

THE UNDEAD SEA SCROLLS

2001 EDITION

SOME RECENTLY UNEARTHED FROM THE SHADOW RIFT,
SOME STOLEN IN THE VALLAKI KARGATANE SECRET VAULT ...

A Ravenloft Netbook

EDITED BY:

JOËL PAQUIN, AKA GOTTEN GRABMAL AND VIKTOR HAZAN

WITH THE COOL HELP OF :

NATHAN OKERLUND, AKA DMITRI STANISLAUS AND ERIK VAN RIJN

E-MAIL US AT [JOPEKIJ@HOTMAIL.COM](mailto:jopekij@hotmail.com) FOR QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS!

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(IMPORTANT COPYRIGHT TEXT ON PAGE XV !)

Richemulot University,

November 15th, 756

The entry hall of the library of the University of Richemulot was absolutely silent; the great skylight overhead drenched the room with a flood of moonlight and left shadows like black paper silhouettes in its wake. The chamber was deserted, but there was a curious tension in the air--almost as if something were waiting there in the darkness. The tap of footsteps broke the silence as a thin figure emerged from some dark corner into the center of the room; it stood in silence for a moment, and something golden—a pocket watch, it seemed—glittered briefly in its hand.

Suddenly, the silence was shattered by a dull boom as a door was thrust back and another person entered the chamber from a side door; turning, the first occupant leapt toward the newcomer and took him by the arm, drawing him into the chamber. As they stepped into the room, the moonlight falling on them gave them an eerie silver glow and made their shadows dance awkwardly beneath them as they walked. The moonlight revealed them to be two men in their late forties or early fifties, the first arrival short and thin, the later short and paunchy.

“Hurry up, Erik,” the thin one hissed, darting ahead to a door on the other side of the chamber and then hurrying back while the paunchy one struggled forward with the assistance of a heavy cane. “They're expecting us.”

In the moonlight the thinner of the pair looked like nothing so much as a great wasp; he was thin and elegant, dressed in the clothing of a dapper gentlemen of Dementlieu in black coat and trousers and a yellow vest. His sharp nose and large eyes only served to enhance the likeness, and his wild nest of hair quivered almost like antennae in his anxiety. There was also something in his expression of a wasp's venom and malice as he fluttered anxiously around his phlegmatic companion.

If the thinner of the pair was a wasp, then the heavier could only be a spider. His arms and legs were just as long and thin as those of his companion, but his gut heavier; pale eyes glared from the tangle of his heavy beard and long, lank hair, and he seemed to exude the quiet menace of a spider at the center of its web. He was dressed in black coat, vest, and trousers, with a dark red shirt; he carried a heavy book under one arm, and walked with the assistance of a cane. He made no reply to his companion's urging, but continued to move with the same deliberation.

Exasperated, the wasp-figure dove forward, flung the door open, and flitted through it; the spider-figure followed. Just as he reached the door the thin gentleman reappeared in the doorway. "All's quiet", he whispered, "No-one burning the midnight oil. We can use the first passage. Do you have everything?"

"Yes, Viktor, I have everything," the spider-figure replied with exaggerated patience. "You see? The manuscript, the seal, the letter, it's all here. Are your remarks prepared?"

"Of course they're prepared. I've been ready weeks! Months!" the thin man snapped, throwing his hands in the air dramatically as the two passed through the door and entered the library proper. "*I understand the importance of this meeting. We must impress, Erik! We must justify our funding. Money is everything at this stage, do you understand?*" For a moment the two stared at each other; then Erik muttered, "We can discuss this later. Shut the door."

Grimacing, Viktor swung the door closed, plunging the room into Stygian darkness. Erik coughed heavily, then muttered, "*Fiat lux*". The grip of his cane began to glow with a dull silver light, revealing the rows of bookcases marching away into the gloom on either side. The two went forward in silence, lost in their thoughts, half-hypnotized by the dancing of the shadows cast by the bobbing light of the cane. They came, at last, to a dead end; the book cases extended upward, the aisle stretched out behind them, but in front them there was only a blank wall, with the paint cracked and mildewed.

“Allow me,” Viktor said officiously. Stepping forward, he brought forward his left hand and set it against the wall, whispering “*Sanctum sanctorum, varium et mutabile*”. For a moment the heavy silver ring on his middle finger glittered; then the wall simply disappeared, revealing a narrow staircase descending into a darkness which the feeble light from the cane could not pierce. The two stepped forward and began to descend.

For a time all that could be heard was the tap of Erik's cane against the stone, and the shuffle of the two men's feet; they could only see a few feet ahead or behind, and the walls pressed against their shoulders, at times requiring that they turn and descend crabwise. If either was disturbed by this claustrophobic journey, neither gave any sign.

They proceeded in silence until, suddenly, a brilliant golden light pierced their eyes and a voice demanded “Who passes? Let him unfold himself!”

“We are brothers”, Erik replied in his gravelly voice, “sworn to search the shadow”.

“We are brothers”, Viktor continued, “neither of darkness nor of light”.

“What proofs have ye of brotherhood?”

Neither man responded in words, but suddenly a darkness as sudden and complete as the light had been filled the stairway; just as quickly, it disappeared, and Erik and Viktor each held forward his left hand, showing a heavy silver ring on the middle finger with a piece of jet set in the band.

“Pass, brothers”, the voice commanded.

The pair stepped forward into a larger space; now that their eyes could bear the light, they could see it was a round room of stone, perhaps twenty feet across, with a heavy wooden door on the other side. A heavily muscled man with the insignia of the Falkovnian Talons on his chest

stepped forward—neither could have said exactly from where he came—and nodded to them. “You're the last”, he said, in a voice devoid of emotion.

“We were delayed by pressing business--business of the greatest import”, Viktor replied haughtily. Erik shrugged as if the matter were of no consequence. The Talon made no reply; stepping to the door, he opened it, allowed Erik and Viktor to enter, then stepped through himself, closing the door behind him.

This room was rather larger and dominated by a long table surrounded by seated people--perhaps a dozen all told. All but one were men; most were at least forty years of age, although one--a brooding youth with pale skin and black hair—appeared to be no older than twenty, and the only woman present—a petite blonde with eyes like chips of blue ice—was probably not much older.

Striding to the head of the table, Viktor clasped his hands and declaimed, “Brothers, ... and our graceful sister...” Erik shot Viktor a suspicious glance as Viktor smiled at the Countess; she raised one eyebrow slightly, but made no other reply.

Undaunted, Viktor continued without pause, “We are most grateful for your presence and hope you shall be edified by the report we are about to make. You see there, in the hands of our esteemed brother Erik van Rijn, the culmination of a year's work by many men, information gathered from across the Core and even the lands beyond, gathered, edited, and compiled by myself and Professor van Rijn, a report which we have every hope will merit your approbation and justify the funds so generously donated by you and others. This report will make its way, this very night, into the hands of the Fathers of our order, and we wish to thank the Countess again for her kind service in so transporting it.” This with a bow to the blonde woman, who inclined her head a fraction of an inch in acknowledgement.

"But we will give you tonight, as it were, a preview, a synopsis, of this work. It will be my pleasure to present to you a selection of the oddities, the marvels, the mysteries contained herein. Allow me to begin with the cover letter."

Taking a piece of parchment and a golden pince-nez from an inner vest pocket, Hazan settled the pince-nez on his nose, glanced out over his audience, waited a moment in silence, then, satisfied that he was the center of attention, began:

“To the Esteemed Brothers of the Fraternity of Shadows, greetings:

As you already know, over the course of a year, the University of Richemulot receives many reports from colleagues and correspondents throughout the Core. These reports are heavily used by scholars in their research and cited regularly throughout the academic world, from the Great Library of Port-a-Lucine to such little-known outposts as that quaint bookstore in Vallaki, Barovia, which we have mentioned to the Fraternity on past occasions.”

Looking up from the paper, Hazan said, “Let us note here that those gentlemen have promised to pay the arrears in library fees for the books mentioned in the last letter we had the honor to send, and they have gone so far as to invite us to visit ‘*all* the aisles of their bookstore,’ a kind invitation which we intend to honor in the coming months.”

Returning to the text, he continued, “Bookshop in Vallaki...yes...ahem.”

“Our mission to gather and share the truth has served us well since the foundation of the University in giving us the opportunity to learn more of the Land in which we live. Of course, some of these reports the University receives are well-documented and substantial, while others are rather less so. Since some doubt exists as to the accuracy and completeness of the information contained in the missives of the latter group, it has been until this time the policy both of the University and of the Fraternity to discard these reports without bringing them into the public eye.

It has, however, come to our attention that some of these accounts have merit and convey information which may still be useful to scholars throughout the Core despite their relative lack of substantiation and the possibility of factual errors in said reports.

We have, therefore, compiled these dubious reports into a journal which Professor Viktor Hazan has jocularly christened the "Undead Sea Scrolls", after the prophecies of that name written by the Darkonese Quebin Crost. The readers will, of course, remember that these writing were declared by the Church of Ezra to "be of value for moral instruction, but not to be considered canon of the Church."

So, likewise, these reports are given, not because we regard them as "canon" or exactly truthful in a scholastic sense, but because they may furnish the Fraternity with additional information which will prove useful in our endeavors.

Hoping, then, that the information contained herein may prove useful, we remain your most humble and obedient servants,

Viktor Hazan

Professor of Philosophy and Numbers

University of Richemulot

Erik van Rijn

Professor of Modern Languages and Anthropology

University of Richemulot"

On completing the letter, Viktor set aside the parchment and said, "As a sample of what the manuscript contains, please allow me to relate a story which came to my attention this past year—the history of a young girl named Anna. After which, Professor van Rijn will favor us with selected remarks on the culture and history of a land only recently discovered in the mists, west of the Sea of Sorrows—a land known as Nueva Aragoña. This is, I assure you, only a small part of what is contained within..."

(And now, skipping to the end...)

Van Rijn's presentation had been a long one; Hazan's pocket chronometer confirmed that the sun must now be rising as van Rijn closed his remarks and took a set at the foot of the conference table. But overall the presentation seemed to have met with a favorable reception; there were smiles and nods from around the table as Hazan stood and addressed them again. "Brothers, I hope that this document meets with your approval?"

There was a general murmur of assent, punctuated by the Countess' voice. "I feel sure that the Fathers will be pleased", she said in her usual cold clear voice. "And I believe that I speak for all of us when I say that I feel that the Fraternity's funds have been well spent. You may certainly expect my continued support, gentlemen—both moral and financial."

Nodding quickly, Hazan replied, "Thank you. Thank you indeed, your grace. I trust that the sentiment is general?" There was an uneasy silence for the sake of a moment, then nods and muttered voices of assent. Nodding, Hazan said, "Good. I—we—are most gratified and shall rely on your good will in this matter. And now, the hour of parting has come; but we thank you again for your attendance, and look forward to seeing you at the general meeting in Martira Bay. Until then, gentlemen—and Countess—may we remain dedicated to our search of the shadows. I give you—the Fraternity of Shadows".

"The Fraternity of Shadows", the group replied in unison, lifting their left hands to show the silver ring worn by all present. "*Scientiae et regnum sum nostra intro umbra*".

After the ceremonial benediction, the group dispersed slowly through the other door of the meeting room, leaving in ones and twos at short intervals. Viktor and Erik shook hands, then stood together, watching the others leave, apparently well satisfied with the night's work. "Well done, Hazan", Erik muttered gruffly. "In fact..."

"One moment, my good man", Hazan replied quickly. "If you don't mind, I would have just a word with the Countess before she leaves—about the manuscript, you understand. So? Good. I'll meet you at the club for dinner and we can discuss...developments." The two men shared a

significant glance, then Hazan disappeared on the track of the young blond woman and Erik found himself alone with the Talon who had admitted him and Hazan to the room.

“So, Vedarrak”, Van Rijn said coolly. “Did we meet your expectations?”

The Talon showed his teeth in a cold parody of a friendly grin and said, “Oh, yes. Well done, Van Rijn. Very impressive. Now, there was something else you wanted to discuss?”

Van Rijn gave him a single menacing glance from his odd, pale eyes and said, “I need that book”.

“I know you do”, the Talon replied, still smiling coldly. “Despite what the Fathers have to say about the study of necromancy, and attracting the attention of the Watchers. And despite the fate of its former owner”.

“Enough of your moralizing, fool. Do you have it?”, Van Rijn snarled, his face distorted. The Talon raised a blonde eyebrow, then, reaching into the pouch at his belt, he brought out a book a little smaller than his hand and laid it on the table; a book bound in cream-colored leather, with spidery red writing across the front. “There”, he said. “And in return?”

“The unedited copy, as promised... and the rest of your payment has already been delivered to your house in Lekar”, Erik replied, his eyes devouring the pale book. Reaching into a pocket, he brought forth a lens of something like blue glass and handed it to the Talon, who took it and turned it in his hand. “What’s this?” he asked.

“The key”, Erik replied. “Hold it to your eye and read your copy of the manuscript, and you’ll see what I mean.”

“Ah. Clever”, the Talon said, still smiling. “In that case, the best of luck to you, Professor van Rijn. And I hope to see you in Martira Bay.”

“I’ll be there”, Van Rijn replied.

“Will you?”. the Talon asked, laughing slightly, and then he stepped to the door and left the chamber.

Van Rijn picked up the pale book with trembling hands and placed it in his coat’s inner pocket; then, taking a key from his vest, he locked the chamber door through which the Talon had exited and left through the door he and Hazan had entered, leaving the chamber deserted.



A WORD OR TWO ABOUT THE ORIGINS OF THIS NETBOOK

The UNDEAD SEA SCROLLS (USS) netbook is a spin-off of the Book of δ - series compiled by the **Kargatane** and housed at the official d20 **Ravenloft** website at: www.kargatane.com. These netbook are usually published around **HALLOWEEN**. This year's edition, the Book of Sacrifices, is available there, and we recommend it and its fellows extremely highly to anyone interested in **Ravenloft**.

As those who have submitted articles to that netbook know, the **Kargatane** have exacting standards in terms of quality and presentation and also demand that the articles presented there fit the canon view of the Demiplane of Dread; while this ensures a netbook of the highest quality, many interesting and noteworthy articles fail to meet the **Kargatane**'s criteria and fall by the wayside.

We present some of those articles in this netbook as a sort of "off-Bo δ " effort, similar to an "off-Broadway" play; the name UNDEAD SEA SCROLLS, in addition to the reference to the biblical Dead Sea Scrolls, is intended to reflect the re-animation of these articles from the scrap heap of failed Bo δ entries into a second life-or, perhaps, unlife-as part of this netbook.

The USS also contains brand new material, made especially for the USS.

We offer a toast to **Ravenloft**, a toast to the **Kargatane**, and sincerely hope you will not toast the editors of this netbook !

Advertising !

FOR THOSE POOR UNFORTUNATES WHO FOUND THAT NETBOOK WHILE
SURFING ON THE NET, AND DO NOT USUALLY VISIT THE
KARGATANE WEB SITE

First, if you play the **Ravenloft** setting, you have to visit the **Kargatane** (www.kargatane.com), the official **Ravenloft** d20 web site, filled with nasty ideas to throw at your players ! Even Azalin Rex is a regular of that web site !!!

Their "BoS" netbook collection is really good, but searching for dark knowledge in all dusty corners of the site it is well worth the time spend. Some ideas are **Ravenloft**-specific but many (NPCs, etc.) can be borrowed for other D&D settings.

Second, you missed the UNDEAD SEA SCROLLS (USS) propaganda on that site. So perhaps you did not know **YOU** can send stuff for the USS netbook too ???

If you have written something about **Ravenloft** (domain, NPC or secret society, adventure, rules, story, etc.), why not publish it in next year's USS !

One rule: it has to be cool, new, and about **Ravenloft** !!! (simple enough ?)

The next release of the yearly USS, version 2002, is planned for around the end of November, 2002, and the submission deadline is October 20th, 2002.

Don't hesitate to contact us for any submissions / questions / suggestions / comments / bottle of wine / chocolate boxes / gifts / rant :) at : jopekin@hotmail.com

ETERNAL GRATITUDE (ETERNAL ? MMM... THAT'S LONG ...) TO:

All webmaster who agreed to host our netbook on their site.

Jean-Guy M., for major major help on fine tuning the document presentation
and for converting the Word document to a PDF document

We warmly thank the Kargatane for allowing us to publicize the USS on their site.

And to all those who submitted stuff to fill these pages.

Éric R., for finding the neat name of this netbook.



Oh, by the way, this neat netbook is best viewed with the
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ENJOY !

**This netbook is dedicated to our departed friend,
Marie K. -Laplante, known on the board
as her character Eevee Beiderbecke.**

We miss you.

**I tried to thank you along the way, but if I didn't,
let me thank you now**

**We also dedicate the netbook to the September 11th victims, and
their aftermath, and to all who suffered by losing someone dear.**

THE DARN OBLIGATORY LEGAL NOTICE !

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RUNNING THE PLACE

THE UNDEAD SEA SCROLLS

FAITHS OF THE MISTS

BY MARC-ANDRÉ BÉDARD
(THORGAR)

PROLOGUE

The footsteps of the monk echoed in the vast cavern as he proceeds to take his place in the circle. Tonight, the solemn fraternity, simply known as the Brotherhood, gathered once more to exchange lore of all sorts, in the hope that they might better understand the strange world in which they lived. The flames of the brazier, reflecting on the faces of the eleven persons present, provided warmth and comfort.

Raising his hands to gather the attention, the masked one began: “Welcome brothers, once again we unite to relate the tales of our experiences and to share the valuable knowledge that we learned, that we may better understand and judge this world of ours. Let us waste no more time, who will be the first to share his wisdom?”

“I shall be the first.” Told the monk. “I’ve traveled far and into both friendly and dangerous places to gather this information. I went my way in the hope to be the witnesses of true feats of Faith and so have I. Let me entreat you brothers, of the many religions I encountered in the lands of the Mists. This is my tale, listen and be witness as the forces of light and darkness battles for the souls of the mortals as I embarked on a quest to further understand my Faith...”

THE NATURE OF RELIGIONS ON RAVENLOFT

The worship of gods on the demiplane of dread is rather uncommon. However, it’s far from being inexistent. Numerous thousands of

people have been trapped on Ravenloft keeping with them their superstitions and religious beliefs. Philosophies, church of particular gods, even whole pantheons have found their ways in the Mists. But a dungeon master must always keep in mind that there is no true gods on Ravenloft. Thus no avatars will ever walk the land. Priests from other worlds who used to feel a special connection with their deity would find this link curiously closed, leaving a somewhat empty feeling about it. For reasons of their own, it is the Dark Powers themselves who grant spells and powers to the priests, but no one is aware of that fact.

This text is a compilation of the various religious organizations I could find in official Ravenloft products, it’s an extensive list but it may not be complete. As I could not have access to all the existing Ravenloft products, mistakes and omissions could also have occurred. Following the descriptions are my personal suggestions for both 3rd and 2nd editions priests of these orders. All spells and special powers of these priests are subject to the rules find either in the rulebook *Domains of Dread* or *Ravenloft 3rd Edition*, depending on which edition you are using. Note that for copyrights consideration no suggestions are provided for religions that are fully described in a Ravenloft product. Also, this text was written prior the release of the *Ravenloft 3rd Edition* rulebook so my suggestions may vary from the official rules and it does not contain any new spell domains.

Note that suggestions for 3rd edition spell domains were only provided in the “Pantheons” section. A 3rd edition addendum follows the text for religions that were not covered in the new Ravenloft’s rulebook.

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THE THREE GREAT CHURCHES

The churches of Bane, Ezra and Hala are the three most important religions on Ravenloft. These three Faiths have followers all over the Core, their views and philosophies varying greatly from a region to another. Thus each church can have clerics of any alignment in their ranks. For most people, these are monotheist religions with the other two great churches being but a different aspect of their god. Others do believe them to be three distinct deities working more or less together against the forces of darkness. Sometime however the rift between the three churches is greater with the followers of one of the gods deeming the other two as false gods.

BANE (King of the Gods, God of Rulership, lawful neutral)

Mainly based in Hazlan and Nova Vaasa, the church of Bane holds the tenets that he is the King of the Gods and that those who rule do so by his divine providence. He's seen as a harsh power who demands total respect from anyone, but giving much in return. He punishes most severely all who would attempt to reach above their station. It's no surprise that the doctrine of Bane holds that he is the highest of all gods worshipped in the demiplane. A schism exists in the church of Bane in Hazlan about the actual causes of the loss of clerical powers during the Great Upheaval. Some think that he was somehow incapacitated to do so while others claim that it was a punishment of his part for not having stopped this major event. Nonetheless, they are all watchful for signs in order to avoid another Great Upheaval.

News of Bane's demise on Aber-Toril has not reached Ravenloft. But even if it did it would either be taken as a madman's fancy at best or for a heresy at worst. Although the Ravenloftian cult of Bane is primarily lawful neutral in alignment, a strong streak toward lawful evil does exist. They consider the other gods and goddesses either as inferior deities or simply as false deities which they are hard pressed

to replace them for the True Faith. Ezra is sometime perceived as Bane's consort.

Banite

Requirements: Intelligence 13 and Wisdom 9.

Alignment: May be of any alignment, most are lawful neutral or lawful evil.

Priest Spheres:

- Major access: All, Combat, Healing, Necromantic and Sun.

- Minor access: Numbers and Wards

Powers:

- Turn Undead if good, or Control Undead if evil, (Neutral priests are free to choose one or the other).

- They are immune to the effects of "Fear" spells, but not other emotional-affecting spells or spell-like abilities.

Holy symbol: Upright Black Hand on a red shield

Weapons: Any weapons.

Armor: Same as clerics.

EZRA (Goddess of Healing and Protection, lawful neutral)

Perhaps the most respected church in all the land. The church of Ezra is dedicated to the protection of the weak, cares for the sick and the betterments of human conditions. Four major branches of this faith exist, each of them with its own practices and beliefs. The first and most important branch is the Home Faith. Based in the Grand Cathedral of Levkarest in Borca they are healers and protectors out of duty. The Chapel of Pure Heart in Mordentshire, in the domain of Mordent, houses the second branch of the Church of Ezra. Concerned with salvation and redemption, they believe that the legions of the night may come to see the light. The third branch is located at the crumbling cathedral of Ste-Mère-des-Larmes in Port-à-Lucine, in the domain of Démentlieu. They are engaged in an endless quest for knowledge, that they might better understand their role in what they call the Grand Scheme. The last branch is somewhat more aggressive, the anchorites of Nevuchar Springs in Necropolis claim that the legions of the night must be fought and that an anchorite

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must be strong in his own defense. Priests of Ezra of any of the four faiths frown upon mistreatment or needless suffering of the innocent. They help the injured and show some degree of mercy to their enemies. Pious anchorites are gifted with the ability to summon the Shield of Ezra, a mystic barrier that protects them from some kind of harm. Some elder priests even manifested the power to travel through the Mists.

Anchorite

Anchorites are fully described in *Domains of Dread*.

