fire that was burning the house down around them. It was only when the roof of the ballroom collapsed, that they realized what was going on. Of course at that point it was too late.

“When the authorities arrived at the burning skeleton of Tyarré Manor, they found Armand admiring his latest masterpiece—*Mansion of Embers*. Believing that the eccentric artist had purposefully caused the fire, the authorities arrested Armand and locked him away in prison. Denied his painting, Armand slowly began to grow mad. Little did he, or any other resident of the doomed city, know, but dark mists had gathered around the city—mists similar to those that give this land its name.

“Day by torturous day swam by Armand, as he continued to plummet into insanity. His only comfort was the dreams, but they too seemed to be going mad. Each day that passed without him painting, caused the dreams to continually twist into nightmares. One morning Armand awoke from his sleep to find a terrible entity in his cell—an entity that he had just dreamt about. The creature was from the deepest pits of hell and yet Armand was not afraid of it. Then it was that he noticed why. He could see into the beast’s mind—his mind. Armand had given his dream life, something that he continued to do in the weeks that followed. Soon Armand had mastered the ability to manifest all sorts of dreams in his cell. But his shattered mind was still sad, for the dreams he manifested were either terrible nightmares or twisted versions of his sleeping visions. A new idea sprung to life in Armand’s mind; perhaps he could use the dreams to gather painting equipment.

“After a particularly horrifying nightmare, Armand manifested a winged claw. He commanded it to fly out of the prison and steal for him what he needed to begin painting again. The dream manifest obeyed and soon returned with an easel, canvas, paints and brushes. Like a starving man to a banquet, Armand immediately began to paint. Yet, like his twisted dreams, Armand could only paint dark scenes. Eventually the warden found him out, a particularly malicious man who had delighted in tormenting poor Armand.

“The warden had all of Armand’s paintings taken away and burnt before the insane artist’s eyes. During the entire scenario Armand just screamed like a pitiful child. Finally, the warden had Armand locked away in solitary confinement.

“His tortured screams rang out for days from the lone, windowless tower that was his home. Finally, when his voice was but a hoarse whisper, Armand turned to plotting the wardens—and the entire prison’s demise. Summoning up from the depths of his insane mind the worst horrors he could imagine, Armand ordered them to slaughter all of the prison guards and the warden. Gleefully the malevolent manifestations swarmed out of the tower and through the prison. Any guard they found, they slaughtered. Armand, who cackled with each scream, felt every murder as they occurred. The final victim was the warden himself, his body and soul was devoured by the gibbering fiends of Armand’s mind.

“This was when everything turned for the worst. The countless deaths they had wrought seemed to corrupt the manifestations further. They broke out of Armand’s control and started to run amok through the prison and out into the city proper. A riot broke out in the prison, during which Armand escaped. Everywhere he ran he either saw massacred bodies or terrible battles. The nightmares pursued screaming figures throughout the streets, yet none of them were interested in Armand. Fleeing through the streets, Armand headed for sanctuary—the city cathedral. In the past Armand had used to come to the great edifice at least once a week to admire the glorious artworks within. It was here that he found artwork that equaled his own. Now, Armand hoped, he would find salvation.

“But the nightmares had come for the cathedral as well, and Armand found himself in a large hall empty except for the mangled bodies of priests. At the head of the cathedral was a gigantic altar and here it was that the mad artist prostrated himself, begging to be saved. He called up to the gods and asked that he and his art would be spared from the ravages of the nightmares. Even as he spoke the windows of the cathedral shook with the moaning of the nightmares outside. Shattered glass sprayed into the cathedral, followed by hordes of ethereal horrors. Shaking with terror, Armand called out to them, told them to go out and find other survivors to kill—just as long as they left him and his art in safety. The nightmares ignored his pleas; instead they closed in for the kill.

“His screams carried on until his body was devoured, at which point the mad spirit of Armand reached for the Plane of Dreams—a place he loved so dearly. But it seemed that a thin web of shadow stood between Armand and true salvation. Strands of the dark web caught at the artist’s spirit, drawing him down and back into the clutches of the terrifying nightmares. Darkness swarmed into Armand’s visions and he knew no more.

“Maybe hours or even days had passed when Armand awoke. He stood in the Cathedral in a ruined city full of mist. His body was emaciated and light gray,

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

his clothes were nowhere to be seen. It was then that Armand saw the spiders, thousands of the black horrors crawling over the walls of the Cathedral. He could barely scream before the arachnids attacked him, swarming over his body and spewing strands of black webbing across him.

“Thus the artist Armand Tyarré died and the creature known as the Nightmare Man was born. This happened sixty-nine years ago in the time of this Land. Since that time others have joined this tortured soul, joined him in his new prison. Thus my memory comes to an end.”

None of the other figures had moved during the shaman’s oration, except to scribble notes down onto paper. One of the figures, a woman with a thick Nova Vaasan accent finally broke the silence.

“Who were these others? How did they come into this Land to join the Nightmare Man?”

Her questions were only met with a smile from the wizened shaman. Without another word the man seemed to fade away into the mist, only the rhythm made by his beads continued on. The four figures sat stunned for a moment before dousing the fire and standing up. Remembering their orders they did not bother searching for Lives-in-Memories, instead they simply dusted themselves off and gathered their belongings from the dusty ground.

“A very interesting tale indeed,” the woman noted, “but now the time has come for us to depart. This history must have its place in the Order archives.”

With that the group left the site of the fire and began their arduous trek back to the Rocky Shoals and the boat that awaited them. Meanwhile, obscured by the mists behind them, swirled a creature of chaotic energy. Only moments had passed since it dropped the illusion of the shaman, but already the Ennui was bored. Without a sound the dream spawn evaporated. As the master ordered, the seeds had been sown.

## THE ORDER OF TWILIGHT



Humans are very curious, whenever an unknown factor appears in our life we strive to uncover its secrets and make it mundane. This art, known as science, has been able to solve just about every mystery that has perplexed us in the past. But one mystery still stands, impervious to the assaults of the human mind—the subconscious. Within this realm of past mist and future shadows lie our creativity, our memories, and our dreams. Most important of all are our dreams, for unlike the other two they have two faces—one light and one dark. Nightmares, the darkest manifestations of our soul, hold great power. They invoke fear within us and could

shatter our very sanity. Imagine what would happen if this power could be harnessed.

## Background

For decades now the Nightmare Lands have existed in Ravenloft, led by the insidious group known as the Nightmare Court. Leading this motley band of evil is the mysterious figure known as the Nightmare Man. Once a skilled artist, the Nightmare Man now finds himself without the smallest drop of creativity. Painting had been his life, but now it was all gone, all but the painful feeling of loss. In vain the Nightmare Man attempted to gain inspiration from the dreams and nightmares of others. Alas, his curse was too strong—not even the most vivid dream could inspire him. Thus the Nightmare Man came up with a new plan of attack—to escape from Ravenloft. But once again he was thwarted, he had no imagination with which to make up a plan.

All of this changed when he stumbled upon the frustrating dreams of a mage known as Guiver Mythspeaker. Guiver had found himself trapped in Ravenloft after a failed attempt to enter the Plane of Dreams. Finding escape impossible, the mage had begun to experience nightmares. Pleased at his discovery, the Nightmare Man decided that Guiver would be the one to help him escape from his terrible curse. Over the next few years, the Nightmare Man appeared in Guiver’s dreams, appealing to the wizard to help him. At first Guiver believed that he was simply dreaming, but after the Nightmare Man proved to the mage that whatever happened in his dreams could affect him in the real world, the mage changed his mind. Finally, in 725 BC Guiver made a pilgrimage to the Nightmare Lands, where he saw the true power of the Nightmare Court. Believing that somehow he could use this as a way to enter into the Plane of Dreams, Guiver agreed to help the Nightmare Man escape as long as he gave Guiver the power to enter dreams and nightmares. Reluctantly the Nightmare Man agreed and gave Guiver a magical item known as a *dream key*. This magical device allowed its wielder to pierce the veil between the realities and enter into dreams and dreamscapes.

A year after he agreed to assist the Nightmare Man, Guiver decided that he would need more people to help him. So it was that the Order of Twilight came to be. Guiver searched the land for other wizards and scholars, but over time he also began to recruit people from more mundane occupations. Eventually the Order became a Land-wide network of information. While investigating the legend about the existence of a portal that led to another world, some Order members discovered a tome written in Balok talking about the Plane of Dreams. Guiver immediately acquired this tome, and studied it in depth for some five months.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

Finally, in the year 748 BC, Guiver had discovered how to open a gateway to the Plane of Dreams that could evade the death-tight grip of Ravenloft. Planning to betray the Nightmare Man and leave Ravenloft without living up to his part of the bargain, Guiver assembled his most trusted assistants and prepared to use the Key to escape. Unfortunately one of the assistants was fiercely loyal to the Nightmare Man and betrayed Guiver to him. Infuriated, the Nightmare Man dragged Guiver into a nightmare. Here he switched the treacherous mage's *dream key* with a cursed one. When Guiver completed his ritual several days later, the energy of the cursed Key was released in a cataclysmic explosion that killed all participants—including the Nightmare Man's informant.

## Goals

Originally the Order was established to help the Nightmare Man escape from Ravenloft. In recent times the Order has expanded its horizons and now strives to learn all it can about dreams and nightmares. Although Guiver died five years ago, the Order carries on, oblivious to their leader's demise. Also, despite Guiver's betrayal, the Order still searches for a way to help the Nightmare Man. In return the Order expects to gain total freedom in the realm of dreams as well as protection from the members of the Nightmare Court.

## Members

Since every intelligent being can dream, membership to the Order of Twilight is open to anyone. In the beginning of the Order, Guiver used to recruit only wizards and scholars who had great knowledge of dreams. But later on he decided that the Order could accomplish other, more menial goals, with the help of members from less specialized fields.

In present times, the Order is separated into Circles, which are further split into Cells. Circles are ranks in the Order of Twilight and signify how far the member is from Guiver and the truth about the Order's origins. The First Circle contains Guiver and his assistants and is unique in the fact that it is made up of only one Cell. The other Circles are made up of any number of Cells, depending on how active members of the higher Circles are in recruiting.

Occasionally a member of a Cell will leave his headquarters and travel the land, looking for prospective members. When he finds a number of candidates he helps them to form a Cell in their local area and initiates them into the Circle beneath his own. For the rest of the Cell's existence they will work together to study dreams and dream-related phenomena, passing along their findings to their found and his Cell,

which will in turn pass it along to their found until all information gathered by the Order reaches Guiver's Cell. Due to the recent destruction of Guiver's cell, all of the Second Circle has been plunged into confusion as to what to do with their information. Already power struggles are taking place and many Cell members are attempting to form a new cell to lead the Order in Guiver's place. This of course has been hampered by the fact that most cells do not know of the existence of other cells in their Circle.

Cells can have any number of members, although most only have between four and seven members. Although they have no elected leaders, each cell has one or two charismatic members that take on the unspoken title of cell leader.

## Recognition

The Order of Twilight is a well-known group, with a great deal of the Core knowing at least a little about them. However the Order does have its secrets (and an ulterior motive known only to members of the First and Second Circle). For this reason they still require several levels of recognition.

First of all, each member has a special medallion that they are given when they are initiated. These medallions are flat black disks made from onyx. Carved into them is an eye with a crescent moon for a pupil. This is known as the Symbol of Twilight. Members of the Order are required to have the disks on show at all times so that they may be identified by other members and the public at large.

Once Order members have identified one another they must then make sure that they are talking to bone fide members. This is done via the Rites of Unmasking. What this rather poetic-sounding ritual entails is two phrases known to all members of the Order. The member who initiates contact with the other member begins by saying "The sun shines upon us, as we shine upon mankind," to which the other member replies, "The moon shines upon us also, so that we may have a beacon in this dark land." When members are satisfied that they are talking to fellow Order initiates they can talk about anything they wish.

Only members of the First and Second Circles employ the final method of recognition. All members of these Circles wear black robes that mask their faces, so as to hide their evil practices from spying eyes. To ascertain whether someone truly is a member, each Cell has a password that changes weekly. This password must be whispered into the ear of the Cell's founder as each member enters the headquarters. Anyone found to be a spy is killed immediately.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

## Headquarters

Just like dreams, the headquarters of each Order cell come in all different shapes and sizes. Most of the Order is concentrated in the Core, with cells found in Lamordia, Mordent, Richemulot, Barovia, Darkon, Falkovnia and Nova Vaasa. Rumors have it that other cells exist in the Islands of Terror, most likely in domains such as G'Henna, Souragne and Vorostokov.

Guiver and his assistants made their home in Cross Keep, a ruined wizard's tower deep within a Mordent forest. None of the other members of the Order knew of its location, and with the death of its inhabitants perhaps none ever will.

## Guiver Mythspeaker

### Biography

Dreams, some say, are a window into the dreamer's mind. Sometimes these windows are broken, and the viewer can only see a dark nightmare within. However, there are also times when the window is opened and something else creates the dream.

### Appearance

In life Guiver Mythspeaker appeared as an elderly man in his fifties. His face was drawn and sallow, a gift from many years of studying tomes in dark rooms. Two pale green eyes stared out from a face, above them rested several wisps of gray hair. He usually draped his hunched form with black and gray robes, the colors of his Circle. When reading he would wear a makeshift pince-nez perched on the end of his aquiline nose.

After the explosion of the cursed *dream key*, Guiver was transformed into a creature known as a dream wraith. He can only appear in Level 1 or 2 realities that are created by another mind. When in these realities he either appears as he did in life, or as a misty column filled with a purple glow.

## Guiver Mythspeaker

### Dream Wraith, Neutral Evil

<b>Armour Class</b>	6	<b>Str</b>	13*
<b>Movement</b>	12	<b>Dex</b>	19*
<b>Level/Hit Dice</b>	7	<b>Con</b>	12
<b>Hit Points</b>	50	<b>Int</b>	19
<b>THAC0</b>	18	<b>Wis</b>	13
<b>Morale</b>	15	<b>Cha</b>	12
<b>No. of Attacks</b>	1	<b>XP</b>	3, 000
<b>Damage/Attack</b>	1d4+2 (hands)		
<b>Special Attacks</b>	Spells, Possession (see below)		
<b>Special Defenses</b>	Spells		
<b>Magic Resistance</b>	25%		

\* These scores represent Guiver's abilities within dreamscapes; see *The Nightmare Lands*.

### Background

Guiver Mythspeaker was born as the third son to a king on the Prime Material Plane. By all appearances Guiver was a normal boy, but there was one thing wrong with him. Guiver suffered from an acute case of insomnia; no matter how hard he tried he could not fall asleep. Believing that the gods cursed him, Guiver's father sent him away to be cured by priests. For months they tried everything they could think of, but unfortunately nothing happened. All hope had been lost for Guiver until an old wizard known as Alamor Mythspeaker came to his father's kingdom. Seeing the young prince, Alamor told the king that he too had once been afflicted with insomnia, but had been cured of it by his master. The king asked the wizard to cure Guiver and offered anything in his kingdom as payment. Alamor agreed and as payment, asked that when he was finished Guiver would become his apprentice. The king gladly agreed and sent Guiver away with Alamor.

For the first few nights with Alamor, the wizard did nothing to Guiver. After awhile the prince grew annoyed at the wizard's apparent laziness. It was at this point that Alamor approached Guiver and told him to lie down on his bed. Obeying the wizard, Guiver laid down and watched, fascinated, as the wizard began to cast a spell. Guiver's eyelids started to droop and before he knew it he was asleep. This was where his joy at finally being able to sleep turned to dismay. He could not dream. When Guiver awoke he told Alamor of the predicament, but the wizard just smiled at him. He told Guiver that not even magic could bring dreams to the dreamless.

Twelve years went by and Alamor's pupil turned into a wizard with great promise. Finally, on his nineteenth birthday, Alamor told his student that it was time he went out into the world. As was the custom in



# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

Guiver's world, he took his master's surname as his own. Bidding farewell to old Alamor, Guiver returned to his father.

More years passed and when Guiver's father died, he became Court Wizard to his elder brother. Although almost twenty years had passed since he had been cured of insomnia, Guiver still desperately wanted to dream like everyone else. His desperation led him to pursuing any book that had the slightest tidbit of information about dreams. While on his quest, Guiver found an old journal written by a planewalker. This journal spoke about the Plane of Dreams, a world where only dreams existed. Guiver was ecstatic; this was exactly what he wanted! Using his brother's coffers, Guiver searched far and wide for a spell that would enable him to pierce the veil between his world and the Plane of Dreams.

One night, after fighting with his brother about his expenditures, Guiver saw an old woman in the courtyard beneath his window. The crone beckoned to him, telling Guiver that she was a fortuneteller who had lost her way. If Guiver would give her shelter for the night and gold to send her on her way, she would reward him richly. At first Guiver was about to refuse, but then he had an idea. Perhaps the fortuneteller could tell him where he would find a spell that could do what he wanted. Calling down to the woman, he told her that she could stay in the barn. When the morning came he gave her a pouch full of gold coins and asked her about his reward. Parting her lips in a smile that revealed several black teeth, the woman handed Guiver a thin tome before running off and out of the gate. Surprised at her bizarre exit, Guiver took the book and returned to his chambers.

Opening the book, Guiver was amazed to find the exact spell he was looking for—one that could take him to the Plane of Dreams. Instantly he stopped his search and instead began to study the spell. Hours turned to days, which turned to weeks and finally months. About eight months after the woman had given him the book, Guiver believed that he was ready to cast the spell. Gathering all he needed, he prepared a circle in his laboratory. Slowly Guiver began to speak the ancient words that would unlock the doorway to dreams. Unfortunately he never arrived at his goal, for as the spell completed and the circle flared with spellfire, Guiver found his vision blurred by mist followed by darkness.

Coming to, Guiver found himself in a field within the domain of Mordent. Believing that he was in the Plane of Dreams, Guiver waited to see if anything unusual would happen. For hours he sat in the middle of the field, but nothing happened. Soon Guiver began to realize that the spell had failed, instead of taking him to the Plane of Dreams it had dumped him in a strange land. Despite the spell's failure, that night when Guiver did finally fall asleep he found himself dreaming. But it

was nothing like the dreams that he had read about, instead he dreamed that he was trapped in a cage. Apparently within his grasp was a key, but no matter how hard he reached for it the key was always further away. This nightmare continued on for several more nights, growing worse every time. Eventually Guiver thought he was going to go mad. This was when he met the Nightmare Man.

Telling Guiver that if the wizard helped him, the Nightmare Man could give him access to the Plane of Dreams. At first believing that he was still just having a normal nightmare, Guiver tried to ignore the Nightmare Man. Finally, in order to prove his reality, the Nightmare Man attacked Guiver, badly injuring him. Upon awaking, Guiver was shocked to see that he still bore the wounds from his nightmare. Agreeing to help the Nightmare Man, Guiver was taken to the mysterious Nightmare Lands. Here he was given a magical item known as the *dream key* that would help him.

As more time passed Guiver created the Order of Twilight to help him keep his promise with the Nightmare Man. At the same time, Guiver secretly continued to look for a way to escape into the Plane of Dreams. When Guiver was in his middle age he finally, after help from the First Circle of the Order, discovered a spell that could take him the final step to the Plane he had sought for so long. Betraying his promise to the Nightmare Man, Guiver decided to cast the spell immediately—success was so close. Unfortunately one of his assistants, a woman who had dedicated her life to helping the Nightmare Man escape, did not like what Guiver was doing. She informed the ruler of the Nightmare Court of the wizard's plans. One night while he was dreaming, the Nightmare Man visited Guiver secretly. Exchanging the *dream key* for a cursed one, the Nightmare Man left Guiver believing that he had won.

Only when his spell was completed did Guiver learn of the Nightmare Man's counter-betrayal. A backlash of dream energy exploded out from the center of the circle, killing all of the wizards involved. Guiver felt his body burn around him, yet somehow he survived. The *dream key* that he had held so long had infused his body with the essence of the Plane of Dreams. Guiver had transcended to the state of a dream wraith, a form that he first enjoyed—until he discovered what it had cost him.

## Personality

Guiver is a bitter man, for whenever something good happens to him it is soon followed by something bad. In his current form as a dream wraith, Guiver is insanely jealous of the Nightmare Man—a being who can exist with great power in both dreams and the real world, while Guiver can only exist in dreams. Guiver is also a

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

genius, albeit a deranged one, who tries to use any situation for his benefit. He'll even help the side of good if it allows him to get one up on the Nightmare Man.

When the *dream key* exploded, it imbued his soul with great dream powers, making him (in his mind) equal to the Nightmare Man himself in the dreamscapes. Because of this he takes great pride in showing his powers off to "lesser" beings, something that could one day prove his downfall.

## Combat

Overall Guiver disdains combat, instead preferring to talk his way through a situation. Of course, if he is hard pressed (or he wants to possess someone—see below) then he can become quite a formidable opponent.

Guiver's first line of attack is his dream powers, some of which he will use outside of combat. Like the members of the Nightmare Court, whenever Guiver uses a dream power the cost is added to the Mental Fortitude of the dreamscape's seed. The *dream key* imbued Guiver with the following Dream Powers: Alter Perception, Alter Spell, Control, Frustration, Polymorph and Summon. Since Guiver lives only in Reality levels one and two, he can successfully dreamwalk without making a check, although he still can only do it once a day.

Secondly, Guiver still retains his ability to cast spells. Since he died as a 7th-level mage, Guiver can memorize and cast spells like one. He has no spellbook or list; instead he can memorize any spell in the *Player's Handbook*. When Guiver has used up a spell, he cannot re-memorize it until the next time he appears in a dream or dreamscape. Also, like every other magic-user in a dream, Guiver's spells can be affected by the rules of the dreamscape unless he spends Inner Strength points. Guiver has 3 points of Inner Strength.

Finally, if all else fails, Guiver can attack with his hands. In both of his forms they appear as gnarled claws. Anyone struck by his claws sustains 1d4+2 points of damage.

Guiver also has the ability to possess a physical body. To do this he must first attack the person, usually a dream seed. When the person's hit points drop to 0 they must instantly make a save vs. death magic. If they succeed, Guiver is repelled and kicked out of the dreamscape. If they fail, Guiver is able to possess them for a time equal to 1d6 x Guiver's Con days. During this time Guiver has access to the victim's memories in order to more successfully pretend to be the person. Once each day the victim must make another Save vs. Death Magic. If they fail, they remain possessed. If they succeed they break the possession and Guiver is repelled. If this happens, Guiver cannot dreamwalk or attempt to possess another person for 1d4 weeks. As

long as the victim doesn't break the possession, at the end of the allotted time of possession, the possessed body collapses from exhaustion. Guiver leaves the body and the victim must make a System Shock roll. If they fail they must make a Madness check, if they succeed nothing out of the ordinary happens.

Because Guiver is undead he can be turned by clerics as if he were a Special Undead.

## New Item: Dream Key

The *dream key* is a rare magical item that enables its owner to successfully dreamwalk once per day. It also gives the owner the ability to use the Alter Perception and Summon dream powers, twice per dream each. No mental fortitude points have to be spent; instead these points are added to the mental fortitude points of the dream seed.

*Dream keys* can only exist in the dream world, when a person is given one in a dream the key appears to be a normal key made from a glowing gold material. When they wake up the key is nowhere to be seen, but as soon as they fall asleep (or dreamwalk) the key appears in their dream self's hand. Because the Dream Key is intangible, it cannot be sold, only given away in a dream.

Rumors exist about *cursed dream keys*. They appear to be like normal *dream keys* except they cannot be given away. Whenever a power of the *dream key* is used, a wave of energy flows out from the key in a 5-foot radius. Anyone caught in this wave must make a save vs. spell or lose 1d10 points of Intelligence. If a person's Intelligence score drops to 0 or below, they die.

**XP:** 10, 000 **Gold:** N/A

## Adventure Ideas

- ❖ At the end of their last adventure, the PCs arrive at a place where they can safely sleep. This can be a farmstead, a settlement, a country manor etc. They fall asleep from exhaustion and find themselves having a very vivid dream (which can be tailored specifically for each PC). Upon awakening they find that instead of being in the place they went to sleep, they are now in an asylum. The only clue to how they came to be there is a black medallion with the Symbol of Twilight on it. Moments after awakening the director of the Asylum enters and notifies them that they have been asleep for the past two weeks after being brought in by the sheriff of the local town. If the PCs press further they discover that the sheriff found them roaming around the streets attacking invisible figures and yelling indecipherable phrases (in other words they

## BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

were daydreaming horrible nightmares). Is this the truth, or are they being used by the Order for some nefarious purpose?

- ❖ While passing through a small Mordentish town with a nearby forest, the PCs hear local rumors about a tower in the forest. Known as Cross Keep, the tower has been at the center of many myths and legends since the founding of the town many years earlier. If the PCs investigate a farmer leads them to the ruins of Cross Keep, but he will refuse to go on with them. Inside the PCs might simply find the rotting bodies of Guiver and his assistants, or perhaps a necromancer possessed by Guiver in order to carry on his mission in life has raised their bodies as undead. Whatever happens in Cross Keep, one of the PCs is marked out by Guiver. Several adventures later the character dreams about an old man who goes by the name of Guiver Mythspeaker. If the PCs are members of the Order (or simply woke up in an asylum with the Order symbols around their necks), Guiver may attempt to possess the PC and find out all he knows. On the other hand, Guiver might try to convince the PC to help him defeat the Nightmare Man by telling him the Man's weaknesses.
- ❖ The PCs arrive in a settlement to find the townsfolk in a state of mixed panic and fear. Something terrible has been happening over the past few weeks, and it has something to do with the Order of Twilight. This terrible thing could be that all the children in the town have fallen into a deep coma from which they cannot awake, although they twist and scream in their sleep. Perhaps townsfolk have gone missing and found in their place are straw figurines. This all leads to a cell of the Second Circle located in or nearby the town. They are a) putting the children into a magical, nightmare-filled sleep in order to study how the Nightmare Court feeds off their victims (perhaps they even have the help of one of the Court members) or b) they are using the kidnapped townsfolk to study certain dream-related effects (how to provoke nightmares, how does extended sleep deprivation affect dreams etc). The cell may have a member who is "helping" the PCs in their investigation, making sure that they go nowhere near where the Order is.
- ❖ One of the PCs is captured by the Nightmare Court and is slowly being fed off within one of his nightmares. This nightmare should be tied in with either the PC's background or a harrowing event that has recently occurred. Somehow (through a chance meeting, through a referral or through actually knowing one) the PC is brought to a dream specialist (perhaps a member of one of the lower Circles of the Order). He tells the other PCs that

their friend is a prisoner of the Nightmare Court and can only be rescued if his friends travel into his own nightmare. Using hypnosis or magic, the dream specialist puts the PCs into a hypnotic state and guides them into their friend's nightmare. Here they encounter all sorts of aspects about the seed PC, perhaps even bits of information that could be damaging to their relationship with the PC. The Nightmare Court may even play up these bits of information in order to separate the party and prevent them from succeeding (or at least make it hard). During their attempts to free their friend, one of the PCs discovers a key made from glowing energy. Taking the key they are filled with the feeling of great strength and power—they have a Dream Key! But is this key the real thing, or a cursed version waiting to destroy the PC when they use it?



# THE NEW GUYS IN VALLAKI

WYAN TWICHELL & MARCEL VENDARK

by Andrew Wyaff & Andrew Cermak

wyaff@kargafane.com cermak@kargafane.com

## INTRODUCTION



uestions, questions, questions. You miserable prisoners *never* let up with the questions, do you? “Who are those two new men skulking about the bookstore?” “What happened to Holder Crosspen?” “Why haven’t we seen Drawden Selrach lately?” “Is it winter yet?” “Are you sure it’s safe to eat this?” “Why can’t I have my feet back?” “What’s that slurping sound?” “What have you done to my face?” Blah blah blah—*enough!*

Very well. I grant that some of your questions are worthy of answers. Except for that one about your feet—that’s for *us* to know. As for your queries about the change in our personnel, and that month or two when *you claim* we forgot to feed all of you, I promise that we shall provide you with the full details.

But *that* is a tale for another night.

## Wyan Twichell

Male Human, 5th-Level Conjurer

<b>Strength</b>	10 (0)
<b>Dexterity</b>	10 (0)
<b>Constitution</b>	9 (–1)
<b>Intelligence</b>	16 (+3)
<b>Wisdom</b>	11 (0)
<b>Charisma</b>	12 (+1)
<b>Fortitude Save</b>	0
<b>Reflex Save</b>	+1
<b>Will Save</b>	+4
<b>Alignment</b>	Neutral Evil
<b>Speed</b>	30 ft.
<b>Size</b>	M (6 ft.)

<b>Initiative</b>	+0
<b>Armor Class</b>	10
<b>Hit Points</b>	11
<b>Attack Bonus</b>	+2

**Skills:** Bluff +4, Concentration +4, Knowledge (outsiders) +7, Knowledge (werebeasts) +6, Knowledge (undead) +6, Profession (scribe) +4, Ride +2, Spellcraft +10, Spot +2, Swim +2.

**Feats:** Brew Potion, Craft Wondrous Item, Extend Spell, Scribe Scroll, Spell Mastery (comprehend languages, detect magic, summon monster I).

**Special:** Cat familiar

**Languages:** Balok, Darkonese, Mordentish, Lamordian.

## Appearance

Wyan Twichell is a husky, unassuming man in his middle twenties. Though he has sturdy legs and wide shoulders, his round stomach and pudgy cheeks betray a fondness for food. His skin is pale, marked by acne scarring on his face and scribe’s calluses on his hands. He wears a full beard and mustache, keeping them neatly trimmed. His straight, strawberry-blond hair is cut to just above his shoulders. Despite his fair appearance, Wyan inexplicably insists that he is half-Vistani, a baseless claim.

In spite of his wealthy background, Wyan prefers to be outfitted as inconspicuously and comfortably as possible. Normally he dresses as a cloistered scribe might, in a simple robe and slippers. As Wyan rarely leaves the confines of the bookshop, this attire serves his purposes. He keeps a finely crafted silver dagger tucked under the belt of his robe at all times.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

## Background

Wyan Twichell was born in Nartok in western Necropolis, the son of an influential merchant. Wyan's father sat on the council of Nartok's dominant merchant house, which controlled the lumber trade and many local craft guilds. Growing up in relative privilege, Wyan was a keenly intelligent, if mildly spoiled, young man. From an early age, he developed a fascination with the occult, much to the consternation of his parents. Wyan loathed traditional schooling, but devoted nearly all of his time to teaching himself from books. He took a particular interest in the creatures that moved through the shadows, doggedly pursuing lore on the undead, werebeasts, and stranger things.

Wyan was drawn to the Kargatane primarily because he vaguely suspected the truth: that the Kargat's highest echelons included vampires. However, Wyan's studies led him to the conclusion that vampirism is an exalted state, where magnificent undead lords engage in debauchery all eternity. Wyan was seduced by the promise of power, pleasure, and immortality, and blinded to the horrors of vampirism. He traveled across Darkon, not-so-subtly ingratiating himself to Kargat agents whenever he could. Although he was eventually inducted into the Martira Bay Kargatane, Wyan's openly voiced suspicions about his masters were shocking both in their stupidity and audacity. It was only a matter of days before Lady Kazandra sent him packing for Vallaki.

## Personality

Wyan has a generally expressive and sensitive personality. He is a good judge of character and sensitive to people's moods and motivations. Yet he has little interest in what others think or do, and quickly becomes bored when anyone else is talking. He is always ready to offer his opinion, even if it was not solicited. Wyan has a habit of sabotaging every instance of social interaction with his cynicism and acidic disdain. He also has a terrible temper. Even minor irritations prompt him to scream colorful obscenities, destroy objects, and threaten others with violence. He is a coward by nature, however, and is infamous for backing down instantly when others call his bluff.

Impatient and constantly irritated, Wyan treats every conversation as a strain on his composure. He fidgets and paces relentlessly, finishes others' sentences, and interrupts with his own thoughts and anecdotes. He is a pathological liar, although not a particularly good one. Nearly every statement he makes is an exaggeration, and he constructs elaborate stories about his past, none of which the other Kargatane believe.

Wyan is fairly intolerant of his fellow outcasts at the bookshop. He has little respect and almost no patience for any of them. He also suspects the lot of them to be dangerously insane, mainly because of their devotion to their desiccated "leader" in the attic. Similarly, the other Kargatane are unanimous in their loathing of Wyan, whom they all find talkative, immature, self-important, and generally abrasive. Wyan simply tries to keep his distance from his fellows and concentrate on his research, but his tendency to open his mouth at inopportune moments sometimes gets the better of him.

As a conjurer, Wyan is deeply interested in outsiders and planar cosmology. Though he was initially interested in all creatures of darkness, the power and mystery of demons, elementals, and the like has proven tantalizing for Wyan. He is constantly writing essays on his personal planar theories, speculating groundlessly on topics such as the geography of the afterlife, infernal hierarchies, or the social habits of elementals. His spell research focuses on the summoning of outsiders and surviving the eventual rampage of such creatures when he can no longer control them. He is very meticulous about protecting himself during summonings, though he thinks nothing of unleashing increasingly powerful outsiders on the Land of Mists. Nonetheless, he has had several close calls over the past few years, and it is probably only a matter of time before an annoyed outsider finally catches up with Wyan.

Wyan has slid down a gradual slope towards depravity for the past ten years. No longer a mere unethical liar, Wyan has virtually no values other than his own lust for knowledge and power. He is even vaguely hostile towards innocence and goodness, which he sees as weaknesses to be undermined for his own amusement. The sole exception to Wyan's lack of compassion is his familiar, Sweetums, an obscenely fat orange tabby cat that Wyan spoils and dotes on to the point of embarrassment.

**Wizard Spellbook (4/4/3/2):** 0—All; 1st—*alarm, comprehend languages, expeditious retreat, hold portal, identify, protection from chaos/evil/good/law, spider climb, summon monster I, unseen servant*; 2nd—*alter self, arcane lock, bull's strength, cat's grace, detect thoughts, endurance, invisibility, locate object, misdirection, summon monster II, summon swarm*; 3rd—*clairaudience/clairvoyance, dispel magic, explosive runes, fly, gaseous form, haste, magic circle against chaos/evil/good/law, summon monster III, tongues, water breathing*.

**Prohibited School:** Evocation

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

## Marcel Vendark

**Human Male, 14th level Wizard, 2nd level Fighter**

<b>Strength</b>	14 (+2)
<b>Dexterity</b>	10 (0)
<b>Constitution</b>	12 (+1)
<b>Intelligence</b>	20 (+5)
<b>Wisdom</b>	10 (0)
<b>Charisma</b>	15 (+2)

<b>Fortitude Save</b>	+7
<b>Reflex Save</b>	+4
<b>Will Save</b>	+9
<b>Alignment</b>	Lawful Evil
<b>Speed</b>	30 ft.
<b>Size</b>	M

<b>Initiative</b>	+0
<b>Armor Class</b>	10 (15 in chain mail, 16 in mail with iron mask)
<b>Hit Points</b>	50
<b>Attack Bonus</b>	+9/+2

**Skills:** Alchemy +17, Climb +5, Concentration +15, Intimidate +8, Jump +5, Knowledge (arcana) +17, Knowledge (Kargatane) +10, Knowledge (Necropolis) +8, Knowledge (Tepest) +5, Knowledge (undead) +10, Listen +3, Ride +5, Scry +8, Spellcraft +17, Spot +3, Swim +5

**Feats:** Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Empower Spell, Enlarge Spell, Expertise, Improved Disarm, Maximize Spell, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll, Spell Mastery (Animate Dead, Darkness, Dispel Magic, Fear, Sleep), Spell Penetration

**Languages:** Tepestani, Balok, Darkonese, Falkovnian, Lamordian, Mordentish

## Appearance

Vendark constantly wears a heavy hooded cloak, even when it is impractical. He favors it because it makes him look sinister. Added to his impressive height (6'2") and frame (230 lbs.), the effect is quite intimidating. Beneath the cloak, he usually wears simple tunics and pants, but will occasionally don chain mail if he believes combat will be likely. He considers the extra protection a fair trade for the loss in spell reliability; a few unfortunate experiences haven't yet shaken him of this opinion.

Beneath his hood, Marcel is rather unremarkable. His hair is dirty blonde, and his face is clean-shaven and somewhat round. His rather baby-faced features are a constant aggravation to him, and he often alters his appearance with magic so as to appear more

impressive. When this is impossible, he dons an iron mask that is suitably sinister looking, but it restricts his vision and makes it hard to speak and breathe, making it far from an ideal solution.

## Background

Marcel Vendark was born in Tepest thirty-two years ago. His mother raised him alone; he never knew his father, and his mother never spoke of him. She was a wise-woman, a seller of and tonics and folk medicine to the people of Kellee, who like most Tepestani were distrustful of more advanced methods of physic. She was also secretly a witch, a worshipper of Hala and a wielder of that strange source of magic known as the Weave.

Marcel had a difficult time as a child. Though the villagers made use of his mother's cures from necessity, they never trusted her, and this superstitious avoidance extended to Marcel as well. Marcel had no friends among the village children, and their teasing and insults made it clear that his mother was a large part of the reason. Marcel quickly grew to resent his mother and the life she led. Marcel also envied his mother, for the sorcerous powers that came so naturally to her were completely foreign to him. Unlike her, he had no in-born talent for manipulating the Weave, and this failing served to further separate mother from son.

When Marcel was nine, a villager who had gone to Marcel's mother for a tonic died a few days later. While the cause of death was never solidly determined, it did not take long for the villagers to blame the wise-woman. She barely escaped Tepest with her life, Marcel in tow. They fled north to Darkon, where the people were slightly less distrustful of the mystical.

They arrived at a small Darkonian village, where his mother planned to continue as a wise-woman, but Marcel had other plans. That night, while his mother slept, Marcel crept away with all the money they had, and fled into the woods. As luck would have it, he ran into a small band of Vistani, and in exchange for all of his money they agreed to take him with them to the nearest town. This they did, where they promptly sold him to an agent of the Kargatane.

The Kargatane in question had intended to use Marcel solely for labor, but when he found just how sharp the child's mind was, and how filled with anger, he quickly realized that here was the potential for something far greater. A man of learning and no small amount of arcane power, he took Marcel on as an apprentice.

Though Marcel lacked the inherent magical prowess of his mother, he proved to be quite apt at more scholarly magical pursuits. Over time, Marcel grew to be a powerful wizard, outstripping his master by leaps and bounds. Once he was certain he had

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT DENIZENS

learned all he could, it was a small matter to engineer his master's death and usurp his holdings.

Vendark has since risen rapidly in the ranks of the Kargatane, but he is not satisfied by his status in what he perceives as a pitiful organization. Should the Kargatane ever discover the secret of eternal life, he will be only too happy to participate, but in the meantime he forges his own plans for power.

Unfortunately, to date, all of those plans have come to naught. Vendark has traveled all over Darkon, and outside it as well, setting numerous schemes both magical and mundane into motion, but despite his brilliance and power his efforts have always been thwarted by the untimely interference of do-gooding louts. He has sent most of them to their graves, but never, it seems, before they have ruined his hard work and careful staging. Because of his arrogance, he seems unwilling to acknowledge his own part in these numerous failures.

## Personality

It's unfortunate that psychology is such an undeveloped discipline in the Demiplane, because Vendark has "Case Study" written all over him. Feelings of inadequacy over his lack of inherent sorcerous power, combined with rebelliousness hatred for authority springing from resentment toward his mother, enhanced by paranoia springing from persecution as a child, and no doubt multiplied by a good old-fashioned chemical imbalance, have turned Vendark into a cauldron of megalomaniacal obsession and seething frustration. Vendark is not happy unless he is in complete, unwavering control of everything and everyone around him, and in a place like Ravenloft where control is largely determined by outside forces Vendark is certain to be frustrated by failure his entire life. Vendark, of course, is unwilling to accept this.

Vendark's temper is truly epic. The slightest hint that things are not going as smoothly as they should be can send him into a tantrum. His wizardly power, physical presence and foul mouth make these fits of pique scary to witness. Vendark is also given to histrionics; he has a tendency to over-dramatize, and likes to talk aloud to himself about how brilliant his schemes are and how his triumph is inevitable. It would be amusing if he weren't so serious about it. Finally, Vendark hates to be shown up . . . at anything. Anyone who demonstrates that they can do something better than he can moves to the top of his enemies list.

## Combat

Vendark is generally content to let whatever minions he has on hand do the fighting for him, while he cackles

mockingly in the background. Once the opponent is properly softened up, he steps in, slinging away with spells. He's also pretty handy with a sword if it comes down to that. As mentioned above, Vendark sometimes wears chainmail into combat. When he does so, his Armor Class improves to 15, but he suffers a 30% chance of spells with a somatic component misfiring. Wearing his iron mask increases his Armor Class by an additional point, but incurs a cumulative 10% chance of misfire for spells with a vocal component, and additionally inflicts a minus -1 penalty to all Spot and Listen checks.

**Wizard Spells Prepared (4/5/5/5/3/3/2):** 0—*arcane mark, detect magic, light, read magic*; 1st—*change self, chill touch, hypnotism, magic missile, sleep* x 2, 2nd—*darkness* x 2, *darkvision, mirror image, spectral hand*; 3rd—*dispel magic* x 2, *hold person* x 2, *vampiric touch*; 4th—*confusion, emotion, fear* x 2, *phantasmal killer*; 5th—*animate dead* x 2, *cone of cold, teleport*; 6th—*chain lightning, mass suggestion, project image*; 7th—*control undead, finger of death*.

## Current Sketch

Vendark's most recent scheme has taken him to Martira Bay, where he is working on the creation of a powerful elixir he calls the Festering Ball of Hatred. This substance evokes an overpowering, undirected rage in those it contacts; with it, entire armies could be led to destroy themselves. Because of the dangers inherent in developing a substance that so alters the emotions, Vendark has begun animating a small force of the undead. Their lack of emotions makes them ideal gophers and assistants for this particular task. They also make excellent cannon fodder should something unforeseen occur.



# TSUU-Y-TEKE

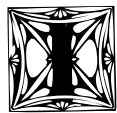
## A LAND WHERE DAYLIGHT OFFERS NO PROTECTION

by Luiz Eduardo Neves Peret

rakshasa2001@hotmail.com

**Author's Note:** The tale of Tsuu-Y-Teke is loosely based on more than a decade of researches made among Brazilian native tribes, with elements borrowed from Central and North American ethnical groups that apparently have no blood relationship among them, but do share common tales and beliefs. This article is dedicated to the first inhabitants of these three continents, in the year when Brazil celebrates the 500th anniversary of the Portuguese arrival.)

### BACKGROUND



In the beginning of all things, there was no light, no sun, no moon, no stars, only the Lubu Byu-Y-Teke (“Dark Tent of Rain”—the night sky). There was no way of counting time, the crops were meager for the lack of light, the Kuni-Bina (restless souls) rampantly walked the dark forests, and the animals were intelligent and could speak among themselves and with the Inan (people). Each animal group had its own Bedu (shaman), responsible for the welfare of the race as a whole.

The gods were worshiped by both man and animal, as most gods were animals as well. Fire was a gift from Haloe, the Puma, and with it the Inan were able to find some relief from the darkness and cold winds. But that was not enough.

Then a young brave shaman called Kananciwe was blessed by Haloe and went deep into the forests, seeking for a light that might be permanent. He fought a Kuni-Bina and was able to find an answer from the restless spirit.

It told him that in a forgotten age, before the Beginning, the Greater Spirit had shared a bit of His wisdom with the most powerful and ancient of the animal gods, and those had shared such wisdom and power with their own Bedu. He had given gifts and guardianship of powers and knowledge to each one of the animal races.

Among them, Haloe (the Puma), protector of all hunters, had received power over fire and all creatures on the ground, and Heresa Heri (the Giant Vulture King) had received the skies, disease and death. It was said that Heresa Heri did not even come down to earth to sleep, preferring to rest on the rainy clouds. The Vulture King was the most beautiful of all birds, as his feathers were white and he had a shining, silver and golden plumage cascading over his head and shoulders. The Kuni-Bina suggested that the headdress might be more than a mere adornment.

Kananciwe decided to see it for himself. He prepared an herbal medicine that feigned death, keeping his own Kuni (spirit) alert just outside his body, and so he managed to lure the scavenging animals to him. The blue fly, seneschal of the Vulture King, told its master of the new, still-warm human corpse found on the top of a hill, and that he was no less the greatest hero of the Inan. The voracious bird decided it would be an unparalleled pleasure to eat the remains of such a hero and plummeted down on him from the high skies.

But Kananciwe’s own spirit was ready for the attack. He quickly got up, jumping and grappling the creature. During the brief battle, he showered the bird with another magical potion that prevented spellcasting and reduced the bird’s size to that of a normal vulture. Unable to cast spells and being true to his coward nature, the Vulture King accepted defeat, saying he would gladly barter anything for his freedom.

The Inan asked about the secret of the Vulture’s shining headdress. Dismayed by the hero’s knowledge about his most well-guarded secret, the enchanted bird confessed that the Vulture God, upon receiving the gift of the skies, had imbued him, his most devoted Bedu, with the ability of enchanting pieces of crystal, diamonds and other gems, turning them into a permanent type of light unknown at that time. But instead of sharing that light with all, he had decided to enchant the gems only for himself, and fused them with his own body, creating that shining feathered headdress.

Kananciwe was enraged at such vile treachery. Heresa Heri explained that the Vulture God had given him the gift and ordered him to enchant the stones, but



# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT LOCALES

not to scatter them throughout the skies. The Inan was not convinced at all and, taking one claw of puma, a present from the Haloe Bedu, he started to cut the creature's scalp, scattering the white feathers in the winds.

Feeling great pain, the Heresa Heri let go of some starlight, and immediately all nature understood what had happened and how the Vulture had betrayed them. At the same time, all vultures flew to rescue their leader.

Spotting the human shaman, they thought better of it and decided to wait for the best moment.

Kananciwe was happy but not satisfied with the light. He took more feathers and this time blood flowed from the wounds, covering the vulture's head, neck and beak. The feathers reassumed their true shape as gems and then turned into stars and constellations. But the sky was still deep blue and cloudy. Then the human shaman once again hurt the bird, and the full moon spread its silver light over the land.

There were no more silver feathers on the top of the vulture's head, only a bunch of golden ones. Heresa Heri told the hero that those were not enchanted and there would come no light from them. Suspecting another lie, the hero cut deeply into the evil bird's flesh, and all golden feathers came together, suddenly lighting up as a large bonfire. The flames spread more and more, and the sky turned pink and orange, as the giant star, the Tsuu (Sun) finally shone. Then Haloe took notice of it, and as it was made of pure fire the Puma held power over it and renamed himself, from that day on, as Haloe-Tsuu (Sun Puma).

The new light dazed Kananciwe, and tears rolled down his cheeks. He loosened his grip on the Vulture King that regained his size and powers at once.

Hersa Heri immediately and fiercely attacked the surprised hero, killing him on the spot. The Sun Puma saw that new treason, and immediately condemned the Vulture for his selfish deeds.

Hersa Heri was cursed to never again face the sunlight, lest he be utterly destroyed and become an incorporeal Kuni. His only trophies from his victory in that doomed encounter would be his still white feathers that set him apart from the other vultures and the dried blood over his head, neck and beak, that formed a deep red bonnet. He was driven to the deepest caves by the scorching rays of the sun, but before he could escape the burning light mortally wounded him. From the dark tunnels he summoned the other vultures and their shamans, and they all gathered in a ceremonial rite that would preserve his spirit, as he did not want to become a Kuni.

As he was prepared and buried, he cursed the Inan that had found his secret, the Kuni that had told the Inan about it, the puma that had taken his most prized gift of light from him, and the very skies for now being the

house of the light he would never be able to behold again. Some powerful spirit must have heard his curse, as the puma lost a bit of his control over the sun, and the giant star never again fully left the sky. The night was over forever and our lands were taken away from the rest of the large forests around us. And we, the true descendants of the hero Kananciwe and his tribe, must now go on with our lives in a burning land under the endless daylight, awaiting the time when the sun will finally give us more relief than one only night per month. Yet, we fear and despise the dark, for the Vulture King might still be somewhere out there, waiting for the night to come as well . . .”

## The Land

Tsuu-Y-Teke (TSOO-ytek) means “House of the Sun” in a primitive language now dead on the world from where its people were taken. The name could not be more fitting, as it seems that the sun never truly sets. The golden sphere shines in the clear, cloudless sky from 4 AM to 8 PM almost every day, except in the short two-month winter when it rises one hour later and sets one hour earlier. “Rising” and “setting” are dubious concepts for the inhabitants, though, as when there should be night, the sky remains pink and orange instead, in an eternal twilight. During these few hours, the myriad stars and constellations shine with a somehow diffuse silver light, and the constellations’ outlines can be easily recognized. The moon almost never leaves the sky, circulating around the ringing mountains in an elliptic orbit and staying full for about a week per month. Meanwhile, the new moon lasts for the one dark night in the month, called “Ahadu-Lubu-Byu” (aha-DOO loo-BOO bee-OO) “The True Night”, for it reminds the elder people of the night they used to know. The winter brings the only rain clouds, although they are weak and the water normally evaporates even before touching the rocky soil, adding to the already unbearable heat but making it somewhat moist.

All this continuous light and heat account for the dryness of the land. Where once there was a lush rainforest, now there are only deserted plains, tablelands and canyons, stretching over more than 5,000 square miles. Cacti and other dryland-dwelling plants are common, while the few fertile areas are cultivated, producing wheat and corn. Tree groves are rare, small and scattered, giving a small relief from the scorching sun in fertile patches of land around the rivers. These are narrow and almost devoid of fish. In the deep canyons the only permanent shadowy areas can be found. These places are crowded with a complex and a little weird ecosystem, including wild giant buffalo, a few giant antelopes, coyotes, pumas, sheep and goats, many types of insects, spiders, snakes and scorpions, watched from above by flocks of common

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT LOCALES

and giant vultures that nest on the steep mesas. The people believe the gods blessed the giant animals, as they are too large for the meager food sources the domain provides. The domestic animals never grow to giant proportions like the wild ones. This is considered an omen, and the Inan have never tried to domesticate the buffalo or the antelope.

The mountains, hills and mesas are riddled with caves and labyrinthine tunnels. The cultists of the Vulture God meet in such places to commune with their evil leader. No people from the pueblos will willingly venture inside the caves.

## Cultural Level

Stone Age. Fire and the wheel are known and used by everyone. However, the people have no knowledge of fine metalworking, relying on clay and cut stone to make most common objects. Glasswork is almost unknown (the finest examples are crude vials blessed to hold holy water), and the extremely rare trees are left where they are, so woodcarving is almost nonexistent. The only “written” language is the quipu, a complex system of knotted strings made of wool or leather, used to keep records and send important messages. Wall painting is highly symbolic and serves religious or magic purposes.

## The People

When Tsuu-Y-Teke was formed about twelve hundred aborigines were drawn into it. They gather in small communities of more or less one hundred each, in pueblo-like villages along the small patches of fertile land and under the few shadows of the canyons. These aborigines name themselves “Inan”, (ee-NAN) or “true people”, in contrast with the “Kuni” (koo-NEE), as they call the spirits that are believed to infest the land in animal, human or monstrous disguise. The Inan speak a language unknown to any other domain.

These people are sturdy, tanned and weathered by sunny days and nights. They are prodigious hunters, always carrying bows made of antelope’s antlers, stone clubs and spears. They dress comfortable leather and wool clothes, wear moccasins and adorn their heads with bright-feathered headdresses.

Also, their bodies are covered with tattoos representing age, sex, marital status, their professions and any important moments during their lives.

As a rule, the Inan are a reclusive folk, and all strangers, whatever the race, are seen with suspicion, as they might be Kuni-Bina (koo-NEE bee-NAH), evil spirits disguised to bring them their ultimate doom. Spellcasters are specially feared, unless they have some

obvious link with nature—as druids, caretakers and other nature priests.

Most Inan are hunters, shepherds and craftsmen. A few brave ones are miners, collecting gems from the canyon caves to adorn their stone totems. Gems and jewels have no monetary value for them, but the cultists of the Vulture God often attack the mines to rob the gems (see below).

## The Law

The Inan live in pueblos carved in the canyons, cultivating wheat and corn and herding goats and sheep. A Council of Elders made up of both men and women rules each pueblo. In the time before, only men were allowed in the Council, but a long time ago the women rebelled and conquered a position of power in all villages, so they now share the management responsibility.

They meet in the Sacred Mask Hall once per month to debate and decide over village matters.

There is regular trade between the villages, as well as annual meetings to play competitive games, perform maturity tests and celebrate marriages. The Inan have no coin and prefer to barter for goods or services. Because of this, everyone is expected to work hard and produce something to barter with. Thievery, cheating and conning are almost nonexistent, and punished with a special, depreciative tattoo and further expelling from all villages.

Such unfortunate rogues must fend for themselves in the barren wastelands and rarely survive to the next season. Murder is punished with a ceremonial sacrifice to the Sun Puma, to “cleanse the spirit.” The body is cremated and the ashes are scattered to fertilize the soil.

The Cult of Haloe-Tsuu, the Sun Puma, is devoted to help the villages develop under the adverse weather conditions. They help with the herds, crops and all celebrations, also teaching the young about the social and moral rules of the Inan. They try their best to keep the culture intact, as they know the destructive effects of drastic changes. And they also have the job of burying the dead (that usually mummify naturally) and cremating sacrificed murderers and dead victims of the Plague (see below).

Specialty priests from the Cult of Haloe-Tsuu, called “Pumasoncs” (Hearts of the Puma) must be Inan of any non-evil alignment, with a minimum of 11 Wisdom and 13 Constitution. They have major access to All, Animal, Elemental (Air/Fire only), Healing, Plant, Summoning, Sun and Weather and minor access to Combat, Divination, Guardian and Protection. They have the following granted powers: turn undead; 3rd level: *remove fear* on up to one person per level, once per person/day; 5th level: *incite courage/hope* once per day, two persons/level. 9th level: *shapechange* into a

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT LOCALES

puma once a day, for a maximum of 18 turns (3 hours). They are restricted to leather armor, non-metallic bludgeoning weapons and stone spears. They are the only ones who actively do some woodcarving, creating elaborate quarterstaves and spears. Their holy symbol is the claw of a puma, worn in a necklace.

There is another cult in Tsuu-Y-Teke, the dreaded Cult of the Vulture God. Most people fear this sect, but a few actually seek the Vulture God and his priests, specially those people who are too lazy and careless, unable to produce anything and unwilling to try. Besides such people, the common and giant vultures are faithful worshippers (see below). The cult is very small among humans, and there are perhaps no more than half dozen priests of 9th level and higher, but the vultures are another story altogether.

The Cult of the Vulture God (not recommended for PCs) requires its specialty priests, called “Ohoty Bedu” (Disease Shamans) to be Inan of any non-good alignment, with the same ability minimums. The spheres are the same, except that these priests also have major access to the Necromantic sphere and the Elemental sphere is restricted to water and earth. They have the following granted powers: immunity to normal diseases; turn undead (neutral priests)/command undead (evil priests); reversed lay on hands (2 hp of damage/level by touch, once a day, no save); 5th level: Plague touch once per month per 5 levels of experience; 9th level: *shapechange* into giant vulture once per day for up to three hours.

The Plague is similar to mummy rot, killing in 2d8 weeks. The victim permanently loses 1 point of Strength and Constitution and 2 points of Charisma per week; infected creatures receive no benefit from cure wound spells while the disease is in effect; wounds heal naturally at only 10% of the natural rate. Also, victims have a chance (cumulative 5% per week) of infecting those who spend a whole day with them.

Only one *cure disease* for every week of infection, plus *regeneration* and *remove curse*, can cure this disease. The priests also have a unique hindrance: The Ohoty Bedu permanently lose one point of Charisma/Appearance each time they rise in level (this affects reactions only outside the Cult). They are restricted to leather armor and slashing non-metallic weapons. Their holy symbol is a white feather given by the Vulture King.

## Native Player Characters

Player characters born in Tsuu-Y-Teke are Inan, coming from one of the villages scattered throughout the domain. Because of the harsh environmental conditions, all characters receive +1 Constitution, but the constant exposure to the sun makes their skin dry and leathery, giving them –2 Charisma. Also, should

they ever leave the domain and face a true night, their ancient, inner fear of the dark flourishes: the first dark night witnessed by an Inan PC prompts a horror check; if it is a new moon, or in a moonless domain, a madness check is in order. The next seven nights are cause for fear checks at each sunset. Checks are not necessary if the character stays indoors with lots of light around (like a *continual light* spell), and no direct sight of the night, taking time to adjust to the new experience. However, the inner fear will always manifest whenever the PC faces a creature directly associated with the night, giving him/her a permanent –1 penalty to all fear, horror and madness checks related to such evils.

PCs normally can opt to be fighters, rangers, wizards, caretakers, shamans (described in the Shaman accessory) or specialty priests (see above). Rogues are extremely rare, and always in danger of persecution. If kits are allowed, all those dealing with primitive, barbaric cultures might be considered appropriate. The few wizards tend to be solitary fetishists (from the article “The Magic of Nature” in *The Book of Sorrows*) or elementalists.

Weapons are primitive, made of flint and obsidian with wooden shafts or handles and must normally be either fashioned by the PC or traded for something valuable. Common weapons include: club, spear, stone knife, bow, sling, staff, quarterstaff. Each character receive the survival proficiency (desert) for free and can choose another free non-weapon proficiency in some unsophisticated craft, such as pottery or gem cutting (but not carpentry), or to agriculture, animal lore, handling or training, land-based riding or hunting. Reading and making quipu is also free, but reading/writing any other language costs one extra slot.

## Personalities of Note

The chief Pumasonc of all Tsuu-Y-Teke is Idianakatu (ee-dee-anak-AH-too), a quiet, wise and heavily tattooed middle-aged man. He is one of the Elders of Berohokan, the largest pueblo in Tsuu-Y-Teke, and spends most of his time teaching the children and testing for spellcasters.

Once every week, though, he shapechanges and ventures alone in the wilderness, looking for his lost twin brother Alobederi (alub-DEH-ree), who was cast out of the pueblo after the Inan found him stealing from the Sacred Mask Hall. Unbeknownst to him, Alobederi survived, and now commands the raids from the cultists of the Vulture God against the miners.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT LOCALES

## Idianakatu

**12th-level Pumasong, Lawful Good**

<b>Armor Class</b>	8 (6)	<b>Str</b>	10
<b>Movement</b>	12 (15)	<b>Dex</b>	14
<b>Level/Hit Dice</b>	12	<b>Con</b>	17
<b>Hit Points</b>	78	<b>Int</b>	16
<b>THAC0</b>	14 (11 w/ quarterstaff)	<b>Wis</b>	18
		<b>Cha</b>	15
<b>No. of Attacks</b>	1 or 3		
<b>Damage/Attack</b>	1d6+3 (blessed quarterstaff +3) or 1d3/1d3/1d8		
<b>Special Attacks</b>	Surprised only on a 1, spells, rake (as puma) for 1d4+1 (x2)		
<b>Special Defenses</b>	Spells		
<b>Magic Resistance</b>	Nil		

\* Numbers in parentheses refer to puma form.

Idianakatu was once a cheerful man, but since the disappearance of his twin brother and the death of his wife Maheyco (ma-HEE-koo), he has become more silent and serious. That does not affect his work, but his lone wanderings make all in Berohokan apprehensive, although no one will ever try to stop him, and he has made it quite clear that no one should follow him on his quest. Everybody respects his word and wisdom, but some fear he might be a little senile. Maheyco's death was a mystery—she was pushed from the highest building in the pueblo during one festival, and the murderer was never found, but it was clear that the Vulture God's cult was involved: her body was full of Plague spots. She had to be cremated instead of buried, and that added a lot to Idianakatu's grief, as he believes she is now a restless spirit. And he is right.

Idianakatu rarely fights, but if he has to, he prefers to shapechange into a puma, making three attacks per round. If both front paws strike, he can rake in the same round with his rear claws. He can also wield his ceremonial quarterstaff +3, which is permanently *blessed*. He usually dons his ceremonial leather garb (equivalent to leather armor), which transforms along with him when he takes puma form.

## Alobederi

**Dual class 5th-level Thief / 9th-level Priest of the Vulture God, Neutral Evil**

<b>Armor Class</b>	8 (7 as vulture)	<b>Str</b>	12
<b>Movement</b>	12 (Fl 30/C)	<b>Dex</b>	16
<b>Level/Hit Dice</b>	9 (+5 as thief)	<b>Con</b>	17
<b>Hit Points</b>	54	<b>Int</b>	13
<b>THAC0</b>	16	<b>Wis</b>	17
<b>No. of Attacks</b>	1	<b>Cha</b>	6*
<b>Damage/Attack</b>	1d6-1 (stone knife) or 1d4 (beak) + special		
<b>Special Attacks</b>	Spells, disease, backstab (x3)		
<b>Special Defenses</b>	Spells		
<b>Magic Resistance</b>	Nil		
<b>Thief Abilities</b>	PP 15% OL 0% F/RT 5% MS 25% HS 90% DN 95% CW 60% RL 0%		

\* Charisma is considered 15 to cultists of the Vulture God.

Alobederi is a coward, cold and calculating man, hardened by the harsh life he was forced to live since his expulsion from the pueblo. He was caught in the act of robbing gems from the Sacred Masks, marked by a humiliating tattoo and condemned to a short life in the tablelands—by his own brother and his peers. Weak and starving, he was attacked by a flock of giant vultures, but instead of fighting, begged for mercy, readily swearing obedience to the beasts. Brought before the Vulture King, he was marked once again—this time, as an acolyte.

In the depths of his soul, he despises the Vulture King and what he has become, but above all he blames his brother for all this. It was Alobederi who, polymorphed as a giant vulture, attacked and pushed Maheyco to her death. But that was just one part of his revenge. Now, he is helping his master by raiding the mining camps and bringing the largest gems to the vultures, hoping that one day he will be able to exact his personal revenge and, perhaps, rule over the other Inan at the Vulture King's behalf. His visage is so ugly that he might be mistaken for a disease-ridden mummy.

Like most priests of the Vulture God, he is not a brave fighter, preferring instead to rely on his spells and, in time of dire need, his vulture shape (actually he hates that shape, as he feels it robs him of the rest of his humanity). He is able to use a leather vest that mocks his brother's own garment and offers the same AC. Also, he is always armed with a large stone knife. He is constantly plagued by the image of Maheyco, now a restless spirit seeking justice.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT LOCALES

## Encounters

Most encounters in the open plains will be with natural creatures. The giant buffalo is perhaps the largest animal found on land, gathering in a single herd of a few hundred, always along the fertile river shores. These beasts walk free, fearing very little from the other animals, except for pumas and men. The Inan hunt them, but one adult alone can feed several families for a week; besides, there are domestic sheep and goats around the villages. The few coyotes that hide in the rocks attack only lone infants, elders of sick. Giant and common vultures nest on the top of the rocky mesas, preying on sheep and coyotes and also scavenging.

In the canyon caves, there are spiders of various types and deadly black scorpions, along with scarab beetles. Snakes hide in the shadows, as continuous exposure to direct sunlight would kill them in a few minutes. The rivers have almost no fish but some aquatic snakes live there.

Tsuu-Y-Teke is no place for vampires and other creatures that need the night to exist. Undead generally include skeletons, desert zombies, a few low-rank, naturally-preserved mummies and incorporeal restless dead such as geists and ghosts, while spectres and wraiths greatly suffer from the nearly endless sunlight.

One of the greatest menaces one is likely to face is the rare presence of the Kuni-Bina, neutral evil spirits that take the forms of animals, people or monsters. Each large group encountered has 5% chance per day, non-cumulative, of having one Kuni among their numbers. The incorporeal spirit cannot affect the physical world or be affected by it, except when it materializes. Once every seven days it can turn into a perfect copy of any animal within 50 yards, with one more Hit Die and the same normal attacks of the species. This materialization lasts for one hour per Hit Die of the creature. The Kuni can be killed normally, and their XP value depends solely on the original creature +1 HD. Kuni hate the Inan and try to kill or harm them whenever possible, blaming all humans for the change in the land, as they know of the curse spoken by Heresa Heri. Two Kuni emulating the same animal rarely socialize among themselves, even to attack humans, and two Kuni of different species will not tolerate each other's presence but will not fight, preferring to part ways immediately.

However, perhaps the most dangerous foes the Inan might encounter are the Heresa-Bedu. Spirits of dead evil Ohoty Bedu, they reincarnate as giant vultures through a special ritual performed by their leader, the Vulture King. In such form they retain their keen intelligence, granted powers and spell abilities, with the following change: all touch attacks are transmitted through attacks with their sharp beaks, and they can use

a reversed version of the *Speak with Animals* spell, enabling them to talk with the Inan. Heresa Heri can only perform this foul ritual once per month at the True Night, and it takes him the full night to do it, so he avoids wasting his only free night in the month (see below) unless the dead priest was a particularly powerful and devoted one.

## Heresa Heri, The Vulture King Lord of Tsuu-Y-Teke

### 5th Rank Giant Vulture Greater Mummy

#### Neutral Evil

<b>Armor Class</b>	-1	<b>Str</b>	21
<b>Movement</b>	6, Fl 30 (C)	<b>Dex</b>	16
<b>Level/Hit Dice</b>	13	<b>Con</b>	18
<b>Hit Points</b>	90	<b>Int</b>	13
<b>THAC0</b>	7	<b>Wis</b>	23
<b>No. of Attacks</b>	1 or 2	<b>Cha</b>	3*
<b>Damage/Attack</b>	2d8 (beak) or 1d8/1d8(talons)		
<b>Special Attacks</b>	Talon grapple, spells, disease, see below		
<b>Special Defenses</b>	+3 or better weapon to hit, spells, see below		
<b>Magic Resistance</b>	25%		

\* Charisma is considered 20 to cultists of the Vulture God.

## Appearance

Heresa Heri is a mummy in pristine state of preservation, although that does not improve his general appearance, except when dealing with his own servants. He is a white giant vulture, perhaps the only of his kind. His feathers are of the purest white, but his head is bald just like the other vultures. He has his crown, though, a dark red bonnet made of dried blood that sprouted from his head when he was hit by the hero Kananciwe. This gruesome headdress covers more than half of his skull and a few droplets cover one side of his beak as well. He has sickly yellow eyes that gleam in the dark of the cave complex he currently inhabits. His large beak is jagged and uneven as if he had fanged teeth. He can talk in the language of the Inan with a screechy voice, and can communicate with all animals and Kuni.

## Current Sketch

Heresa Heri's history is described in the legend above. After his burial, he awoke as a powerful yet frightened mummy. He is unable to fly under the continuous sunlight and the only moment when he can leave the caves is during the True Night, once a month. When this time comes, he briefly spies the Inan settlements from above, and then he goes on to another mountain.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT LOCALES

This inability to rule over the skies as before greatly infuriates him. Recently, he has devised a new plan: if his priests can gather a sufficient number of gems, he believes he might be able to imprison the skylight once again and recreate the Night. But first he needs a number of gems equal to the amount of stars in the sky, and he does not remember the exact number.

The dark powers taunt him with this amnesia, as he knows the ritual will not work if but only one gem is missing. He firmly believes that the Vulture God will advise him when he reaches the exact quantity, unaware of the missing connection between him and his deity, as the dark powers now grant his spells and powers. As the Inan collect their gems very slowly and his minions are not always able to take the gems away, his work will never end.

## Closing the Borders

When he wants to seal the domain, the Vulture King summons the last remnants of the Night, cloaking the air around the mountain chains and valleys with brooding clouds of darkness. It is similar to a *continual darkness* spell, except that it cannot be dispelled or countered with any source of light, normal or magical. Neither animals nor Inan will willingly cross the dark cloud, and even if they wanted to, they would quickly lose the path and find themselves back in Tsuu-Y-Teke. Even creatures able to see in the deepest darkness are blind in the magical cloud.

## Combat

Heresa Heri is unlikely to fight on his own accord, as he still fears humans, even though he is obviously more powerful than his hated enemies. He exudes an aura of fear that affects all creatures within sight range, paralyzing for 1d12 rounds all those who fail a fear check at a -2 penalty.

In melee he attacks with his jagged beak for 2d8 points of damage. Anyone hit by the Vulture King contracts a powerful version of the Plague, a rotting disease that kills in 2d4 days. In 24 hours the muscles swell and the skin bursts with dark, sore blisters. The victim permanently loses 1 point of Constitution and Strength and 2 points of Charisma per day. The disease can be cured by one *cure disease* for each day of infection, plus a *remove curse* (to end the magical affliction) and *regeneration* (to recover lost hit points). Lost ability points can only be regained through the use of a *wish*. A high fever actually “cooks” the victim’s body, being responsible for the death. There is a cumulative 10% risk of contagion per day of contact with the victim. If buried alive in one of the many caves in the mountains, the victim raises later as a desert

zombie. If prepared for a ceremonial funeral before death, the victim raises as a servant mummy (usually of 2nd rank).

Heresa Heri can also grapple an opponent with his powerful talons, inflicting 2d8 points of damage per round. He can carry up to 500 pounds while flying, but this drops his maneuverability class to D. His talon attack does not spread the Plague.

In addition to his great physical strength, the Vulture King can cast spells as an 18th-level priest of the Vulture God, with appropriate adjustments for high Wisdom. He also has all granted powers of his sect. His followers believe him to be an avatar of their god.

The mummy king is immune to weapons of less than +3 enchantment, unless they are *blessed* or holy weapons (in this case they do 1 point of damage plus the magical bonus, but no Strength bonus). The lesser mummies he creates are fully vulnerable to +1 or better weapons and receive half damage from flint weapons.

Heresa Heri is also immune to all cold-, water- and earth-based attacks, mind- and health-affecting spells, death magic, normal fire and electricity. Magical fire causes him normal damage and magical lighting causes double damage. Acid burns his feathers and flesh but cannot cause him more damage than 1/3 of his total hit points. Holy water has no effect on him, unless created by priests of the Sun Puma, giving him 1d4 points of damage per vial (1 point per splash).

As all his feathers are considered holy symbols, Heresa Heri is able to fully rejuvenate after one hour of complete rest, at a range of 2d4 points per round. Contact with a holy symbol of a good faith causes him 1d4 points of damage, but a holy symbol of the Cult of the Puma causes him 1d8 points of damage. He is turned as special undead, but priests suffer a -2 penalty, and in a 100-yard circle around him there is a Sinkhole of Evil (Pumasoncs receive only -1).

Heresa Heri is rarely alone. He can summon swarms of scarab beetles, black scorpions, hairy spiders, blue flies or wasps, once per day each. The swarm covers about 60 cubic feet and has a movement rate of 18. Flying swarms have maneuverability B. The swarm lasts for 1d6 rounds and inflicts 5 points of damage per round if the victim does nothing except try to fight off the stinging horde, or 1d10+5 points per round if the victim ignores it. Scorpions, wasps and spiders have poisonous attacks (see the *Monstrous Manual*).

Heresa Heri can always count on his powers over the undead (2d10 desert zombies and/or 1d4 servant mummies) and vultures (2d10 common or 1d6 giant, with a 50% chance of one actually being a Heresa Bedu). If hard pressed in combat, once per month Heresa Heri can summon a 16 HD free-willed chaotic evil elemental, either a grave (70% chance) or blood (30% chance) elemental. The creature does not attack

## BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT LOCALES

him, but his minions are not safe at all; therefore he avoids using this power.

For all his powers, Heresa Heri has his own weaknesses. He is utterly unable to face sunlight, and direct exposure burns him for 3 points of damage per round. Reflected sunlight causes him 3 points of damage per turn. *Continual light* spells do not hurt him but can still drive him away as if turned. He receives normal damage from a *sunray* spell. His desert zombies and servant mummies are not affected by sunlight, and this enrages him all the more.

Every time he is confronted with sunlight, Heresa Heri must make a morale check. If cornered alone and isolated by an obviously superior creature or group (an unlikely event), the Vulture King will resort to his old bartering tactics.

Should Heresa Heri ever be slain and destroyed beyond hope of rejuvenation, his Kuni will fly at maximum speed to any giant vulture within a 13-mile radius. The vulture's feathers will turn white in seven days, and after another seven days the creature will die, becoming the Vulture King once again. During this time the borders will remain open.

✕

# VULTHARESK

## BE ON YOUR BEST BEHAVIOR

by Ari Marmell with George Marmell

[mousferafu@aol.com](mailto:mousferafu@aol.com)

### THE LAND



ultharesk is a relatively small domain, consisting of a single large village (less than a thousand inhabitants) snuggled away in the confines of a roughly circular valley in the midst of uncharted mountains. The Mists cloud the mountain trails most of the time, blurring any possible view of whatever may lie beyond the peaks. The inhabitants claim that there are occasional days on which the fog lifts and the lands outside the valley can indeed be seen; whether there is any truth to this claim, or whether it is simply hallucination or false memory imparted by the Mists themselves, no outsider can say. The climate of Vultharesk leans towards the colder side, with short, mild summers and long, numbing winters; storms and blizzards blow in across the mountains with astounding frequency. Planting is difficult, and the single village struggles yearly to survive. Parts of the surrounding valley are thickly forested with heavy, coniferous trees, and the mountainsides are splotted with more of the same.

The majority of Vultharesk's structures tend towards the short and squat, rarely more than two stories high. Constructed almost entirely of timber, they often sport thick chimneys that smoke practically year-round, adding to the already weighty haze that hovers over the vale. Many of the buildings are painted in surprisingly cheerful colors, the bright hues contrasting strangely with the dull browns and drab grays that make up the natural surroundings. A walled estate, enormous in size when compared to the relative poverty of its environs, sits atop a small rise near the center of town; the structures here, unlike those below, are made of whitewashed stone, and stretch in some places up to heights of four or five stories. The property is heavily gardened, a patch of conspicuous affluence in the midst of the town.

Though it may take newcomers to Vultharesk some time to realize it, there is something off about the village and its inhabitants. Only with study and acclimatization will travelers slowly begin to pick up on the fact that there is almost nothing reflective to be seen

in the town. Mirrors are banned outright, windows remain shuttered at night, wells stay covered, and even small tools and items such as cutlery, jewelry, and belt buckles are either made of non-metallic substances or are designed to present a minimum of flat surface. Travelers carrying a great quantity of metallic equipment, especially armor, will find themselves met with stares of outright horror by the villagers, who will often go so far as to turn and flee.

### Cultural Level

Godwyn Estates and its inhabitants function at the Renaissance level of development and technology; the rest of Vultharesk can claim only Dark Ages, at best.

### The Folk

The majority of Vultharesk natives tend to be short and slender or wiry, somewhat swarthy of skin, with dark hair and eyes. Men dress most often in simple tunics and tight, dark-hued pants, and often go mustached; the women dress in colorful skirts and peasant blouses when younger, changing over to a far darker, more somber wardrobe as they age. They bear more than a passing resemblance to the Vistani, a fact that has led some foreigners to theorize that Vultharesk is the long-lost origin of those gypsies. This is not, in fact, the case, though there are more than a few similarities between the two cultures, and those Vistani who travel to Vultharesk are met with an openness and acceptance that they rarely hope to find elsewhere. Still, the Vistani avoid this domain as much as possible; their behavior all too easily attracts the unwanted attention of the Mirror Man, Vultharesk's master.

The second group of inhabitants to be found in the domain, the residents of Godwyn Estates, could not be more different than those who toil beneath them. They are far paler of skin, light haired, with a tendency towards softer features, brought about by a life encumbered by substantially less physical labor than their neighbors. The Godwyn family and their servants dress formally most of the time, the men in intricately



# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT LOCALES

embroidered frock coats and stiff breeches, the women in petticoats, heavy skirts, and corsets. Unlike the villagers below, the Godwyn family does not eschew the use of mirrors, nor of metal adornments in their wardrobe.

The villagers, unlike the Vistani they resemble, live a strict, almost puritan, lifestyle. All their attentions seem devoted to the necessities of survival, with little time left for entertainment or play. Dour, serious, and absolutely proper, it would appear to most outsiders that the people of Vultharesk have forgotten that there is more to living than mere subsistence.

The truth is that the unfortunate inhabitants of this domain do not live in this fashion as a matter of preference; they have, instead, been taught since childhood to moderate their behavior, to be right and proper in all things, not out of any moralistic sense of decorum, but out of fear. The villagers of Vultharesk live in constant terror of attracting the unwanted attentions of the Mirror Man, a vengeful spirit who permeates every aspect of native living. The Godwyns, however, scoff at any mention of such an entity, refusing utterly to believe a word of it.

## The Law

Formally, the law in Vultharesk is mandated and enforced by the Godwyn family, those who have ruled over this tiny land since long before its encapsulation by the Mists. The current lord is Sir Ambrose Godwyn, a stern, leather-skinned old man of regal bearing and a demanding nature. Godwyn passes few laws—stealing, murder, failure to pay taxes, and “improper relations” between non-married (or adulterous) couples are illegal, but that’s about it—but these are rigidly enforced, with punishment for violation coming at the whim of the nobles, rather than through any form of trial or system of justice. The Godwyns themselves are, of course, above this law, as the villagers have no other legal recourse to turn to, and the Mirror Man confines his own harsh “justice” to the peasants. The natives restrict themselves to iron-clad codes of behavior far in excess of what Lord Ambrose demands of them; they know that, as wretched an overseer as he is, he is far more forgiving than the true judge of Vultharesk.

Note that the Godwyn family, even after several generations, is unaware that their domain no longer lies in the world it once did. The Mists seem to dampen their powers of observation in that regard; furthermore, occasional messengers or noble visitors still arrive at Godwyn Estates (it is from these that the family has drawn their supply of fresh marriage stock). Whether these newcomers are taken from the world in which Vultharesk originally lay or are creations of the Mists themselves is unknown.

## Native Player Characters

Player characters from Vultharesk come from the gypsy-like peasant stock; there are too few of the Godwyns for any of them to be permitted to wander off on their own. Of all the various races, only humans can be found in Vultharesk. Fighters, rangers, rogues, priests, and the *very* occasional bard may hail from this tiny domain; all other classes are forbidden to native heroes. Due to the poverty and isolation of Vultharesk, natives start with only half the standard beginning funds, and they have no access to heavy armors, exotic weapons, or crossbows. However, because they have been raised their entire lives with the necessity of iron control over their behavior, they receive a bonus of +4 to any Will saves to resist taking any actions contrary to their moral code, even while under magical influence. # (except when trying to resist the touch attack of the Mirror Man; see below).

## Encounters

There are few true “monsters” to be found in this minuscule domain. There is a mere 10% chance of an encounter during the day, rising only to 20% at night. The vast majority of these encounters will be with common forest or mountain wildlife, such as wolves, bears, or the infrequent mountain lion. Dire rats can occasionally be found around the village itself, skulking about amongst their smaller cousins, and a small enclave of goblins lurks in the mountain caves.

## Sir Trevor Godwyn, "The Mirror Man" Lord of Vultharesk

### Unique Undead Spirit, 14th-Level Fighter

<b>Strength</b>	18 (+4)
<b>Dexterity</b>	19 (+4)
<b>Constitution</b>	—
<b>Intelligence</b>	14 (+2)
<b>Wisdom</b>	9 (–1)
<b>Charisma</b>	12 (+1)

<b>Fortitude Save</b>	+9 (immune to affects that require a Fort save unless they affect objects)
<b>Reflex Save</b>	+4
<b>Will Save</b>	+6
<b>Alignment</b>	Lawful Evil
<b>Speed</b>	60 ft. (supernatural enhancement)
<b>Size</b>	M

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT LOCALES

<b>Initiative</b>	+12 (+4 supernatural enhancement, +4 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)
<b>Armor Class</b>	22 (+8 deflection, +4 Dex)
<b>Hit Points</b>	119
<b>Attack Bonus</b>	longsword +19/+14/+9 melee; banishing touch +19/+14/+9 melee
<b>Damage</b>	longsword 1d8+4 (17–20/x2) touch 1d3+4 + banishment (see below)
<b>Spell Resistance</b>	25

**Special Attacks:** Automatic success, banishing touch.

**Special Qualities:** Undead, darkvision 120', +6 turn resistance, damage reduction 15/+1, reflection immunity, fast healing 2/turn.

**Skills:** Climb +6, Diplomacy +3, Jump +3, Knowledge (geography) +10, Knowledge (history) +6, Knowledge (nature) +3, Knowledge (nobility) +8, Ride +9, Sense Motive +7\*, Spot +7\*, Swim +3, Wilderness Lore +4\*

**Feats:** Ambidexterity, Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Critical (longsword), Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike, Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword), Track\*, Two-weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (unarmed), Weapon Specialization (longsword), Weapon Specialization (unarmed).

**Notes:** \* These skills and feats are considered automatically successful when utilized against a chosen victim (see below), overcoming even magical or supernatural abilities.

## Combat

Godwyn fights with all the skill of a 14th-level fighter, augmented by his supernatural nature. He can use his banishing touch as an off-hand attack while still attacking with his longsword; should he choose this option, his attack bonuses are +17/+12/+7 with the longsword; he can then make a single additional touch attack at +17.

**Undead:** Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and disease. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

**Automatic Success (Ex):** Godwyn can select a chosen victim, if that victim breaks one of the domain's taboos (see Current Sketch below). Godwyn automatically succeeds in all Sense Motive, Spot, and Tracking checks made against that specific victim.

**Banishing Touch (Su):** Godwyn's touch attack normally inflicts 1d3+4 points of damage. If his touch attack successfully strikes a "chosen victim" (see

above), the victim must succeed at a Will save (C 20) or be banished into Godwyn's mirror realm. (See below.)

**Turn Resistance (Ex):** Godwyn adds +6 to his effective Hit Dice total when clerics or paladins attempt to turn him. Any attempt by a "chosen victim" to turn Godwyn automatically fails. Even if successfully turned, Godwyn's power as domain lord is such that he need not flee, but is only prevented from approaching the cleric or paladin in question for one minute.

**Damage Reduction (Su):** Godwyn's quasi-corporeal body renders him resistant to damage, granting him damage reduction 15/+1.

**Fast Healing (Ex):** Godwyn heals 1 hit point every five rounds.

**Reflection Immunity (Ex):** Godwyn is utterly immune to all attacks from reflective weapons or substances (including many metal weapons); this even applies to magic weapons. A metal weapon that has been dyed, blackened, or otherwise rendered nonreflective can damage him normally.

## Appearance

Trevor Godwyn, the Mirror Man, is a unique spirit, similar in some respects to a ghost. Unlike the standard ghost, however, Godwyn's manifestation is effectively corporeal, and he can manipulate physical objects. When he manifests, be it within the confines of a reflective surface or in the real world, he appears as a tall man dressed in a black, high-collared and long-tailed frock coat trimmed in silver, with matching leather boots and pants of midnight blue. His hair, hovering on the border between blond and white, is pulled back tightly into a tail; his eyes are an utterly empty shade of icy blue. Though traces of the handsome man he once was can still be seen in his sharp features, his face now appears to be that of a man dead by starvation; skin is pulled tight over his skull, as though most of the muscle and flesh were sucked out from beneath it. Unless he actively wills it into some other expression, the tightness of his skin constantly pulls his mouth into a rictus grin.

He carries an ornate long sword at his left hip, its hilt trimmed in gold, its scabbard adorned with elegant embossing. His every movement appears to onlookers to be slow and graceful, and yet this illusory lassitude is belied by Godwyn's supernatural swiftness. Similarly, as he strides across the land in pursuit of prey, he almost gives the appearance of floating inches above the earth, rather than truly stepping upon it.

## Background

Several generations back, on a world far from the endless nights of Ravenloft, a large nation, considerably

## BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT LOCALES

more technologically advanced than its neighbors, began a far-reaching campaign of imperialist expansion. Land after land was conquered—not only for the glories of king and country, but also for the sake of the “heathens” themselves; here was their chance to be civilized, to learn to live and be ruled in the “proper” fashion. And if they didn’t recognize that opportunity when it came, if they chose in their ignorance to fight a misguided battle against their saviors—well, they could easily be kept down by military might until they came to their senses.

One province thus subjugated included a small mountain town called Vultharesk, situated at the very outward edges of the empire’s reach. It fell without a fight—the natives of Vultharesk simply had neither the numbers nor the means to resist—and was quickly assigned a military governor. This man would preside over the area with a (supposedly) more enlightened rule than the natives themselves, and would also be responsible for keeping law and order in the newly acquired territory. The man assigned to the job was a rising young nobleman by the name of Trevor Godwyn.

Godwyn—along with his entire extended family and a veritable army of servants and bodyguards, very nearly two hundred souls in all—immediately journeyed thousands of miles to Vultharesk and set up shop, ordering the construction of a large manor on the top of a rise in the center of town, the former location of the village’s largest temple. There he set about to rule the “heathens,” to bring them in line with a ruthless efficiency.

The new lord’s policies were draconian at best; no infraction, legal or moral, was to be tolerated. Murder, theft, brawling, plotting against the new lord; these were all capital offenses as might be expected—but so were lying, adultery or improper relations, or worshipping the old gods who held sway before Godwyn arrived. He was going to civilize these people, bend them to the rule of his own kingdom’s moral outlook, even if he had to kill the lot of them to do it.

This continued for nigh onto ten years—until, on a march of inspection through the heart of the village, Trevor Godwyn met a young native woman, barely more than a girl, by the name of Olyana Volienska. Instantly smitten with the dark-tressed beauty, Godwyn nevertheless managed to resist his baser impulses that day, and for several more weeks as well. He finally succumbed to temptation one cold winter night, slipping out of the bed he shared with his wife of fifteen years and riding down into the village to find her. Olyana, already married as well, nevertheless went along with her lord’s demands, partially out of fear, but also with the hope that her cooperation might result in a better life for her and her family.

After a mere handful of these clandestine trysts, Olyana’s husband grew suspicious of her frequent

absences, and arranged to have several of his friends follow her one evening to the couple’s meeting place. Unable to get near enough to make out any details in the dark of night, the men could not identify Olyana’s lover—but the fact that she was unfaithful was proven in their minds beyond the shadow of a doubt. Incensed, the young woman’s husband waited up for her that night . . .

Lord Godwyn presided over an open court the next afternoon, as was his practice on most days, so that the poor savages under his rule might observe his inspired leadership and sense of justice in action. Mere moments before the noon hour, at which time it was his custom to break for a midday meal, the governor was stunned to the core of his soul when Olyana was dragged in by her husband and thrown at Godwyn’s feet. The young man demanded the lord’s justice—and Godwyn, terrified that his own hypocrisy would be revealed, agreed, executing Olyana with his own blade where she lay. If the brutal lord of Vultharesk felt any shame, any guilt, even the slightest regret for his actions, he never showed it. The court broke for their meal, and all seemed well when they resumed an hour later.

It was not until that evening—when Trevor Godwyn glanced up from his washbasin into the large silver mirror that hung in his bathing chambers to see, not his own handsome visage staring out at him, but rather the shocked and accusing face of Olyana Volienska—that Godwyn’s terror-stricken mind began to understand that there would, finally, be consequences for his actions.

For months, Godwyn was haunted by this mirror-housed phantom that only he could see. Every reflection he saw, from the slightest bit of polished jewelry to the ripple-marred face that stared up from his bath, revealed to him the specter of the woman he had slain. And the lord began to go ever so slightly mad. He ate but rarely now, as though he had more important things on his mind than food; his face grew gaunt over time, his limbs lanky. His family began to avoid him where feasible, growing ever more frightened of his sudden fits of temper. His rule over the natives grew, if possible, even more ruthless, more barbarous; perhaps he felt that the ghost in the mirror was somehow their doing. Dozens were executed for imaginary transgressions, and Olyana’s entire family was rounded up on “suspicion of treason” and hanged to the last man, woman, and child. Blood flowed like a mountain stream, each drop of it shed either by Godwyn’s own hands or at least by his orders—and still it was not enough to drown the image staring at him from the glass.

It finally ended one night, half a year to the day from the date of Olyana’s unjust execution. The mists, unusually thick for a summer eve, had poured in off the mountain peaks, smothering the village of Vultharesk in

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT LOCALES

a thick pall of gloom. It was tenacious, this fog, slipping tendrils of itself in through partially shuttered windows, or beneath the cracks of doors. Wolves howled, hidden deep within the shifting haze, and yet hideously close to judge by the sound of their soul-chilling dirge. Every door in the village was bolted that night, as though the people had some dreadful premonition of what was to come.

That night, Trevor Godwyn snapped. Staring at Olyana's reflection in the mirror, he abruptly demanded that his wife come in from the adjoining room and tell him what she saw in the looking glass. She entered, and told him—as she'd done a hundred times before—that she saw nothing out of the ordinary in the mirror at all. And Godwyn, enraged beyond measure and maddened by the months of torment, exploded in fury, grabbing his own wife by the back of her skull and slamming her face repeatedly into the glass. Cracks spider-webbed across the mirror, blood ran freely and torn bits of flesh snagged in the broken crevices, and still Godwyn would not—could not—let up, screaming at his dying spouse to open her eyes and *look!*

The shards fell from the frame in a tiny hailstorm of glass—yet Olyana stood there still, in the empty frame of the mirror. Staring in horror, Godwyn dropped the limp body of his wife and tried to retreat as his deceased lover stretched forth her hand, no longer impeded by the wall of glass, and grasped the lord of Vultharesk by the throat. His scream, as he was pulled bodily through the jagged opening in the mirror, echoed across the entirety of the village of Vultharesk. Those awakened by the shriek shivered in their beds, getting up to double check their locks and shutters; those who slept through it tossed and turned, wrapped in the grip of awful nightmares.

The Mists gleefully claimed their prize. When the fogs burned away beneath the following dawn, everything looked the same to the people of Vultharesk—but everything had changed.

## Current Sketch

Trevor Godwyn has been condemned to a phantom existence in an empty world, a pale shadow of the Vultharesk he knew. He exists in the realm beyond the mirror, and his only access to the outside world comes by continuing the pattern of his own damnation—the punishment of sinners. To the citizens of Vultharesk, the Mirror Man is an ancient curse upon the land; they have no knowledge of the fact that he was once their hated lord and master. The Godwyn family, currently ruled by Trevor's grand-nephew Ambrose, refuses to believe in any talk of such a creature—especially since they are incapable of seeing Trevor, even during his rare manifestations, and he himself is either unable, or unwilling, to haunt them the way he does the villagers.

What the people of Vultharesk *do* know is that should anyone, villager or stranger, commit any evil deed or immoral act in view of even the smallest of reflective surfaces, they will attract the malevolent attentions of the Mirror Man. “Evil” and “immoral” are defined, of course, by Godwyn's own impossible sense of right and wrong, and include everything from murder or rape to telling a simple white lie, public rudeness, or so much as glancing lustfully at a married woman. From that date onward, anytime the perpetrator should happen to glimpse his (or her) reflection, be it in a mirror, a still pool of water, or the gleam of a soup spoon, he will see, not his own face, but the gaunt and desiccated face of the Mirror Man staring back at him. All others will see the reflection as it should be; only the chosen victim sees the horror looming before him. His luck begins to change for the worse—this includes an across-the-board penalty of –4 to all die rolls—but it should extend beyond simple mechanics; the DM is encouraged to think of all sorts of unpleasant events and runs of ill fortune to befall the character. This lasts either until the character is imprisoned in the mirror, or until he leaves Vultharesk (though it will resume immediately should the victim ever return; the Mirror Man never forgets).

It only gets worse from there. Should the victim ever glance into a mirror or reflective surface large enough for a human being to squeeze through, he has sealed his own fate. Again, this can be anything from a full-length mirror to a wide puddle of water to a polished suit of armor. At this point, Godwyn may step forth from the mirror realm into the real world, manifesting for all to see. He will then attack his chosen victim, attempting to strike him with his bare hand, reserving the long sword for those who attempt to aid his target. Should Godwyn's hand strike his victim—or anyone to whom the Mirror Man has previously appeared in a reflection—the victim must make a Will Save (DC 20) or be sucked into the realm behind the mirror.

Once Godwyn has manifested physically, he may remain in the real world for exactly half a day (12 hours); while free, he usually uses the opportunity to hunt down other chosen victims, those to whom he has appeared, but who never looked into any surface large enough for him to step through. When hunting down anyone to whom he has previously manifested, Godwyn can track them regardless of how they have traveled (including flight, water travel, or magic), and he can see through any attempts at disguise, hiding, invisibility, or other mystic barriers.

It is difficult in the extreme, but Godwyn *can* be slain while in the real world. Though he will eventually reform behind the mirror, this will not occur until the light of the next full moon. This period, then, is the

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT LOCALES

safest time to attempt the release of any of his trapped victims.

Should anyone stand before a mirror or other reflection in Vultharesk and call the name of any of the Mirror Man's victims, the face of the trapped soul may (50% chance) appear to him in the reflection. The victim cannot speak or communicate in any truly meaningful way, though he can gesture. However, Godwyn considers speaking to a trapped soul to be, in and of itself, an immoral act; thus, calling on one of his victims also attracts the attention of Godwyn himself (this is why the safest time to do this is after Godwyn has been slain, but before the next full moon).

It is also possible for random faces to appear to an onlooker; should a mirror (or other reflective surface) be struck by direct moonlight, there is a 25% chance that a random victim of the Mirror Man will appear briefly in the image, even if no name has been called.

In either case, once the victim has appeared, someone in the real world may attempt to reach through the mirror and pull him free. (Again, this can only be done if Godwyn himself does not manifest and interfere.) However, the mirror realm exerts a pull of its own on those it has claimed; the would-be rescuer must succeed in both a Will save and a Strength check, both against DC 18. Failure on either one means that the individual does not have the power to draw the victim forth; someone else must make the attempt if they are to succeed. Should both checks fail, the "rescuer" is instead pulled into the mirror realm, just as if he had failed a save against Godwyn's touch attack.

Those trapped in the mirror realm are utterly helpless; they see Vultharesk only as hazy and indistinct outlines in a foggy landscape, they see their fellow trapped souls just as nebulously, and they cannot see people in the real world at all. Magic items, spells, and powers all cease to function immediately. Imprisoned souls cannot converse with each other, as they quickly discover that they have no voice here. Only should their name be called by someone before a reflection, or should they be passing by such a surface when the moonlight strikes it, can they then see into the real world, and even this lasts but a few moments. Their only hope is to be rescued by someone from outside; otherwise, their imprisonment is indeed eternal. Trapped victims cannot, of course, leave the Vultharesk of the mirror realm; should they attempt to do so, they find themselves briefly lost in a fog, only to return once more to the center of town. The natives of Vultharesk believe that strange flickers of motion or phantoms seen from the corner of one's eye are, in fact, the Mirror Man's victims, flitting about the town from mirror to mirror, wailing silently for their release.

When trapped behind the mirror, Godwyn himself can see little more than any of his victims. The only people who appear distinct to him are his chosen

victims, or those committing acts to which he is drawn. While here, he is haunted, too, by the constant sobs of Olyana, though she has never appeared to him again since the night of the Mists.

## Closing the Borders

Godwyn cannot seal the borders of Vultharesk while trapped in the mirror realm; only in the brief span while he has manifested physically can he do so. During this time, should he will his domain to be closed, the Mists roll in from the peaks and valleys to block all roads (and even flight) from Vultharesk. Anyone attempting to pass through the fog finds himself quickly spit back out in the exact spot they entered the Mists.



## MICTLAN

### NIGHTS OF BLOOD AND OBSIDIAN

by Ryan Naylor

Schadenfreudel3@hotmail.com

#### THE LAND



Mictlan is a harsh land of extremes, one hundred miles in diameter. During the day, the sun beats down over the canopy of the jungle, turning the air beneath the foliage into a choking, humid oven. Plants thrive in the moist soil, growing to colossal proportions despite the fact that the burning sun quickly evaporates any groundwater. In the few places where water is plentiful, the jungle is so thick it can take hours or days to break through the tangled mess. Many people have died of thirst just a few feet from a river, held back by the impenetrable thickets. For the warriors of this land, the sun and lack of water are as deadly an enemy as their human foes or the jungle beasts.

When the sun leaves the sky, the temperature falls dramatically. Water re-condenses from the humid air into a thick mist and clouds of mosquitoes and other biting insects seem to rise from the soil, spreading pain and disease through the jungle. Other predators slink from the trees or their burrows to continue the violence that consumes the domain. Their fear of these silent killers is one of the few things that Mictlan's native race shares with the invaders they constantly battle.

Most natives live in crowded cities near the few permanent water sources. By far the greatest of these is Huanoque, which is home to nearly twenty thousand people. This massive city, easily ten times bigger than the largest of its rivals, is built on a series of islands at the center of the stagnant lake Jauja. The center of both Huanoque and Mictlan itself is a huge stepped pyramid devoted to the fierce war god Huitzilopochtli. Every morning and evening, people captured in battle or those harvested from the peasantry are sadistically tortured and sacrificed to Huitzilopochtli in this dark temple. The ruler of Huanoque, a fanatical priest named Cuxi Yapanaque, lives entirely within the ziggurat's confines, overseeing his priests. The towering pyramid is the greatest of the engineering achievements that the natives have made despite their lack of iron or domesticated animals. Stone causeways

link the city and its islands to the distant shore, although many natives use simple canoes instead. The causeways are pocked with narrow sections, wooden bridges and steep inclines to prevent invasion. Aqueducts arch above the causeways, bringing fresh water to the teeming city. The lake's rich soil has been dredged up into island garden beds to supplement the food supplied by the tribute Huanoque exacts from the other native cities. These islands have been used more and more since Mouriros' invasion as Huanoque's once-undisputed empire begins to collapse. The invaders themselves rely on the native allies and intercepting Huanoque's tributes to survive. They have no permanent camp and move all over the domain besieging cities and ambushing Huanoque's warriors.

#### Cultural Level

Before Mouriros' army invaded Mictlan, they came from a chivalric Holy Empire. The jungle, however, is completely devoid of iron and horses, as well as people with the skills required to create *smokepowder*. Although they have become quite adept at improvising and exploiting the supplies that occasionally appear at the borders of Mictlan, they will soon be forced to fight without the advantages that *smokepowder* and metallurgy brought them.

Despite their harsh environment, the natives have managed to carve out a classical culture from the unforgiving jungle. They typically use tools and weapons made of wood, bone or stone, including obsidian or fired clay, although a few lucky warriors have managed to capture the invader's steel swords.

#### The Folk

The people of Mictlan are divided easily into two groups: the invaders and the natives. The native folk average five and a half feet tall and are quite slender. Their skin is reddish-brown and their hair and eyes black. What little body hair they have they pluck out, believing it to be unsightly. Because of the unrelenting

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT LOCALES

humidity, the natives typically wear nothing more than cotton robes or even just a loincloth. When preparing for battle or religious ceremonies, they paint their faces with a mixture of colored clay and blood. Priests wear ornate headdresses and pierce their ears, lips and noses to show their devotion to the Bloody Handed God.

Like their counterparts in other realms, peasants live harsh lives in Mictlan. As well as having to work to support their hometowns by providing food and labor, they are expected to fight in Mictlan's endless wars as well. If there are not enough captured invaders or native enemies for the priests' ceremonies, they are often slaughtered on Huitzilopochtli's altar to bring luck to the more important warriors. They are far more afraid of this grisly fate than the relatively easy death the invaders offer, and so are driven into a savage frenzy in battle.

In comparison, priests and professional warriors lead privileged lives in their brutal culture. The warriors constantly strive to become the greatest fighters in Mictlan, earning themselves a special position in Huitzilopochtli's eternal host. They are divided into different lodges, each of which is centered in a different city and devoted to emulating a different jungle predator. To show their special status, warriors ritualistically tattoo and scar themselves, and wear ornate armor made of quetzal feathers, wood and precious stones. Huanoque is home to the Eagle and Jaguar Warriors, which are fierce rivals. Contingents of these elite warriors are placed in every loyal city to ensure they remain loyal—at any cost. Yapanaque recently gave his permission for the warriors to act against the ruling priests if necessary, prompting a rash of murderous uprisings in protest. These fighters are noble, savage and devoid of fear or mercy.

Unfortunately, the unnatural weapons and horrific abilities of their enemies have thrown the lodges into confusion. Late at night, they whisper amongst themselves that the people of Mictlan have strayed from the path their war god intended for them and the invaders are Huitzilopochtli's host sent to punish them.

The black robed priests that lead their cities brutally punish those found spreading these rumors. More than one person found spreading this heresy has been dragged into the smoky temple of Huitzilopochtli, where they are agonizingly tortured and then sacrificed. The number of sacrifices always increases before and after major battles, but even during relatively peaceful periods at least one person is sacrificed at dawn and at dusk every day. Yapanaque teaches that if this ceremony isn't performed every day, the invaders will conquer Mictlan and the jungle will be destroyed. Because of this gory role in their society, priests always reek of spilled blood and have chunks of flesh and blood clots tangling their hair. Everyone in Mictlan

holds the priests in fear and awe, including the invaders.

The invaders are taller and more solid than the natives and have lighter skin. Their hair ranges from blond to red to black and almost everyone sports a thick moustache or beard. When they rode into the jungle six years ago, every man was mounted on a horse and equipped with a plate mail breastplate, helmet and sword or *smokepowder* weapon. The warriors were famed for their military skill and ingenuity, and no one believed a few savages could withstand this mighty conquering army led by the famous Commander Mouriros. During the endless war, however, half the horses were killed and much of their equipment lost. No longer are they the splendid, shining knights that marched across the Sierra Acora to conquer the newly discovered jungle civilization. Now, every man is covered in mud and cuts, tired and thirsty, their armor dented and scratched. Although occasionally the invaders discover a cache of the supplies that miraculously appear at the edge of Mictlan, they are the pitiful remains of a once proud army.

When the invaders reached the first native city, the awed natives received them peacefully. After examining their strange appearance and weapons, the priests of Huitzilopochtli pronounced that Mouriros and his men were spirits sent from the war god to reward them. Mouriros eagerly received the priests' tribute of gold and gems, then had the messengers butchered to demonstrate the inferiority of their civilization. A day later, the army attacked. Although they were vastly outnumbered, the cavalry and *smokepowder* weapons of the invaders decimated the native army, and they easily captured the town. Mouriros ordered that all the blood soaked priests were to be burnt alive and the other men stabbed and left to die. The women were raped and then executed.

During the battle, a native spear wounded Mouriros' nephew Francisco. The youth suffered terribly through the cold night, while mosquitoes and leeches swarmed over him. The army priest, Patos Bartolemo, gave him what comfort he could, and Francisco survived through the night. The next day, he lay suffering and moaning as the temperature and humidity climbed. Despite a fever and the beginnings of gangrene, Francisco survived, although he was in incredible pain and more than a little unhinged by the experience. The invaders were amazed—the experienced fighters had seen many men killed by wounds such as Francisco had suffered, but eventually the boy was able to resume his duties.

This was the first incidence of the horrific curse that the invaders have labored under for six years. It is impossible to kill them in battle. Regardless of how badly wounded they are, the warriors regenerate 2 hit points a day until they are completely recovered. The

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT LOCALES

invaders can still feel pain, however, and often are forced to suffer for weeks in agony while their injuries heal. Every man is wasted with exhaustion and hunger and covered in raw wounds that often become infected. Most suffer from some sort of mental disturbance, particularly depression. They want nothing more than to end their pain with death. Until Mouriros forbade it, Patos Bartolemo preached that this suffering was the invaders' penance for inflicting similar agonies upon the natives.

The invaders are not truly invulnerable, however. Every time Mouriros' army even temporarily conquers one of the natives' cities, one of the invaders dies. They are so consumed with the desire to end their suffering that they eagerly push Mouriros to capture native towns so their suffering can end, although this means it is becoming less and less likely the army will be able to conquer Mictlan. The unfortunate Patos Bartolemo discovered that being sacrificed to Huitzilopochtli also results in the final death of the crusader, although only the most desperate or unlucky are forced to endure this long and torturous demise. Since then, Mouriros has conducted the religious services himself.

The invulnerable invading army has had a drastic effect upon the native civilization. Generations ago, the fierce Eagle and Jaguar Warriors of Huanoquite united all of Mictlan's once-independent cities into a vast tributary empire. Since then, Huanoquite has been undisputed ruler of the jungle civilization, keeping the smaller settlements in terrified obedience with its superior military might. The arrival of the invaders, however, destroyed this stability completely. With a new ally against their hated overlords, the minor towns began revolting. This sparked the constant war that has raged across Mictlan for six years. The smaller towns ceaselessly wheel between Huanoquite and the invaders, playing one side against the other. To Yapanaque's frustration, no sooner does Huanoquite's massive army re-conquer one city than another rebels, preventing him from regaining control of his empire and destroying the invaders. The constant revolts are a double-edged sword for Mouriros as well, for each time he captures a city, his army shrinks further. He has discovered that simply allying with a city does not cause the deaths of one of his men, but the natives show no more loyalty to Mouriros than they do to Yapanaque. The commander has been forced to rely on native allies rather than conquered vassals to fight the armies of Huanoquite. Once the massive city has fallen to the invaders, Mouriros will return his gaze to the minor cities. Still, he is forced to use more and more devious tactics to preserve his men and ensure the loyalty of his allies.

## The Law

As commander of the invading army, Mouriros' commands are carried out unquestioningly. He exerts strict military discipline over his army despite their trying circumstances, and punishes any insubordination fiercely. Although his public floggings are legendary, the invaders are more afraid of being forced to endure Mouriros' private torture sessions, where even a touch of his hand seems to enflame his victim's nerves. With the death of Patos Bartolemo, no one has the authority to challenge his decisions, and he refuses to allow any of his subordinates, except his nephew, to gain enough influence to challenge him. He does, however, reward success equally lavishly, and most of his forces regard him as a brilliant leader and strategist. They remain loyal to him through a mixture of fear, respect and hope that he can somehow end their tortured existence.

The priests of the native cities are the undisputed leaders of their race. They maintain a steady stream of sacrifices to ensure Huitzilopochtli smiles upon their warriors, and ensure that their city (and hence themselves) is served as best as possible by the constantly shifting politics. The most powerful priest in Mictlan is Cuxi Yapanaque, who continues to demand tribute and issue proclamations and threats to the smaller cities. Although generally only those commands that are enforced by the Eagle or Jaguar Warriors are obeyed, the priests do obey Yapanaque's order that a sacrifice is to be made at sunrise and sunset every day. Although many cities would like to see Huanoquite in ruins, no one wants the invaders to triumph. If there are not sufficient captured warriors to sacrifice, they turn on their own people to appease the war god, and the warriors and peasants are too terrified of this fate to speak out.

The lodge warriors also wield considerable influence in the natives' warlike society. The respect peasants hold for the majestically armored fighters is a mixture of fear and awe for their abilities. The peasants tell many tales about the lodges' secret rites and magical powers. According to legend, many lodge warriors are able to assume the form of the animal they emulate. The peasant's fear is not solely because of their mystic abilities, however—the warriors control the peasants' lives on the battlefield, and the enemies they capture are all that prevents them from being sacrificed to Huitzilopochtli.

## Native Player Characters

Characters native to Mictlan are drawn from the peasantry or junior soldiers of either army. Members of Mouriros' army receive a +2 bonus to Constitution but a -2 penalty to Wisdom. The natives receive a +2 bonus



# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT LOCALES

to fear checks involving scenes of blood and gore, since they are subjected to them every day in their religious ceremonies, but must make a Wisdom check to avoid blindly obeying others' commands.

Warriors are very common in this savage domain, particularly fighters and avengers, although thieves are widespread. Rangers are less common than might be expected because of the many dangerous beasts that lurk under the jungle's canopy. Native rangers can apply their missile attack adjustment (as determined by their Dexterity score) to both their attack and damage rolls when using slings or spears, instead of straight bows which are unknown in their culture. They are also unable to calm Mictlan's wild animals.

Classes relying on education such as priests are also rare in this primitive land. The native priests of Huitzilopochtli are able to cast spells from the spheres of All, Combat, Elemental Air and Fire, Necromancy, Sun, War and Weather, but these murderous holy men are not appropriate as player characters. A few invaders received a small amount of training in the mystic arts from Patos Bartolemo before he died and their god, Matherion, grants them major access to the All, Combat, Guardian, Law, War and Wards spheres, and minor access to Necromantic and Protection spells. These crusaders must be lawful and their THAC0 advances as though they were warriors rather than priests.

Wizards, gypsies, anchorites, and psionicists are unheard of in Mictlan.

## Personalities of Note

Hernando Mouriros and Cuxi Yapanaque are undoubtedly the most powerful people in Mictlan. Yapanaque despises the invaders, and eagerly pursues the war of attrition against them. He is a chaotic evil 12th-level priest of Huitzilopochtli, although he has been unable to cast spells since the invaders conquered their first city. He has managed to conceal this from the other priests, well aware of how quickly they would turn against him if they knew of his disfavor. In his rabid lust to restore himself in the eyes of his god, Yapanaque has ordered that the invaders be captured at all costs to feed Huitzilopochtli, and always oversees their torture personally. Mouriros repays his fanatical hatred in kind, blaming the murderous priest for the curse that afflicts his men and prevents him from conquering the jungle. Both men would eagerly do anything if it would result in the other's death.

It is widely known in the invading army that Mouriros' one real weakness is his fondness for his nephew Francisco. After the young man's miraculous recovery, Mouriros had him promoted to captain. Recently, however, it has become apparent that Mouriros may have schooled his nephew too well.

Francisco is gathering a measure of support from the junior officers and younger soldiers who have grown tired of Mouriros' maneuverings and simply wish to end the war. Francisco is planning to supplant his uncle as the army's commander and some say that he is dealing with Yapanaque to achieve this. Mouriros himself may be unaware of Francisco's plot, or he may be using it to lure Yapanaque and the traitors in his own camp further into a trap. The commander is very perceptive and has used similar tactics to purge his army before.

## Encounters

There is a 33% chance of an encounter in Mictlan four times a day. During the daytime, most encounters will be with either the invaders or the natives, who constantly send out hunters and war parties. The invaders are 4th-level fighters armed with long swords or a *smokepowder* weapon and a plate mail breastplate, giving them AC 6. Native war parties are composed of first level fighters armed with bolas, obsidian-studded clubs, spears, slings or swords. They are lead by a lodge warrior—a 3rd-level fighter with similar weapons but AC 8 from their ornate armor. Some lodge warriors are maledictive lycanthropes whose phenotype corresponds to the animal sacred to their lodge. Werejaguars and wereeagles (which can be treated as chaotic evil wereravens) are the most common, although werebears, wereanacondas and wereboars do exist. Both groups attempt to capture the strangers. Natives will hand them over to the priests of their city to be sacrificed, while the invaders will cannibalize what equipment they can before executing them or inducting them into their army. One month after they are inducted, the invader's terrible curse will spread to the newcomers.

At night or in more isolated areas of the jungle, the vicious jungle beasts stalk through the humid shadows to attack luckless intruders into their territory. As well as animals that could normally be expected in a jungle, nagas and couatl lurk beneath the canopy. Isolated tribes of yuan-ti, ghouls and tabaxi kidnap or devour whomever they come across. A trio of rakshasa, named Lord Smoking Mirror, Jade Petticoat and Hummingbird, move from city to city, spreading chaos and evil.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT LOCALES

## Commander Hernando

### Mouriros

#### Lord of Micflan

##### 10th-level Fighter, Lawful Evil

<b>Armor Class</b>	2	<b>Str</b>	11
<b>Movement</b>	12	<b>Dex</b>	16
<b>Level/Hit Dice</b>	10	<b>Con</b>	12
<b>Hit Points</b>	62	<b>Int</b>	17
<b>THAC0</b>	11	<b>Wis</b>	9
<b>No. of Attacks</b>	2 (long sword) or 3/4 (pistol)	<b>Cha</b>	17
<b>Damage/Attack</b>	By weapon, typically 1d8		
<b>Special Attacks</b>	Inflict pain or cause disease with touch		
<b>Special Defenses</b>	None		
<b>Magic Resistance</b>	50%		

As commander of the invading army, Hernando Mouriros has access to the finest resources available to his army. Like most of the soldiers at his command, Mouriros is a little less than six feet tall. His dark hair and goatee are always elegantly trimmed, and one soldier is always charged with ensuring that his ornate breastplate, helmet and weapons are brightly polished and in good condition. His blue eyes and air of strength and determination give him a palpable aura of control, both over himself and his army and their collective fate.

## Background

Mouriros was born forty-three years ago in the city of Turon, the capital city of the vast Holy Empire. His mother was a seamstress who died giving birth to a younger sister when Hernando was ten years old, and his father was a simple laborer. The brutal man beat his wife and children and spent what little money that had on alcohol. Hernando was often forced to listen with his small fists clenched in rage to the drunken man beating his wife when he returned home drunk. In the marble city at the heart of Matherion's holy empire, the Mouriros family lived in fear and misery.

When his father took the young Hernando to remove his mother's body from the Hospice where she had died, Hernando stared for a long time at her pale corpse. His mother was thin and wasted from disease; her hand were scarred and callused from her harsh lifetime of work. In that moment, Hernando swore to rise from the gutter in which he had been born and make something of his life. When his father came back into the room holding his newborn daughter and the forlorn bag of his wife's possessions, Hernando felt a wave of hatred sweep over him. It was this man, he realized, that had caused his mother's death, with his

neglect, constant abuse and drunkenness. Six months later, when the older Mouriros took another wife, Hernando finally snapped. Anxious neighbors called the city guard after hearing the terrible argument from the Mouriros family's house. The guardsmen found Hernando beaten almost to death. After arresting Hernando's father, they took the boy to heal at the same Hospice where his mother died. As soon as he had recovered, Hernando joined the guards.

Hernando was completely devoted to the guards who had saved his life. For many years he worked obsessively, moving steadily through the ranks. Although he came to regard his family as an unwelcome reminder of his low origins, he continued to send them money regularly. In return, they maintained their distance. His natural aptitude and determination to succeed allowed him to move from the city watch into the Imperial Army, where he was eventually promoted to captain. Those disgruntled men he stepped over on his meteoric rise murmured sullenly that his promotions were due to blackmail, adultery and bribes more than his physical talents. On the one occasion Mouriros was tried for misconduct, he maintained that they were simply jealous of the love his men felt for him despite his not being born into the nobility. His silver tongue and rapier wit managed to convince the tribunal that the accusations of sadism and bribery were unfounded.

Gradually, the Imperial Court became aware of the dashing new captain in their army and his unusual origins. The emperor and empress requested that Hernando meet with them, and he readily agreed. The Imperial Couple were quite impressed with the suave and self-possessed young man and the opulent surrounds and the royal family that represented everything he wished to achieve enchanted the captain. As he prepared to leave, the empress gave him a token of her esteem—a small lace handkerchief embossed with the sigil of Matherion—and guaranteed that he would go far in the Imperial army. Mouriros was overcome with a wave of emotion at her words and swore to do all he could to speed his advancement.

Mouriros was immediately placed in command of a large garrison of Imperial soldiers. At the same time, the emperor declared a crusade against all the heathens and pagans that lived on the outskirts of the Empire. To prove that the Imperial Family were justified in entrusting such a responsibility to him, Mouriros joyously threw himself into the task, determined to show his loyalty and win for himself the elegant lifestyle he believed he was entitled to. Mouriros became famous throughout the Holy Empire for his uncompromising nature and devious tactics. His name was held in terror by the thousands of pagans that he captured and brought into Matherion's loving arms. Those who refused to convert were tortured until they did so and then executed. Some people whispered that

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT LOCALES

Mouriros was too zealous in persecuting his enemies and enjoyed his work too much, but it was obvious when he returned to court that he was completely devoted to the Imperial and divine wills.

For ten years, Mouriros fought, tortured and conquered the heathens. His fury in persecuting them was unmatched and although he suffered occasional setbacks, his army always triumphed eventually. During this time, Hernando received news that his father had been released from prison. An apparently reformed character, the man had sworn to avoid alcohol and help the poor avoid fates like his own. Shortly after, the man was beaten to death in an alley by a group of thugs, who were never apprehended. The sole witness to the brutality maintained that one of the men had been wearing the armor of an army officer, although, as a foreigner, his testimony was never accepted. When he was informed of his father's death on a dark and misty night, Hernando tried vainly to conceal his pleasure and sent a message to his family. The note informed them that he would pay them handsomely if Francisco, his nephew, would come and join Hernando's command. They were never to contact either Mouriros man again.

Finally, Mouriros was called to the Imperial Court once more. The emperor excitedly informed him that the Sierra Acora, which was thought to represent an impassable edge to the world, had finally been traversed. On the other side of the high mountains, a jungle paradise had been found. As the Empire's most successful and zealous commander, Mouriros and his army were to conquer the new land and any people they discovered there. In return, the emperor would make the commander marquis of the new land.

Within two days, Mouriros' army was marching towards the newly discovered land. They traversed the treacherous Sierra Acora with the concerted efforts of all the priests, lead by the puissant Patos Bartolemo. Mouriros proudly rode at the front of the army as they rode into Mictlan, his mind filled with plans for the new realm and its natives after he had conquered it. With the slave labor the natives would provide, Mouriros would live in opulence at the head of a mercantile empire. The fact that they might not fall as easily to his small army as the other heathens had never entered his proud mind.

From the moment he laid eyes upon the blood soaked priests and their brutal vassals, Mouriros became convinced that the pagans were heretics of the worst kind, suitable only for slavery or extermination. As they seemed to understand nothing more than murder and savagery, Mouriros swore to use these tools to bring them into the Holy Empire at any cost. He eagerly accepted what he saw as the natives' attempt to bribe the invaders with tribute, then attacked the city, fighting at the head of his men. Every man, woman and child was brutally murdered at Mouriros' command, giving him a sense of pleasure and achievement of a

magnitude he had never experienced before. As a thick mist began to rise from the soil, Mouriros threw back his head and laughed at the sensual pleasure of brutality.

Since their first battle, Mouriros has obsessively pursued his campaign of terror and cruelty. Hernando Mouriros has never broken a vow before and he is determined that Mictlan's obstinate natives will not make him break his latest oath.

## Current Sketch

Mouriros is determined to bring Mictlan under his heel through any means necessary. The curse over his men, which grants them immortality but saps their spirits and prevents him from capturing the natives' cities, frustrates him immensely. Apart from his nephew, whom he indulges constantly since Francisco's brush with death six years ago, he cares nothing for the soldiers under his command. As long as they obey his harsh commands, he cares nothing for their emotional and physical suffering. They represent a means to an end and nothing more. Without his army, Mouriros knows that he has no hope of conquering the jungle and finally realizing his dream.

His inability to conquer cities without reducing his tiny army further chafes at him relentlessly. The commander walks a fine line between conquering the cities and maintaining an army large enough to keep control of his allies and vassals. Used to the flawless military discipline of his men, the chaotic behavior of the unpredictable natives frustrates him to the point of madness. No sooner has he confirmed a plan to conquer one city than his allies will realign themselves with Huanoquite. To try to maintain control over his allies, the commander has tried every tactic from assassination to wholesale kidnapping, but almost nothing works. One city's captured women attacked their guards before either escaping or committing suicide. At times, the natives' brutality and alien culture almost scares the seasoned commander, driving him to even greater lengths to capture the natives and force them to act in an intelligible fashion. The self-discipline and authoritarian control that once served him so well is one of Mouriros' greatest handicaps in the alien jungle of Mictlan.

At times, Mouriros still dreams of his brutal, drunken father and he awakes from these horrific nightmares more determined than ever to conquer Mictlan. Everything in the fetid jungle reminds him of his lust to make something of himself, while at the same time reminding him of why he can't succeed. His unbending laws are of no use in the wild, unpredictable jungle. His men are the perfect soldiers—lethal and unable to be killed—but are of no use in conquering the land. His allies are completely alien and no more loyal

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT LOCALES

to him than they are to Huanquite. Frustration gnaws endlessly at Mouriros. He is determined to either conquer or totally destroy the jungle. As more and more time goes by and his sanity begins to wear away from the pressure he puts himself under to succeed, the second alternative seems more and more likely.

## Closing the Borders

When Mouriros wishes to seal the domain, the jungle become still and quiet. This silence covers the domain completely. Terror spreads through the cities and camps as people find themselves unable to speak or hear. In the unearthly silence, tendrils of mist begin to rise from the soil, flowing slowly towards Mictlan's borders. There, they condense into the forms of all those who have been killed in the jungle since the war began. Anyone attempting to force their way through this silent army discovers that they become more and more real as the escapees move further away from Huanquite. If they do not turn back, they are hacked to pieces by the undead host. Moments later, their spirits rise from their bodies to join the silent guard and fight against their living comrades.

## Combat

Mouriros has all the abilities of a normal 7th-level fighter. He is specialized in the use of the long sword and always keeps a brightly polished long sword and wheellock pistol available at all times in case of assassins sent by Yapanaque. His low Armor Class is due to his ornate field plate breastplate and arm guards as well as his high Dexterity.

Mouriros can cause disease or inflict pain at will with a simple touch of his hand or from his sword. If the victim fails a saving throw versus poison, he is consumed with agony for one round and can take no other action, or contracts a debilitating disease. Mouriros uses this ability to punish both prisoners and soldiers who violate one of the many laws he uses to keep control of the army.

Unlike the rest of the invaders, Mouriros can be killed in battle, although he is too intelligent to become trapped in situations dangerous enough to make this likely. If he should die, however, his body bursts into flame. Anything that touches this magical fire will instantly be set alight, although these secondary fires can be extinguished normally. If Mictlan somehow survives this fierce blaze, Yapanaque will probably become the new darklord, but the chances of much of Huanquite's empire remaining after the fire is small. What Mouriros could not capture in life, he may destroy in death.

✘

# NEW MONSTERS

## FOR NOSOS

### TWO CREATURES THAT CRAWLED OUT OF THE GUTTER

by Luis Fernando De Pippo

lfdepippo@ciudad.com.ar

### INTRODUCTION



Within the filthy land of Nosos many normal things become diseased and corrupted. For the lord of the land, nothing is more beautiful than the destruction of the realm.

The following monsters are most frequently found in Nosos.

### GARBAGE GOLEM

<b>Climate/Terrain</b>	Nosos
<b>Frequency</b>	Very Rare
<b>Organization</b>	Solitary
<b>Activity Cycle</b>	Any
<b>Diet</b>	None
<b>Intelligence</b>	Non- (0) or Supra-Genius (19)
<b>Treasure</b>	Nil
<b>Alignment</b>	Neutral Evil
<b>No. Appearing</b>	1
<b>Armor Class</b>	6
<b>Movement</b>	12
<b>Hit Dice</b>	5 (50 hit points)
<b>THAC0</b>	16
<b>No. of Attacks</b>	2
<b>Damage/Attacks</b>	1d8/1d8
<b>Special Attacks</b>	Disease, spoils the land, surprise
<b>Special Defenses</b>	Immune to all spells but fire spells, hit by +1 or better weapons, regeneration
<b>Magic Resistance</b>	See below
<b>Size</b>	L (8')
<b>Morale</b>	Fearless (20)
<b>XP Value</b>	3.000

The garbage golem appears as a vaguely humanoid figure without any facial features, composed of rotting garbage. These golems are mindless, as are most typical golems, but their alignment is always evil, even when

not controlled by Malus. These golems delight, if an automaton can delight, in the destruction of the land.

### Combat

The garbage golem is a straightforward combatant. When ordered to attack it will simply keep coming until destroyed. When ordered to defend a place, it will stand its ground and attack anyone who approaches. The golem's fists inflict 1d8 points of damage and force a saving throw vs. poison. Failure to save means that the victim has caught a fatal disease; the victim loses 1 point of Constitution per day until his death. The disease manifests as painful cramps. During its course it will cramp random muscles of the body and eventually kill the afflicted person (when the Constitution reaches 0). The disease can be cured by a *cure disease* spell, and a victim who does nothing but rest quietly all day will not lose a point of Constitution that day. Every day spent in complete rest prevents the Constitution loss, but if any physical activity is undertaken, however minimal, then the disease will run its course. After the *cure disease* is cast the recovering victim remains bedridden for two days, as the cure is not instantaneous.

The golem despoils the land it walks upon. Nothing will grow in its path unless care is taken to clean the land, something that it is not done in Nosos. The golem can also assume a non-humanoid form. It can disincorporate itself and pass as one of the piles of refuse so common in Nosos. When in this form it can reform and attack with surprise in the same round. The golem can only be hit only with +1 or better magical weapons and is immune to all spells, except those that use fire. Fire magic inflicts full damage, and normal fire causes half damage. Even a heated nonmagical weapon can be used to strike a golem, but it only inflicts half damage.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

While in contact with garbage, the usual state of affairs in Nosos, the golem regenerates 1 hit point per round and can even regenerate fire damage. A garbage golem is destroyed if it is brought to –10 hit points and burned; otherwise it will regenerate back to full hit points if left in contact with garbage. If the golem is brought to negative hit points, but not to –10, it is incapacitated but not destroyed. If it is brought to an area with lots of garbage it will start regenerating.

If a garbage golem is destroyed it will explode and rain refuse on its destroyers (10% chance that rot grubs are in the garbage).

As stated, garbage golems are mindless, but Malus can control them at will; thus at times it may appear that the mindless golem can exhibit great intelligence and formulate complicated plans. This can come to a great shock for the party battling one.

## Habitat / Society

All garbage golems—which fortunately number only ten—were created by a wizard at the request of Malus Sceleris. Malus desired some personal bodyguards that could also spread his “gift” of devastation through whatever little unspoiled land remained in Nosos. The golems are all under the control of Malus and will never attack him. He can see what they see and can direct the action of a golem as if he was in its body. They are usually scattered throughout Nosos so Malus can monitor his domain. If Malus is attacked all garbage golems will rush to his defense. The golems also share his curse: they cannot leave Nosos, frustrating Malus with his inability to spread his “gift” to other lands.

## Ecology

Garbage golems are not natural creatures and actually disrupt the ecology of the places they are in. Druids cannot tolerate the presence of these monsters, but druids seldom travel through Nosos. The wizard who created these golems for Malus was killed shortly thereafter, and no attempt to duplicate his work has been made.

## Garbage Elemental

<b>Climate/Terrain</b>	Nosos
<b>Frequency</b>	Very rare
<b>Organization</b>	Solitary
<b>Activity Cycle</b>	Any
<b>Diet</b>	None
<b>Intelligence</b>	Low (5–7)
<b>Treasure</b>	Nil
<b>Alignment</b>	Neutral
<hr/>	
<b>No. Appearing</b>	1
<b>Armor Class</b>	0
<b>Movement</b>	6
<b>Hit Dice</b>	8, 12, 16
<b>THAC0</b>	8 Hit Dice: 13 12 Hit Dice: 9 16 Hit Dice: 5
<b>No. of Attacks</b>	1
<b>Damage/Attacks</b>	4d10
<b>Special Attacks</b>	Disease
<b>Special Defenses</b>	See Below
<b>Magic Resistance</b>	Nil
<b>Size</b>	8 Hit Dice: L (8' Tall) 12 Hit Dice: L (12' Tall) 16 Hit Dice: H (16' Tall)
<b>Morale</b>	Fanatic (17–18)
<b>XP Value</b>	8 Hit Dice: 3,000 12 Hit Dice: 7,000 16 Hit Dice: 11,000

For general information see Elemental, Ravenloft, General Information in the *RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM Appendix I*.

The garbage elemental is a variant earth elemental that can only be summoned in Nosos, specifically in areas of huge garbage deposits. It appears as a towering, man-shaped mass of earth with garbage exuding from it. Attempts to summon any earth or grave elemental in Nosos results in a garbage elemental.