HALA (Goddess of Healing, Witches and Warlocks, neutral good)

Coming from an unknown prime material world, the goddess Hala is perceived as a goddess constantly working to ease the pain and suffering of others. She is also credited with the creation of good witches and warlocks. The evil hags also claim of having been created by the goddess. Note however that members of Hala's clergy find this belief offensive. Her clergy is divided in several forms. First of all typical clerics tends the need of communities in a traditional way. But the true specialty priests and priestesses of Hala form reclusive covens of witches and warlocks. They usually wear any kind of light colored robes ranging from white to crystal blue.

The cult of Hala is particularly active in the domains of Mordent and Falkovnia. It can also be found in the domain of Sithicus where the tale of the ogress Lurrhem, closely linked to the legend of Lurren about the creation of hags, is widely spread.

Worthy of note, the Sisters of Mercy, also known as the Sisters of Grace, were a reclusive, monastic sect of exclusively female priestesses who worshipped Hala. Well respected, their sanctuary (The Sisters of Mercy Hospice) could be found just east of Mordentshire. These priestesses of Hala wore blue robes and covered their faces with veils.

Indeed, to uncover the face of a priestess risked Hala's wrath. Unfortunately, the priestesses found themselves playing host to two vampires in recent years; the second one, with the aid of the Gentleman Caller, wiped out the priestesses to the last near the time of the Grim Harvest.

Priest of Hala

Standard cleric. The good witches and warlocks of Hala are described in the *Van Richten Monster Hunter Compendium volume III*.

THE FAITHS OF LIGHT

The three great churches are not the only ones working against the forces of darkness on the demiplane of Dread. Other religions exist and their importance must not be lessened. Often these religions are rooted to a particular domain but some priests know now bound to pursue evil and they can be encountered anywhere.

DIVINITY OF MANKIND (True neutral)

In the city of Paridon, all priests follow the philosophy that mankind (including half-elves and half-vistani) is nearly a divine being, and should do as much as he can to achieve physical, mental, and emotional perfection, always and in all ways. The philosophy encourages men to strive for the physical ideal and to learn as much as possible of the world. They do not turn undeads, but are able to use a very potent ability, the Soothing Word power.

Paridon's priest

Requirements: Strength 12, Intelligence 14, Wisdom 12 and Reading/Writing proficiency.

Alignment: Any neutral alignment.

Priest Spheres:

- Major access: All, Charm and Healing.

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- Minor access: Combat, Creation, Divination and Protection.

Powers:

- Soothing Word.

With this power, three times by day can the priest remove the effects of a fear spell or of a failed fear check. It can also calm someone in berserker rage or sway the attitude of a hostile crowd or mob

When used this way, it momentarily calms down a number of characters or monsters (equal to 2x the priest's experience level in hit dice: therefore an 8th level priest could momentarily calm 16 HD of angry mob, for instance).

- Two other minor sphere of the priest's choice.

Holy symbol: Human silhouette.

Weapons: Dagger, dirk, knife, stiletto and all swords (likely to be a rapier).

Armor: Same as clerics.

ELEMENTAL FORCES (Any)

From the harsh world of Athas, comes the domain of Kalidnay and with it, those who worship the elemental planes of existence (fire, air, water and earth). Elemental clerics are really rare, for the bulk of Kalidnay's priests are templars of the sorcerer king Kalid-Ma. They must remain cautious about how they use their elemental powers, unless they want to have trouble with the templars and get first chair places in the arena of Kalidnay City. Note that you don't have to play an Athasian character to be an elemental cleric, if its suit your campaign you could have an elemental cleric from anywhere. All elemental clerics try to enhance the presence of their chosen element in the world. Elemental clerics can select only one spell domain.

Elemental cleric

Requirement: Wisdom 9.

Alignment: Any alignment.

Priest Spheres: (As described in the Dark Sun campaign setting boxed set.)

- Major access: The chosen element.

- Minor access: Cosmos.

Powers:

- Turn or Control Undead.

- Ignore chosen element.

A cleric can ignore the presence of the element he worships when he reaches 5th level.

The duration of this power is a number of rounds equal to his level, and it can only be performed once per day. This protection extends to everything that the cleric is carrying on him.

- Gate material.

Once per day, a cleric can gate material directly from his elemental plane when he reaches 7th level. The amount of material he may gate is one cubic foot per level above 6th. The material is a pure specimen from the plane in question--earth, air, fire, or water. The exact nature of the material will be raw and basic. Air so gated comes in the form of a terrific wind, capable of knocking down all huge or smaller creatures; it lasts one round. The shape of the gated material may be dictated by the cleric, but it cannot be gated more than 50 feet from the cleric.

Holy symbol: The worshipped element.

Weapons: Anything somehow related to their chosen element.

Armor: Any.

FALKOVNIAN PRIESTHOOD (Neutral good)

Very few suffer more than the poor souls inhabiting Falkovnia. It comes at no surprise that they cling to whatever hope they can to survive the horrors of their lives and religions do provide that hope. Falkovnian priests believe in the gods and they constantly see the world as a battle between the forces of good and the forces of darkness. Falkovnian priests are poor, dressing only in common robes, wearing no armor and fighting only with staves. Other than the every day suffering, pain and brutality of life in Falkovnia, it is the gods of Death from the neighboring domain of Necropolis which represent the supernatural forces of darkness and corruptions who are the greatest enemies of any Falkovnian priests.

With their zealous attempts at easing the pain and suffering of the Falkovnians, the priesthood of Hala is particularly active and

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appreciated in this domain. Though they are cautious not to run afoul of the Talons. The goddess Ezra too is respected and her name called for when in need of protection. But no significant bastion of her faith is located in Falkovnia, the worshippers of Hala doing most of the job. Falkovnians are less prompt to the worship of Bane. After all, if those who rules do so by his divine providence. He must be evil to support a sadistic king like Drakov. One could assume that this tenet of Bane's religions would be appealing to Drakov. It is not so, he cannot tolerate any other king than himself to be worshipped in his domain. Beside many sees in Drakov's continual failure at annexing Darkon a sign of Bane's disfavor. Many banites won a place at the stakes for speaking this thought aloud.

Falkovnian priest
Standard cleric.

LAMORDIAN PRIEST

Most Lamordian citizens believe that the gods have withdrawn from the world after its creation and that they have no interest at all in humankind. Their duty is mainly to prepare the souls of the dead for the afterlife. Lamordian priests are not granted any clerical powers.

Alternatively, the philosophy known as the Divinity of Mankind could be quite appealing to the Lamordians. It is easy to assume that a fleeing priest from the city of Paridon could have find his way to Lamordia and incorporate the local beliefs in his religion. A Lamordian priest would now gain clerical powers but would continue to promote the advancement of scientific fields, such as medicine, over the use of their miracles. Using them only as a last resort. See the Divinity of Mankind's philosophy if you select that alternative for the Lamordian priests characteristics.

MILIL (Lord of Songs, neutral good)

A cult dedicated to Milil, the Faerunian god of song and poetry exist in Kartakass. Priests of Milil on Ravenloft are charged to use their artistic skills to comfort those who are suffering, a difficult task in this grim land. They must continue to create songs or poetry on a regular basis, at least a song or poetic text once a year, to prove their devotion to the lord of songs. The close proximity of Kartakass with Hazlan and Nova Vaasa occasionally caused minor incidents between banites and Milil's priests.

Priest of Milil

Requirements: Intelligence 13, Wisdom 14, Charisma 14 and singing proficiency.

Alignment: Any good alignment.

Priest Spheres:

- Major access: All, Charm, Creation, Healing, and Traveler.

- Minor access: Necromantic, Wards.

Powers:

- Turn Undead.

- At 3rd level, Enthrall once a day.

- At 10th level, they can sing a Song of Suggestion (which acts like the wizard spell Suggestion) once a day.

Holy symbol: A harp.

Weapons: Same as clerics.

Armor: Same as clerics.

MORNINGLORD (Neutral good)

In the land of the devil Strahd, a small shrine in a decaying church in Vallaki is dedicated to the worship of the Morninglord. A being with golden skin and hair of fire, whom one day, will step out of the Mists and banish darkness and suffering from the world. His priests are kind folks dedicated to the welfare of others. This religion seems to be very appealing for the former Gundarakites, rapidly taking over the grim religion of Nerull. But not so for the older Barovians, who thinks they have been forsaken by the gods. Certain persons have linked the Morninglord with Lathander Morninglord the Faerunian god.

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Priest of the Morninglord

Requirement: Wisdom 9.

Alignment: Any good alignment.

Priest Spheres:

- Major access: All, Elemental (all), Healing and Sun.

- Minor access: Combat, Wards and Weather.

Powers:

- Turn Undead.

- Light (as per spell), 2 times a day.

- At 9th level, Cure Lycanthropy once a week.

Holy symbol: A rising sun.

Weapons: Same as clerics.

Armor: Same as clerics.

Note that Morninglord's priests from prime material Barovia (see *Roots of Evil*) possess different powers than Morninglord's priests on Ravenloft.

ORDER OF THE GUARDIANS (Neutral good)

Although not a religion, the Order of the Guardians is a monastic organization. They seek to acquire evil artifacts and magical items in hope to destroy them to prevent danger to innocents. If unable to do so they would create secret sanctuary to guard the item so it would not fall in the wrong hands. Someone does not simply choose to become a guardian. It's a calling, one that you are born with. The Guardians are described as a kit in the accessory *Champions of the Mists*. Any good priests may join the order, but the kit is best suited to clerics rather than specialty priests. All members are required to take certain vows and oaths. Among these sacred promises is the commitment to abandon individuality. To that end, all members of the order wear the same heavy robes of gray wool. In most cases, the hoods of these robes are drawn up, all but hiding the wearer's features in dark shadows. The robes worn by these monks are unadorned as a sign of their humility and devotion. They make use of no other icons or signs to identify themselves to each other, even when traveling in the outside world.

TEPESTANI INQUISITORS (Chaotic good)

Tepestani folks believe in all kind of "little beasties" and evil witches, which lurk in the night. Currently in Viktal, an aging priest by the name of Wyan has started a crusade against the Fey. He believes them to be malevolent creatures that dwell in the wilds of the world. He feels they are responsible for the destruction of G'Henna and Markovia (unknowing they have only been replaced elsewhere by the dark powers), and now fears that they plot to do the same to Tepest. He thinks it's his righteous duty to oppose them. Although well meaning, some elves and innocents have been burnt by their overzealous actions. The bulk of these inquisitors are chaotic good, all of them are humans. They dress themselves in drab brown robes and carry quarterstaves. They maintain a small local temple in Viktal. The people of Tepest are of Celtic racial stock, thus we can assume that they worship the Celtic pantheon.

Alternatively, they could worship the god of one of the three great churches. Should it be so it would likely to be Ezra since she is seen as goddess of protection, fighting against corruption and darkness. Bane would also be a good possibility, as the king of the gods he can be seen as the provider of divine justice by some, which could be the motivation of the inquisitors. In all case, they would never worship Hala. A goddess they must perceived as foul for creating the hags, witches and warlocks that are their enemies.

Inquisitor

Standard cleric.

VOODAN (Any alignment)

The priests in the domain of Souragne are all shamans dedicated to the worship of the spirits of the swamps. They obtain their powers by their relation with these spirits. To be granted the use of a spell, they perform some kind of ritual, making an offer in order to please the spirit and seek his help. They are surrounded with a lot of fetishes and other strange items

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used for their ritual purpose. They consider profane to bury, cremate or mutilate the body of a dead person, until at least 4 days have passed. Voodan is a religion like no others in the Mists. Obviously inspired by voodoo folklore, a small research on the matter would most certainly add to the richness this religion can add to your campaign.

Shaman of the swamp

Those having access to the *Shaman* accessories are encouraged to follow the guidelines provided in this book.

Requirement: Wisdom 12.

Alignment: Any alignment.

Priest Spheres

- Major access: All, Necromantic and Plant.

- Minor access: Animal, Healing and Weather.

Powers:

- None.

Holy symbol: Unknown.

Ceremonial garb: Unknown.

Weapons: They may not use heavy, awkward, delicate or refined weapons: only simple, basic weapons are acceptable, such as a staff, dagger, short sword, or club.

Armor: They may not use armor more cumbersome than leather, and do not use shields.



YUTOW THE PEACEBRINGER (Lawful neutral)

This lawful neutral religion is used as a tool by the darklord of Valachan, Urik Von Kharkov, to control the population. The religion promotes obedience to the law and master of the land, keeping the peace and bringing a plentiful harvest. The baron closely monitors it and if one priest seems to have too much Faith (after reaching 4th level), he tends to die in a tragic accident. Priests of this ethos are ill suited to be player characters. Unless they want to be fugitive hunted down by the minions of Von Kharhov after reaching 4th level, the DM should refrain to allow a fellow player to impersonate a priest of Yutow. This religion appeared in *Dragon Magazine #50* in the adventure *the Felkovic's Cat*.

Alternatively, the church of Bane could have conceivably replaced the church of Yutow by claiming that the latter was but an aspect of the Lord of Kings. After all, both Bane and Yutow's tenets enforce obedience to the lord and encourage people not to attempt at reaching above their station.

Priest of Yutow

Standard cleric.



PANTHEONS

Whole pantheons of gods have found their ways into Ravenloft. Some of these gods are working on the side of light while others sided with the darkness. Usually, a priest of a given pantheon worships the entire pantheon, performing rituals dedicated to bring the gods favor over their community. From time to time however, some elect to worship one god in particular. Lets have a brief look at some of the gods of these pantheons. Note that being wholly evil, the corrupted Sri-Rajian pantheon is covered in the section *The Faiths of Darkness*. Also, official game statistics for 2nd edition priests of these pantheons can be found in the book *Legends and Lore*. A 3rd edition book on pantheons should soon be released too.

CELTIC PANTHEON

The Celtic pantheon is worshipped in a number of domains on Ravenloft. Notably in

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Forlorn where two orders of druids (the Oak and the Rowan factions) are respectively dedicated to the druidic gods Daghdha and Belenus. They struggle to deliver the land from the darkness and to survive against the goblins, worshippers of Arawn.

Many conclaves of elves on the demiplane also worship the Celtic pantheon. But it is not the case of the Sithican elves, which worship Hala. The Tepestani inquisitors might also be worshippers of the Celtic pantheon.

The worship of the Celtic pantheon, mainly that of Belenus, can also be find in the Shadowborn cluster. But it has evolved from the druidic culture to a medieval culture. Sadly, the cult of Belenus in the land of Nidalia is a cult to Belenus in name only. The lord of the place, Elena Faith-Hold, committed many crimes in his name. The meanings of his teachings have been lost to her and he has forsaken her. Thought she would never admit it. The goddess Brigit also has many followers in the cluster.

ARAWN (God of Death and the Underworld, neutral evil)

This god reign supreme over the life and death of the Celtic folks. He is also the sole master of the underworld. The goblins of Forlorn are fanatically devoted to him. Their burial practice of scattering the deceased's bones reflects their belief that reanimation or resurrection is unholy.

Spell domains: Death, Evil and Destruction.
Favorite weapon: Scythe.

DAGHDHA (God of Druids, Crops and Weather, neutral good)

Leader of the loose confederation of the druidic gods, Daghdha is the protector of the Celtic folks. He is also credited with power over crops and weather. His followers gather in sacred groves to worship them. The druidic Oak faction in Forlorn is following the tenets of Daghdha.

Spell domains: Plant, Earth and Air.
Favorite weapon: Wooden club.

BELENUS (God of the Sun and Fire, neutral good)

Belenus is the druidic god of the Sun and of Fire. The Rowan druids of Forlorn are dedicated to him. His followers gather in circle of standing stones to worship him. In the Shadowborn cluster where his cult has grown into a medieval one, the god of the Sun and Fire is also a champion of good and justice. He is the inspiration behind the creation of the Circle also known as the knights of the shadows.

Spell domains: Good, Sun and Fire.
Favorite weapon: Longsword.

BRIGIT (Goddess of the Moon and Peace, neutral Good)

The nocturnal counterpart to Belenus, Brigit, is the goddess of the moon. Seen as a calm and kind deity, she is respected for her haunting powers. Her priests have been known to exhibit the power to heal wounds, purify water and turn undead. They are a peaceful lot always striving to find a way to avoid battle.

Priests of Belenus & Brigit

BELENUS

Requirements: Strength 12, Constitution 12 and Wisdom 12.

Alignment: Any good alignment.

Priest Spheres:

- Major access: All, Combat, Divination, Healing, Elemental (fire), Protection and Sun.
- Minor access: Wards and Guardian.

Powers:

- Turn Undead.
- At 1st level, Light 3 times per day.
- At 9th level, Flame Strike once a day.

Holy symbol: Solar disc, Circle of standing stones.

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Weapons: Same as clerics.
Armor: Same as clerics.

BRIGIT

Requirement: Wisdom 13.
Alignment: Any non-evil alignment.
Priest spheres:
- Major Access: All, Charm, Creation, and Healing.
- Minor Access: Thought, Divination.
Powers:
- Turn Undead.
- At 5th level, Starshine once a night.
- At 9th level, Moonbeam once a night.
Holy symbol: Silver crescent moon on a chain.
Weapons: Quarterstaff (only for defense as a last resort).
Armor: None.

LUGH (God of excellence, chaotic neutral)

He is a jack of all trade if there can ever be one among the Celtic gods. Lugh, the god of excellence, is said to be the patron and inventor of the arts, expert in fields such as sorcery, history, heroism, storytelling and craftsmanship of all sorts. His priests are required to travel much and must dedicate themselves at perfecting a form of art, whatever it might be.

Spell domains: Knowledge, Strength and Travel.
Favorite weapon: Sling.

MORRIGAN (Goddess of War, chaotic evil)

She is the terrible war goddess of the Celts. Her priests are always in search of intense battles to fight. Often banding with groups of warriors in order to find it. If they cant find any battle they are certainly not against the idea of intentionally creating it.

Spell domains: Chaos, Evil and War.
Favorite weapon: Longsword.

DIANCECHT (God of Healing, lawful good)

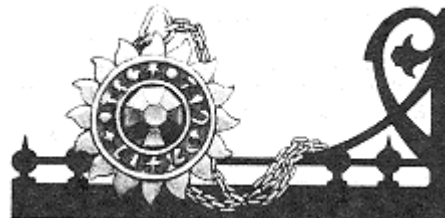
A god of healing who goes at any length to aid the injured and the sick whoever they might be, friends or foes alike. His doctrine insists that the responsibility of a wound belongs to the inflictor to heal or at least pay for. Thus, Diancecht's priests will use their powers trying to coerce anyone injuring another to correct the situation.

Spell domains: Law, Good and Healing.

MATH MATHONWY (God of Sorcery, neutral evil)

The Celtic god of magic, his worshippers are always eager to bring more magical powers into the world. Often helping wizards or priests of other ethos by participating in-group rituals to stir more magic to do so. Obviously collecting ever more magical knowledge is their principal goal.

Spell domains: Magic, Knowledge and Evil.
Favorite weapon: Quarterstaff.



EGYPTIAN PANTHEON

Har' Akir, Sebua

The desert lands of the Amber Wastes are home to the pantheon of the Egyptian gods. In Har' Akir, the temple of Muhar is dedicated to all the Egyptian gods. But the two most worshipped in the cluster are the brothers, and bitter enemies, Set and Osiris. A temple to Apophis, a god of ultimate evil can be found in Sebua and a clan of werejackals in Har' Akir worships the god Anubis in a strange and twisted way.

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SET (God of Jealousy and Lord of the Desert, lawful evil)

The jealous personification of evil, Set is the lord of the desert and sandstorms. His most heinous act was the assassination of his own brother Osiris. Although evil, he is a member of the great Ennead nonetheless and is often depicted defending Ra's solar barque against Apophis. To not worship him properly would be to invite his wrath.

Spell domains: Law, Evil and Trickery.
Favorite weapon: Longspear.

OSIRIS (God of the Dead, lawful good)

Osiris and Set are bitter enemies, for the latter once tricked him into lying down in a magic coffin. Once inside, Osiris was unable to escape and soon died. His wife, Isis, mummified his body. In so doing she gave him eternal life and made him the god of the underworld and the protector of the dead. Most of his priests on Ravenloft belong to the Green Hand, an order dedicated to the green skinned god that is charged to protect the resting places of the dead against any grave robbers.

Spell domains: Law, Good and Death.
Favorite weapon: Flail.

RA (God of the Sun and Rulership, lawful neutral)

Ra is the lord of Heliopolis and leader of the Egyptian pantheon. His priests are supposed to act as advisors for lords and pharaohs if not pharaohs themselves, a rather difficult task to do on Ravenloft. The greater mummy Ankhepot was himself a former priest of the sun god Ra.

Spell domains: Law, Sun and Fire.

THOTH (Science, Knowledge and Medicine, true neutral)

He's the omniscient god of science, knowledge and medicine. Priests of Thoth are expected to always seek to learn further knowledge and help to spread wisdom throughout the world.

Spell domains: Knowledge and Healing.
Favorite weapon: Quarterstaff.

HORUS (God of Rightful Vengeance, chaotic good)

The falcon headed god is a good and just god, whose duty is to avenge all form of wrongs. Horus is another sworn enemy to Set. Also perceived as a warrior god, His priests are living a constant crusade by upholding the virtues of goodness against darkness and evilness.

Spell domains: Chaos, Good, Protection and Sun.
Favorite weapon: Sword (Khopesh).

APOPHIS (God of Ultimate Evil, chaotic evil)

The snake god, living in perpetual darkness, is the antagonist of the sun god Ra. Apophis is the personification of darkness, evil, and chaos. Occasionally, the struggle between light and darkness was decided in his favor, causing a solar eclipse, but his victories were of short duration for Ra always triumphed in the end.

Spell domains: Chaos, Evil, Destruction.

ANUBIS (God of Death, twisted version, lawful evil)

Har'Akir is home to a twisted cult dedicated to Anubis, the god with a jackal head, lead by true lycanthrope werejackals. The god of mummification is now a strange and mysterious god with unknown goals. His priests try to infect a small population with the curse of lycanthropy.

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Then they command their willing slaves to build a temple to Anubis.

Spell domains: Law, Evil and Death.

Priest of Anubis

(As worshipped by the werejackal of Har' Akir):

Requirement: Wisdom 18, werejackals.

Alignment: Lawful evil.

Priest Spheres:

- Major access: All, Animal, Elemental (all), Healing, Plant, Weather and Necromantic.

- Minor access: None.

Powers:

- Command Undead.

Unholy symbol: Jackal Head with staff.

Ceremonial garb: Unknown

Weapons: Same as werejackals.

Armor: Same as werejackals.

NORSE PANTHEON

(Personal variant)

According to *Domains of Dread*, the dwarves of Ravenloft worship a pantheon of gods known as the Norse (the Vikings pantheon). The dwarves of Ravenloft claim that they were once inhabitants of another world known as Midgar. How they came to find themselves in the domains of Dread is matter of speculation. A legend claims that a long time ago they were once tricked to commit a great offense against the Gods by the god Loki. What could have been this offense is unknown but they believe they were condemned, they and their descendants, to live in some remote part of Nifleheim (which truly means the land of the Mists), realm of the goddess Hel. They would still receive the blessings of the Gods through their prayers but they would never appear or speak to the dwarves ever after until they atone for their ancestor's sacrilege.

ODIN (God of Chieftains, Chief of the Gods, chaotic good)

Often referred to as the "All-Father," Odin is the leader and creator of the Norse pantheon. His first concern is battle, but he is also the god of knowledge, wisdom, poetry, and inspiration. To be a priest of Odin, one must be a chieftain of a tribe. Odin's priests must like fighting. In addition, they must be good tacticians and leaders of men. They must always be in the front lines during battle.

Spell domains: Chaos, Good, War and Knowledge.

Favorite weapon: Longspear.

FRIGGA (Goddess of the Sky and Domestic Life, lawful neutral)

Frigga is the goddess of the clouds, sky, married love, and wives. In her role as goddess of married love, she is sometimes prayed to for fertility. Frigga is the second but principal wife of Odin. Priestesses of Frigga must be married women. They are expected to watch over their home and set a good example for other wives by not letting their husbands stray too far out of the marital fold.

Spell domains: Law and Air.

SIF (Goddess of Excellence and Skill, chaotic good)

Sif is the goddess of excellence and skill, as well as being a superb warrior-woman. Married to Thor, she is also the embodiment of conjugal fidelity. Priests of Sif must be dedicated to excellence in all things. If they are married, they must always behave within the boundaries of the conjugal relationship.

Spell domains: Chaos, Good and War.

Favorite weapon: Longsword.

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HEIMDALL (God of dawn light and Guardians, lawful good)

Heimdall is the god of the dawn light and guardians and is the sworn enemy of Loki. He is the favored god of Ravenloft's dwarves. Priests of Heimdall serve as guards for kings and other powerful men. They are expected to be unswerving in their duty, and must never allow someone to pass a post under their guard without their master's permission. Heimdall's priests hold bridges sacred and must avenge any act that destroys one.

Spell domains: Law, Good, Sun and Protection
Favorite weapon: Longsword.

HEL (Goddess of Death and Disease, neutral evil)

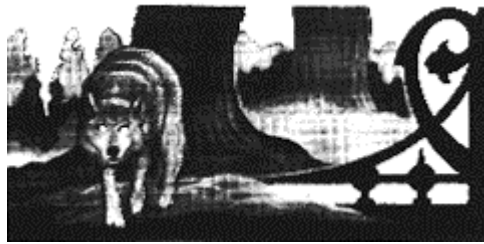
Hel is the goddess of death. She receives the spirits of those who die by diseases and old age, locking them behind the impregnable walls and gates of Niflheim, the land of mists. Thus the dwarves on Ravenloft believe themselves to be in her realm and struggle daily for the right to return on Midgar. All priests of Hel must be women, they work either to appease the goddess or for the acquisition of personal power.

Spell domains: Evil and Death.

LOKI (God of Mischief and Strife, chaotic evil)

Loki the Trickster is the god of mischief and strife. Always causing trouble among the gods, he is tolerated in Asgard only because of the great services he has performed in the past, such as helping to create Midgar and the wall guarding Asgard. Many dwarves fault him for being trapped on Ravenloft. Greedy and covetous persons form most of his followers.

Spell domains: Chaos, Evil and Trickery.
Favorite weapon: Warhammer.



OLYMPIAN PANTHEON

(Personal variant)

According to *Domains of Dread*, the few gnomish settlements known on Ravenloft worship a pantheon they call the Olympian Gods (the Greek pantheon). They believe that their land was taken from their homeworld into a remote part of the Underworld as a respond, by Hades, to a prayer to save them from an unremembered dark peril. Has king of the Underworld, Hades became known has the highest god of the pantheon and as well as their protector. Note that the names of Zeus and Hera are completly unknown to them. Athena is now believed to be daughter of Hades.

HADÈS (King of the Underworld, lawful neutral)

Hades is a two-sided deity, the god of death on one hand and the god of wealth on the other. The right to restore life to the dead belongs to him alone, and he guards it jealously. When a Raise Dead spell is corrupted by the dark powers it is seen as a sign of Hades disfavor, thus only one of his priests would attempt the feat. Hades' priests must live in dark, dreary caverns. They hoard large amounts of gold, which they collect as fees for raising the dead.

Spell domains: Law, Protection and Death.
Favorite weapon: Shortsword.

ATHÈNÀ (Wisdom, War and Crafts, lawful good)

Athena is the goddess of noble combat, architecture, sculpture, spinning, weaving,

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horses, ox olives, prudence, and wise counsel. Like Athena herself, her priests must remain chaste. They must also dedicate themselves to learning the arts of combat and the crafts of peace, and be ready to fight whenever they encounter worshippers of Ares. Her symbol is an owl.

Spell domains: Law, Good, War and Knowledge.
Favorite weapon: Longspear.

ARTEMIS (Goddess of the Hunt, neutral good)
The huntress Artemis is the patroness of young girls, and the mistress of beasts and all wild things. Although renowned as a huntress, Artemis kills only to feed her and others, never for sport. Only women may become druids of Artemis. They must live in the forests, tending the animals, avoiding men, and, above all, remaining chaste.

Spell domains: Good and Animal.
Favorite weapon: Shortbow.

HEPHAESTUS (God of Blacksmithing, neutral good)
Hephaestus is the god of blacksmithing and the patron of artisans, craftsmen, and mechanics. According to the legend he is slightly deformed, resembling a tall, bearded hill giant with a clubfoot and a hunchback. Hephaestus priests are not numerous and must be blacksmiths.

Spell domains: Good, Fire and Knowledge.
Favorite weapon: Warhammer.



ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ (God of the Oceans, chaotic evil)
A brother of Hades, Poseidon is the god of the seas, oceans, rivers, lakes, and earthquakes. He is a quick tempered and possessive god, the treacherous Sea of Sorrow and Nocturnal Sea do seems to prove that fact. No one whatsoever would sail on them before making an appropriate sacrifice to the god.

Spell domains: Chaos, Evil and Water.
Favorite weapon: Trident.

ΑΡΕΣ (God of Strife and War, chaotic evil)
Ares is the god of battle, killing, and fighting. As the personification of the savage side of war, he is fond of strife, anger, and unrestrained bloodletting. Strictly speaking, Ares has no priests, for his worshippers must be soldiers and fighters. However, he grants his most devoted followers the ability to use priest spells by multi-classing themselves as clerics.

Spell domains: Chaos, Evil and War.
Favorite weapon: Longspear.

THE FAITHS OF DARKNESS

Death and corruption are all too common things on Ravenloft. The forces of darkness are very actives and many are ready to pay with their soul for the power they offer. From the vile priests of the Eternal Order, to the corrupt worshippers of the false god Zhakata, religions dedicated to evilness abound. Lets have a look to those active on the demiplane.

THE ETERNAL ORDER (Neutral evil)
No other religions can represent terror, corruption and damnation more than The Eternal Order. Once the only religion tolerated in Darkon, this religion is dedicated to the worship of the various Gods of Death. They played upon the fears of the populace and told them that by

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keeping the gods of death appeased, they would keep the Hour of Ascension at bay. This widely spread superstition comes from the belief that the land was a land of the dead taken by force by the living, and that the dead would someday rise again to claim it back. In truth, they are in league with the undead and work to collect various magical items to send them to their true master, the lich-king Azalin, who gives them to the Kargat, his secret police. Following the Grim Harvest events, they lost much of their hold on the populace due to the fact that the Ascension is believed to be currently happening. They are still the state religion, but other religions have risen and they don't have the power to crush them outright anymore. They are still very dangerous. The Temple of Eternal Penitence in the slain city was once their main headquarter. The Temple of Eternal Balance in Martira Bay, the Temple of Eternal Order in Nartok, the Shrine of the Spirits in Neblus, and the Church of the Sorrowful Dead in Karg are other notorious places of worship of this religion. The Gods of Death have come to represent the forces of Darkness on the Core and are strongly opposed by the three great churches.

Priest of the Eternal Order

Requirement: Wisdom 9.

Alignment: Any evil alignment.

Priest Spheres:

- Major access: All, Astral, Charm, Divination, and Reversed Healing.

- Minor access: Guardian, Necromantic, Sun, Weather.

Powers:

- Command Undead

- Inspire Fear

Twice a day, a priest of the Eternal Order can inspire fear as per the 4th level wizard spell of the same name. Alternatively it could cause the effect of a failed fear check.

Unholy symbol: Small scythe on silver chain.

Weapons: Headman's axe, dagger, knife, lasso, scythe, sickle, stiletto and short sword.

Armor: None.

CAT LORD (God of the Paka, Chaotic evil)

The paka are a vicious and dangerous race of shape changing feline humanoids, bent on revenge upon humankind for an insult made to their race so long ago that even they don't remember what it is! However, they are positive that it was a great insult made by humans and they intend to make all of them pay. Their god is a mysterious deity only named the Cat Lord and not much is known about him. Paka priests delight upon causing harm and wreaking havoc in human communities, and as such, they often pose as "good" clerics to do their evil bidding. Most paka live in Invidia. Paka's can reach the 8th-level as priests. They are described in the *Monstrous Compendium Ravenloft Appendix III*.

Paka priest

Requirements: Wisdom 9, to be a paka.

Alignment: chaotic evil.

Priest Spheres:

- Major access: All, Animal, Charm, Divination and Healing.

- Minor access: None.

Powers:

- None.

Unholy symbol: Probably a Cat.

Weapons: Any.

Armor: Same as clerics.

FAITH OF THE OVERSEER (Lawful evil)

This false religion, located in Martira Bay, seems at first to be a good religion, which cares to the welfare of others. It is not! This is but a deceptive facade to lure would be heroes and proverbial do gooders. This faith is controlled by the Kargat as a means of keeping an eye on adventurers, allowing the Kargat to act more efficiently if they become too troublesome. In addition, they may attempt to have them do their dirty deeds without the adventurers realizing who really pulls the strings. This faith as also created to oppose The Eternal Order. Definitely ran by evil clerics. All information about the Cult of the Overseer can be found in the game module *Bleak House*.

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Faith of the Overseer's priest

Standard cleric.

LAW-GIVERS OF PHIRAZ (Neutral evil)

In the city of Phiraz, the sole city of Pharizia in the Amber wastes cluster, only Diamabel's law, the dreadful overlord of the domain, holds any weight. Diamabel is fanatically devoted to his deity (whose name is not mentioned) and everyone in the city must faithfully pray for at least two hour a day. In order to enforce his edicts, he formed the law-givers, which are charged to cleanse the impurities from those who commit sins or infractions (usually by whipping the unfaithful, sometimes to death). Only the most brutal Pharazians find their calling as part of Diamabel's law-givers. They do not have great spell casting abilities nor any granted powers, but woe to the one who'll harm a law-giver, for few ever survive an encounter with Diamabel. The law-givers never leave the city of Phiraz.

Law-givers of Phiraz

Requirement: Wisdom 9.

Alignment: Any evil alignment.

Priest Spheres:

- Major access: Sun and Necromantic.
- Minor access: Combat.

Powers:

- None.

Unholy symbol: Unknown.

Weapons: Scourge and Whip.

Armor: None.

LOVIATHAR (Goddess of Pain, neutral evil)

In the strange pocket domain of Davion, the ever-shifting village of Thornewood becomes the village of Pallatia when Narana, a priestess of Loviatar the goddess of pain, takes control. They are sadists and masochists; they delight in causing more pains for their goddess. Her holy symbol is the scourge.

Priest of Loviathar

Requirement: Wisdom 9.

Alignment: Any non-good alignment.

Priest spheres:

- Major access: All, Healing (usually reversed), Charm, and Necromantic

- Minor access: Combat, Protection

Powers:

- Unknown.

Unholy symbol: Scourge.

Weapons: Scourge or any other weapons, usually altered to cause more suffering and pain.

Armor: None

NERULL (Chaotic evil)

The cult of Nerull, a god of death, was once the sole religion of Gundarak. It's still active now that it is a part of Barovia, but its quickly crumbling against the appealing religion of the Morninglord. The priests of this religion don't possess any clerical powers and were mostly use by the late duke Gundar to instill fear and obedience to the population.

SRI RAJIAN PANTHEON (Neutral evil)

At the top of mount Yamati in the domain of Sri-Raji, located in the Steaming Lands Cluster, lies Mahakala, lord Arijani's temple. Each section of the temple is devoted to a different evil Sri-Rajian deity, a corrupted version of the Indian pantheon. Rudra is the god of storms, diseases and the bringer of death. Shiva the Destroyer is a goddess of destruction. Kali the black mother of the earth who devours her own children is the goddess of wickedness. Yama is the judge of the dead and the lord of undeads. Finally, Ravana the monster-king of the rakshasas is the most powerful of them and the master of All-Evil. Sri-Rajian priests are dedicated to this corrupted pantheon as a whole. Their role is to ensure that proper rituals and regular sacrifices are made to appease the gods. Some gods of the real pantheon are described in the book *Legends and Lore*. The domain of Sri-Raji and its religion is described in more details in the adventure *Web of Illusions*.

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Priest of the Sri-Rajian pantheon

Requirement: Wisdom 9.

Alignment: Any evil alignment.

Priest Spheres:

- Major access: All, Divination, Elemental (all) and Necromantic.

- Minor access: Combat, Weather.

Powers:

- Command Undead.

Unholy symbol: Any symbols associated with death and pain.

Weapons: Any.

Armor: Same as clerics.

Priest Spheres:

- Major access: Air, Earth, Fire, Water and Cosmos.

- Minor access: None.

Powers:

- Command Undead.

Unholy symbol: Unknown.

Weapons: Any.

Armor: Any.

TEMPLARS OF KALID-MA (Lawful evil)

From the scorched landscape of Athas comes the domain of Kalidnay, which was ruled by the sorcerer-king Kalid-Ma. The sorcerer-kings of Athas had amassed so much power that they even mastered the process of granting spells to their followers, the templars. Now that Kalidnay is in Ravenloft, Kalid-Ma the sorcerer-king sleeps eternally, it is the cursed domain lord, Thakok-An, who rules in his name. Spells are still granted to the templars. On Athas, the templars are a corrupted lot, and bribes are common when one need to deal with them. However, the sorcerer-king Kalid-Ma was known for his strict laws and even stricter enforcement, and not even the templars were above the law, giving the city of Kalidnay the reputation of being a very harsh but fair city. Templars are charged with the city's bureaucracy, the city's defense, application of the law and virtually every important task. Being a templar allows great freedom in the city state of Kalidnay. Including passing judgments on others, calling upon slaves to do whatever the templar wish, requisitioning soldiers and even, at higher level, draw upon the city treasury for official investigations.

Templar of Kalid-Ma

Requirements: Wisdom 9 and Intelligence 10.

Alignment: Any non-good alignment, most of them being lawful evil.

WOLF GOD (God of Werewolves, chaotic evil)

This cult originates from the domain of Verbrek and is practiced exclusively by true werewolves. Alfred Timothy himself, the darklord of Verbrek, is the high priest of this religion, which states that every creature except true werewolves and dire wolves are heathen creatures to be hunted and killed.

Werewolf priest

Requirements: Wisdom 9, to be a true werewolf.

Alignment: Any evil alignment.

Priest Spheres:

- Major access: All, Animal, Charm, Divination, Plant, and Summoning.

- Minor access: None.

Powers:

None.

Unholy symbol: A wolf's head (speculation).

Weapons: Claws and Bite.

Armor: None.

ZHAKATA (Lawful evil, but clerics may be of any alignment):

In the domain of G'Henna all aspects of life revolve around the worship of Zhakata, the beast-god. A false god created from the mind of the domain lord Yagno Petrovna. Until some years ago, Zhakata was considered to be both the Provider and the Devourer. However, Yagno who states that Zhakata is only the Devourer has declared this heretical. Good and neutral priests of Zhakata still believe that the beast-god is also the Provider, and are considered heretics by the others. In either case, it is the dark powers themselves who grants them their spells and one

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only needs to have completed his training and appear to be a priest in good standing to receive his power, though its not widely known. The whole adventure *Circle of Darkness* constitutes a close look at this false religion.

Priest of Zhakata

Requirements: Wisdom 9.

Alignment: Any alignment.

Priest Spheres:

- Spheres of Zhakata's priests greatly vary from one another, why is it so is unknown. Priests of Zhakata may select 5 major and 2 minor spheres in the following list: All, Charm, Combat, Elemental, Healing (some priests have only access to Reversed Healing), Summoning, Necromantic, Protection, Guardian, Weather, Animal, Divination and Plant.

Powers:

- None.

Unholy symbol: Unknown.

Ceremonial garb: Red hooded robes.

Weapons: Any weapons.

Armor: None.



THE LOST FAITHS

While it is unlikely that any priests of those religions walks on the demiplane today, vestiges of those faiths can be found in various places throughout the land. Relics and legends about them could become the cornerstone of a good adventure.

HIGH FAITH OF MORDENT (Lawful good)

Prior to the inception of Mordent in the demiplane of Dread, the Church of the High

Faith was quite powerful in that region of its home world. Based in a city called Osterton, 3 days journey to the north of Mordentshire. It seems this good-aligned faith wasn't above granting favors to its politically and economically powerful patrons. There was a "great Church" of the High Faith led by a priest named Father Joshua Talbot in Mordentshire-on-the-Sea at the time the domain was created. Unfortunately, on the fateful night Strahd and Azalin appeared on the scene, lightning struck the church and it burned to the ground (as much as a largely stone structure can burn, that is). After the events of that unnatural time, the Mordentish lost their faith and the church was never rebuilt; today it is in ruins. Father Talbot was the last priest of the High Faith. The few references to this religion are available in the game module *I10: The House on Gryphon Hill*.

Priest of the High Faith

Standard cleric.

LOLTH (Goddess of the Drow, Chaotic evil)

In the now lost domain of Arak, the cult of Lolth the spider queen, although illegal, was once secretly practiced by a number of shadow elves. The basic the teachings of the Spider Queen must have been the same as anywhere else. These teachings state that Lolth is the only goddess worthy of being worshipped, that each family must produce an heir that will serve her better than its mother, and that women are the ones to hold the power. Spiders are sacred to them and to hurt one was to invite the vengeance of Lolth. The practice of this religion was punishable by death.

Priestess of Lolth

Requirement: Wisdom 13.

Alignment: Chaotic evil.

Priest Spheres:

- Major access: All, chaos, combat, elemental, necromantic and sun (reversed only).

- Minor access: Charm, divination, healing.

Powers:

- Immune to all spider venoms.

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- At 2nd level, Spider-climb once a day.
- At 10th level, Spiderform twice a day.
Unholy symbol: A spider.
Ceremonial Garb: Black robes with spiderweb motives.
Weapons: Any.
Armor: Any.

MALAR (Chaotic evil)

In the isolated village of Aferdale, located on the island of Liffe, there was a temple to Weeshy, "the god of wind." Several dozen priests and followers could be found there. The worship room was covered in images of the sky and storms; the priests wore sky-blue robes. Unfortunately, the temple was nothing more than a cover for a Malar cult. "Weeshy" was the fictional creation of the cultists, who feared impersonating a real religion lest they anger its god. Malar, otherwise known as the Beastlord, is an evil power worshipped in Toril. He represents the savage personification of wild beasts.

Priest of Malar

Requirements: Strength 13, Wisdom 12.
Alignment: Chaotic evil, chaotic neutral or neutral evil.
Priest spheres:
- Major access: All, Animal, Combat and Chaos.
- Minor access: Summoning and Elemental.
Powers:
- Control wild animals.
- Immune to the effects of "charm" spells cast by woodland creatures at 7th level.
Unholy symbol: Beast claw.
Ceremonial Garb: Animal skins.
Weapons: Any kind of natural weapons, metal claws.
Armor: Hide and leather armor.



SEHKMAA (Chaotic evil)

Although the novel *The Enemy Within* has been proclaimed non-canon, I'll still make mention of it. In this novel, Malken the darklord

of Nova Vaasa introduces a new religion, which he secretly uses to further his criminal goals. He presented Sehkmaa as a Cat God devoted to the welfare of society and protection of orphaned children. Even priests of this religion were fooled by Malken's lies. As it is not a true faith, priests of Sehkmaa did not receive any spell powers, and their cat familiars were a "gift" of the darklord to spy on them when he wanted to. At the end of the novel, the vile schemes of Malken are thwarted and the religion is declared illegal.

TOVAG'S PRIESTHOOD

The clerics of Tovag were not organized into a coherent religion, and like the rest of Tovag's inhabitant were not dedicated to any one deity or religion. Still, they all worshiped thousands of powers and spirits dedicated to protection and watchfulness. Usually worshipers did not even know the names of the gods prayed to by those around them. The few clerics maintained the Temple of Penates, a large cathedral in the city of Tor Gorak. It was the only official place of worship in the domain. It was by no means a place of sanctuary or respite however, for all of the clerics worked directly or indirectly for the Daggers, the state police. This means that fugitives were handed to the authorities, and any secrets given in confidence to them was likely not to remain so. Clerics of any alignment could join them. Their worst enemies were most certainly the evil cultists of Vecna, the chained god. The Burning Peaks cluster no longer exists, thus this religion is not active anymore on Ravenloft.

Tovagian priest
Standard cleric.

UNDEAD GOD (Neutral evil)

In Kartakass lies abandoned a ruined temple dedicated to an obscure undead god once tended by the priestess Radaga. She was once a neutral priestess of a minor goddess, very vain and ambitious the dark powers granted her all her wishes in a perverted way of course. It is on

THE UNDEAD SEA SCROLLS

Ravenloft that her worship switched to this undead god. Her goal was aimed at amassing a formidable horde of undead creatures, an army to conquer anything she could. It is she who created the very first giant skeleton. Radaga's deeds are detailed in the adventure *Feast of Goblins*.

Priest of the Undead God

Requirement: Wisdom 13.

Alignment: Any evil alignment.

Priest Spheres:

- Major access: All, Charm, Elemental (Fire), Healing, Necromantic and Protection.
- Minor access: Animal and Guardian.

Powers:

- Control Undead.

Unholy symbol: Skull.

Weapons: As clerics, but mainly weapons made of bones.

Armor: As clerics, splint mails made of human bones are a favorite.

VEЦNA (God of Magic and Dark Secrets, Neutral evil)

This church was dedicated to the Chained God, the vilest demigod of Secrets and Magic of Oerth. In light of his imprisonment, the lich-god was constantly furious about the fact that he could not leave the demiplane and even more so because his most hated enemy ruled the domain neighboring Cavitius. His priests were charged with nothing less than total domination of the population and to uphold the war against the traitor Kas. Citadel Cavitius acted as a giant temple to Vecna and his fully detailed in the game modules *Vecna Reborn* and *Die Vecna, Die*, in which the Maimed Lord escaped his imprisonment and becomes a full fledged god. The Burning Peaks cluster no longer exists, thus this religion is not active anymore on Ravenloft.

Cultist of Vecna

Requirements: Wisdom 17, they must be dual-classed mage.

Alignment: Any evil alignment.

Priest Spheres:

- Major access: All, Charm, Combat, Divination, Elemental, Protection and Summoning.
- Minor access: Guardian and Necromantic.

Powers:

- Control Undead.