## Combat

A garbage elemental cannot travel through fire, but can travel in the water. It can lurk beneath the stinking piles of garbage of Nosos while would-be victims draw near. When they pass right above it, the elemental explodes upwards and attacks, imposing a –4 penalty on all surprise rolls.

When garbage elementals engage in combat, their preferred means of attack is a simple blow from their mighty fists. The damage they inflict is dependant on their size: 8 Hit Dice elementals deliver 4d8 points of damage, 12 Hit Dice elementals deliver 4d10 points of damage, and the massive 16 Hit Dice elementals inflict 4d12 points of damage.

Garbage elementals are less effective when striking targets that are airborne or made of fire (such as pyre

## BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

elementals). Any physical damage they inflict is reduced by 2 points per die (to a minimum of 1 point per die). They are susceptible to magical fire, receiving one extra point of damage for each die rolled.

Every time an opponent strikes a bgarbage elemental, that opponent must make an immediate saving throw vs. poison. Failure to save means that the character has contracted a fatal disease; this disease performed identically to that carried by garbage golems, above. Obviously this attack does not work on golems or other elementals.

If destroyed, garbage elementals collapse into a lifeless pile of rotting refuse.

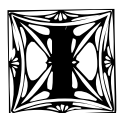
✕

# OWLMAY

## A SHAPESHIFTER WHO MOVES ON SILENT WINGS

by Hugo Viegas Nascimento  
 shadowspawn\_the\_dragon@hotmail.com

### INTRODUCTION



In some civilizations, the owl is the symbol of wisdom. In others, it is seen as an ill omen, a creature of night and death, a guardian and summoner of restless spirits. In the Demiplane of Dread, there is a small group of women who take the owl as their symbol of natural guidance, forging a life-long alliance with Nature through these noble but not fully understood creatures.

Owlmayes have formed a unique sorority dedicated to protecting natural life, yet they suffer from the bond they forge with the land, hoping against hope that it will not make them evil creatures themselves. They seek to protect life, yet many of the living shun them for their totem and for the attitudes some of them take against people. Such actions are almost always well-intentioned, but as with all good intentions, sometimes they lead to disaster and suffering.

### Owlmay

<b>Climate/Terrain</b>	Temperate wetlands and forests
<b>Frequency</b>	Very rare
<b>Organization</b>	Solitary
<b>Activity Cycle</b>	Any
<b>Diet</b>	Omnivore
<b>Intelligence</b>	High to Genius (13–18)
<b>Treasure</b>	See below
<b>Alignment</b>	Per class
<b>No. Appearing</b>	1
<b>Armor Class</b>	6
<b>Movement</b>	12 (as humanoid), 1, Fl 27 (D) or 3, Fl 18 (E)
<b>Hit Dice</b>	Per class
<b>THAC0</b>	Per class
<b>Attacks</b>	3 or per class
<b>Damage</b>	1–2/1–2/1 (as owl), 2–8/2–8/2–5 (as giant owl) or by weapon
<b>Special Attacks</b>	See below
<b>Special Defenses</b>	+1 weapon to hit (animal form only)
<b>Size</b>	S (owl) / M (humanoid) / L (giant owl)
<b>Morale</b>	Champion (15)
<b>Magic Resistance</b>	2% per Hit Die
<b>XP Value</b>	Varies

Similar to the swanmayes in other worlds, owlmayes are females who can shapeshift into owl form. They are protectors of wildlife and nature, and almost always take on a career as rangers, although roughly 10% choose to become caretakers (druids) instead. An owlmay that achieves 8th level in either class is able to assume a second shape, of a giant horned owl. In the case of a caretaker owlmay, her shapechanging ability is in addition to the similar powers she gains upon reaching the 5th Circle of Initiation (7<sup>th</sup> level).

Different from wereowls, owlmayes are usually indistinguishable from other people, resembling either humans or half-elves. They normally wear light armor and carry gear according to their class. Such items are unaffected by an owlmay's shapeshifting, so they must be hidden away. An owlmay may be recognized by her feather token or feathered garment, which is transformed into part of the owl's plumage or can be worn on a leg.



# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

## Combat

In human form, the owlmay fights as per her class. The DM can roll 2d6 to determine the level/Hit Dice of an owlmay (or simply choose it). She attacks with whatever weapons or spells she possesses.

In either owl or giant owl form, an owlmay can only be harmed by +1 or better weapons. She attacks with buffeting wings, a flying leap, and a bite. Owlmayes are highly claustrophobic and must succeed at a fear check whenever forced to enter a cave or other obviously enclosed space. Houses and other buildings with windows do not subject them to these checks.

Both their normal and giant owl forms fly in complete silence, imposing a -6 penalty to surprise. Due to their heightened senses, owlmayes are surprised only on a natural roll of 1 in 1d10.

The magical nature of the token used by the owlmay and her own development in level grants the creature 2% magic resistance per HD. This magic resistance immediately drops to a flat 2% if the token is ever stolen or destroyed. If the owlmay fails her magic resistance roll and saving throw against a magical fire attack, the token then must roll a separate save vs. magical fire (as ivory/bone) to avoid destruction.

## Habitat / Society

Owlmayes are members of a very small sorority. Commonly confused with lycanthropes, even by those sages who have ever heard about them, the owlmayes are instead a group of females that have consciously accepted the mission of protecting nature and the wildlife at their own risk. They often battle evil creatures that refuse to live in accordance with the natural balance, and they hate undead above everything else, as they see such monstrosities as wholly unnatural.

Owlmayes will sometimes also attack human or humanoid settlements if they perceive such communities as threats to nature. For this reason, owlmayes are often misunderstood and the common folk view them with mixed feelings. Their area of action is very wide, covering several square miles. In Tepest they are considered symbols of ill omen and highly feared and despised, as they are seen as humans that have willingly embraced the twisted ways of the wee folk. In other forested domains, like Kartakass and Verbrek, both werewolves and wolfweres dislike them for intruding in their business.

Their special shapeshifting ability is gained voluntarily through a pact with the forces of Nature, symbolized by a special feather token or a feather garment. Such items reveal their magical auras when exposed to a *detect magic* spell. Without the item, she not prevented from shapeshifting, and remains trapped

in her current form. Also, she is forced to remain within an area (1-mile radius) around the item's current location. If someone is keeping the item, the owlmay cannot directly attack that creature, and usually has to bargain her freedom for services. If she's trapped in owl or giant owl form, the item's current owner can understand her as if a permanent *speak with animals* had been cast.

If the token is destroyed, an owlmay will remain trapped in her current form. Also, she will have to stay within a 1-mile radius of the item's last location and will eventually be driven mad—a madness check is required every month, with a cumulative -1 penalty each month. The only possible salvation for the trapped owlmay is if another owlmay of at least 2 levels higher helps her to create a new token. Such tokens only function for owlmayes and the quests taken to replace them are very difficult and demanding, especially if the creature is already demented.

If an owlmay is considered mad beyond redemption, she is hunted down by her former sisters. After giving her a proper burial, they do their best to hunt and kill the creature that took her special token and her sanity.

Owlmayes are even more secretive about their sorority than swanmayes. Only human or half-elven females are admitted; the other requirements are unknown. It is suspected that women are invited to join when they unknowingly perform a great service for another owlmay, like helping her recover a token. If a PC is invited to join, it is 50% likely that she will be asked to retire from casual adventuring to devote herself full time to her new responsibilities. Whenever a promising female is contacted, she is carefully tested and, if successful, she is then admitted in the ranks of the order, being fully informed of the responsibility and dangers involved. After taking the vows the owlmay cannot give up her mission under threat of death.

Owlmayes are normally guided by their animal personalities. They dislike noisy, brash creatures, rabid beasts and all undead. They are shy and reclusive, and avoid other forest folk, as most of these creatures are tainted by the evil in the Land of Mists, but they will not willingly attack such beings, as they are, after all, a natural aspect of the Demiplane. Owlmayes do not build communities, preferring to live alone deep in the wilderness. They do not control normal owls unless using specific spells to do so.

## Ecology

Owlmayes are independent guardians of the forests and wildlife. They actively oppose either monsters or humans that threaten to somehow decimate wildlife and the countryside, protecting nature at any and all costs, what may add to their bad reputation. Besides, they will

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

always seek a way to destroy all undead in the vicinity, as they view such creatures as an unnatural abomination. They seem to either ignore resident and wandering lycanthropes and natural shapeshifters or tolerate them unless attacked first.

Although they are protectors of nature, owlmays are carnivorous predators and scavengers themselves, and must feed on at least five pounds of fresh meat (or ten pounds of cooked or not-so-fresh meat) each day in order to survive. An owlmay usually kills a small animal that can supply her with about fifty pounds of edible flesh, eating only five pounds the first day. She then hides the corpse somewhere and can feed on it again for two more days, each day eating ten pounds of the nearly inedible meat. She knows the importance of saving food supplies and rarely kills sentient beings.

## Owlmay Characters

If the DM is willing to accept player character owlmays, then at character creation they are not treated as normal humans or half-elves, but have instead the following score adjustments: +1 bonus to Dexterity and Wisdom (to a maximum of 18), -1 to Strength. They can be rangers of up to 14th level, and upon permission one owlmay in the party can be a caretaker, able to progress until the Druid Circle (12th level). Class requirements are standard and the optional rules for advancing beyond level limits based on exceptionally high scores may apply.

Note that if an owlmay is a caretaker of 7th level or higher and becomes trapped in human form because she loses her token, she does not lose her other shapeshifting abilities, but cannot assume owl or giant owl shape, much to her frustration. If trapped in animal form, she cannot assume another animal shape, as she would have to change into human form before transforming again.



# CHILDREN OF THE NIGHTLESS LAND

## NEW MONSTERS FOR TSUU-Y-TEKE

by Andrew Wyaff

wyaff@kargafane.com

**Author's Note:** These monsters are designed for use in the domain of Tsuu-Y-Teke (see page 96). Though they are explicitly suited to that land, they might conceivably be encountered elsewhere in the Land of Mists, or even in the Brazil of Gothic Earth. Luiz Eduardo Neves Peret, the creator of Tsuu-Y-Teke, deserves special thanks for extending his permission and guidance in the creation of these creatures.

**Treasure:** Standard goods (gems only), double items (no metal items)

**Alignment:** Usually lawful evil

**Advancement:** By character class

Achunga are an intelligent and evil race of humanoids, known for their depravity and mastery of magic. They are cold, chthonic creatures, harboring a smoldering hatred for the Inan, who supposedly usurped their dominance of Tsuu-Y-Teke when the land was still a verdant rain forest.

Achunga dwell beneath the earth, though they despise this subterranean existence. They emerge at night to gather food and spread suffering among the Inan. They enjoy tempting surface-dwellers with arcane magical power, offering spells and magical items to wizards in return for their loyalty.

Achunga resemble lanky, athletic humanoids with stone-gray skin. Though their faces are nearly human, their eyes are a curious slate blue and their noses are mere skeletal, ragged pits. Their long, stringy black hair hangs below their waists. The creatures' hands are tipped with cracked and yellowed nails.

Achunga speak their own language as well as Inan.

### Achunga

**Medium-Size Humanoid**

**Hit Dice:** 2d8+2 (11 hp)

**Initiative:** +2 (Dex)

**Speed:** 40 ft.

**AC:** 13 (+2 Dex, +1 natural)

**Attacks:** Stone age hand axe +0 melee; stone age javelin +1 ranged; stone age shortbow +1 ranged

**Damage:** Stone age hand axe 1d6-1; stone age javelin 1d6-2; stone age shortbow 1d6-2

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

**Special Qualities:** Pyrophobia, darkvision 60 ft.

**Saves:** Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +3

**Abilities:** Str 12, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 16, Wis 10, Cha 13

**Skills:** Concentration +3, Hide +4, Move Silently +4, Knowledge (arcana) +5, Spellcraft +5

**Feats:** Blind-Fight, Combat Casting,

**Climate/Terrain:** Warm desert, hills, mountains and underground

**Organization:** Gang (2-5 plus 1 2nd-level petty chief), band (11-20 plus 2 2nd-level petty chiefs and 1 chief of 2nd-5th level) or tribe (30-80 plus 100% noncombatants plus 1 2nd-level petty chiefs per 5 adults, 4 5th-level chiefs, and 1 9th-level great chief)

**Challenge Rating:** ½

### Combat

Achunga are a generally cautious race, but their hatred of humans leads them to attack fiercely when presented with a relatively safe opportunity, such as a lone traveler. They plan careful and elaborate ambushes, backing up their warriors with magical power.

**Pyrophobia (Ex):** Achunga are terrified of fire. They never use spells with the Fire descriptor. When confronted with open flame equal or greater than a torch, achunga must make a Will save (DC 15) or be frightened for 1d10 minutes.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

## Achunga Society

The achunga are a prime example of a degenerate race. Though they once boasted a true civilization, more advanced than that of the Inan, they have since descended into bitter savagery. Achunga society is strongly hierarchical, and built on a complex system of taboos. However, their race values little but perversity, magical knowledge and an eventual reclamation of the surface world. Achunga have their own terrifying gods, but refuse to formally venerate them or even speak their blasphemous names.

## Achunga Characters

An achunga's favored class is wizard. Most achunga leaders are wizards, fighters, clerics, or (frequently) some multiclass combination of the three. Achunga clerics are devoted to evil rather than any specific god, and can choose any two of the following domains: Evil, Knowledge, Law, Magic.

## Anhanga

**Medium-Size Shapechanger (Incorporeal)**

**Hit Dice:** 5d8 (22 hp)

**Initiative:** +5 (Dex)

**Speed:** Fly 60 ft. (good)

**AC:** 18 (+5 Dex, +3 deflection)

**Attacks:** – (+3 base)

**Damage:** –

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

**Special Attacks:** Nightmare aura, spells, spell-like abilities

**Special Qualities:** Incorporeal, one thousand forms, indistinct, darkvision 60 ft.

**Saves:** Fort +4 (+4 base), Ref +9 (+4 base), Will +7 (+4 base)

**Abilities:** Str —, Dex 20, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 17

**Skills:** Hide +14, Listen +8, Knowledge (nature) +4, Spot +8, Wilderness Lore +8

---

**Climate/Terrain:** Warm deserts, hills and mountains

**Organization:** Solitary

**Challenge Rating:** 4

**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** Always chaotic evil

**Advancement Range:** 6–8 HD (Medium), 9–15 HD (Large)

The anhanga is a malicious, shapeshifting creature that haunts the wilds of Tsuu-Y-Teke, victimizing hunters, travelers or any humanoids that it happens to encounter. The creature usually attempts to drive its victims to panic and madness before finally destroying them. Though the Inan believe the anhanga to be the

protectors of wildlife, the pure sadistic glee that these creatures exhibit when on the hunt reveals their evil nature.

In their natural form, anhanga resemble heat mirages. They are only visible as roughly humanoid-shaped distortions in the air. Anhanga rarely assume this form, however, unless they need to flee quickly or are severely threatened. They can shapechange into any natural animal native to Tsuu-Y-Teke. This includes a host of familiar creatures such as the mountain lion, wildcat, skunk, weasel, bat, fox, wolf, vulture, game fowl, snake and tortoise. It also includes many animals unusual to the eyes of folk from beyond Tsuu-Y-Teke: the jaguarundi, peccary, tapir, armadillo, anteater, agouti and rhea.

Anhanga cannot speak.

## Combat

An anhanga has no natural attacks in its normal form. It prefers to use its spells and spell-like abilities to confuse and weaken its opponents before shifting to a powerful animal form (such as mountain lion or wolf) to pick them off one at a time.

**Nightmare Aura (Su):** The mere presence of an anhanga causes terrifying nightmares, wherein the victim is being chased through the wilderness by shadowy predators. Any sleeping creature within 60 feet of an anhanga must make a Will save (DC 13) or suffer the effects of a *nightmare* spell. A creature is required to make only one saving throw per night, but the anhanga need only come within 60 feet of the creature for a single round to use its aura, and does not need to remain for the *nightmare* to take effect. Unlike the *nightmare* spell, the casting of *dispel evil* on the victim will not stun the anhanga. This is a mind-affecting ability.

**Spells:** An anhanga can cast druid spells as arcane spells, as if it were a 12th-level sorcerer. The save DC, where applicable, is 13 + spell level.

**Spell-Like Abilities:** At will—*ghost sound*, *silent image*, *ventriloquism*. These abilities are as the spells cast by a 12th-level sorcerer. The save DC, where applicable, is 13 + spell level.

**Incorporeal:** In its natural form, an anhanga can be harmed only by other incorporeal creatures, +1 or better magic weapons, or magic, with a 50% chance to ignore any damage from a corporeal source. The creature can pass through solid objects at will and always moves silently.

**One Thousand Forms (Su):** An anhanga can shift into the form of any animal native to Tsuu-Y-Teke as though using the *polymorph self* spell. Changing to or from any animal form or the anhanga's natural form requires a standard action. Appropriate animals (or roughly equivalent animals) from Appendix 1 of the

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

*Monster Manual* are: bat, cat, eagle, hawk, leopard, lizard, owl, rat, raven, viper snake (tiny, small or medium), toad, weasel, or wolf.

**Indistinct (Ex):** The anhangas' hazy outline gives the creature one-half-concealment (20% miss chance) in its natural form. This ability cannot be counteracted with *see invisibility* or *true seeing*.

**Skills:** Anhangas in their natural form receive a +4 bonus to all Hide skill checks due to their semi-transparent appearance.

## Caypór

**Small Fey (Fire)**

**Hit Dice:** 3d6+3 (13 hp)

**Initiative:** +3 (Dex)

**Speed:** 30 ft., climb 15 ft.

**AC:** 15 (+3 Dex, +1 size, +1 natural)

**Attacks:** Bite +5 melee, 2 claws +3 melee

**Damage:** Bite 1d4–2, claws 1d3–2

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

**Special Attacks:** Fear gaze

**Special Qualities:** Fire subtype, low-light vision

**Saves:** Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +5

**Abilities:** Str 6, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 15, Cha 14

**Skills:** Animal Empathy +7, Climb +6, Hide +15,

Knowledge (nature) +5, Listen +7, Move Silently +11, Spot +7, Wilderness Lore +8

**Feats:** Dodge, Multiattack, Weapon Finesse (bite, claw)

---

**Climate/Terrain:** Warm deserts, hills and mountains

**Organization:** Gang (2–4), band (6–11 plus 1 2nd-level petty chief), or tribe (20–80 plus 6 2nd-level petty chiefs, 2 5th-level chiefs and 1 8th-level great chief)

**Challenge Rating:** 1

**Treasure:** Standard goods (gems only), standard items (no metal items)

**Alignment:** Usually neutral evil

**Advancement Range:** By character class

The caypór are curious goblinfolk that dwell in the most remote regions of Tsuu-Y-Teke, waylaying any who venture near their territory. They are infamous for their hideous appearance and cruelty.

Caypór are the ever-present bogeymen of Tsuu-Y-Teke, greatly feared by the Inan. The caypór were likely jungle fey at one time, but they have since adapted to the cracked and barren wasteland that dominates the domain today. Though they still get along well with natural animals, their temperament has become much more savage, bordering on the depraved. Allegedly, a favorite pastime of the caypór is to kidnap an Inan and subject him or her to the most painful and disfiguring torture imaginable, only to release the wretch back to his village.

Caypór stand just under three feet in height, and are generally humanoid in appearance. Their build is wiry, and the digits on hands and feet are overly long and tipped with fleshy pads. The overall impression is that of an early primate, such as a tarsier. Caypór skin is smooth and waxy, a bright crimson in color. Their faces are so grotesque as to be nearly indescribable; a mishmash of scar tissue, bony protrusions and mucous membranes. Their mouths are wide and filled with two rows of hooklike teeth. Their catlike eyes are always an inhuman color, such as bile yellow or deep orange. Caypór have rod-straight, jet black hair, kept short and even. They rarely wear clothing, but favor elaborate and gruesome body piercings.

Caypór speak Sylvan.

## Combat

Caypór are expert guerilla fighters, using their knowledge of Tsuu-Y-Teke's wastes to maximum advantage. They gain surprise, cut down their prey's numbers with their fear gaze, and then descend on whoever remains.

**Fear Gaze (Su):** Panicked for 2d6 rounds, 30 feet, Will save (DC 15)

**Fire Subtype (Ex):** Fire immunity, double damage from cold except on a successful save. A favorite tactic of caypór is to smear their bodies with oil and light themselves aflame before battle. Opponents take 1d3 points of fire damage per round of contact if the burning caypór can grapple the opponent successfully.

**Skills:** Caypór receive a +2 racial bonus to all Hide and Move Silently skill checks.

## Caypór Characters

A caypór's favored class is druid. Most caypór leaders are druids or rangers, though warriors, adepts, and even rogues are not unheard of. Caypór with player character classes use their natural weapons in combat, but also favor tiny sickles and small javelins.

## Curupira

**Medium-Size Shapeshifter**

**Hit Dice:** 6d8+24 (51 hp)

**Initiative:** –4 (Dex)

**Speed:** 5 ft.

**AC:** 14 (–4 Dex, +8 natural)

**Attacks:** Bite +7 melee (+4 base)

**Damage:** Bite 1d6+3

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

**Special Attacks:** Croak

**Special Qualities:** Masquerade, darkvision 60 ft.

**Saves:** Fort +9 (+5 base), Ref +1 (+5 base), Will +8 (+5 base)

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

**Abilities:** Str 16, Dex 3, Con 18, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 19  
**Skills:** Animal Empathy +13, Bluff +14, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (nature) +7, Listen +5, Spot +5, Wilderness Lore +5

**Feats:** Endurance, Iron Will

**Climate/Terrain:** Warm deserts

**Organization:** Solitary, pair, or clan (5–8 plus 1 2nd–5th level leader)

**Challenge Rating:** 5

**Treasure:** Standard goods (gems only), standard items (no metal items)

**Alignment:** Usually neutral evil

**Advancement Range:** By character class

A stranger creature than the curupira would be difficult to imagine. Best described as intelligent, shapeshifting giant tortoises, their odd appearance gives no indication of the cruel intelligence beneath. Setting themselves up as wise reptile gods, the curupira move unseen among the Inan, spreading a brutal agenda.

Curupira are conceited and deceptive creatures, obsessed with proselytizing an evil druidic message that venerates competition, survival, and the inevitable destruction of the Inan. To this end, they infiltrate the pueblos of Tsuu-Y-Teke and create blasphemous reptilian cults, with themselves as gods. They play the part of the ancient tortoise-spirit dispensing cosmic knowledge, all the while masterminding disasters on the heads of the locals.

In their natural forms, curupira appear to be normal giant tortoises. They move a bit faster than mundane tortoises and often have patterns of muted color on their shells that seem to suggest some disturbing shape. Curupira can shift from this form to resemble any kind of human they desire. Though they cannot imitate particular individuals, they can easily pass for any ethnic group or general physical description.

Curupira speak Druidic, Inan, and occasionally Draconic.

## Combat

Curupira dislike combat, preferring to direct their minions to do their fighting for them. They do not flee the scene of a battle unless things go particularly bad, however, preferring to use their spells (if any) to weaken opponents and then use their loyal cultists or summoned animals to attack.

**Croak (Su):** Three times a day, a curupira in its natural form may let loose an eerie whooping croak as a standard action. This affects all within 60 feet as the spell *confusion*, as if cast by a 9th-level sorcerer. The save DC is 14. This is a sonic, mind-affecting ability.

**Masquerade (Su):** A curupira can shift into the form of a normal human of any generalized physical description as though using the *polymorph self* spell.

The curupira may not, however, imitate a specific person. Changing to or from any form requires a standard action. In any human form, the curupira's Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution scores are all 11, its base AC is 10, and its speed is 30 feet.

**Skills:** Curupira receive a +4 racial bonus to all Animal Empathy and Bluff skill checks.

## Curupira Characters

A curupira's favored class is druid. Curupira leaders are always druids, though some curupira become adepts.

## Jaracacas

**Medium-Size Magical Beast**

**Hit Dice:** 3d10+3 (19 hp)

**Initiative:** +3 (Dex)

**Speed:** 40 ft., climb 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

**AC:** 16 (+3 Dex, +3 natural)

**Attacks:** Bite +6 melee

**Damage:** Bite 1d4–1 and poison

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft. (coiled)/5 ft.

**Special Attacks:** Poison, gaze

**Special Qualities:** Darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision

**Saves:** Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +1

**Abilities:** Str 8, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 6, Wis 14, Cha 8

**Skills:** Balance +11, Climb +6, Hide +10, Listen +9, Move Silently +6, Spot +8

**Feats:** Weapon Finesse (bite)

**Climate/Terrain:** Warm deserts and underground

**Organization:** Solitary, cluster (2–5) or nest (10–30)

**Challenge Rating:** 2

**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** Always Chaotic evil

**Advancement Range:** 4–7 (Large), 8–9 (Huge)

Jaracacas are exceedingly dangerous magical snakes, possessing a gaze that can wither flesh with a glance. They live wild throughout Tsuu-Y-Teke's most arid regions, but are often kept as companions by monstrous wizards and vulture cultists.

Though undoubtedly the product of magical experimentation, jaracacas have been slithering through the deserts of Tsuu-Y-Teke as long as the Inan can remember. Most Inan wisely avoid these dangerous creatures, but a few brave (or foolish) individuals attempt to collect their eggs in order to raise deadly guardians. Though they can become friendly towards a master that provides them with ample food, jaracacas can be as fickle as any cat, and much more dangerous when irritated.

A jaracacas resembles a normal viper roughly five feet in length. The snake can be recognized from its mundane kin by its peculiar skin. The jaracacas' scales are nearly crystalline, appearing as squarish white

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

granules rather like salt. A pattern of ochre-yellow circles runs down the length of the snake's back. A jaracacas lair is also readily identifiable by the desiccated corpses that inevitably surround it.

Jaracacas cannot speak, though those that are raised in the company of humans learn to understand rudimentary Inan.

## Combat

Jaracacas use their gaze to bring their opponents to the point of unconsciousness, then move in to slay the helpless victims with their venom. A whole nest of such creatures can bring a terrifying amount of raw destructive power to bear with their gazes. Despite their magical abilities, jaracacas retain some of their snake skittishness, and tend to flee if they encounter something new and startling (such as a powerful spell they have never witnessed before).

**Poison (Ex):** Bite, Fortitude Save (DC 14); initial damage 1d4 temporary Dexterity, secondary damage 1d6 temporary Dexterity.

**Withering Gaze (Su):** 2d4 points of damage and nauseated for 1d4 rounds, 30 feet, Fortitude save (DC 15). Cannot affect constructs or undead.

**Skills:** Jaracacas receive a +4 racial bonus to all Hide, Listen and Spot skill checks and a +8 racial bonus to all Balance skill checks.

## Lobishomen

**Medium-Size Undead (Incorporeal, Fire)**

**Hit Dice:** 8d12 (52 hp)

**Initiative:** +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

**Speed:** Fly 40 ft. (perfect)

**AC:** 20 (+2 Dex, +8 deflection)

**Attacks:** Incorporeal touch +6 melee

**Damage:** Incorporeal touch 1d6 fire damage and heat exhaustion

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

**Special Attacks:** Heat exhaustion, blood drain, madness

**Special Qualities:** Undead, incorporeal, invisible, fire subtype, +4 turn resistance

**Saves:** Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +9

**Abilities:** Str –, Dex 15, Con –, Int 6, Wis 17, Cha 19

**Skills:** Hide +13, Intimidate +14, Spot +14

**Feats:** Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative

---

**Climate/Terrain:** Warm deserts, hills and mountains

**Organization:** Solitary

**Challenge Rating:** 7

**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** Always chaotic evil

**Advancement Range:** 9–11 (Medium), 12–18 HD (Large), 19–24 (Huge)

With the exception of the Kuni-Bina, no creature is as feared in Tsuu-Y-Teke as the lobishomen. A bizarre and powerful undead predator, the lobishomen spreads madness as it searches for living blood.

The origin of this unholy creature is not known, though some Inan speculate poetically that the lobishomen is the spirit of a male warrior who died without finding a wife to share his house. The truth is likely far grimmer, as the lobishomen seems to take a particular interest in the blood of young women. Regardless, the victims of a lobishomen's feedings are inevitably driven mad, becoming obsessed with what they only remember as an intensely pleasurable dream.

Lobishomen are invisible, save when they attack. At such times, a frightening creature seemingly *unravels* out of the air into view. The lobishomen resembles an unclothed human corpse, covered from head to toe in a horrible sunburn. Creased, hairless flesh oozes watery pus. Skin peels and flakes off in ragged, yellowed sheets. The maw of broken fangs is all most victims remember of the creature, however.

## Combat

A lobishomen only drains blood from helpless—usually sleeping—victims, preferring to use its burning touch on those opponents foolish enough to confront it in battle. Though confident and cunning, a lobishomen is not stupid, and is more than willing to back off from a battle that is going poorly for it.

**Heat Exhaustion (Su):** Opponents struck by a lobishomen's incorporeal touch attack must make a Fortitude save (DC 15) or take 1d4 subdual damage, just as if they were in conditions of extreme heat (see pg. 86 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). Opponents in heavy clothing or armor have a –4 penalty to this save as normal. An opponent who has taken any subdual damage from the lobishomen's touch is fatigued. The fatigued condition ends when the opponent recovers the subdual damage.

**Blood Drain (Su):** A lobishomen can permanently drain 1d4 points of Constitution per round from a helpless victim as a full-round action.

**Madness (Ex):** Victims of a lobishomen's blood drain must make a Will save (DC 15) or be permanently affected as if by *confusion*. Alternatively, the victim becomes Obsessed with the experience (as the failed Horror Check result).

**Undead:** Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning and disease. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

**Incorporeal:** Can be harmed only by other incorporeal creatures, +1 or better magic weapons, or magic, with a 50% chance to ignore any damage from a corporeal source. Can pass through solid objects at will

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

and its own attacks pass through armor. Always moves silently.

**Invisible (Ex):** A lobishomen is continuously *invisible* unless attacking.

**Fire Subtype (Ex):** Fire immunity, double damage from cold except on a successful save.

## Macachera

**Medium-Size Fey**

**Hit Dice:** 3d6 (10 hp)

**Initiative:** +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

**Speed:** 30 ft.

**AC:** 16 (+2 Dex, +4 deflection)

**Attacks:** Stone age hand axe –1 melee; stone age short bow +1 ranged

**Damage:** Stone age hand axe 1d6–2; stone age short bow 1d6–2

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

**Special Attacks:** Spell-like abilities

**Special Qualities:** SR 17, low-light vision

**Saves:** Fort +1, Ref +5, Will +6

**Abilities:** Str 11, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 16, Cha 18

**Skills:** Bluff +14, Concentration +5, Heal +9, Hide +7, Intimidate +9, Knowledge (any one) +7, Listen +8, Move Silently +7, Spot +8

**Feats:** Dodge, Improved Initiative

---

**Climate/Terrain:** Warm deserts, hills and mountains

**Organization:** Solitary

**Challenge Rating:** 1

**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** Always neutral evil

**Advancement Range:** 4–9 (Medium)

The macachera is an enigmatic creature. Resembling a normal human in almost every way, it is difficult in the extreme to detect. Though it seems friendly and helpful, it is in fact a malicious spirit of disease and misfortune.

Macachera are perhaps most infamous for their habit of preying on groups of travelers deep in the wilderness, particularly hunting parties. They do not discriminate, however, and though they prefer the more remote regions of Tsuu-Y-Teke, they often infiltrate pueblos in their quest to sow discord and misery. Very rarely, they may be found in the service of an evil cleric or wizard for a time, though what precisely the macachera gets out of the relationship is unknown.

The mind of a macachera is an alien thing. They seem to take glee in the very act of deception, and they make efforts to conceal their true nature as long as possible while inflicting their “companions” with curses and disease. Few Inan care to dwell on what the macachera’s motivation might be, or what might have spawned such a creature. One legend, however, tells of

a powerful and black-hearted wizard, who long ago enslaved the macachera in an effort to destroy his enemies. The macachera, however, could not cease their evil activities once they had begun, and have since been twisted into elemental spirits of corruption.

Macachera speak Inan and Sylvan.

## Combat

Macachera avoid combat if at all possible. They prefer to utilize their spell-like abilities to terrorize their victims in a clandestine fashion, all the while behaving in a helpful manner themselves. If confronted or attacked, most macachera will simply use their *invisibility* to vanish and flee.

**Spell-Like Abilities:** At will—*doom*, *invisibility*, *suggestion*; 3/day—*bestow curse*, *contagion*, *emotion*. These abilities are as the spells cast by a 12th level sorcerer. The save DC, where applicable, is 14 + spell level. None of these abilities have any sensory signatures.

**Skills:** A macachera receives a +4 racial bonus to all Bluff skill checks.

## Marét

**Medium-Size Fey (Air)**

**Hit Dice:** 4d6

**Initiative:** +8 (+4 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

**Speed:** Fly 50 ft.

**AC:** 18 (+4 Dex, +4 natural)

**Attacks:** Slam +2 melee

**Damage:** Slam 1d6

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

**Special Attacks:** Spell-like abilities

**Special Qualities:** Avian forms, damage reduction 15/+1, low-light vision

**Saves:** Fort +2, Ref +8, Will +5

**Abilities:** Str 11, Dex 19, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 13, Cha 17

**Skills:** Concentration +8, Hide +11, Intuit Direction +8, Knowledge (history) +10, Listen +8, Move Silently +11, Spot +8

**Feats:** Dodge, Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative, Mobility

---

**Climate/Terrain:** Warm deserts, hills, and mountains

**Organization:** Solitary

**Challenge Rating:** 1

**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** Always chaotic evil

**Advancement Range:** 5–6 (Medium), 7–13 (Large), 14–16 (Huge)

The marét are curious fey associated with particular bloodlines among the Inan. Once, they were regarded as the protectors and advisors of whole



# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

families. Like most fey in Tsuu-Y-Teke, however, they have long become corrupted by the parching of the land. Now, they “protect” their chosen bloodline with acts of murder and destruction.

Marét are dangerous and twitchy creatures, who grow restless when they are not spreading chaos. Unfortunately, the families that host them are no longer able to parley with these creatures. The marét fixate on imagined slights and misunderstandings, and respond with campaigns of terror—with little regard for who gets in their way. As a result, most of the bloodlines which still host marét have long since fallen into shame and poverty. And yet the marét continue, oblivious and unstoppable.

Spirits of the sun and sky, the marét traditionally appear as mundane birds native to Tsuu-Y-Teke. Their natural form, however, is a human-sized whirlwind of air and dust. When attacking in their natural form, marét utter a choking laughter that sounds chillingly close to a death rattle.

Marét speak Inan and Sylvan.

## Combat

Marét only initiate combat against those that they see as a threat to “their” families. They will defend themselves if attacked, however. Their typical strategy is to unleash their *sunburst* or *whirlwind* power, then shift into their natural form and begin buffeting their foes mercilessly.

**Spell-Like Abilities:** 3/day—*control winds*, *searing light*, *wind wall*; 1/day—*sunburst*, *whirlwind*. These abilities are as the spells cast by a 14th-level sorcerer. The save DC, where applicable, is 13 + spell level.

**Avian Forms (Su):** A marét can shift into the form of any flying bird native to Tsuu-Y-Teke as though using the *polymorph self* spell. Changing to or from any animal form or the marét’s natural form requires a standard action. Appropriate birds (or roughly equivalent animals) from Appendix 1 of the *Monster Manual* are eagle, hawk, owl and raven.

## Saci

### Tiny Fey

**Hit Dice:** 1d6+2 (5 hp)

**Initiative:** +8 (+5 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

**Speed:** 15 ft.

**AC:** 17 (+5 Dex, +2 size)

**Attacks:** Diminutive short sword +7 melee; tiny javelin +2 ranged

**Damage:** Diminutive short sword 1d3–2 and poison; tiny javelin 1d3–2 and poison

**Face/Reach:** 2 1/2 ft. by 2 1/2 ft./0 ft.

**Special Attacks:** Poisoned weapons

**Special Qualities:** Aura of putrefaction, spell-like abilities, low-light vision

**Saves:** Fort +2, Ref +7, Will +4

**Abilities:** Str 6, Dex 20, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 13

**Skills:** Bluff +4, Climb +1, Hide +21, Jump +5, Listen +5, Move Silently +9, Pick Pocket +9, Spot +5, Tumble +12

**Feats:** Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Weapon Finesse (short sword)

---

**Climate/Terrain:** Warm deserts, hills and mountains

**Organization:** Solitary, gang (2–5) or clan (9–20 plus 50% noncombatants plus one 3rd level leader)

**Challenge Rating:** 1/2

**Treasure:** Standard goods (gems only), standard items (no metal items)

**Alignment:** Usually chaotic evil

**Advancement Range:** By character class

Saci are evil goblinfolk that dwell in the pueblos of the Inan, living off stolen food. Lazy and wicked, they delight in sabotaging the hard work of the Inan out of sheer spite.

Saci riddle the walls of pueblos with tiny tunnels, allowing them to move throughout a village without being seen. Though ostensibly tribal, saci are led more by mob instinct than any formal society. They take little interest in anything but their own satisfaction. Often, however, this means disrupting the lives of the Inan in the most petty and spiteful ways imaginable. They steal and spoil food, kill livestock, foul drinking water, destroy pottery and stonework, cause accidents, disrupt rituals and holidays, and sometimes outright murder for the fun of it. It is rare, but not unheard of, for an Inan to vanish from his own home in the middle of the night; such events testify to the saci’s love of human flesh.

Saci appear as miniature, exaggerated humanoids. Standing about one and a half feet tall, they have large hands, flat heads, and grotesque, distended stomachs. Their skin varies in color, but is usually some awful shade of greenish-gray. Their scowling mouths are filled with flat, grinding teeth. They have scarlet hair, which is always horribly matted and caked with filth and insects. They wear nothing but breechcloths, but always carry diminutive flint short swords and pipes which they use to smoke dried manure.

Saci speak Inan and Sylvan.

## Combat

Saci use their numbers, size, and agility to maximum advantage in battle. They are surprisingly athletic, jumping and tumbling with remarkable skill during combat. They use hit-and-run tactics to poison their opponents, and then move in to finish them off.

**Poisoned Weapons (Ex):** Weapons, Fortitude Save (DC 18); initial damage 1d6 temporary Strength, secondary damage 2d6 temporary Strength.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

**Aura of Putrefaction (Su):** Saci have the insidious trait of tainting any food or stored water (i.e. in some kind of container) they come within 10 feet of. The food or water becomes diseased: Fortitude Save (DC 14), incubation 1 day, damage 1d4 temporary Constitution. This ability cannot be turned off. The saci themselves may consume such spoiled fare without ill effect.

**Spell-Like Abilities:** At will—*ghost sound* and *prestidigitation*. This is as the spell cast by a 5th level sorcerer. The save DC, where applicable, is 11 + spell level.

**Skills:** Saci receive a +4 racial bonus to all Hide, Jump, and Tumble skill checks.

## Saci Characters

A saci's favored class is rogue. Saci leaders tend to be rogues or rogue/sorcerers.

## Tupan

**Medium-Size Fey (Air)**

**Hit Dice:** 7d6+21 (45 hp)

**Initiative:** +6 (+6 Dex)

**Speed:** Fly 90 ft (good).

**AC:** 20 (+6 Dex, +4 natural)

**Attacks:** Lightning bolt +9 ranged (+3 base)

**Damage:** Lightning bolt 3d6

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

**Special Attacks:** Lightning bolt

**Special Qualities:** Masquerade, damage reduction 15/+1, low-light vision

**Saves:** Fort +5 (+2 base), Ref +11 (+5 base), Will +6 (+5 base)

**Abilities:** Str 16, Dex 22, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 13

**Skills:** Bluff +11, Hide +11, Intimidate +6, Intuit Direction +6, Listen +6, Move Silently +11, Spot +6, Wilderness Lore +6

**Feats:** Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Flyby Attack, Mobility

---

**Climate/Terrain:** Warm mountains

**Organization:** Solitary or pack (3–8)

**Challenge Rating:** 5

**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** Always chaotic evil

**Advancement Range:** 8–10 HD (Medium), 11–18 (Large)

Tupan are powerful and deadly thunderstorm spirits that have long since been driven into insanity. They lurk on the highest mesas of Tsuu-Y-Teke, darting about in a frenzy of electrical destruction. Occasionally, they come down from their mountains in human form, seeking to spread mayhem.

The tupan were once the beneficent rain sprites of Tsuu-Y-Teke, gentle in nature and harboring a special love for humanity. No one is certain why they became malicious and hateful, though the suspicion is that like most fey, they were affected by the domain's transformation from forest to wasteland. Though they normally stick to the mesas, for some unfathomable reason the tupan sometimes become more focused in their madness. At such time, they journey to pueblos disguised as Inan and go on murderous rampages.

In their natural form, tupan appear to be tiny, dark gray thunderclouds, roughly the size of an adult human. Their form crackles with purplish electricity, which sometimes seems to suggest a screaming face, gripped by agony.

Tupan speak Inan and Sylvan.

## Combat

Few creatures in Tsuu-Y-Teke can match the tupan for sheer destructiveness. In combat, they become frenzied, darting about seemingly at random and unleashing their deadly lightning strokes. Only rarely will a tupan break off its attack once it is embroiled in battle. Very severe injury and being vastly outnumbered are the only deterrents to these savage creatures.

**Lightning Bolt (Su):** A tupan's natural attack, usable only in its normal form, is a lightning bolt with a range of 100 feet. This is a electrical ranged touch attack (ray).

**Masquerade (Su):** A tupan can shift into the form of a normal human of any generalized physical description as though using the *polymorph self* spell. The tupan may not, however, imitate a specific person. Changing to or from any form requires a standard action. In any human form, the tupan's Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution scores are all 11, its base AC is 10, and its speed is 30 feet.

**Skills:** Tupan receive a +4 racial bonus to all Bluff skill checks.

## Templates

### Lycanthrope, Werejaguarundi

The werejaguarundi template is identical in all respects to other lycanthrope templates as described on pages 217–221 of the *Monster Manual*, except where noted below.

**Animal Form:** Jaguarundi (see below)

**Ability Score Adjustments:** Dex +6, Con +2

**Feats:** Blind-Fight, Multiattack, Weapon Finesse (bite, claw)

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

## Werejaguardi

A werejaguarundi in humanoid form tends to be feral in appearance, with dashing good looks and a predatory gleam in its eye. Telltale features in the humanoid form include unusual birthmarks, hair in strange places on the body (especially the ears), and stiff nodules on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet.

### Combat

Werejaguarundis can assume a hybrid form as well as an animal form. They prefer to use stalking tactics in combat. If their opponents cannot be killed quickly once the werejaguarundis pounce, the lycanthropes will retreat and make another attempt at a later time.

**Alternate Form (Su):** A werejaguarundi can assume a bipedal hybrid form or the form of a jaguarundi. The bipedal form is Medium-size, and a breathtaking mixture of human and feline traits. The creature has clawed hands and feet, which are more like paws than human extremities. The werejaguarundi's head is basically feline, though its eyes are very human and its mouth is more expressive than that of a normal cat. The animal form is that of a normal jaguarundi without any human features.

**Pounce (Ex):** If a jaguarundi in hybrid or jaguarundi form leaps upon a foe during the first round of combat, it can make a full attack even if it has already taken a move action.

**Improved Grab (Ex):** To use this ability, the werejaguarundi in hybrid or jaguarundi form must hit with its bite attack. If it gets a hold, it can rake with its bite attack. If it gets a hold, it can rake.

**Rake (Ex):** A werejaguarundi in hybrid or jaguarundi form that gets a hold can make two rake attacks (+4 melee) with its hind legs for 1d2 damage each (1d3 damage each in hybrid form). If the werejaguarundi pounces on an opponent, it can also rake.

**Skills:** In hybrid or jaguarundi form, werejaguarundis receive a +4 racial bonus to Hide and Move Silently checks and a +8 racial bonus Balance checks.

## Sample Werejaguarundi

This example uses a 1st-level human commoner as the base creature.

### Werejaguarundi

#### Medium-Size/Small Shapechanger

**Hit Dice:** 1d8+1 (5 hp)

**Initiative:** +0; +3 (Dex) as jaguarundi or hybrid

**Speed:** 30 ft.; 30 ft, climb 20 ft. as jaguarundi or hybrid

**AC:** 12 (+2 natural); 15 (+3 Dex, +2 natural) as hybrid; 14 (+3 Dex, +1 size) as jaguarundi

**Attacks:** Unarmed strike +0 melee; bite +4 melee, 2 claws +2 melee; bite +4 melee, 2 claws +2 melee as jaguarundi or hybrid

**Damage:** Unarmed strike 1d3 subdual; bite 1d6, claws 1d3 as hybrid; bite 1d4, claws 1d2 as jaguarundi

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

**Special Attacks:** Pounce, improved grab, rake, curse of lycanthropy as jaguarundi or hybrid

**Special Qualities:** Jaguarundi empathy; plus scent, damage reduction 15/gold as jaguarundi or hybrid.

**Saves:** Fort +3, Ref +8, Will +1

**Abilities:** Str 11, Dex 11, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; Str 10, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10 as jaguarundi or hybrid

**Skills:** Balance +11, Climb +6, Hide +11, Listen +12 as human or +16 as hybrid or jaguarundi, Move Silently +10, Profession (miner) +4, Search +4 as human or +8 as hybrid or jaguarundi, Spot +8 as human or +12 as hybrid or jaguarundi

**Feats:** Skill Focus (Profession: miner) as human; Blind-Fight, Multiattack, Weapon Finesse (bite, claw) as hybrid or jaguarundi

---

**Climate/Terrain:** Warm deserts and hills

**Organization:** Solitary, pair, family (2–5), or pack (2–5 plus 6–11 jaguarundis)

**Challenge Rating:** 2

**Alignment:** Always chaotic evil

**Advancement:** By character class

## Vampire, Azeman

The azeman is a variant of the traditional vampire, found exclusively in the domain of Tsuu-Y-Teke. Azeman are cold and predatory undead, even more inhuman than normal vampires (if such a thing is possible). They delight in hunting humans like frightened rabbits, and relish the act of taking life. Perhaps their most startling feature, however, is their complete immunity to sunlight.

Azeman appear as they did in life, though their skin takes on a deeper bronze tone. When attacking, their cartilaginous jaws actually distend into a horrifying maw so strong that it can snap bone.

Azeman speak any languages they know in life.

## Creating an Azeman

“Azeman” is a template that can be added to any humanoid or monstrous humanoid creatures (referred hereafter as the “base creature”). The creature's type changes to “undead”. It uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

**Hit Dice:** Increase to d12

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

**Speed:** Same as the base creature. If the base creature has a swim speed, the azeman retains the ability to swim.

**AC:** The base creature's natural armor improves by +6.

**Attacks:** An azeman retains all the attacks of the base creature and also gains a bite attack if it didn't already have one.

**Damage:** Azeman have a bite attack. If the base creature does not have this attack form, use the damage values in the table below. Creatures with natural attacks retain their old damage ratings or use the values below, whichever is better.

Size	Damage
Fine	1d2
Diminutive	1d3
Tiny	1d4
Small	1d6
Medium	1d8
Large	2d6
Huge	2d8
Gargantuan	4d6
Colossal	4d8

**Special Attacks:** An azeman retains all the special attacks of the base creature and also gains those listed below. Saves have a DC of 10+1/2 azeman's HD + azeman's Charisma modifier unless noted otherwise.

**Domination (Su):** An azeman can crush an opponent's will just by looking into his or her eyes. This is similar to a gaze attack, except that the azeman must take a standard action, and those merely looking at it are not affected. Anyone the azeman targets must succeed at a Will save or fall instantly under the azeman's influence as though by a *dominate person* spell cast by a 12th-level sorcerer. The ability has a range of 30 feet.

**Blood Drain (Ex):** An azeman can suck blood from a living victim with its fangs by making a successful grapple check. If it pins the foe, it drains blood, inflicting 1d4 points of permanent Constitution drain each round the pin is maintained.

**Children of the True Night (Su):** Azeman command the lesser creatures of the world and once per day can call forth a pack of 10d6 cats, a swarm of 10d10 bats, or a flock of 4d6 vultures (treat as eagles) as a standard action. These creatures arrive in 2d6 rounds and serve the azeman for up to 1 hour.

**Create Spawn (Su):** A humanoid or monstrous humanoid slain by an azeman's blood drain attack rises as an azeman 1d4 days after burial. The new azeman is under the command of the azeman that created it and remains enslaved until its master's death.

**Special Qualities:** An azeman retain all the special qualities of the base creature and those listed below,

and also gains the undead type (see page 6 of the *Monster Manual*).

**Damage Reduction (Su):** An azeman's undead body is tough, giving the creature damage reduction 15/+1.

**Turn Resistance (Su):** An azeman has +4 turn resistance (see page 10 of the *Monster Manual*).

**Resistance (Ex):** An azeman has cold and electricity resistance 20.

**Dust Cloud Form (Su):** As a standard action, an azeman can assume the form of a cloud of choking dust. This is identical to the spell *gaseous form* as cast by a 5th level sorcerer, except that the azeman can remain gaseous indefinitely and has a fly speed of 40 feet with perfect maneuverability. Opponents who are caught in the dust cloud are blinded and stunned for as long as they remain within it, and for 1d4 rounds thereafter. Creatures with the blindsight ability are immune to this effect.

**Spider Climb (Ex):** An azeman can climb sheer surfaces as though with a *spider climb* spell.

**Alternate Form (Su):** An azeman can assume the shape of a cat, bat, or vulture (treat as an eagle) as a standard action. This ability is similar to a *polymorph self* spell cast by a 12th level sorcerer, except that the azeman can assume only one of the forms listed here. It can remain in that form until it assumes another or for twenty-four hours, whichever comes first.

**Fast Healing (Ex):** An azeman heals 3 points of damage each round so long as it has at least 1 hit point. If reduced to 0 hit points or lower, an azeman automatically assumes *gaseous form* and attempts to escape. It must reach its burial site within 2 hours or be utterly destroyed. (It can travel up to 18 miles in two hours). Once at rest at its burial site, it rises to 1 hit point after 1 hour, then resumes healing at the rate of 3 hit points per round.

**Saves:** Same as the base creature.

**Abilities:** Increase from the base creature as follows: Str +4, Dex +4, Int +2, Wis +4, Cha +4. As undead creatures, azeman have no Constitution score.

**Skills:** Azeman receive a +8 racial bonus to Bluff, Hide, Listen, Move Silently, Search, Sense Motive, and Spot checks. Otherwise same as the base creature.

**Feats:** Azeman gain Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, and Lighting Reflexes. Assuming the base creature meets the prerequisites and doesn't already have the feats.

**Climate/Terrain:** Warm deserts, hills, and mountains

**Organization:** Solitary, pair, or pack (2–5)

**Challenge Rating:** Same as base creature +2

**Treasure:** Double goods (gems only), double items (no metal items)

**Alignment:** Always neutral evil

**Advancement:** By character class

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

## Azeman Weaknesses

### Repelling an Azeman

Azeman recoil from a strongly presented holy symbol and cannot cross a line of seeds of any type.

### Slaying an Azeman

Simply reducing an azeman's hit points to 0 or below incapacitates but doesn't destroy it. Unlike most vampires, azeman are not negatively affected by sunlight. An azeman may only be slain by driving a shaft of solid beryl through the creature's heart. However, it returns to life if the shaft is removed, unless the body is destroyed by cutting off the creature's head and hands, cutting them up, and feeding every last bit of gristle and chip of bone to vultures on top of a mesa.

## Azeman Characters

Azeman are always neutral evil, which causes character of certain classes to lose their class abilities, as noted in Chapter 3: Classes in the *Player's Handbook*. In addition, certain classes suffer additional penalties.

**Clerics:** Clerics lose their ability to turn undead but gain the ability to rebuke undead. This ability does not affect the azeman's controller or any other azeman than the master controls. Azeman clerics have access to the Animal, Death, Evil, and Trickery domains.

**Sorcerers and Wizards:** These characters retain their class abilities, but if a character has a familiar (other than a cat or bat), the link between them is broken, and the familiar shuns its former companion. The character can summon another familiar, but it must be a cat or bat.

## Sample Azeman

This example uses a 3rd-level human ranger as the base creature.

### Azeman

#### Medium-Size Undead

**Hit Dice:** 3d12 (19 hp)

**Initiative:** +8 (+4 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

**Speed:** 30 ft.

**AC:** 20 (+4 Dex, +6 natural)

**Attacks:** Bite +7 melee; 2 stone age hand axes +3/+3 melee; stone age shortbow +3 ranged

**Damage:** Bite 1d8+4; stone age hand axes 1d6+2/1d6; stone age shortbow 1d6-2

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

**Special Attacks:** Domination, blood drain, children of the true night, create spawn

**Special Qualities:** Undead, damage reduction 15/+1, cold and electricity resistance 20, dust cloud form, spider climb, alternate form, fast healing 3, azeman weaknesses

**Saves:** Fort +3, Ref +7, Will +4

**Abilities:** Str 18, Dex 19, Con -, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 12

**Skills:** Bluff +8, Hide +16, Listen +8, Move Silently +16, Search +8, Sense Motive +8, Spot +20, Wilderness Lore +7

**Feats:** Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Track

### Combat

**Undead:** Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning and disease. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

The Will save against this azeman's charm has a DC of 12.

**Favored Enemy:** Humanoids (humans)

**Challenge Rating:** 5



# HIVE SKELETON

## AN UNDEAD HORROR WITH SOME SURPRISING GUESTS

by Dustin "Grigg Deadbreaker" Rathbun

dustinrathbun@hotmail.com

### Skeleton, Hive

<b>Climate/Terrain</b>	Any
<b>Frequency</b>	Very Rare
<b>Organization</b>	Pairs or Small Bands
<b>Activity Cycle</b>	Any
<b>Diet</b>	None
<b>Intelligence</b>	Non- (0)
<b>Treasure</b>	Nil
<b>Alignment</b>	Neutral
<b>No. Appearing</b>	2-8
<b>Armor Class</b>	7
<b>Movement</b>	12
<b>Hit Dice</b>	2+1
<b>THACO</b>	18
<b>No. Of Attacks</b>	1
<b>Damage/Attack</b>	1d4
<b>Special Attack</b>	Swarm
<b>Special Defenses</b>	See Below
<b>Magic Resistance</b>	Nil
<b>Size</b>	M (6')
<b>Morale</b>	Fearless (20)
<b>XP Value</b>	650

Hive skeletons are humanoid skeletons with an insect hive or nest placed within the ribcage. The skeleton is continually covered with a mass of bees or hornets crawling over its dirty, age-yellowed bones. Often, hive skeletons are garbed in a large cloak. The hood is always pulled up in order to obscure the features of the ghastly face in shadows.

Hive skeletons do not speak with the living, but are always surrounded by the droning buzz of the insects that use it for a home.

### Combat

A hive skeleton attacks with its jagged finger bones, clawing once per round for 1d4 damage. However, the insects that lair within a hive skeleton will attack anyone coming within a twenty-five foot radius of their nest. Creatures caught within the swarm will take 1d4 + their Armor Class in damage. Creatures with naturally thick hides (AC 7 or better,) and those who take the

precaution of sealing any openings in their armor, will not be harmed by the swarm. The swarm can also be kept at bay by an *insect* or *vermin ward*, which will also keep the skeleton at bay so long as the queen remains within the hive. A *protection from evil* spell will keep the skeleton at bay, but the insect swarm will remain unaffected.

Unless precautions are taken to prevent the damaging stings of the swarm, such as those listed above, spellcasting within the swarm is not possible.

Hive skeletons take only half damage from slashing and piercing weapons, but take full damage from bludgeoning weapons. As undead, they are immune to *sleep*, *charm*, and *hold* spells. They are unaffected by death magic and poison. Some spells, such as *cloudkill*, can destroy the swarm, but the skeleton will be unaffected.

### Habitat / Society

Hive skeletons were created by an unnamed necromancer by combining a variant of the *summon swarm* spell with the *animate dead* spell. In order for the enchantments to take place, a fully intact hive and queen must be placed within the ribcage of the skeleton to be animated. The bones are then coated with honey and the spells are cast. The secret of creating hive skeletons has spread rapidly, and the formula has become easily accessible in the books of necromancers.

### Ecology

As an undead creature, the hive skeleton contributes nothing to the ecology around it. The swarm that makes the skeleton its home however, continues to act as any other representative of its species, albeit much more aggressively. Some hive skeletons have been found with honeycombs inside them. The honey that is produced by the insects of a hive skeleton is useful for creating *potions of undead control*, or when properly prepared, can become a very sweet tasting poison (Treat as type O, Ingested).

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

## Variants

Some adventurers have reported seeing different versions of hive skeletons housing spiders, centipedes, and even locusts. None of these variants have been kept intact, and if indeed they do exist, the spells for creating them have not yet come to light.



# UNDER THE HANDS OF HAGS

BEING A BESTIARY OF CREATURES INHABITING THE DOMAIN OF  
TEPEST, COMPILED FROM THE NOTES OF DR. ILLUVIOUS SHARP

by Wes Schneider  
Dendread@home.com

*The best way to study a creature is  
through its stuffed corpse.*

—Dr. Illuvious Sharp

## Introduction



As my frequent readers well know, this land we inhabit is filled with all manner of strange and deadly creatures. From the man hunting plants of Valachan to the snowy felines that stalk across the spine of the Sleeping Beast, a great number of beings, sentient and non-, seem to exist merely to hunt civilized man and terrorize the dreams of children. In my long years as an observer and hunter of the creatures that inhabit our world, I had hoped that I had cataloged all of the most deadly beings in existence. Unfortunately, I have recently found my hopes to be disquietingly incorrect.

During my recent travels into the lands of Keening and Tepest, I searched to find what, if any, evidence I could about the creatures that fill the folklore of the region. Though my excursions into Keening were disappointingly short, due to the insistence of my native guide Jacob Winthrop, I found no evidence of any malicious screaming specters. As such, I must disregard all talk of “Banshees,” as the locals call the supposed creatures, as nothing more than the product of overactive imaginations after hearing the wind cascading through the broken environs surrounding Mt. Lament. But even though the tales surrounding Keening

seem to be false, I now have proof that many of the beasts that lurk in the tales of the Tepestani are startlingly real.

Though I found little to confirm or disregard the tales of the “Fey Folk,” which the natives insist inhabit the lands, I was able to document and even capture several other beasts that threaten the Tepestani population. One such being we came into contact with was a Green Hag by the name of Jezbella, and, after performing a task I refuse to go into detail about, were able to interview her about some of the more mystical creatures of the lands. Though some of these creatures are of a nature alien to my understanding, my guide Jacob and the hag Jezbella have aided me in documenting the biology and lore surrounding these creatures. Following are our notes and studies on several of the supposedly mythical beasts that lurk in the forests of one of our land’s most untamed wildernesses.

## Wolf, Ravenous

### Medium-Size Beast

**Hit Dice:** 2d10 (12 hp)

**Initiative:** +2 (Dex)

**Speed:** 40 ft.

**AC:** 13 (+2 Dex, +1 natural)

**Attacks:** Bite +1 melee

**Damage:** Bite 1d8+1

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./ 5 ft.

**Special Qualities:** deaf, pack senses, cowardly low-light vision 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft.

**Saves:** Fort +3, Ref +0, Will +3

**Abilities:** Str 10, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 3, Wis 2, Cha 5

**Skills:** Spot +6

**Feats:** Alertness



# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

**Climate/Terrain:** Any Mountainous  
**Organization:** Pack (6–24)  
**Challenge Rating:** ½  
**Treasure:** None  
**Alignment:** Neutral  
**Advancement Range:** 3–5 HD (Medium-sized), 6–8 HD (Large)

A ravenous wolf is a particularly brutal and voracious hunter inhabiting the lands of northern Tepest and southern Keening. These creatures appear very much like normal wolves, except for their smaller, seemingly starved, appearance, wild tufts of uneven fur, and crazed yellow eyes. Despite their sickly façade, ravenous wolves dart swiftly towards prey, showing no mercy in battle.

## Combat

Ravenous wolves attack anything moving that comes into sight. When something approaches, the pack attacks en masse, single-mindedly hunting until the quarry is dead, ignoring all other distractions, even that of other potential prey.

**Deaf:** All ravenous wolves are completely deaf. Relying on their heightened senses and those of the others in the pack, they are still able to stay dangerously aware of the areas surrounding them. This deafness gives all ravenous wolves immunity to all sonic abilities and spells that base their effect on sound.

**Pack Senses (Ex):** Ravenous wolves are forced to be completely visual creatures. As they cannot see in all directions at once they rely on the other members of the pack. Each ravenous wolf surveys its surroundings every few moments; in this way they can track the movements of their group and watch for nearing prey. If one ravenous wolf spots a potential quarry it will dart towards it. Moments later, this motion will alert the rest of the pack and the entire group will follow. Ravenous wolf packs are accustomed to working as a whole in this manner, as such the rest of the groups response to a single member's movement is very swift, allowing the pack to move as a whole mass instead of a line of hunters.

**Cowardly:** For the most part ravenous wolves are cowards. If a single member ever loses more than 75% of its total hit points, the entire pack will break off from their prey. The wounded member will withdraw from all further combat, but the rest of the pack will circle for 1d6 rounds, then charge for another assault. If these hit and run assaults fail more than four times, or if 25% of the pack is killed, the remaining group members will flee.

## Pretty Pinchers

**Tiny Construct**  
**Hit Dice:** 1/2d10 (5 hp)  
**Initiative:** +3 (Dex)  
**Speed:** Fly 30 ft. (Poor)  
**AC:** 13 (+3 Dex)  
**Attacks:** Slam +0 melee  
**Damage:** Slam 1d3  
**Face/Reach:** 2 1/2 ft. by 2 1/2 ft./ 0 ft.  
**Special Attacks:** word theft/ disease bite  
**Special Qualities:** fear shapes, darkvision 60 ft., immune to mind-affecting spells, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, and necromantic effects.  
**Saves:** Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +2  
**Abilities:** Str 6, Dex 17, Con –, Int 5, Wis 6, Cha 8

---

**Climate/Terrain:** Any  
**Organization:** Group (2–8)  
**Challenge Rating:** ½  
**Treasure:** None  
**Alignment:** Chaotic Evil  
**Advancement Range:** 2–3 HD (Small), 4–5 HD (Medium-sized)

Pretty Pinchers are small, expendable servants created by evil spellcasters and hags. These constructs appear as empty, bloodless human hands with stolen bat wings sown on to the back, from the knuckles to the wrist. A slit across the palm is filled with either a human eye or a collection of rotted, mismatched teeth, completing this nightmare creature. Despite their haphazard appearance, pretty pinchers are capable of flight, their wings being their only form of conveyance.

## Combat

Pretty pinchers commonly shy from battle, preferring psychological harassment. When order into battle by their makers, these small constructs attack in a flurry of pounding fists and slashing nails, using their special abilities to further terrify and hinder their opponents.

**Word Theft (Su):** 75% of pretty pinchers created are of the “eye” variety. These constructs have a human eye placed within their palm and serve as both messengers and scouts. All “eye” pretty pinchers have the word theft ability to help them in their missions. Using this ability, pretty pinchers may steal a phrase off the lips of any speaker in sight as it is spoken, and release it elsewhere later. A speaker, though unaware of the attempt to steal his words, does receive a Will save (DC 20), to avoid the recording effects. As the speech is stolen, the speaker hears himself normally, not aware that anything is wrong, though no one else hears him. No more than thirty seconds of speech can be recorded, but this is often enough for an “eye” pincher to record a

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

message from its mistress or catch a snippet of information from an intruder.

This ability becomes truly dangerous when used against spell casters. “Eye” pinchers may steal spells as they are cast and repeat them back to their full effect at any point afterwards, recasting them as if they were the original caster. Magic-users with the Silent Spell feat are immune to this attack.