Unholy symbol: An eye in the middle of a bony hand.

Ceremonial garb: Red and black robe.

Weapons: Same as mages.

Armor: Only devices usable by mages.

EPILQVUE

“... And thus end the tale of my quest. I walked as far as I could and as long as time allowed me in order to collect this lore. Surely I could not visit all the realms and wondrous locations both terrifying and beautiful that surround us. Thus I believe that many other religions do exist on these lands of the Mists. Time and circumstances will reveal them to us... not now... but in proper time. Have I fulfilled my self appointed task? I do not know. Answers to certain questions bring further questions.”

On these words the monk resumed his place among the circle. His eyes fixing the brazier, he thought... No, he didn't have the answer. He still could not understand this feeling of emptiness. He knew he would have to confront the sincerity of his Faith once again. For in the lands of the Mists, Faith rarely fulfills his promises of plenitude...



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LOST FAITHS OF THE MISTS

(A 3RD EDITION ADDENDUM)

PROLOGUE

Just like anything else, religions arise and die. This is no exception in the Lands of Mists and so it is that in its brief but rich history an uncounted number of Faiths vanished and fades out of men memories. Sometimes some vestiges from the past are unearthed and for the time of a breath, men are made aware again that it once existed. Every once in a while, rumors speak of a follower of one of these lost Faiths whom would walk the land again. Perhaps then we should ponder the question then, are they truly lost or are they just hidden? In this question lies the cornerstone of adventure.

This text describes some of the religions that were known to exist on Ravenloft at some point of the demiplane's history. Each of them is provided with my suggestions for their clerical spell domains and they follow all rules of the Ravenloft setting. To respect the fact that Ravenloft has been cut off from other official gaming worlds, I modified the names of some religions that were linked to other settings. Very few, if any, of these religions are still active in Ravenloft but they can prove interesting options for games set in Ravenloft's past. Who knows, some secluded enclave of worshippers may still exist somewhere or the Mists could send one cleric of these religion forward in time. An infinite number of possibilities could justify the presence of one of these clerics in present time Ravenloft.

FAITHS OF LIGHT

Some of the disappeared religions did work for the greater good of their community or at least for a goal that was not focused on dark and terrible deeds. Different reasons caused them to vanish, the destruction of their domains, manipulations from a darklord or simply the lack of worshippers.

BRIGIT

The nocturnal counterpart to Belenus was once praised in Nidalia a long time ago. Brigit, was a goddess of the moon and of peace. Seen as a calm and kind deity, she was respected for her haunting powers. Her priests have been known to exhibit the power to heal wounds, purify water and turn undead. They were a peaceful lot always striving to find a way to avoid battle.

Symbol: The moon.
Favored Weapon: Quarterstaff.

THE ELEMENTAL FORCES

It is said that in a desert lost in the Mists, lies a city of broken hope and endless suffering. Hidden among its inhabitant are some who subtly and discretely worships the elemental forces of nature. Striving to increase the presence of their chosen element in the world. Although very rare, some of these elementalists sometime found their way out of their inhospitable home and are seen to wander the Core.

Symbol: A representation of their chosen element, at best a pure specimen of it.Favored Weapon: Anything somehow related to their chosen element.

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THE HIGH FAITH OF MORDENT†

Prior to the inception of Mordent in the demiplane of Dread, the Church of the High Faith was quite powerful in that region of its home world. Based in a city called Osterton, 3 days journey to the north of Mordentshire. Not above granting favors to its politically and economically powerful patrons the Faith was a good aligned-one nonetheless. There was once a "great Church" of the High Faith led by a priest named Father Joshua Talbot in Mordentshire-on-the-Sea. When Mordent entered into the Mists, lightning struck the church and was razed to the ground. After the events of that unnatural time, the Mordentish lost their faith and the church was never rebuilt. A new cathedral is currently built on its ruins by the church of Ezra.

Symbol: Unknown

THE POWERS OF PROTECTION†

The clerics of Tovag were not organized into a coherent religion, and like the rest of Tovag's inhabitant were not dedicated to any one deity or religion. Still, they all worshiped thousands of powers and spirits dedicated to protection and watchfulness. Usually worshipers did not even know the names of the gods prayed to by those around them. The few clerics maintained the Temple of Penates, a large cathedral in the city of Tor Gorak. It was the only official place of worship in the domain. It was by no means a place of sanctuary or respite however, for all of the clerics worked directly or indirectly for the Daggers, the state police. This means that fugitives were handed to the authorities, and any secrets given in confidence to them were likely not to remain so. Their worst enemies were most certainly the evil cultists of the Chained God.

Symbol: Varying from one priest and the other.

THE SONGMEISTER

In the year 737 of the Barovian calendar in the domain of Kartakass, a church was briefly

established in the name of the SongMeister, a god of song and poetry. Priests of the SongMeister were charged to use their artistic skills to comfort those who were suffering, most assuredly a difficult task in this grim land. This religion was short-lived because it was rumored of being established by a sinister monster.

Symbol: A harp

YU†OW THE PEACEBRINGER

This peaceful religion was in truth used as a tool by the darklord of Valachan, Urik Von Kharkov, to control the population. It promoted obedience to the law and master of the land, keeping the peace and bringing a plentiful harvest. It seemed however that the clergy of this faith was ill fated, as mortal accidents were particularly common among the high-ranking members. Actually, the baron commanded these accidents to avoid the clerics to grow too much in power and therefore becoming a potential threat. These disguised murders were a heavy toll for the clergy and with their number swiftly decreasing, the Faith of the Valachani turned over Ezra and Hala.

Symbol: Unknown

FAITHS OF DARKNESS

Be they disappeared or worst, only hidden, their existence is hardly a comforting thought. Who knows what manner of dread legacy they left behind? Take heed adventurers some of these malicious religions are still dangerous.

ARAW†N

Arawn reigned supreme over the life and death of the Celtic folks, the sole master of the underworld. The goblins of Forlorn are fanatically devoted to him. Their burial practice

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of scattering the deceased's bones reflects their belief that reanimation or resurrection is unholy.

Symbol: Piles of bones
Favored Weapon: Scythe.

ANUBIS

Har'Akir is home to a twisted cult dedicated to Anubis, the god with a jackal head, lead by true lycanthrope werejackals. The god of mummification is now a strange and mysterious god with unknown goals. His priests usually infect a small population with the curse of lycanthropy, and then they command their willing slaves to build a temple to Anubis.

Symbol : A sarcophagus ornate with a jackal head.

THE BEASTGOD

In the isolated village of Aferdale, located on the island of Liffe, there was a temple to Weeshy, "the god of wind." Several dozen priests and followers could be found there. The worship room was covered in images of the sky and storms; the priests wore sky-blue robes. Unfortunately, the temple was nothing more than a cover for the cult of the evil Beastgod. "Weeshy" was the fictional creation of the cultists, who feared impersonating a real religion lest they anger its god. The Beastgod represents the savage personification of wild beasts.

Symbol : Clawed beast paw

THE CAT LORD

The paka are a vicious and dangerous race of shape changing feline humanoids, bent on revenge upon humankind for an insult made to their race so long ago that even they don't remember what it is! However, they are positive that it was a great insult made by humans and they intend to make all of them pay. Their god is a mysterious deity only named the Cat Lord and not much is known about him. Paka priests

delight upon causing harm and wreaking havoc in human communities, and as such, they often pose as "good" clerics to do their evil bidding. Most of them live in Invidia.

Symbol : A cat's head.
Favored Weapon: Claws and bites.

THE CHAINED GOD

A vile god of dark secrets and fell sorcery was once imprisoned in the Mists and his church strived in the now disappeared Burning Peaks cluster. This god was enraged by the fact that his traitorous lieutenant ruled the neighboring domain and so his priests were charged with nothing less than total domination of the population and to uphold the war against the betrayer. This god cared little for the livings, the undeads being his favorite and his skull-shaped city acted as a giant temple to his might.

Symbol: An eye in the palm of a hand.
Favorite Weapon: Dagger.

THE MAIDEN OF PAIN

In the strange pocket domain of Davion, the ever-shifting village of Thornewood becomes the village of Pallatia when Narana, a priestess of the Maiden of Pain, takes control. They are sadists and masochists; they delight solely in causing more pains for their goddess.

Symbol : A scourge.
Favored Weapon: Scourge.

THE SPIDER QUEEN

In the now lost domain of Arak, the cult of the Spider Queen, although illegal, was once secretly practiced by a number of shadow elves. The basic teachings of the this religion stated that she was the only goddess worthy of being worshipped, that each family had to produce an heir that will serve her better than its mother, and that women were the ones to hold the

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power. Spiders were sacred to them and to hurt one was to invite the vengeance of the Spider Queen. The practice of this religion was punishable by death.

Symbol : A spider on his web.
 Favored Weapon: Snake-headed whip.

and ambitious the dark powers granted her all her wishes in a perverted way of course. It is on Ravenloft that her worship switched to this undead god. Her goal was aimed at amassing a formidable horde of undead creatures, an army to conquer anything she could. She is rumored to have created the very first giant skeleton. No other worshippers of this mysterious undead god were known to exist, but her legacy cannot be denied.

THE UNDEAD GOD

In Kartakass lies abandoned a ruined temple dedicated to an obscure undead god once tended by the priestess Radaga. She was once a neutral priestess of a minor goddess, very vain

Symbol: A skull.
 Favorite Weapon: Weapons made of bones.

Lost Ravenloft Religions

Deity/Faith	Alignment	Domains	Worship Centers
Brigit	Neutral good	Good, Healing, Water	Nidalia
Elemental Forces	Neutral	Air, Earth, Fire, Water	Kalidnay
High Faith of Mordent	Lawful good	Good, Law, Protection	Mordent
Powers of Protection	Lawful neutral	Law, Protection, War	Tovag
SongMeister	Neutral good	Good, Luck, Travel	Kartakass
Yutow the Peacebringer	Lawful neutral	Law, Protection, Strength	Valachan
Arawn	Neutral evil	Destruction, Evil, Repose	Forlorn
Anubis	Lawful evil	Death, Evil, Law, Repose	Har'Akir
Beastgod	Chaotic evil	Animal, Chaos, Evil, Strength	Liffe
Cat Lord	Chaotic evil	Chaos, Evil, Trickery	Invidia
Chained God	Neutral evil	Evil, Knowledge, Magic	Burning Peaks
Maiden of Pain	Neutral evil	Destruction, Evil, Strength	Davion
Spider Queen	Chaotic evil	Chaos, Destruction, Evil	Arak
Undead God	Neutral evil	Death, Destruction, Evil	Kartakass



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FEARLESS

The only thing to fear is fear itself

BY LUIZ EDUARDO NEVES PERET
(ARIJANI)

THE FEARLESS SERUM PROJECT

Most places in both the Demiplane of Dread and Gothic Earth are not for the faint of heart. From dark back alleys to unholy graveyards, from scream-filled sanitariums to sunless, misty forests, one might wonder how common people can even imagine staying out of doors most of the time. During the day, under a blue sky, this might seem an easier task, but even then there are horrors that defy the very sun and walk freely under its rays. At night, or on those frequent cloudy days, it is almost impossible to avoid the sensation of dread and the cold shivering of the spine, even if for only one moment.

Thinking of that, a small group of sages and scientists, mostly amoral men and women, in whose opinion human knowledge and imagination should have no bounds whatsoever, began to think of ways to conquer fear and inspire courage even to those so spineless that they would run away from a shadow of a rat crossing the room. This is the tale of how they developed the Fearless Serum.

The DM is free to adapt this tool to either Ravenloft, Masque of the Red Death or any other campaign setting. If in the Demiplane of Dread, the laboratory should be at a relatively populated and technologically advanced domain, such as Lamordia, Dementlieu, Nova Vaasa or Richemulot. Alternatively, the scientists might have moved away from their original realm and have made their new home at a less advanced land, where their work might rise less

suspicious. The main reason for the location, however, should be the availability of possible “donors” and “guinea pigs”. In such case, realms like Barovia, Necropolis, or even Verbrek might be useful.

Those few, anonymous people abandoned any religious beliefs, codes of ethic and even a bit of their own humanity, in their quest for a final remedy against fear. Their experiments led them to believe that those people in near-death situations secrete an unique serum into their bloodstream, a thick, pale liquid that might be called “the essence of fear”.

They developed the theory that, once isolated from the body, this serum could be used in the brewing of an antitoxin with the specific purpose of eliminating fear. Such “anti-fear serum” could them be injected into a normal person’s bloodstream, making such person completely fearless for a short-term period.

Unfortunately, extracting the “essence of fear” proved a problem in itself. While the doctors were reasonably schooled in anatomy, they were unable to determine which ways the liquid used inside the body, or which glands secreted it. Most probably, they thought, such gland would either be near the brain (the source of all feelings) or the liver (chemically responsible for several changes in humor and traditionally believed to be the source of whatever makes us feel happiness or anger). So they started the research dissecting such organs and all glands nearby. After a few necropsies, they decided to do that with the patient still alive, so that they might have access to the tissues still fresh and intact. Needless to say, this attracted the attention of the Dark Powers (or, if the DM prefers, the Red Death).

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After a while, they thought they had finally found out the answer to the enigma of fear: submitting their unfortunate human “guinea pigs” to extreme tortures and scary situations, they were able to generate relatively generous quantities of the “essence of fear” (actually, a few milliliters per person), which they harvested through a pair of long, hollow silver needles, one inserted directly under the brain cavity, in the back of the head, and the other trespassing the bladder of the victim. Of course, the subject suffered searing pain in addition to the intense emotions which were forced upon him or her, and few survived more than two harvesting processes.

Testing the serum in animals and patients, the results were more than expected: mice did not run from cats, but instead attacked and other normally shy or fearful creatures revolted against their common predators. Some even managed to hurt or kill obviously more powerful animals. The scientists were awed by the results. However, even the smallest dose seemed to invoke serious addiction and create dangerous side effects in the creature’s metabolism. Most subjects died of heart attacks, seizures or strong convulsions that could break bones. The scientists then decided to test the Serum in humans, as that was the purpose of the whole experiment.

CAMPAIGN USE

The Fearless Serum Project can be used as an adventure in itself or as part of a greater campaign. It is ideal that the heroes enter in contact with it after this step of the project, when the experiments with animals have ended and the scientists are now ready to test their substance in human subjects.

The heroes can either be chosen as subjects – for harvesting or testing it – or might be hired to save those who were kidnapped to serve as experiment subjects, or even might be contacted by a former member of the scientific team, either one who regrets his former deeds and wants to turn his companions in to the authorities, or one

who wants to take over the whole project and involves the adventurers to use them against his colleagues.

The process of inducing the production of the “essence of fear” is left for the DM’s imagination, although it should include exposition to gruesome events, dangerous situations and near-death experiences. In order to collect the Serum, the character must be familiar with human anatomy and have access to a set of surgical tools, sterile syringes and laboratory equipment. It is strongly recommended that only a few people in the whole campaign world know how to create this substance. As one might expect, making conscious use of the Serum, after learning how it is harvested, calls for a Powers Check.

THE FEARLESS SERUM

The Fearless Serum is a non-magical chemical compound that grants living creatures the following effects, according to the way it is administered into the body:

- 1) If directly injected in the bloodstream, the effects take only one full minute to happen. The subject receives a +10 morale bonus to all checks specifically against fear. This bonus drops by 1 per turn, so that the effects vanish totally in 10 minutes.

Also, as the adrenaline flows in large quantities, any stressful situation that would invoke panic actually makes the subject substitute rage for fear. The first time the subject fails a Fear check, the character will instead enter a state of uncontrollable fury, effectively receiving the bonuses and drawbacks of the Barbarian Rage (+4 to Strength and Constitution and +2 Morale bonus to Will saves, –2 penalty to AC). The rage lasts for a number of rounds equal to 3 plus the character’s new Constitution modifier, and the character cannot consciously end it prematurely. However, even after it ends and the character becomes fatigued (as per the rules for Barbarian Rage, PHB page 25), the bonuses to Fear checks still apply.

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Note that the character might enter a new rage right after having suffered one, for as long as the Serum is active. In this case, the effects of the fatigue are cumulative. Also, every time the subject suffers a new rage in sequence, the body suffers from the massive influx of adrenaline. The subject must succeed at a Fortitude saving throw (DC 15) of immediately suffering the symptoms of Shakes (see Disease, DMG, page 75). The disease continues to manifest as described in the DMG.

2) If taken by oral means, the serum dilutes in the digestive tract and its effects take 2d6 full minutes to be felt. The subject receives a +5 morale bonus to all checks against fear. This bonus drops by 1 per turn. In the case of a failed Fear check, there is a 50% chance of the subject entering the state of rage described above.

The serum also takes its toll on the victim's psyche: the subject must succeed at a Will check or suffer an alignment change to Chaotic Neutral for the duration of the effects; The DC to resist this effect is equal to 10 + the subject's own Charisma modifier – the more vivid, life-loving and strong-willed the person is, the more difficult it is to resist the chaotic nature of the energy flowing through the body. A spellcasting character must succeed at a Concentration check every time she tries to cast a spell while under the effect of the serum. Characters in state of

rage cannot cast spells or manifest powers, as noted in the PHB. During the effect of the Serum, the subject becomes daring and bold, willing to test all limits and try all experiences at once.

When the serum loses its power completely, the subject must succeed at another Will check (same DC of the other check + 1 per previous use of the serum) or be driven by an insane need to experience the thrill of fearlessness once again. The details of this addiction are left for the DM to describe. People will rob, kill and do whatever it takes to get another dose.

The only way to be cured from this addiction is to stay a long period without using the Serum, one day for each turn the subject felt its effects (several uses will accumulate periods of 10 or 20 days, making it a lot more difficult to resist). After the period has ended, the subject can try another Will check to free herself from the addiction once and forever.



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THE ASYLUM

BY ALEX MIRANDA
(WILLIAM CAIRNSTONE)

I. INTRODUCTION AND DM NOTES

Dear reader, herein I present you a Hospital for the Alienated, which is to say, an Asylum dedicated to the cure and treatment of mental illnesses. Even though there are more asylums in the Ravenloft Canon, this article is dedicated to all those who do not own an accessory describing one, and yet would like to have an Asylum in their campaigns. The Asylum is, for me at least, one of the cornerstones of the Gothic, and through this article, I hope to bring it into the campaigns of many DMs.

However, this is not an easy article. It is lengthy, massive and at times can be even boring. For that reason, I've decided to write this introduction and give you some reading guidelines, so that you can extract from it the best parts for your own campaigns.

As a last note, let me say that I do respect mental illness and that this article does not seek, in any way, to mock of those that suffer from it. In fact, if possible, I hope to have the opposite effect of making each of us more aware of what it means to suffer from a mental illness. I've seen a Psychiatric Hospital from the inside, although briefly and as a visitor; I've read their words, heard their stories. I've felt a small part of their suffering, even if at a fair distance. To all those that suffer from a mental illness go my innermost compassion and sympathy.

i. Objective

What I have written below is drawn primarily from the impressions I felt when I had the chance to visit an Asylum around 120 years old.

Even though it was at the time the odd stage for a group of art performances, and the fact that its patients are now harboured in much better conditions than a hundred years ago, the building itself still oppressed me, better said, still depressed me. The unkempt and overgrown gardens, the dark deactivated wings, the dingy corridors, the sounds of lock and key wherever I went, and finally the several evocations of aspects of the patients' life in the several performances, all gave me the impression that one cannot but suffer terribly in such a place. And mostly, though it is unfortunate to say it, that there was a time when certainly no one could improve her condition in there, for the mere smallness and darkness of the rooms where patients lived were enough to depress even more someone already terribly afflicted.

I have completed my impressions with data available on the internet about the history of Mental Illness. I'm no expert in the matter, and I do not claim technical exactitude. First of all, this is intended for a fictional game, and so accuracy is not intended.

Nonetheless, I've tried to remain as close as possible to the reality of facts, in an effort to illustrate several stages of Psychiatry between the 1800s and the 1950s. As a side note, keep well in mind that all of the Directors believe in some theories that were actually proved wrong in the true history of Medicine.

The main objective of this article is to evoke the suffering of the many thousands of inmates that lived in such asylums. And, in a certain sense, to bring some awareness to us, today, of what a terrible thing mental illness can be, of all the despair, hopelessness and horror that exists in a person whose own mind is her most terrible enemy.

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It is also a showcase for some practices that paved the road to today's Mental Care. It was not an easy one. The first treatments were crude, some were even harmful and ghastly. They all had their place in the evolution of science. What remains is their memory, and surely they can gain their place in a Ravenloft game.

ii. How to Use This Text

The idea of a Ravenloft campaign is to evoke fear, terror and horror in the PCs. Not forgetting about the adventuring and heroic part, Horror is what sets Ravenloft apart. Horror is an emotion, emotion is feeling. The key for DMing this article is to make the players **feel** the suffering of those in there. Horror will slowly form in the players' minds as they find all the despair of the inmates. It needn't arise from things happening to PCs themselves. Rather, it is expected that they can become horrified merely by seeing – and mostly by imagining – what is being done to others. Where I have the chance, I prefer to let them imagine.

Just picture one empty room. The walls are bare, the floor too, and the only thing in the room is a thin uncomfortable mattress. The only window is 7 or 8 ft above the floor, beyond a man's reach. Even though, it cannot be opened and is barred from the outside. The only door leads to a small hall with a dozen other such doors leading to a dozen other such rooms. The doors are heavy and massive, made of iron two inches thick and with only a small sliding panel.

The empty room is only a room. But picture a man, a normal man like everybody else, living there all the hours of his days, months and years in a row. The light entering through the window is meagre, and he sees no one else. In three steps only he walks the whole extension of this room. The door does not open, no one answers his cries. Food is thrown through the panel, but he never sees who throws it. Even not seeing the man wasting there, you can't but shiver. The room is after all a solitary cell. Horror is merely one step away: imagine it is not empty – someone lives, and will die, there.

This is the kind of Horror that can be explored with this Hospital. Always remind your players that they're seeing evidence of things done to other people, common people that only suffered of being somehow different. Show them how that difference is tenuous, how any of them could eventually end there, for mental health is a fragile thing indeed.

I have provided lots of detail in an effort to give enough ground for the DM to evoke this ambience and to create feelings in his players. The extensive History of the asylum is of marginal importance for any adventure itself, but it is the ground for any deep description the DM wishes to make. And you'll need description to achieve the best results with this article.

The text is divided into several sections. The first part describes the physical aspect of the Hospital and the location of its rooms. A map is provided for better understanding. The DM is free to add to the description of the rooms, but I've tried to give some ideas. Remember, the description is the key to what your players will feel.

The next part introduces the three last directors of the Hospital, those that have made it what it is today and marked its existence and that of its patients. It makes references to their practices and techniques, but those are described in a subsection instead, so that it can be skipped if the reader so wishes.

The third part gives some guidelines on how to play mental patients. It provides also some specific examples of patients and some general descriptions to populate the asylum. Then follows the history of the hospital itself.

Finally, I give some ideas for adventures with the Asylum.

I sincerely hope you and your players enjoy it. If you're still reading this, there's a good chance you'll get to the end of it. Good reading, and good campaigns.

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II. THE HOSPITAL

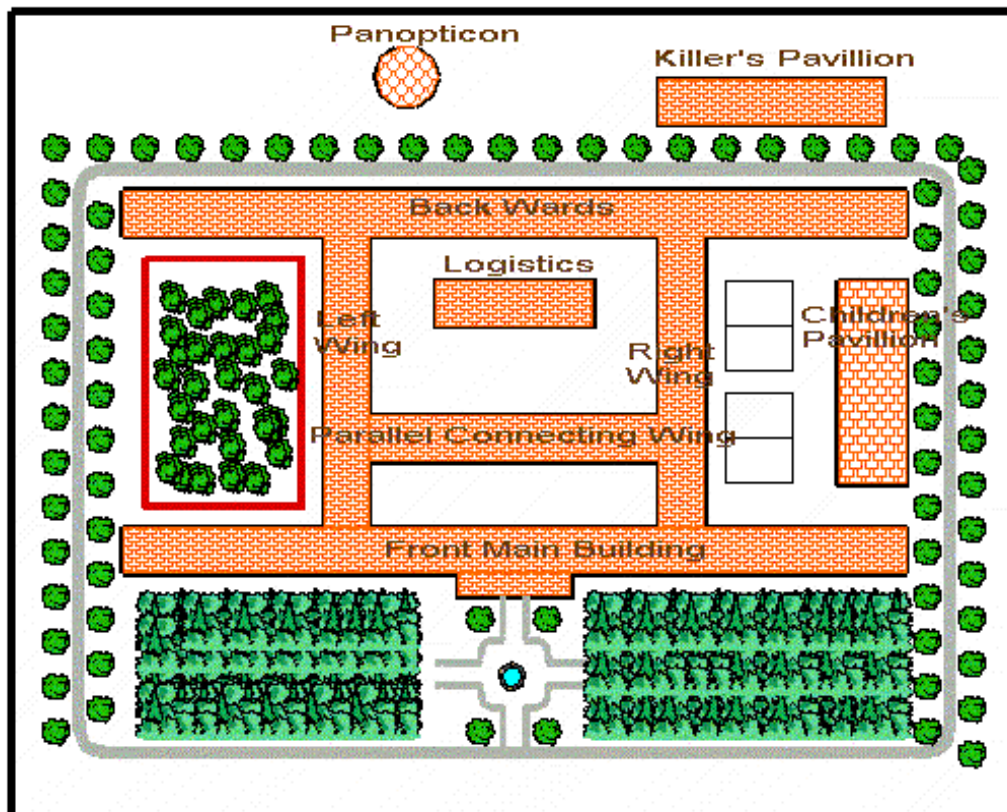
Also known as the Hospital of Conde da Teixeira (its founder), this is presently an institution for the confinement and treatment of the insane and mentally ill. The whole Hospital is massive, overwhelming and old. It hides many secrets, and in its decrepitude, instils fear on the mere visitors.

Many stories are told about it, and its long history has impressed on the common folk a superstitious fear both of its inmates and of what is done within its high walls. It is, for them, a place where forbidden experiments are conducted, where people are justly arrested for life due to their insanity.

Everyone fears it because inside you must be insane: someone who isn't insane when coming in, will certainly become so after a short time. And he'll never again leave those high walls. Crossing the gate of the Hospital is like going to the grave, so people tend to stay well clear of it.

The Hospital is set in a pleasant and welcoming place, with a large wood surrounding it. From afar, it looks similar to a noble estate with hunting grounds. This impression is, nevertheless, erroneous, for the woods are outside the Hospital's limits. These are clearly marked with a granite wall that surrounds the whole premises, encircling an area of about 225 per 180 yards. This wall is massive and 10ft tall, preventing anyone from looking inside. The only exception to this is around the entrance gate, where the top 7ft are replaced by an iron fence with pointed spikes, allowing the only view of the buildings from the exterior. Between this wall and the buildings is a dirt pathway.

The entrance gate faces east, and gives way to a small garden with a fountain and a statue of the founder in the middle. Across the garden is the main building of the hospital, and to each side of it are gardens with old and large trees. These gardens haven't been tended to for years, which has turned them into miniature wild woods. Both of them are surrounded by an iron fence, with a small gate that is always locked, reminding that the Hospital is, after all, a prison.



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The building itself is a large structure composed of two main bodies and three connecting wings. Other smaller buildings were added in the course of time to accommodate further needs of the Hospital. The main buildings are two storeys-high, with the ceiling arching 15ft above the floor. They are almost 180 yards long. The windows are nearly 9ft tall, and 3ft wide. There is an underground floor, whose rooms have top wide windows that reach to ground level outside.

Apart from the remaining buildings, there is still another garden, this in slightly better condition than the others, although it has certainly seen better days, and a couple of game fields.

III. APPEARANCE

The years weigh on the whole structure. The years weigh on the whole structure. The financial position of the Hospital has degraded with time, which has reduced maintenance to a minimum. The original colour of the Hospital was a kind of dark pink, but it has turned darker and darker with time, so that it is much near black in several parts. Where the paint is not stained, it is cracked.

Trees surround the pathway, obliterating light in most of the grounds and in some of the buildings themselves. The gardens are overgrown, and full of underbrush. Everything is old, outdated and extremely oppressing.

Heavy, massive and battered furniture is cluttered everywhere, paying homage to older memories that still linger around. Many windows in the whole Hospital don't open, due to years without function. This makes the ventilation clearly inadequate and the air becomes heavy and foul. The corridors are narrow and dingy. The bedrooms are in general very small and dark, offering no conditions for the two patients they are expected to accommodate.

Every room is locked in the Hospital. Every member of the staff always carries a key ring so

that he can open and immediately lock every door he has to traverse. The hospital is oversized for today's number of patients. Consequently, some wings have been deactivated and left to oblivion. These wings usually have cracked windows and holes in the doors that let someone peep inside. Only garbage can be seen, debris of old facilities completely broken, a veritable ruin home only for mice and rats.

The building itself is ominous. It is built in such a way that no one can escape some well-placed observation rooms. Every part of the grounds can be surveilled by watchers so that no one is ever left unchecked.

At night, the number of lights in the windows is very small. Those eerie white lights, a product of Dr. Mordenheim's contributions to the Hospital, shine like floating eyes in the night, surging from the utter massive darkness of the rest of the buildings.

There are no birdsongs, no gentle singing, no other sound but that of winds and rain when the storms come. It is a place devoid of joy or hope.

i. Layout

As can be seen from the map, the building is divided into five parts: the front building, the back building, a parallel wing and left and right wings. Then, there are some more buildings. This section will describe each of them, and show where is each room.

a) *Front Building*

The front building has, on its ground floor and at the centre, the entrance hall. It is wide with supporting columns, but seems austere cold. It is 20 yards wide. Doors to the left and right lead to stairs for the first floor. Another set of doors after these leads to the cloister and the corridors to each side of the building. Between the entrance hall and the connecting wings, are the admission wards: on the left side, the female ward (1st ward-women), and on the right side, the male ward (1st ward-men). People here are

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examined to decide if they stay or not in the Hospital, and each person stays here at most for a month, but usually, only for a few days. The entrance to the wards is through doors in the cloister. The admission wards are mildly pleasant, painted yellow and with some vases on the windows.

At the end of each of the corridors, when the connecting wings close the cloister, is a door giving access to the 2nd wards (women on the left, men on the right): these are wards for the patients after their internment has been confirmed. People in these wards still have a hope of one day leaving the Hospital. They are deemed mildly insane, but with hopes of recovery.

On the second floor are the rooms dedicated to the public and administrative functions of the Hospital. Above the entrance hall is the noble salon which, despite its name, is neither big nor much impressive. It is decorated with large portraits of past Directors, and has a desk of honour at one end of the room, sitting on a pedestal. Behind it, three high-back chairs. There are five large windows on this room, overlooking the entrance of the grounds. On the opposite wall, a door gives access to a small corridor leading to an administrative room (the Director's Office), a small museum and medicine storage. Here are kept potions, drugs and pills for the use of the Hospital, and a thorough record of them. This is the main medical storage in the Hospital.

The museum displays some instruments of the early eras of the Hospital, but it also has some resulting from the obsession of most recent days: displays of skulls clearly marked with phrenological measures and several types of injury, a skeleton with all bones tagged, charts detailing the human body, explaining the use of some instruments and even show-casing distinct physiognomies and their meaning on personality analysis.

To the left and right of this block, are the 3rd Wards (Women and Men respectively), also for mildly insane patients, now deactivated. The last

section of the left wing was once dedicated to Lazslo Monz's dwelling, but now belongs to Philibert Antuns. It holds his rooms and a laboratory. On the opposite wing, after the 3rd Ward Men, are Joachim Antuns' dwellings: his rooms and a small personal library.

The underground level of this building is nowadays closed. It held the 4th wards, but those have been deactivated. They were the dungeons in the eldest times of the Hospital, and were called "Wards" only to soften suspicions of what might go in there.

b) Connecting Wings

Neither the left nor the right wing has any interesting rooms on the ground floor. They are mainly a corridor opening views to the inner cloister. The last section of each, between the parallel wing and the back main building, is dedicated to laboratories and study rooms.

On the second floor, the left wing has the staff's rooms. The right wing has rooms for specific exams and instruments storage. The subterranean floor of the left wing is dedicated to the heating system of the Hospital, the furnaces that will heat the water. The subterranean floor of the right wing serves to host another laboratory and to keep another array of medical storage.

The parallel wing does not have an underground level (or at least, there is not at present a connection to one, if it exists). It has on the ground floor the Hospital's library and an auditory, which doubles as conference room where the medical staff themselves are taught the Director's recommendations. On the upper floor are the observation rooms, specially suited for interviewing the inmates, and a general infirmary for the more physical ailments.

c) The Inner building

This building is dedicated for the few social moments in the patients' lives: meals and, some times (rarer since Philibert has become

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Director), parties. The ground floor has a large convivial room, where parties were once regularly organized with theatre and music. The patients themselves acted and danced. Now, all this is rare. The upper floor holds the storage, the kitchen and the refectory.

d) *The Back Building (The Back Wards)*

These are the centre of the system of the Hospital. These are the sinister dependencies that are never shown to the public, for here are the direst cases. Here lies the true despair of madness, the hopelessness of incarceration for life. These patients are the most difficult to treat, and the ones that will stay for longer --- until they die.

The ground floor of this building is dedicated to the chronics. These are those patients that have no cure waiting for them and no other place to go. They have been in the Hospital for 10 or more years, subjected to every kind of treatment, and generally deprived of everything that made them human. They have no possessions and no freedom. Their life is completely regulated by the Hospital and most of them have lost all will to live... or conscience of it. As always, the left wing is for women and the right wing for men. These are the 5th Wards. At the centre of the building are observation rooms only for these patients.

These wards are composed of two dozens of rooms in succession, each 2yd per 2yd in size. There are two beds in each room, all made of iron, and bolted to the floor. The paint in the walls was once white, but it has turned to a dirty yellow. There is only one window in the room, up on the wall, barred. It is square, each side 1ft long. The outside light is obstructed by the large profusion of trees, so the rooms are positively dark and depressing. The doors are wooden, 2-inch thick. They have only a small sliding panel 4 inch long through which the food is passed inside. The bed sheets are old and full of holes, and each patient has only one blanket. It becomes not surprising that they all seem weak and wasted.

At the end of the corridor is the bathroom. It is the size of two cells, and has a tub so old it has turned a rusty yellow. The windows are tall and do not open. They are composed of small-framed glass squares, a few of which can be turned to let in some fresh air. They are translucent, and thus do not allow a view of the outside. The lavatories have turned black, and it is impossible to tell if they are washed or not. As everything else, the aspect is depressing.

The upper floor hosts the 6th Wards, dedicated to the violent and dangerous patients. The rooms are undisguised cells, thought to control the patients, not to heal them. Between the two wards (Female and Male) are the specific observation rooms.

The 6th and 7th wards (see below) have only one bed per cell, also bolted to the floor. These beds, however, have leather straps on them, so that the patients are kept immobile during the night. They are especially violent and the less active they are the better. These rooms have the same wooden doors of the other wards, but added to this is an inner iron grate, so that it is possible to open the door and have the patient still locked.

The underground floor of this building is perhaps the most sinister in the whole Hospital. It hosts the rooms for shock treatment (electroconvulsive therapy, fever induction, convulsion induction, coma induction), operation rooms, autopsy rooms and even a morgue. The last rooms are the dreaded solitaries, where patients are kept without seeing anyone and sometimes without even any light.

There is a smell here that permeates everything. It is the distinctive asylum smell, which leaves an inerasable mark in the mind of all those who work there --- the mixture of many different smells: sweat, urine, floor wax, stew, carbolic soap and chemicals.

Every warden must come to terms with this smell. The many that don't get used to it simply leave the service, because here is the core of the

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Hospital, where the largest part of the treatment is done.

This building echoes with the frequent cries of the inmates at any hour of the day.

Usually, these are the result of their personal terrors and delusions, but sometimes, mainly at night, their cause is much more physical: special treatment administered by Philibert Antuns.

e) Children's pavilion

One pavilion was built only to take care of children. It does not have a second floor. The subterranean floor had some storage rooms, but mostly is had the punishment rooms, and the dark rooms, where children were put when they misbehave. This whole pavilion is now deactivated, and is nothing more than a wrecking ruin. The ceiling over the main corridor has partly collapsed. The door that once gave access to it is locked, but through its panels of broken glass, the interior can still be seen.

f) Criminals' pavilion

This pavilion was built to host the most dangerous population in the Hospital: criminals that are deemed mad and enough worthy of study to have them in the Hospital. This is the 7th Ward, and the only one where there is no sex discrimination. So, there is only one 7th Ward. There is no second floor. The ground floor has some rooms where medical examinations and interviews are made. The subterranean floor has some observation rooms and punishment cells.

This pavilion was a personal bet of Joachim Antuns, who first defended some criminals were ill people and thus isolated them here for study. With Philibert in charge, now, its future is much more dubious.

g) The Panopticon

The panopticon is a special structure intended only for hosting solitary cells specifically built

for that effect. The building has the form of a regular polyhedron with 10 sides, each corresponding to one cell. The space in the middle is left for the observer to watch and control at the same time all the patients there locked.

The cell rooms of the panopticon have only one door, but made of iron 3 inches hick. They are bare, with a window high on top that scarcely lets in the light. There is nothing to distract the patient, nothing to let him or her rest. Just an empty small room, without ever seeing anyone. These cells are the highest torture available in the Hospital because of its psychological nature.

IV. THE DIRECTORS

There have been three important directors in the history of the Hospital: Laszlo Monz, in functions from 658 until 712; Joachim Antuns, in functions from 712 to 748; and Philibert Antuns. in functions from 748.

i. Laszlo Monz (627 – 721)

Laszlo Monz was technically the best Director the Hospital ever had. He was a veritable genius, deep in his knowledge and persistent in his study, iron willed and adamant in his convictions. Unfortunately, he was not a good man, and did not hesitate in sacrificing the sanity, well-being and sometimes the lives of his patients.

He was the first to recognise that madness was a disease, and that therefore there should be a cure. He was determined to find it, no matter the cost. For this purpose, he invented many false histories for sane people that were interned as ill patients, and instilled in the society a paranoid fear of the mad, so that people would be eager to turn other people in. After all, people were merely test subjects for him.

He wrote many records and diaries, which he kept secret because he knew his ideas wouldn't be easily accepted in society. He kept, in these

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records, all the history of the patient: cause for internment, date, treatments tried and respective date, and the progress, if any.

He invented and applied many techniques: trepanning, cold water therapy for the violent patients, immobilization during the night and the solitary. At the same time, he abolished, or at least tried to, the beating by the wardens as a means of calming patients.

Instead of bleeding and leeching, that were the only healing practices before him, he used a whole array of new techniques. The cornerstone of Monz's studies was chemistry and brewing. He believed the cure for madness was not in confinement, although it could help in controlling the patients, but in drugs and potions. Aside the potions, Monz also began trying hypnosis on his patients, and in his last days, scribbled in his diaries some discoveries he had made on how fevers and other diseases could improve a patient's condition. He did not pursue these studies, though.

Monz ceased being director when he became ill, and an inmate at the Hospital himself. He was bedded in 712, and remained interned until 721, when he died of illness and age.

Monz's Techniques Repertoire

- **Trepanning:**

This process was invented by Monz. It is an operation through which he drilled holes in the patient's skull. The reason behind this is obscure. In his diaries he says this was one of his first experiments, when he still thought possible that some malign agent could be causing the madness. He abandoned this explanation, but since the operation did seem to ease the headaches in his patients, he kept doing it. Besides, it proved useful in curing haematomas and wounds done to the skull. He used the bone dishes he took from the brain, powdering them and mixing them in

beverages he administered to his patients, believing they had therapeutical effect. Once again, only his empirical data could provide any support to this belief.

- **Cold Water Therapy:**

Monz believed it to have neutralizing and calming effects. He had the patient chained to a chair and a handful of wardens pumping cold water from hoses at him; other times, the patient was submerged in cold water to the neck for four to ten minutes, until the intense cold began to calm him. Indeed, when the patient was released, body temperature was usually below normal, in what became known as hypothermia.

- **Immobilization During The Night:**

On the patients' rooms, Monz had all furniture bolted to the floor, and some beds were equipped with leather straps, so that the patients had to sleep locked in place. Some couldn't even move during the night, and were thus forced to stay always looking at the ceiling.

- **Solitary:**

Monz invented the solitary for those patients that were systematically violent. The patient was locked away, alone, in a closed and small cell, almost without external light. The only door to the cell was heavy and thick, with no aperture, which contributed to the sense of isolation. The prisoner (for it was indeed a prisoner) was locked for a whole week, and after that time, re-evaluated. It was common to stay in solitary for a number of weeks in a row. Some attempted suicide, so Monz had the rooms absolutely empty, the windows placed at 9ft from the ground, and the patient stripped naked, so he

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couldn't use anything of his clothes to cause himself harm. There was no mattress, nor even straw for the patient to lie on.

- **Drugs and Potions:**

Monz found two sets of drugs – some that could combat apathy and melancholy in a patient but would render him violent - and some that would calm and quieten the patients, sometimes rendering them asleep, but which had to be carefully dosaged, on the risk of causing death to the patient. Monz experimented extensively with these drugs. He would at first inject them, and then administer them as pills. The patients were very reluctant to take these, for the first experiments all ended badly and a fear grew that these were deadly pills. Monz overlooked the patients concerns and literally forced the treatments on them, by having them secured and strapped by the wardens while he administered the drugs.

- **Hypnosis:**

Monz did only a fleeting study on hypnosis. He confirmed its validity as a technique and eliminated the belief that it was a supernatural process. However, he didn't get enough results with it to pursue its study.

ii. Joachim Antuns (688 –)

AI: LG
Mr: 11
HP: 14
HD: 5 (Wizard 5th level)
THAC0:18
AC: 10
#Att: 1

Str: 12
Dex: 15
Con: 11
Wis: 18
Int: 16
Cha: 14

Joachim was Monz's successor at the Direction of the Hospital. He began working there in 708 but only assumed the position when Monz retired due to his illness, in 712. He was a rather different man. Although not as much as Monz, he was also very gifted medically, but to this he allied a genuine care for the patients of the Hospital.

Rather young and energetic, Antuns was full of new ideas, mainly regarding the treatment to give the patients. He disapproved entirely of the notion that study and science should come before the care for human life, and through all his life tried to maintain the person above the technique. He was deemed by many a visionary, but in the thirty-odd years that followed, he painstakingly battled for his convictions and instilled a glimmer of hope in the Hospital.

The foundation of his methods and studies, formed during his first years as Director, was that madness can be acquired, and there are reasons behind most of the lunatic's behaviours, some biological, others in the patient's history.

Through the years, Antuns evolved on this idea. He identified several different types of madness, and classified each of them: mania, melancholia, stupor, delirium, paranoia and dementia praecox or schizophrenia. He concluded at last that true madness was hereditary, that the patient suffering from it was absolutely unpredictable and incurable. There was no motivation or reason behind any of his acts. On the other hand, all other deviant behaviours tended to have some reasoning explaining them. Most of all, Antuns believed in biological deformations of the brain and, to a small extent, traumas that had been suffered in the childhood. Above all, he reached the distressing conclusion that many lunatics not classified as truly mad were very dangerous, and

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potential assassins. Conversely, many killers were indeed ill and deserved to be interned and studied.

The most important consequence of these views was the way Antuns regarded (and still does) the mentally ill. For him, they are real human people who deserve a treatment worthy of any human life. Unfortunately for them, they are also a very significant danger to society, and so they must be removed from it, for two main reasons: they can endanger it through their direct actions; they can breed more mentally ill people, and that has to be avoided.

These views led to Antuns' main objectives: to study and if possible remove the factors that lead to insanity; and to remove from the society those that could not be averted from an insane state. In short, to protect the society from the mad, both by relieving it of their burden and by helping it in stopping their proliferation.

In medical terms, Antuns' views were also very different from Monz'. His focus was mainly in a biological explanation to madness and deviant behaviour. He defended that phrenology and physiognomy could help identify "types", as he called them: the criminal type, the paranoid type, the schizophrenic, the melancholy, they all had distinctive characters that could be traced in the outline of their faces – Physiognomy -, or in the measures of the skull – Phrenology.

Toward that end, Antuns promoted an extensive study of his patients, detailing his records with hand-drawn pictures of their faces (he was an accomplished drawer, and had an excellent visual memory). In parallel, he much improved Monz's way of keeping records about the patients, in accordance with his own belief that a patient's past could hold the explanation for his present illness.

To effectively proceed with the study of the inmates, and the acquisition of their data, Antuns instituted the observation sessions, or as he called them, interviews with the inmates. He created the observation rooms with that purpose, where each patient would go according to a

schedule defined according to his particular history and case. This trend was carried even further. Despite believing in a humane treatment of the patients, Antuns was certain they had to be controlled, and that the observation shouldn't be done only in interviews, but rather at all times. Some special cases even had to be set apart for a more minute and thorough vigilance. This was the main reason behind the creation of the Panopticon and some changes in the buildings' layout.

Besides the organization changes, Antuns also made some technical progress. He invented the "Tranquillising Chair" and the "Gyrator", as an attempt to give some relief to the suffering of the inmates (but not to provide a cure) and after some 20 years of directing the Hospital, he finally developed his port-mortem psychosurgery. This was a corollary of his belief in biological deformations as a cause of madness. He was well past the ancient belief of the "stone of madness" being inside the skull causing the illness. Malformations of the brain should be the cause, and he believed them to be easily visible by opening the skull. These operations had some positive results and led to his invention of leucotomy, a daring curative surgery. However, he did not trust this procedure entirely, and deeming it very dangerous for the patient he used it only sparingly.

In 748, Antuns had two years of leucotomy behind him. He was 62 years old and was feeling old, and distressed with all the way he had covered in 36 years. He felt it was time to stop. His hands were beginning to shake and he could no longer perform operations. Having a young son in the flower of age working with him at the Hospital, he decided to give him its run, and quietly continue with only a part of his medical attributions thus far, leaving the Direction for Philibert Antuns.