A particularly nasty trick used by the creators of “eye” pinchers is to record a brief warning message into one of their servants, followed by a swift attack spell, to be released later to intruders.

**Disease Bite (Ex):** 25% of pretty pinchers are of the “fang” variety. Where many of their brethren have eyes implanted within their palms, “fang” pinchers have rows of decayed teeth from a variety of sources bound into them, creating a crude, jagged grimace. “Fang” pinchers are created to serve as small assassins and guardians. Instead of attacking with slaps and punches like other pretty pinchers, those of the “fang” variety use their decaying teeth in a rotten bite attack. The bite itself does only 1d4 damage, but victims must make a fortitude save or contract a disease of the DM’s choice.

**Fear Shapes (Ex):** One feature that sets pretty pinchers leagues apart from other golems and constructs is their warped intelligence. Something in the creation of pretty pinchers bestows them with what can only be called a dangerously dark sense of humor. As such, pretty pinchers will often perform a variety of peculiar actions, from joining together in mid-air to create hand puppets mocking their maker or intruders, to arranging local refuse into sadistically suggestive forms. Piles of bones, misplaced skulls, even nearby vegetation become the tools of pretty pinchers without pressing orders. Flying from place to place, cooperating with one another, the pinchers will create truly fearful and grotesque shapes. From six-foot tall piles of skulls, stick figures hung from ivy nooses, bones arranged in shapes suggestive of intruders, the pinchers add a fearful décor to the places they inhabit. Those who are not prepared for these fear shapes begin to suffer from apprehension, leading to true horror. Those who witness a fear shape must make a Will save (DC 15) or suffer the effects of fear, suffering a –2 morale penalty to saving throws. Each fear shape seen after the first raises the DC of the Will save by 1. Therefore, if three fear shapes are seen the will save must be made vs. DC 17. The effects of a fear shape last for two hours. Once the effects of a previous fear shape have worn off, a will save vs. a new shape is made at the original DC of 15.

## Cauldron Spawn

### Small Undead

**Hit Dice:** 2d12 (12 hp)

**Initiative:** +1 (Dex)

**Speed:** Fly 40 ft. (Perfect)

**AC:** 11 (+1 Dex)

**Attacks:** Bite +1 melee

**Damage:** Bite 1d4+1

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./ 5 ft.

**Special Attacks:** Maddening Bite

**Special Qualities:** Incorporeal, Acrid Scent,

Darkvision (60’), +1 or better to hit, Immune to poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, or necromantic effects.

**Saves:** Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +3

**Abilities:** Str 10, Dex 13, Con —, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 10

**Skills:** Hide +2

**Feats:** Dodge

---

**Climate/Terrain:** Any

**Organization:** Solitary (1)

**Challenge Rating:** 2

**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** Chaotic Neutral

**Advancement Range:** 3–6 HD (Medium-sized), 7–10 HD (Large)

Cauldron spawn are the undead amalgamation of dozens, even hundreds, of souls that have been used in the meals and experiments of hags. These tiny wraiths appear as little more than slight wisps of ebon smoke in miniature humanoid form, two slits of stark, dead white forming eyes at its supposed “head”. Cauldron spawn move through the air, flying or hovering at any level they wish, moving at swift and deadly speeds.

## Combat

Cauldron spawn attack any sentient being they encounter, but not out of hatred like most undead, but at a need to deliver their ultimately fatal bite. Swift ambushes make up the majority of the cauldron spawn’s tactics, allowing them to rush from cover, make a single attack, and flee, leaving only madness and their stinging smell in their wake.

**Maddening Bite (Su):** Unknown amounts of poor lost souls are combined to create a cauldron born. Each one of them undoubtedly had their own hopes, loves, and ambitions for the future, none of which probably consisted of meeting their end sinking into a briny black vat of iron, surrounded by hell-spawned demon women. When a cauldron spawn is formed all of these dashed hopes and feelings of loss, despair, and hatred remain, fused into one chaotic being. Each mind that makes up the cauldron spawn wants these emotions

## BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

released, hoping that they did not die needlessly, hoping their hopes will live on by bestowing them to another. Through their maddening bite (1d4+1 damage), a cauldron spawn pass on the memories built up within all of its sprits in a wisp of black smoke. Unfortunately thousands of conflicting emotions and hundreds of brutal ends being forced onto a person at once is often too much for a sane mind to bear. Anyone bitten by a cauldron spawn must make a Will save (DC 20). Those who save are able to repress, contain, or force away many of the cauldron spawn's thoughts. Those who fail their save find themselves overcome by a flood of a thousand memories that breaks past their mental defenses, washing away all sanity. Only the most extreme psychological aid, *remove curse* spell, or *heal* spell, will allow one afflicted with a cauldron spawn's memories to deal with the fragment of these minds bestowed upon them.

**Acrid Scent:** Due to the years spent surrounded by the potions and brews of hags, the cauldron spawn retains the acrid sent of poison and death. Any who come within twenty feet of a cauldron spawn or passes through an area they have been in within the last day, can easily discern their overpowering smell. This acrid smell makes the cauldron spawn relatively easy to track (DC 15 for those without the Track feat, DC 10 to those with it).



# WEREGLUTTON

## A LYCANTHROPE WHOSE FURY KNOWS NO BOUNDS

by Michael Massey

shadowangel@prodigy.com

**Author's Note:** "Glutton" is one of the many nicknames for the animal known as the wolverine. It is called a "glutton" because it will eat berries, bird eggs, and any animal that it can kill.

### Lycanthrope, Wereglutton

<b>Climate/Terrain</b>	Any Subarctic
<b>Frequency</b>	Very Rare
<b>Organization</b>	Pack
<b>Activity Cycle</b>	Night
<b>Diet</b>	Carnivore
<b>Intelligence</b>	High (12–14)
<b>Treasure</b>	A
<b>Alignment</b>	Chaotic Evil
<b>No. Appearing</b>	1–6
<b>Armor Class</b>	5
<b>Movement</b>	12
<b>Hit Dice</b>	5+5
<b>THAC0</b>	14 (12)
<b>No. Attacks</b>	3 (5)
<b>Damage/Attack</b>	2–5/2–5/2–8
<b>Special Attacks</b>	Berserk, see below
<b>Special Defenses</b>	+1 or granite weapons to hit
<b>Magic Resistance</b>	Nil
<b>Size</b>	M
<b>Morale</b>	Special
<b>XP Value</b>	950



erewolverines, or weregluttons as they are known, are humans who can change themselves into wolverines. In their human form, their most distinguishing traits are excessive body hair, short tempers, and an almost feral air about them.

Their hybrid form is a hideous, slaving monstrosity standing over six feet tall. Their broad, hulking body is covered in thick, short, coarse, brown fur with two lighter stripes of fur running down their sides. It has long hooked claws on both hands and feet, a mouth full of sharp needle-like teeth, and eyes that seem to glow with an utter hatred of everything they encounter.

Their animal aspect is slightly more powerfully built than a giant wolverine, but is otherwise indistinguishable from one.

In either hybrid or animal form, a wereglutton has wide paws designed for running across snow and ice, allowing it to move at its normal movement rate with no penalties for terrain.

### Combat

Weregluttons are ruthless fighters when pressed (and even when not pressed), attacking with two claw attacks followed by a savage bite. Once every four rounds there is a chance that the wereglutton will enter a berserk frenzy. A save vs. death magic should be rolled, with failure indicating that the wereglutton has gone berserk and usually will not stop until it or its opponent is dead. While berserk, the wereglutton becomes even more dangerous. The wereglutton's THAC0 improves by +2, it gains an extra two attacks (its hind claws), and it inflicts double damage on all attacks. Furthermore, a natural 20 on an attack roll while in this state indicates the wereglutton has bitten its opponent's neck; if the opponent fails to save vs. death magic, the wereglutton rips his opponent's throat open. The victim of this attack will fall to the ground unconscious and begin choking on his own blood in 1d6 rounds (losing 1d4 hit point per round). Witnessing this happen is grounds for a horror check. Also, while berserk, a wereglutton will fight to the death, refusing to retreat; it will collapse only when brought to –10 hit points.

Due to their lycanthropic nature, weregluttons are immune to normal weapons; only weapons of +1 or better enchantment or those made of granite will hurt them. Sages are unsure as to the connection, but speculate that the link may have to do with granite's incredible durability. Interestingly enough, powdered granite also has a baneful effect on weregluttons. If thrown in a wereglutton's face, the powder blinds the creature for 1d8 rounds (the lycanthrope can save vs. breath weapon to halve this duration). Should a

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

wereglutton inhale the dust, it must save vs. breath weapon or begin choking on the dust, suffering 1d4 points of damage for 1d4 rounds. If the granite dust is hurled at a wereglutton while berserk, it must save vs. death magic or cease berserking. Thus far, this is the only known way to snap a wereglutton out of its frenzy.

For every point of damage a wereglutton inflicts upon its opponent, there is a 2% chance (4% in Ravenloft) that the victim will become infected with lycanthropy. Sages are unsure of the reason for this strain being easier to contract than all others, but it is at present being researched.

## Habitat / Society

Normal wolverines are typically solitary creatures. Weregluttons, on the other hand, travel in small packs. If encountered the weregluttons will usually be the ones to initiate the fight. Female weregluttons give birth to 1–3 young who resemble baby wolverines until they are three years of age, when they develop the ability to adopt a human form. Weregluttons grow to maturity by age six. They usually live to be only forty years old.

## Ecology

Weregluttons are possibly among the deadliest of the lycanthropes, attacking without provocation to destroy and consume nearly everything in sight. They will decimate entire forests and mountains of wildlife only to move on to better hunting grounds once they have exhausted the area of animal life. Although they can eat any meat, they prefer humans above all other animals. Weregluttons have been known to enter and decimate remote human settlements strictly for “better hunting grounds” once other prey (such as caribou and deer) have migrated elsewhere for food.



# PATCHWORK FOLK

## A CREATURE STITCHED WITH BITTER THREADS

by Andrew Wyaff

wyaff@kargafane.com

### Patchwork Folk

**Medium-Size Construct**

**Hit Dice:** 2d10 (11 hp)

**Initiative:** +1 (Dex)

**Speed:** 30 ft.

**AC:** 11 (+1 Dex)

**Attacks:** Short sword +3 melee; light crossbow +2 ranged

**Damage:** Short sword 1d6+2; light crossbow 1d8

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft.

**Special Qualities:** Construct, repairs, fire vulnerability, darkvision 60 ft.

**Saves:** Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +0

**Abilities:** Str 15, Dex 12, Con —, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 11

**Skills:** Bluff +3, Craft (tailoring) +3, Disguise +3, Hide +5, Listen +5, Move Silently +5, Spot +5

**Feats:** Alertness

**Climate/Terrain:** Any land and underground

**Organization:** Solitary, pair, or gang (3–6)

**Challenge Rating:** 1

**Treasure:** Standard

**Alignment:** Usually chaotic evil

**Advancement Range:** By character class

Patchwork folk are strange, reclusive creatures made of little more than cloth, thread, and stuffing. They lurk on the fringes of society, violently acting out on their bitter envy of humankind.

Patchwork folk might be mistaken for normal humans in poor lighting or at an appreciable distance. They are designed to resemble humans, certainly, but the similarities are superficial. Patchwork folk's "skin" is made of a crazy-quilt pattern of cloth scraps, stitched together into something approaching a human form. More fortunate patchwork folk are constructed exclusively of materials with colors that are close to human skin tones. Most, however, have more than a few patches with bright colors or distinctly unnatural patterns, such as stripes, paisleys, or plaids.

Instead of hair, patchwork folk sport mops of yarn, usually some inconspicuous "natural" hair color such as

black, brown, pale yellow, or dark red. The creature's eyes are glass, but appear astonishingly lifelike. Patchwork folk are typically stuffed with dried leaves to give them shape. Nonetheless, their "skin" is surprisingly firm, with well-defined features and responding to pressure much like human flesh. Patchwork folk wear clothing that is appropriate for the local human population, though they favor garments that conceal their unnatural appearance.

Patchwork folk speak local human languages in a normal voice, though they have some difficulty with sounds that require teeth (such as "f's" and hard "th's"). They do not require food or water to survive. They are nomadic and restless by nature, living alone or in small groups. Patchwork folk hate all other creatures and races, but reserve a special kind of obsession for humankind. Their feelings towards humans alternate erratically between infatuation and envious rage.

### Combat

Patchwork folk are surprisingly athletic, exhibiting impressive strength and agility in combat. Nonetheless, they are cautious and cowardly by nature, preferring to flee unless they have a distinct advantage. They will not even defend the temporary lairs they make, since their possessions (usually a sewing kit and a handful of treasure) are light enough to be carried with them at all times.

**Construct:** Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, disease, and similar effects. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

**Repairs (Ex):** Like most constructs, patchwork folk cannot heal on their own. They can be repaired, however, by a character with the Craft (tailoring) skill. Patchwork folk can even repair themselves with this skill. The total cost of the raw materials used in a patchwork folk is only 1 gp, so any repairs cost a mere 2 sp. Once repairs are completed, the patchwork folk is restored to full hit points. See pg. 66 of the *Player's Handbook* for more details on repairing items using the

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

Craft skill. A patchwork folk is considered a typical item with a DC of 10.

**Fire Vulnerability (Ex):** A patchwork folk takes double damage from fire attacks unless the attack allows a save, in which case it takes double damage on a failure and no damage on a success.

## Patchwork Folk Society

Patchwork folk are a paradox, simultaneously insular and curious. They want more than anything to be human; unfortunately, they deal with this impossible desire by lashing out violently at any convenient human target. Ironically, they experience emotions on an epic scale, perhaps more intensely than humans. Depressed patchwork folk are inconsolable, while enraged patchwork folk are positively volcanic. Love is a particularly problematic emotion for them. A patchwork folk that becomes infatuated with a human will pursue the imagined love interest beyond all reasonable bounds. Usually, the patchwork folk ends up murdering its beloved in a fit of rage, only to slink off into weeks of dazed depression, confused about what precisely went wrong.

The first patchwork folk was created by human hands over a century ago. Likely some variety of unique golem born of obsession, this creature eventually learned that it could stitch together progeny in much the same fashion that its creator had done. Over time, this being's progeny spread across the Land of Mists. Every patchwork folk understands intuitively how to create more of its kind. Typically, however, after a single, disillusioning attempt at creating a companion, a patchwork folk never makes another of its kind again. Thus, these creatures "reproduce" but once, if at all. The secret of how another intelligent creature might make a patchwork folk died with the race's human progenitor.

Patchwork folk only have the loosest racial cohesion. They have no culture to speak of, only a shared tendency towards hatefulness and neurotic behavior. When they travel in one another's company, it is more for the sake of convenience than for any real need to be with their own kind. Indeed, many patchwork folk hate the sight of one another, as it serves as a constant reminder of their inhumanity.

## Patchwork Folk Characters

A patchwork folk's favored class is rogue, though many are also fighters. Few spellcasting patchwork folk exist, though there are a few sorcerers among their kind.

✖

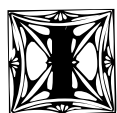
# ELEMENTAL CORRUPTION

## EIGHT NEW HORRORS FROM THE INNER PLANES

by Mark "Morfavius" Graydon

Morfavius@cnx.net

### Introduction



In the Misty confines of the Demiplane of Dread, the dark powers work to warp the effects of spells cast within their purview. Whether they grant these spells, or just work to change them, is a topic for another day. But spells are altered. One school of magic that runs the risk of being changed is conjuration: spells that summon those mystical creatures known as elementals. Such creatures may become twisted mockeries of their normal form, which undoubtedly drives the original alien mind of the creature into an alien madness. But what of the other elemental creatures that are summoned into the Demiplane? For a while, it was thought that only those creatures that embodied an element could be summoned. But wizards, rarely content with what they already know, have breached the boundaries of magic and created spells to summon other natives of the Elemental Planes to the mortal realms. The dark powers watch these with interest, and twist such summonings as they have for the other spells, creating some interesting creatures in the process.

Whenever any creature from the Inner Planes is summoned into Ravenloft, there is a 20% chance that the summoned creature is corrupted by the dark powers and becomes a Ravenloft variant of the common creature. Such creatures are automatically freed from any control the summoner may have had over them, and must roll a madness check. (Madness checks for creatures are all saves vs. paralyzation.) Any summoned creature also automatically realizes that it will not be able to return home, and will react according to its nature.

Of all the magic used to conjure Inner Planar creatures, by far the spells of *aerial servant* (from the *PLAYER'S HANDBOOK*) and *conjure elemental-kin* (from *PLAYER'S OPTION: Spells & Magic*) are the most commonly used. Note however, that enterprising wizards can (and have) created numerous spells to summon nearly any sort of extraplanar creature to the Prime Material Plane, regardless of the danger to

themselves and others. Note, that any of the other forms of elementals (Greater, Lesser, or Miniature) undergo the same changes as their normal cousins, as detailed in the *RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM Appendix I*.

Below are the corrupted versions of the more commonly summoned Inner Planar denizens.

### Mist Sylph

<b>Climate/Terrain:</b>	Any Ravenloft / Foggy areas
<b>Frequency:</b>	Very Rare
<b>Organization:</b>	Solitary
<b>Activity Cycle:</b>	Any
<b>Diet:</b>	Carnivore
<b>Intelligence:</b>	Exceptional (15–16)
<b>Treasure:</b>	Nil
<b>Alignment:</b>	Neutral (evil)
<b>No. Appearing:</b>	1
<b>Armor Class:</b>	8
<b>Movement:</b>	9, Fly 24 (A)
<b>Hit Dice:</b>	3
<b>THAC0:</b>	17
<b>No. of Attacks:</b>	1
<b>Damage/Attack:</b>	By weapon
<b>Special Attacks:</b>	Spells
<b>Special Defenses:</b>	Spells
<b>Magic Resistance:</b>	50%
<b>Size:</b>	M (4'–5' tall)
<b>Morale:</b>	Elite (14)
<b>XP Value:</b>	1,400

The mist sylph is a sylph that is summoned to Ravenloft and corrupted by the dark powers. It appears to be a fairy-like being, though it is nearly as large as a human. Its wavy hair is composed of cloying mist, and such vapors trail around the creature at all times. Otherwise, mist sylphs have elven features, but with a cruel twist, and wings of dragonflies. However, their wings do not seem to catch the light and glitter like the insects' do; instead they seem muted and dull, and whenever the mist sylph moves them a harsh staccato sound reverberates in the area. (Unlike normal sylphs, mist sylphs must use their wings to fly; they have no innate *levitation* power.)



# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

When a mist sylph is first summoned, it must make a saving throw vs. paralysis or go mad.

If forced into combat, the mist sylph has no natural attacks. Her body is much too frail, and she has no skill wielding weapons (if forced to fight with a weapon she has a -5 penalty to hit). However, the mist sylph has potent spellcasting abilities, and it is for this reason that she will often try to fight from a distance, allowing her spells to take full effect while removing her from the danger of the fight.

The mist sylph has a number of spell-like abilities she can cast once per day (unless otherwise noted). She casts all the following spells at 7th level: *feather fall* (twice per day), *wall of fog* (three times per day), *dust devil*, *fog cloud*, *ride the wind*, *stinking cloud*, *whispering wind*, *gust of wind* (twice per day), *wind wall*, *solid fog* (twice per day), and *cloud of putrefaction*.

Also, all mist sylphs have the ability to assume *mist form*, in which they cannot be harmed. Such a form can be maintained for up to three hours. They can, once per month, summon a mist elemental. However, they have no control over this creature, so they would most likely only do this under duress, since the mist sylph would very likely become the object of the elemental's anger.

Mist sylphs do not have the ability to infuse evil as their elemental counterparts do, but they seem to take delight in corrupting mortals into evil actions. Their favorite tactic is to find a sleeping victim and use their *whispering wind* power to send evil thoughts and words to the sleeping person's ears. This has the effect of inducing nightmares in the poor sleeper, causing the victim to suffer as if he had experienced a vivid nightmare (as explained in *The Nightmare Lands*). In short, the victim must make a System Shock roll with a -25% penalty or suffer a -1 penalty to all die rolls for the next 24 hours. Note, that the mist sylph's power encompasses a two-foot radius, so if multiple people are sleeping within this area they are all subject to the effects. Those of evil alignment are unaffected by this power and those who are neutral only suffer a -15% penalty to their System Shock rolls.

The mist sylph is a hateful and spiteful creature. Its transformation has robbed it of its natural *levitation* ability, making it work much harder to stay aloft. Sylphs naturally have distaste for the ground, and thus the fact that they must return to it so often to rest their wings irks them to no end.

Mist sylphs still build nests, but they have a predisposition for those areas that gather fog and mist, such as forest glens. Many have found the Mistlands, in the domain of Necropolis, to be to their liking. They avoid the Misty Border however, due to its dangerous nature, and the lack of building materials for a nest. They will always build their homes as high as possible

to allow them to still stay in the concealing fog. Mist sylph reproduction is identical to that of the normal sylph, except that they dare not summon an elemental to guard their egg for fear of its destruction.

Mist sylphs live for up to 1,000 years, but they grow increasingly haggard and ugly as their time of death approaches.

## Mist Servant

<b>Climate/Terrain:</b>	Any Ravenloft / Foggy areas
<b>Frequency:</b>	Very Rare
<b>Organization:</b>	Solitary
<b>Activity Cycle:</b>	Any
<b>Diet:</b>	Wind
<b>Intelligence:</b>	Semi- (2-4)
<b>Treasure:</b>	Nil
<b>Alignment:</b>	Neutral Evil
<hr/>	
<b>No. Appearing:</b>	1
<b>Armor Class:</b>	3
<b>Movement:</b>	Fly 18 (A)
<b>Hit Dice:</b>	16
<b>THAC0:</b>	5
<b>No. of Attacks:</b>	1
<b>Damage/Attack:</b>	7d4
<b>Special Attacks:</b>	Strangulation, Infuse Evil
<b>Special Defenses:</b>	+1 or better weapon to hit
<b>Magic Resistance:</b>	Nil
<b>Size:</b>	L (8' tall)
<b>Morale:</b>	Elite (14)
<b>XP Value:</b>	13,000

The mist servant is summoned by powerful clerics, and just like the air elementals it is related to, it stands the risk of being corrupted when summoned. The mist servant changes very little when it is so changed however. The creature goes from being naturally invisible as an aerial servant to becoming just barely able to be seen (Intelligence checks are required to spot the creature). It appears as a legless humanoid composed of mist, with a face devoid of all emotion. When first summoned, a mist servant must make a saving throw vs. paralysis or immediately go mad.

When commanded to fight (or drawn into one) the mist servant attacks suddenly, and without warning. Its natural near-invisibility and speed cause its enemies to suffer a -4 penalty to their surprise rolls. The creature attacks by slashing with its hands and attempting a stranglehold (it has a Strength score of 23). If it successfully strikes then it grabs hold and causes normal damage to the victim each round until the victim dies or breaks free. To break free a victim must either have greater Hit Dice than the mist servant or exceptional Strength. If the latter is the case, then the victim receives a chance equal to his percentile Strength to break free. Those with Strength 18/00 or higher, or with more HD than the Servant can break away instantly.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

The mist servant also has the mist elemental's ability to infuse evil, though it is more limited than the elemental's. The mist servant must first successfully grab hold of the victim. Then, the next round it flows into the victim's orifices, and the victim is wracked with pain as the servant battles with the spirit of the host. In game terms, the victim of this attack can do nothing for the round but attempt a save vs. death magic. Those who succeed can expel the mist servant (which usually causes it to flee) and suffer no further effects. Those who fail, however, have their alignments converted to Chaotic Evil for the time that the servant holds control over them. Once the mist servant is in place, only a *dispel evil* or *banishment* spell will remove it.

The mist servant is extremely resentful of any cleric who summons it to the Demiplane. It immediately breaks free of its control and will attack the priest who summoned it if he is not protected by a *protection from evil* spell. If the priest is protected, then the mist servant will likely track the priest, waiting for a chance to strike.

Mist servants who are caught in violent storms have a 5% chance of being blown in two, creating two mist servants, both with half the strength of the original. Also, normal aerial servants feed upon the wind of the Elemental Plane of Air. However, no such breezes occur in the Demiplane, and after thirty days they begin to take 1d8 damage per day. Usually around this time the mist servant goes quite insane and on a killing rampage.

## Crypt Gnome

<b>Climate/Terrain:</b>	Any Ravenloft / Graveyards
<b>Frequency:</b>	Rare
<b>Organization:</b>	Clan
<b>Activity Cycle:</b>	Night
<b>Diet:</b>	Carnivore
<b>Intelligence:</b>	Average to Exceptional (8–16)
<b>Treasure:</b>	Z
<b>Alignment:</b>	Neutral Evil
<b>No. Appearing:</b>	1
<b>Armor Class:</b>	4
<b>Movement:</b>	9, Burrow 9
<b>Hit Dice:</b>	4
<b>THAC0:</b>	16
<b>No. of Attacks:</b>	3
<b>Damage/Attack:</b>	1d3+3, 1d3+3, 1d3+3
<b>Special Attacks:</b>	Spells
<b>Special Defenses:</b>	Immune to Petrification
<b>Magic Resistance:</b>	25%
<b>Size:</b>	S (4' tall)
<b>Morale:</b>	Average (10)
<b>XP Value:</b>	1,400

Crypt gnomes are corrupted forms of the pech. They appear as small humanoids with bone-white skin

and eyes lacking any pupils. Their hair is matted and dirty, and smudges of dirt cover their small bodies. Most noticeable however, are the small claws that sprout from each finger, and when they open their mouths, small rows of tiny needle-sharp teeth can be seen.

When the pech are summoned and corrupted, they must make saving throw vs. paralysis or go mad. Most fail and go insane, taking relish in their new lives.

Crypt gnomes have a Strength score of 18/50. This gives them a +1 bonus to hit and a +3 bonus to damage; these bonuses have already been factored into their scores above. Most crypt gnomes avoid fighting, but if their lair is entered (this includes the ground above their lair) and the force entering is not overtly large, then the creatures will most likely attack. They do so by slashing with their small claws and biting with their teeth.

Crypt gnomes also have a number of spell abilities at their disposal. Each crypt gnome can cast *stone shape* four times per day, and a special version of *stone tell* four times per day. This specialized version can only be used on gravestones, and when employed, the stone will tell the crypt gnome all the details about the corpse buried beneath it, including the current state of the body, depth, burial raiment, and any valuables left with the body. Four crypt gnomes together can prepare a stone wall to become a living wall, as detailed in the *Monstrous Manual*. Eight crypt gnomes together can cast *flesh to stone* once per day.

When fighting any sort of creature composed of stone, the crypt gnomes can strike without needing a magical weapon, and always cause maximum damage.

Crypt gnomes band together under cemeteries in tunnels that they dig. They have infravision to 120 feet, and usually claim an area of about 50 yards' diameter. Anything that isn't a very large force is attacked, as the crypt gnomes have a very potent ability to detect vibrations on the surface. The one exception to this is daylight. The crypt gnomes will go out under overcast skies, but will never venture forth under daylight, and if their enemy has artificial light, they will always consider ways to douse it.

Crypt gnomes live to loot. Their entire society is based upon who in the clan can gain the most valuables, and they have found the best way to gain these, is to use their powers to loot them from the dead. However, once the cemetery is totally emptied of valuables, they will move on to nearby towns and the like, terrorizing the locals with their theft and appearance.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

## Graveling

<b>Climate/Terrain:</b>	Any Ravenloft / Graveyards
<b>Frequency:</b>	Rare
<b>Organization:</b>	Solitary
<b>Activity Cycle:</b>	Always
<b>Diet:</b>	Herbivore/Scavenger
<b>Intelligence:</b>	Animal (1)
<b>Treasure:</b>	Nil
<b>Alignment:</b>	Neutral
<hr/>	
<b>No. Appearing:</b>	1
<b>Armor Class:</b>	4
<b>Movement:</b>	12, Burrow 6
<b>Hit Dice:</b>	4
<b>THAC0:</b>	17
<b>No. of Attacks:</b>	1
<b>Damage/Attack:</b>	2d8
<b>Special Attacks:</b>	Fear
<b>Special Defenses:</b>	Nil
<b>Magic Resistance:</b>	Nil
<b>Size:</b>	L (10' diameter)
<b>Morale:</b>	Average (8-10)
<b>XP Value:</b>	650

Gravelings are the corrupted forms of sandlings. These creatures resemble their natural forms very closely, except that instead of being constructed of sand they are made of wet dirt, worms, and crumbled headstones, as well as the occasional bone or piece of coffin.

When a sandling is corrupted into a Graveling, it must make a saving throw vs. paralysis or go mad.

Gravelings attack in much the same way as sandlings; they wait until prey walks across them, then lunge upwards around the victim, sealing him in a globe of grave dirt. The graveling can only capture up to two man-sized creatures in this globe (or 1 size L creature, 4 size S creatures, or 8 size T creatures). Victims of this attack have a -2 penalty to their surprise rolls and if successfully grabbed cannot successfully fight while trapped. However, they can try to break free by making a successful Open Doors roll (vs. locked door); one attempt can be made each round. Those outside can assist those inside; in this case the victim need only make a successful Open Doors roll vs. a stuck door. Those trapped inside suffer 2d4 damage each round due to abrasions and digestive acids. If the victim's friends outside attack the graveling while it has someone trapped within, the graveling takes normal damage, but the victim inside also suffers half the damage of the attack.

While the graveling has any victim trapped, it can still lash out each round with a pseudopod to attack those around it, causing the listed damage. Also, it enacts its Fear power against those who are trapped within the creature. Those inside are subjected to a mental torrent of fearful images that are only enhanced by the poor victim's surroundings (this power can only

be used against those who are trapped within the beast). The victim of this fear effect must make a fear check. If the check is successful the victim can act this round. Otherwise the victim is stuck with fear and must immediately roll the results of a fear check. If the check is passed then the victim is not out of danger however. Each round another fear check must be made, with a cumulative -1 penalty. The torrent of fear will erode even the most determined minds given enough time.

A graveling has a different composition to it than a sandling, so it requires fifteen gallons of water to cause the creature to act as though under a *slow* spell. Note, that if the graveling is attacked with a heat source (such as a *fireball*) after being slowed like this, then the water will evaporate enough that the creature will be free to act normally. Otherwise, the creature remains *slowed* for an hour. Also, when *slowed* the graveling still causes normal damage, due to its composition.

The graveling is also sufficiently mutated from its original form that it can and does feed upon organic matter. Most often this is just bacteria, plants, and the small creatures commonly found in graveyards (insects, worms, rodents). However, although gravelings will not specifically hunt humanoids, they will feed upon one if it is killed or a carcass is found.

Gravelings reproduce exactly like their sandling counterparts, by budding when they reach full maturity.

## Heat Stalker

<b>Climate/Terrain:</b>	Any Ravenloft / Extremely hot areas
<b>Frequency:</b>	Rare
<b>Organization:</b>	Solitary
<b>Activity Cycle:</b>	Any
<b>Diet:</b>	Carnivore
<b>Intelligence:</b>	Very (11-12)
<b>Treasure:</b>	Nil
<b>Alignment:</b>	Chaotic Evil
<hr/>	
<b>No. Appearing:</b>	1
<b>Armor Class:</b>	5
<b>Movement:</b>	9
<b>Hit Dice:</b>	7+7
<b>THAC0:</b>	13
<b>No. of Attacks:</b>	2
<b>Damage/Attack:</b>	1d4, 2d6
<b>Special Attacks:</b>	Drain heat, fire
<b>Special Defenses:</b>	+1 or better to hit
<b>Magic Resistance:</b>	Nil
<b>Size:</b>	M (7' long)
<b>Morale:</b>	Elite (14)
<b>XP Value:</b>	4,000

The Heat Stalker is the corrupted form of the salamander, a creature from the Elemental Plane of Fire. Their new, skeletal forms resemble blackened humanoid torsos with the lower bodies of snakes. They have horns sprouting from their heads, and their entire bodies are wreathed in a sheath of orange-green flame.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

When Heat Stalkers are summoned, they must make an immediate save vs. paralyzation or go mad.

Heat stalkers attack in a vicious and almost desperate manner. They strike twice with their sharpened finger bones, and then try to constrict with their snake-like tails. Victims suffer 1d4 points of damage from the claw attacks, and 2d6 from the tail. Each successful attack also inflicts an extra 1d6 points of damage from the flames that surround the creature. If the heat stalker successfully hits with its tail, then it holds the victim fast, and to break free the victim must make a successful Open Doors roll vs. a locked door. However, there is only a 10% chance that a heat stalker pins a victim's arms, so the victim can usually still attack the creature, with a +1 bonus due to proximity. Of course, while constricted the victim automatically suffers 3d6 damage per round from the flames and constriction. Whether or not the heat stalker chooses to attack with its claws (inflicting another 1d4 and 1d6 points of damage upon a successful hit with a +2 bonus) or whether the creature chooses to attack another person is up to the DM.

These corrupted elementals also have a draining ability. Three times per day, they can unleash a wave of heat that inflicts 1d6 points of damage against themselves. This heat wave also causes living creatures' bodies to start to sweat, generating more body heat for the increased activity. This causes a sort of feedback that the heat stalker hopes to pick up on. All living creatures within thirty feet must save vs. breath weapon. Those that succeed avoid the powers of the creature, but those that fail lose 1d10 hp in heat loss from the draining of the heat stalker.

Heat stalkers can only be harmed by magical weapons or spells, or by creatures with at least 4+1 Hit Dice. Being skeletal, they suffer only half damage from slashing and piercing weapons. By their nature, they are immune to *sleep*, *charm*, and *hold* spells. However, it is important to note that the heat stalker is not undead, merely corrupted by the dark powers. Thus, not everything that affects the undead will necessarily work against them. Cold attacks inflict an extra 2 points of damage per die. Fire attacks do no damage, but the heat stalker feeds off of them, and will stand stunned for one round after such an attack, basking in the brief moment of ecstasy.

Heat stalkers are almost pitiful creatures. They crave the warmth that they have lost in being drawn to this realm, and in most places, the warmest things are living creatures. Thus, they hunt the living, trying to draw their warmth out of them through their draining and through basic contact (which only provides very fleeting sustenance). Some of these creatures have found their way to very hot regions, such as the Burning Peaks cluster and have survived there. There is even a story in Borca about one of these beasts invading

Lady Ivana's hot springs and causing quite a lot of distress with her ladyship until the creature was killed.

## Pyre Wym

<b>Climate/Terrain:</b>	Any Ravenloft / Fires
<b>Frequency:</b>	Rare
<b>Organization:</b>	Solitary
<b>Activity Cycle:</b>	Any
<b>Diet:</b>	Burning Flesh
<b>Intelligence:</b>	Semi- (2-4)
<b>Treasure:</b>	Nil
<b>Alignment:</b>	Neutral (evil)
<hr/>	
<b>No. Appearing:</b>	1
<b>Armor Class:</b>	7
<b>Movement:</b>	4
<b>Hit Dice:</b>	2
<b>THAC0:</b>	19
<b>No. of Attacks:</b>	1
<b>Damage/Attack:</b>	1d3
<b>Special Attacks:</b>	Paralyzation, Immolation
<b>Special Defenses:</b>	Immune to fire
<b>Magic Resistance:</b>	Nil
<b>Size:</b>	S (2'-3' long)
<b>Morale:</b>	Steady (11)
<b>XP Value:</b>	420

Pyre wyrms are the corrupted forms of the fire snake, a creature from the Elemental Plane of Fire. Their appearance has changed to match their names, they appear as disgusting blackened worms, with shiny skin and large lamprey-like mouths at one end. Even though they have no eyes, they seem to have no trouble seeking out their prey.

When brought to the Demiplane (a rare occurrence) pyre wyrms must make an immediate save vs. paralyzation or go mad.

Pyre Wyrms attack by a simple bite, but the repercussions of that attack can be devastating. First of all, they retain their paralyzation venom, forcing those bitten to save vs. poison or be paralyzed for 2d4 turns. Secondly, those bitten must save vs. breath weapon or the bitten area will begin to burn. This inflicts 1d6 points of damage the first round, and an additional 1d6 damage for each round of progression (up to a maximum of 10d6 damage per round). Also, for every d6 of damage, 10% of the victim's body is assumed to be on fire. If the victim is not paralyzed they may take actions to douse the fire, and can also make a saving throw vs. breath weapon each round to suffer only half damage (should efforts to douse the fire prove unsuccessful). However, victims who are paralyzed are allowed neither luxury and suffer normal damage. Being creatures of fire, pyre wyrms are completely immune to any flame, whether it is magical or otherwise.

To completely douse the fires (which are feeding directly off the victim's flesh) the burning area must be

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

totally immersed in water or some other nonflammable liquid. Rolling on the ground immediately erases 3d6 dice from the damage total, and every half-gallon of water poured on the victim also removes 2d6 from the damage total. Should the damage total be reduced to 0 or below, the fire is assumed to be extinguished. Otherwise, it builds up again as normal on the next and following rounds.

Pyre wyrms are one of the few elemental creatures that may come to the Demiplane naturally. Their original forms (fire snakes) are attracted to great heat and bonfires, to they are usually found in such great fires, most notably, funeral pyres or “witch burnings.” When they come into the Demiplane on their own, they are always corrupted by the dark powers.

There is a legend in Tepest that any foul wizard can call these creatures into this world whenever he wants. They often use them as a curse when they are finally being punished by being burned at the stake. However, this legend actually arose when an elven mage from the northern Mistlands journeyed down to Tepest and was captured and accused (and found unlawfully guilty) of witchcraft. When she was burned at the stake, she pronounced a curse upon the Inquisitor, saying that even as the fire burned her, it would worm and snake its tendrils to his heart and consume him as well. The dark powers heard the curse and granted it power, bringing pyre wyrms into Tepest. The creatures promptly attacked and killed the Inquisitor and several innocent bystanders before they were killed.

Pyre wyrms feed upon burning flesh. It does not matter whether the flesh is a corpse on a pyre or screaming and trying to escape.

## Bloody Mary

<b>Climate/Terrain:</b>	Any Ravenloft / Water
<b>Frequency:</b>	Very Rare
<b>Organization:</b>	Solitary
<b>Activity Cycle:</b>	Any
<b>Diet:</b>	Nil
<b>Intelligence:</b>	Very (12)
<b>Treasure:</b>	Nil
<b>Alignment:</b>	Chaotic (25% Neutral, 75% Evil)
<b>No. Appearing:</b>	1
<b>Armor Class:</b>	10
<b>Movement:</b>	12, Swim 12
<b>Hit Dice:</b>	4
<b>THAC0:</b>	17
<b>No. of Attacks:</b>	1
<b>Damage/Attack:</b>	1 (fist)
<b>Special Attacks:</b>	See below
<b>Special Defenses:</b>	See below
<b>Magic Resistance:</b>	50%
<b>Size:</b>	M (4'–5' tall)
<b>Morale:</b>	Steady (11)
<b>XP Value:</b>	4,000

The Bloody Mary is a corrupted form of the nereid from the Elemental Plane of Water. While the nereid is pleasing to look upon, the Bloody Mary is anything but. In her natural form she is seen as a cloud of red in the water, but a cloud that seems to hold itself together despite the current and move of its own accord. However, upon contact with air, the Bloody Mary assumes the shape that earned her her name. She appears as a beautiful woman with raven hair, bone-white skin, and dark hypnotic eyes. However, any semblance of beauty ends there, as onlookers can quickly see lines of red blood constantly flowing from her eyes and the corners of her mouth, trickling down her otherwise voluptuous body.

When summoned and corrupted, a Bloody Mary make an immediate save vs. paralyzation or go mad.

Unlike the nereid, the Bloody Mary can only assume one form, and that form is always the same woman. Any male human, elf, half-elf, or half-Vistani that sees the Bloody Mary in this form must immediately make a horror check from the conflict of beauty and horror, as well as a remnant of the nereid's power that tries to seduce the man. Females, of course, are not subject to this effect.

The Bloody Mary retains many of the Nereid abilities, albeit corrupted ones. She can now spit a mouthful of blood at victims three times per day. This blood burns like an acid when it hits organic matter, causing 3d4 points of damage (halved with a successful save vs. breath weapon). Also, she can control any type of blood. If the blood is in a pool or otherwise lying around, she can animate it as a snake-like creature that has 4 HD, THAC0 17, and inflicts 1d4 points damage per hit from weak acid and pummeling. However, most of the time, the only blood in the area that the Bloody Mary can control is that pumping inside her victims. All of her blood control abilities can be used at will, but only one effect can be active on a single victim at a time. She may attack as many victims as she likes, and each victim gets a saving throw vs. spell to avoid the effect. If successful, the victim is immune to that effect for 24 hours. All of the effects last for 4 rounds.

The Bloody Mary can slow the flow of blood in the body, causing the victim to act as under a *slow* spell. Or, if she chooses, she can speed up the flow, causing the victim to make a System Shock roll each round or pass out from the strain for 1d3 hours. Finally, if she is truly angered, she may inflict her most devastating attack. This takes the form of a heating of the blood, causing the victim 2d10 damage each round (half with a successful save vs. poison). For the Bloody Mary, she really can make a man's blood boil!

The Bloody Mary shares the nereid's ability to avoid all damage from an attack by flowing like liquid with a successful save vs. poison. A kiss from her can drown a man if he fails a saving throw vs. breath

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

weapon with a -2 penalty. If he survives, however, an immediate horror check with a -2 penalty is called for as blood rushes into his mouth and pure evil flows into his soul.

A Bloody Mary also has a unique defense ability, similar to the phylactery of a lich or demon. The creature keeps its life force in a ragged scarf that it wears about its neck. If the Bloody Mary is ever reduced to 0 hp, its essence retreats to the scarf. Then it immediately looks for an amount of blood equal to that inside a medium-sized human creature. (This is most likely found *inside* a living human creature!) The Bloody Mary then conducts a possession attack. This is an all or nothing action, for if the attack fails, the Bloody Mary perishes. If a victim fails a saving throw vs. spell, then its blood is usurped by the Bloody Mary, which then takes 24 hours to fully form itself. During this time the victim is struck with incredible pain and suffers 1 point of damage every two hours. Finally at the end of the 24 hours, the Bloody Mary flows back out of the victim, killing him or her utterly. An interesting side effect is that if the victim is female, then the Bloody Mary permanently assumes a likeness of that woman. If the victim has the correct spells cast upon him during the possession attempt, then he may be saved from the affliction. A *remove curse* or *banishment* spell forces the Bloody Mary back to her scarf. Other spells have no effect, except for *slow poison* (which causes the possession to begin anew in 24 hours) and *cure disease* or *neutralize poison* (both of which kill the Bloody Mary if she fails a save vs. spell).

Note that if a Bloody Mary is somehow confined to her scarf and the scarf is destroyed, then so is she. The rag has no special immunities.

The first Bloody Mary was formed when an evil wizard from Hazlan tried to summon a nereid to the Demiplane. However, he was young and inexperienced, and felt that he needed a sacrifice to appease the creature, like it was some sort of demon. The girl that he chose was a traveler from Mordent, named Mary. The nereid was summoned in Mary's blood, and arose from her body. It went to great lengths after killing its summoner to create a name for itself and its species. To this day, its destruction has never been recorded, and it may still haunt the waters of Hazlan.

## Scarlet Stream

<b>Climate/Terrain:</b>	Any Ravenloft Water
<b>Frequency:</b>	Very Rare
<b>Organization:</b>	Solitary
<b>Activity Cycle:</b>	Always
<b>Diet:</b>	Blood
<b>Intelligence:</b>	Average (8-10)
<b>Treasure:</b>	Nil
<b>Alignment:</b>	Chaotic Evil
<hr/>	
<b>No. Appearing:</b>	1
<b>Armor Class:</b>	4
<b>Movement:</b>	12
<b>Hit Dice:</b>	3+3
<b>THAC0:</b>	15
<b>No. of Attacks:</b>	1
<b>Damage/Attack:</b>	Nil
<b>Special Attacks:</b>	Blood Possession
<b>Special Defenses:</b>	See below
<b>Magic Resistance:</b>	Nil
<b>Size:</b>	L (10' long)
<b>Morale:</b>	Elite (13)
<b>XP Value:</b>	650

The scarlet stream is the corrupted form of the water weird. Of all the corrupted elemental-kin, the scarlet stream has the least change in appearance. It retains its shape and form, the only change being that the creature is now composed of blood instead of water. Still, this is enough of a change to mentally test the creature, and it must make the standard save vs. paralyzation upon being summoned or go mad.

The scarlet stream attacks by possession. It has no innate damaging attacks unless it is inside a host. Thus, the first thing the creature attempts to do is to possess a living creature's blood. It does this by rearing back and then darting forward like the snake it appears to be, aiming straight for the victim's chest. If successful, then the victim must save vs. spell. If the save succeeds, then the victim takes no damage, and the scarlet stream rears back, making an angry bubbling sound. But if the save is failed, then the blood of the stream flies over the victim exploding in droplets, coating the victim and anyone standing nearby. The spirit of the elemental-kin however, is now in the victim's heart, and it soon exerts its control over the victim by controlling his or her actions.

A victim with a scarlet stream inside him must make a System Shock roll every turn. Success means the victim can act normally for that period. Once the victim fails a roll, however, the scarlet stream takes over until it is excised by magic. While under control the victim acts woodenly, like a puppet, but can perform actions well enough to warrant no penalties. The scarlet stream cannot cast spells or use mental abilities or knowledge, and it always attacks only once per round with a THAC0 of 15. It does, however, receive any Strength bonuses, Armor Class, Movement

## BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

rate, and hit points of its victim's body. Any attacks aimed at the possessed victim inflict normal damage upon the hapless soul, but do no harm to the stream. If the victim is killed, the stream can only lay inside the body for a maximum of an hour before it must emerge.

A scarlet stream can be excised from a body through the use of a *remove curse*, *banishment*, or similar spell. *Cure* spells have no special effect upon the creature, however. If the creature is excised from a body, then its spirit seeks out the nearest amount of blood that it can inhabit that resides outside of a living body. The scarlet stream cannot cross a closed domain border, but otherwise will keep searching until it finds a suitable body (usually in a nearby fresh corpse) or until four hours have passed. If such time passes, then the creature's spirit is consumed by the Mists (and may become a mist horror).

In its normal form, a scarlet stream suffers only 1 point of damage from piercing and slashing weapons and half damage from fire (none with a successful saving throw). Any sort of cold spell acts as a *slow* spell upon the creature instead of inflicting damage. However, being composed of blood, the *purify water* spell has no effect upon a scarlet stream. If a scarlet stream touches a blood elemental, then it has a 25% chance of melding with it and taking control of the creature.



# SPITTING COBRA

## A LYCANTHROPE WITH LETHAL AIM

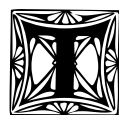
by Robert A. Combach

robagom@cc.usu.edu

**Author's Note:** The were-spitting cobra is a variant of Daniel Bandera's were-king cobra that appeared in *The Book of Secrets* netbook.

### Were-spitting Cobra

<b>Climate/Terrain</b>	Desert
<b>Frequency</b>	Very rare
<b>Organization</b>	Solitary
<b>Activity Cycle</b>	Night
<b>Diet</b>	Carnivore
<b>Intelligence</b>	High
<b>Treasure</b>	M
<b>Alignment</b>	Any evil
<b>No. Appearing</b>	1
<b>Armor Class</b>	4
<b>Movement</b>	12, Sw 12
<b>Hit Dice</b>	5
<b>THAC0</b>	15
<b>No. of Attacks</b>	1
<b>Damage/Attack</b>	1d4+1
<b>Special Attacks</b>	Poison (spit or bite)
<b>Special Defenses</b>	Hit only by +1 or better or ivory weapons, <i>feign death</i>
<b>Magic Resistance</b>	Nil
<b>Size</b>	L 8' (secondary aspect) M 7'-8' (tertiary aspect)
<b>Morale</b>	12
<b>XP Value</b>	650



his variety of wrecobra is a human that is able to transform into a spitting cobra. In its secondary aspect, the were-spitting cobra appears as an eight-foot-long slender serpent. It ranges in color from dull black to pink; with the lighter-colored snakes having a black band around their necks. Traits of albinism have also been expressed, but this is rare. The spitting cobra is so named because of its ability to spit venom into the eyes of its opponents and blind them. Like the king cobra, the spitting cobra's bite is venomous.

In their primary aspect were-spitting cobras appear as a dark-skinned human. They are of average human height and approximately 10–15 pounds lighter than average. When talking, whether in human or hybrid

form, the creatures speak with a hissing lisp. Because the were-spitting cobra lives in a hot, arid, desert climate, its clothing is loose-fitting and scant.

In its tertiary aspect, the were-spitting cobra's hybrid form, it stands approximately 7 1/2' tall. Its hairless body is covered with scales that are the same color as those in its secondary aspect. From its lower back extends a two-foot-long tail, and its tongue forks and doubles in length.

### Combat

In its human form the were-spitting cobra can use any available weapons, but prefers to use daggers and short swords. If the were-spitting cobra is attacked during daylight hours it will almost always remain human. The were-spitting cobra will only change forms if it is in danger of being killed. In its secondary and tertiary aspects the were-spitting cobra will attack by spitting its venom into the face of its opponent. The were-spitting cobra is extremely accurate at spitting venom and makes all such attack rolls with a +2 bonus. The range for such attacks is 30 feet. If a successful hit is made, then the victim must save vs. poison or be blinded for 2–12 hours. Due to the caustic nature of the venom, the victim has a percentage chance equal to the number of hours they spend in blindness to be infected with lycanthropy. The were-spitting cobra is also capable of delivering a venomous bite to opponents. If bitten by the were-spitting cobra, the victim must save vs. poison or die in 1d6+4 rounds. However, if the victim fails the save vs. poison by 4 or less on the d20 roll they do not die. Instead of death, they experience excruciating pain and discomfort over the next few days (the amount they failed the save vs. poison by determines the exact number of days) before what seems to be a complete and miraculous recovery.

Recovery, however, is not complete, nor is it miraculous, because the victim has been infected with lycanthropy. If the victim's save vs. poison is successful, the victim still receives 1d4+1 points of



# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

damage and has a 1% chance per point of damage to become a were-spitting cobra.

While a formidable opponent in combat, the were-spitting cobra prefers to rely on stealth and its treacherous nature to defeat enemies. It is capable of sneaking up on prey at a -3 to its opponents' surprise rolls.

Only magical weapons of at least +1 enchantment or those made of ivory can harm this species of werecobra. While in its secondary or tertiary aspects, the spitting cobra has the ability to *feign death* as per the 3rd level wizard spell. However, because this ability is a biological ability, a Ravenloft powers check is not required. Those who are familiar with lycanthropes may be astute enough to realize what is happening, because if a were-spitting cobra actually dies, rather than using its ability to feign death, it reverts to its human form in one round.

## Habitat / Society

In the Ravenloft setting the were-spitting cobra is native to Har' Akir and Sebuia, with some migrating to Pharazia. Were-spitting cobras are solitary creatures, preferring to dwell away from both humankind and others of their species. Were-spitting cobras are primarily nocturnal, and because of this, they often find employment as thieves, spies, or assassins. As thieves, were-spitting cobras are not limited in the level of advancement they can attain. Their evil nature also draws some to serve as priests in one of the various evil cults found in the Demiplane of Dread. Such priests can advance to 12th level in ability.

## Ecology

Because of their solitary nature, little is known about the ecology of this creature. It is possible, however, that a study of non-lycanthropic spitting cobras would reveal some insights into the ecology of the were-spitting cobras.

x3

# INFESTATION

## TWO CREEPY-CRAWLIES TO GET UNDER YOUR SKIN

by Wes Schneider  
Dendread@home.com

### INTRODUCTION



Within the Misty Borders of Ravenloft every wicked emotion and corrupt passion is cultivated to an extent seen few other places in creation. The darkest aspects of mortal existence are exposed, and unspeakable horrors are given both monstrous forms and earthly disguises. In this place, evil is constant, as subtle as air, and like vapor it saturates and warps nearly every facet of the world it permeates. This corruptive influence drives men to desperate, wicked actions and even perverts nature itself into a fearful enemy. As such, even the most insignificant beings are given the potential for depraved action and can become true afflictions upon the inhabitants of the lands.

Following are two of the smallest terrors known to inhabit the Demiplane of Dread: insects with such fearful abilities and tendencies that even brave men dread an infestation of these “natural” horrors.

### Devouring Spiders

<b>Climate/Terrain</b>	Any non-artic land
<b>Frequency</b>	Very rare
<b>Organization</b>	Solitary
<b>Activity Cycle</b>	Any
<b>Diet</b>	Carnivore
<b>Intelligence</b>	Animal (1)
<b>Treasure</b>	Nil
<b>Alignment</b>	Neutral
<b>No. Appearing</b>	1–12
<b>Armor Class</b>	4
<b>Movement</b>	10
<b>Hit Dice</b>	1 hp
<b>THAC0</b>	20
<b>No. of Attacks</b>	1
<b>Damage/Attack</b>	1
<b>Special Attacks</b>	See below
<b>Special Defenses</b>	Nil
<b>Magical Resistance</b>	Nil
<b>Size</b>	T (1” or less)
<b>Morale</b>	Unreliable (2–4)
<b>XP Value</b>	120

From time to time hunters and trappers of the Core report acres of forests, abundant with game the previous year, as being devoid of all life the following season. Also, some caravans have passed through small villages, eager to trade with the locals, only to find the town’s entire population left as tattered corpses. Many chalk these events up to rumor and exaggeration, or even the strange nature of the realms in which they live. But a more educated listener recognizes these stories as detailing the effects of an infestation of tiny fiends known as devouring spiders.

Named for both their taste for flesh and the means in which hosts contract them, these creatures are as at home in urban settings as in the densest woodlands. Though they are no larger than the nail on a man’s smallest finger they are highly visible, their exoskeletons glimmer a deep crimson, a color as red as the blood spilt in each tiny creature’s birthing. Despite their size, these creatures number among the most dreaded insects to roam the core because of their instinctual cunning, making them brutal hunters. And as all good hunters know, prey is best caught when it is at its weakest, and when is any creature weaker than when it sleeps.

### Combat

Due to their tiny size, devouring spiders are nearly helpless in combat with larger creatures that are aware of their presence. As such, most of the tactics these spiders use rely on ambush and surprise. The only advantage a devouring spider gains in combat is its paralyzing bite and the numbing touch of its steps.

Though small, the jaws of a devouring spider are coated with a potent poison; thus anyone bitten by one of these creatures will have the area ten inches around the wound go numb for 1d4 turns (no saving throw). The tips of the spider’s legs also secrete a similar but weaker poison, allowing them to walk over bare flesh without being detected.

The reason devouring spiders are so feared is because of the way in which they incubate their young.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

Using a fine silken webbing these spiders descend from overhanging branches or ceilings onto the face of their sleeping victim. Entering through the mouth or nose the parent spider crawls into the throat, a place behind a man's Adam's apple on humans, and gnaws a small hole into the tender internal flesh. Into this hole the parent lays ten to twelve eggs, then gaining a powerful grip on the surrounding skin, covers the hole with its body and dies. Due to the spider's paralyzing bite the victim never feels the insidious attack, but will wake the next morning with a sore throat and seemingly strained vocal chords.

Two days later the eggs will hatch and the young will begin feasting on the soft tissue around the throat but will avoid the skin's surface. During this time the victim will have his voice weaken to little more than a raspy gasping. After the fifth day the devouring spiders will lay in wait for the vibrations of the vocal cords to be in use, usually caused by speech or even snoring. At this point the young act as one, simultaneously opening a passage to the skin's surface and gnawing into the major veins of the neck. The result is a particularly gruesome eruption that not only sends the host to his untimely demise, but surprises anyone nearby to such a point that they rarely notice the small red spiders blending into the spray of blood they've been soaked in. From this point, each young spider clings to or finds a host and repeats the gory reproduction process.

Those infested by a clutch of devouring spiders have little hope of surviving. Only the most difficult and dangerous medical procedures may extract the infant spiders, and have just as much chance of killing the host as removing the danger. The potent clerical healing spells such as *remove disease* or *heal* are perhaps the safest way to save an infested host.

## Habitat / Society

Devouring spiders can be found anywhere there is an abundance of warm-blooded creatures to hunt. Only the most severe conditions deter these voracious arachnids, otherwise they prosper anywhere other breeds of spider would.

Perhaps the devouring spider's greatest weakness is its short lifespan. In general these creatures will not live for more than eight days, including the time spent inside a host (two days of incubation, four days feeding, two days hunting). Once these spiders exit a host they must find another within forty-eight hours and lay their own clutch of eggs or simply shrivel and die. This comes as both a blessing and a horror to those forced to deal with an infestation of these tiny monsters. If action is taken to end these creatures' threat, assurance of one's success or failure will be obvious in mere days. However, areas unequipped to handle such a threat are

forced to deal with a plague of deadly insects that multiplies both exponentially and frequently.

## Ecology

Devouring spiders are a scourge upon whatever land they come to inhabit. They will brutally kill all life in an area with no regard for future generations of even their own species. As such they will wipe out all creatures for literally miles around, then either die off or move on to where they continue their purely destructive existence, blood-red viruses upon the land.

## Adventure Ideas

- ❖ A brutal series of gruesome killings has the populace terrified and local investigators baffled. Several of the killings have happened behind locked doors and within seemingly unreachable rooms. Its up to the PCs to put a stop to the killer's rampage, their only clue being a single tiny red spider found at the scene of one of the crimes.
- ❖ A haggard figure staggers into town and collapses, obviously suffering from exhaustion and the hazards of days on the road. When he is revived he cannot speak, making only unintelligible gasps, and clutches his throat, obviously pained. Without aid he dies spectacularly, his neck tearing open in a rain of blood. Days later several other members of the town are afflicted with a loss of voice. It falls on the PCs to find the source of this "disease" and cure it.
- ❖ As an added terror to his already deadly menagerie of traps, a local villain has cultivated several devouring spiders. In certain places goutts of blood spray from the walls, floors, or trickle from the ceiling, seeming to pose only psychological danger, but hiding a much subtler menace.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

## Plague Moths

<b>Climate/Terrain</b>	Any non-artic land
<b>Frequency</b>	Rare
<b>Organization</b>	Solitary
<b>Activity Cycle</b>	Any
<b>Diet</b>	Herbivore
<b>Intelligence</b>	Animal (1)
<b>Treasure</b>	Nil
<b>Alignment</b>	Neutral
<hr/>	
<b>No. Appearing</b>	1–5
<b>Armor Class</b>	6
<b>Movement</b>	1, Fl 18 (B)
<b>Hit Dice</b>	1 hp
<b>THAC0</b>	20
<b>No. of Attacks</b>	Nil
<b>Damage/Attack</b>	Nil
<b>Special Attacks</b>	See below
<b>Special Defenses</b>	Nil
<b>Magic Resistance</b>	Nil
<b>Size</b>	T (1" or less)
<b>Morale</b>	Unreliable (2–4)
<b>XP Value</b>	65

Due to their colorful wings and benign, even graceful demeanor, butterflies and their nighttime counterparts, moths, are among what many find to be the only tolerable, even likeable members of the insect species. However, the mists of Ravenloft have found a way to warp even these docile creatures into life threatening dangers.

The plague moth is the name given to a breed of both moth and butterfly that has wreaked havoc on nearly every human settlement they come to infest. Members of these strains of insect have lost their natural gay colorings. Gone are the bright yellows and shimmering whites of these creature's normal wings, replaced instead by a dull tan or brown, dotted with streaks of crimson. Many examiners have compared the plague moth's coloring to that of a disease victim's handkerchief or bed linens, the fabric dulled and dirtied, flecked with the bloody symptoms of illness. Besides their abnormal wing color, the anatomy of the plague moth resembles their docile relatives perfectly . . . except for the one flaw which makes them so threatening.

## Combat

Plague moths have no real attacks, they have no sizable claws or teeth, they inject no venom, and they have no magical abilities. As such these creatures are about as dangerous in battle as a normal moth or butterfly.

## Habitat / Society

Plague moths inhabit the same lands as their normal cousins; from jungle to forest these creatures are an unusual but present threat in all but the harshest of environments.

The strange coloration of the plague moth serves it as a means of camouflage allowing it to blend with the filth and refuse of both natural and urban environments. In order to make full use of their coloration, plague moths are drawn to the beds of the diseased, the most putrid refuse, and other areas and conditions prime for their namesake threat.

Like normal members of their species, plague moths have no real society. Besides birth and mating these insects have few dealings with members of their species. In fact, while not performing these activities, plague moths will actively avoid one another so not to fall victim to the dangers their kin might possess.

## Ecology

The one thing that makes a plague moth so threatening to all other life is a simple and unique genetic flaw. Plague moths have no natural immune system and as such have a high chance of contracting disease. Commonly this would be no threat to humanoids or other animals, but plague moths seem highly susceptible not just to the illnesses of their own species, but also to those of other species. As such, the plague moth becomes a threat to all creatures as it may carry any disease, natural or magical, and easily pass it on wherever it travels.

The plague moth gains its name from its ability to spread even the simplest and easiest contained malady into a full spread plague in a matter of days. If a single plague moth is able to contract an infectious disease it will carry it with it for as long as it survives, usually only a matter of days or hours, but still long enough to land on food, clothing, and others capable of contracting the illness. A plague moth will often live on even after a victim of sickness has died and the most extreme measures are taken to eradicate the disease, allowing the infection to mysteriously reemerge elsewhere in the area.

All plague moths have a 70% chance of being carriers of a potentially contagious disease, as such all who come into physical contact with an infected moth must make a save vs. poison or contract a disease of the DM's selection. But actual contact with the carrier insect is not necessary to contract many diseases. There is a 20% chance that any who touch an area that a plague moth has landed on will have to make a save, like the one above, or become infected in the same manner. Surfaces touched by a plague moth will

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

commonly remain infected either for one day or until the area has been thoroughly cleaned.

A plague moth rarely transmits diseases that rely on blood transfusion, though it is possible, say if one ingests the carrying moth. Many magical diseases may also affect and be passed on by plague moths, such as mummy rot, all magical viruses, and even lycanthropy if the moth is somehow exposed to infected blood.

Plague moths are a curse to healers and doctors throughout the lands they infest. Caretakers of the ill find their workloads exploding with new cases, the threat of mass hysteria growing hourly, and death tolls rising. Worst of all, once the danger seems contained or eradicated, a new series of infections may mysteriously crop up in a mere matter of days. Countless deaths and the blighting of whole areas fall to the incidental passing of the seemingly harmless plague moth, perhaps the smallest of pestilence's harbingers.

## Adventure Ideas

- ❖ What is usually an easily treated and uncommon illness has exploded into a full-fledged epidemic in one part of the city. PCs become trapped within a quarantined area and must use their skills to try and aid the baffled local healers. As they help, they find that more than one household has a strange problem with an unusual strain of moth.
- ❖ A devious nobleman has decided to change his fortunes by removing many of his opponents. Several of his enemies have received packages from him, seemingly peace offerings, only to turn up dead of a strange disease days later. An observant opponent notices this pattern and hires the PCs to protect him and find out how the others have been killed. Once the PCs find one of these deadly packages they find that it holds not only a gift, but is also a transport for a single strangely colored moth.
- ❖ A villain with a deep hatred of a city that scorned him wants revenge. The PCs find several of his henchmen smuggling packages and crates of strange moths into the area. They must find the destination of these deadly insects before hundreds of them are infected with a terrible disease and set free all across the city.

# WITCH RITUAL TOOLS

## THE REGALIA OF HALA'S CHOSEN

by Timothy S. Brannan

fbrannan@usa.net

### INTRODUCTION



he witches described herein refer the witches and warlocks from *Van Richten's Monster Hunter's Compendium Volume Three*. These rules can also be used for the "sorcerer" witches described in *The Complete Wizard's Handbook*, *PLAYER'S OPTION: Spells & Magic*, or any spellcaster that specializes in witch magic described in the *Wizard's Spell Compendiums Volumes 1-4*. Unless a distinction needs to be made the generic "witch" will be used to describe any or all of the spell casters known as witches.

### Creating a Witch Spell Focus

According to the information presented in *Van Richten's Monster Hunter's Compendium Volume Three*, a witch is required to create a spell focus in order to use her magical powers. While that work describes a few possibilities, it only mentions that the focus should be durable (wood, stone, metal, crystal, glass or a combination of these items) and at least portable; i.e. not a dwelling.

Most, if not all, witches depend on tools, both mundane and magical. A spell focus can be made from the witch's assortment of Ritual Tools or Other Tools. In any case the witch can own and use as many mundane tools as she needs or can afford. Witches are expected to treat their spell focus and other ritual tools with the utmost care. These items do not provide the witch with power, but only allow them to focus the energies of their goddess and the Weave. Without her spell focus a witch cannot cast spells.

### Ritual Tools

Witches rarely accomplish their goals with magic alone. Certain tools are used in witchcraft for ritual purposes, such as to invoke Hala, banish evil influences and create magical circles. Tools are simply a way to direct

and focus energy for magical workings. They have no power except for what the witch gives them. Tools should be consecrated, or cleansed, before use, to clear them of any lingering negative energies.

### Knife

Magical knives are commonly used in witchcraft. They are never used for cutting purposes, or for any purposes outside the coven or spellwork. The knife is used in rituals to direct energy and is an instrument of power and manipulation. The blade is often dull and double-edged and the handle is black or some other dark color to absorb power. They are very fine quality and most witches will have them crafted to his or her exact specifications. Normal or magical knives, daggers or swords created for combat cannot be used.

Most witches own their own ritual blade, but it is never used for combat or for any other but ceremonial purposes. The knife will have the witch's personal symbol of power and that of the coven engraved somewhere on the handle.

Many witches become very attached to their ritual blades. Since these knives are used in many of the witch's magical rituals it begins to absorb a bit of magical energy. A witch can always locate his or her ritual knife as if it had a permanent *locate object* spell cast on it. Also, due to its magical focusing power, the blade cannot rust and makes saving throws as if it were a *+1 dagger* of fine quality.

The ritual knife is the tool of the East and is associated with the element of Air. In some traditions it is the tool of Fire.

Some witches have taken to using a specialized white knife for practical purposes. It has a sharp, usually crescent-shaped blade, and is used as a normal knife or dagger. It is also used in rituals, but it is kept separate from the ritual knife. Losing one's working blade can be an inconvenience, but is seldom worrisome.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

## Broom

The broom often is used to purify space before a spell is cast. It is related to the element of Water and is used in many water spells involving cleansing. Some witches have used brooms to ritually protect their homes by laying it across the door.

To make a magic broom, a witch should use an ash staff, birch twigs and a willow binding. Ash is protective, birch cleansing and willow sacred to the goddess Hala. The coven would use woods or elements sacred to their god a goddess.

The broom is associated with Water and is sacred to the Goddess Hala. Unlike the ritual knife, the broom can be used for mundane purposes.

## Cauldron

Nothing conjures up the stereotypical image of a witch better than a cauldron. The cauldron is a symbol of the goddess Hala and corresponds to the element of Water. It is used in rituals as a container in which magical transformations can occur and is often the focal point of a ritual. During spring rites, it can be filled with water and fresh flower petals and in winter, fires can be lighted within the cauldron to symbolize the rebirth of the Sun. It can also be filled with water and used for scrying into the future. Cauldrons often are three-legged and made of iron. They come in all sizes ranging from a few inches in diameter to several feet across.

The cauldron is the tool of the West and is associated with Water. The cauldron is feminine in nature and represents fertility and femininity. Unlike some of ritualistic items, the cauldron can be used for mundane matters as well.

A cauldron spell focus is good for a non-adventuring witch, but a mobile witch may prefer something a bit more practical.

## Censer

The censer, or incense burner, represents the element of Air. It can be a big, swinging metal contraption like those used in churches or a small wooden stick incense holder, whichever the coven requires. The use of both the stick holders and the metal ones for powdered incense is fairly common.

If a witch cannot find a suitable censer, a bowl filled with sand or salt works fine. The sand or salt absorbs the heat from the charcoal, or incense sticks or cones can be pushed into it. Many witches find that incense greatly increases their concentration and is especially useful in meditations or scrying. The censer is a tool of the element Air. To be used as a spell focus the incense in the censer needs to be lit.

## Chalice

The altar chalice symbolizes fertility and is related to the element of Water.

They are generally used to hold the ritual wine that is imbibed at the end of some rituals, but it can also be used for holding water for scrying or other ritual purposes. The chalice can be made out of any substance, from silver or brass to wood or soapstone. When not in use the chalice should be stored away for safekeeping or displayed on the witch's altar.

Some legends state that a normal human can gain magical power by drinking holy water, blood, or nearly anything from a witch chalice. These are generally rumors.

The chalice is also a symbol of water and represents the Goddess Hala, fertility and femininity. The chalice is often used as a portable cauldron.

## Pentacle

Of all the symbols and tools used in witchcraft, this is probably the most misunderstood, due to its extensive use in the dark arts. The pentacle is usually a flat piece of metal or wood inscribed with a pentagram, a five-pointed star. When making a metal pentacle, gold or brass is often preferred.

The pentacle came from ceremonial magic and has been used in ritual and magic for thousands of years. It is used to represent feminine energy and to consecrate objects such as amulets and charms. The pentacle is also a traditional symbol of protection and is one of the official symbols of many witch traditions.

The pentacle is the tool of the North and is associated with Earth. The pentacle, as used by good witches, has a single point of the star pointing up, which is not to be confused with the version commonly associated with demonic summoning rituals, which is inverted (two points up).

## Wand

The wand, an instrument of invocation, is more than familiar to most spellcasters. In the Hala tradition, the wand corresponds to the element of Air. It is sometimes used to direct energy, to scratch magical symbols in the ground or to stir the contents of a cauldron. Woods such as willow, elder, oak, hazel and apple are traditionally used for the wand, but any fairly straight piece of wood can work. Many witches carve special symbols into the wood to personalize the wand. It is not uncommon for witches to craft some truly beautiful wands from crystal with gems and stones set into them.

These wands are normally mundane with only a trace amount of a magical aura. As the witch progresses

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

in power she opt to enchant her wand in some manner. Any wand found on a witch has a 3% chance per level of the witch of being enchanted to some degree.

The ritual wand is used mostly to invoke the Goddess Hala, direct energy, and to charge other objects. It is used to draw symbols on the ground and even to stir the cauldron.

The wand is also a tool of the South and is associated with Air. In some traditions it is the tool of Fire.

A wand used for a spell focus cannot be of the magical variety. The wand must be new and unused for any other function. A witch may add magical properties to it later if she wishes.

## Other Tools

These are some of the other tools that are used by witches. For a few of these tools it is believed by some that they are a direct result of the persecution of witches over the centuries. Take the sword, for example. A sword is long, cumbersome, and very visible. In some lands, most notoriously Tepest, the whether or not a suspected witch is carrying a sword can make the difference between harassment and arrest. Some believe that dark-handled ritual knife has become common to avoid just this problem; for even peasants in Falkovnia can carry daggers. The same applies to the staff. The staff is several feet high and again, very visible. Some believe the wand is a direct result of “shrinking” the staff to a stick, something that could be found in every home in one form or another.

## Bell

The bell is used for summoning spirits and for starting vibrations. Bells can either be rung by the witch or by the spirits she summons. It is believed that spirits and fairies will ring bells when they enter a room. Bells are rung to ward of bad spirits or to signify the beginning or end of a ritual.

The bell is a feminine symbol and is often used for beckoning signs from the Goddess Hala.

## Staff

Another commonly known magical item, the staff directly relates to the wand and has the same attributes and uses. Witches use staves very frequently. Staves are generally considered to be the tools of mages and wizards.

## Stone

The stone is used in much the same way as the pentacle and relates to it in many ways. It is a tool of the North and represents the Earth. Again, the stone is another tool that is often thought to be a trade-off for many witches. Where a pentacle may be interpreted as an evil symbol, even by well-meaning adventurers, just about everyone has rocks lying around in some form or another.

## Sword

The sword directly relates to the ritual dagger and has the same attributes and uses. The sword is used by many witches in ritual and magic. Like the ritual dagger, the sword must be dull and never used for combat purposes.

### 1st Level Witch Spell (Wizard or Priest)

#### Rite of Consecrate Ritual Tool

(Invocation/Evocation)

**Sphere:** Witches\* (All or High Secret Order)

**Range:** Touch

**Components:** V, S, M

**Duration:** Permanent

**Casting Time:** 1 round

**Area of Effect:** 1 tool

**Saving Throw:** None

This spell is granted to anyone who uses witch spells. This spell is free to the witches of the Church of Hala. Other witches (sorcerers, or other kits) must gain this spell as normal. This rite prepares the witch’s tools (cauldron, broom, pentacle or wand) for rituals. Until consecrated the tool is unsuitable for magical rites. This spell only needs to be cast once per tool. The tool will radiate a faint aura of magic, but it will not be magical itself. This spell attunes the tool to the caster.

As with many witch spells, this spell may only be cast during particular times of the year. Typically these are holy or high days or during a certain phase of the moon. If the witch loses her tool she must recover it or wait till the next occurrence of the special date to consecrate another one. Until that time she may not be able to cast spells or to participate in some ceremonies.

The material components for this spell are the witch’s tool, which is not consumed, and special oil, which is.

The exact nature of the item’s consecration will vary by witch tradition. For example, witches of Hala must meditate for three days with the tool; the spell is only cast at the end of this ritual. Witches of Hala also infuse the item with their own life force, represented by a loss of 1,000 experience points.





# THE MASK OF SORROWFUL BEAUTY

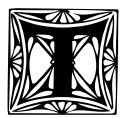
A DANGEROUS WAY TO BE ONE OF THE BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE

by Luiz Eduardo Neves Peret  
rakshasa2001@hotmail.com

*"I shall not be dark, but beautiful and  
terrible as the Morning and the Night!  
Fair as the Sea and the Sun and the  
Snow upon the Mountain! Dreadful as  
the Storm and Lightning! . . . All  
shall love me and despair!"*

—J.R.R. Tolkien  
*The Fellowship of the Ring*

## APPEARANCE



*The Mask of Sorrowful Beauty* is a five-inch white porcelain mask resembling the upper side of a human face of indeterminate gender. It covers from the forehead to the cheeks and just below the nose it curves as an inverted "U," leaving the mouth and chin uncovered. It also has holes for the eyes and nostrils, as well as a silver string on the sides to keep it in place. The whole piece is very light and comfortable to wear.

## Background

The sculptor Pierre Spandeaux was a gifted artist who lived most of his life as a recluse in a small house-and-

studio in the outskirts of St. Ronges, in Richemulot. He was good-hearted and generous, but bore a hideously scarred face, the grim result of an attack by sewer rats when he was a child. Although he survived the ordeal, his soul was also deeply scarred. His mother was also an artist, and she sketched portraits of clients in cafes and sold porcelain sculptures. His father, a cheap cutpurse, had died years before, in the act of saving Pierre from the rat attack. That was probably the noblest thing the poor wretch had ever done in his life.

Pierre's mother was a loving and responsible woman, and took great care in making young Pierre live with joy, doing as much as she could to conceal the fact that he looked repulsive due to his awful scars. When she took him with her, she always concealed his face under a porcelain mask, pretending she was taking him to an imaginary masked ball. He was delighted with that party with no end, and played along with her. She would then take him to walk through the streets and channels of the city, singing and dancing with him.

He soon developed his talent for the arts, becoming a skilled sculptor. His works started to sell in large quantities and, soon enough, he was known as one of the youngest and best sculptors of the city. His work with porcelain masks was particularly famous, and people from all places, and even from other cities, came to buy his masks for the large parties thrown in spring and autumn. Following his mother's advice, he always dealt with his clients wearing a fine porcelain mask that covered his face almost entirely. She told him that such a fine mask would be his best advertisement, and would also confer an aura of mystery around him, thus making him even more popular.

The plan worked well enough. Most of his clients thought that it was some sort of eccentricity, or a way of directing attention to the high quality of his work, rather than a true need to hide his face. He became "Monsieur Le Masque", and was a constant presence

## BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

during the warmer seasons. During the rest of the year, he gathered materials, sculpted other pieces of fine art and took care of his aging mother.

As he had started his career while still a child, his mother had forbidden him of attending the balls until he reached adulthood. She hoped he would understand his problem and find his own ways of dealing with it. However, he was so used to wearing a mask at all times that he rarely found time to look at himself in the mirror and face the sad truth. He eagerly waited for the time when he would be able to attend a ball and see for himself the product of his hard work. It seemed that he had built a happy life for himself and his mother.

Then the wheel of fortune spun in another direction. A few days after his nineteenth birthday, a girl coming from Mortigny, named Anne-Marie, caught his eye while buying an expensive porcelain mask. She smiled at him and appeared a bit more grateful than the average client. He was deeply touched by her beauty and grace, by her shining smile and deep, black eyes. She laughed at his jests and seemed impressed by his work.

At home, he told his mother about the girl. However, instead of being happy, she was alarmed. The girl no lesser than a distant cousin of the Renier family, the rulers of Richemulot. And the Reniers were more than that—or at least the local gossip said so. More than one young man was found dead in the sewers a few days after dancing with a Renier girl in a ball. She imagined that each young spoiled woman of that family would use young men as toys and later, fearful of being discovered in the arms of an “undeserving rogue,” would arrange for his subtle disappearance.

To make things even worse, the girl had not seen him without the mask, and surely knew of his fame as an “eccentric.” Pierre’s mother feared what might happen, should the girl use her family’s connections to discover his secret and, just for fun, invite him for one of the masquerades and have him take off his mask just to humiliate him in front of a hundred people. She adamantly forbade Pierre from ever seeing the girl again, although she knew the order would break his heart.

And she was right. Pierre was shocked to see his mother directly interfere with his first affair. Further, he was no fool; he was conscious of his ugliness and could not believe his own mother did not trust him. Blinded by passion, he accused her of being overprotective and exaggerated, then said she was showing the same prejudice against him from which she had allegedly protected him before, for surely Anne-Marie liked him for what he was and could do, not for his looks, and she would understand him. His mother told him of tales about what happened to young men who came too close to the Reniers, but he refused to listen to her.

Their argument grew heated, and the lad left home in a rush, seeking Anne-Marie. When he found her, his surprise was almost as big as his shame. She was not alone, instead accompanied by a snobbish young man. When he asked for her love, she laughed at him, saying she already knew his “precious secret” and that everything had just been a mistake on his part. How could he, an ugly and deformed man, believe himself worthy of her love? She told him that, although she lived in another city and had never seen his face, she knew of his deformity just like everybody else, by the gossip which had spread throughout the city, and she claimed her smiles and graceful words had been nothing more than pity. If he at least had a handsome face, she said, she might consider the slight possibility of ever being his . . . friend.

He was devastated. Going back to his study, he took the porcelain mask he had been working on to give her as a present, and decided to make it a gift for himself. Working for days without eating and barely sleeping, he created his finest piece of artwork. It was chalk-white and shining, and he gave it a sad expression. He used his own face as a model, carefully measuring the mask so it would cover his scars entirely.

After two weeks, he was starving and ragged, but his mask was perfect. So obsessed was he with creating a piece of art that would completely cover his imperfections, that the dark powers decided to help him. When he first donned the mask, it painfully fused with his skin. When he braced himself and finally could breathe again, he noticed the profound change: the mask had cleaned his face of all scars and deformities. Instead of a mask, he saw his own face, perfect and flawless for the first time. He was overjoyed. When he pulled the mask back, though, it cut his face lightly. He was worried in the beginning, but a few moments later he noticed that he could always wear the mask again and cover this new, fresh scar. Every time he pulled it away, it cut his face, but every time he wore it again all scars disappeared.

When he thought he had learned the secrets of his best work, he set up his plans. There would be a ball at the local Renier manor and he decided to attend. As the mask melded with his skin, he took another mask, this one with a simple handle so he could always take it away, and left home. His mother tried to stop him, but when he showed her his “new face”, she was so overwhelmed by his looks that could not say a word.

When he walked in the streets, carelessly waving his mask, all people turned to see him, amazed with his handsome looks. For the first time in his life, he was happy to go out and face the crowds. It didn’t matter to him that he was wearing a mask, because this time no one could see it, only his perfect face.

But at the same time, he felt there was something wrong, not with him, but with the people around him.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

He could feel a strange sensation, as if some of the people were not what they looked like. Also, as he overheard conversations in the cafés along the channels, he could perceive people lying and cheating each other. Twice he could even perceive that some people in the cheering, snobbish groups going to the ball seemed to not be human at all. For the first time in his life, he felt that the city was a lot more dangerous than he had ever thought before.

Arriving at the party, the dumbfounded doorman did not even ask for his invitation, as his exceptionally good looks fascinated him. Every woman at the ball came to him in the hopes of being asked to dance, and every man approached to offer him a drink, wanting to be seen next to the most handsome and elegant man in the manor. Suddenly, the crowd parted before the hosts as they descended the stairs. Anne-Marie was wide-eyed. She approached Pierre and they danced under everyone else's envious gaze. Finally she took him away from the hall, wanting to talk privately before any of her cousins arrived. She was entranced by his appearance, and seemed genuinely ashamed of her previous behavior.

However, something was not right. While her words seemed sincere, there was something else which Pierre could not identify, but that alarmed him all the same. Although he truly loved Anne-Marie, he felt that could not stay near her for long. After a few moments, the sensation was unbearable, and he ran away. She was confused, but as the other guests turned to see what had happened, she felt ashamed for being rejected, and hatred replaced the new feeling she had barely begun to develop towards Monsieur Le Masque. She was truly furious.

As Pierre ran down the stairs and left the manor house, Anne-Marie decided to teach him a lesson, once and for all. Following him from the shadows while he entered a nearby dark alley, she assumed her hybrid form and summoned rats from the sewers to distract him while she attacked. She intended to rake at his handsome face and make it truly hideous, so much that no mask would be able to help him.

However, the *Mask* had yet another dread surprise to the young wererat. Able to detect her presence, Pierre was not surprised and turned to face his enemy. At once the handsome face turned to a nightmarish visage, one that was unbearable to contemplate. Anne-Marie gave a loud wail of distress and panic, and fell to the floor, her face twisted in painful horror, her eyes and mouth wide open. So devastating was the effect that part of her hair turned gray as she transfigured back to her human shape. Pierre was shocked to see that his beloved was indeed a monster, and that he had been the cause of her demise. He ran into the night, still wearing the *Mask*, as guards from the manor house came in response to the scream.

The Reniers were outraged and furious by Anne-Marie's death. Jacqueline herself visited the city a few days later and sent several rats after Pierre and his mother. The poor elder woman was no match for the surprise attack, but the young man had not returned home, having disappeared into the night. Rumors now hold that Pierre has already died, for his *Mask* has been seen in other places, sometimes being sold at stores, sometimes traveling with theatrical groups. Everywhere it goes, only grief and disaster can be expected.

## Powers

The *Mask*'s first purpose was to conceal scars and other facial deformities. The dark powers warped and enhanced this power, and now the *Mask* is able to correct deformities in the body as well. It functions like a *hat of disguise*, but instead of changing the wearer's appearance, it enhances that aspect, reaching a supernatural effect equivalent to Charisma 20 for purposes of physical appearance, and giving the wearer all reaction adjustments according to this new visage (the true Charisma score is unchanged). Also, as it has been made to deceive others, its owner is, on the other hand, quite difficult to cheat. The *Mask* grants its owner the *detect lie* ability, as per the spell, at will.

## Curses

The first problem with the *Mask* is that the owner is consciously deceiving others, and slowly becomes addicted to doing so, finding it more and more difficult to leave behind. This, combined with the *Mask*'s detection power, gives the wearer a mild paranoia that eventually develops into a severe insanity. After the first week of use, and for every subsequent week the *Mask* is donned the wearer must roll a madness check with a cumulative -1 penalty. After the first failed roll, madness does not manifest immediately, but the wearer becomes more and more convinced that everyone is lying and being dishonest in one way or the other. Besides, every time a check is failed, the wearer feels more comfortable with the *Mask* and doesn't want to take it off. After the third failed madness check, the insanity finally manifests, as the wearer becomes brutal and savage towards those he or she sees as liars and cheaters, suffering an alignment change to Chaotic Evil while wearing the *Mask*.

In addition, every time the *Mask* is removed, the wearer suffers 1d4+1 points of damage, as the *Mask* adheres itself to the skin and flesh. There is a non-cumulative percentage chance equal to the amount of hit points lost that the user's Charisma score will permanently drop by one point. This painful effect only enhances the reluctance of the wearer in removing the

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT THINGS

*Mask*, as he or she will almost certainly want to wear it once again later and cover the previous scars.

The only sure way to get rid of the *Mask* is to confront the wearer with his crimes and make him willingly confess them. Also, if an *atonement* spell is cast, the wearer gains relief and may leave the *Mask* behind (still suffering the described damage). A *remove curse* spell cast on the *Mask* will free the wearer without causing damage, but the person still feels the urge to wear the *Mask* again.

Also, the *Mask* was attuned to detect and hate wererats and all rat-kin. The wearer cannot stand the presence of rats, giant rats, osquips or similar creatures, even wererats who are under human disguises, within ten feet. Continuous exposure to such creatures prompts a new madness check and consequently enhances the chances of a possible alignment change. Finally, whenever a wererat confronts the wearer in combat, the *Mask* unleashes its most horrible attack: Its features become so monstrous and revolting that the wererat must make a fear check. If the roll fails, the wererecreature is unable to move for 2d4 rounds. If the result of the d20 roll is "1," the wererat dies from pure fright. Even if the roll succeeds, the visage is often too much for a naturally coward wererat, and most will run away.

magnitude, hideous-looking, distorted apparition, scarred by the rat attack and by her own grief and suffering, as she feels completely unsuccessful in her role as a protective mother. As an additional yet essential feature, since the deadly attack she has been completely mute, due both to her wounds and to her shame. She might be an ally or foe to the heroes, and her repulsive looks and inability to talk might scare them a lot. This encounter is totally optional, depending on the DM's approach to the *Mask's* tale as part of the campaign.



## Suggested Means of Destruction

- ❖ The *Mask* is very resistant to damage, having an Armor Class of 1 and the same hit points of the mad artiste Pierre Spandeaux who created it (30 hp). Only weapons of at least +1 enchantment can harm it, and it suffers half damage from edged or piercing weapons. Magical bludgeoning weapons do normal damage to the *Mask*. It is immune to normal or magical fire but suffers normal damage from cold and electricity. If the *Mask* is attacked while being worn, the wearer shares all suffered damage. If worn after receiving damage, the *Mask* reassembles and regenerates all damage at the rate of one point per turn. After being smashed to small pieces, the shards of the *Mask* must be scattered so that no part of it will ever be usable again.
- ❖ According to a few tales, the ghost of Michelle Spandeaux, Pierre's mother, haunts the vicinity of any place where the *Mask* is worn, stalking the wearer in the hopes of destroying the accursed piece of art. This might be merely another fable created from overheard gossip and tall tales, but no one knows for sure. If this is indeed the truth, Michelle's ghost might be able to eradicate the *Mask* forever with her icy touch. That would also be the only way to put her to rest permanently, as she now blames the *Mask* for the misfortune of her family. Michelle would most probably be a low-

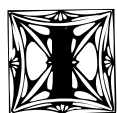
# THE VOCALIST

## VOICES AGAINST THE DARKNESS

by Wes Schneider

Dendread@home.com

### THE VOCALIST



In places where music and song runs as deep as tradition and as thick as blood, the vocalist is not just a performer for the community, but a teacher and resolute defender. In the Lands of Mist he raises his song to ward back the creatures of the night and strike a single shining note to bring some light to the overwhelming darkness.

Throughout the Core, the domain of Kartakass is renowned for its rich heritage of music and song. In each community the greatest performer is selected to instruct and lead the population as Meistersinger, an elected singing leader, until a more talented artist takes his position. It is in the hopes of attaining this coveted position that spawns the vocalist.

Trained in both the performing arts and the unique histories and stories of his people, the vocalist hones his voice to angelic quality so it might reflect the magnificence of his home and the awe and love he has for that land. Over time, practice, and through a bond that grows between the performer and his land, the vocalist gains the ability to raise the living, the created, even the dead, to new heights through the undeniable beauty and passion of his songs. The most common vocalists are bards and rogues, since their powers so closely parallel and are accentuated by the powers of performance. However, many barbarians, clerics, druids, fighters, monks, paladins, and rangers raise their weapons with their voices, creating a deadly combination of song and steel. Several sorcerers and wizards also add the music of the vocalist to their powers, weaving notes laden with untold and miraculous powers.

NPC vocalists have reasons for their chosen paths as diverse as any player. Whether they strive to aid their community by sharpening their skills to celestial perfection, or dominate it by attaining a position of power, vocalists of all walks share a passion that lends to their performances and their memorable personalities. Annually each Kartakan settlement holds

a competition to seek out the best performer to be the next Meistersinger, and during this time, just for a short while, one domain of the Core, resounds with the music of the vocalist, ancient songs of history, tradition, and even, somehow, joy.

**Hit Die:** d6

### Requirements

To qualify to become a vocalist, a character must fulfill all of the following criteria.

**Knowledge (History):** 3 ranks.

**Knowledge (Local):** 3 ranks.

**Perform (Singing):** 8 ranks.

**Feats:** Skill Focus (Perform [singing]).

**Special:** Must be of Kartakan decent. Must have at one point given a performance of extraordinary quality (see the *Player's Handbook* pg. 71)

### Class Skills

The vocalist's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Animal Empathy (Cha), Knowledge (Local) (Int), Knowledge (History) (Int), Listen (Wis), Perform (Cha), Sense Motive (Wis), Spot (Wis), and Tumble (Dex).

Class Level	Base				Special
	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	
1st	+0	+0	+2	+2	Charming Song, Far Singing
2nd	+1	+0	+3	+3	Melody of Nature
3rd	+2	+1	+3	+3	Call of the Land
4th	+3	+1	+4	+4	
5th	+3	+1	+4	+4	Ode, Dirge
6th	+4	+2	+5	+5	Danse Macabre
7th	+5	+2	+5	+5	
8th	+6	+2	+6	+6	Words of Joy
9th	+6	+3	+6	+6	True Melody
10th	+7	+3	+7	+7	Greater Charming Song

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RAVENLOFT PC RULES

## Class Features

All of the following are class features of the vocalist prestige class. All song abilities take one full-round action to complete. All saving throws against the vocalist's abilities are DC (10 + vocalist's level + vocalist's Charisma modifier).

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Vocalists know little of real combat and as such are only proficient with simple weapons. They may wear any light or medium armor, even shields, but anything heavier encumbers them so that they may not breathe freely enough to perform their songs.

**Charming Song (Sp):** The signature ability of the vocalist is her charming song. The vocalist can, once per day, per performance (at least 5 minutes), focus the theme of her songs to those particularly touching or soothing to a specific listener. If a successful Perform check is made listeners of the song are so enamored and touched by the vocalist's ability that they behave as if the spell *charm person* had been cast upon them. Listeners receive a Will save to resist. The vocalist may focus this ability on 2d6 people, 1d6 HD of animals, or 1d4 HD of monsters.

**Far Singing (Sp):** Three times per day the vocalist may sing a song that drifts across the land at a low volume, much like the spell *whispering wind*. The vocalist may sing messages but not speak through this ability. Her other song abilities cannot function through this one.

**Melody of Nature (Sp):** Twice per day the vocalist may sing, calling upon his attachment to the land and summon natural aid. This ability functions the spell *summon nature's ally I*.

**Call of the Land (Su):** Once per day the vocalist may spend three rounds tapping into the deepest parts of her attachment to the lands to summon forth mist and fog from the ground. This ability functions as the spell *obscuring mist* but the area of effect and duration is multiplied by the vocalist's level.

**Ode/Dirge (Sp):** The vocalist is not a stagnant figure; though he often functions as a teller of ancient tales, audiences crave new and innovate works. As such, the vocalist creates new songs and tales to fulfill the needs of her audience. Often, vocalists will take figures from their travels and immortalize them in epic song. How these figures are cast though can be a boon or curse upon the figure at the focus of the lyrical work. The Ode ability allows the vocalist to create a song detailing and embellishing upon the positive traits of a figure; his unbeatable strength, her angelic beauty, etc. Thus anyone who has heard the ode responds to the focus of the song as if their Charisma were three points higher for the next number of months equal to the vocalist's level. The vocalist is unable to use this ability

on himself, as it would be seen as a simple work of narcissism at its first performance.

The reverse of the ode ability is the dirge, a somber, depressing tune, focusing on the negative qualities of a character. Those who have heard the dirge and encounter its focus respond as if her Charisma were three points lower for the next number of months equal to the singer's level.

**Danse Macabre (Sp):** The darkest of the vocalist's abilities, once per day the vocalist may make a Perform check at DC 20. If this check is successful the Danse Macabre causes the remains of the dead nearby to rise and serve the singer as skeletons with Hit Dice equal to her level. The skeletons are true undead and as such are affected by turning and spells that affect undead. As animating the dead is a fundamentally corrupt action this ability does provoke a powers check. The skeletons remain and serve until destroyed or until the vocalist stops singing.

**Words of Joy (Sp):** Once per day the vocalist may focus her formidable talent into a short yet beautiful song causing a single opponent, after a failed save, to be stricken with overwhelming happiness, forcing him to do nothing more than dance for 1d4+1 rounds. This ability functions exactly like the spell *Otto's irresistible dance*.

**True Melody (Sp):** This song, one of the most difficult for the vocalist to master, is said to, if performed correctly and with the full spirit of the singer backing it, cause even non-living objects to rise and dance to its wondrous tune. Once per day the vocalist may use this ability, causing non-living items to rise and obey her, as per the spell *animate objects*, for as long as the song is sung uninterrupted.

**Greater Charming (Sp):** By this point the vocalist has so honed her charming song that it affects an even more impressive amount of creatures. The vocalist may now focus this ability on 2d8 people, 3d6+1 HD of animals, or 2d4 HD of monsters.



October 31<sup>st</sup>, 755.

# THE PHANTASMAL FOREST.



**D**avran gazed up at the clutching branches of the tortured trees as they spiraled away above him into the darkness. Trying to judge his position, his gaze fell to earth again, and as he stared at the muck oozing up around his boots, he was sure. He was as sure as he could possibly be that this was the spot where one year earlier, almost to the hour, he had watched the last life's blood pour from Barloc's punctured throat. A voice forever silenced by something beyond . . .

Davran looked up.

. . . something beyond *that wall*.

Davran stared at the pristine barrier in silence, contemplating its horrors. At long last he realized; this was not a wall. These were not stones. This was the fanged maw of the Abyss, and it was *smiling* at him.

He turned away, knowing that if he stared into that flat, blank hell for another moment he would have no choice but to hurl himself at it—at whatever lurked behind it. He took in the scene around him, seeking to calm himself. The surroundings seemed to leap whole from Davran's memories; the Knights of the Shadows were busy making their secondary camp, while the "Wolfpack"—his supposed comrades—aided as they could and kept an eye on the shadows. A few new faces, and a few faces keenly missed, were all that made the difference. It felt like so much time had passed, and yet here he stood, preparing for another night of waiting at the end of the world, as if the past year had not passed at all.

Davran let his mind flow back to that night. Übrig had spent the entire time on watch. Davran almost pitied the dwarf, for no horrors had emerged from the night that could claw their way past his watchful sword. Julian had been assigned to different watches, and had not been missed. In the end, Davran had spent most of the night patrolling with Kosia. Somehow, he unused to speaking, and she unused to being spoken to, had talked away most of the long hours. He had never asked Kosia what she had hid beneath her layers of masks. Over the course of the past year, as Davran found his mind strangely replaying the sound of her voice that night, he found that he no longer cared.

As the hours stretched on, Davran's tiring body had told him that dawn was nearing. Somewhere beyond the

endless night of the Phantasmal Forest, the sun was rising.

That was when the knights had returned. There had been a sudden commotion; Davran and Kosia had rushed to the scene in time to see Rohmer dragging his friend from the wall. Their armor was burned and chipped, and both were badly wounded. Even Davran's inexperienced eyes knew deep sword strikes when he saw them. Rohmer had suffered a long slash down the length of his shield arm, which he now cradled at his side. Barloc had been stabbed just above the collarbone. Although the blood still pulsed over his armor, everyone but the pleading Rohmer could tell with a glance that no amount of healing magic would save the valorous knight. Death had likely come for Barloc as his friend tried to drag him to safety.

Emileeza and the tattooed knight did not emerge from the wall. They never would.

The answer was obvious—the two knights would not have been able to escape the manor otherwise in *any* condition—but the question still had to be asked. Yes, Rohmer had nodded. The four keys were in place, he had assured Gondegal. Although it had come at a brutal cost, the vital deed had been done.

Eventually, after the healers had helped Rohmer recover some of his strength, it emerged that disaster had struck when the tattooed knight had forged on ahead of Emileeza. Before she could warn the headstrong man, he had opened the wrong door—and found himself facing a room filled with hovering blades that had waited an eternity for his arrival. Rohmer had described all that followed as a bloodstorm.

With the knights' task done, the entourage had marched back to Nidala. They had carried Barloc's body the entire way, to ensure that the quagmires of the Forest did not claim him, damning him to awake some future night as one of the flesh-eating Ahltrian. Barloc was now buried at the Red Wolf's camp.

And with that, the Knights of the Shadows had scattered to the winds for another year.

Another year. Davran's clothes were even more badly patched now, but his armor fit, and he carried the same battle axe in a steady, calloused hand. His face was leaner now as well, from a year of avoiding Lady Elena's merciless search parties. But the woodsmen had

## BOOK OF SECRETS: INTERLUDE

not been the worst menace. Over the past year, a rumor had flared to life among the Red Wolf's camp, claiming that Elena Faith-hold had a spy among their number. Whispers held that, under cover of night, a prisoner had been released from the dungeons beneath Elena's castle, the Faith Hold. Freed for a price, that price being the Red Wolf's head. No one had any proof, of course, but Davran knew that the rumor alone could tear through the bandits far more cruelly than any spy ever could. He also knew that some eyes were beginning to turn toward him, for this faceless "spy" had supposedly been freed not long before Davran had been found hanging in his gibbet. Davran resolved to simply ignore the stares for as long as he could. It was all he could do for now, but he sensed he would not be welcome in the western woods forever.

Perhaps the growing unease with his comrades was why Davran had welcomed the sight of the returning knights this year. A bit to his surprise, both Julian and Übrig had survived to return. Julian's beard was longer, and growing unkempt. Davran remembered Rohmer's words about the flames of hatred consuming him from within. He could see Julian being consumed, and imagined him turning entirely feral within a few years. Yet Davran could still feel those same fires flickering within himself as well.

Übrig, for his part, was barely present. He had not spoken two words in as many days. He communicated mainly in quiet grunts and nods now, as his wide eye continually scanned the encroaching gloom for his fate; for the death that he had missed.

Rohmer had also returned. Davran sensed a nervous anxiety crackling within him; he could tell that whatever had happened within *that wall* had not left Rohmer's thoughts for one moment in the entire year.

And last, Kosia was back as well. Of all of them, she seemed the least changed. She still cloaked herself in black, leaving only her glittering eyes to be seen. Those eyes were still hard, battered but unbeaten. If anything, she seemed quieter now, unsure of how to speak to Davran. Davran found himself wondering if she had anyone to talk to on all the *other* days of the year.

Once again, the great entourage had made camp at the circle of sunlight in the Phantasmal Forest, that lonesome gift from Belenus. There they had again waited for Gondegal to return with the four offerings—the four *keys*, as Rohmer had called them. From there the group had again wound its way to *that wall*—to the border of Shadowborn Manor.

Then the time had come for the choosing ceremony. Gondegal had picked Rohmer to return as the guide, perhaps so he could face his demons. Davran couldn't tell if Rohmer had been more excited or terrified by the news. Then the other three names had been chosen.

The names chosen were Übrig, Julian, and Kosia. Gondegal had given each of them a rosewood box, and taken them aside to quietly explain their use. The knights had handed over their swords and daggers, then suffered through the ceremonial salute.

Kosia had passed near Davran on her way to the wall. "Come back safe," he had said, the words sticking in his throat. She stopped, and tilted her head at him. Davran found himself unable to read her eyes.

"Thank you," she said softly, then turned away.

And then they were all gone, gone into *that wall*. All the knights he knew, knights he even . . . they had all stepped into hell, to face Ebonbane at its heart.

Davran found himself standing alone before the endless wall, feeling helpless. Feeling like a dumb boy, left behind *again*. He could feel the fires burning within him; the need to *do* something. Clutching his axe tightly, he looked back and forth at the men and women buzzing around the campsite. For the moment, no one was looking his way. Davran grinned.

This year, death would not be kept waiting.

A moment later, Davran was gone.



Davran pushed himself through the darkness. The "wall" had proven utterly intangible as he entered, but rock solid the moment he tried to take an experimental step back. Uninterested in retreat, he pressed on, blind and only able to hear the sound of grinding stones surrounding him. With each step, the grinding gained rhythm, until it at last settled into a thudding double beat. A heartbeat, slow and ponderous and maddening.

"This is where the world ends," Rohmer had said, "and where Ebonbane begins."

No sooner had the thought passed Davran's mind than he found himself spilled out into hell. He stumbled to his knees, and found himself clutching grass, luxurious and green. Davran looked up, returning to his feet, and was amazed. The white wall was at his back, and it stretched off in both directions, making wide arcs before gracefully meeting each other again hundreds of feet distant. The white ring of stone enclosed the beautifully tended grounds of an elegant estate, separating the earth from a glorious sapphire sky. The sun's light shone down, warm and loving, glimmering in the manor's tall windows.

Davran took a few soft steps forward, drinking in such beauty as he had seldom seen. On his third step, he heard something crack. Lifting his foot, Davran saw something glittering in the grass. Curious, he dropped back down to one knee, reached down, and delicately plucked up the trapped bit of light.

It was just a shard of cracked glass—blown glass, smooth and curved and thin as breath. Poking around the grass, he plucked up a few more pieces, cradling



## BOOK OF SECRETS: INTERLUDE

them in his hand. It was a ball. Davran imagined that, before he'd stepped on it, the shards of glass would have fit together to form a perfect, tiny sphere, no more than an inch or two across. Davran looked around, half expecting to spot more of the ephemeral treasures lying on the lawn, but he found none.

Suddenly a noise tore through the calm. It was Julian, and he was shouting. Before the shards in his hand had even fallen to the ground, Davran had launched into a sprint, his axe pumping in one hand.

Rounding a hedge, Davran saw the others just ahead. Julian and Kosia were screaming at each other, and throwing accusatory gestures. Rohmer and Übrig stood between them, trying to form a barrier, but ultimately looking a bit helpless. Davran slowed to a jog, realizing that he had no idea what was going on.

"I don't care!" roared Julian, pointing a shaking gauntlet at Kosia. "I tell you I *looked!* And she is *not* who—"

Julian fell silent as Davran entered his view. His eyes widened to platters. The others followed his gaze, and reacted with similar shock.

"Davran?" murmured Kosia. Übrig merely stared at Davran dully, while Rohmer's face assumed a deep cast of suspicion.

Julian thrust his mace in Davran's direction, switching the focus of his fury effortlessly. "You are *not* supposed to be here!" He turned back to the others, his face livid. "What is going *on* here? First *her*, now *him*? What *next*?"

The manor responded to this request.

As Davran cautiously merged with the group, a curtain of shimmering light began to coalesce from the fragrant spring air. At first formless and flowing, within moments the spray of light solidified into a feminine figure. Her kind face was surrounded by a halo of fair hair, which flowed off into vapor. As the spirit's features faded in and out of existence, they gazed upon the gathered warriors with a mixture of compassion and concern.

Übrig was the first to ask what all the knights were thinking. "Is that . . .?"

Rohmer immediately dropped to one knee and bowed his head. "Lady Kateri Shadowborn."

The spirit's voice was firm. "I come to warn you." Her image wavered as she spoke, losing form with every word. "There is a traitor among you."

Rohmer's head snapped up to look at Lady Kateri's gaze. Julian spun to glare at his companions. Kosia merely stiffened her posture, while Davran took a cautious step back.

Übrig merely shrugged. "I know it isn't me."

The spirit continued, her voice increasingly urgent. "One who serves three masters! Beware of—"

The spirit of Lady Kateri started to raise a pointing hand, but the moment she did so, her image contorted

painfully into monstrous and skeletal forms. An instant later, violet flame belched up from the earth at the spirit's feet, engulfing her.

Where the spirit of Lady Kateri had stood now billowed only a pillar of unnatural, hateful flame. In the heart of this pillar of fire, a sword rose up from the earth, sprouting from the cracking ground like a weed. Its long, slender blade was black as night, and covered in runes that glowed blacker still; the sword's hilt was molded from gleaming silver. The tormented figures sculpted in the sword's pommel seemed to writhe and quake in the light of the flames.

As the sword rose, the world warped to greet it. The glorious gardens died and withered to blackened weeds within moments; the elegant manor peeled and cracked, aging centuries in seconds. Even the skies obeyed the sword, as crackling storm clouds expanded from thin air to hide the sky—even as that sky twisted from perfect blue to pitch black, as a ruddy sun fled for the horizon.

"By all the gods," murmured Davran.

"That sword," shrieked Julian. "I know that sword! It's the Ebonbane! The Ebonbane is free again! We're doomed!"

"No," interjected Rohmer as he cautiously rose to his feet. "That is *not* the Ebonbane. It is just the sword that once held it. *Just a sword*, alive like any other in this realm; recreated time and time again just like the manor itself!"

The sword began to dance grotesquely in the air before them, as if daring the warriors to try to cross its path.

"How do you know?" shouted Kosia over the fury of the coming storm.

"If that was the Ebonbane," Rohmer shouted back, "We'd be dead already."

"We'll be dead soon enough if we don't spot this thing," bellowed Davran. "Demon or not, how do you kill a sword?"

The ebon blade opted not to let the warriors ponder this riddle. Its twirling dance instantly halted, and it launched itself at blinding speed towards Rohmer. Only one thing could move faster.

Übrig threw himself in the path of the murderous sword. It plunged through his chest, and together they went spinning through the air, finally landing at Davran's feet. Übrig rolled onto his back, the hilt of the sword still jutting from his chest, and lay still.

"Übrig!" Davran shouted, dropping to the dwarf's side. The others raced to join them as well. Übrig opened his one eye weakly. It was unfocused. It was dying. Übrig found Davran's gaze and burred his name, coughing up blood. With one shaking arm, Übrig pressed the tiny rosewood box he had been assigned into Davran's hands, finally letting go of the leather strap wound around his palm.

## BOOK OF SECRETS: INTERLUDE

“Take it and go,” Übrig gasped. Blood was now pooling beneath his body.

Davran clutched the box stupidly, not knowing what to do. Kosia dropped to Übrig’s other side and leaned in meet the dwarf’s fading gaze.

“Just lay still, Übrig,” she cried above the storm. “I might still be able to help you!”

At that promise, the sword buried in Übrig’s chest suddenly leapt to life again, lunging for Kosia’s fragile throat. Kosia and Davran jumped back as a pair of bloody hands clamped around the unholy blade’s hilt. With inhuman effort, Übrig plunged the bucking sword back into his chest. The sword jerked to and fro, desperate to free itself from Übrig’s dying clutches.

“Go!” shrieked the dwarf, as the struggling blade continued to saw through his breastplate. “Run!”

Davran’s mind was suddenly very clear. He sprang to his feet and all but shoved the others toward the manor. “Go! Get inside! Now!”

Without another word, Davran and the three knights bolted for the manor’s entrance. Behind them they left the fury of the raging storm, and Übrig’s dying cries of agony and triumph.



The outer doors of the entry hall slammed shut, muffling the roar of the storm and all that it contained. For the moment, a queasy sort of calm had been restored. Davran and Julian leaned against the double doors, panting. Kosia stood alone in the middle of the chamber, clutching her face in one inky hand. Rohmer cautiously cracked open an inner door and peered through it, his pick at the ready.

“Wait,” Julian grunted, before Rohmer could go any further. “We aren’t done here.”

Kosia snapped her head around at Julian, her eyes glaring. “You’re mad.”

“Oh am I?” Julian mused. He turned to Davran, sneering. “Let’s see what you think, Davran, since you took it upon yourself to join our little escapade. I mean, after all, we *were* just told by the lady of the manor herself that there’s an enemy in our midst. And we all know who Lady Kateri was starting to point at, don’t we?”

“She wasn’t pointing at *anyone*,” barked Rohmer. He took a moment to regain his composure. “Ebonbane didn’t let her. You’re grasping at straws, Julian.”

“Oh, am I?” sneered the blond knight. “Well, if *she* isn’t the spy, then maybe it’s *you*! Or maybe it’s our little *volunteer* friend here! Because I know it isn’t *me*, and I’m *quite* convinced it wasn’t Übrig.”

Davran shook his head, confused. “What are you—what *were* you shouting about? Back in the garden? Before the ghost appeared?”

“Ah, see?” Julian grinned, sweeping a pointing finger from Davran back to Kosia. “He’s smart. You might not know this, local boy, but where *Kosia* there says she’s from isn’t really all that far away from where I’m from. And so I spent a little time looking into her.”

“You don’t know what you’re talking about.”

Kosia’s voice was sneering.

“And we don’t have *time* for this,” added Rohmer.

“Oh, I think we do.” Julian turned back to Davran. “You see, I found out that there *was* a girl named Kosia who lived in Tepest. As it turns out, the locals were going to burn her as a witch.” Julian pushed off the heavy door, taking a few steps towards Kosia. “And there *was* a Knight of the Shadows who rushed to save her. But here’s the thing that bothers me, one bit of the story that everyone agrees on.” Julian leered back at Davran over his shoulder. “They agree that the knight in shining armor *was too late*. The girl burned.”

Davran straightened. “What do you mean?”

Julian patted the head of his mace against his calf. “What I mean is, this girl—this *scarecrow*—is either *not* Kosia, or it is *not* alive.” Julian turned his full attention to the ebon figure, and tightened his grip on the mace. “If we want to find the traitor, I say we start with the *monster*.”

And with that, Julian raised the mace to strike. Before Kosia or Rohmer could react, the mace arced through the air, whistling down toward Kosia’s head—but mid-swing it seemed to suddenly strike a wall, nearly knocking the weapon free of Julian’s grip. Amazed, he looked up at his trapped weapon, and saw the head of his mace interlocked with the head of Davran’s axe. Julian spun to face Davran, their faces mere inches apart.

“I think,” Davran growled, “That if you want to cut her, you’re going to carve through me first.”

Julian looked up at his mace again, puzzled. Then he remembered, and he smiled cruelly.

“I don’t need you to save me,” offered Kosia in a husky whisper. Davran turned to look at her as Julian withdrew, chuckling hopelessly.

“And he’s right,” she added. “About some of it.”

Julian laughed once, to himself. Rohmer and Davran both raised an eyebrow. “Kosia . . .” began Davran, uncertain.

“They *were* going to burn me as a witch. And the knight that saved me *did* come too late. The . . . *witnesses* didn’t stay to watch what happened after my guardian arrived. They’d *already* seen enough.” Kosia started to untie the laces running around her throat, loosening her cowl. “His spells saved my life. But there wasn’t much else they could do.”

“Kosia,” murmured Davran, his voice steady. “You don’t have to do this.”

Kosia shook her head. “Yes, I do.” She peeled back the cowl, laying her face bare. Her eyes were still azure

## BOOK OF SECRETS: INTERLUDE

gems. Her teeth gleamed like pearls. There wasn't much else left. Just a few wisps of colorless hair clinging to a head that looked as though it had been poorly shaped from molten wax.

Kosia scowled, as much as she could, keeping her eyes locked with Julian's horrified stare. "I can show you as much of this as you like. Do you still think I'm one of Ebonbane's ghouls? Or do you think I'm something worse?"

Step by step, Kosia had backed Julian into a corner, where he now stood, pale and mute. Kosia noted Rohmer trying to politely avert his eyes. These were the expressions she knew. She had seen them countless times, even on the faces of those people she had saved from hags or goblins or worse.

But then another arm—Davran's arm—reached around from behind her, gently draping itself across her collarbone.

"Kosia," she heard Davran's voice whisper, soft and serene. "Kosia, we aren't safe yet. *We need to move.*" Startled, she spun to face him. His face was a wonderment to her, devoid of pity, devoid of spite, except for one moment: the moment when Davran had momentarily glanced past her at the quaking blond knight.

Rohmer cleared his throat. Davran stepped back from Kosia. She continued to stare at him, bewildered.

"How far do we still have to go?" Davran asked.

Rohmer smiled weakly, "Through this door, we have one room, one hallway, and one staircase to go. We're almost there."

Julian insisted on bringing up the rear.



The massive iron door squealed hideously on its hinges, but it opened all the same. Rohmer, Kosia, Davran and Julian filed into the small cellar, and at last found themselves facing the end of their quest. A forge sat against the far wall, its coals still hot, bathing the chamber in guttering red light.

It was by this light that the foursome could see the crystal coffin that occupied the center of the room. Davran had never seen anything like it before, and he could see the excitement in the others' faces as well, even Rohmer's. The coffin had been carved from a single block of crystal, and every inch was covered in intricate engravings. At first Davran thought the crystal was clouded and dark—but then the inky stain twitched. With a start, Davran realized the crystal was as clear as glass—but darkness incarnate flowed just beneath its surface.

"What is this thing?" Davran asked, not taking his eyes from the coffin.

"This is the founder of our order," replied Rohmer. "This is Alexi Shadowborn."

Julian looked up suspiciously. "It's the Ebonbane." "It's both." Rohmer smiled tightly.

Kosia started to run her fingers along the coffin's length. Davran finally tore his gaze away. "I don't understand."

"You wouldn't," sneered Julian.

Rohmer frowned at the blond knight. "The Ebonbane is like nothing else. It is more than a demon, and less than a god. It is also without form. Without a physical body, there is no prison that can hold it. At first it took the body of a Grand Caliph, and in him scheming to corrupt an empire, and after that, a world. But that plan was spoiled largely by a single woman."

"Kateri Shadowborn?"

"Correct. She banished the Ebonbane back to its realm. She ruined its monstrous plans. She decimated its hideous minions. The last three servants of the Ebonbane summoned it back into the world, locking it into the 'body' of that sword you saw outside. From that day on, the Ebonbane has been dedicated wholly and utterly to the absolute spiritual destruction of *everything* Lady Kateri ever held dear. It murdered Lady Kateri, and that was just the *beginning* of its wrath. Its vengeance would have been all the more terrible had the Ebonbane not found itself trapped in this manor—this prison, spawned by the tattered will of Lady Kateri's ghost. But even so, its conquests were many. And each time the Ebonbane ruined another piece of Lady Kateri's world, it was added to the Ebonbane's collection in the Phantasmal Forest. This manor; Tergeron; even your homeland of Nidala and a dozen sites you've never even heard of are all just trophies hanging in the Ebonbane's web."

Davran hesitantly touched the coffin. The darkness swirled beneath his hand. "So what is *this* thing?"

"No *sword* could trap the Ebonbane forever," muttered Julian. "That's where Alexi Shadowborn came in. He was Lady Kateri's son, you see. He came here, to this very room, to avenge his mother. He fought the Ebonbane, and he *defeated* it."

"By freeing it from the sword, and trapping it within his own soul," concluded Kosia.

"All correct," affirmed Rohmer. "Alexi remained in this manor for the rest of his days. He founded the Circle to continue the work the paladins of his homeland had begun. And he struggled to keep the Ebonbane trapped every remaining day of his life. But he was just a mortal man, like all of us, and he knew that time was working against him. He knew that the Ebonbane would run rampant upon the moment of his death. It was about eighty years ago that Alexi determined to keep the Ebonbane trapped forever."

"Alexi had a sister, named Aurora. Thanks to that mage, Morgoroth the Black, she sleeps forever in a crystal coffin deep within Tergeron Manor." Rohmer

## BOOK OF SECRETS: INTERLUDE

now ran his own hands over the coffin's engravings. "The very coffin upon which *this* one was modeled."

"Morgoroth was persuaded to create this coffin, because he was wise enough to understand that the first thing the Ebonbane would destroy once it was freed was Aurora. And she is the one thing in all the world that Morgoroth is not willing to lose."

Rohmer placed his little rosewood box on top of the coffin, near a small hemispherical depression. Davran noticed that each side of the coffin had the same round hollow. Rohmer opened his box, revealing a tiny glowing sphere, pulsing with fiery red light. He plucked up the glowing sphere and held it delicately between his fingers.

"Only Morgoroth could have created this coffin, and thus only he can make these keys." Kosia and Julian popped open their boxes, revealing glowing spheres of navy blue and dark amber, respectively. Davran followed suit, opening his own box. The sphere glowed silver. He removed his sphere from the box as the others had done. It felt like glass. He nodded with recognition.

"The same elemental keys that destroyed the sword," continued Rohmer, "keep the coffin whole against the Ebonbane's endless onslaught."

Kosia looked across the coffin at Davran. "All we have to do is insert the elemental keys into the grooves, like this—"

Kosia did as she had described, gently placing the glowing blue glass sphere in the hemispherical hollow. There was a gentle flash of light. The sphere was gone, but its blue aura now flowed through the inscriptions on the coffin.

Davran frowned. "Wait."

"What now?" Julian grimaced. "I'd like to get this over with."

Davran examined his own glowing sphere. "The glass in that key—what just happened to it?"

Kosia shrugged. "Consumed by the magic."

Davran's frown deepened. He turned to Rohmer. "What would happen if we lost a key? If we didn't use them all?"

Now Rohmer shrugged. "The ritual would be incomplete. It would fail. No better than leaving the coffin untended altogether."

"And how long would it take Ebonbane to escape Morgoroth's coffin here if the keys weren't replenished?"

"One year," mused Rohmer. Now he began to frown. "... Maybe two, with luck."

"What's this about, Davran?" inquired Julian.

Davran looked at Julian, then at Kosia. "I ask because I found one of these orbs outside. It was empty and cracked, but it couldn't have been *used*."

He turned back to Rohmer. "You *did* complete the ritual last year, didn't you?"

All eyes turned to Rohmer. His shoulders slumped. "Julian," he sighed, reaching into the folds of his cape, "I need to demonstrate something. Hold this for me, would you?"

When Rohmer's hand reemerged a moment later, it produced a bundle of knives.

Julian exploded. "You brought *knives* into the Manor! Are you *insane*?"

Rohmer shook his head sadly. "If only it were that simple." He let go. The seven blades spun in the air for an instant before launching themselves at Julian like arrows. Whatever curse Julian was about to spew was lost as the blades imbedded themselves deeply in his flesh. Julian collapsed, gurgling. Kosia leapt across Julian's body to catch his key before it could roll off the coffin and smash on the floor.

"So," Davran hissed. "You're Elena's spy!" Almost as an afterthought, Davran quickly flicked his orb into its hollow, where it vanished in a flash. Silvery light now mingled with the blue among the coffin's grooves.

Rohmer backed away from the coffin, clutching his fiery key protectively. "Yes and no," he replied.

Kosia emerged from behind the coffin, slapping the amber orb in place. Three colors of light now danced within the crystal. "What were you thinking?" she hissed, rising from the floor holding both her own flail and Julian's mace.

Rohmer frowned. "What, my plan? It's a simple trick to make someone pick the right slip of paper from a hat. It was no more difficult having myself selected last year than it was to have all of you bickering children chosen this year. And next year . . ." Rohmer started to grin. "Well, next year won't matter, will it?"

"But *why*?" roared Davran. "Why are you doing this? Not even Elena Stranglehold would want *this*!"

Rohmer's eyes quivered. "Lady Elena doesn't know *what* she really wants. I should know; I spent enough time with her, in those dungeons, after she captured me two years ago." Rohmer's voice was choked with emotion. "It was painful at first, of course. Redemption always is, isn't it? But then, as she continued to bestow her labors upon me, I came to *understand* her. I have even come to *love* her, you see. And there is so very much that my beloved is not ready to accept—that she is not ready to know."

"You *love* her?" grimaced Davran. "You're not just mad, you're a fool. Elena Faith-hold doesn't even know the *meaning* of the word."

Rohmer nodded. "Sadly, you're right. She can't tell the difference between love and hate anymore. It's just as I told you, Davran—she has been left alone with her hatred for so very long that it has eaten her alive."

The floor started to tremble.

"But Elena taught me that *anyone* can be redeemed, even me. Even her. What Elena needs is

## BOOK OF SECRETS: INTERLUDE

really quite simple. She needs something *more* than hatred in her life. She needs something *greater* than her hatred.”

“What’s that,” mocked Davran. “Your *love*?”

The floor was buckling and cracking now, forcing Davran and Kosia to brace themselves against the coffin.

Rohmer scowled. “No. What Elena Faith-hold needs is a *nemesis*.”

With that, violet flames burst to life at Rohmer’s feet, and the slender black blade rose up from the earthen floor, still sticky with dwarven blood.

“All Elena needs to be happy is to have Ebonbane free, rampaging across her lands again. A true enemy for her to fight. All could be forgiven!” He chuckled. “My *love*. Ha! Offering Elena my *love* just would have gotten me killed. I’m not so blinded by love as to be unaware that my Elena is consumed by darkness.”

Rohmer held out his hand, and the unholy sword’s hilt rose smoothly into his grasp. The tremors ceased.

“So what else could I do but *join* her? Ebonbane has proved *most* amenable to my plans.”

Davran and Kosia both stepped forward, their weapons raised. Davran held out his hand. “Give me the last key, Rohmer. It’s not too late.”

Rohmer examined the fragile little orb in his hand. He looked up. “You’re right.” And with that he hurled the key against the wall. The glass sphere smashed against the rough stone. The light within burst in a flash of flame, and then the magic was gone.

“Oh dear,” Rohmer cooed. “I’ve lost the fire.” He twirled the sword around, bringing the blade upright. Suddenly, the black blade burst into crimson flames. “Oh dear,” he smiled. “I’ve found it again.”

Screaming a battle cry, Davran rushed the knight, Kosia hard on his heels. As Rohmer stepped forward to meet him, Davran brought down his battleaxe to cleave through Rohmer’s skull. But the black sword danced in Rohmer’s hand. In one stroke, it deflected Davran’s strike, sliced through the haft of Davran’s axe, and brought the pommel across Davran’s brow.

Dazed, Davran stumbled to the floor. Rohmer stepped across him to meet Kosia. She rushed him, both weapons swinging. Again, the sword fairly well dragged Rohmer’s hand through the air as it cleaved through both weapons in a mighty arc. Before Kosia could react, Rohmer’s threw out his free hand, his fist striking her square in the face. She staggered backwards, collapsing against the crystal coffin.

Rohmer glanced down at Davran to ensure the bandit was still out of the fight, then closed in on Kosia to finish her.

“Wait, please,” pleaded Kosia, still bracing herself against the coffin’s edge.

Rohmer paused, looking annoyed. “Let’s hear it. I already had to wait long enough for this sword to carve

its way out of Übrig; I’m not in the mood to listen to any speeches from you.”

Kosia nodded, her gaze still unfocused. “Just . . . one request. Make it a quick end. One strike, through the heart.”

Rohmer double-checked the sprawled Davran one more time, then smiled. “That wish I *can* grant,” he cooed. “I am not a cruel man by nature, after all.” He scowled as his eyes skipped over the ravaged remains over her face. “In fact, this is something that *first* Knight of the Shadows in your life should have done for you long ago.”

Kosia squeezed her eyes nearly shut as Rohmer brought the flaming blade to bear on the eclipsed sun on her breastplate. He calmly drew the sword back, and then he struck.

At the last possible moment, Kosia lunged to the side—but too late, as the razor-edged blade plunged through her side. She cried out as the black blade momentarily pinned her to the crystal coffin. The crimson flames licked at Kosia’s wound, and flared out behind her back. Rohmer laughed in triumph—but his laughter was quickly choked off.

As Kosia fell across the coffin, barely conscious, a new color was flowing through the engravings in the crystal. A fiery red now blended with the colors of earth, air, and water, swirling together into a blinding white light.

“No!” he screamed, yanking back the blade. As Kosia slumped to the floor, Rohmer saw what she had done—what *he* had done. The tip of the black sword had been struck the last round hollow. His sword’s own flames had supplied the elemental key of fire.

Rohmer shrieked in horror, and another voice—a voice utterly devoid of humanity—joined him in his mind. As Rohmer watched, paralyzed by fear, the swirling darkness within the coffin was beaten back by the blazing light, inch by inch, until it at last retreated into the coffin’s occupant. The man’s face was lined with age, his hair silver, but his frame still contained the spark of vitality. And once again, Alexi Shadowborn’s face reflected the peace of his eternal slumber.

Rohmer continued to shriek, now in rage, oblivious to the tendrils of obsidian energy worming their way up his arm from the blade of his sword. Rohmer glared down at Kosia, who struggled to return his gaze. Summoning all of her might, she grinned.

Rohmer’s rage was now beyond words, beyond thought. Screaming incoherently, he raised the sword to remove that mocking grin from her wretched face.

Then something stung him. Kosia saw him stiffen in pain. Rohmer clawed at something on his back, his face uncomprehending. Shuffling his feet, Rohmer turned to look at something behind him, and Kosia saw the blade of a battleaxe, most of its haft cleanly chopped away, jutting from between his shoulder

## BOOK OF SECRETS: INTERLUDE

blades. Rohmer dropped the unholy sword, and it shattered as it struck the ground. Finally, his strength spent, Rohmer sank to the floor. Kosia looked past Rohmer's twitching body and saw Davran slumped against the wall across the room, pressing a hand against an angry welt on his forehead.

Davran wobbled across the floor to Kosia. He pulled her to him, squeezing her tightly. She lay stiffly in his arms for a moment, but then he felt first one arm, then another slowly, fearfully crawl across his back, until she at last returned his embrace.

"I don't need you to save me," Kosia whispered.

Davran pulled halfway about of their embrace so he could see Kosia's face. "I didn't save *you*," he whispered back.

It was only then that he noticed the seared wound running through Kosia's side. As he started to panic, Kosia shook her head dismissively. "It's not as bad as it looks," she whispered. "I've had worse." She smiled weakly. "I think I'll live."

Rohmer twitched again. Davran looked at the warped body coldly. "I think he might live too."

Kosia stared at the axe blade still jutting from Rohmer's back. "You could fix that."

Davran pondered this. "No, I don't think so." He smiled grimly. "There's a better way."



Rohmer sat in a weak light cast by the ring of candles that surrounded him. He had been in this chamber before, though it was too dark to make out its details now. A collar of heavy chains bound him to that floor, leaving him unable to stand.

Davran knelt alone in the center of a wooded grove. A ring of men and women—both bandits that called the western woods their homes, and the Knights of the Shadows who called it home for only one day a year—surrounded him, murmuring to each other and watching him with expectant eyes.

A heavy door opened on well-oiled hinges. Lantern light from the hall briefly spilled over the instruments of pain in the chamber, and Rohmer started to tremble. An armored woman stepped through the door, closing it behind her. Rohmer looked up into the shadowed face of Lady Elena Faith-hold.

Gondegal stepped forward from the ring of observers, striding forward to stand before Davran. He beckoned for Davran to rise.

Elena paced back and forth at the limits of the candlelight. Her face was taut and dour. "I cannot say how sad I am to see you here again, Rohmer. I held such . . . high hopes for you. You responded so well to your reeducation. I thought you had such . . . potential."

"Let it be known this day," proclaimed Gondegal to the gathered crowd, "that another virtuous man has

petitioned to join the Circle." He nodded to Davran. "Announce your name to the assembly." He smiled.