Presently, the relation between Philibert and Joachim isn't on very good grounds. Joachim has noticed a kind of fear in his patients' eyes, mute expressions and apathic gazes. There are inmates who have shown incredible alterations of mood in just a few days, some for the better

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and some for the worse. He knows his son is doing therapy on his own, but he doesn't know which methods he's using and he's not certain he'd like to know. All in all, Joachim has turned to be a sad man, for he feels all he built with so much effort, and the changes he introduced, is slowly being perverted, that his patients are no longer under his control and that some very offensive things are being done to them.

Joachim is now a crestfallen man. He feels the weight of years on him, and has no more strength to fight. He remains at the hospital out of love for it and care for his patients, to whom he has dedicated the whole life, but feels abated to see so many things changing. His son keeps him off the back wards and he himself doesn't feel any wish to go there anymore. He is seen mostly in the Hospital's Noble Hall, at the window overlooking the entrance. Each time he sees a new patient arrive to the Hospital to be interned, a pang of doubt and sorrow strikes him. Will this one be coming for life too? And for a long worthy one, or a short and strange death on the surgery tables?

Joachim's Techniques Repertoire

- **Phrenology and Physiognomy:**
Phrenology and Physiology are not the same science, but their objects of study and objectives are somehow related: Phrenology studies the measures of the human skull, whereas Physiognomy studies the human facial features. Both intend to guess at personalities and capabilities of individuals by observation of their particular object. Physiognomy claims that any given personality has a reflex in the facial lines of a person, which thus can reveal one's violent or docile behaviour, one's intelligence or stupidity and so forth. Phrenology claims that the skull measures are a product of the size or certain brain areas, and that this size is directly related to one's prowess in any

particular field, like logical reasoning or visual abstraction.

Antuns developed instruments to take several measures of the skull and perform facial observation. He had all his patients come to his laboratory, where he would strap a strange kind of helm to their heads while thoroughly taking measures. Even though apparently harmless for Antuns, this procedure had the gift of terrifying his patients and, in general, anyone who happened to watch. Perhaps it was the fault of the instruments, the fear that he would open their skulls to actually measure the brain inside.

- **Records and Patient History Analysis:**
Antuns much improved Monz's record-taking practices, so much that records had their hallmark at the Hospital with him. He talked extensively with his patients, trying to uncover all their history. He kept for each of them a full register containing the following: a note describing his general health, a description of the identified affliction, the date this had been first noticed and how long the crisis had last. After this introductory note, he kept progress notes that were added with time, reporting the several interventions until the end of the history: either the highly unlikely situation that the patient was given as cured and left the Asylum or the more prevalent case in which he simply had to report the patient's death. In parallel with this technical report, he also kept a detailed file with all his conversations with the patients, where he tried to uncover reasons for their present day's behaviours. These were then analysed by him in search of patterns, but apparently he wasn't successful with that.

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- **The Panopticon:**

Noting grimly that some of his patients were among the deadliest in the community, Antuns felt the need for close observation and control. Thus, the buildings were altered to permit an absolute control of everyone in the premises. The motto was "to observe all without relax". Strategically placed windows allowed the wardens to view all the patients and control them. Patients could control one another, but the wardens were out of their reach. A special building was constructed as a small, intensive special case of the Panopticon (the all-observer), being of decagonal form. Each side would have a cell, and in each cell there was only one sliding panel that would allow a small view into it. This panel was controlled only from the outside, where an observer could check in each cell he wished. Additionally, each cell had a system of mirrors installed near the ceiling (9ft from the floor) which allowed the inspector to see without being seen. Being in the centre of the building, the inspector had total freedom to observe whomever he wished, whenever he wished and make the necessary comparisons, without the patients ever seeing each other and, most of the time, even seeing their watcher. In essence, the cells of the Panopticon were another set of solitary cells.

- **Observation Rooms:**

The observation room is divided in two rooms, separated by a glass in the middle. One room is illuminated, the other in total darkness. The observer is in the dark room, and the subject in the lighted one. Due to the arrangement of the lights, the subject cannot see the

observer, but the observer has a full view of the subject. The glass is mirrored from the subject's side, but not from the other. Antuns used these rooms to interview his patients at their most vulnerable, without ever exposing himself to their scrutinizing looks. They always looked through the glass, defying the darkness, trying to meet with their gaze that of their interviewer, who at times was so abhorrent to them. Some could pierce the darkness, now and then, but it was still better than nothing. The feeling of being observed is horrible. The subject is effectively naked before the observer, all his defences are down. The very darkness where the observer sits is overpowering, and the dividing glass absolutely constraining. Even though that is not the intention, observation ends up being a kind of torture, and very often the subject sits in a stubborn silence and does not cooperate, merely wishing the observer to tire and send him away. Those that come looking through the glass do so in an effort to find some visual contact with the observer and encounter once again the warmth of being one like the person behind the mirror. On the other hand, being the observer is not easy either. He absolutely feels his state of invulnerability and the anguish of the subject, and those sensations usually lead to the uneasiness of being unfairly in control.

- **The Tranquillising Chair:**

Although perhaps still a bit horrid, the tranquillising chair was a product of good intentions. Its aim was to tranquillise the patient, lowering his pulse and relaxing the muscles. It was designed to keep the head, legs, arms

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and torso immobile for long periods of time, encasing them in wooden boxes and strapping the members to impede any movement. On some patients, this machine had the secondary effect of increasing brain activity, for the patient felt the need “to think of something” while he “could do nothing”. Highly imaginative or even delusional inmates saw their condition worsen because of this.

- **The Gyrator:**

This was a machine where the patient was strapped to a chair that articulated on a gyrating arm. The machine turned like a wheel fastened in place and in doing so, the chair where the patient was turned outside, such that the head of the patient stood in the continuation of the arm connecting it to the centre, in a 90 degrees angle to its normal position. This machine intended to have the blood race to the brain, thus enabling it higher quality operation. A variant was the “circulating swing”, which followed the same principle but was designed so that the patient was always kept in a sitting position.

- **Post-Mortem Psycho-surgery:**

This method was used by Antuns to examine a posteriori what could have been the cause of madness. He removed the top part of the dead person’s skull and carefully examined the brain. Most of the time, he’d completely extract and preserve it for further study. He found indeed some connections between delusions and abnormal formations, which led him to the theory that if he could destroy some mal-formations during the patient’s life, he’d be able to cure some of his afflictions.

- **Leucotomy:**

This procedure was a direct consequence of the Post-mortem surgery. Finding a relation between some connecting fibres in the frontal part of the brain and some severe disorders, like paranoia and obsessive-compulsive ones, he had the idea of destroying these fibres. Basically, he would make several trepanning incisions in both sides of the brain, insert a special instrument he called the leucotome and swing it sideways until the fibres were destroyed. The results were dubious: the operation appeared to work sometimes and on certain kinds of patients, but it also destroyed all creativity and brilliantness of some personalities. He was cautious enough to use only in very special cases, for such a delicate operation could utterly destroy the patient.

- iii. Philibert Antuns (718 –)

Al: LE
Mr: 14
HP: 15
HD: 4 (Wyzard 4th level)
THAC0: 18
AC: 10
#Att: 1
Str: 13
Dex: 14
Con: 13
Wis: 10
Int: 15
Cha: 11

Philibert’s Techniques Repertoire

- **Lobotomy**

Philibert developed Joachim’s leucotomy and generalized it to lobotomy. The difference is that a

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greater part of the brain is affected, and the pre-frontal lobe can be actually removed. Actually, Philibert has been experimenting with all other parts of the brain since then, and in most cases, the results have been distressingly radical. He has achieved some minor success with this operation, rendering psychotic patients more controllable, and ending their hallucinations. So, he actually has made this technique the hallmark of his repertoire. Since these operations must be made without Joachim's knowledge, he gathers a group of patients (a dozen maybe) on the nights set and takes them to the subterranean wards, where he performs lobotomies to all of them in a row. Philibert is not a moderated man. The cries by then are distressing, for the patients in wait are watching the operations and seeing what will happen to them. On the other hand, please note there are no anesthetizing methods.

- **Ice-Pick Lobotomy**

Unsatisfied with the length and difficulty of Joachim's procedure for leucotomy, Philibert has invented his own technique: he uses a common ice pick to perforate the skull just above the eye orbit and below the eyebrow. The pick is literally hammered in, perforating skin, subcutaneous tissue, bone and meninges in a single stroke. Once inside, he swings the pick freely damaging the frontal lobe thus accomplishing the goal of the operation. Philibert defends this operation is faster than the traditional method, but indeed it is horrid to look at, even for other experienced surgeons. Still, Philibert has no one watching over his back, and goes on unchecked. As before, this operation strikes on very sensitive areas, and the risk of infection is very

high. If the meninges are even slightly touched, the patient's death is almost guaranteed. In this respect, trepanning was much safer, but Philibert has ignored it.

- **Fever, Coma and Convulsion Induction**

Philibert has built on Monz discoveries that indicated that a fever could cure paresis. He has developed a process to induce fevers in the patients and then trying to cure the disease causing them. Slowly, he seems to be finding the right disease and cure, but in his guesswork he still induces in his patients many lethal diseases he can do nothing about. On the other hand, he has developed means to induce a comatose state in his patients through the injection of some mysterious fluid, through which he tries to control schizophrenic patients. This is not, per se, a curative technique, but rather a way of controlling the afflicted patient.

Another thing he found is that the creation of convulsions can help to create an artificial epileptic state, which he has verified to never happen in schizophrenics and psychotics. This is the basis for his convulsion induction therapy.

He's still studying the advantages and disadvantages of each option. The induction of a coma has the obvious problem of being difficult to revive the patient. Besides that, the chemical for convulsion induction is far easier to use and produce, and has a wider range of application. On the other hand, the convulsions are so severe that some patients actually break their spine in their own twisting and in the long term,

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this seems to have a higher mortality rate than the coma.

- ***Electro-Convulsive Therapy***

ECT is primarily an alternative method of generating convulsions. He can already produce convulsions more reliably with electro-shocks than with his chemicals, and since this procedure erases the recent memory, the patients do not react as badly to this technique as to the other. They just forget their pain. However, they suffer more while they're going through it, since electro-convulsive therapy is much more destructive. Several areas of the brain are irrevocably damaged. Indeed, he has found that the best cures were achieved in people whose intelligence was severely diminished and even reached a state of amentia (feeble-mindedness). Needless to say, Philibert virtually toasted the first 2 patients that tried this method, but he's learnt from that and the casualties rate has been kept low. Presently, he submits the patients appointed to ECT to daily doses for periods of 20 days. For the most severe cases, he forces a series of repetitions in a day, a method he calls annihilation. Philibert takes some cares when performing ECTs. He forbids eating or drinking four hours before the procedure to prevent vomiting during it; he places a cloth gag in the mouth so that the patient does not break the teeth or bite his tongue. Then, he pushes the button and applies the shock until the toes curl.

V. THE PATIENTS

The physical aspect of the wards, on itself, is depressing, but the human factor only makes it worse. In some of the wards there are open

rooms, without any furniture, where the mad wander aimlessly. It is common to see groups of people sitting in a row without apparent motive or will, completely apathic, 5, 10, 20 of them just sitting there. Outside, these people would equally stand doing nothing. Vacant expressions betray the destruction of their minds, the loss of any human will. The only way these people can make any exercise is by enforcing the walking parties, where each patient grabs the hand of another one and the whole group is pulled and watched by 4 or 5 nurses. Some others walk in pairs, others run, others stand in one leg, others just pose, and some others just urinate in place.

The disturbed wards (violent and criminals) are sensibly different from the others. There is tension in the air. The patients all look the same. Their hairs have been cut short, both for men and women, and they're all clad in strong untearable clothes, uniformly grey.

There is a lot of noise, and a very good chance of one of the patients hitting anyone passing there: a doctor, a member of the staff or an unhappy extraordinary visitor.

These are the most restricted parts of the Hospital, where all the shame lingers, where it is apparent that any cure is hopeless, and that these people are here until they die. The back wards are the testimony to the futility of efforts, and to the degradation the human being can reach. No matter how used people become to it, they are never an easy sight.

i. Role-Playing the Patients

The first thing to note very well about the insane is that they are not stupid. The mentally ill, namely psychopaths and schizophrenics, can be very intelligent indeed. What can be almost uniformly said about them is that they have severed their links to reality, if not permanently, at least at some particular times. This distance to the common rules makes them strange and ridicule, but never make them plain fools.

They are not.

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The other main point to stress about playing the mentally ill is their sadness. Even though there may be those few who are happy in their fake world, because they are not aware of their madness, the majority do know they're ill, and more, they do know they have no hope. Thus, the insane are indeed sad and despaired people, and many attempt suicide. That's why the Hospital has taken so many precautions to avoid it: windows opening at strange angles that prevent a body from passing, no utensils possessed by the inmates, no sharp corners in their rooms, strong untearable clothes, hair cut short, etc.

Another caveat you should note is that it's perfectly possible to talk to a mentally ill. They have many moments of lucidity, and even when their state is chronic, they do hear and reply to other people. They may not always make sense, but they can interact. They don't even jumble words or letters at random. They build grammatically perfect sentences. It is the semantics that many times fails. Of course, this is not always the case. Severe disorders like catatonic schizophrenia, and delusional states can prevent any communication at all, but that is not the majority of cases.

Even though all this may not qualify as horror at first sight, I think it can be worked to come to the surface. The key, as always, is in proximity. The patient's history should be known, and the tragedy of insanity confronted with her previous happy life.

Many times, this process happens without previous notice, all of a sudden, to any person. Everybody can be stricken by insanity. A sudden attempt of suicide; an urge to kill someone without motive – both happen someday and herald madness, insanity, reclusion. Mental balance is a fragile line the PCs can pass at any moment, and they should know it then. Once they are reminded of this fact, the vision of what it is like to be mad should strike them deeply.

ii. Specific Examples

In this section, I give you a small list with some inmates at the Hospital for the Alienated. While these may be enough to give the right feel to the setting, you can always use them as inspiration for others. Note that in general, the population of asylums was mostly feminine since men died earlier, not because women are more prone to madness.

a) *Janos Golyai*

Mr: 20
HP: 30
HD: 4 (Fighter 4th level)
THAC0:13
AC: 10

Str: 18
Dex: 11
Con: 17
Wis: 11
Int: 9
Cha: 10

Janos is a very strong man, possibly the strongest in Lamordia. He is considered both a criminal and a violent man, and was thus committed to the 7th ward. He has been an orphan since his late childhood, and grew up in the hills, mostly by himself but occasionally doing services for isolated farmers. He developed a strong physique, but felt always chided by others for being merely a child trying to do a grown-up's work.

When he grew, he wanted to prove everyone he was strong. This in a short time evolved to the need to prove he was the stronger of every men living, and thus began a rampage to prove it. He made a series of violent murders where he strangled his victims and broke them several bones. Janos never took pleasure in a crime. He never killed consciously, either. He just felt the need to prove he was stronger than any man, and in the fights he provoked, he compulsively and unavoidably killed his victims. With time he

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moved from the mountains to Neufurchtenburg, where he continued to try to prove no one was stronger than him. At the same time, unknowingly, he was truly looking for someone who could beat him, someone that he could recognize as a superior, a teacher and a protective figure.

He was eventually caught by a militia and brought to the Hospital 5 years ago. Joachim Antuns, despite no longer being the Director, still dedicates himself to the study of this man, that has proved to be a strange case of what he calls a psychopath, and one of his favourite case studies.

Janos is quite unreasonable in a conversation. He's always doubtful of people, and if a strong person comes to see him, he'll feel threatened and try to enter a fight. He's usually locked behind bars, and in this situation he's much similar to a caged feral animal.

b) *Lady Jennifer Whitestone*

Mr: 12
HP: 3
HD: 1 (aristocrat in 3rd ed)
THAC0:20
AC: 10

Str: 9
Dex: 10
Con: 14
Wis: 15
Int: 13
Cha: 12

Lady Jennifer is now 92 years old, and has been confined to the Hospital for more than 60 years, thus still during Monz's direction. Philibert Antuns doesn't consider her much interesting, and indeed is only waiting for her to die. Joachim Antuns wrote some notes on her, considering a diary she wrote, but he never could decide if the diary was the product of her own delusion or if it was the bitter resentment of a sane woman confined against her will.

For some reason, Antuns never truly studied her case. She's the oldest resident in the Hospital, a quiet, almost mute person, with a heavy angry look in her eyes. She despises the whole world and trusts no one, and is frequently seen shouting at an invisible crowd, gesturing violently. She also weeps convulsively many times.

The story she told in her diary was that of a rich young lady from Mordent married to a merchant of name but little fortune and, as she soon found out, even less character. After a year of marriage, her husband locked her in the house and began to spread rumours in the society that her wife could not attend parties because, alas, she had fallen ill. With an impressively well-faked distress, he reluctantly told people how the poor sort was on the verge of insanity, of how her brain was weak, supposedly inherited from an ancestor who had had a similar ending. So, it came as no surprise that after two months he went to intern her at the Hospital for the Alienated. Still according to her diary, Monz gladly accepted her nearly not questioning her state.

When Monz retired and Antuns became Director, Jennifer had some hope, but she felt the exam Antuns made her was not earnest, and that her husband certainly had secured his tongue with her own fortune. After some years, she ceased writing, while apparently her husband seized her fortune after declaring her legally unable to administer it.

Jennifer is extremely sour and sad. She has seen much and is confined in the chronic's wards. This experience and all her years make her the best source for information about the Hospital.

c) *Virginie LeBoeuf*

Mr: 14
HP: 5
HD: 1
THAC0:20
AC: 10

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Str: 10
Dex: 10
Con: 12
Wis: 7
Int: 12
Cha: 14

Virginie is 79 years old, living at the Hospital for nearly 20 years. She was born and lived all her life in Dementlieu, until the day when her husband died, after a marriage of 38 years. Just as many ghosts refuse to understand they're dead, so did Virginie refuse to accept her husband had died.

She never wore the mourning colours and continued living as if her husband were alive, and indeed walking by her side. She would give her arm to an invisible being that no one else could see, she would talk to him in middle street, and even hear his advice. She was deemed mad easily and eventually committed to the Hospital by her landlord (since she refused to leave the house). Even before her husband's death she was already seen as not entirely normal, since she still dressed in the fashion of 50 years before [the people of Dementlieu have the false memory of a long history] and indeed addressed people with a language of a past time.

Now living in the Hospital, she finds it strange that her husband is so silent most of the time, and is becoming sad because he doesn't like their new house and blames her for it.

Virginie is not usually sad, though lately she's been so because of her husband's absence. The chemicals that she's taking make her sleep more heavily and apparently reduce her hallucinations, but she feels much more hapless without her elusive company. If addressed by the PCs, she'll probably answer haughtily and defer all decisions to her husband, but speak of him as if he were a distinct hard to reach gentleman. Even though, she's a very sympathetic person, and her face still shows remnants of a very beautiful youth.

d) *Madeleine:*

Mr: 14
HP: 7
HD: 2
THAC0:20
AC: 10

Str: 13
Dex: 15
Con: 13
Wis: 10
Int: 12
Cha: 16

Madeleine is still young, around 30 years old. She's been in the Hospital for 2 years only. She was born and raised in Richemulot, and quickly marked as a rival by Jacqueline Renier due to her insatiable thirst for men. Even for Richemulot standards, Madeleine was considered more a whore than a lady. She was never happy, and a true-huntress, and her truly human nature only made this more surprising. Her indecorous attitude earned her the hatred of Jacqueline who saw fitting as a punishment for her the internment in the Hospital rather than any kind of death.

In the Hospital, Madeleine is clearly saner than many of the other inmates, but her behaviour is still classified as a disease, namely, a paraphillia. Her desires and needs have not dwindled, except when she's given strong medication. She continues to be unsatisfiable, and creates (and writes) many fantasies out of her own need. Some wardens accused her of attacking some of them and some of other patients merely with carnal objectives in mind.

Vera keeps her own books as the only solace allowed to her. The books are the only way she can materialize her fantasies and these are very pressing indeed. She was a regular resident of the solitary, in an effort to reduce her "appetites", but since it seemed to increase them even more, Philibert has given them up. When coming in contact with the PCs, Madeleine will

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probably choose a male member of the party and act in a very seductive way. If any wardens are around, she may be violently repressed and taken away by them.

e) *Vera:*

Mr: 14
HP: 7
HD: 2
THAC0:20
AC: 10

Str: 12
Dex: 16
Con: 14
Wis: 9
Int: 15
Cha: 8

Vera has come all the way from Nova Vaasa, and is still very young - merely 18 years of age - but her state has proven to be very difficult for both Antuns doctors. Her own father brought her with tears in his eyes, when he heard there was an institution, on the other side of the Core, that could help his child. Vera has been in the Hospital for three years already. She has an obsession with knives, and with cutting her own body.

She mutilated herself several times, and even attempted suicide, which was what motivated her father to bring her to the Hospital. Once there, more disturbing signs were found of what Antuns calls a Personality Disorder. She has a very low self-esteem, and always thinks badly of herself. She tries to inflict pain because she believes she deserves it, but at the same time in an attempt to materialize the ugliness she feels inside. If she recognizes herself as ugly, she may come to accept what she views as an ugly inner self. On the other hand, she refuses every effort done by other people to abandon that image she has of her own person, denying everything but the imaginary world she has formed.

Despite this, she feels an overpowering emptiness within her, a chronical void that prevents her from ever laughing or being happy. She has tried at least two times to kill herself while at the Hospital, though the staff are very careful not to let any blade into her hands.

Vera is closely watched, and should the PCs try to contact with her, she'll probably be kept away. They fear they can give her any tool useful for a suicide. Even if they speak to her, she'll be clearly obsessed with any blade she sees and will only talk about death and other morbid themes.

f) *Manuel Gancho*

Mr: 13
HP: 12
HD: 2
THAC0:20
AC: 10

Str: 10
Dex: 12
Con: 13
Wis: 15
Int: 17
Cha: 15

Manuel Gancho is a poet. He has written a whole book of poems while in the Hospital. He is 60 years old, but has a long history of madness. He was interned when he was 28.

Gancho can be classified as an extremely sensitive person, weighing each word he says with extreme care, as if he were touching it, feeling it and caressing it. Each phrase is like a picture that he throws at people with a clearly defined intention: to please, to amuse or to hurt. It is customary for him to speak each phrase at least three times, soft first, then declaiming, then imitating someone else's voice, then hushing, then clearly but begging, as if he were trying all the possible variations of the colour of each word. Nearly each phrase defies rationality, because the entities mentioned do not seem to

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have anything in common, but it is said in such a way that at first makes one smile, and then, with his insistence, wonder and even move. He doesn't need a person to reply verbally to him. He will maintain a conversation with anyone that looks at him, just as if one's eyes could convey perfectly perceptible messages to him.

Gancho can teach sensitivity to anyone merely by talking to them. It is possible to find him in lucid moments, and have an interesting conversation with him. On his less rational moments, even though his phrases don't make sense, the way they are spoken is undeniably touching. Many people are moved to wondering about their most existential problems after contacting with him. Besides this, he's a very quiet and charming man.

g) Alexandrina Verminskaya

Mr: 13
HP: 5
HD: 1
THAC0:20
AC: 10

Str: 11
Dex: 12
Con: 11
Wis: 7
Int: 10
Cha: 11

Alexandrina is a woman 48 years old. She was interned after an attempted suicide. She keeps five hundred dolls with her, for she's got an obsession for dolls. She thinks she is 24 years old and that her daughter is 23 years old and claims her daughter comes to visit her many times, but receives no visits. It's her dolls that keep her company. She loves her daughter very much, and innerly suffers her absence, but somehow she has filled that void with the delusion of her regular comings. Besides her dolls, she lives in a very infantile universe from which she never comes out, and she refuses

violently to any attempt to make her disbelieve her own world.

After a violent crisis, it is common for her to hide away in her rooms and weep convulsively. She's known to have tried a suicide once after one of these occasions.

It's not easy to talk to her. She's clearly very childish and retired to a different world. It's possible she won't even acknowledge anyone else's presence.

h) Nadine

Mr: 8
HP: 13
HD: 3
THAC0:20
AC: 10

Str: 12
Dex: 14
Con: 10
Wis: 16
Int: 17
Cha: 14

Nadine came to the Hospital of her own free will, 2 years ago. She felt despairingly sad, unable to do anything, impotent. Nowadays, she still lingers at the hospital, in a similar state but with reduced strength. In her worst moments, she wakes up crying, and crying, unwilling at all to get out of bed, with fear of the world outside, headaches and a weight all over. Her disease leaves her absolutely incapacitated.

When she is called to do something important, she often feels anxious about the task. Another set of symptoms is present at these moments: sweating, a sensation of suffocation, a weight on the chest and palpitations. Unfortunately, these attacks also happen sometimes without apparent reason, one minute she's well and calm, the next minute she feels it coming and the worries that it may end up as an attack just increase it and make it happen even faster. Sometimes, these

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attacks are merely originated simply by fearing about when the next one will be. Antuns has described her state as a conjunction of melancholy and anxiety.

Nadine's state is extremely unbalanced. Her melancholy has reduced her self-esteem to a very low level, and even the most harmless event can trigger her anxiety and fear.

Despite this, she's highly intelligent and earnestly wants to cure herself. She keeps her rationality, but cannot be productive nor survive outside of these walls. If the PCs try to speak to her, she'll welcome the chance to know about the world outside the Hospital and remember a bit of her past life.

However, she doesn't believe she'll ever return to the society again, and certainly not to her former life.

i) Lord Edward Glimmerbright

Mr: 14
HP: 20
HD: 4 (aristocrat in 3rd ed)
THAC0:16
AC: 10

Str: 14
Dex: 13
Con: 15
Wis: 11
Int: 15
Cha: 13

Originaly from Mordent, this noble led a normal life, until one day he tried to kill his four sons and attempted suicide afterwards.

He was committed to the Hospital and there confined until today. He claims he's not ill and that he's not violent, just that sometimes he simply loses control of himself. He is extraordinarily difficult to handle. He is mute most of the time, refusing to speak or to accept anything. He tends to counter any instruction or

suggestion given to him, such as "go walk outside", or "you really should sit down". Wardens have learnt to suggest him the opposite of what they wish, but he's learnt their game, and most of the time ignores them, walks away or does a completely unexpected thing. Despite this aversion to others, he can't help but mimicking, without noticing, what others say and do in front of him. This makes him mutter and repeat the last phrases of their interlocutors, and even repeat the gesture he sees them make. Also marking is his habit of sneering when beginning to speak, always with the left corner of the mouth. He walks with an undisguised military pose that seems to have been learnt more from theatre plays than from actual education. In general, he avoids all contact with other people and refuses to acknowledge they exist, but he still is violent enough to unexpectedly attack someone now and then. For this reason, he has been put sometimes in solitary.

If the PCs come in contact with him, she'll immediately assume a position of superiority or utter indifference. He sees everyone else as a lowly inferior being.

j) Wilhelm Rudiger

Mr: 13
HP: 12
HD: 2
THAC0:20
AC: 10

Str: 11 (17)
Dex: 12 (15)
Con: 12
Wis: 17
Int: 18
Cha: 17

Note: numbers in parentheses refer to his violent moments.

Wilhelm is 60 years old, almost bald, the remaining hair of a pure white. He is a first-

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order mathematician and violinist. He's got the walls of his cell scribbled from the floor to the ceiling with mathematical formulae, geometric drawings and rigorous calculations.

He also plays a violin without strings. No one else can hear the sound, but he acts as if he really did. The violin has been stripped of strings because of his history of attempted suicides, and his unrelenting requests for a violin for him to "ease his soul". He's got what Monz classified as a bipolar disorder: he is alternatively a rather euphoric man, with flashes of genius during which moments he makes truly marvellous discoveries, which fortunately he writes in his cahiers; and a melancholy man, distressed and paranoid, claiming "they are coming for him, and they're inside him, waiting for the moment to rip him apart and kill him".

The books he is writing in his euphoric moments are carefully kept by Philibert Antuns, who hopes to sell them to an editor (or even Dr. Mordenheim) after Rudiger's death, in an attempt to improve research and learning.

During his depressing moments, though, he becomes very uncontrollable and violent, running into walls and trying to hurt himself. At these times, he answers haughtily and despisingly to anyone else, claiming no one can understand him, that he's superior but beyond help, and that their futile means of treatment will never teach them anything. He's a sympathetic old man, but the contrast of his personality is frighteningly violent.

When first met, Rudiger surprises anyone with his apparent genius and sanity. It seems improbable that someone so highly logical and intelligent could be confined in an Asylum. If the PCs see him while accompanied by a doctor, he'll probably explain them while he is locked, but if they are alone, Rudiger will keenly try to convince them to help him flee, and even offer to answer their questions, so they can be convinced he is unfairly imprisoned. The PCs should never first meet him while in one of his depressive and violent states.

k) *Franz*

Franz is a young man, aged 23, who was once interned by a party of commoners from a nearby village. They claimed Franz was clearly mad and that he was dangerous for them and their livestock.

In fact, Franz suffers from the disease known scientifically as lycanthropy. Care should be taken in not confusing this with the dread disease Van Richten speaks of. It is rather the medical name for a curious disorder that has nothing of supernatural: Franz believes he's a wolf.

Franz is a common man, there's no drop of werewolf within him, and in fact, the doctors at the Hospital completely dismiss the idea of werewolves and man-beasts and such nonsense. What exists is a mental delusion that makes the person behave like a wolf, and such is the case of Franz. He moves on all fours, attempts to eat raw meat and is very fond of jumping at people's throats. He's intellect is completely destroyed, and he can't, or refuses, to speak, barking and howling instead. Weren't it for his clearly human shape, one would believe he was a wolf. He is barely dressed at all, since he can't stand the use of clothing, but out of decency, the wardens usually force some on him.

Joachim Antuns never managed to uncover why Franz behaved like this, and is decidedly frustrated on what can cause such a mania. Philibert, on the other hand, finds no interest in this disease, but has thought Franz amusing enough to put a leash around his neck and use him as if he were a common dog, taking him on a stroll or urging him to impress and frighten unwanted visitors. It is not known if Franz understands common speech. Apparently, he refuses to do so.

iii. General Examples

Apart from those specific examples, there are more inmates at the Hospital, totalling about 100. The Hospital was initially thought for

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something like 600 or more, which means it is severely under populated these days. In this section, I give you a very light description of symptoms and disorders, so that you can create inmates as needed to populate your campaign.

There are two kinds of mental disease to be distinguished: neuroses and psychoses. The first are lighter forms of mental illness, with which a person can still lead a normal life.

The latter are extremely severe, and generally preclude any life outside the Asylum.

When very severe, neuroses can lead to confinement, due to serious impairment of the patient's life. In this section, can be included:

- **anxiety**
The patient feels an uncontrollable and inexplicable fear. She sweats, shivers, and feels the heart pounding. The fear has no specific cause.
- **hypochondria**
The patient has an obsessive fear for his health. Even though a perfectly healthy person, he'll be in constant doubt that he's ill. Any minor physical sign will be the proof of a severe illness, and will always try to prove it to himself and to others.
- **agoraphobia**
The most serious of the phobias, the fear of open spaces and of being in public. This person will prevent any contact with others, and do all the possible to remain in his home, in this case, in his room. She fears speaking, eating or even writing in near others.
- **various phobias**
Other fears of specific things or situations. Can be serious if the cause of the fear is related to the day-to-day life.

The presence of the object can lead to a panic attack and to anxiety.

- **obsessive-compulsive disorder**
This disorder usually entails two sets of behaviour: an obsessive thought that is extremely unpleasant for the person but cannot be avoided and a compulsive ritual that the person performs to prevent that unpleasantness. The failure to perform the ritual worsens the state of the person. This leads to tics and bizarre gestures or movements, like washing hands repeatedly (if the obsession is for cleanness or fear of contagion) or muttering some strange phrase on and on.

Psychoses are generally divided in three types: schizophrenia (dementia praecox), manic-depressive disorder (mania) and paranoia. Unlike the neurotic, the psychotic does not recognize his illness. These are the most severe cases of mental illness and always require medical treatment. Since many of the symptoms are shared, I will simply list some of them without associating to any illness in particular:

- **hallucinations**
The patient actually sees, hears and feels things that are not there, talking to inexistent people, listening to their comments about herself and sometimes feeling their touching him.
- **delirium**
The patient develops an idea or a full system of ideas that compose an unreal world which, although, she believes entirely.
- **paranoia**
The patient believes someone, perhaps her friends, family or even the whole world, is set to harm her. She believes a well-orchestrated conspiracy that has

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the sole intent of harming her and possibly those around her. This conspiracy is not debatable, which means the patient will never acknowledge it is false. The rest of all the mental faculties may remain unaltered.

- **dissociative thought**
The normal processes of reasoning are broken, leading to illogical conclusions and bizarre thoughts. The patient loses control of her thoughts and may feel they are implanted there by an alien entity, stolen, altered or owned by someone else. They feel their own thoughts slowed and fuzzy.
- **blunt feelings**
The patient becomes insensitive and closed to the exterior to the point of being bluntly cold and losing all his emotional feelings
- **catatonia**
The patient closes himself to all outside influence, remaining frozen in place for hours, in some rigid and bizarre position (like standing on one simple foot, for instance). At other times, his movements may become rigid and repetitive.
- **mimicking gestures and phrases**
The patient unknowingly repeats the last phrases and gestures of the person to whom she's talking.
- **delusions of grandeur**
The patient believes she's someone else assuming some other personality, sometimes a grandiose figure. This can easily be attached to paranoia in that that grand figure is the object of some mischievous plan to cause her harm.

Other times, she may believe she's superior to her interlocutor in some aspect, intellectual, for instance.

- **hyper-activity**
The patient becomes euphoric and full of energy, engaging herself in several actions and making long-lasting projects. Many tasks are started but may be quickly left unfinished. She feels less need to sleep. This hyper-activity is alternated with depressive phases in the bipolar disorder (manic-depressive disorder). It is possible to live with this illness. Many great writers and geniuses suffered from it.
- **increased needs**
The patient feels increased appetites for something, be it money, exercise, sex or others.
- **fits**
The patient may have fits of fury, laughter or others.

iv. The Wardens

The patients' life is intimately connected with the wardens that watch over them. These are the ones responsible for taking care of them, administering their treatments and enforcing the rules of the Hospital.

When Joachim Antuns took over the Direction of the Hospital, he contracted most of the staff from scratch, although he didn't quite fire everyone. There were a young few that remained at the Hospital because, as Joachim thought, they weren't yet tainted with prejudice. From these, three remain in the Hospital today: Marcus, Gheorghe and Vasily.

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These are today the senior wardens of the Hospital. They are extremely authoritarian and rejoice with Philibert's iron fist. Also, since they're the most experienced members of the staff and the most severe, Philibert usually asks for their assistance when going to perform his shock therapies and special treatments. Their names are ominous among the inmates, who regard them as even worse than Philibert himself. They are ruthless and usually have not qualms in beating the patients when no one is looking. Beating and spanking were abolished as therapy, but there's nothing ruling it out as a means of control or punishment.

The rest of the staff has been around since the time of Joachim. Philibert has not contracted new personnel and so, all the wardens at the hospital can already be considered quite experienced. There are 15 wardens in the Hospital, 6 of them women. Margaret and Janine are still in their thirties, and being the youngest in the Hospital, they are also the most sympathetic members of the staff and really try to provide some company to the inmates.

However, the rest of the female wardens are already in their fifties and like their male counterparts, are mostly insensitive and indifferent to the inmates. By now, all of them are at the Hospital because that's the job they could find, but they have no pleasure in it. They view the patients as nuisances or freaks, and always try their best to do their own jobs at their minimum cost.

It is not uncommon, in fact, for them to blame some patient for something that disappeared, for something they themselves did wrong and have them punished for this or that. Miss Victoria, a towering fat woman nearing her sixties, is especially cruel in this. Being the oldest of the female wardens, she's usually the one responsible for assessing whether a patient is ready to come back from the solitary to the normal wards, or recommending one for a lonesome week, and she usually isn't very compassionate in her evaluations. Patients in solitary are more free time for her, and she uses it well.

The relations among the wardens are maintained by an inner hierarchy, where the older ones are on top and make use of that to keep in strict order their younger colleagues. Even among the wardens there is a certain repression and uneasy life. The youngest ones often mutter they should change the status quo or find something else to do in their lives.

VI HISTORY OF THE ASYLUM

The Hospital for the Alienated was founded in Lamordia in 610BC by a foreigner noble, called Conde da Teixeira (Count of Teixeira). Conde da Teixeira was an extremely wealthy man, and philanthrope of sorts, if such a thing exists in these lands. His land of birth is not known, but he lived among the upper class of Lamordia after wandering a while for other domains. Being a man of the future, he couldn't but be attracted to the progressful land of Dr Mordenheim.

Always worried with the others, he supported for all his life the poor and homeless of the domains where he lived, and when he died, he left the rest of his fortune, still a very considerable amount, to the founding of a hospital where the unfavoured could be cared for. This included the destitute, the orphans, the crippled, the diseased, the handicapped, prostitutes and, especially, the lunatics. His intention was to provide a home for those that had no one else and were outrightly rejected by the society. Everyone that was "different" found a place in the Hospital.

The Hospital was grandiose and magnificent when it opened, and was quite renowned outside Lamordia as a great new work of an enlightened spirit to advance the society. It is said that Dr Mordenheim himself contributed extensively with inventions of his own to the Hospital, which made it even more fashionable.

In fact, however, this society soon found a sordid use for the Hospital. The fame it had led to organized trips of the senior nobility of Lamordia to the Hospital, so they could be

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entertained with a visit of the people that had found their home there.

And so, the noble venture of Teixeira's will was perverted right from the outset. More was to come, though, and worse.

Brilliant and genuinely caring as Teixeira was, none of his successors could even grasp his mind. He said he'd like to see the unfavoured cared and tended to, but if he ever said how, no one listened or found out. The truth was that the wardens at the Hospital viewed the inmates as second-class beings, and the doctors really didn't exist.

Given the broad range of acceptance of the Hospital, it was more like a general asylum than a place to cure any illness. This made the Hospital have directors instead of doctors through the first 50 years of its history. During this time, certain practices took hold that would last for decades and decades to come, and that made the life of the inmates considerably worse than outside. The inmates lived segregated by sexes: there were wings for men and wings for women.

They lived crammed in their rooms, meanwhile turned to dungeon cells. Rooms that were planned to hold two people contained ten; there were no beds, and people were chained to the walls. Food was scarce and the inmates were always dirty and unkempt. Diseases proliferated, and some were epidemic. Violent inmates were even more violently beaten and whipped by the wardens. Special clothing was invented to restrict the inmate's movement in these difficult cases, leading to the appearance of the straitjacket.

The general outlook of the society towards these people, at the time, was one of hostility and superiority. In a rational age, those that could not be understood by reason were cloistered and locked away. They all had a reason to be confined. Lunatics, in particular, were behind bars because they were particularly dangerous: they had succumbed to nefarious spells, committed dreadful acts or convened with

demons and supernatural entities. Their lunacy was not the cause of the moon, as many was much suggested in the most backward domains, but was instead the result of evil sins that should be punished and prevented.

When the Hospital celebrated its 48th anniversary, a new director was appointed that would change radically its life and meaning during his half-century of direction: 31 year-old Laszlo Monz.

He instituted the precept that only mentally ill people – the mad and lunatics – were to be accepted at the Hospital. All the others did not belong there. However, instead of expelling the two or three hundred people that did not qualify as such, he forged false histories for them and classified them as “afflicted”. Since then, the Hospital has accepted only those deemed witless, mad or disturbingly violent. In order to get a regular source of new study subjects, he spread in the community a pervasive notion that the mad was so dangerous he had to be interned. At the same time, he opened the Hospital for paid visits, exhibiting his patients as freaks and warning the high-class visitors for the peculiar signs of illness. “Anyone who shows even one of these signs should be immediately brought to the Hospital for further observation”.

This paranoia grew so intense through the years that in a short time people began to be interned for the simple fact that their neighbours didn't like them or someone wished to “eliminate” them. Many wives lost their joy and the chance of a life due to greedy husbands who locked them in the Hospital under any false pretext they could find. And meanwhile, Monz grew in satisfaction, with the increase in the number of subjects and the income for the Hospital.

Although he invented all those false histories of patients, he did not fall in the error of believing them. He knew they were perfectly healthy people, and wrote so in his secret diaries. His purpose, as he explained there, was to study the effects of his cures in normal people, and see if they were innocuous or harmful to the normal, healthy person. Of course, such intention was

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reproachable even for a corrupt community as that of Lamordia and its neighbours was, so he kept it zealously secret.

Monz revolutionized the techniques in the Hospital and directed it with an iron hand, until he himself fell ill and lost many of his cerebral capacities. He stood abed for 9 years, respectfully treated by his successor, Joachim Antuns, until he finally died in 721.

With Joachim Antuns, a new era began. Antuns was a caring man, and tried all his efforts to provide a better life to the inmates. He disapproved entirely of the notion that study and science should come before the care for human life, and tried to change the general way of life in the Hospital. He had to fight the ingrained violence of the staff, and for that he cast out many of them and hired new blood. Fresh, young people would certainly be not as much prejudiced towards the patients, nor under so much pressure.

In fact, one of the first things he found out was that the staff beat the patients more than necessary because they were under numbered and underpaid. Without proper education and motivation, violence was the easiest resource they had. He thus renewed the staff almost entirely and taught them some kindlier ways to deal with the patients.

One of his measures to improve the inmates' lot was the invention of leisure time for the patients. He had a games field built where the patients could play, and had them meet collectively once a week for theatrical representation. Sometimes there were also balls, where these unfortunate people could try to have some fun. He also forced the walking parties, where a group of patients were accompanied by nurses and forced to walk around the premises. Although there was an obligation to it, it was not evil-intended, since that was the only way some people could be coerced to make any exercise at all. And exercise, he deemed, was necessary to good health. Even though the mind was not sane, there was no reason for the body not to be. Continuing with his liberating efforts, the chains

and the beatings were abolished. Some beds kept their straps, though.

Although he believed in the dignity of the patients, that they had their own rights and should be allotted some freedom within the Hospital, his theories on the origin of insanity and its implication in society led to the effective transformation of the Hospital into a prison. The mad had to be removed from society; they had to be imprisoned within the Hospital grounds.

Antuns' objective was to provide, in the best way possible, an alternative place where these people could live the rest of their lives. The Hospital had turned to an Asylum. Since the philosophy of the Hospital was now to retain people for life, Antuns had to create new wards in the Hospital: the chronic patients' wards.

Another major change was Antuns' realizing that criminals could be mentally ill people, and that they should be studied and treated at the Hospital. With this in mind, he had a whole new structure built specifically for criminals, and convinced the militia to give him access to some prisoners before their trial. If he ascertained that they were ill, he would take them into his Asylum instead of their facing trial.

Still recognizing the need for the solitary, especially more so with this new kind of patients, he decided to improve the conditions of these cold cells, and the walls were furnished with some kind of pad and cushions to prevent the patients injuring themselves. It was customary, in Monz's time, for them to throw themselves violently at the walls and the bars of the door in absolute despair. Some suffered severe injuries, and some even killed themselves in this fashion. The solitary became known as the padded rooms, but their purpose was the same, and the human misery remained. Despite his good heart, Antuns could not grasp everything that had to be changed.

Due to the new nature of the Hospital, and Antuns' views, "visiting the freaks" was obviously abolished. Besides, admittance was now very rare, and only after a thorough exam

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made by Antuns himself. For these exams, he built a new building in front of the old one, where he installed the admission wards. The back wards were thus relegated for the chronic patients, the criminals and the violent that did not yet deserve the solitary. The changes in the admission policy and the extra buildings led to a financial unbalance for the Hospital. Unable to solve it, Antuns let the Hospital decay, and since then it has become very depressing.

Antuns made no special effort to change the society's outlook on the lunatics, but his thorough exams and many refuses to accept people as inmates slowly abated the intense paranoia Monz had created. However, since he still defended and even publicized that the mad was dangerous, these began being hunted like criminals until they were locked in the Asylum. In short, the society learned to distinguish better between lunatics or mentally unstable and mere witch-hunt, but dealt more severely with the ones it caught within its clutches.

Philibert succeeded his father in 748. Joachim was feeling old and weak for all his work and passed on the position to his son. In the organizational field, Philibert changed nothing. The finances are still bad, the Hospital is old, dirty, dark and filthy. The whole is strongly depressing. Where Philibert has made his influence already felt is in the patients' treatment.

He imposes a system even more restrictive than his father's. He has ceased with the parties, the exercises and the games. He has pushed gathering to a minimum and has the patients locked for much longer periods.

The present time is perhaps the darkest period in the History of the Hospital. The patients live with fear in their eyes, and Philibert begins to look mad. He is, however, the absolute ruler in the Hospital, and entrance is thoroughly controlled, so everyone there is virtually helpless. Joachim comes out sometimes, both because he no longer feels well inside and because he expects to find someone that can help him understand what's going on. He has

aged visibly in the last three years, and looks a man 10 years older than he is. Nevertheless, he feels more than ever his duty to zeal for his patients, for he is probably the only person within the Hospital, nowadays, that really cares for them.

These changes have all had their effect on society. Philibert is a much less society dweller than his father was, and admittance is now very rare. The Hospital has nearly set itself like a world apart, behind those high ominous walls that try to hide the secret life that's inside. However, rumours have spread of how the inmates have a new look of abject terror in their faces since the Direction of Philibert. Now, and more than ever, the common folk is really afraid of going near the Hospital and avoids it at all costs.

VII. ADVENTURE HOOKS

I feel the best way to use this article is to confront the PCs with the reality inside. Several points should be explored: the fear in the patients; Dr Joachim's anguish; the nocturnal treatments by Philibert, both its evidence (the cries, the rumours, the remains of the rooms) and their actual witnessing; the showcasing of the several madnesses, and the evidence of how much the human mind can fall: highlight the suffering and the despair the imprisoned person feels, or confront the PCs with a completely impossible thought that seems so natural to the inmate – it could be something as simple as “my child is almost my age, just a year younger than me, all said with a childish smile in her lips.