"I know I've withheld vital details from you, my lady," pleaded Rohmer. "But I swear I thought I was doing right. Ebonbane is real, I swear it upon all that's holy. And I know how to *free* it, so that you can *destroy* it! Don't you see?" Rohmer searched Elena's eyes for mercy. All he found were the traces of tears.

Gondegal turned to the assembly and asked them if any knight would sponsor the neophyte's petition. One knight quickly stepped forward, marching forward to join Davran in the center of the gathered ring. Davran smiled as he watched his veiled sponsor approach. Kosia confirmed her pledge to the assembly. Her eyes were sparkling.

Rohmer wept, his tears thick and black. "I don't know what else to say," he sobbed. "I don't know what else I can do to make you believe me."

Gondegal presented Davran with the emblem of the eclipsed sun. Gondegal was beaming. "I now proclaim you a full Knight of the Circle."

Elena stopped pacing. She stepped closer, and held up a small mirror at Rohmer's level. "Tell me why I would believe anything said by one of *these*." Rohmer looked at his reflection with growing horror. He recoiled from his own face—from the tight gray flesh, from the maw of fangs, from the dead black eyes.

Kosia squeezed Davran's arm. "Congratulations," she said. "So, *now* what do you want to do?"

"Everything I have ever done," wept Rohmer, still pleading to his pacing lady, "I did for the love of you!" Elena froze in her tracks. As she stared at the ghoul, he shrank in terror from the expression on her face.

Davran took Kosia's hand in his own and smiled. "I think I'd like to see what *your* part of the world looks like."

Elena leaned in closely, scrutinizing Rohmer's face. "*Why?*" she spat. "Why do you *abominations* continually *torment* me with these . . . *perverse* oaths of love? Do you take some kind of sick *pleasure* in it?" Rohmer remained silent. He had nothing left to say. "Every time I listen to one of you *things*, I can feel the *filth* collecting on me! Like your very *words* infect me with plague! Enough!" Elena suddenly drew her sword. "I need to free us *both* from your perversion."

Davran and Kosia walked together out of the wooded grove, towards a waiting Vistani vardo. The ring of observers dissolved around them, applauding. Together, they ventured out into a wider world.

Rohmer looked up one last time at the angelic face of the woman he loved. "Elena, please," he pleaded. "Love is what makes us human." Rohmer saw Elena's sword arc through the island of candlelight, shimmering like a silver smile. Then the darkness flowed in.



OCTOBER 31<sup>ST</sup>, 1938.

LOS ANGELES.



[Due to continuing snafus, the Masque framing fiction is not yet ready. We hope to insert in in the book within a week. Thank you for your continued understanding. -ed.]

x

# SHADOWS OF BLUE AND GRAY


A COMPLETE ADVENTURE FOR GOTHIC GEORGIA

By Jaleigh Johnson  
jaleigh@atwood-il.com

## BIOGRAPHY

### Journal Entry

June 17, 1863

y sense of anxiety is growing as we march. It has been a long trek, and the looming threat of the enemy, lurking somewhere in front of us, unseen, has not helped to ease my mind. I have been two years in the fighting, and in all that time I have never felt such a great, compelling weight of dread settle so firmly in my belly. My companions have said it is nerves, only. They say I ought not to go looking for my own death, lest it come for me sooner than necessary. They believe that to be the source of my worry, and maybe they're right. Still, I can't help but feel that

*something waits for me just up the road, or behind the next tree. Like a dark shadow following us into each battle, waiting to make its presence known to me. Lack of sleep must be clouding my sense, to ramble so, but I find it helps. I have still not received word from Andrew since our parting of ways. Circumstances being what they are, I should not be surprised, but I would still like to know that he is well. I miss him very much at times like these.*

*Joel Ashburn*

## APPEARANCE

Joel Ashburn is a tall, lanky eighteen-year-old, with a gentle face and light blond hair. He appears much as he did at the moment of his death, dressed in the uniform of a Confederate lieutenant. A bayonet wound stains the chest of his frayed coat dark with blood. Andrew Cadwell, his best friend, is the same age and physical build, but is otherwise a sharp contrast to Joel. He wears a perpetually hawk-like, glowering expression and has sharp green eyes hidden beneath bushy black



# BOOK OF SECRETS: RUNNING GOTHIC EARTH

brows. He wears the blue uniform of a Union officer, and a fatal musket wound has been dealt to his back.

## JOEL ASHBURN

**2nd Magnitude Ghost, mutable, Chaotic Good**

<b>Armor Class</b>	1 (6*)	<b>Str</b>	N/A
<b>Movement</b>	12	<b>Dex</b>	N/A
<b>Hit Dice</b>	4	<b>Con</b>	N/A
<b>Hit Points</b>	20	<b>Int</b>	16
<b>THAC0</b>	16	<b>Wis</b>	14
<b>No. of Attacks</b>	1	<b>Cha</b>	14
<b>Morale</b>	14	<b>XP</b>	4,000
<b>Damage/Attack</b>	See below		
<b>Special Attacks</b>	See below		
<b>Special Defenses</b>	Hit only by weapons of +1 enchantment or higher		
<b>Special Vulnerabilities</b>	Unable to attack Andrew directly		
<b>Magic Resistance</b>	Nil		

\*AC vs. ethereal opponents

## ANDREW CADWELL

**2nd Magnitude Ghost, mutable, Chaotic Evil**

<b>Armor Class</b>	-1 (6*)	<b>Str</b>	N/A
<b>Movement</b>	12	<b>Dex</b>	N/A
<b>Hit Dice</b>	5	<b>Con</b>	N/A
<b>Hit Points</b>	28	<b>Int</b>	17
<b>THAC0</b>	16	<b>Wis</b>	15
<b>No. of Attacks</b>	1	<b>Cha</b>	11
<b>Morale</b>	14	<b>XP</b>	4,000
<b>Damage/Attack</b>	See Below		
<b>Special Attacks</b>	See Below		
<b>Special Defense</b>	Hit only by weapons of +1 enchantment or higher		
<b>Special Vulnerabilities</b>	See Below		
<b>Magic Resistance</b>	Nil		

\*AC vs. ethereal opponents

## BACKGROUND

Born in 1845, no more than a month apart, Joel Ashburn and Andrew Cadwell grew up together in the city of Savanna, Georgia, both sons of respected families. The Ashburns and the Cadwells lived side by side, and, as Andrew had no siblings—and Joel having only an elder sister, Lucy—the two were friends throughout their childhood. The boys cherished the companionship they found in one another, though on the surface they could not have been more different.

Joel was boisterous, kind and well mannered, even at a young age. His gentleness and contagious smile made him quite popular with the ladies as he grew

older. But above all else, Joel loved his family, his friend, Andrew, and his home in Savanna.

Andrew was known to be rash and ill tempered, and was possessed of an inescapable restlessness. He was impatient with the pace of life in Savanna, and the ways of the people who lived there. More than anything, he wanted to move on, but the bond he shared with Joel kept him in Savanna. When both boys turned sixteen, Andrew tried to convince his best friend to travel north with him. At that time, tensions between the states had built to a breaking point, and when Georgia seceded from the Union in January of 1861, the boys could no longer ignore the fact that their lives had reached a fateful turning point.

Andrew, to the shock of his family and friends, announced his intentions to join the Union Army, urging Joel to follow in his footsteps. But Joel's loyalty lay with his family and home, in Savanna. He joined the 9th Georgia regiment, under the command of Brigadier General George T. Anderson in June of 1861. Anger and betrayal burned in Andrew that even his best friend was set against him. He cursed Joel for a traitor and left to go north.

Joel's heartache at these words—and the knowledge that they could be the last ever exchanged between them—was nothing compared to Andrew's fury. It festered for two long and horror filled years as the war carried them both through one battle to the next—grew into a driving hatred as Andrew slowly rose up the ranks to become an officer in the Army of the Potomac. He began to prowl each battleground almost hungrily as the summer of 1863 drew nearer, waiting for some sign of the 9th Georgia, and his enemy.

His wish was granted on the evening of July 2nd, 1863, as confederate soldiers of the Army of Northern Virginia stormed the Wheat field at Gettysburg, on their push to take the high ground away from the Union army.

Joel's regiment was in the thick of the fight, and Joel did not see his former friend cutting a steady swath through the battle toward him. The last sight to meet Joel's living eyes was that of his closest friend's face, alight with a terrible expression of triumph and satisfaction as he plunged a bayonet deep into Joel's chest. At almost the same instant, a musket ball took Andrew in the back, and the boys died together on the same battlefield.

News of the boys' deaths reached their respective families, but neither knew the circumstances that had brought it about. To ease the pain of loss for both families, when the war ended, a stone statue was erected in the large ornamental garden that linked the houses of the two families. It depicted two young and bright-eyed boys—Andrew and Joel as children. The families remained close, long after the war, and the

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RUNNING GOTHIC EARTH

story of Joel and Andrew's friendship is still related in Savanna today by those who knew the Ashburns.

Unfortunately, Joel and Andrew's spirits did not remain at rest. Andrew, his hatred traveling beyond even death, rose as a powerful ghost soon after the war ended. But he was drawn back home to Savanna by an irresistible force. His fury ignited once more upon seeing the statue, a permanent symbol of a friendship he'd destroyed, and a physical anchor for his spirit. Despite his anger, Andrew's spirit could never venture far from the statue, or his home. Frustrated and restless, much as he had been in life, Andrew's only recourse was to lash out against those nearest at hand—Joel's family.

Perhaps because of the violent nature of his death, or, more likely, owing to his deep and abiding love for his family, Joel's spirit also rose—weaker, but much the same—to join his former friend as a ghost, and protect his family from harm at Andrew's hands.

Realizing the danger Andrew's vengeful spirit posed to his family and descendants, Joel devised a plan to imprison his former friend. He learned that he too, was bound to the land where the boys had spent their childhood, but Andrew in particular seemed unable to resist the area in and around the statue in the garden. Its presence continued to incense him. Joel also discovered that Andrew could not stand to go near anything having to do with the battlefield where he had lost his life.

Using this information, and his new powers, Joel managed to charm the family's gardener, for he would not be able to carry out his plan himself. He instructed the aging man to retrieve a number of large stones from the battleground at Gettysburg and bring them back to Georgia.

The gardener completed his task in secret, returning to the statue where Andrew's spirit restlessly lingered. He buried the stones in a narrow circle around the statue's base, and planted kudzu and other thick, obscuring plants over the spot to cover what he'd done. When Andrew realized what Joel had done, it was too late; he was trapped in the circle, unable to leave the tiny plot of land around the statue.

His family now safe—or so he thought—Joel fell dormant, content to watch his family and their descendants live out their lives without any interference. He had no idea that a curious pair of twins would unwittingly undermine all that he had done.

## COMBAT

As ghosts, Joel and Andrew are now immune to all manner of biological spells, and can become invisible and pass through solid objects at will.

Being a second magnitude ghost, Andrew rejuvenates to full hit points at will in one round, leaving him unable to perform any action for 45

minutes. He can be harmed only by magical weapons of +1 enchantment or higher. Andrew also has the ability to cause fear at a -2 penalty, and *charm person* as per the spell. Andrew has a strange and paralyzing fear of anything to do with the battlefield upon which he was killed, including everything from the weapons and objects present that day, to the very stones and earth he walked upon. Any weapons used on the battlefield that day are capable of harming him, inflicting twice their normal damage if a successful attack is made.

Although also a second magnitude ghost, Joel appears to be physically weaker than Andrew. This may be due in part to his gentle nature, which has remained a part of him even after death. He is also reluctant to use his powers unless absolutely necessary, and can never use them to attack Andrew directly. He can be harmed only by magical weapons of +1 enchantment or higher and can rejuvenate to full hit points at will in one round, but is left unable to perform any action for 45 minutes. Joel's powers include the ability to *charm person* as per the spell, and to drain memories for a period of 1d10 x 10 days. Unlike Andrew, he has no aversion to the places and things associated with his death, despite the violent circumstances under which he died.

## PERSONALITY

Joel is as caring and kind in death as he was in life, but very distant and sad. The boisterous light has left his eyes, and his only concern now is to insure the protection of his remaining family. He is single-minded in that pursuit, as it is the only reason his spirit remains. His family is his physical anchor; while they or any of his descendants remain alive, he will not rest.

Andrew retains his intense hatred of Joel, and that hatred has now extended to include all of his family. He knows that the best way to torment and punish Joel is to strike at them. Since his imprisonment, Andrew has done nothing but bide his time and wait for an opportunity to escape. He finds this opportunity in young Melissa and Samuel Hampton.

## SHADOWS OF BLUE AND GRAY



This adventure is designed for 3–4 characters, levels 4–6. The focus of the adventure is on the descendants of Joel Ashburn. The heroes will become involved in an investigation into the kidnapping of nine-year-old Melissa Hampton, daughter of Tom and Ellen Hampton. (Ellen is the eldest daughter of Lucy, Joel Ashburn's sister.)

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RUNNING GOTHIC EARTH

Along the way, the heroes will uncover the truth behind the deaths of Joel and Andrew, even as they are drawn into the conflict that still rages between the two beyond death. This time, however, the lives of Joel's descendants, Melissa and her twin brother Samuel, are at stake.

## ADVENTURE SETUP

The Hamptons enlist the aid of the heroes at the request of Ellen's mother, Lucy. Lucy, Joel's only sibling and the last surviving family member who knew him, suspects that there may be a connection between Joel and Andrew's death and the young twins, Melissa and Samuel. She has not revealed this to the Hamptons, but rather has suggested that they look elsewhere for help in finding Melissa, as the police have no leads, and the family has received no demand for any type of ransom.

The heroes may become involved by reputation—perhaps through a detective character—or through a mutual acquaintance of the Hamptons. Either way, they will be traveling to the city of Savanna, Georgia.

## THE WHOLE STORY

The Dungeon Master should refer to this section for a synopsis of the events leading up to Melissa's disappearance, and the truth behind her abduction.

Approximately three weeks before the kidnapping, Melissa and Samuel began spending more time playing in the garden behind their house. Melissa, in particular, took a keen interest in the statue of Joel and Andrew, while Samuel quickly grew bored and lost interest. She began to imagine that the statue could speak, and would whisper secrets to her and share in her imaginary games.

In reality, Andrew was speaking to the girl from his prison, remaining invisible so as not to frighten her away. Eventually, he managed to cast a charm over the child, and instructed her to unearth the stones that held him prisoner.

For nearly three weeks he forced her to dig—clearing away the weeds and flowers as she went—with painstaking care, so as not to exhaust her small body and arouse the suspicions of her parents and Joel.

Joel did find out, however, and managed to intervene before Melissa could unwittingly set Andrew free. The furious spirit materialized inside his prison, but could only watch as Joel took Melissa away to safety. Young Samuel was also witness to the kidnapping—having come running at his sister's scream—but was unable to do anything except look on in fear at the sight of the two ghosts.

Joel has kept Melissa safe and hidden away at the cemetery where he was laid to rest, in an old and little-

used caretaker's cottage. Up until the heroes' arrival, Joel will be watching and waiting for more treachery from Andrew. If the heroes prove themselves willing to protect his family, Joel will eventually seek their help.

## THE ADVENTURE BEGINS

When the heroes arrive in Savanna, they are easily directed to what the townspeople now refer to as simply the Ashburn homes. The Cadwells passed away some time after the Civil War, and now both houses belong to Ashburn descendants. The Hamptons reside in the Cadwell house, while Lucy—now a widow—lives in her parents' former home. As the heroes approach the Hampton residence, read the following aloud:

*An elegant, two-story country house rises up in front of you, flanked on either side by towering hedges that wind around towards the back of the house. A wrought iron fence and unlocked gate encase the yard.*

*Mounting the steps to the broad porch, the door swings open before you can reach it, to reveal a rather thin, sallow-faced man. He appears strained and distracted, but gestures for you to enter. "We've been expecting you," he says without preamble.*

The man introduces himself as Tom Hampton, and invites the heroes into a small sitting room situated off the front hall, closing the door behind him to insure privacy. He explains that many of the residents of Savanna have been stopping in to express their sympathy and inquire about Melissa. His wife is entertaining another such visitor at that moment. Some come out of genuine concern, others come for curiosity or gossip's sake. Therefore, he does not wish it to become public knowledge that his family has decided to bring in outside help, for fear of angering the police. He will insist that the heroes stay with them instead of finding other accommodations, but asks that they tell anyone who inquires that they are friends of the family, and not reveal that they have joined in the search for Melissa.

*"Lucy insisted upon bringing you here after the second week," Tom explains wearily. "Not that I'm ungrateful for your help, of course not. My mother-in-law, you see. Wonderful woman—none finer, in fact—but she has strange ideas . . . doesn't think like most people."*

The muffled opening and closing of the front door interrupts conversation, and signals the departure of the guests. Afterwards, Ellen will join them in the sitting room. She, like her husband, looks pale and drawn from worry. The two can give little information about what happened the day the kidnapping took place; the closest person they have to a witness is Melissa's twin brother,

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RUNNING GOTHIC EARTH

Samuel. With Ellen's permission, the heroes are allowed to question the boy themselves about what happened. They are also invited to examine the scene of the crime: the garden and the area surrounding the statue. Should they decide to do this first, skip down to **The Garden/Crime Scene**, if not, continue on to **Samuel**.

## SAMUEL

The heroes are cautioned by Tom to be gentle with young Samuel. It seems that since the evening of the kidnapping, the boy has been plagued with nightmares, though he claims to have no memory of them in the morning hours.

Tom will lead the heroes up a polished wood staircase to the upper rooms. The twins share a large bed/playroom at the end of the hall, with large airy windows letting in the sunlight. Samuel, a small boy with sugar-blond hair and shadowed eyes, is sitting ensconced in a window seat in the corner, looking down at the garden below.

The shock of glimpsing the ghostly forms of Andrew and Joel, combined with his sister's kidnapping, has caused Samuel to block the events of that evening from his mind. However, he is not being entirely truthful about his nightmares. He does remember them, but has been too frightened of the images he sees to tell anyone except his grandmother, Lucy.

With careful questioning, the heroes can pick up the following details about the evening of the kidnapping.

- ❖ The twins were playing in the garden shortly before their mother called them inside for the night.
- ❖ They were not playing together; Lately, Melissa had been venturing off by herself in the garden to play, which left Samuel surprised and hurt, though he tries to hide it.
- ❖ Just as Ellen was calling the twins inside from the doorway to the back porch, Melissa's scream rang out from somewhere among the bushes near the statue. (Samuel will point to the statue of Joel and Andrew through the window. It is clearly visible, and, eerily, the boys' faces almost seem to be looking straight up at them.)
- ❖ Samuel ran to the spot where the scream had come from, but claims he saw no one, and no sign of his sister except for a torn and dirt-stained piece of her dress.
- ❖ The plants and earth around the statue were disturbed, as if a frantic struggle had taken place.

Tom and Ellen can provide the last detail; they arrived at the scene shortly after. They found Samuel on

the ground near the statue and the torn up earth, shivering violently and clutching the bit of Melissa's dress.

Should the heroes take the time to look around the playroom, they will note that in an otherwise impeccably tidy room, there are dark dirt smudges in the form of child's fingerprints covering several of the toys in the room, most noticeably on a wooden rocking horse and doll house. (Melissa left the marks when she failed to wash her hands from her digging in the garden.) Samuel does not know how they came to be there; the horse and dollhouse are Melissa's toys.

Throughout the entire interview, Samuel continues to glance out the window at the statue in the garden. If the heroes work hard enough to put him at ease and gain his trust he will confide to them that the statue actually frightens him more than a little. Read the following aloud:

*"Melissa liked it; she said it looked peaceful . . . friendly. I don't. Statues are cold, hard and not friendly at all. Sometimes, when I'm around it, I imagine I can hear it whispering to me. I never stay long enough to hear what it's saying though. I'm afraid to."*

## THE GARDEN/CRIME SCENE

The garden itself is unremarkable, fenced in naturally by tall hedges and providing a connection between the Ashburn and Cadwell houses. The statue is stone and stands out in the center of the garden. Except for a bit of weather damage, it looks much the same as it did the day it was erected.

As described, the heroes find that, on the surface, the area around the statue's base seems to have seen signs of a struggle of some kind. There are several patches of loose soil, and wild weeds have been pulled up and scattered. If the heroes investigate thoroughly, they will discover the evidence of Melissa's digging, suggesting that perhaps no struggle took place, and the ground was disturbed on purpose.

Aside from this, the heroes find no other evidence or clues, and the statue does not appear to be anything out of the ordinary. Of course, Tom and Ellen can tell the story behind the statue, but they dismiss Samuel's fears about it as a child's imaginings. As they are searching, however, an observant hero may notice an elderly woman watching them from an upstairs window of the Ashburn house. It is Lucy, and she appears quite agitated. If the heroes do not pay her a visit, she will seek them out and request an audience.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RUNNING GOTHIC EARTH

## MEETING LUCY

Lucy Ashburn, (married name: Cameron) lives alone, her children grown and she having been a widow for several years. Instead of receiving them in her parlor, the elderly woman ushers the heroes upstairs to the master bedroom, where she seats them around an old and dented trunk kept at the foot of her canopied bed.

Even if the heroes have not already spoken to Samuel at this point, Lucy will confide to them that Samuel told her a little of what he could remember about his nightmares, and that he has been too frightened to tell anyone else about them. Read the following aloud to the heroes:

*“I could see he was frightened and confused. He wasn’t going to tell me at all—wouldn’t have told me—if it weren’t for this.” She lifts the sagging lid of the trunk so that all of you can look inside. Atop piles of Lucy’s personal effects rests a saber sword and a water-stained journal. Folded neatly to one side is a faded, patch-covered confederate uniform. “Samuel and Melissa both like to explore the odd corners of this house. Samuel happened upon Joel’s personal effects a few days ago. He told me it was the same—at first I didn’t understand—that he saw these things in his nightmare.”*

If the heroes have not already heard the tale of Andrew and Joel, Lucy will relate it to them, but will add her own suspicions about the cause of Joel’s death. She alone suspected Andrew of having a dark heart, and even now she is haunted by the knowledge that Andrew may have killed Joel himself. To support her theory, she shows the heroes the journal entry (found at the beginning of the article) Joel made just before his death. Believing that there is some strange connection between Joel, Andrew and the twins, Lucy asks that the heroes look after Samuel as well as continue in their search for Melissa.

## MEETING JOEL

At some point during their search, the heroes will be confronted with the ghostly form of Joel, who is keeping watch over the events that are taking place at the Hampton home. Depending upon what actions the heroes take, Joel could be a friend or a dangerous adversary, if he perceives his family to be in danger in any way.

This encounter should occur at night, away from the two houses—eliminating the possibility of Joel being seen by his family.

*A boy, no more than seventeen or eighteen, steps from the shadows, his flesh drained of all living warmth. It strikes you that he has the same sugar-blond hair as Samuel, and similar eyes. He is dressed in a tattered uniform that is stained dark with blood down the front from an ugly wound in his chest.*

Unless he is given a reason to mistrust the heroes, Joel will reveal to them that he was responsible for kidnapping Melissa—for her own safety, of course. He can confirm Lucy’s suspicions about Andrew and his own death and further explains the circumstances behind Andrew’s imprisonment and the spirit’s plot to break free, using Melissa. Despite the fact that he shows great remorse for having abducted the young girl, he will not reveal where he has hidden her away, nor will he return her until he is certain she will be safe from Andrew. Knowing the truth about the events which led to Melissa’s kidnapping, (revealed in **The Whole Story**) the heroes—and Joel, as he will insist on seeing to his family’s safety—will have the dual tasks of battling Andrew and saving Samuel. By now, the boy will have also been charmed into aiding in Andrew’s escape, and this time, the spirit means to succeed.

## RESOLUTION

When the heroes and Joel arrive at the statue in the garden, they will find that Samuel has just finished removing the last stone that imprisons Andrew, unleashing his furious spirit.

The two greatest weapons the heroes have to use against Andrew are his fear and his obsession. The heroes can retrieve the saber from among Joel’s personal effects—its presence on the battlefield at Gettysburg causes it to inflict double the weapon’s normal damage against Andrew. Or, the heroes may elect to destroy the statue, which serves as Andrew’s true physical anchor to this world. His spirit will dissipate permanently if it is destroyed.

It is important to note that Joel will shield Samuel from any harm at Andrew’s hands, and will also protect Lucy, Tom and Ellen—the battle will very likely draw them out to the garden—but he is unable or unwilling to attack Andrew directly, even now. He will therefore be of no help to the heroes in combating the spirit. When Andrew’s spirit finally dissolves, Joel’s eyes reflect a terrible sadness.

When he is certain of his family’s safety, Joel will return Melissa to them. She is unharmed, if a little confused. Joel has used his powers to erase her memories of the trauma of the past few weeks—something he will also do for Samuel.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: RUNNING GOTHIC EARTH

## RECURRENCE

With the threat to his family gone, Joel will retreat to the shadows once more, unable to relinquish the role of protector he has taken up. It is therefore possible that the heroes could cross paths with the spirit and the Hampton family again, should they have reason to return to Savanna.

## HISTORICAL RESOURCES

*Gettysburg: A Battlefield Atlas*, by Craig L. Symonds (Cartography by William J. Clipson) The Nautical & Aviation Publishing Company of America, 1992. ISBN: 1-877853-16-x.

(A narrative history and chapter-by-chapter recounting of each engagement at the battle of Gettysburg, with cartographic display.)

**Web Site:** Military History Online—Battle of Gettysburg

<http://www.militaryhistoryonline.com/gettysburg/misc/csaunits.htm>

(Contains regimental histories, muster rolls, links to various reenactor pages):

**Author's Note:** While the historical information is presented as accurately as possible, the characters of Joel and Andrew and their part in the Civil War are entirely fictitious. Any resemblance to actual persons is purely coincidental.



# DANYLO DENISOVICH

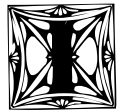
## ZNÁMIA

### A COLD-HEARTED KILLER IN GOTHIC RUSSIA

By Daniel Bandera

daniel.j.bandera@us.pwglobal.com

#### BIOGRAPHY



In a little-traveled pass through the snow-covered Valdai Hills between St. Petersburg and Moscow a strange phenomenon has been reported. Ice sculptures in the shape of a beautiful woman are sculpted by an unknown being. The sculptures appear to be of the same woman, but her pose and express change with each new statue. The statues melt just like regular ice, but new statues always reappear in the same vale. The story behind the tortured soul that carves these statues is shrouded in the snow-covered wilderness of Russia.

#### DANYLO ZNÁMIA

<b>Arayashka (Snow Wraith), Neutral Evil</b>			
<b>Armor Class</b>	3	<b>Str</b>	—
<b>Movement</b>	9	<b>Dex</b>	—
<b>Level/Hit Dice</b>	5	<b>Con</b>	—
<b>Hit Points</b>	31	<b>Int</b>	16
<b>THAC0</b>	15	<b>Wis</b>	13
<b>No. of Attacks</b>	1	<b>Cha</b>	9
<b>Morale</b>	17	<b>XP</b>	975
<b>Damage/Attack</b>	1d6+1		
<b>Special Attacks</b>	Chilling touch, drain heat		
<b>Special Defenses</b>	Undead immunities, hit only by +1 or better weapons.		
<b>Magic Resistance</b>	Nil		

#### APPEARANCE

From a distance Danylo appears as a gray, misty shadow about the size of a man. On closer scrutiny, his features become apparent. He is a man, about nineteen years old, with collar-length blond hair. He is dressed in a simple shirt and pants typical of a Russian peasant,

but he wears no hat, gloves, or boots. His hands and feet bear a slightly lighter color than the rest of his body, due to the frostbite he suffered before his death.

#### BACKGROUND

Since the age of twelve, Danylo had been in love with Irena Vishnayev. They lived in the small village of Vyshni, in the Valdai Hills, outside of St. Petersburg. Irena was four years older than Danylo, and she found his affections cute, but did not take his attention seriously. When Irena turned eighteen, her parents arranged for her to marry Anatoly Nashinkov. Danylo was bitterly disappointed. Before the wedding could take place, Anatoly was called to fight in Czarina Catherine's army. As Anatoly's absence grew from weeks to months, Danylo spent more and more time with Irena. He believed he was winning her over, but in reality she continued to see him as the little boy who followed her around. For three years this went on, and Danylo assumed, like most in the village, that Anatoly had been killed in the war.

When he was old enough, Danylo got a job working for the town's boyar as a laborer. One of his duties was to help transport goods to the market in St. Petersburg. In the late fall of Danylo's nineteenth year, he was in St. Petersburg when a harsh winter storm hit the area. It threatened to force him and his fellow laborers to spend the winter in St. Petersburg. Danylo was distraught. He knew that Irena would be alone all winter, a very dangerous time, and thought of himself as the only one who could take care of her.

Once the storm let up slightly, he told his fellows he was returning to Vyshni. Slowly he made his way back to the village, stopping well before nightfall at roadside inns. Three days into his journey, he had reached the Valdai Hills and stopped for the night at the Vóron Cherdák Inn. Another storm, stronger than the

# BOOK OF SECRETS: GOTHIC EARTH PEOPLE

first, was descending on the area, and Danylo knew he might well be stranded at the inn for a few days.

That night the few patrons at the inn were preparing to wait out the storm there, and the family who ran the inn made arrangements to accommodate their guests. All were surprised when Danylo knocked on the inn's door and asked for shelter for the night, but he was welcomed nonetheless. It was shortly before nightfall, that the large storm fury was unleashed, and the small valley in which the inn nestled was soon surrounded by the howling wind and driving snow. Shortly after nightfall, a band of bandits attacked the inn. The desperate bandits were seeking shelter from the harsh storm, and would have died if they had not stumbled upon the inn. After forcing their way into the inn against the protests of the innkeepers, the bandits were not satisfied with only receiving shelter from the storm. They began to ransack the inn for money and valuables. Only Danylo resisted, so the bandits beat him, then they stripped him of his heavy clothing and tossed him out into the winter night. Danylo did not last long and froze to death during the stormy night.

Thirteen days later, Danylo became an arayashka, a snow wraith, and began haunting the area around the inn. Almost one year later, Anatoly, Irena's long lost love, returned to Vyshni. He had distinguished himself in the wars and been promoted to captain of artillery. Anatoly and Irena were married soon thereafter. As they traveled to their new home in St. Petersburg, they stopped at the Vóron Cherdák Inn. Danylo was overjoyed when he realized that Irena was staying at the inn and appeared in her room when night fell. But he was devastated to learn that she had married Anatoly. In a rage, he killed everyone else in the inn with his heat-draining ability. Returning to Irena he slew her as well, embracing her as he drained the last of the heat from her body. He did not release his embrace until her body was frozen in a solid block of ice.

## CURRENT SKETCH

The Vóron Cherdák Inn is now only a pile of timbers. Ice and snow cover it year-round. Danylo has moved Irena's ice-covered body to a clearing a short distance into the woods behind the inn. There painstakingly he has carved the ice around her body into a perfect ice sculpture, mirroring Irena's image beneath, including the look of terror etched on her face at the time of her death. He has repeated to carve images of her into other large chunks of ice, each time presenting Irena in a different pose. Some bear the same terrified expression, but most show her in a variety of happy appearances. These ice sculptures are scattered around his territory, but are mainly concentrated near the clearing.

Danylo is anchored to the spot of his death and cannot travel more than 500 feet from the clearing

where Irena's body remains. Due to his obsessive jealousy, he will attack any man that enters his domain, or anyone who harms one of his ice sculptures.

## PERSONALITY

Danylo seems a calm, peaceful spirit content with carving his ice sculptures. In actuality he is consumed by jealousy and loneliness. The sight of any man that reminds him of Anatoly, brings a killing rage over him. He will immediately attack and kill any man that matches Anatoly's description. Anatoly was a man with fair skin between the ages of 20 to 35, from 5'10" to 6'2" tall, weighing 180–220 lbs., and had dark hair.

Danylo will never physically harm a woman other than in self-defense. If he meets a woman resembling Irena, he will approach her in a friendly manner. Admiring her beauty, he will ask if she will model for one of his ice sculptures. If she says yes, Danylo will begin to carve sculptures of her from the ice. Once the statue is finished he will not let her leave, and will want to continue to use her as a model. If she tries to flee, Danylo will be disappointed, not understanding her refusal. His jealous and rage will grow and he will attack her, trying to use his heat draining ability on her. If he succeeds, she will become another model for Danylo, her body trapped in a block of ice, which he will carve to match her image underneath.

## COMBAT

Danylo attacks in melee with a chilling touch. The victim loses one point of Strength in addition to the damage noted above. Lost Strength points return at the rate of one point per hour. A victim reduced to Strength of 2 collapses and falls unconscious. A character reduced to 0 Strength dies.

Danylo also has the ability to drain heat, causing one character within 30 feet to lose 1 hp per round, with no saving throw. Any victim losing more than 50% of his total hit points suffers hypothermia. Danylo can also use this ability to extinguish flames within 30 feet.

Danylo can be turned as a wraith. He is immune to all non-magical weapons, but he is vulnerable to fire and heat attacks. Magical fire causes 1 extra point of damage per die rolled against Danylo. Non-magical attacks, such as flaming oil or burning torches, can harm him and inflict an additional 2d4 points of damage. Metal weapons heated in fire inflict 1d4 points of damage to Danylo on a successful hit, but after hitting him twice such a weapon will cool off and no longer harm him. Note that, because of the heat generated when firing a bullet, firearms cause minimal damage to Danylo: 1 hp per die rolled for damage.





# SIR ANDREW SINCLAIR

A CRUELLY CONFLICTED NPC FOR GOTHIC ENGLAND

by Luis Fernando De Pippo

zoren55@yahoo.com

## BIOGRAPHY



ome people are good because they are born that way. Some are good because their religion tells them that they have to be good, lest they suffer eternal damnation. But some other people, like Sir Andrew Sinclair, are good because they really have no choice.

## APPEARANCE

Sir Andrew Sinclair is a typical English nobleman. He is always dressed in the latest fashions and is a pillar of his community. He keeps a well-trimmed moustache, black as his hair, and uses a monocle in his right eye. He is almost six feet tall and has a face and nature that can only be described as angelic. No one has anything bad to say about him now, but that was not always the case.

## SIR ANDREW SINCLAIR

**5th-level Soldier (Explorer), Lawful Good**

<b>Armor Class</b>	10	<b>Str</b>	15
<b>Movement</b>	12	<b>Dex</b>	13
<b>Level/Hit Dice</b>	5	<b>Con</b>	18
<b>Hit Points</b>	30	<b>Int</b>	12
<b>THAC0</b>	15	<b>Wis</b>	12
<b>Morale</b>	12	<b>Chr</b>	16
<b>No. of Attacks</b>	By weapon (usually army pistol)		
<b>Damage/Attack</b>	Varies (army pistol 2d6+1)		
<b>Special Attacks</b>	Nil		
<b>Special Defenses</b>	Regenerates 1 hit point every 6 hours		
<b>Special Weakness</b>	Can be hurt or killed by hurting or slaying the Beast		
<b>Magic Resistance</b>	Nil		

## BACKGROUND

As a little boy Sir Andrew knew that he would be the greatest explorer known to man. To that end he trained hard every day on the local woods that lead to Little Pond, as the nearby swamp was known. While he trained he was a happy and cheerful child, but alas his happiness was not to last. During one such training trip he caught a lung disease, and its complications left him bedridden and weak as a kitten for two months.

When he contracted the disease he felt his world crashing down on him because the doctors told him that he would never be able to exert himself again. After the shocking news, he became bitter and resentful towards the world and everyone in it. After all, if he couldn't have his dream, then no one would. He started kicking the servants, hitting the maids and killing the house pets. One day he even pushed his father down the flight of stairs at Sinclair manor.

Terrified, his parents consulted with the pastor of the local Anglican Church, hoping that he would be able to do something. Fervently the pastor prayed for a miracle, and one apparently occurred. The lung disease afflicting little Andrew was cured (having run its course), but the scars that the disease left on his personality were beyond even the pastor's ability to heal. Nonetheless, the local Anglican pastor tried to help Andrew, but he could do nothing to make Andrew change his ways, as the bitterness in the boy's heart overcome the goodness that the clergyman wished to bestow. In the end he pronounced Andrew to be evil and excommunicated him.

Andrew became a recluse, going out only when it was absolutely necessary. When Andrew turned twenty-one he became the explorer that he had always wanted to be, but his bitter personality did not lend itself well to the necessary companionship that such explorations require. The bitter explorer was known in such circles as Andrew the Bad Tempered, and other explorers shunned him.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: GOTHIC EARTH PEOPLE

One day he decided to visit India, in particular the region of Kashmir, where ancient secrets were supposed to lie. He spent two years on Indian soil and when he returned to England he was a completely changed man. He no longer kicked the servants, he kept pets well fed, and he even treated the peasants with respect. More astonishingly, he also began to frequent the local pub and courted one of the local noble daughters. He became a pillar of his community, and a better person was hard to find in Little Pond. His bitterness was nowhere to be seen and those who knew him said that the change was complete. The only black spot in his personality was in the cage.

When he returned from India, he brought a great cage completely covered with canvas. When the cage was transported to his ancient home, inhuman cries and howls could be heard from it. In his manor the entire west wing was dedicated to the cage. Sir Andrew gave orders to the servants that only he was to go to that part of the house. He did not hit the servants that tried to enter, but he did cut their wages in half for any transgressions. He was fair to those who were overcome with curiosity but reminded them that “curiosity killed the cat.”

Of course, gossip ran like wildfire among the peasants of Little Pond. Some people said that someone in his travels taught him serenity, likely an ancient order of monks. Others thought that the cage was a ruse for covering the uncountable treasures that he had found during his trip. The enlightened ones thought that he had found Nirvana, while the pessimists said that someday he would release the thing in the cage upon them. They point out that the howling and crying has not stopped, but has since grown. Sir Andrew has always refused to comment on the cage and anything in it, saying that he brought nothing from India but a little curio. But at least twice since he returned from India something has been let loose in the woods of Little Pond, something that kills and eats its victims.

Currently, Sir Andrew is intending to host a philosophical congress in Little Pond, with the greatest philosophers of the United Kingdom. He is keen on discussing the nature of “evil” and “good,” with most of the arguments hinging on whether absolute good and evil can exist in man, and whether absolute evil can be redeemed. The philosophers may wonder why the interest, but Sir Andrew has, so far, refused to comment.

Also, Sir Andrew is gathering strange materials—glass and strange metals. He is building something inside the greenhouse, but no one has been able to see it. The presence of an electrical generator next to the building raises further questions . . .

## PERSONALITY

Sir Andrew is the pinnacle of virtue in his community. He never does anything remotely sinful, goes to church every day and acts in a way that can only be defined as benevolent. He supports numerous charitable causes and runs a hospice for orphaned children. A few folk of Little Pond, Sir Andrew’s hometown, still find his behavior quite odd, recalling that Sir Andrew was once the most reviled and hated person in the county.

## COMBAT

Sir Andrew prefers diplomacy to violence and will only use his pistol as a last resort. He will ask for surrender and will never intentionally kill an opponent. He will remind the combatants that they are breaking the law by attacking a noble of the United Kingdom and will also assure them that they will have a fair trial if they surrender.

## Forbidden Lore

Sir Andrew did bring something back from India—something very dark and dangerous, a monster of incredible evil. He brought back himself.

During his travels he discovered a hidden complex of caves in Kashmir. Despite the natives’ superstitions, he ventured on, determining to map every corner and search for the secrets that might be buried there. When his guides and porters deserted him, he cursed them and started screaming at the top of his lungs for them to come back, as the cave was surely deserted.

Someone, however, lived in the caves and heard him.

When he returned from India, Sir Andrew was of two minds—literally. He brought something in a cage, a great secret. Sooner or later, however, someone will discover the secret and the beast will be free to hunt. In fact, that has happened twice as servants unknowingly opened the cage, but Sir Andrew has always managed to recapture the beast. Sir Andrew fears the beast’s escape because everything that happens to his evil twin also happens to him, so he is extremely careful about hurting him or letting others hunt the mysterious creature.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: GOTHIC EARTH PEOPLE

## The Beast

### Andrew Sinclair, Chaotic Evil

Armor Class	5	Str	19
Movement	15	Dex	18
Level/Hit Dice	5	Con	18
Hit Points	30	Int	6
THAC0	12	Wis	6
Morale	18	Chr	6
No. of Attacks	2		
Damage/Attack	1d8*2 (claws)		
Special Attacks	Howl of Madness (forces everyone who hears it to make a madness check)		
Special Defenses	Regenerates 1 hit point every 6 hours		
Special Weakness	Can be hurt or killed by hurting or slaying Sir Andrew		
Magic Resistance	100%		

The Beast is a filthy humanoid creature with claws. Under all the dirt the Beast looks remarkably like Sir Andrew. That is because the Beast *is* Sir Andrew—the evil half of Sir Andrew. During his trip to India Sir Andrew was subjected to a soul-splitting procedure that left him divided between his good and evil halves.

Sir Andrew and the Beast share a link: every wound that one receives is also suffered by the other. Sufficient damage dealt to one of them can kill both. As the Beast is immune to every kind of magic, magical effects such as a *charm person* do not affect the Beast if cast on Sir Andrew. Damage-dealing spells that affect Sir Andrew, however, also affect the Beast. Killing Sir Andrew in order to slay the Beast is cause for a powers check.

The Beast, besides being extremely filthy, *can* pass as Sir Andrew, but cannot imitate his intelligent and charismatic “brother” effectively. The Beast will use this strategy only if he feels that he cannot physically overcome his attackers. The only physical differences between Andrew and the Beast are the claws that the latter has for hands.

Once per day the Beast can howl, forcing everyone within earshot to make a madness check. Sir Andrew is immune to this effect.

## Current Sketch

It has been six months since Sir Andrew returned from India, and he still has little recollection of just what happened there, other than vaguely remembering someone putting him inside a glass globe. The trapped Beast is the only solid evidence of his misadventures

there. Early on Andrew discovered that he shares any damage that the Beast suffers. For now, Sir Andrew is content to let the Beast lie in its cage, but he is working on a number of ways to help his evil half and himself.

Sir Andrew is in possession of a manual containing the instructions to build an *Apparatus*. (See the “Apparatus in Masque” below.) Currently he is gathering the materials needed to build it, so he can rejoin with his evil half, on his terms. Sir Andrew knows that his personality, when whole, was despicable, so he is intending to try and keep the good part of himself in control after the process is complete.

He has also called the greatest theologians of the United Kingdom, hoping to gain some insight on the nature of pure evil, to better understand his brother. He hopes to temper his evil side with goodness so, when they rejoin, the good side can gain dominance. So far all his efforts to redeem the Beast have been in vain.

At the moment, Sir Andrew needs some discreet people to run certain errands for him, getting some strange materials. One such person has recently died horribly in Little Pond and the locals are afraid. Sir Andrew personally led a hunt for their killer, but returned empty handed. He fears that the body was left as a signal to him and has redoubled his efforts to build the *Apparatus*.

The Beast’s motive is straightforward—revenge. He wants to get out of the cage and make Sir Andrew suffer. He knows, however, that he needs to hurt Andrew’s spirit, because he cannot hurt his body. Now he is planning a way to escape and remain free, preferably posing as Sir Andrew so as to ruin his name in the community. The Beast is patient, for now.

## ADVENTURE IDEAS

- ❖ The heroes arrive in Little Pond and find that a series of murders have rocked the community, and evidence points towards a beast loose in the woods. Sir Andrew, a local respected nobleman, is leading the hunt for the killer and the PCs are asked or hired to help by the mayor. During the hunt Sir Andrew seems extremely reluctant to hurt the marauding creature, planning elaborate traps to capture it instead. The PCs must deal with the consequences of the hunt and the reluctant nobleman. If they go along with Sir Andrew’s plan they will notice how everything done to the Beast affects Sir Andrew as well, and that the Beast is a near twin of the nobleman. Also, if they ignore Sir Andrew’s plan they can choose to kill the Beast, but they will be framed for murder as Sir Andrew’s body will have wounds in it that could have only

# BOOK OF SECRETS: GOTHIC EARTH PEOPLE

been inflicted by the PC's weapons (the DM might want to ensure that a peculiar weapon in the possession of the heroes is used to bring down the Beast).

- ❖ Someone wants to get the manual that Sir Andrew has. Of course, that someone knows about the Beast and will attack the manor in the hopes of stealing the manual while simultaneously freeing the Beast to elude pursuit. The PCs can be involved as bodyguards, protecting Sir Andrew. It may appear to be a pretty straightforward job, but the consequences could lead to a trip to India to recover the manual, as Sir Andrew does not want it to fall into evil hands.
- ❖ The tables are turned; the Beast manages to gain freedom, and he is certainly not happy. Vowing to destroy everything that Sir Andrew stands for, his first act is to capture his good brother. The mayor of Little Pond hired the PCs to find Sir Andrew when he suddenly goes missing. The PCs find Sir Andrew when they arrive at the manor, but he is completely changed. No longer the perfect gentleman, he behaves aggressively to the point of being rude and insults the PCs. While they stay in town the Beast kidnaps some person close to them and they must deal with the crazed nobleman again. The mayor, suspecting an impostor, also hires the PCs to uncover the reason for "Sir Andrew's" sudden personality shift.
- ❖ One of the PCs is the victim of a soul-splitting experiment (either with the *Apparatus* or by some other method) and the PCs must recover the manual to create an *Apparatus* and thus reverse the procedure. Through rumor, magic use or tracking, the PCs are led to Sir Andrew, who has possessed the manual ever since the incident in Kashmir. Meanwhile, the PC's twin heads for the manor to ensure that the manual is never found again. Exploring the manor, this evil twin can discover the Beast and free him so that, working together, they can try to stop the PCs and Sir Andrew. The PCs must fight the twin menace carefully, lest they kill their friends.

## FORBIDDEN LORE APPENDIX:

### THE APPARATUS IN MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH

The *Apparatus*' first recorded appearance was in the late 15th Century. No one knows why or how it was used, as both the *Apparatus* and its creator were

destroyed shortly afterwards. Before he died, the unknown creator had come into possession of a manual that provided instructions on building the *Apparatus*. No one knows where the manual came from or who first created it. This manual, the only one in existence on Gothic Earth, is irrevocably flawed.

When an *Apparatus* is built using the manual's instructions, the end product does not work as expected. The *Apparatus* does not work as described in the *Realm of Terror* boxed set or the *Book of Artifacts*. The differences in operation between a Ravenloft *Apparatus* and its Gothic Earth counterpart are summarised below:

- ❖ Only magical lightning can charge the *Apparatus*—natural or artificial non-magical electricity, such electricity created by a generator, will not work.
- ❖ When the soul-splitting power is used, the soul splitting is not complete. Thus, the *Apparatus* does not produce two complete, individual and distinct beings. Instead, each sundered half is connected with the other via a mystical link that transcends distance. Both creatures can feel the pain of the other and slaying one of them will kill both. The other feels every wound received by the one with the same intensity. They also share a weak empathic link, but they cannot use the link to communicate between themselves.
- ❖ The *Rod of Rastinon* is not required to operate the *Apparatus* on Gothic Earth. All of its powers are accessible to the user, but the power of transpossession cannot be used in Gothic Earth.
- ❖ The manual cannot be destroyed by any means, and it always appears to be written in a language that the reader can understand. If subjected to an attack that would destroy it (such as fire) the manual instantly teleports to a random location on Gothic Earth.
- ❖ Finally, the *Apparatus* will *always* explode after it is used. The explosion never harms the victims of the soul split, but is lethal to anyone else caught within 20 feet of the *Apparatus*. This flaw is not described in the manual. Using the *Apparatus* to split the soul of a victim on Gothic Earth is an Act of Ultimate Darkness. Using it to restore a victim is cause for a normal powers check.



# DAME ALICE KYTELER

FALSE SAINT, WICKED MISTRESS

by Hugo Viegas Nascimento  
shadowspawn\_the\_dragon@hotmail.com

*There are three things in nature,  
Tongues, Ecclesiastics and Women,  
which, be it for righteousness of  
wickedness, know no bounds; whenever  
they cross the limits of their natural  
condition, they reach the highest peaks of  
goodness and the farthest depths of  
corruption.*

—J. Sprenger and H. Kramer  
*Malleus Maleficarum*

## INTRODUCTION



Among uncountable reports of witch trials through the Holy Inquisition, most were mere mistakes committed due to superstition and fear of wise women and village healers, or outright assassinations with the secret purpose of claiming lands and possessions of those who were charged. However, in a few cases, the accused were true spellcasters and, if they did ever find a way of outwitting their captors, the consequent vengeance could be devastating. There is one such tale told in Ireland, and curiously it tells of a wise woman that not only was acquitted from the charges against her, but also gained favor from the British Court and became secretly worshipped as a saint, although the Church

never recognized her as such. Even more disturbing is the fact that she was actually guilty as charged.

## THE OFFICIAL HISTORY

In 1302, in Kilkenny, Ireland, a wealthy banker named William Outlawe died of a strange wasting disease. He was a widower and had married a noblewoman, Dame Alice Kyteler, three years before death. She inherited his fortune as legal tutor to his first-marriage son, also named William Outlawe, and no one doubted her care for her adolescent stepson. Only a few grew suspicious of the fact that she had been refusing suitors all her life, only to suddenly accept Outlawe's courting, particularly because he was quite a bit older than she. But these few people were quickly silenced.

About two years later she married Adam le Blond, a well-to-do French merchant. Their marriage appeared to be a happy one, although whispered rumors told of Adam beating his wife for no reason at all, and treating her stepson very poorly while trying to add the inheritance to his own possessions. He died, presumably of a heart attack, in 1311. By that time young William was considered adult for all purposes and took the head of the family banking business.

Dame Alice was still a beautiful woman despite her advancing age. At that time women usually got married before the end of adolescence and, if their husbands died before them, they normally retired to nunneries, but that was not the fate for her. She soon met another wealthy merchant, called Richard de Valle, who had recently moved to Kilkenny, after his wife suffered a fatal riding accident. Dame Alice's new husband was no better a man than the previous, and by 1317, he allegedly had a seizure during a storm and ran away from the family's seaside home, jumping from the high cliffs. Dame Alice's stepson William came to her side once again and arranged for Richard's legacy to swiftly pass into her hands.

Even then Dame Kyteler did not retire; she was still an attractive woman, and even her apparent barrenness did not keep men away from her, particularly after she had accumulated such a fortune.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: GOTHIC EARTH PEOPLE

Her fourth husband, Sir John Le Poer, was a retired knight with three children from his previous marriage. His wife had died from a miscarriage a few months after he moved to Kilkenny, and he found Alice charming, thinking her the perfect woman to stay by his side and help raise his children. They were married in 1318, but Sir John's happiness was short-lived. In 1320, he started to suffer from bloody coughing fits and headaches. In 1324, his children were alarmed to see his hair coming out in handfuls, and urged him to look for a physician in the court. No one could diagnose his problem, so he and his children grew suspicious of foul play.

Finally, they confronted Alice and invaded her locked room in her private property by the seashore. There they found various powders and unguents, along with amulets and charms. Sir John sent those evidences in locked chests to the Bishop of Ossory, Richard de Landrede, who had trained in France and supposedly knew everything about witchcraft.

The bishop was convinced of Dame Alice's guilt and charged her, along with William and ten servants on her property, of heresy, performing black masses, and killing her previous husbands through the use of sorcery. When Landrede arrived in the county, though, the situation changed: as he signed an order of excommunication for Dame Alice, she had him arrested and held for seventeen days for false accusations and perjury. The bishop had the whole diocese placed under interdict and censure, but Dame Alice's brother-in-law, Sir Arnold Le Poer, who was Lord Justice at that time, appealed in her favor to the Supreme Court in Dublin, charging the bishop with illegal ban. Landrede was forced to lift the ban and decided to visit Sir Arnold's court. When he entered the court carrying the Holy Sacrament, horses turned wild, people were afraid of him, and Sir Arnold had him thrown out. The second time the bishop tried to demand the arrest of Dame Alice and her stepson, a terrible war of words was recorded in the court chronicle, and he was thrown out again. Alice had Landrede summoned back to Dublin to answer for having excommunicated her without a true conviction of witchcraft.

The bishop was a stubborn man, and he eventually managed to have William arrested along with Alice's housemaid Petronilla and the others he had accused before. Dame Alice Kyteler had escaped to London long before the soldiers came to Kilkenny. After nine weeks in jail and away from her influence, William was offered acquittal if he accused Alice of witchcraft. He did so and was released, with the penance of paying for the re-roofing the Cathedral and then making a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Thomas at Canterbury.

All the others followed his example, receiving a sentence of whipping at the marketplace. But Petronilla the maid, after being scourged nine times, confessed

further crimes, taking the whole blame and even saying she was planning to kill her own husband the same way Alice had killed her previous husbands. Charged once more, she was burned at stake in the same year. That helped turning people's attentions away from Alice. Sentenced "in absentia", her personal lands were forfeited. But she had managed to transfer her fortune to London and bought a manor house near the Thames. She soon had the goodwill of most noblewomen, as she would advise them against abusive husbands, and spread gossip and rumors against such men.

Before long her supposed magical powers were whispered about in the Court, and she was visited in private by many women of all classes and ranks, looking for advice, charms, filters, salves and potions. She also managed to have an all-women entourage, selecting women with fighting skills to protect the weaker ones and young prostitutes as her spies and orderlies. When she was pronounced dead of old age somewhere around 1350, a pagan cult had already been built around her figure, one that might be considered a remarkable attempt at women's liberation for the 14th Century.

This cult still exists in the 1890s as the Daughters of St. Alice, a female-only qabal, dedicated to protecting women and teaching them about their inner powers and skills. Sadly, the Daughters also seek darker, more morbid goals that only the highest ranks of the order are able to comprehend.

## Forbidden Lore

Born sometime around the 1270s, Dame Alice Kyteler was unwittingly adopted by her family, for she was actually the child of a powerful Irish sea hag who exchanged her with the newborn daughter of Dame Anne Kyteler, the infant's would-be mother. Alice was made aware of her true nature around her mid-teens, when a new housemaid was employed. This housemaid was her own mother in disguise, who had noticed the lack of other hags in the area and decided to teach Alice how to defend herself and get ready for the Change.

Alice grew up with full understanding of her fate, and eventually came to accept it as a fact of life. As a woman of Irish strain, she was strong of will, and her inner evil and hatred against human families festered in a more prepared way. Her intelligent mind built up a plan that would help conceal her nature and activities: instead of marrying a young man who would constantly plague her with the obligation of having children she would never be able to bear, she would marry a man already with children, preferably an elder with wealth of his own.

With that in mind, she easily found her goal, the banker William Outlawe. The need to kill his first wife

# BOOK OF SECRETS: GOTHIC EARTH PEOPLE

did not bother Alice in the least. Soon Alice made William forget his slain wife completely, and charmed his son quite easily, too. By that time, Alice's mother had already departed certain of her daughter's success.

But Alice did not count on the ruthlessness of men; when she did not give William a new child, he began to beat her. That was intolerable, and without the powers of a true hag she had to rely on her potions and few spells. But fortunately for her, that proved a relatively easy task. As an additional demonstration of her cunning, she let the rumor spread about the beatings and mistreating, so that the general populace sympathized with the widow when Outlawe died.

Yet Alice could not accept the pretense of retiring to a nunnery, mainly because her Change would start soon. As the young William was still too young for her to have a sociably acceptable relationship with him, she decided to take no chances and seduced another man, Adam le Blond. He proved to be a scoundrel no better than her first husband. She slowly poisoned him and claimed all his possessions; exactly what he had intended to do with hers.

Alice's third marriage came as result of a personal vengeance; she had met Richard de Valle and his wife at the market and the woman had remarked upon the need for Alice to retire as a widow, letting her stepson run the family business and live his own life. Outraged, she enchanted Lady de Valle's horse and made it run wild, eventually breaking the lady's neck. Alice soon seduced the widower and a sweet smile came to her face as he asked for her hand.

By that time Alice's stepson William had grown a little weary of her imposing presence and her command over everything. He and Alice's young housemaid Petronilla had a secret affair and started to plot against her, but both were actually too frightened of Alice to act. In the meantime, unbeknownst to either one, their mistress was already going through the Change. She suffered from a "winter rash" and moved to her property near to the sea cliffs. William and Petronilla tried to turn de Valle against her, by telling him of Alice's part in his prior wife's death. Shocked, he went to the seaside manor to confront Alice, just to be maddened by her visage as a Changing sea hag. He ran away and fell from the precipice. Trying to avoid being found as the perpetrator of her downfall, William arranged for de Valle's fortune to go to Alice quickly, ensuring his devotion to her.

When Alice met with Sir John, she saw him as the ultimate challenge: a brave knight, married with a lovely young woman and with three children, a symbol of everything she had grown to despise and hate. She induced the poor woman's miscarriage with an herbal poison and, at the same moment, changed to her true form right in front of the suffering mother, who died of

shock and fright. She then used the dead wife's blood in a love philter that bound Sir John to her in a matter of a few months. Later, she started his gradual poisoning, as she wanted to savor his slow and painful death.

However, at that time it was getting harder to cover her actions. Everyone found it strange for a man who had just lost a beautiful young wife to get married to an elder woman with a dubious reputation. William found that his best opportunity, and convinced Sir John's children of Alice's guilt. On the other hand, Alice still held an iron grip on people's hearts and minds, and was able to not only avoid the arrest, but also to make William and Petronilla pay for their betrayal. Alice was responsible for her housemaid's sudden madness and confession, making sure the young woman would simultaneously suffer the full consequences of Alice's wrath while helping to distract the attention of her accusers while Alice escaped.

In the Court, she rapidly spun a web of spies and agents, taking advantage of the lack of satisfaction from women of all ranks and positions. Helped by such women, she managed to build up an underground empire right under the nose of the authorities. Eventually these women began to worship Alice as a saint. She then moved from her headquarters near the harbor to another place, even deeper into the bridges and back alleys along the Thames River, and let her network become a qabal.

In the 1890s, the Daughters of St. Alice work with the purpose of taking power from men and placing women in the highest positions available, eventually subduing and enslaving men to their own purposes. In a society such as Victorian Great Britain this is quite a daunting task, but the Daughters work with ability and patience, always recruiting new members from all social levels. Meanwhile, Alice still lives somewhere deep in the sewers, planning to one day rise as the true Queen of Great Britain.

## Dame Alice Kyteler

### Mature Sea Hag, Neutral Evil

<b>Armor Class</b>	6	<b>Str</b>	18/00
<b>Movement</b>	18, Sw 15	<b>Dex</b>	16
<b>Hit Dice</b>	4	<b>Con</b>	15
<b>Hit Points</b>	30	<b>Int</b>	17
<b>THAC0</b>	17	<b>Wis</b>	15
<b>Morale</b>	Elite (14)	<b>Cha</b>	13 (2)
<b>No. of Attacks</b>	2	<b>XP</b>	3,000
<b>Damage/Attack</b>	1d4+6/2d4+2		
<b>Special Attacks</b>	Death gaze, spells, weakness visage, <i>suggestion</i> , see below		
<b>Special Defenses</b>	<i>Change self</i> , <i>water breathing</i> , <i>fog cloud</i> , <i>summon swarm</i> , spells, see below		
<b>Magic Resistance</b>	50%		

## BOOK OF SECRETS: GOTHIC EARTH PEOPLE

Alice has kept her magical abilities and evil cunning through the ages. She rarely shows herself to the world, or even to her own followers, but whenever she does so, she always disguises her appearance with that of her former life. Once she has engaged a foe in combat, however, her mask will fall to reveal a hideous face with discolored eyes, mottled skin and mud-caked hair. Her long fingers end in sharp talons, usually dirty with remains of her victims, and her yellow teeth look like those of a shark.

The “Saint” is not fond of close combat. As a rare member of her breed, she was able to overcome her repulsion for her own shape because her mother explained all she needed to know. She has far more understanding of her nature than most hags, and while she still hates happiness in the lives of others, she has been able to intermingle with society while keeping her privacy. Alice is a genius and will use her vast knowledge and extensive network of spies and allies to her best advantage. She usually meets a party in a pleasant form that mimics her human appearance before the Change. Whenever an intruder is found within the deeper sewers, he or she will have to face Alice’s Daughters, mostly helpless prostitutes and beggars who were warmly accepted into the ranks of the order and will fight to the death to protect their mistress’ privacy.

If unable to summon minions to her aid, Alice will open a fight by showing her true appearance to her enemies. That is usually enough to weaken most heroes, for all who see Alice’s true shape and fail a saving throw vs. spell lose half their Strength scores for 1d6 turns. Alice reserves an especially terrifying attack for those who withstand this first assault. By concentrating her malice within her gaze, Alice may glance upon any one creature within 30 feet. The victim must succeed at a saving throw vs. poison. If the victim fails, he has a 25% chance of immediately dying from fright and a 75% chance of being paralyzed for three days. Alice may use her deadly gaze up to three times per day.

When Alice has to fight, she does so with two daggers, receiving a +3 bonus to attack rolls and +6 to damage due to her preternatural strength. She can cast *change self*, *water breathing*, *fog cloud* and *summon swarm* three times per day as an 8th-level adept. She can also cast *suggestion* twice a day at the same level.

During her life before the Change Alice made extensive use of arcane lore and herbal concoctions. She is quite proficient in Herbalism and Spellcraft (gaining a +1 bonus to these proficiency checks), and has the magical abilities of a 4th level adept. She is quite capable and diligent, and loves to solve riddles or playing a nice game of chess. She holds no respect or mercy for men, whom she considers weakminded fools, but will compliment a female adversary (and probably try to enlist her) before attacking.

**Spell list (3/2):** 1st—*audible glamer*, *charm person*, *friends*, *hypnotism*, *phantasmal force*, *spook*, *ventriloquism*; 2nd—*blindness*, *blur*, *forget*, *invisibility*, *scare*.

Alice’s greatest physical weakness is her dependence on water. Her mother had taught her about the symbolism of water and its importance to sea hags. If somehow taken more than a few miles away from a large body of water, such as the Thames or the Atlantic Ocean, Alice will wither rapidly and die within days. Alice is confident that she can live forever while next to the waters, but this is not true; after more than 600 years, she is nearer to death than she admits, and might already be entering the final stages of her life. That realization could make her commit a fatal mistake.

Alice’s troops are made up of women, most of whom are mere 1st-level tradesmen (or better, tradeswomen) who act as spies or cannon fodder. Some are soldiers, and a very few trusted followers, who are allowed to come near to their “living saint,” become adepts. Alice can also summon several sewer-crawling creatures, as noted above.

If the DM wishes to introduce Alice as part of a hag coven, it must be remembered that she is old and used to rule and command, and that she is well versed in hag lore, knowing that the main weakness of most hags is their lack of planning and patience. Most probably she would not accept the idea of sharing her kingdom with others of their kind, particularly to those who might one day destroy her. Therefore, if she ever gets in contact with other hags, she will probably use a spawning ritual to ensure that the newly created hags will faithfully obey her.



# BOOK OF SECRETS: GOTHIC EARTH PEOPLE

## THE DAUGHTERS OF SAINT ALICE

A Neutral Evil Qabal

*It takes twenty years for a woman to turn a son into a man, and twenty minutes for another woman to make a fool of him.*

—Helen Rowland

The Daughters of Saint Alice started as a small group of unsatisfied women, some noble, some poor, who took Dame Alice's advice seriously and decided that men were not fit for authority, being inferior beings. As such, they slowly began to spread word of her teachings against men in all ranks of British society. Soon they also started to talk of Dame Alice's aptitude as healer, advisor, brewer of philters and potions and wise-woman. The tale of the woman that survived four husbands and turned the tides of the Inquisition against Bishop Landrede himself became a symbol of dignity and endurance, and an example to be followed.

Instead of supporting women's equality like suffragists and feminists, though, they promote women's complete superiority over men; that men are little more than pawns to be moved about and partners for casual love affairs. Even those Daughters who masquerade as faithful housewives help to spread the ideals of the qabal through gossip against their own husbands, brothers and sons. What once started as a campaign to free women from male dominance, has now been perverted to a concealed war against men.

In its history, the United Kingdom has had a few queens who did not leave the state affairs in the hands of the Prime Ministers, but would rather take the reins themselves. There are rumors that link such women, Queen Elizabeth, for example, to the Daughters of Saint Alice. It has been said that Queen Elizabeth saw the saint herself at least once, and received advice against her foreign suitors.

In the Victorian Era, the Daughters of Saint Alice still manage to keep hold of a fraction of English society. Nowadays their work must be subtle and unhurried, for although Great Britain once again has a Queen on the throne, male power over the world seems

consolidated. The Daughters work to discredit men whenever they can, and some suffragists and feminists known for "exaggerated attitude against men" are members of the qabal. Most members are common women from different ranks of society, from laborers' wives to bankers' daughters, but the true force of the society hides in the sewers and back alleys.

Along the Thames there are gambling houses and buildings of ill repute, which are totally run by Daughters of Saint Alice. There are women selected from an early age from among the poorest in England, and they consider the qabal their true family and its leader as their true savior. Most of them see "Saint Alice" as a martyr, someone who unjustly suffered in the hands of men and was saved, both from the Inquisition and from male command, by divine intervention. Almost all Daughters are proficient with at least one small, easily concealed weapon, such as a knife or dagger. Some Daughters are trained in the use of firearms and larger blades, and have reached the mid-levels as soldiers. Others develop their roguish skills under the constant and caring supervision of their elder sisters.

A few select Daughters, prized for their intelligence, and after having proved their utmost loyalty to the order, are taken to a secret place deep within the sewers, hidden even from the other sisters. There, they are introduced to the arcane arts and the most skilled have the honor of meeting "the living saint" herself. This only adds to their already feverish loyalty.

Alice, however, is quite wary of the possibility of a new hag rising from her army and taking her place, so she is always inspecting these women very closely. She will typically *charm* or *hypnotize* those women who are closest to her, sometimes reinforcing the spells with brews and potions. At the least sign of disloyalty, the poor woman simply disappears and the "saint" proclaims her treason and unworthiness. Those few who are able to escape her clutches are savagely persecuted throughout the country. Alice's word is accepted unquestionably by her followers, as are the commands of her inner circle (who are simply relaying Alice's orders most of the time).

Members of the Daughters recognize one another through a complex series of hand signs and words carefully inserted in a casual phrase, usually a joke about men's faults.

## ADVENTURE IDEAS

- ❖ During the course of a campaign, a female PC is noticed by a member of the Daughters and invited to join the order. As the Daughters' most public goals are geared toward the extinction of prejudice against women, she might be tempted at first, only

## BOOK OF SECRETS: GOTHIC EARTH PEOPLE

to discover the truth after a while. As most PCs are remarkable people, it would not take long for the hero to be introduced to “the living saint.” After that, she must decide which side she will join with, but she must know that no one leaves the Daughters of Saint Alice and lives long enough to tell their secrets. Eventually, the PC will have to face the truth of the matter: that the Daughters do not plan to make women be respected by men as equals, but actually plan to enslave and subjugate half the world.

- ❖ A male PC is mistaken for an abusive husband or gigolo and a few of the more radical Daughters decide to teach him a lesson. This might lead to unwanted attention from the local authorities, so Alice decides to get rid of the reckless women. The survivors might turn to the heroes, offering a few secrets of the qabal in return for protection.
- ❖ A trusted member of the Daughters falls in love with a male hero and is forced by the order to pick one of two options: break the PC’s will, or have him killed lest she give away the order’s secrets. This would put the party in serious danger, as one of the Daughters’ higher members holds an important position in the royal court.
- ❖ One Daughter gets a little too fanatical and decides to kill her husband in the same fashion Alice did centuries ago, trying to be granted divine approval. Then she decides to “free her sisters from their burdens,” murdering their husbands as well and becoming a serial killer. Naturally, the “saint” disapproves of these unsubtle tactics and a new hunt is called. This time, however, the Daughters might hire the PCs to investigate, actually using them as “cannon fodder” and to distract suspicious eyes as they close in on their errant sister.
- ❖ A mysterious woman with a strong will and compelling words begins a new female crusade, attracting the attention of the Daughters but not entering the ranks of the Order. Rather, she begins to recruit the younger Daughters for her own group. This woman actually is another, younger hag in disguise, who has uncovered the truth about Alice and decided to take her place. This usurper might hire the PCs to aid her against those “evil women who would do worse to men than men have ever done to them before.” This would place the heroes right in the middle of a power struggle between two evil creatures and their followers, some of who are simply innocent, misguided women.

✕

# BOOK OF SECRETS: GOTHIC EARTH PEOPLE

## THE KATIPUNAN

### A REVOLUTIONARY QABAL FOR GOTHIC MANILA

by Dion Fernandez

avignon@thedoghousemail.com

#### INTRODUCTION

The Katipunan, or the Blood-Brotherhood, is a secretive Philippine secessionist group composed of members from all walks of life who wish to topple the near-tyrannical regime of the Spanish Empire. As nearly every Filipino knows, the group's main goal is to establish an independent Philippine republic through whatever means possible. This is a cover story: the hidden purpose of the Katipunan is to keep the Red Death at bay.

The qabal is subdivided into two groups: the Katipunang Lantaran (the Open Blood-Brotherhood), that which deals with the politics and the revolutionary tactics; and the Katipunang Lihim (the Hidden Blood-Brotherhood), which focuses on fighting the hidden evil. It is the Katipunang Lihim's job to collect and archive each and every form of mysticism and magic in Asia and to fight unnatural evil throughout Manila, specifically the statue called the Nuestra Senora. This latter level of the Katipunan holds a deep-seated belief that in 1521, one of Ferdinand Magellan's crewmen named Antonio Pijafetta was actually a minion of an unexplainable evil. Through the use of the Nuestra Senora now displayed in the Manila Cathedral, Pijafetta brought this evil into the Philippines.

The Katipunan as a whole have several international connections. According to its current leaders the Blood-Brotherhood communicates regularly with agents in Cuba, Puerto Rico, Peru and other Spanish colonies, including Spain itself. It also regularly communicates with other good qabals around the world. The main headquarters of the Brotherhood are located outside Manila, at the foot of a sacred mountain called Banahaw.

#### SYMBOL

The Katipunan's symbol is an upright equilateral triangle with a red outline of the Philippine symbol for "K", sort of a stylized Roman letter "I", inside the

polygon. Members are required to have this symbol tattooed on their left wrist.

#### MEMBERS

The founders of the Katipunan are revolutionaries who want to secede from the Spanish Empire, and who have an ancestral background of adepts and mystics (though this latter information is unknown to the other members). Anyone with a strong resistance to Western imperialism could be invited to join or to become an international agent of the Katipunan.

Membership in the Katipunang Lihim, however, is rather different. Any Katipunan member or agent who has witnessed or experienced an encounter with supernatural phenomena could be considered as one of the subgroup's members, moreso if that person is "pinagpala," or with psychic, magical or mystical abilities. That member is then sworn to secrecy, even to the members of the Katipunang Lantaran, and any lawbreakers would be dealt with accordingly by the Katipunang Lihim's Kataasan ("High Council"). By accepting these gifted members into the fold, the Katipunang Lihim slowly gains advantage over evil through knowledge and innovation.

#### A BRIEF WHO'S WHO

Andres Bonifacio is a founding member of the Blood-Brotherhood. He also works as the Spanish government's liaison to the far-flung Philippine provincias of Ilocos, Cebu, Bangsamoro and Igorrotes. His position in the Katipunan is unknown to the Spanish officials. He is skilled in using a variety of weapons including swords, bayonets, pistols and homemade bombs. A battle-scarred revolutionary, he is a hotheaded individual torn between his loyalties to Spain and the Katipunan. He has no idea of the Katipunang Lihim's existence.

Emilio Aguinaldo, a founding member, is a half-Spanish aristocrat with several connections in Spanish circles, more specifically the officials of Intramuros. He has a compassionate attitude towards the aims of the Katipunan, and his position gives the group a steep

# BOOK OF SECRETS: GOTHIC EARTH PEOPLE

advantage. International agents who need to seek help from the Katipunan are usually referred to him. As with Bonifacio, he does not know that the Katipunang Lihim exists.

Apolinario Mabini is a teacher at the Universidad de Santo Tomas. Sick with a malignant disease akin to polio, he is confined to a wheelchair. He knows of the Katipunang Lihim, and if any of his students or contacts exhibit any unusual characteristics like magic or mystic abilities, he would carefully consider them for membership in the qabal.

Melchora Aquino is an old mystic, and whom the Katipunang Lihim approaches for information on sorcery, mysticism and ancient culture. She was once a victim of the Nuestra Senora's influence, and was lucky enough to escape with her life and sanity intact.

Juan Luna is an internationally renowned painter. His travels to Spain, Portugal and the United States gained him fame and recognition in social circles. He is also an investigator of the paranormal, and thus a vital member of the Katipunang Lihim.

Florencia Silang is an Ilocana, a descendant of the great Philippine revolutionary Gabriela Silang. Only fourteen years old, she is considered "pinagpala" by the Katipunang Lihim due to her mystic abilities. She travels frequently with her father Manuel Silang to Hong Kong and Singapore, and is considered as an international agent.

Graciano Lopez-Jaena is editor-in-chief and publisher of the reformist paper *La Solidaridad*, which is published weekly, has a circulation of 5,000 copies, and has readers from Chicago, Rome, Hong Kong, London and Cairo. As a journalist, he is the most widely known member of the Katipunan and communicates frequently with other international newspapers. He has never heard of the Katipunang Lihim.

Cristina Olenka Cenzone is a Filipino-American agent of the Katipunan, and also a journalist. She has closely monitored the events of the Spanish-American war and what this means for European dominance in the Far East. Her uncanny ability to decipher codes and understand languages, though not mystical or magical in nature, has earned her a seat in the Katipunang Lihim.

Jose Rizal is a physician, and the most intelligent member of the Katipunan. He supervises the work of the Blood-Brotherhood's international agents, being well-traveled himself. He is an expert in eight languages (English, French, Latin, German, Japanese, Italian, Filipino and Chinese), and has gained recognition from his reformist novels *Noli Me Tangere* (*Touch Me Not*) and *El Filibusterismo* (*The Ways of the Heretic*). Unfortunately, he is captured and executed in 1896 by Spanish authorities on charges of secessionism and heresy.

Gregorio del Pilar is a young revolutionary and former member of the failed Qabal Las Espiritistas. He has shown signs of being an adept, a main reason why he was taken into the Katipunang Lihim. The Katipunang Lantaran has seen in him the potential to become a great general in the upcoming revolution versus Spain.

## HISTORY

The beginnings of the Katipunan started even before its foundation. A decade or so earlier a small group of Manila folk had formed a secret group called Las Espiritistas. Armed with knowledge of a dark force emanating from the holy confines of Manila Cathedral, the Qabal nearly succeeded in destroying Pijafetta's Nuestra Senora, until a turncoat reported them to the Dominican Order. All of Las Espiritista's members, save for the traitor and a child named Gregorio del Pilar, were executed in the catacombs under Intramuros.

Sometime in the late 1880s, during the time of the secessionist emergence, a group called La Liga Filipina was formed in Manila. Its primary aim was to seek dialogue with the Spanish government to uplift the already crumbling Philippine condition. Again, due to turncoats, the group was controlled, and its leaders executed.

Also during this critical time, the reformist newspaper *La Solidaridad* was first published, publicly accusing certain Spanish officials and Dominican friars of corruption. Its founder, Graciano Lopez-Jaena, constantly risked life and limb to ensure the paper continued to come out on a regular basis.

A strong force was needed to fight the corrupt leaders. Underground Filipino leaders saw no need to delay the formation of a group to defeat absolute power. On July 7, 1892, a pact was created in the small district of Biak-na-Bato ("Broken Stone"), thus resulting in the formation of the Katipunan. The founders of the Blood-Brotherhood include Graciano Lopez-Jaena, Emilio Aguinaldo, Andres Bonifacio, Melchora Aquino and Jose Rizal. At first, only the Katipunang Lantaran exists.

Slowly in the following years, the fame of the elusive Katipunan spreads throughout Luzon island, inspiring other Filipinos to either join the group or create their own secessionist movements. During this time, the Katipunan's leaders start research on mysticism, ancient culture and magic. Eventually, they stumble upon the documents of Las Espiritistas and recruit Gregorio del Pilar as a member. In March of 1894, the Katipunang Lihim is established under extreme secrecy, unknown even to some Katipunan founders.

## BOOK OF SECRETS: GOTHIC EARTH PEOPLE

A fatal blow strikes the Katipunan in December of 1896 when, after a European tour, the physician Jose Rizal is arrested and jailed in Intramuros. Spanish authorities claim that Rizal's reformist novels are anti-government and suggest secessionism, but the Katipunan know otherwise: Rizal, in his tours across Europe, had discovered the true dark and evil nature of the Nuestra Senora in Manila Cathedral, and had been plotting a way to destroy it. Finally, on the morning of December 30, 1896, Rizal is shot in a public execution on the hill called Bagumbayan.

The Katipunan now face their greatest challenge against Spain's last stronghold of imperialism. However, the Katipunang Lantaran agree that toppling Spain is just the beginning. At their disposal now lie the machinations and the techniques to combat the Red Death in the Philippines, under a cover of political revolution.



# THE LOÇOLICO

## ANCIENT FOES OF THE VISTANI

by Andrew Wyatt

wyaff@kargafane.com

### INTRODUCTION



ei Gott.”

Meinhard fumbled awkwardly for his handkerchief, choking back his rising gorge. The scent that washed over him was as wretched as he had ever experienced. It was the unbearable stench of a sickroom muddled with the wet, runny pall of earthworms after a summer rain. And underneath that there was a dry, musty scent, not unlike that of moldering bones.

The scene before him was even more horrible than the smell, if such a thing was possible. The tiny Hungarian village of Soltvecse was utterly devoid of life. All around him, in the muddy, rutted road that served as the main thoroughfare through the village, lay the corpses of men, women, children, and animals. Their bodies were wasted, the jaundiced skin stretched tight over protruding bones and traced with dark green veins. Watery human waste was pooled everywhere. Every dead eye that looked back at him was bloated tinted the color of pea soup. The village was utterly silent, save for the steady buzzing of flies.

“Doktor Gleisbach?”

Meinhard turned to the elderly Magyar man beside him, blinking. He was lost in the horror of it all, uncomprehending. Slowly, he shook himself back to reality.

“You see now, why I had to bring you here?” the Magyar urged. “Your colleague at the University of Budapest felt very strongly that you should see for yourself.”

Meinhard nodded slowly, licking thick spittle from edges of his lips. He fingered the tiny silver pin on his lapel absently, taking comfort in its familiar candle shape. “Yes. I. I see. There are no survivors, then?”

“Only one.”

Meinhard looked up at the Magyar, surprised at the response.

“He is at a farm a few miles from here. Come.”

The boy looked for the entire world as if he should already be among his dead kinsmen. The wheezy heaving of his tiny, emaciated frame was the only sign of life yet in him. The boy’s eyes were glazed and distant, as if he was gazing at a serene vista visible only to him.

Meinhard sat down on the straw palette that served as the boy’s bed and opened his medical bag. He withdrew a stethoscope and placed it against the boy’s heaving chest, which was slick with sweat. After listening wordlessly to the boy’s erratic heartbeat for a minute, Meinhard turned to the Magyar.

“What is his name?”

The Magyar shrugged, giving him an apologetic look. “If he has family outside Soltvecse, they surely do not yet know what has happened there.”

Meinhard nodded vaguely. He turned his attention to the boy again, who could not have been older than eleven. He must have been stout and strong once, Meinhard thought, and probably handsome. Now he seemed to be waiting to die.

“What is your name, child?” Meinhard spoke gently, but with paternal firmness. The boy did not seem to hear him at first, and Meinhard was about to repeat himself when the boy whispered through cracked lips.

“Iskren.”

Meinhard tried to smile. “Hello, Iskren. I am Doktor Gleisbach from Vienna. Can you tell me what happened to your village yesterday?”

Iskren squinted, as if trying to find the words. “There was a man.”

“A man?”

“He walked into the village just after noontime. The wasting seemed to follow him. My father, he withered away in front of my eyes. It took less than two hours. His bowels seemed to empty his flesh onto the ground.” Iskren’s lips shuddered in anguish and oily tears welled up in his eyes.

“Ikren, the man who came with the wasting,” Reinhard was anxious now. “What did he look like?”



# BOOK OF SECRETS: GOTHIC EARTH PEOPLE

Iskren breathed raggedly. “He was dressed all in black, like a priest. He was dark, like a gypsy. I remember looking at him, at his face. For a moment.”

“Yes?”

“Worms. I thought I saw worms where his face should be.”

Reinhard looked questioningly at the Magyar, who only shrugged.

“Iskren, did the man say who had sent him? Did he say what he was looking for?”

Iskren seemed about to say something, when a creaky voice interrupted from behind Meinhard.

“He was looking for me, Doktor.”

Reinhard turned around sharply to see an ancient gypsy woman standing in the doorway of the tiny farm shed. She was dressed in a simple, loose woolen blouse and skirt, without the gay colors that he would have expected. Her long, dirty-white hair peeked out in frizzy ringlets from the kerchief on her head. Her face was creased and her flesh sagging, but her eyes sparkled darkly with vitality.

Meinhard rose slowly, unsure of how to respond to the old woman.

“This child knows nothing, Doktor. Let him die in peace. If you seek the man who has slain Soltvecse, you will come with me.”

Meinhard took a step forward. “Who—?”

The gypsy woman held up a frail, bony hand dismissively. “You may call me Madame Verica for now. True names have power, and you do not have my trust yet for that.” The gypsy woman paused, considering Meinhard with a cocked head and half-smile. “Perhaps today we can begin to build such trust.”

## THE LOÇOLICO

For centuries, the Rom have spoken in fearful tones of the Loçolico, mortals who were long ago corrupted by the Devil. According to legend, the king of the Loçolico forced Ana, queen of the faeries, to wed him. From this blasphemous union sprung the most powerful of the Loçolico, names the Rom dare not speak aloud: Bitoso, Lilyi, Lolmischo, Melalo, Minceskro, Poreskoro, Shilalyi and Tçaridyî. These terrifying beings walk the earth to this day, spreading disease and suffering wherever they go. Nearly every sickness that can befall a man can be attributed to one of their foul number.

The Vistani know these names as well. They also know that the Loçolico are no mere folktale or superstitious rationale for illness. For as long as they can remember, the Vistani have been watching over their shoulders for the Loçolico. These strange beings perpetually hunt their race, relentlessly dogging their wanderings across the world. All Vistani fear the day they see a lone traveler in black following close behind

them, for that will surely be the day they suffer a fate worse than death.

A mystery even to Gothic Earth’s most mysterious group, the Loçolico are presented here as a plot device flexible enough to be used in almost any *Masque of the Red Death* campaign. The Vistani have never spoken of the Loçolico to outsiders, for to do so would not only reveal one of their greatest secrets, but also one of their greatest weaknesses. But as the tide of the Red Death swells in 1890s, a few Vistani have come to believe that perhaps the time for absolute secrecy and xenophobia is past. The Loçolico seem to be growing stronger with each passing century. Some among the Vistani believe that the Loçolico are powerful agents of the Red Death, who may in time become a threat to all of Gothic Earth (if they are not already).

It should be emphasized that though the Vistani know of the Loçolico, they do *not* understand their motivations. Attempts to divine any information about the Loçolico always fail, a fact that in and of itself frightens the Vistani. Though the Vistani have had enough encounters with the Loçolico to know that the foul creatures want to do their race harm, they have not yet discerned to what end. The riddle of the Loçolico vexes the Vistani perpetually, which in turn makes their fear of their mysterious hunters cut all the deeper.

## LOÇOLICO (GENERAL)

### Unknown Alignment

<b>Armor Class</b>	0	<b>Str</b>	12
<b>Movement</b>	12	<b>Dex</b>	12
<b>Level/Hit Dice</b>	10	<b>Con</b>	13
<b>Hit Points</b>	80	<b>Int</b>	20
<b>THAC0</b>	11	<b>Wis</b>	16
<b>Morale</b>	18	<b>Cha</b>	9
<b>No. Attacks</b>	1	<b>XP</b>	N/A
<b>Damage/Attack</b>	Special		
<b>Special Attacks</b>	Disease		
<b>Special Defenses</b>	Immune to magic, +1 or better to hit, immune to disease and poison		
<b>Magic Resistance</b>	100%		

All of the Loçolico have a similar appearance, being dressed in a thick black robe and cowl, buttoned tightly across a slim human frame. Only the Loçolico’s face and hands are visible, which usually have the skin tone and features typical of the Rom. The face of a Loçolico is otherwise maddeningly unassuming and difficult for witnesses to describe in any kind of detail. A few witnesses—usually children, mystics, or those already infected with serious diseases—have reported glimpsing squirming vermin beneath a Loçolico’s cowl instead of a human face.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: GOTHIC EARTH PEOPLE

## ROLEPLAYING

The Loçolico never speak or show any kind of emotion. They are relentless and deliberate in their actions, and extremely intelligent. While outrunning a Loçolico might potentially be as easy as outrunning any human, outwitting one is nearly impossible. The true alignment of the Loçolico is unknown, but their habit of infecting any innocents that they come across with dreadful diseases suggests that they are either thoroughly evil or chillingly amoral.

The appearance of a Loçolico should be a sinister and terrifying event. They seem to have the ability to track Vistani over any terrain, or find them amid the throngs of a bustling city. Despite the fact that they travel on foot, they always seem to be right behind their quarry. The DM should feel free to attribute any kind of supernatural abilities she feels are appropriate for how she intends to utilize the Loçolico in her campaign. Particularly suitable powers are those that allow the Loçolico to bend the laws of time and space in order to find the Vistani.

## COMBAT

The Loçolico are not warriors. They never defend themselves with weapons, and rarely fight for any longer than it takes to infect all of their opponents (see below). Nonetheless, they spread death with such a chilling casualness that it can give even a stalwart soldier pause.

Loçolico attack by making a touch attack against their opponents. This attack ignores worn or natural armor, though Dexterity and magical bonuses to AC still apply. On a successful hit, the victim must make a saving throw vs. death magic with a –6 penalty or contract a terrible disease. Each of the Loçolico spreads a different disease, and the effects of those diseases vary (see below). Regardless, the effects are always permanent. Victims who are reduced to zero hit points or zero in any ability score die. The incubation period for all of these diseases is astonishingly brief, however, beginning to take effect in only 1d6 turns. The disease of a Loçolico cannot be cured by *cure disease*, but can be removed by *heal*. This simply stops the disease's progress; another *heal* spell is required to remove any adverse effects resulting from the disease.

Once a single victim is infected, a Loçolico's disease can spread on its own through a population. Anyone who comes into physical contact with the original victim must make a saving throw vs. death magic with a –2 penalty or contract the same disease. Curiously, this effect seems to end once a victim dies, so that coming into contact with a diseased corpse does not carry a risk of infection.

Loçolico can only be harmed by weapons of at least +1 enchantment. They are immune to all poisons and disease, including magical ones. Furthermore, the Loçolico are utterly immune to *all* spells and spell-like effects. Magic simply has no effect on them.

**Bitoso** is male, and his face sometimes appears as a mass of squirming maggots. His disease causes symptoms that resemble those of a severe intestinal infection. Infected victims lose one hp permanently every turn.

**Lilyi** is female, and her face sometimes appears as a mass of rotting fish. Her disease causes symptoms similar to those of a catarrhal infection. Infected victims lose one point of Constitution every turn. The victim also become so weak that any exertion whatsoever beyond sitting or resting causes him to make a system shock roll or lose 2d4 hit points permanently.

**Lolmischo** is male, and his face sometimes appears as a mass of squealing, bleeding rats. His disease causes symptoms that resemble those of a skin infection, with weeping sores and severe eczema. Infected victims lose one point of Charisma every turn.

**Melalo** is male, and his face sometimes appears as a mass of blind, slimy bird hatchlings. His disease causes crippling madness. Infected victims must make a madness check every hour. If the check fails, roll on **Table 9** on page 150 of *Domains of Dread* with a –4 penalty to determine the result. The effects are cumulative, and once a victim accumulates a number of madness results equal to half her Intelligence, she dies.

**Minceskro** is male, and his face sometimes appears as a mass of black scarab beetles. His disease causes symptoms similar to a variety of feared diseases, including scarlet fever, measles, and smallpox. Infected victims lose two points of Constitution every turn.

**Poeskoro** is male, and his face sometimes appears as a mass of writhing serpents. His disease causes agonizing joint pain and hugely swollen lymph nodes. The victim loses one point of Dexterity every turn and must make a save vs. death magic to attempt any activity greater than sitting or resting, due to the severe pain.

**Shilalyi** is female, and her face sometimes appears as a mass of hideous centipedes. Her disease causes symptoms resembling a debilitating pneumonia. The victim does not lose hit points or points from an ability score, but becomes completely incapacitated. Any exertion whatsoever beyond sitting or resting causes him to make a system shock roll or die immediately.

**Tçaridyî** is female, and her face sometimes appears as a mass of wet, squirming crayfish. Her disease causes an intense fever that threatens to boil the victim's brain. Infected victims lose one point of Intelligence and one point of Wisdom every turn.



# BOOK OF SECRETS: GOTHIC EARTH PEOPLE

## USING THE LOÇOLICO IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

Like the Vistani themselves, the Loçolico are a mysterious group, their motivations inscrutable. This works to the advantage of the DM, however, as he is free to interpret the Loçolico in a manner that best fits his campaign. Described below are several options for introducing the Loçolico into Gothic Earth.

A note of caution is in order, however. As the above abilities indicate, the Loçolico are powerful opponents, who can easily doom an entire party with a touch. The Loçolico are not monsters to be tackled head-on. Rather, they are enigmas, beings whose appearance can be an excellent springboard to adventure. Heroes should not be expected to face down these creatures, even if they want to. The Loçolico are meant to serve as potent plot devices, particularly if the DM wishes to use the Vistani of Gothic Earth in his campaign.

## AGENTS OF THE RED DEATH: DESTROY THE VISTANI

Perhaps the most obvious answer to the riddle of the Loçolico is that they are bent on destroying the Vistani of Gothic Earth. Though the Vistani do not always work against the Red Death, their meddling nonetheless annoys the Red Death. It perceives the gypsies to be a serious threat to its ascendancy on Gothic Earth. The Loçolico are humans who were long ago corrupted by the Red Death and transformed into powerful supernatural creatures, specifically molded to slaughter the Vistani to the last. Now the Loçolico traverse the globe, ferreting out the Vistani wherever they hide.

## AGENTS OF THE RED DEATH: CORRUPT THE VISTANI

While the Loçolico are in fact agents of the Red Death, their true motivations are much more insidious than even the Vistani suspect. They seek to corrupt the Vistani to the Red Death's side, making them its agents and allies. Too troublesome to ignore, yet too valuable to destroy, the Vistani have been judged worthy of the Red Death's dark attention. The Red Death wants the gypsies on its side, at any cost. The Loçolico are charged with subtly manipulating the Vistani, luring them over to the side of evil one at a time.

## AGENTS OF THE RED DEATH: ONE GOAL AMONG MANY

The Loçolico are indeed trying to destroy or corrupt the Vistani as described above, but this is not their only goal. They act as a secret police for the Red Death on Gothic Earth, perhaps answering to the Seven themselves. Though the Vistani believe that the Loçolico are their own private foes, the Loçolico have left their mark on numerous cultures throughout history. They have hundreds of different names in hundreds of different tongues, but they always serve the Red Death's unfathomable interests. Their primary purpose, however, is to work against the qabals that oppose the Red Death.

## FOES OF THE RED DEATH: DESTROY THE VISTANI

The Loçolico are in fact enemies of the Red Death. Their goal is still to destroy the Vistani, but for a very different reason: the Loçolico believe that the Vistani will be instrumental in cementing the Red Death's power over Gothic Earth. If the Red Death is to be stopped, the Vistani must be stopped. The Loçolico might be avenging celestials, the last remnant of heavenly power on Gothic Earth. Or perhaps they are ancient mortal adepts who have sacrificed their own mortality and souls for the purpose of destroying the Red Death.

## ANCIENT CURSE: DESTROY THE VISTANI

The Loçolico have little, if anything, to do with the Red Death directly. Rather, they are the agents of an ancient curse that the Vistani labor under. The Loçolico seek to destroy the Vistani, but they are merely supernatural heralds of vengeance and justice. The Vistani committed some heinous crime in the ancient past, one that invoked a dreadful curse. The Loçolico now hunt the gypsies relentlessly, which is why the Vistani are nomadic. It is questionable how much longer the Vistani can continue to run from the Loçolico, who for millennia have shown now signs of tiring or ceasing their pursuit.

## CORRUPTED VISTANI: CORRUPT THE VISTANI

The Loçolico were once Vistani themselves. Now they are . . . something else. Perhaps the Loçolico are darklings of such evil that they have become twisted

# BOOK OF SECRETS: GOTHIC EARTH PEOPLE

beyond all recognition. Though they do not serve the Red Death directly, the Loçolico are nonetheless obsessed with corrupting other Vistani. Corruption seems to grant Vistani great power, and the Loçolico take malicious glee in tempting their kin with that power.

## CORRUPTED VISTANI: DESTROY ONE ANOTHER

The Loçolico are corrupted Vistani, as in the scenario above. They care little for their mundane kinsmen, but they despise one another. They may have personal reasons for this hatred, or perhaps they gain power when they destroy one of their own. Perhaps the Red Death has even promised the last surviving Loçolico a place of power at its side. The Vistani, for their part, are caught in the middle of the conflict, as each Loçolico is convinced that the Vistani are protecting or harboring others of its kind.

## CORRUPTED ADEPTS: CAPTURE THE VISTANI

The Loçolico are ancient adepts who have managed to survive for centuries with the aid of magic. Perhaps they developed a unique variation of the lich formula, or struck an unspeakable pact with the Red Death itself. Regardless, these adepts have long been obsessed with the secrets of the Vistani. They believe that the gypsies hold the key to even greater magical power, or even the secrets to outwitting the Red Death. To this end, they seek to capture Vistani alive, for the purpose of interrogation, magical experimentation, or even sacrifice.



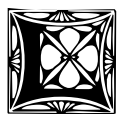
## CARACAS

### A SLICE OF THE GOTHIC CARIBBEAN

by Daniel Bandera

[daniel.j.bandera@us.pwcglobal.com](mailto:daniel.j.bandera@us.pwcglobal.com)

### CARACAS



located near the coast of the Caribbean Sea, the white stone buildings of the city of Caracas stand in contrast to the surrounding tropical jungles of Venezuela. A large city of Spanish design, it is the center of the Venezuela's coffee and beef trade, but like the rest of the country has been racked by revolution throughout much of the past century.

### HISTORY

The land around Caracas was first explored by Christopher Columbus in the early 16th Century, who claimed it for the Kingdom of Spain. The Spanish did not place much interest in the area, as it lacked the precious metals that were discovered in abundance to the north in Mexico. Though a few settlements were established, they were mainly bases for slavers, who would raid the local tribes to find slave laborers for the gold and silver mines of Mexico. This led to bitter hatred of the Spanish by the local tribes, who maintained an ongoing war with the conquistadors for years. In 1567, after more than a decade of fierce fighting, Diego de Losada cleared the area of hostile tribes and created the settlement of Santiago de León de Caracas.

Situated in a fertile land, the settlement was able to become self-sufficient from the start, while the Spanish crown concentrated on developing its other colonies. With agriculture as the settlement's main product, it began exporting a variety of crops to Spain, such as tobacco. The new settlement fell under the rulership of the Viceroy at Bogotá, but due to the distance between the two cities, Caracas maintained a degree of independence.

In the 1600s, the use of the cocoa bean to manufacture chocolate and as a narcotic became very popular, and the fertile lands around Caracas were prime growing areas for these crops. Trade for the little settlement exploded, increasing the need for slaves to work the cocoa fields. To pay for the slaves, plantation

owners began smuggling their excess produce to Dutch and English ports, where they could receive a higher price for their goods.

Once the Spanish crown learned of the large profits it was losing to this illegal trade it reacted by granting the exclusive trading rights of cocoa to the Caracas Company. The Caracas Company succeeded in reducing the illegal trade, but the low prices it offered the cocoa growers led to resentment. In 1749, a rebellion of poor cocoa growers in the interior of the country began. The rich land owners of Caracas discreetly offered aid to the rebels, but when a large contingency of royal forces arrived to quell the rebels, the aristocracy withdrew their support and the rebellion was crushed.

The first successful revolution would have to wait another fifty years. This revolution was led by Francisco de Miranda, who came from a wealthy Caracas family. Miranda had a vision of South America similar to that of the United States, which had won its independence only a few years before.

After a failed attempt at popular insurrection, in the first decade of the 19th Century, Miranda was exiled to England. There he remained until he met Simón Bolívar Palacios. Together they returned to Venezuela in 1810 to lead a revolution. The timing could not have been better. Spain had been conquered by Napoleon in 1808, but due to the strength of the British navy, he could not exert control over Spain's many colonies.

With Miranda leading the way, the Caracas *cabildo*, the city council, declared Venezuela independent from Spain and set up a congress and constitution for the new country. The First Republic of Venezuela did not last long. Many of the country's major cities did not recognize the rulership of the Caracas congress, and instead declared their support for the French dictator. By 1812 the rebellion had been crushed and Miranda hauled away to a Spanish prison. Meanwhile Bolívar escaped to New Granada (Colombia) and became the new head of the Latin American independence movement.

In 1813, uttering the battle cry he would make famous, "war to the death," Bolívar's forces captured

# BOOK OF SECRETS: GOTHIC EARTH PLACES

Caracas and declared the Second Republic of Venezuela, with Bolívar as dictator. The Second Republic was as unsuccessful as the first. Its major failing was the lack of support from the commoners, who regarded the local landowners with more hatred than the King in far off Spain. In 1814, royalist forces recaptured Caracas and sent Bolívar fleeing the country again.

Bolívar returned in 1816 to take charge of a new rebellion. This time started among the commoners of the interior, Bolívar added European mercenaries to his forces and succeeded in liberating much of western Venezuela and Colombia. In 1819, with Caracas still in royalist hands, a Third Republic was established with Bolívar as president. It was in 1821 that Bolívar finished the liberation of Venezuela and the new Republic of Gran Colombia was created.

While Bolívar continued his war against the Spanish forces in Peru and Ecuador, the new republic faced its first challenge. The citizens of Caracas resented being ruled from Bogotá, and under General Páez, Venezuela declared its independence from Gran Colombia in 1829.

The long decades of the war for independence left the economy of cocoa growers in ruins. Thus it was simple for the nation to adopt the new cash crop, coffee. Over the next ten years the high price of coffee would keep the country stable. By 1846 coffee prices had fallen, resulting in General Páez's fall from office, to be replaced by General José Tadeo Monagas. Another dictator, he ruled harshly, though he did abolish slavery in 1854. Monagas was driven from power in 1858, leading to a period of chaotic warfare, known as the Federal War. The country did not become stable again until 1870 when Antonio Guzmán Blanco became a dictator. His rule lasted until 1888, during which time he increased the public well being with education and construction of much of the country's infrastructure.

A student riot in 1888 led to Guzmán's relinquishing control and to another period of chaos lasting until 1892, when General Joaquín Crespo takes control of a military regime. Most of his reign is spent fighting against other power-seekers, until he is killed in 1898. He is replaced by yet another military ruler, General Cipriano Castro, who is still in power at the end of the century.

## Forbidden Lore

This splendid city of South America from which the roots of revolution grew, faced the horror of war numerous times over its history. Ghosts of the natives killed by slavers in the 16th Century, rebellious peasants killed in the uprising against Spanish rule in the early 1800s, and soldiers killed in the many civil wars through the latter part of the 19th Century are all rumored to stalk the city at night.

In recent years, the local rancheros have reported a large increase of fatal attacks by vampire bats on their cattle. Local officials are baffled since vampire bats typically do not drain their victims dry, however, recently a number of cattle have been found drained of almost all of their blood. There is speculation that the vampire bat population has grown to such a large size that it forcing the bats to be more aggressive in their search for food. The truth is more diabolic. One of the wealthy cattle ranchers, Miguel Santiago, is behind the attacks. Santiago is a wererat, who controls large flocks of vampire bats that roost near the city. He lives on a large ranch on the outskirts of the city and uses the bats to attack other ranchers' cattle. As more cattle die, the price of beef will go up, increasing the value of his own cattle.

Rumors and myths abound of men that can take the form of giant snakes, living in the interior of the country. At least one were-anaconda (see *The Book of Secrets*) is known to inhabit the wild region of forest on the southern shores of the Lago de Valencia, Valencia Lake, southwest of Caracas.

Approximately one hundred miles east of Caracas is the Laguna de la Tacarigua, the lagoon of the stained water. The waters of this lake are almost black. While the locals believe this phenomenon represents a evil mystical presence, the reason is actually geological. The area around the Laguna de la Tacarigua rests on top of a large petroleum reserve. It is this that stains the lake's waters black. The dark waters of this large lagoon are connected to the sea through a narrow strait. Many islands of various sizes dot the lagoon, and give it the appearance of a tropical paradise; however, a small school of reavers lairs in the deeper waters of the lagoon. Legends of these devil men of the deep cause the local inhabitants to shun the lagoon and the surrounding area.



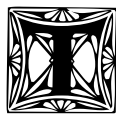
## MINNESOTA

### HORRORS IN THE NORTH STAR STATE

by Mike S.W.

[count\\_strahd@excife.com](mailto:count_strahd@excife.com)

#### HISTORY



Two Frenchmen, who came to hunt furs sometime between 1654 and 1660, are generally credited with having been the first European explorers to reach Minnesota. They were Pierre Esprit Radisson, and Medart Chouart, sieur de Groseilliers. In 1679 Daniel Greysolon, sieur du Lhut, made peace between the Sioux and Chippewa where Duluth now stands. At Mille Lacs Lake he claimed the region for France. Father Hennepin went up the Mississippi in 1680 and discovered St. Anthony Falls. Between 1731 and 1743 Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, sieur de la Verendrye, and his sons established a canoe route from Lake Superior to Lake Winnipeg. After the French and Indian War, France ceded all land east of the Mississippi to Britain. British companies—Hudson's Bay and North West—controlled the fur trade. Grand Portage was the chief post.

Britain ceded the land east of the Mississippi to the United States in 1783. Twenty years later, the United States bought the western area in the Louisiana Purchase. President Thomas Jefferson sent Zebulon M. Pike to explore the upper Mississippi in 1805. The American Fur Company took over the fur trade in 1816.

In 1819 United States troops established Fort St. Anthony at the mouth of the Minnesota River. After 1825 it was called Fort Snelling. Lewis Cass reached Cass Lake in 1820. Major Stephen Long located the 49th parallel in 1823. Henry Schoolcraft established the source of the Mississippi as Lake Itasca in 1832.

Missionaries began to work among the Native Americans, and by the mid-1800s they had developed an alphabet of the Sioux language. The present state capital is named for the Chapel of St. Paul, which Father Lucian Galtier built on the city's site in 1841. In 1837 the Indians had ceded their land between the St. Croix and the Mississippi rivers. The opening of a land office at St. Croix Falls in 1848 drew many settlers. After Congress created the Territory of Minnesota in 1849 and the Sioux gave up land in the south and west

in 1851, more settlers arrived. The Chippewa ceded timberland in the north in 1854–55.

On May 11, 1858, Minnesota became the 32nd state. Almost 22,000 troops from the new state served in the American Civil War. After the first of these troops left in 1862, the Sioux rose and massacred more than 400 settlers in the Minnesota River valley. They were later defeated near the German settlement of New Ulm.

After the war, many more settlers came from Europe. Railroads spanned the state. Most of the farmland was golden with wheat. Lumbering is peaking as a business in Minnesota. Also at this time Minnesota is providing most of America's iron ore, discoveries of huge taconite (low-grade iron ore) deposits on the southern edge of Minnesota's Mesabi Range and the development of a commercially feasible method of processing the taconite gave new thrust to this valuable industry. The first iron ore shipment from the Vermilion Range was made in 1884; from the Mesabi Range, in 1892. Minnesota's favorable growing season helps make it a leading agricultural state.

#### Forbidden Lore

The dark grasp of the Red Death permeates the very air in Minnesota, making the chill winter winds seem that much colder. Though Minnesota has been tainted by the touch of the Red Death the land itself seems to be fighting back. For some reason unknown to the Red Death and its minions, lycanthropes seem unable to enter most of the state, with the exceptions of a few places around the borders. This odd protection seems to be the result of an ancient spell that was cast here just a few years after the European settlers came to the New World. It is believed that this powerful spell was cast by the ancestors of the present day Chippewa Indians to protect their land from the terrible evil they sensed coming with the newcomers.

Of course this minor problem has not stopped other minions of the Red Death from bringing the foul touch of evil to Minnesota. Some of the more common beings

# BOOK OF SECRETS: GOTHIC EARTH PLACES

of terror in Minnesota are living scarecrows (see the Golem, Necrophidius and Scarecrow entries in the *Monstrous Manual*) which populate the farmlands of the state. The land is also infested with all manner of non-corporeal undead, especially shadows and wraiths. While corporeal forms of undead are present, they are very rare.

## Ice Spectres

The 1862 massacre of about four hundred settlers by the Sioux in the Minnesota River Valley created many spectres that now haunt that area. Unlike normal spectres they do not drain energy levels. These spectres drain heat (this power is exactly the same as the Heat Drain power described for Jezra Wagner in the *RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM Appendix I&II*) and leave their frozen corpses to scare away intruders from their lairs. These minions of darkness are only active during the long winter months and disappear as soon as all of the snow has melted off the ground till next year.

## The Red Rock

In the township of Newport, which is only about ten miles southeast of St. Paul, there stands a curious monument to the former residents of this area: a large stone on the east side of the Mississippi River called the Red Rock. The Sioux once used this large stone for ritualistic purposes. The name “Red Rock” was a misnomer in reference to a ritual the Sioux used to perform annually at the stone to ensure a year of good hunting. The Indians would paint red stripes on the stone with red pigment. They would then proceed to chant and pray around the stone for the rest of the night. In the past few years the Sioux who used to continue this ritual even after Minnesota became a state have stopped coming to pray at the stone each year. Two years after the Sioux last performed this ritual a young Sioux female named Eyes of a Fox came to the Red Rock and performed the ritual again—with one small difference. She did not use paint but human blood to paint the stripes on the Red Rock. This evil act transformed Eyes of a Fox into a zombie lord (see *RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM Appendix I*) the corrupting influence of the power she has gained has prompted Eyes of a Fox to use that power to take revenge on the citizens of Newport for driving her people off their land.

## Fatal Storms

Southern Minnesota in recent years has been plagued by unusually frequent visitations by tornadoes. In fact on July 13, 1890 two distinct tornadoes form: one a few

miles north of St. Paul, and the other, especially violent and destructive, on Lake Pepin. In both storms over 100 people perish, and a considerable amount of property is destroyed. Some theorize that the sudden increase in storm activity is being caused by a powerful demon. This theory is of course scoffed at by most. What most don't realize is that what they take for a storm is actually a living creature. A pair of tempests (see the Elemental, Composite entry in the *Monstrous Manual*.) that long ago became trapped on Gothic Earth have been corrupted by the Red Death. Now their normally chaotic dispositions have been peppered with acts of intentional malice and hate.

## A Dirty Little Secret

A small town called Coon Rapids has cut off all contact with the rest of Minnesota and the outside world. It is rumored that a doppelganger plant has transformed most of the citizens of this town into podlings (Both of these creatures are detailed in the *RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM Appendix I*) and now it seeks to extend its influence further into Minnesota. Several agents of the forces of good have gone to investigate this matter but none have returned.

## Federal Courts Building

Bad luck has fallen on the crew building the Federal Courts Building in the city of St. Paul. It seems that somebody does not wish the project to go forward for unknown reasons and is sabotaging the building site. The workers' foreman has received inconsistent reports about a small winged devil causing all the mishaps. The foreman, Hienrich Kliensasser, believes these tales to be the tales of drunks and negligent workers and has fired any man who even suggests that the bad luck is due to some supernatural influence.



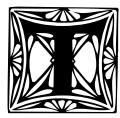
## BOGOTÁ

### A WARTORN LAND IN GOTHIC SOUTH AMERICA

by Daniel Bandera

daniel.j.bandera@us.pwcglobal.com

#### SANTA FE DE BOGOTÁ



his old colonial city, situated in a valley high in the Andes Mountains, enjoys warm springlike weather all year long. Despite the pleasant climate, the city has been the center of much of the country's political troubles that have disturbed Colombia since its founding.

#### HISTORY

European settlement of Bogotá began when Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada, the Knight of El Dorado, conquered Bacatá, the capital of the Chibcha Indians. On the site he founded the settlement of Santa Fe de Bacatá. The Spanish settlers soon corrupted the name to Bogotá. An *audencia* was established to rule the new colony of New Granada. The *audencia* was a tribunal that had both administrative and judicial powers over the colony, but was subordinate to the viceroy of Peru.

As the settlement grew over the years, it maintained a large degree of independence due to the difficulties of travel between Lima and Bogotá. In order to influence more control over the colony, Spain established a new viceroyalty, New Granada, and Bogotá became the capital.

In 1808, when France invaded Spain, Bogotá remained loyal to the Spanish king. But by 1810, a rebellion had grown against Spain amongst the rural workers of New Granada, and the colony was declared independent of the kingdom later that year. Independence did not last long, as numerous factions competed for power in the new country. This infighting weakened the new republic and allowed Spain to reconquer New Granada by 1816.

In the aftermath of the reconquest, Spanish troops committed a number of acts of brutality against the citizens of Bogotá and other cities in New Granada in reprisal for the rebellion. This led to much resentment and many of the citizens of New Granada flocked to the banner of the Venezuelan freedom fighter Simón

Bolívar. After his victory at the Battle of Boyacá, the republic of Gran Colombia was declared in 1819.

The new republic did not last long. In less than a decade, separatists in Venezuela and Ecuador declared independence from Gran Colombia. In 1830, a new constitution was adopted for the Republic of New Granada, with Simón Bolívar ruling as dictator. Half a century later the name of the country was changed back to Colombia.

Beginning in 1840 the political conflict between the Federalists and the Centralist Parties often erupted into civil war over the next forty years. During the twenty-year rule of the Federalists party from 1861–1880, a new constitution was adopted that set limits on the central government as well as the Catholic Church. In addition a number of land reform acts were passed, aimed at giving more freedom to the masses. Instead these reforms allowed the rich to increase their hold over land ownership and forced the native Indians into serfdom. Resentment of these reforms led to rebellion. Fighting these rebellions was hampered by the new constitution, which set a limit on the size of the country's army, keeping it at such a small level that it was prevented from being able to effectively fight the rebels.

In 1880 the Centralists returned to power. Rafael Nuñez, in a fifteen-year-presidency, restored the power of the central government and the church. In 1899 a bloody civil war erupted, led by Federalists who object to these reforms. As the century closes there is no end in sight to this bloodiest of the country's civil wars.

#### Forbidden Lore

Situated on the site of the capital of the Chibchal Indians, their culture still affects Bogotá today. A large minority of the city's population is descended from the Chibchals, and their mystics and adepts are still present among the inhabitants. A number of the evil mystics have been drawn into a secret qabal, called the Arrows of Sagipa, in honor of one of the last Chibchalan kings. The cult's leader is called Authulapac and claims to be

## BOOK OF SECRETS: GOTHIC EARTH PLACES

an ancient high priest of the Chibchal who has come back from the afterlife to expel the infidels from their sacred land. While Authulapac does have minor adept skills, being a 5th-level adept, he is actually a vampire named Thuáshcan. Thuáshcan is of Chibchalan descent, but is not ancient, having been born in 1815 and made into a vampire sometime in the 1840s

Quesada has often been referred to as the Knight of El Dorado, due to his numerous determined attempts to find the legendary golden city in the jungles of Colombia and Venezuela. Many men shared Quesada's dream and joined him on his quests, but most found only death in the dark jungles. Quesada himself died from leprosy contracted during his last expedition for El Dorado at the age of seventy. No one ever found the fabulous city of gold, and most scholars believe the city was only a legend. The truth is unknown, but the jungles of Colombia are haunted by the spirits of a number of men who continue their search for the legendary city.

The residences of Bogotá are use to bands of traveling gypsies wandering into the city. These vagabonds make a living as traveling field hands during harvesting times and supplement their earnings by entertaining crowds with their variant of typical Spanish folk songs and dances. Recently, a number of these bands have fallen under the influence of a darkling, Guiseppi Constantini. Guiseppi is a fallen Vistana; cast out of his tribe in Eastern Europe for an unknown affront, he fled their vengeance, escaping to the New World. Taking advantage of the local gypsies' natural superstitions, he was able to establish a controlling influence over a few of the local tribes. These tribes now earn their living through theft and trickery, while giving tribute from their thefts to Guiseppi. Their actions have given all gypsies a bad name throughout Colombia, and the people are no longer as welcome to see the traveling entertainers as before.





# BOOK OF SECRETS: GOTHIC EARTH PLACES

## MANILA

### A CROSSROADS COLONY IN THE GOTHIC PHILIPPINES

by Dion Fernandez

avignon@thedoghousemail.com

#### MANILA



Strategically located on Luzon island in the Spanish colony of the Philippines, Manila is the crossroads of Asia. It is a perfect blend of the romantic West and the exotic Orient, and rivals cities such as Tokyo and Singapore as the greatest port city in the Far East. Dozens of ships from India, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaya and the East India Company dock at the bustling Manila de Bay every day, making this colonial city the melting pot of the continent.

Manila is also on the brink of chaos: The city faces uncertainty as bands of secessionists roam the countryside. The dominant Spanish regime, not about to let go of their colony's natural, economic and human resources, remains on constant alert against insubordination, and thus considers the city as a stronghold of the empire's waning might.

#### HISTORY

Indonesian and Malay tribesmen founded a small village by the river Pasig sometime in the 10th Century, calling this settlement Maynilad. Until the beginning of the 15th Century Maynilad was a port of call used by Chinese, Arabian and Indian merchants. Eventually, continuous trade among its Asian neighbors brought progress and fame to the settlement, expanding until finally emerging as a small sultanate, ruled over by a sovereign called the Raja.

On April 14, 1521, the Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan landed on Limasawa Island, south of Maynilad. He was later killed in a conflict created by Limasawa's chieftain Lapu-Lapu. Years later, in 1570, the Spanish conquistador Miguel Lopez de Legazpi, under orders from King Carlos I, sent a contingent to defeat the armies of Maynilad's last Raja, Solaiman, and succeeded. Renaming the city Manila, Legazpi declares it the colonial capital of Las Islas Felipenas, and seat of the mighty Spanish Empire in Asia. Spain

ordered trade between Manila and its Asian neighbors closed.

In succeeding years Manila became a key city in the Pacific galleon trade with Acapulco in Mexico. The oldest European university in Asia, Universidad de Santo Tomas, opened its doors to the native folk. Manila also became the seat of the Roman Catholic Church in the Far East, delegated by Dominican friars who helped build the massive Manila Cathedral, a masterpiece of Baroque architecture located at the city center. The real seat of power, however, lay nearby at the walled enclave of Intramuros, the so-called "city within a city." Within its black walls the governor-general of the Philippines ruled his colony with an iron fist.

On July 23, 1762, in a small footnote of the Seven Years War, a British general named William Draper commanded a fleet to occupy Manila de Bay. Some days later the British occupied Intramuros and ruled Manila until 1764. In that year Spain and England agreed upon a pact, and as a result the former once again regained power in the Philippines.

In the year 1830, in what seemed to be a message of goodwill, Spain reopened Manila's doors to international trade. Thus began a period of economic boom unprecedented by anyone since 1570. A steady flow of rural folk from outlying towns emerged regardless of political and religious restrictions and maltreatment. The city grew eastward, from the low cliffs of Manila de Bay to the flat lands and hills of the east bounded by the vast Lawa de Laguna. The grid plan was still maintained ever since the Spanish seized Manila: the Spanish nobility still surrounded the Cathedral and its sacred grounds, while the less fortunate native folk (called "indios") still had to stay farther away from this sanctuary.

Calls for reform and even secession from the mother country Spain were sounded within the eight rural districts, called provincias, surrounding Manila, but these were easily quelled by the Spanish government and the Dominican Order. On July 7, 1892, a small group of secessionists bands together to form the Katipunan ("The Blood-Brotherhood"). This

# BOOK OF SECRETS: GOTHIC EARTH PLACES

collective, active up to the close of the 19th Century, aims to resist any and all forms of European oppression to found an independent Philippine republic.

The city still retains most of its Baroque architecture, beautifully blending in with the native Indo-Malayan style. A few recognizable Chinese structures stand, especially in the district of Binondo. Victorian architecture is rare, though the Manila Cathedral supports a few adaptations of the style, ever since it was rebuilt in 1874 after part of its structure collapsed in an earthquake.

In the 1890s Manila is fast approaching a period of political upheaval and revolution. Calls for independence from Spain are frequent in dialogues between the city folk. The Spanish government, including the Dominicans, keeps a tight head even if both are slowly loosening their grip on an already hot situation. The ever-vigilant Spanish Guardia Civil keeps watch over the actions of the secretive Katipunan as word of its mission spreads throughout Luzon and the Visayan islands far to the South.

These she uses to terrorize the folk of Manila, and to effortlessly control secessionist uprising against both the Spanish government and the Red Death

Many more, probably fictitious, stories and accounts abound, from the white-clad maiden who walks the quiet neighborhood of Balete to the restless coffins of the Great Churchyard. No vampires abound, yet reports of other walking undead are more rampant and multitudinous than ever. There are also a number of reports of “aswang” (raksashas) and kwei terrorizing the eight provincias.

With Manila under siege due to gossip, speculation, and talk of revolution and civil war, no one could really be sure of anything. Every story, no matter how ridiculous or outlandish, is considered as fact. In a place where cultures blend in an uneasy truce, and where loyalties and sides are blurring, no one, not even the secretive Katipunan, could be trusted.



## Forbidden Lore

As a cosmopolitan city that ironically still retains its ancient tribal ways and huge passion for religion, many of Manila’s inhabitants still talk about things no one could really explain.

Ancient spirits of Maynilad still walk the urban streets, crying for vengeance due to the destruction of their simple pacifist culture. Raja Solaiman’s ghost is still said to walk the district of Tondo and the Pasig riverside, now both covered with sewage and refuse.

Hideous ghouls and banshees stare into houses at night, striking terror into those who see them. Headless men holding torches walk the rice paddies outside the city. Nighttime at Manila de Bay brings reports from night watchmen who claim to see clear outlines of sunken ships and galleons bathed in a faint blue light sailing on the horizon. Worse still are the almost weekly reports of dead bodies by the bay’s edge, killed for no visible reason. Some say a murderer with the power to move objects with his mind is responsible for the killings, others say that the elusive bayfolk, half-man half-shark, are to blame.

Huge white spectral dogs wander about the streets of Intramuros at night. Old folk also have accounts of hag-like creatures flying with huge bat wings, perching on rooftops and feeding on life forces.

Somewhere in the provincia of Tarlac lives an old woman named Katarina Trinidad. The Katipunan see her as a minion of the Red Death. According to the liberationists’ reports Katarina is well over two hundred years old, and was given the power to create endless hordes of flesh golems, of different forms and features.

# RAPA NUI

THE GODS ARE SILENT, THE LAST CIRCLE IS BROKEN

by Hugo Viegas Nascimento

shadowspawn\_the\_dragon@hotmail.com

*There is no place in the world more  
solitary than this island, all alone in the  
largest ocean of Earth.*

—Michel Croce-Spinelli,  
*The Island of the Stone Giants*

## HISTORY



From the end of the eighteenth century to the close of the nineteenth, history speaks of the many triumphs, scientific discoveries, and glorious growth of human civilization, reaching the farthest corners of the world. However, it usually fails to mention the price. The effects of regular contacts between different cultures, for example, range from slow cultural absorption and the consequent downfall of ancient traditions to outright devastation. Such was the condition of most aboriginal cultures met by European expeditions since the fourteenth century, and as the “civilized world” advanced, so did corruption, social segregation and, worst of all, the Red Death and its minions. The Ancient Enemy quickly expanded its wicked talons throughout the conquered lands, destroying each and every magical or philosophical attempt to stop its progress, under the disguise of a “civilized approach on primitive behaviors”.

This was the case with a small, isolated island some 2,500 nautical miles away from Tahiti, called Easter Island by the Dutch Admiral Roggerween, as his ship came close to one of the island’s only two shores on the Easter Sunday of 1722. His crew was frightened at first by the sight of the dozens of giant heads that seemed to encircle the entire island. For hours they thought of sea monsters and old legends, until they

could see normal-sized silhouettes walking around the giants.

Admiral Roggerween did not even set foot on land, as the tattooed natives looked savage and dangerous. When they came near the ships on their long canoes, he ordered the cannons to fire at any native boat that came too near. The thunderous roar, the smoke and the obvious deadly effects of those strange weapons startled the natives, who quickly turned back to the island. As he did not see a single palm tree on the barren shores, the Admiral took the island for a cursed place and left it behind, scarcely sparing it a second glance.

More than fifty years passed before another expedition arrived at the island. That time, and on each new fleet that came through the next hundred years, communication between natives and visitors was slowly made possible, and a small portion of the place’s history was finally unveiled. Unfortunately for the local inhabitants, it only added to the common sense that aborigines were uncivilized people who needed to be “helped and enlightened.”

From the natives, the Europeans and South Americans learned that the island was originally called Rapa Nui, meaning “The World’s Navel,” because it was believed to be the most isolated place of the Great Ocean, and was actually considered by its inhabitants the very center of the world. They also explained how their ancestors came to the island more than a thousand years before, having departed from a far away land named Marae Renga (probably Polynesia) boarding long canoes and following their spiritual and secular leader, King Hotu-Motua. By that time, the island had been a lush tropical garden, full of plant life. But now, at the end of the nineteenth century, it was little more than a desolate rock surrounded by gusting winds and high waves in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

By the 1890s, Easter Island has developed a little, but a lot remains to be done (and discovered). Archeological expeditions visit the island when the weather permits. The same blasts of chilling winds and gales, that greeted the first natives hundreds of years ago, still make sea travel difficult and shaken at best,

# BOOK OF SECRETS: GOTHIC EARTH PLACES

impossible at worst. More than one ship has sank while trying to reach one the island's only two beaches. It looks as if the island itself does not want people to set foot on its exhausted lands, on its barren soil.

From all sides, rows of stone giants silently stare at the visitors and the sea behind them. Almost no statue is complete, most no longer wear the exquisite flat bonnets Admiral Roggerween saw adorning their heads more than a century ago. There is little natural plant life, although legends tell of a vast jungle. The few, scattered small palm trees and bushes have been planted by the previous expeditions in an attempt to grow new food sources. But it seems that the earth refuses to create new life, as if the whole place had been cursed. And the truth is not far from this.

The less than one thousand natives who still live here have chicken and fish as their major food sources. All of them are considered Catholic, and no one seems to even remember the traditional ways of their old religion. They look like people who need guidance and support. It is difficult to believe that this island has housed thousands of natives who somehow managed to raise such gargantuan beauties, such exotic totems, whose purpose is all but forgotten. No one can read the carvings and paintings on the stone walls, and even their native language is so mixed with Spanish that no native seems able to speak a whole sentence in Rapa Nui's ancient idiom.

## FORBIDDEN LORE

King Hotu-Motua the Founder was not the savage native the European priests believed him to be, but actually a wise man from a lineage of powerful shamans. A few hundred years before, his ancestors had been advised by their Ancient Gods about an invisible, unreachable entity they simply called "The Enemy of the Gods", that had arrived in a faraway land and was, slowly but steadily, dominating entire nations and destroying the cults of nature spirits, corrupting shamans and the very Mother Earth. Unbeknownst to them, they were actually referring to the Red Death, which was spreading its influence over Africa and the Middle East.

At that early time, that malevolent entity was either unaware of their knowledge (as they learned of its existence through indirect means) or too busy striking down the last remnants of the Defiance, so they were relatively safe for a while. But they knew their time would come, and instead of fighting, they decided to withdraw and build up defenses.

They had set plans for a whole immigration to an isolated place, where they would once again commune with the Ancient Gods and create a colossal mystical barrier, preparing themselves against invasions of all kinds, both material and spiritual. After centuries of

preparation, when the tribes were ready to go, Hotu-Motua took upon himself the responsibility of guiding his people from their old homes into a holy quest for their sacred haven.

They left Marae Renga (possibly Polynesia) in long canoes, oared by hundreds of men. None of the surrounding islands served their purposes, for if they could easily reach them, so could The Enemy. They traveled for several weeks, fighting gales and schools of ravenous sharks, fishing and stopping here and there at small rocky islands to gather water and coconuts. When they had almost lost all hope, the scouting canoes brought back the long-expected news: there was a tropical island in the direction of the rising sun, away from all others, full of plants and animals, and with a small, dormant volcanic mountain chain. The island was very difficult to reach, for the currents led elsewhere, and the howling winds and huge waves were quite deadly.

Hotu-Motua was happy with the discovery, and against all odds the united tribes landed there, even though dozens of people either had drowned or been eaten by sharks. The survivors took their long canoes from the water and turned them upside down, using them as their first tents and at the same time making sure they would never leave the island again. They named the island Rapa Nui, the World's Navel, for two reasons: first, because of its obvious isolation in Mother Earth's watery "belly", and second, because that place would be, in the future, the only connection between material life and the spiritual world. Like a infant's navel that had to be cut once he was born, and kept as a reminder of his link with his mother, Rapa Nui would be cut from the rest of the planet and stay as a spiritual link to Mother Earth.

But their holy task was just beginning. The shamans, fetishists and mystics gathered around the communal fire and laid plans which would take generations to fulfill. They were to go into the volcanic mountain and carve giant totems called "Tikki" for the Ancient Gods, to be imbued with the spiritual essence of their own dead, and would plant such statues on the shores and hills all around the island, magically sealing it.

Once set, the massive cooperative spell would make the island invisible to the eyes both of mortal men and of The Enemy. Their gods and nature spirits would have enough concentrated energy to maintain the spell active for centuries. And, once the world outside once again found peace and turned back to the ways of the Ancient Gods, only then would Rapa Nui become visible again.

Their first problem was to gather enough people to carve and transport all of the giant statues. A small group of brave men traveled back to Marae Renga, to tell their relatives and friendly neighbors about the holy

# BOOK OF SECRETS: GOTHIC EARTH PLACES

place and call them to go there, while the vast majority of the population began to learn the necessary crafts. For years, no one did even come close to the volcanic rocks. From father to son, they taught each other how to shape the stone and make sturdy wooden carts of the trees, to carry the statues to their final resting places. From mother to daughter, they learned how to paint and decorate the images. Both men and women passed the enchanted songs of summoning and hailing spirits throughout generations. When Hotu-Motua died an old man, no statue had yet been erected. His body was buried and his soul contained through old spells, awaiting the First Ascension. Meanwhile, more canoes came from Marae Renga, bringing more families, animals and plant seeds.

Little more than two centuries had passed since their arrival when they finally felt sure of their skills and the time came for the First Ascension. They slowly and carefully cut the stone and took it away from its bedrock, erecting the first Tikki. They consecrated the idol bidding Hotu-Motua's spirit to it, with visible success. It seemed that their plan would work, after all.

However, unbeknownst to the fugitives, the very same strategy they were using against the Enemy of the Gods would be the cause for their undoing. After first entering Gothic Earth, the Red Death was still too weak and small to spread its influence over many lands at once. When the Lost Kingdom used ancient and powerful spells to seal itself against the intrusion of the Enemy, the malignant entity grew wary of further such attempts. As Hotu-Motua's spirit was bound to the first Tikki, thousands of miles away, the Red Death immediately stirred, sensing gigantic magical waves coming through the land, from an unknown source.

Believing that either the Lost Kingdom had reappeared or another group of mortals was about to gain the upper hand against it once again, the Red Death immediately set about to send minions from Asia to find and undermine those efforts. Conscious that it would be impossible to properly infiltrate the whole Asian continent and find the hidden place in a short period, it decided to change tactics in that particular matter, rapidly spreading minions to various places at once, all going farther to the East, planting only a few seeds of evil in the way, while looking for the exact direction of its daring foes. The opportunity finally came, in the hands of the very ones who would try to do their best to avoid its influence entirely.

Happy with their apparent initial success, the natives feverishly labored day and night, giving little importance to everything else. They knew that, despite their better efforts, it would still take many generations for them to finish their holy task. They made more Tikkis and set them in lines across beaches and hills, intent to face the Great Sea at all sides and thus close

the warding barrier. For a brief moment, it looked like they would win the race against evil.

But, as the years passed and new generations followed the elder ones, the younger natives started to doubt the priority of that task. With the continuous arrival of more and more families from Marae Renga, it seemed clear that Rapa Nui was not at all as isolated as their ancestors had thought. And they never imagined how disturbingly correct they were. At some point during the thousand-year immigration, minions from the Red Death finally landed there. The Tikkis already in place and the powerful spirits bound to them effectively warded Rapa Nui against two-way mystical communication, so that the Enemy was still partially blinded to their true goals and means of fulfilling them, but its followers were wise and patient. Subtly they ascended to positions of influence and started to weaken the moral and old beliefs. Content that its minions had certainly arrived in the hidden place (as they partially lost contact with their primary source of corrupted power but were still alive), the Red Death left them for their own devices and continued with its subtle growth towards the West.

The arrivals of canoes were followed by a few departures, too. Some people started to think of their governors and mystics as crazy old crones, full of old superstitions. They decided to escape the island before it overpopulated, but instead of going back, preferred to follow the same direction, going to the rising sun. Those eventually reached the west coast of South America. As the Red Death had not yet taken a firm root in Rapa Nui, it was unable to follow those islanders to the New World, and they were relatively safe until the arrival of the Spanish conquerors in South America. These were few and far between, though, compared to the much larger number of arrivals.

Soon a new generation replaced the old, and a new structure of power was established in Rapa Nui: not only the Royal Family members were rulers, but every distant relative to them considered him- or herself a ruler, too. Two castes were defined: the Long Ears (rulers) and the Short Ears (commoners). The Long Ears refused to help in the carving, painting and carrying of the stones, saving themselves for the "more subtle and important task" of enchanting the stones. By that time, an ever-growing number of Red Death minions took positions among the Long Ears, feeding the social prejudice. They took most of the food production for themselves, leaving the Short Ears with barely enough goods to keep a rough survival. Many Short Ears starved and some became sick, but then the Long Ears whipped them into slavery.

Eventually, a civil war exploded. The Tikkis themselves were a matter of ever decreasing importance in light of the power struggle, the reason behind then left behind as a foolish superstition. The starved,

## BOOK OF SECRETS: GOTHIC EARTH PLACES

oppressed Short Ears began to undermine the work, and finally attacked the lazy Long Ears. At first, their guards were able to suppress the weakened rebels, but in the end the chaotic masses overthrew them all. Unfortunately, the peoples had grown so devoted to the holy task that they forgot more mundane affairs and even the other aspects of natural life, having destroyed every last palm tree in order to make rolling devices for the increasingly large stone idols, which had been devoid of true devotional power for a few years. Such new Tikkis were unfinished and inappropriate for their holy task. They simply interrupted the line of protection and weakened the warding circle even more. The psychic effect was obvious, as the population broke into an outright massacre.

As if it were not so bad already, the famished Short Ears, seeing the devastation they had caused to the land and blaming the Long Ears for that, decided to resort to new, even more wicked methods. They reasoned that, if the Long Ears had deprived them of food, then the Long Ears should replace that food, with their own flesh if necessary. So they added cannibalism to the list of atrocities. Disgusted, the nature spirits turned away from the people, and the oldest Tikkis, which once had been able to subtly communicate with the wise men, became silent. Deep within the first Tikki, Hotu-Motua's soul wept.

Then, one morning, everything changed. Strange, huge canoes came from the sunrise horizon, with white clouds right above them. The Long Ears thought them to be gods, finally coming to rescue them. But when they approached the ships, thundering roars and bloody destruction greeted them. They turned back and would never again try to reach the gods. The Red Death, whose minions had subtly infiltrated most expeditions, smiled as it was finally able to see the results of its centuries-old plan.

Other "gods" came and went during the next century, while the natives became more and more uncultured and savage. They shied away from the white men, but with every new expedition a few more were taken as prisoners or slaves. Then a new king was able to establish a dynasty and tried to reorganize the society, to retake the holy task left behind about one hundred years before, and to prepare a defense against the "evil white gods" from the East.

But it was too late: most of the population had degenerated to a state of total savagery and cannibalism. The Tikkis, which were built to ward off the evil from outside the island, held no power to stop the evil that came from within. Eventually, a fleet of slave ships arrived and took the king, his court and everyone else who tried to approach them as captives. They were sent into slavery in the mines in South America. They rarefied air of the mines and subhuman conditions decimated them. The next year, the local

government was forced by French authorities to release them and send them back to Rapa Nui. From a thousand slaves taken, only one hundred boarded the ship, and only fifteen survived the voyage home. They brought with them memories of the treatment they had received from the continentals, and brought something more: new diseases which quickly spread through the weakened people.

One year later, only about 600 natives were left from a population which had reached thousands. Father Eugène Eyraud came to Easter Island to convert them to Catholicism and "save their souls". They arrested him, tried to torture and experiment with him just as they had suffered from the other white men. But his faith and strong will prevailed, and eventually he converted a lot of them. His assistant, Friar Roussel, managed to gather other priests and started a massive baptism. That gave the natives new hope, but also disrupted the last remnants of their ancient, natural magic. No adepts or mystics had survived in the last years, and no one knew enough of their old ways to pass the knowledge ahead. It seemed that the Enemy had finally won the battle.

Or so it seemed. Actually, one young fetishist was able to secretly show the truth to Father Eyraud. At first he dismissed the information given as mere superstition, but the unnamed man took him deep into the volcanic mountain and showed to him ancient carvings in the very walls. He then demonstrated how the natural magic worked, and was even able to briefly conjure one ancestor spirit, that of Hotu-Motua, who was finally able to talk again. The interior of the volcano was still partially warded against the evil from abroad, as each and every one of the elder Tikkis had been sculpted and raised there with faith and determination. In that last sacred place, Father Eyraud learned of the Enemy and the necessary measures to keep it away. He was reluctant, but in the end he left the cave changed and a bit shaken, believing in the spirit's words.

When he returned to the small village, though, he was attacked from behind by a cloaked stranger, actually a low-rank mummy, one of the last corrupt shamans of the civil war period, risen from the dead by the Red Death. His companion vanished from sight. His wounds festered and the windy sea air helped spread the disease, which was diagnosed as a harsh form of scurvy. Feverish and hallucinating, he was unable to explain to Friar Roussel what had happened to him in the cave, but was resigned that all natives had become Christians. Friar Roussel determined that no one approached the volcanic cave, believing it to be the source of the disease. Father Eyraud died soon after that, the last man to actually know something of the true history of Rapa Nui. Or was he? The mystic native managed to survive the doomed encounter and blended

# BOOK OF SECRETS: GOTHIC EARTH PLACES

with the others of his kind. So far no minion of the Red Death, living or otherwise, has found him or her.

This small island has a disturbing amount of undead creatures. During the civil war, the last Long Ears were eaten alive by their former Short Ears slaves who, as a “reward” from the Enemy, were turned into lacedons (aquatic ghouls). During the day, those foul creatures lurk in the shallow waters offshore, coming to land at night to attack the unwary.

The corrupted Long Ears shamans, who had been buried with mundane honors but no proper spiritualist rites, became first- and second-rank salt mummies (similar to bog mummies), and now slumber in their burial mounds, just waiting for intruders to come. Their touch is venomous, infecting victims with scurvy, a vitamin deficiency which is both lethal in a few weeks and quite difficult to cure, as there are no citric fruit trees in the island (the disease can be normally treated in a long term with large amounts of food rich in vitamin C).

Of the Tikkis, only a few actually hold the spirits of the elders. Most of them are equivalent to geists, unable to ever again communicate with their descendants and teach them the old ways. Such is the punishment the Red Death inflicted upon them. However, Hotu-Motua and his contemporaneous shamans and mystics, who had their souls bounds to the first Tikkis, inside the volcanic mountain, are powerful enough to affect the physical world. They are greater geists and ghosts of variable magnitudes, all anchored to their respective statues. Most of them are able to communicate through images and sounds, similar to first-level illusions, while the Founder can even speak for brief periods, but only in his ancient, long-forgotten local language.

## TIMELINE FOR GOTHIC EASTER ISLAND

**650 (?)**: King Hotu-Motua arrives at Rapa Nui, coming from Marae Renga (probably Polynesia). His scouts tell him that the island is surrounded by windy walls and miles of open sea. He is satisfied that the island is so well isolated. The shamans and mystics start their plans for the protective barrier. At that point, the island is full of local animals and trees.

**856**: After 200 years perfecting their skills, the natives are ready for what they consider their holy task. The first stone giants are built.

**650–1600 (?)**: More canoes come from Marae Renga in small groups. At some point the Red Death succeeds in sending servants to undermine the project from within.

**1680**: Possible starting point of the internal war that will destroy the civilization.

**1722**: Admiral Roggween arrives at Rapa Nui at Holy Saturday and decides to name the island Easter Island after the date.

**1774**: The Sook Expedition visits Easter Island.

**1786**: The Lapérouse Expedition visits Easter Island.

**1816**: The Kotzebue Expedition comes to Easter Island.

**1837**: The Dupetit-Thouars Expedition comes to Easter Island.

**1862**: Slave ships come from Peru to Easter Island; King Kamakoi, his court and the last mystics in the island are arrested; about 1,000 slaves are sent to the Peruvian mines.

**1863**: The surviving Easter slaves are freed and sent back to the island. From the 100 survivors returned, only 15 living arrive, carrying tuberculosis and smallpox. The population is decimated, and only about 600 people are able to survive.

**1864**: Father Eugène Eyraud arrives at Easter Island. Under his command, Friar Roussel and other priests baptize all natives. The natural magic all but disappears from Rapa Nui. The Red Death has won.

**1868**: Father Eyraud finds the truth but is reluctant to accept it. Upon returning to the village at night, he is contaminated with an unknown disease by an ancient dead minion of the Red Death. Soon later he dies, feverish and delirious, convinced and satisfied that all natives are converted to Catholicism.

**1899**: The native population bottoms out at just over 100.



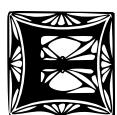
# THE H.M.S. EREBUS

A FLOATING TOMB IN A FROZEN GRAVEYARD—BASED ON A TRUE STORY

By Luiz Eduardo Neves Peret

rakshasa2001@hotmail.com

## INTRODUCTION



Excerpt from the witness report signed by Sir John Lynch, to the Ministry of Defense, on the strange facts registered by Mr. James Silk, first mate on board the *Renovation*, on September 30th, 1851:

“... After many days traveling north of the Arctic Circle, on May 14th, at early morning, we watched in awe as the enormous icebergs crossed our way under the stormy sky, some of them larger than the whole town of Limerick, whose cathedral would look humble in comparison with such gigantic icy needles emerging from the seawater. And our wonder was not over yet, for amongst the gargantuan mountains of ice we saw two ships, old war vessels trapped in the solid ice, one of them several feet above sea level. The other, erected only a few feet over the cold water, had its masts cut as if by a gale, while the higher one was fairly preserved.

“As the iceberg was coming south from the Davis passage, I immediately thought of Sir Franklin’s expedition, lost six years ago. Had we found only one ship, we might deem her to be an abandoned whaler, but seeing both large vessels so close to each other, there was no doubt that they were traveling together. Curiously, although the captain had been immediately informed of the strange event, he would not leave his quarters until much later, as he claimed that he had felt feverish all day. It was up to the first mate to take all decisions . . .”



“Coming dangerously nearer to the iceberg, by two o’clock that afternoon our ship almost reached boarding distance from the less-preserved vessel, the one that is closer to the water, but the first mate thought better of it and decided not to send anyone to the wrecked ship. The name of the battered ship was clear enough to be read under the fading twilight: H.M.S. *Terror*, confirming our suspicions: most certainly the other ship was the H.M.S. *Erebus*, Sir Franklin’s ship.

“The man on watch spotted lights on the ship we thought should be the *Erebus*, but even then the first mate refused to send anyone to investigate. The crewmembers were whispering tales of haunted ships and freezing death, but none would say such words aloud.

“Suddenly, the captain started to act in an agitated manner, shouting orders to everyone, wanting our ship to circumnavigate the iceberg and preparing a boarding party, not to the wrecked *Terror*, but straight to the *Erebus*. Although the first mate strongly disagreed with that order, the captain was adamant about it. In addition, he would lead the party himself.”



“After one hour of fruitless investigation, the boarding party came back. They reported having seen strange lights and hearing noises that reminded them of steam engines and people walking, but no one, not even a frozen corpse, was found. The captain was quite excited, though, and upon returning on board he immediately ordered a change in course, heading further north, with the obvious intention of going straight into the Davis passage.

“The first mate alerted the captain of the dangers in such a course, and asked the captain about the report he would have to make on the discovery of the two ships. The captain almost shot him on the spot, dismissing the warning as cowardice and saying he had better things to do than to write reports on dead vessels. The man had a strange spark in his eyes and a different tone in his voice. At first we thought he might still be suffering from the fever that had attacked him earlier, but there seemed to be something more, and he did not look feverish in the least. Obsessed, yes, but not feverish.”



“The two ships were now just an uneasy memory drowned in the freezing storms that we faced ahead, and we still were going further north. On May 20th, the icy blocks were growing too thick even for our metallic



# BOOK OF SECRETS: GOTHIC EARTH THINGS

double-layered prow. Gigantic icebergs were all around us, threatening to smash the *Renovation* with a single move. Enormous waves and chilling winds were battering the ship without mercy. Yet the captain wanted to go even further north.”



“Fearing for the captain’s mental health, the first mate and other crewmembers overtook the deranged man. Although he was an elder sailor, the captain seemed possessed by a preternatural strength, as it took five men to subdue him. He was finally arrested and confined to his quarters, as the first mate ordered the crew to put the ship on a course in the opposite direction. I think the poor men had never before taken an order with so much relief . . .”



“As we approached the edges of the Arctic Circle, the screams coming from the captain’s rooms that had intensified over the course of the last few days finally stopped. I thought the old seawolf had finally yielded to the fever, but I was mistaken. When a sailor went there to serve him his dinner, he attacked the man. Once again, I must emphasize the fact that the captain should be completely out of his mind, as he easily subdued a strong man of half his age. Then he ran to the poop deck and jumped into the freezing waters before anyone could do anything. It was a shame for all of us, experienced sailors, to let the captain do such a foolish thing, but we all conceded it to the fever. Also, the crewmen restarted the whispered talks about our encounter with the two ships. But at least we were safe, and had lost no more than one crewmember. For all he did due to his final insanity, Captain Coward was a good man, and I think his personal profile should not be tainted by this event. I do recommend him for the Medal of Merit, and submit this recommendation to the wise judgment of Her Royal Majesty.”

## BACKGROUND

Life in the seas can be harsh, as isolation and death always have a watchful eye on the unwary seafarer. When the sea to be crossed is unknown and new passages and safe ports are yet to be discovered, the danger is tripled. Such was the life of the intrepid explorers who were boldly trying to find northern passages that would reduce travel time between the East and West. A few expeditions were crowned by success and glory, while most others only met horrible death, either by disease, starvation, shipwreck, drowning or, in that specific environment, freezing coldness.

One of these legendary expeditions was led by Sir John Franklin, a British explorer who was obsessed with the idea of crossing the seas from England to Russia through the Arctic Circle, northwest of the Canadian territory. He left the Thames on May 19th, 1845, at dawn, commanding the H.M.S. *Erebus*, a four-hundred-ton auxiliary war vessel, adapted by the Royal Navy for expeditionary trips. Along with it went the H.M.S. *Terror*, similar in size and power. Neither ship had metallic layers to protect them from the ice, nor any of the modern contraptions and gadgets so many other British ships already had. The only improvements both ships had received were a new steam-powered engine for each, with the potency of 20 H.P.

Sir Franklin was not scared in the least by the lack of modern equipment on board. He was an experienced sailor, and had chosen his crew one by one, among the bravest and most daring men he could find in the Navy. They were a total of 128 intrepid men in both ships, and since the old war times the two vessels had always traveled so close to each other that most sailors thought of them as only one ship.

On July 30th, the whaler *Enterprise* met the two ships anchored together at Melville Bay, Greenland. That was the last time any human being ever saw the captain and crew alive. By December of 1846, the Admiralty decided that too much time had passed since the departure of that expedition and started a discreet investigation, sending various rescue parties to the Glacial Sea, but by 1857 nothing had been retrieved from the icy waters.

Meanwhile, several captains were officially reported as suffering from a strange fever and acting in an obsessive manner, as if not in full command of their thoughts. At the same time, first officers, navigators and passengers on board different ships began to spread tales of two ships trapped in a gigantic iceberg, floating through the Glacial Sea as a moving tomb. All tales would tell of a ship with the masts broken down and another still in good shape, but taken away several feet over the sea surface by the massive ice. A few ships came close enough for the crews to be able to read the name of the wrecked ship: “H.M.S. *Terror*.”

Lights would almost always be seen on the higher ship. Also, in almost all cases the captain would organize an exploring party, not to the *Terror*, but to the other ship. After returning from the ship empty handed, the seamen would tell stories of strange lights, noises coming from inside the cabins, the smell of steam from the engine and food in the kitchen—but no people, not even corpses. And invariably, right after returning the captain would sink into madness, changing course until his ship was heading straight north. Those ships that were able to return before being caught by the icebergs or maelstroms would always report their missing captains.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: GOTHIC EARTH THINGS

The authorities of Great Britain, Germany, Norway, France, Russia, United States and other nations decided to remain silent about the case, fearing the possible panic that might come. So any and all reports, both official and informal, were banned from the records, and the sailors were advised to stay quiet.

But in 1857 Lady Franklin equipped the explorer vessel *Fox* with her own resources, sending the ship after her lost husband. One year later, the *Fox* brought grim news: they had found an abandoned boat from the H.M.S. *Terror*, with a message inside a bottle.

“April 25th, 1848. H.M.S. *Erebus* and *Terror* trapped in thick ice since September 12th, 1846. The *Terror* suffered terrible losses in a gale. All crew transported to the *Erebus*. By April 2nd, when the iceberg holding our ship approached land, a small part of the crew deserted under the orders of Captain F.R.M. Crozer, but I know we are cursed. Captain Franklin, although almost frozen to death, still had the will to call us cowards and say that no matter how far we go, we will never leave the Arctic Circle. So far nine officers and fifteen sailors have already died a cold death. We will try to reach the Back Fish River tomorrow by foot. The two ships went back north with the iceberg . . .”

At the same time, the British newspaper *Limerick Chronicle* published part of a witness report signed by Sir John S. Lynch, a passenger on board the *Renovation*, which departed from Limerick, Ireland, for Quebec, Canada, in 1851, proving that the Navy had known about the ships for a long time. Lady Franklin desperately tried to find any crewmember of the *Renovation*, and finally found Mr. James Silk, a veteran sailor who confirmed Lynch’s words, saying that the iceberg rose almost three hundred feet out of the water, and the *Erebus* was lifted about half that height.

There was a scandal within the Royal Admiralty. Admiral James M. Shore took upon himself the responsibility of reopening the investigation. First mate Simpson of the *Renovation* confirmed Sir John’s report. Then a somber revelation surfaced: In 1854, under secret orders from the Admiralty, Captain Robert McLure tried to retrace the steps of the Franklin expedition. At some point after having registered the discovery of more than one thousand icebergs of various sizes, he and his crew had to leave their three ships behind and cover part of the way using sleighs to cross the glaciers.

Near the place where the abandoned boat would be found in 1858, they had discovered the remains of a campsite with several bodies. Some had frozen to death, although it was summer, and a few had been decapitated. Their heads were missing. That was one

more of the pieces of information that the Admiralty had decided to hide.

In the mid-1870s, the British fleet had completed a total of forty different expeditions and had spent more than twenty million sterling pounds without discovering anything more than some whispered ghost tales and a few dozen crazy captains apparently committing suicide after trying to follow Franklin’s wake in search of the northwestern passage. Her Royal Majesty stepped forward and declared the case closed. Despite all efforts, so far the passage has not been found.

## THE H.M.S. *EREBUS*

### 4th Magnitude Corporeal Ghost Ship, Neutral Evil

<b>Armor Class</b>	0	<b>Str</b>	– (18/00)
<b>Movement</b>	Special	<b>Dex</b>	–
<b>Level/Hit Dice</b>	11	<b>Con</b>	–
<b>Hit Points</b>	80	<b>Int</b>	14
<b>THAC0</b>	9	<b>Wis</b>	8
<b>No. of Attacks</b>	1	<b>Cha</b>	4
<b>Damage/Attack</b>	See below		
<b>Special Attacks</b>	Create illusions, control weather, curse, dominate captains, telekinesis		
<b>Special Defenses</b>	See below		
<b>Magic Resistance</b>	40%		
<b>XP</b>	10,000 (destruction) or 20,000 (for lifting the curse and finding the northwestern passage)		

The H.M.S. *Erebus* is an old, large wooden war vessel ready to carry a crew of approximately sixty men. It had been retired from service after participating in a few military campaigns along with its companion, the H.M.S. *Terror*, when the Admiralty decided to equip them both with new steam engines and give them to Sir Franklin to find the northwestern passage. Most sailors considers the H.M.S. *Erebus* and the H.M.S. *Terror* to be twin sisters, as both ships were identical, had been made in the same year, always went into combat as a team and finally retired together.

Now, while the *Terror* lies torn and broken at its side, and it has been pushed far away from the seawater by eternal ice, the *Erebus* has been warped and changed. Rather than becoming ghosts and haunts, as has happened to many a man who met his doom in the seas, Captain Franklin and his crew were all made one with their beloved ship. As their bodies froze to death and their strong will and obsession alone were leading them, those men made a vow of finding together the hidden passage north of the Davis passage, even if they had to spend eternity searching. Even those who had deserted under orders of Captain Crozer were included

# BOOK OF SECRETS: GOTHIC EARTH THINGS

in the vow, cursed to die before ever reaching the outskirts of the Arctic Circle.

## CURRENT SKETCH

The *Erebus* still floats on its frozen prison, trying to find a way north. As the currents circulate throughout the year, and the iceberg is pushed forward to the south, but the power of the cursed oath prevents it from ever leaving the Arctic Circle and entering warmer waters where it would melt, ultimately releasing the two ships. The icy island then is carried back by another current and re-enters the frozen seas, meeting thousands of other icebergs and the Greenland glaciers as they slowly glide into the waters.

As the sentient ship somehow understands its inability to reach the passage, it tries to make other vessels do the job (see *Combat*). But so far the *Erebus* has only managed to bring an early death to dozens of captains, and sometimes to entire crews as their ships are not prepared to face the extreme cold and polar storms and to cross the iceberg-infested waters. Until someone finds the northwestern passage (that is, if it exists at all), chances are that the *Erebus* will keep bringing doom to many other ships and crews.

## COMBAT

The *Erebus* is not prepared for a full-scale combat, as most of its weapons have been removed when it was remodeled. It still keeps six cannons on its sides and can fire one per round with its telekinesis ability, but as the ship is not in its correct position, it may find it difficult to aim at other ships. (Cannon damage can be found in the *Ships and the Sea* accessory.) As for its movement, the *Erebus* does not control the direction or speed of the iceberg, dependent on the currents to push it. The only exception is when the ship dominates a captain: then the iceberg slowly turns to follow the ship on its way north, but it floats so languidly that normally the crew will not even notice the movement. It is common for a ship to put one or two days of difference between her and the cursed iceberg.

The *Erebus* usually resorts to subtler methods. It can command the winds and waters in a ten-mile radius, for about ten hours a day. Whenever a ship comes into this radius, the ghost vessel uses its power to create a storm that pulls the other ship nearer to it. Then it makes a debilitating attack on the captain's mind. This attack only works on the ship's captain, even if he is not in charge at the occasion. The captain becomes feverish unless a save vs. spells is made at a -2 penalty.

Once bedridden, the captain is subject to a dominating attack as soon as the ship comes near to boarding distance. A new saving throw vs. spell is

made at a -2 penalty to prevent the captain from being dominated. If failed, the captain remains under the ghost ship's control for seven days. During this period the captain's Strength score rises to 18/00, as his madness empowers him. In order to lure and confound the crewmembers of the chosen ship, the *Erebus* is able to create visual, audible and olfactory illusions that imitate the activities of its original crew.

If the *Erebus* is unable to dominate the captain, it will consider him a coward and the ship unusable. Then it may either conjure a new storm to sink the ship or curse the captain—but it prefers to leave the curse for later. A dominated captain will do whatever is within his power to board the *Erebus*. There he is secretly bound by the same oath made by Sir Franklin and his men, and feverishly pursues the passage. The iceberg slowly follows the ship, a day or two behind it.

If prevented from going ahead, the captain is still bound by the curse: if he comes within ten miles of the edge of the Arctic Circle, headed south, he starts to painfully lose one hit point per day. When he reaches the Circle region, the loss increases to one hit point per hour. The maddening pain is too much for most men, and they end up using their madness-enhanced strength to escape from their own ships and jump into the freezing sea, trying to swim to the north. Of course, most of them die a just few moments after entering the water.

In addition to its 40% magic resistance, the *Erebus* is unaffected by cold-, water- and lightning-based attacks, and enjoys all standard undead immunities. It takes normal damage from normal fire-based attacks, and 50% more damage from magical fire. If damaged, it can rejuvenate for full hit points in one round, but must stay completely immobile and is unable to use any of its powers for 20 minutes.

When the rebel crewmembers tried to escape, the *Erebus* was already developing the dominating powers bolstered by the oath. Thus it ordered Captain Crozer to keep the crew near the shore and kill the strongest sailors, while the curse took care of all others. They never reached the Arctic Circle.

The *Erebus* is literally anchored to the iceberg, and the *Terror* is its greatest weakness: as they were built together, the wrecked ship actually holds the karmic resonance that gathered all spirits together. If she is somehow destroyed, the *Erebus* will lose its grip on the material world and its souls will be released. The *Terror* has the same Armor Class as the *Erebus*, but only has 40 hit points and cannot defend herself.

Also, should anyone (under the dominating influence or not) find the northwestern passage and report the information back to the other ships so that they may turn it into an ordinary commercial route, the curse will finally come to an end. But this, of course, might take years . . . ☠

# WANG-CHI

## THE DEVIL DOG OF GOTHIC CHINATOWN

By Luiz Eduardo Neves Peret

rakshasa2001@hotmail.com

*Thy battlefield shall not be known.  
When it is not known, thy enemy must  
scatter many sentinels, and as many of  
those are in isolated and small places,  
thou can easily attack them with  
minimum effort.*

—Sun Tzu  
*The Art of War*

### INTRODUCTION

**M**y son, although I am unsure of how this letter will reach you, or how you will accept the truths in my words, I beg you, please, read it until the end, for the survival of our people may depend on the words of an old, dying man. I have a tale to tell you, a tale about ancient fears and secrets, and about truth and light. Please, read on and be faithful . . .

A few months ago, a cargo ship arrived from the Far East. As the Chinese-bannered ship slowly approached the port of San Francisco about one hour past sunset, everyone noticed something was terribly wrong. All lights were off; no shouted orders to set the ropes or lower anchors came from within the boat. The authorities had to send people onto the ship to prevent it from crashing into the deck.

Inside the silent vessel, horror and shock welcomed the visitors. At every corner, spots of dried blood tainted weapons, tools and ropes. Here and there, remains of headless corpses piled up on the deck floor. The workmen jumped back onto the harbor, screaming

and cursing in several languages. Men from every nation can be found working at the port of San Francisco, but that night everyone felt one and the same thing: fear.

The local authorities placed the ship under quarantine, for it looked as if madness had made the crewmembers murder each other, and the missing heads made the mystery even more disturbing. To them, the most important thing was to avoid a scandal, but that was easier said than done. Although no newspaper took notice of that tragedy, sailors and gossip travel together hand in hand, and soon everybody in town knew of the ghost ship and its doomed cargo.

One man, a rich, corrupt man from our homeland, called Mr. Tang, confronted the local authorities. That renowned businessman was anxiously waiting to receive some valuable shipment that was onboard. As the harbor crew said later, he managed to set foot onboard, entered the cargo compartment alone and, when he came back later, smiling, he told the port managers that his crate had not been damaged and that there was nothing wrong with it, so he would take it with him, no matter the price. When asked about the goods inside, he simply said: "Family inheritance." Those were his last words spoken in perfect mental health, it has been told later in gossip and whispers.

Less than one week later, deep in Chinatown, scattered and quiet at the beginning, the murders began. People whispered of a madman. Others talked of spirits and demons. There was gossip about trusted friends and relatives killing each other out of madness. When asked about the murders, Mr. Tang's words were quite inconclusive. It seemed that his mind was rapidly degenerating after so many years of active work with the Chinese underworld. He retired a few days after the arrival of his precious shipment, and no one did ever know what happened to him.

That is, no one but myself. I know what happened to poor, foolish Mr. Tang, and that is why I am writing these words. The beast must be hunting me; it must know that now, after a deep research into books and texts full of what your modern teachers would call meaningless superstition, I know its true name.

# BOOK OF SECRETS: GOTHIC EARTH THINGS

Mr. Tang was murdered right after he entered the ship, by the thing he thought was one of his servants laying in the cargo compartments. The truth is, Mr. Tang was smart when dealing with people and money, but a fool when it came to the supernatural world. He barely understood what he had ordered to be delivered to him, and that was his last mistake. He had sent his servants on a doomed expedition, to retrieve a creature that probably (and hopefully) was the last remnant of an ancient race, and they apparently succeeded. Not that the monster was some stupid beast, no, quite on the contrary. It seems to me that the creature *wanted* to be captured; it wanted to come into this foreign and more advanced land, where the old ways are viewed as superstition.

The cunning of this beast is terrifying, and it cannot be underestimated. Thanks to Tang's money and influence, it easily arranged for more prey. But I know the old ways; I have kept the ancient prayers and tales alive in my memories. I noticed that something was wrong from the beginning. After a long search in the old texts, I was able to find legends about its race, about their plans to take over our lands and how to stop them, how the old ones killed them.

Now it is time to reveal it to you. This damned race's name is Wang-Chi. They look like large, black infernal dogs, but they almost always will be seen in human shape, and with that disguise they will walk among us. Now, what really surprised me is it that, in the past, the Wang-Chi would keep to itself in the forests, stalking lone travelers and wild dogs. But the ancient texts speak of a time when these monsters suddenly became murderous, advancing into our cities, infiltrating the old families of our social underworld, seeking those who would enslave them to find out about their longevity and powers, and killing them mercilessly, then taking their looks and positions for a time.

The nature of our society helps their infiltration. Our silence and secrecy over murders and disappearances in the criminal network of our world only adds to the creature's mischievous plans. Like crime itself, they can only be defeated by the light of truth and justice. Before killing the monster, one must find its true name in the ancient texts. Names have power, you know. The pure, golden light of truth, bright as the sun, is the best way to raze its masquerade and put an end to its wretched existence. Lies walk fast in the dark, but they do not go far in the light.

I have found that the Wang-Chi has disguised itself as a respectable member of Chinatown's council of elders (who is also the leader of a local gang). As the council will hold a public meeting tomorrow afternoon, I will go there and, during the session, I will shout the beast's name aloud. I fear not the legendary curses the Wang-Chi is believed to throw at its attackers. The

modern times are not for me any longer. I do not intend to survive for long, just enough to kill this creature. But you must be prepared, for I do not know if this creature can breed either with men or dogs.

If, by any chance, I die or disappear and this letter comes to your hands, know this: the Wang-Chi comes from our haunted past and intends to take over our future. Just in case you have to complete my mission, be warned that the creature's true name is . . ."

(From the remains of a partially burned letter found beside a beheaded corpse in a ruined, burned house in Chinatown).

## WANG~CHI

### (DOPPLEGANGER HOUND)

<b>Climate/Terrain</b>	Any land
<b>Frequency</b>	Very rare
<b>Organization</b>	Solitary
<b>Activity cycle</b>	Night (see below)
<b>Diet</b>	Carnivore
<b>Intelligence</b>	High (13–14)
<b>Treasure</b>	R or equivalent
<b>Alignment</b>	Chaotic Evil
<hr/>	
<b>No. Appearing</b>	1
<b>Armor Class</b>	4
<b>Movement</b>	15
<b>Hit Dice</b>	4+3
<b>THAC0</b>	17
<b>No. of Attacks</b>	1
<b>Damage/Attack</b>	2d4
<b>Special Attacks</b>	Silence aura, disease, curse.
<b>Special Defenses</b>	Hide in shadows, shape shifting, gold or +1 weapon to hit, cannot be truly destroyed while disguised.
<b>Special Vulnerabilities</b>	True name, sunlight.
<b>Magic Resistance</b>	See below
<b>Size</b>	M (5'–7')
<b>Morale</b>	Elite (13–14)
<b>XP Value</b>	2,000

Contrary to Chinese folktales, the Wang-Chi is not a true demon, but is actually a supernatural creature from the Far Eastern fauna. In the distant past they could be encountered with certain regularity near small towns from India to China and Russia, always preying on the unwary traveler or farmer. They were dangerous predators then, but no more evil than a crocodile. Then, with the coming of the Red Death to the East, the creatures developed hunger for more power and the expansion of their hunting grounds, so they began to infiltrate Chinese society through its criminal world. Centuries ago, though, wise men found ways to stop their cunning attacks and the monsters were almost drive extinct, despite their powers and the capacity to live for hundreds of years. Hidden deep in the forests,

# BOOK OF SECRETS: GOTHIC EARTH THINGS

the Wang-Chi became object of legends, until men all but forgot their existence.

These creatures, believed by many to be nearly immortal, used to prey upon mankind as naturally as a tiger would prey on deer. Now, they must rely on their wits in order to operate in such a low profile that they will not rouse any unwanted attention. The lack of respect for tradition and disbelief in magic and legend has helped the race grow a little through the centuries, but the Far East is still very rooted in old beliefs, so at least one Wang-Chi decided to move to faraway urban areas, where it could hunt without the problems its race still faces in China and India. That is how one of them ended up in San Francisco, arriving onboard a cargo shipment.

Even among modern men, there are those who dream of controlling legendary enchanted creatures like the Wang-Chi, and using them to achieve their own selfish goals. But no one can dominate the Wang-Chi, and woe to the fool who thinks otherwise! Even then, there are some who believe such creatures to be emissaries of the Ancient Gods, and that, if appeased, they can bring fortune and longevity. Mr. Tang was one such individual, fascinated with the legend of the long-lived Wang-Chi and convinced that it might teach him how to achieve near-eternal life. His dream was cut short when he faced the monster. Now the creature roams about Chinatown, preparing itself to find a proper mate.

In its true form, the Wang-Chi looks like a large black hound that seems to be made more of living darkness than of flesh. It is fully corporeal, however, and should not be mistaken for a common shadow. Its mouth constantly drips diseased blue foaming saliva and its eyes glow with orange light. In animal form it cannot speak, but in human guise it can speak any language it has learned (see below).

## COMBAT

The Wang-Chi has a primary bite attack with its jagged fangs, which inflicts 2d4 points of damage and exposes the opponent to the effects of the creature's diseased saliva. Anyone bitten must save vs. poison or become infected with a disease that robs the victim of one point of Strength per day until cured. Victims without Strength scores have cumulative -1 penalties to attack and damage every day. At 0 Strength the victim dies. The effects of multiple bites are cumulative.

Twice per day the creature can surround itself with an aura of magical silence, which extends to ten feet in all directions. The aura lasts for three turns, and can be normally dispelled. The Wang-Chi must wait for at least a full turn before it can summon the aura the second time. The creature is also skilled at hiding in shadows, with 90% chance of success (50% if exposed

to any light source brighter than a torch or *light* spell). It is also immune to *sleep* and *charm* spells, and makes all saving throws as an 8th-level soldier.

The Wang-Chi's most treacherous ability, however, is the power to imitate one of its past victims, either human or canine. The highly intelligent Wang-Chi can learn up to three human languages after about one to three months of careful listening, and usually it keeps taking victims who speak the same language for a while before trying another. It can change its shape in a fashion like that of a Ravenloft doppelganger, but is limited to imitating any victim killed in the past thirty days. The transformation takes only a single round to complete, and the new likeness is nearly flawless. This masquerade can last for up to another thirty days, and within this period the Wang-Chi can change its shape to look like other victims, although that weakens its mimicry.

Instead of having the ESP of its humanoid cousin, the Wang-Chi has another insidious ability. When it kills a victim and eats the head, it absorbs part of the victim's memories, in order to help it simulate his or her general manners. Proficiencies, roguish skills and spellcasting cannot be learned through such methods, however, so it prefers to take victims who are not specialized in any craft, except perhaps giving orders to other people. The Wang-Chi must kill and eat the head in order to effectively gain access to the victim's memories. Comatose or otherwise living victims are of no use regarding this aspect. Heads from victims dead for more than one hour are also useless.

The drained memories erode rapidly, making the false person look senile or slightly absent-minded. As the days pass, the person becomes increasingly incoherent and gibbering. At the end of thirty days, the stolen memories collapse altogether. By that time, however, the Wang-Chi will most likely have changed shape again. Every time the creature chooses to change between human shapes, the change accelerates the memory-losing process by one day, so the monster prefers to stay in the same disguise for as long as it can. Changing between human and animal form does not affect stolen memories. When changing to another dog's shape (also a past victim), the Wang-Chi does not gain any memories, and uses this disguise only as a last resort, because it definitely prefers to stay among mankind as an equal, seeing dogs as little more than dumb cousins and second-rate food sources.

In either shape, only golden or magical weapons can hit the creature. If attacked while in human disguise, it can activate its Silence aura and try to use any weapon at hand. Usually the chosen disguise will be that of a wealthy and influential person, so heroes will most probably have to deal with bodyguards, relatives, minions and servants before they ever reach the monster. The Wang-Chi will avoid changing shape in

# BOOK OF SECRETS: GOTHIC EARTH THINGS

public until it is no longer possible. If reduced to 0 hit points while disguised, the Wang-Chi's true nature becomes clear: it immediately changes back to its shadowy true form, healing 2d4x10% of all suffered damage. This regenerative change can happen only once per day. Unlike most shapeshifters, the Wang-Chi can change forms while moving (at half rate), but it cannot attack while transforming.

When the Wang-Chi reverts to its true form, the change prompts a fear check to anyone witnessing the transformation for the first time. For those who are familiar with the shape previously chosen by the monster, the sight of a friendly grin changing to a hideous canine snarl may prompt a horror or even a madness check.

Only after the Wang-Chi has assumed its true form it can be destroyed, either by impalement or beheading by a weapon of +1 or better enchantment or a weapon made of pure gold. Even if beheaded or impaled under disguise, the creature reforms—in this case it must immediately change shape. Direct sunlight harms it violently, inflicting 1d6 points of damage per round, but only if the Wang-Chi is in its true form when exposed. The Wang-Chi knows better than to take chances, though, and avoids sunlight as much as it can. When under direct or clearly reflected sunlight the Wang-Chi cannot change shape (unless reduced to 0 hp), nor can it use its Silence aura. The Wang-Chi can use both of these powers normally during the daylight hours; they just need to avoid sunlight to succeed.

If the creature's true name can be somehow found and spoken aloud in its presence, the creature must immediately change to its true shape and cannot take another form for one full hour. It will try at any cost to prevent anyone from learning its true name, or from saying it aloud. Perhaps that is the reason for the Silence power. The beast's true name can be discovered either through investigation, psionic or magical means.

Sometimes, a dying Wang-Chi can focus all its hatred and malice against its attacker and cast a powerful curse. This is not a common occurrence, but if the creature is allowed time (at least one full round) to concentrate before the final blow is delivered, the one who landed it must save vs. spell or be subject to a curse as described in *Domains of Dread*. The DM should judge the type and severity of the curse. The Wang-Chi cannot concentrate properly if it receives continuous attacks until it dies, but a single round is enough to cast the dying spell. The creature will then growl the curse in an audible but barely intelligible phrase just before it dies. It might say it in one of the tongues it has learned, but usually it will choose that which it has been more accustomed to (normally an Eastern language). Trying to understand the words and their meaning in order to lift the curse might offer the

DM very interesting side plots, perhaps leading the adventurers to their next mission.

## HABITAT/SOCIETY

Wang-Chi are mostly solitary creatures, especially now that they have nearly been driven extinct. They are also very territorial and one Wang-Chi might even help heroes find another, just to get rid of it and accumulate its territory. These creatures are quite bold and certain of their superiority over mankind, and that might be their main weakness. While a Wang-Chi will not endanger its master plan because of foolish presumption, whenever it finds worthwhile antagonists, it might take a few risks and even leave some clues behind, just to prove its superior intellect.

Wang-Chi prefer to dwell in the outskirts of human society, usually taking the place of guild leaders or black market dealers—people that might easily end up dead or disappear without compromising its disguise very much. Although originally coming from a Far Eastern land, it can adapt to almost any urban area. The creature can easily appear on Gothic Earth (particularly any large city's Chinatown), Ravenloft (Rokushima T'aiyoo or, if the DM allows seafaring trade, virtually any coastal domain) or any other campaign setting, preferably one with some contact with exotic oriental cultures.

## ECOLOGY

The Wang-Chi are exclusively carnivorous, seeing human (or humanoid) flesh as their favorite meals, or canine flesh as an inferior food source. Their favorite body parts are the head and brain. While a Wang-Chi may live for approximately 100–400 years, it can only reproduce once every ten years, and then only with a suitable human female. From such a union one Wang-Chi is born in animal form, always at night. The female must be held fast while pregnant, for the metabolic changes are too strong and painful for her. The gestation lasts only six months, and the mother suffers an agonizing death in the end, as the Wang-Chi literally eats its way out of the womb. Once free, the monster usually devours the remains of her corpse and hides.

The infant Wang-Chi can defend itself with a bite that inflict 1d4 points of damage. By the end of the first year the creature's saliva will be diseased. Its shapeshifting and silence powers come with maturity in three years, and until that time it looks like a black hound. But since the first kill the monster is already able to get a glimpse of the victim's memories—usually, the first memory will be the image of its father, as seen by its mother. Its father may take a base care of it during these first years, but will send it away as soon

# BOOK OF SECRETS: GOTHIC EARTH THINGS

as it has developed its shapechanging powers. If father and son do ever meet each other again later, it will most probably be as hated enemies and rivals.

## ADVENTURE IDEAS

- ❖ The heroes are visiting a friend or ally in Chinatown (or any other reclusive, foreign neighborhood) and come in contact with a series of strange and gruesome murders among local criminals. The local guilds blame each other or a new faction. The heroes may be hired by a local crime boss, perhaps under disguise, to investigate. At some point, though, their employer will be replaced by the Wang-Chi, which will then confound them with false clues.
- ❖ By the same token, a disguised Wang-Chi might hire the services of the heroes to get rid of another, perhaps its own father or son.
- ❖ A friend or ally of the heroes might have been cursed by a dying Wang-Chi, and that might lead them to an intricate plot while they research for a solution.
- ❖ The Wang-Chi might replace a person who knows an important secret, and the PCs must find ways to make the creature reveal it before its memory collapses.

✖



## MORTICIAN

### A GRAVE TRADESMAN KIT FOR MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH

By Eldred Black

[eldredblack@eldredblack.com](mailto:eldredblack@eldredblack.com)

### MORTICIAN

<b>Class:</b>	Tradesman
<b>Ability Req:</b>	Intelligence 13
<b>Prime Req:</b>	Dexterity
<b>Hit Die:</b>	d6
<b>Attack as:</b>	Tradesman
<b>Save as:</b>	Tradesman
<b>Advance as:</b>	Tradesman
<b>Exc Strength?</b>	No
<b>Spell Ability?</b>	No
<b>Exc Constitution?</b>	No
<b>Starting Cash:</b>	2d4

#### Proficiencies

<b>Weapon Slots:</b>	3
<b>Additional Slot:</b>	4
<b>Nonproficiency Penalty:</b>	-3
<b>Nonweapon Slots:</b>	6
<b>Additional Slot:</b>	3
<b>Available Categories:</b>	General, Educational, Arcane
<b>Bonus Proficiencies:</b>	Corpse Preparation/Embalming (New, see below)
<b>Recommended Prof:</b>	Medicine, Chemistry, Biology, Etiquette

### DESCRIPTION

The mortician, while sharing some of the same knowledge and training as the physician, comes into contact with a unique element that makes his profession quite exceptional. As a person who deals with corpses and cadavers to make his living, he often encounters and experiences things the average citizen of Gothic Earth does not. More than one mortician has left a cadaver on the embalming table, only to return and find it missing, with no evidence that anyone else has been in or out of the room. As well, a few morticians have had the unpleasant, and sometimes extremely dangerous, experience of beginning to embalm a corpse, only to have the subject somehow become reanimated, and return from the dead. Of course, this

type of experience (if survived) often leads to a change of profession, but occasionally it leads to a curiosity about what sort of dark arts could bring about such enigmatic occurrences, and thus the mortician may pick from the Arcane category when choosing nonweapon proficiencies.

### ROLE~PLAYING

The mortician is usually a somber, solitary person. He spends his days almost exclusively surrounded by cold, dead corpses in various stages of decomposition. It is his gruesome task to try and make these empty carcasses once again resemble the living beings that had once inhabited them. The few living persons with whom he does have contact are usually the grieving family and friends of the deceased, whom he is required to try and console as best he can. While occasionally this can make the character cynical and distant, his quiet and reserved manner can be a mere facade, masking a deep longing for real relationships and true human contact. Often, he has few friends, and little status in the community, because of his morbid profession. Sometimes, he is haunted by the things he has seen: the strange claw-like wounds on the bodies of innocent young children; the small twin incisions over the jugular at the base of the neck of beautiful socialites, whose graves are found desecrated only days later, seemingly torn apart from the inside out; the bodies of stout, healthy men who have apparently been frightened to death, their mouths wrought open in a perpetual scream of terror.

The mysteries of these horrible images often lead the character from the relative safety of his silent mortuary out into the dark of night, searching for something he can not yet put a name to: the Red Death.

### SPECIAL BENEFITS

One of the main benefits of the mortician is his knowledge of human biology and physiology. Having seen many different kinds of wounds and forms of

# BOOK OF SECRETS: GOTHIC EARTH PC RULES

death, he can often identify the cause of death when that cause is not readily apparent to the untrained eye. Additionally, even though he is not a licensed physician, he has some skill in tending to wounds and mending injuries. After all, sewing up scrapes and lacerations on living skin is not so different from stitching the rent flesh of dead corpses.

Lastly, the mortician's daily exposure to death and decay grants a +1 bonus to his horror checks.

spreader, to facilitate organ removal prior to embalming.



## SPECIAL HINDRANCES

The mortician has seen too much death to have any real charisma, and he has difficulty befriending others or fitting in with a group. To reflect this, the character's Charisma score is automatically lowered by -2. Additionally, other characters will tend to feel a bit of unease about him, once they learn of his profession, and as such, a certain skepticism or mistrust in his suggestions and ideas can easily develop. The Etiquette proficiency can often help the mortician lessen these negative trappings of his profession, but it will never let him overcome them completely.

### Forbidden Lore

Some morticians do not become benevolently curious about the dark arts implicated by the strange occurrences they may have encountered—they become malevolently excited. Sometimes a mortician may peer into the cold eyes of a recently murdered corpse, butchered gruesomely by some madman, only to find the Red Death staring back at him. And sometimes, a mortician may seek to try to find a way to rekindle the fire of life in those dead eyes, leading to experimentation with the undead.

## NEW PROFICIENCY

**Corpse Preparation/Embalming:** This proficiency is available only to the mortician profession, or those who have worked in a mortuary. It enables the proficient character to tend to a recently deceased body, preparing it for viewing at a wake, and embalming it for burial. Occasionally, mangled limbs must be severed and reattached, or large wounds sutured to preserve the shape of a torn body. The embalming process is an ancient one, practiced since the time of the Egyptian Pharaohs, but it has been modernized over the centuries, and requires some tools and equipment unique to a mortuary. However, a suitable Mortician's Kit might contain a small bone saw, a few spools of silk thread, several large suturing needles, cosmetic rouge and blush, and perhaps a vial of perfume. Several other specialized tools might be included, such as a rib-

BOOK OF SECRETS: GOTHIC EARTH PC RULES

OCTOBER 31<sup>ST</sup>, 1938.

LOS ANGELES.



[Keep your eyes peeled!]



# BOOK OF SECRETS: CREDITS

## CHRISTOPHER ADAMS

FATHER GURAN

#

[mhacdebhandia@yahoo.com](mailto:mhacdebhandia@yahoo.com)

## DANIEL BANDERA

DANYLO DENISOVICH ZHÁMIA

CARACAS ☠ BOGOTÁ

I would like to thank the Kargatane for letting me be “in” one of their netbooks. I dedicate this article to those fans of the MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH who have kept the setting alive.

[daniel.j.bandera@us.pwcglobal.com](mailto:daniel.j.bandera@us.pwcglobal.com)

## JOE BARDALES

Kargatane

As the oldest member of the Kargatane [Editor’s note: he ain’t kidding], Joe would like to dedicate this year’s netbook to his fellow old fogeys, the old time gamers who just can’t put the polyhedron dice away for good. Here’s to the fun we had with First Edition AD&D, and to many more years of the same as we enter this wonderful new age of 3E. That is if we can force ourselves to stay awake that late anymore . . .

[joe@kargatane.com](mailto:joe@kargatane.com)

## ELDRED BLACK

MORTICIAN KIT

*We tried to get a dedication paragraph from Mr. Black, but sadly, a clerical error made it quite impossible to locate him. You know, if they would just label bodies with facial branding instead of those flimsy toe tags, this sort of mistake would never happen.*

[eldredblack@eldredblack.com](mailto:eldredblack@eldredblack.com)

## TIMOTHY S. BRANNAN

WITCH RITUAL TOOLS

Last Halloween I was not thinking of the release of the Kargatane’s *The Book of Secrets*, or my own netbook, *The Complete Netbook of Witches and Warlocks*, or even Halloween itself. No, last Halloween I brought home my firstborn son! Liam Weston Brannan was the best Halloween present I could have ever bought myself (yes, I am in the habit of getting presents for Halloween!). Currently I have a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology and I am doing what every other new Ph.D. in the country is doing now: looking for a job! When not doing this, I am writing material for my two other RPG projects, *The Other Side* and *ShadowEarth*, which I still write on my 486 Gateway2000 computer. My lovely wife, son and I live in the suburbs of Chicago in small brick house with a white picket fence. Basically I am just a minivan away from being a cliché.

Now *that* is horror!

[fbrannan@usa.net](mailto:fbrannan@usa.net)

## ANDREW CERMAK

SIR WILLIAM CANIFAX

MARCEL VENDARK

Kargatane

What a difference a year makes! Sitting on the other side of the glass, I had the barest inkling of the amount of work and thought that goes into these netbooks. Now that I know the truth, I’m starting to understand why they made me sign that contract in blood when I first joined up.

Sir William Canifax was a character I had intended to include in last year’s netbook, but time got the better of me. I’m quite pleased to be able to present him this time around. As for Marcel Vendark . . . well, the less said the better, I think. I’m sure we’ll be seeing more of him in the future. I’d like to dedicate both articles to my fellow Kargatane, for taking a chance on an unknown kid, and all that rot.

[cermak@kargatane.com](mailto:cermak@kargatane.com)

## BOOK OF SECRETS: CREDITS

### JAMES “THE MADMAN”

#### DALTON

##### THE ORDER OF TWILIGHT

Of the fifteen years I’ve spent on this floating rock, only two and a half of them have been filled with the joy of Ravenloft. In fact if it weren’t for my buying *Domains of Dread* on a whim (and then later learning I needed to buy other products to play AD&D), you would not be reading this now. Since then I’ve played ALTERNITY, WFRP, VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE and a heap of homebrews. Apart from roleplaying my interests are writing (I have some short stories at my webpage: [http://www.geocities.com/Fat\\_Jimmy\\_D](http://www.geocities.com/Fat_Jimmy_D)), reading, debating, karate, the occult and movies. Before I go, I must give thanks to my gaming group for being the unsuspecting guinea pigs that I sent up against the Order of Twilight. ☺

[reagulf@hotmail.com](mailto:reagulf@hotmail.com)

[http://www.geocities.com/Fat\\_Jimmy\\_D](http://www.geocities.com/Fat_Jimmy_D)

### ERIC DANIEL

#### UMBRAN THE SHADOW LICH

#

#

### LUIS FERNANDO DE PIPPO

#### NEW CREATURES FOR NOSOS

##### SIR ANDREW SINCLAIR

“New Creatures for Nosos” is dedicated to the members of the Ravenloft Mailing List who helped tweak the monsters to fit Nosos.

[zoren55@yahoo.com](mailto:zoren55@yahoo.com)

### DION FERNANDEZ

#### GOthic MANILA & THE KATIPUNAN

Dion doesn’t even live in Manila—thank Heavens. He lives further up north in Baguio, a city that’s too ideal to be Gothic (it could probably work in a Faerie setting, say, Sylvan Earth). He’s currently finishing his degree in English, so he could get out of the country and go on an Asian tour.

Dion wants to thank Tina Cenzone, Fred Tello, Julie Noble, Dale Mendoza and Anton Broas. He also gives special consideration to his wizard, who claimed that if ever vampires entered Manila, they’d die of asphyxiation—smog here smells like garlic.

To all Philippine history purists, Dion apologizes for making the Katipunan members a bit younger than they actually were.

[avignon@thedoghousemail.com](mailto:avignon@thedoghousemail.com)

### ROBERT A. GOMBACH

#### SPITTING COBRA

To my beautiful wife, Ann-Michelle, for all her love and understanding. For all the times she has had to put up with spitting cobras, demonic toy makers, and vampire darklords.

[robagom@cc.usu.edu](mailto:robagom@cc.usu.edu)

### FREIDRICH GOTHE

#### DR. HENRY WOLLCOTE

##### THE INTERPRETATION OF DREAMS

I would like to dedicate the article “Dr. Henry Wollcote” to a great friend of mine, Paul Boudreaux. Without him, I never could have completed it.

[fgothe@hotmail.com](mailto:fgothe@hotmail.com)

### MARK “MORTAVIUS”

#### GRAYDON

##### ELEMENTAL CORRUPTION

I’d like to dedicate my work this year to all the Ravenloft fans who have contributed to the setting, either by submission, conversation, or simply just getting together for a creep-fest on some late lonely Sunday night game. With all of us together, this world will never die.

[Mortavius@cnx.net](http://Mortavius@cnx.net)

# BOOK OF SECRETS: CREDITS

## ANDREW HACKARD

### EVEN MORE FUN & GAMES

Kargatane

I wrote “Even More Fun & Games” to thank all the people who have enjoyed the first two articles, and to placate the ones who berated me for not including a games article last year. Hope this was worth the wait, y’all. I dedicate the article to all of you, and to the

Eleventh Floor Pasteboard Society:

“Requirimus Quartum!”

[andrew@kargatane.com](mailto:andrew@kargatane.com)

## JALEIGH JOHNSON

### SHADOWS OF BLUE AND GRAY

As a DM who is always on the lookout for Masque of the Red Death material, I hope my article proves useful to others. This one’s for Jeff, for fearlessly editing my writing . . . your Civil War material was also greatly appreciated. Credit for inspiration goes to the youngest player in my campaign. Melissa and Samuel are for you, Sara. And, as always, many thanks to the Kargatane for all their hard work and effort.

[jaleigh@afwood-il.com](mailto:jaleigh@afwood-il.com)

<http://www.angelfire.com/or/OnyxV/index.html>

## STEFAN MAC

### EDUARD DUVOIR

I would like to extend thanks first of all to the people on the Ravenloft mailing list for their help on this article, specifically Arijani the Rakshasa and Ian Mathers.

Secondly, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to the Kargatane, not only for accepting my work, but for having this site and compiling these netbooks in the first place. That being said, on with the countdown . . .

[mac\\_cosfilow@hotmail.com](mailto:mac_cosfilow@hotmail.com)

## JOHN W. MANGRUM

### FRAMING FICTION

### FEAR AND LOATHING IN THIRD EDITION

Kargatane

You know the saying about living in interesting times?

Boy, we sure do. Let’s see if next year’s netbook will be less . . . *eventful*.

[iggy@kargatane.com](mailto:iggy@kargatane.com)

## ARI & GEORGE MARMELL

### VULTHARESK

#

[mouseferafu@aol.com](mailto:mouseferafu@aol.com)

## MICHAEL MASSEY

### WEREGLUTTON

“Anger can be an expensive luxury” —Italian Proverb.  
I think it kind of defines the animal.

[shadowangel@prodigy.com](mailto:shadowangel@prodigy.com)

## HUGO VIEGAS

### NASCIMENTO

### OWLMAY & RAPA NUI

### DAME ALICE KYTELER

As a child I had the unique opportunity of caring for a baby owl that I found alone and starving in a backyard hollow tree. In a short while I grew to love it as a true friend. From that very moment, the owl symbolized more than wisdom for me, it also meant a trustful friend, albeit a dark and predatory one. That is what I intended to do with the Owlmay, making her different from both the regular Swanmay and the Ravenloft Were-Owl. I hope you all feel the same and enjoy playing with her.

[shadowspawn\\_the\\_dragon@hotmail.com](mailto:shadowspawn_the_dragon@hotmail.com)

## RYAN NAYLOR

### THE TALE OF THE LADY OF THE LAKE

### MICTLAN

I have been playing DUNGEONS & DRAGONS for nearly five years with the same group of people. More than anyone, they deserve more credit than they get for putting up with convoluted plots, manipulative NPCs and somehow managing to alienate every darklord they come across. Remember: whenever you kiss anyone, they are bound to be a demon, a vampire or a red widow. I also need to thank my parents for instilling in me enough arrogance to shamelessly rip off whatever historical figures I feel like. Finally, I would like to thank the rest of the world for showing me the Olympics. Truly scary.

[Schadenfreudel3@hotmail.com](mailto:Schadenfreudel3@hotmail.com)

## BOOK OF SECRETS: CREDITS

LUIZ EDUARDO NEVES

PERET

TSUU-Y-TEKE

THE MASK OF SORROWFUL BEAUTY

THE H.M.S. EREBUS & WANG-CHI

Tsuu-Y-Teke was based on “true legends”, so to speak. The tale of the vulture that steals the sky light because of its selfishness is well-known among Brazilian natives. The Land without Night is a common tale in some North American tribes. With Tsuu-Y-Teke I wanted to portray a small portion of native American culture, in the same year Brazil commemorates 500 years since the first arrival of the Portuguese to our lands (although I guess the natives have little reason to commemorate). I would like to thank my father, the anthropologist and botanic scientist João Americo Peret, whose more-than-50-year work with Brazilian natives and unending love for our culture were the basis for this article.

I would like to dedicate the “H.M.S. Erebus” to my dear uncle, Richard “Joe” Balboni, the first merchant sailor who told me that ghost story, which for years I had taken for just another tall tale told by elder seamen. That is, until the mid-70’s, when I read an article at a scientific magazine telling the very same tale and presenting official documents to prove it. I was so startled that I immediately thought of writing a short story about that. I just hope the ghost iceberg and the two ships have already set their course to true peace . . .

[rakshasa2001@hotmail.com](mailto:rakshasa2001@hotmail.com)

DUSTIN “GRIGG

DEADBREAKER” RATHBUN

THE SOCIETY OF HUNTSMEN

HIVE SKELETON

Many thanks to my family and friends for the support, and the Kargatane for keeping Ravenloft alive. See you all in the Mists.

“Come, drink the mystic wine of Night,  
Brimming with silence and the stars;  
While earth, bathed in this holy light,  
Is seen without its scars.”

—Louis Untermeyer, *The Wine of Night*

[dustfinrathbun@hotmail.com](mailto:dustfinrathbun@hotmail.com)

WES SCHNEIDER

UNDER THE HANDS OF HAGS

INFESTATION & THE VOCALIST

A WOTC grunt of the lowest level in Columbia, Maryland, “Wes” now spends his days trying to gain the attention of his higher ups, while trying not to get squished under their feet. As a piece of advice to all, avoid pointed fingers, pirates, trolls, red shirts, and the number fourteen.

[Dendread@home.com](mailto:Dendread@home.com)

ANDY “SOCKO” SNOW

THE RED WOLF

Not much is known about the man who calls himself Socko, Two stories seem to emerge over and over again. Either he’s a College Student living in a Sardine Can in Syracuse NY, or He’s a mad Bard who wanders the Shadowborn Cluster talking to a sock on his left hand and seems to know things he truly shouldn’t know.

[count\\_strahd@excite.com](mailto:count_strahd@excite.com)

MIKE S.W.

GOthic MINNESOTA

My mom introduced me to fantasy (*Chronicles of Narnia* and Piers Anthony’s *Xanth* series) but was, believe it or not, afraid of AD&D (you know the whole role playing is evil spiel), which (along with many other roleplaying games) I have been playing for 10 years now. Ravenloft has since then become my favorite setting for AD&D. When MASQUE came out I originally dismissed it as a silly and foolish waste of time. However after a couple years I broke down and bought a supplement. (I am a sucker for almost anything with the RAVENLOFT logo on it.) I was very pleasantly surprised. Thus the reason I wrote this article; Minnesota gets such a raw end of the deal in roleplaying I guess nobody thinks anything exciting happens up here. (Or maybe its because we voted a wrestler into office.) Anyways thanks mom for showing me the direction even if we did not agree on the destination and for putting up with me and AD&D.

[count\\_strahd@excite.com](mailto:count_strahd@excite.com)

# BOOK OF SECRETS: CREDITS

## STUART TURNER

### TERRIBLE TRANSFORMATIONS

Kargafane

Fourth time around, and still the submissions flood in. Despite this being one of the more chaotic years for the Kargafane, notably including the loss of four years of emails, templates and other website work when my computer exploded, it has as always been an enjoyable experience. The release of third edition has revitalised the D&D game, and I'm sure we'll all see RAVENLOFT live into D&D's third incarnation, given the level of online support we continue to see for the setting.

[stu@kargafane.com](mailto:stu@kargafane.com)

## ANDREW WYATT

### CHILDREN OF THE NIGHTLESS LAND

### WYAN TWICHELL ☠ THE LOÇOLICO

### PATCHWORK FOLK

Kargafane

In reality, the Loçolico are very much a part of Rom folklore, and the vivid legends surrounding them made it hard to resist weaving them into Gothic Earth somehow. Likewise, the monsters for Tsuu-Y-Teke are all based on creatures from native Brazilian folklore, although they have been twisted somewhat to fit Luiz Eduardo Peret's vision for the parched domain. Wyan, of course, is something of an alter ego, and a very unflattering one at that . . .

[wyaff@kargafane.com](mailto:wyaff@kargafane.com)