Probably more things can be used. These were just ideas. Still, one that should be considered by the DM, is the possibility of the PCs being taken in the Hospital in the role of inmates, and suffering all the procedures themselves. Have Philibert even build some false histories for them. There are several things that can be done to the PCs that should entail at least a Horror Check, and most possibly Madness Checks. I would leave this to DM's discretion. Even though going against the suggestion of

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“Domains of Dread”, I’d apply the rules for gaslighting on the PCs in this case. If the characters are submitted to treatment and therapy every other day, have them roll for madness each thirty days. If they are submitted to it between 1 and 3 times per week, extend that to sixty days. Below that, don’t use gaslighting and apply horror checks with each treatment. Remember, there’s always a chance a Horror Check will entail a Madness Check.

Following, I give you some more concrete ideas for adventures within the Hospital.

- Dr. Joachim Antuns feels the truth slipping from his grasp, and life ebbing away with disgust. He asks the PCs to enter the Asylum and find what’s is going on his back.
- One of the PCs, or an NPC friend of them, falls into madness and is taken to the Hospital for treatment. S/he is confined for indefinite time, and when the PCs want to visit her, they get evasive answers and are denied access. They may decide to force-break into the hospital to find what has happened.
- The PCs need to interview a mad person confined a long time ago to the care of the Hospital, because she is the only witness, or a key factor, in some current investigation. In the process, they are confronted with the difficulty of speaking with that person, and by the visible and progressive decay of her mental faculties.
- A movement in Dementlieu’s (or another “advanced” domain) society is organizing to close the Hospital, based on accusations of atrocities committed there. The PCs are commissioned to investigate the truth of those charges.

VII. A SUPERNATURAL OPTION

This article's main intention was to be played without any supernatural effect of any kind. Nevertheless, I've decided to provide an option that explores precisely this. The DM is free to

include this option in the rest of the article: it integrates seamlessly with what has been previously written and offers an interesting new twist to life in the Hospital.

i. The Sightings

Some of the older, more disturbed patients continue to see Monz wandering the Hospital corridors. They see him most frequently walking at their side or during Philibert's operations, bearing an evil smile of contentment. Although this can not be verified, it appears that whenever Monz "appears" the patient outlives the operation, no matter how painful and harmful it may be.

Monz's legendary harshness is well known among the patients, and whenever they view the old man with his chemicals-stained doctor uniform they cry in fear. They say "the devil came to torture them", and, although they know he's dead, that "he's still around to torment them".

Joachim Antuns finds these reports distressing. He views it as a group delusion, a form of paranoia that evolved into folklore of the hospital, forming a kind of whispered myth that is passed from the older patients to the new ones. He has a lot of trouble to calm them down whenever they are in one of their fits, because they claim they can still see him in the corner of their minds even with eyes closed. This, however, is to be expected from people that suffer from paranoia and delirium.

What frightens Joachim the most, though, is the amazing consistency of details among the several reports he hears: they all describe Monz in the same fashion, even though only two or three patients at the Hospital were actually around during his time; they also seem to all agree on the fact that while they do remember seeing Monz around, they don't recall anything of what was happening to them when they saw him.

Philibert also finds these reports very disturbing. For some reason, many of the sightings coincide

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with blackouts he has and which he cannot understand. Fearing any explanation for which he's not ready, he does not have any wish to delve further into the matter.

ii. The Ghost

What is really happening is that Monz's ghost is still around the Hospital. He could never accept the fact that he became mentally ill himself and that he had to be confined in his own Hospital. It was so much his own hospital, and his own patients, that he has simply refused to let go and has become a 4th-magnitude ghost.

Monz, however, is particularly insidious. He is fully incorporeal and invisible, and never chooses to appear as normal ghosts do, although he still retains that ability. Instead, he projects his image in people's minds, as if he were one more hallucination, and can do so without limit of targets, provided they are within the Hospital walls. Thus, he can choose to be fully "visible" by a lot of people or only by one in the middle of a crowd. Up to date, he has never manifested on anyone but patients, perhaps in an effort to conceal his presence. While he's manifesting, he's also able to instill fear on and drain memories of the affected patients.

Aside from this, Monz has the ability to dominate people. He uses that ability to control Philibert and exercise his operations, trying new techniques, in a sense furthering his own research, and at the same time punishing all those patients that dared to survive him. There is no specific time-period governing his manifestations, since he's the owner of the place and chooses to wander through whenever he wants. He's also irregular in his domination of Philibert, since regularity is traceable and could therefore provide a strength to anyone chasing him. Nevertheless, he usually takes over Philibert one to four times a month.

Finally, Monz suffers from no allergen and can never leave the premises of the Hospital.

a) *Combat*

As a ghost, Monz has no combat abilities. At most, he can use the body of a person he has dominated. When that is the case, he's proficient with knives, daggers and shortswords, and has a THAC0 of 18.

b) *Suggested Means of Destruction*

Due to his particular behaviour, Monz is very difficult to stop. Since he can manifest at will within people's minds, he can appear without actually being there, which can leave him quite out of direct confrontation. Thus, even having loads of holy water and the proper magical weapons will be hardly enough to lay him to rest. Fortunately, there are two ways of destroying Monz.

When Monz passed away, his spirit lingered within his journals and writings. It was probably no accident that Philibert found them --- Monz was already exerting his influence from beyond the grave and leading the young Director's steps. After Philibert had studied these and been imbued with Monz's ideas, he had just fallen under his sway. Since then, Monz's ghost was free and able to use his full powers.

The key to destroying Monz is thus in his writings: if all his diaries and journals are burnt, Monz's link to this world will be severed and he will be permanently destroyed. This, however, may be very difficult, for Philibert defends them dearly. They are almost an object of devotion for his idol. Little does Philibert know that he is actually a vessel for him.

The second way of destroying Monz is darker and should not be actively sought by good-aligned PCs. Monz is effectively tied not only to his writings but also to his patients. Presently, there are three patients in the Hospital that were inmates during Monz's time. These are the ones that keep the belief in Monz alive. If these should die, or be killed, his last links to the Hospital would be destroyed, thus dispelling him permanently.

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Joachim does not influence these ties because Monz never had any power over the old Antuns' will, so the former director does not have to die for Monz to disappear. Of course, it is not expected that the PCs kill these particular patients, but if they should somehow die, the haunting would be terminated. On the other hand, Monz will take all possible measures to prevent their death.

Finally, destroying the Hospital, even if burning it to the ground, will be of no effect. Laszlo Monz will still be haunting the ruins, looking for someone to rebuild the Hospital. Anyway, this would be a truly radical effort.

c) *Stats*

Laszlo Monz, 4th-Magnitude Incorporeal Ghost

AC:	-3 (2)	Str:	-
Al:	LE	Con:	-
HD:	11	Dex:	-
HP:	74	Int:	18
#Att:	0	Wis:	17
Dmg:	-	Cha:	12
MR:	nil		
SA:	see below		
SD:	see below		
SV:	see below		

Note: the number between brackets refers to when his enemy is ethereal.

d) *Special Defenses*

- Can only be hit by +3 weapons, or by +1 weapons if the enemy is ethereal.
- Standard undead immunities against spells.
- Can rejuvenate completely in one round, but must rest for 20 rounds afterwards.
- Imposes a -2 penalty on turning attempts.

e) *Special Vulnerabilities*

- Can be hit by Holy Water for 1d4 damage. An attack roll is required against AC 2.
- Destroyed if his writings are burnt or if the three older patients in the Hospital die.

f) *Special Attacks*

- Can manifest at will in people's minds, as long as there are within the Hospital's walls. This is in fact the "Create Phantasm" version of the "Create Illusion" power, but with a much broad limit. (This is why the "Drain Memories" power has been toned-down).
- Can cause fear on a subject within whose mind he's currently manifesting, forcing a fear check at a -3 penalty
- Can dominate victims. The victim must be asleep. The domination can last up to a week, but he can attempt a new domination 1 hour after the end of the first one. At the end of the week, the victim is entitled to a saving throw at -2 penalty to shrug off Monz's domination. Failure means Monz can initiate a new period of domination. He usually dominates a victim for one or two days at most.
- Can drain memories from a subject within whose mind he's currently manifesting. This ability of his is not as strong as normal in a ghost of his magnitude: he can drain memories of the last 2d10 hours. The victim must roll a saving-throw vs spell. Failure indicates the memory loss is permanent. Success means the victim will recover the lost memories gradually over the course of 4d10 days.

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iii. Adventure Hook:

Joachim is not happy at all with the ghost sighting reports. Although completely discarding the supernatural, and attributing this "ghost" to mental febleness, he does believe there is, in the Hospital, an emotional charge strong enough to generate some strange and misunderstood psychic phenomena.

Reluctant to leave any possibility unexplored, he hires the PCs to try to uncover if there is any supernatural explanation for all of these sightings.



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PEOPLE, GOOD OR BAD...

THE UNDEAD SEA SCROLLS

LADY GOWENA

BY ALEX MIRANDA
(WILLIAM CAIRNSTONE)

BACKGROUND

Lady Gowena Ward-Barthold is the daughter of Lord Jeremy Barthold and Ann-Elizabeth Ward, of Mordentshire. Lord Jeremy belonged to a very renowned, but broke family. The Ward family, on the other hand, was also distinct and had a considerable fortune. Lord Jeremy, vowing to restore the pride of his family's name, sought a convenience marriage with Ann-Elizabeth, to which the Wards agreed.

Their marriage was mostly without love, but a child was born, Gowena. Ann-Elizabeth devoted all the love she could give to her, since his husband's heart was barren, and sought comfort and solace in her only and older brother, Philip Ward. A bachelor, and something of an artist, Philip was extremely dedicated to her sister and niece.

Within only 2 or 3 years, Jeremy had taken over the influence of the Ward family and passed it to the Barthold name, and governed the Ward mansion as if he were the owner of the whole fortune. The Wards resented this, but since the death of Ann-Elizabeth's and Philip's father, Jeremy's rule was absolutely impossible to resist. Philip left the Ward mansion (or was cast out, some say) and went to live in a small loft in town, leaving poor Ann-Elizabeth unprotected from Jeremy's rages. He still visited her occasionally, but Jeremy did not hide his discomfort when Philip was around.

Jeremy became a distinct politician, stern defender of morality and tradition, a model for the society. His sole worry was his political image and his social power. Gowena didn't

mean much for him, for she was too young yet, and Ann-Elizabeth should be a quiet, dedicated and submissive wife. If she were not, he had no compunction in beating her into "a wife's proper state".

Ann-Elizabeth, however, was of a strong fiber, and held fast within her ground. He gave her husband no chance to punish her, and willingly distanced herself from him, earning her own space and carrying on with her own plans, while making an ally of her daughter. Jeremy welcomed this apparently submissive attitude, but did not understand that Ann-Elizabeth was doing it for her own profit. She stimulated Gowena's independence, wishing her to be strong and able to escape her father's yoke. She did not want Gowena to be unhappy as herself was, and so tried to give her a more physical education that could free her of the prejudice against women's serving role and make her stronger and able to face any man. Thus it was that Ann-Elizabeth sponsored Gowena's classes of riding and sword-fighting of several styles. She was only 9, by then.

Gowena and her mother were happy with each other, but unfortunately for them, Ann-Elizabeth died the following year of a debilitating disease. It was a serious blow for Gowena.

Only then did Jeremy understand how distanced his daughter had grown from him. Trying to recover lost time, he tried to approximate her, but she much preferred Philip's company, and innerly blamed her father for Ann-Elizabeth's death. Jeremy, desperate to regain his daughter from the annoying brother-in-law, condescended to let her go on with her classes, which he disapproved strongly for being too masculine for a proper lady.

Gowena grew and the gap between her and her father never seemed to diminish. Jeremy's

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anguish for her daughter's love turned, with time, to indifference as he noticed she had only icy feelings towards him, and then to a resentment he could not hide. He became even more aggressive in his social duties, as a way of repressing his familiar frustrations, always looking for a way to punish Gowena.

He found the solution when Gowena was 14 years old. News reached his ears that Gowena was flirting with a mere stable boy during her riding classes. This was too much for him. Using this as a pretext that it was utterly against the proper behaviour a lady, he imprisoned her in the a tower of the Mansion, at first for a mere week but then indefinitely. This was the opportunity he was much waiting, and now he would subdue his daughter as he had done with his wife. She had to become a proper Barthold, and discipline was the key to it. At the same time, Jeremy definitely forbid Philip of approaching the Mansion, thus cutting all the communication there was between him and Gowena.

Gowena remained locked in her room in the tower for three whole years, looking down from her grated window to life passing by. People much estranged her absence, and soon it became apparent that she was a prisoner in her own house. During those years she became very beautiful and attractive for any young man, and the story of her detention only made her a more romantic and desirable prize. She had become the proverbial princess locked in the castle weeping at the window. These were only the thoughts of the romantic youth.

On the other hand, Jeremy was known not only for his moral righteousness, but also for his stubbornness and rage fits. If he had locked Gowena, either he had a very good reason for that, or Gowena would have to suffer unjustly, for no one would dare to face Jeremy.

During these three years, Gowena lived in the tower. Her appartments were made up of two whole floors, filled with all the comfort, but she couldn't leave them. She was in nothing short of a golden cage. Nevertheless, Gowena was

determined, and tried to profit the best she could from the situation.

Her rooms had once belonged to an adventurous grand-father or her, and comprised, among others, a bedroom and a library. Among his many things, she found many books and, hidden in some old rags within a concealed compartment, a magnificent longsword of past times. Fond as she was of sword-fighting, she engaged daily in training with it and never lost her practice. But what most affected her during all that time were the books.

Many of those were about the romantic idea of the knight, lost tales of cavalry, the ideal of a man. Away from reality, she believed in that ideal earnestly and with time began longing for the brave knight that would climb her tower and rescue her.

Other books, though, were about more mundane things: journeys, poisons, healing herbs and fighting techniques. From all these, she acquired a practical knowledge far beyond that of many young men in Mordent and certainly more than her father had wished.

As Gowena turned 17, Jeremy decided it was time for her to be presented to society, and began taking her to balls and receptions. His goal was to find a suitable husband for her, one that had a name and a fortune. Gowena welcomed this chance to leave her tower and find her dedicated knight, but right from the start she was very disappointed. Not less so was Jeremy.

Three years locked in a tower had granted Gowena a certain distance from society, and her inept behaviour did not favour her in the least, but she was a living legend and several galant youngsters approached her. Unfortunately, their conversations didn't last much. The Mordentish youth was nothing like she had read, and certainly they were far below her in what respected adventuring: neither her nor them had any experience, but she at least had many notions about the matter. Haughtily, Gowena despised them in public.

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Jeremy was very angry with the situation, but he wouldn't be defeated in his plans. He continued to force her going to the parties, until it became clear she was no longer willing to do so. Upset and despaired at last, Jeremy locked her up, deeming her a lost case and totally hopeless. Gowena wept that night. Even from her father whom she didn't love, such words were heavy as lead and life seemed black to her.

The next day, however, a light shone. A magpie came to her window carrying a message. It was from Philip. He had seen her in one of the balls. Fearing why Jeremy was taking her daughter to such events, he decided he had to reach Gowena somehow. Profiting of Jeremy's absences from the manor, he studied Gowena's tower and finally decided on training a bird to reach her with messages. It took him a few months, but at last he had made it. Finally, when Gowena was already 19, these messages gave fruit.

Combining his knowledge of the mansion and Gowena's presence there, they found a secret passage from her tower that led to some bushes right outside the walls. At last, five years after her imprisonment, Gowena had found the way for freedom from her father. They exchanged plans for her deliverance, and Philip set a horse in a cave nearby to help in her escape.

The first night of her freedom was the grand night of her unveiling. She wept in one single flow all the tears she had repressed in so long a time, all the distress of her prison, the ill-perceived grief of her mother's loss, the youth lost among four closed walls. All the sorrow of her suffering, all the anguish of the loneliness, everything came out in that dull cold hour before midnight. The sudden freedom burst within her, and compelled by that sudden emotion, she let her free of everything that could oppress her that night, and everything that symbolized Jeremy.

She gathered the things most dear to her, her sword, her newfound horse, and forsook the purity her father imposed on her. She undressed herself totally, mounted her horse bearing nothing but what she most loved, and shot wildly through the night, blonde hair on white

stallion, madly, raging, furiously drifting through the night, a white flame on a landscape of black, amongst houses, trees and rolling hills, throwing at the skies her cry of deliverance.

She didn't flee, though. Unsure of what to do and where to go, she came back home before morning and climbed back to the tower. She had found a way to freedom, but was she free? She knew nothing that could help her survive. She had no money, nowhere to go. Philip was old and getting sick, and could not go help her.

There were tales of dangerous things at night, things she was not prepared to meet. And besides, more defeating than all of this: this life was all she knew, this city was all she had ever seen. She didn't feel ready to leave everything behind and meet the unknown..

APPEARANCE

Lady Gowena is 20 years old, and a true beauty. She is no more than 5'3" tall and slim. She is apparently frail, but she has well-trained muscles which make her stronger than at first she may appear. She has lake blue eyes and a long blond hair, that stretches uncombed but straight down her back. She has a soft and tender voice, and all in all is a very attractive girl.

CURRENT SKETCH

Gowena is now 20. Her first escapade was some eight months ago. Since then, her mind is perhaps a little bit affected. She lost all courage to change her life and submitted to her prison in the tower. She still talks to Philip, but he's getting weaker and can provide no more than moral comfort.

Her greatest desire now is the arrival of her champion, someone that takes her away from her father and has the courage she lacks. She stoically awaits him, but has decided that the freedom she conquered will be hers forever and no one will take that from her. Almost every night, she leaves her tower with at most a scant

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white veil dressed and nothing more but her trusted sword and horse. Anything else would oppress her. During those few hours, she rides freely and thunderly through the dark streets of Mordentshire and the nearby fields. It's a mystery how she musters the courage to brave the night but not her father.

Whenever she sees someone, she tries to avoid him or her and never stops, with fear of being recognized. If absolutely cornered though, that same fear might lead her to kill the person, although that hasn't happened yet. After all, not many people come out after midnight. Although people are not a problem for her, she has had to fight on occasion some nightly beasts, although nothing too difficult.

Even though, the city inhabitants have already understood there's a new menace in the air. A thundering horse beats the streets at night, and a white shadowy figure wanders within the city and on the distant moors. Since her appearance, two or three lads have appeared killed and they blame her. Some say it's a wizardress, some say it's a vampiress or a foul seductress of men, but none can guess the truth. And people fear her, the Lady in White.

COMBAT

LADY GOWENA WARD-BARTHOLD, 3RD LEVEL HUMAN FIGHTER

Hit Points:	21
THAC0:	16 (+1 specialization, +1 from Longsword)
Morale:	12
AC:	7
Al:	CG
#Att:	3/2
Dmg:	1d8 + 2
Str:	13
Dex:	16
Con:	11
Int:	15
Wis:	9
Cha:	17

SA:	see below
SD:	nil
SV:	nil
MR:	nil

Gowena has become a specialist with the Longsword, which grants her the common benefits of Specialization. She never carries any thing but her sword, but she's so intimate with it that when using it she gains a +1 bonus to her AC. She tries to avoid fight and flee as much as possible, but if forced into one, she's as capable as a normal 3rd level fighter.

When facing men, though, she can try to use her natural beauty to *charm* them. The victim must roll a saving throw vs paralyzation at -2 penalty, and if this is failed, he'll stand immobile for two rounds, time enough for Gowena to run away or try to strike a deadly blow. However, this does not happen many times at all.

Finally, Gowena carries a magic sword, *Night Veil*, that once belonged to her grand-father. This is a longsword +1, but it has some more special abilities. On the good side, it is a protective sword in that it confers the wielder permanent Protection From Evil and Invisibility to Undead.

Unfortunately, there's also a darker side. The sword strikes at the owner's sanity. For each month in possession of a person, she must roll a saving-throw against spell, and if this is failed, lose a permanent wisdom point. If this stat reaches 3, the person becomes insane, and if it reaches 0, the person simply loses all reasoning and becomes just like a wild animal. If this were not enough, the sword acts like a magnet to undead. Even though it protects the wielder from them, if the full moon shines upon it, it attracts 1d6 ghouls or ghosts each night to any one spot where it has been illuminated by the moonlight. These undead will then go on looking for prey. If the wielder is among a party and is not aware of this curse and leaves her sword exposed, she might be well attracting unexpected company for her companions. She'll be completely safe from them which, after a time, will much look like she's controlling the undead. Vengeful

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companions might act in a not too pleasant manner. In fact, the young men recently found dead in Mordent were killed by these ghouls.

USING GOWENA IN GAME

There are two facets to Gowena: her shy look of the defenseless maiden, sympathetic to the community but for whom it can do nothing; and her nightly escapades where she frees herself completely and becomes someone completely different. Both can provide hooks for an adventure.

For the first side, she can become the object of the love of some PC, and this can be her awaited champion. He'll then have to take her away from the clutches of her father, but Gowena will be expecting no less than a marriage. Even then,

she probably won't cease her escapades, which can prove a problem to the newly wed husband.

On the other side, she can become the object of a hunt on the part of the PCs. Her involuntary ability to attract undead can support the claims that the White Lady is a mischievous evil-doer and that she must be brought to the point of the sword. In this case, though, she should always appear, at least at first, in the distance and rather vague and ghostlike.

Of course, the two scenarios can be mixed, adding to a plot where one of the PCs hunts in the night his bride during the day.



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THE BLUE LADY

BY CARRIE KUBE

(YAOI HUNTRRESS EARTH)

Leaving a graceful and bloody trail behind her, the personal bodyguard of Ivan Dilisyna may be her own worst enemy.

History:

Once upon a time there was a little girl who dreamed of being a paladin. So much that she would follow the town's champion in loving admiration. Her days, blissfully dreaming when she could faithfully serve her god and her nights, praying and sneaking outside to practice her sword fighting.

But in the land of the mists, no good intention goes unpunished. One day her family was taken to the castle for their crimes. The interrogation was nothing short of torture as she prayed for her hero to come to her aid only to see her family fall one by one. While morning over her older brother, her hero came to inspect the damage. Overjoyed, the little girl ran to the hero, told her tale of woe, and got struck down with the hero's sword.

Her innocence further shattered, she closed her eyes for one last time and woke up in the middle of a barren field in Falklovia. Confused? Don't be, because this is where the story of this little girl, Maya Hawthorne, truly begins.

Forbidden Lore: Maya was born in Nidala. Like most of the children in this domain, she idolized the local Darklord. Only problem was that Miss Faith-Hold didn't return the little girl's devotion and had struck her down with her sword when Maya had tried to explain her family's innocence.

Normally, running a small child through with a bastard sword will kill them, but the Dark Powers found potential in little Maya, revived her, and transported her to Falklovia. Maya doesn't quite understand how this happened, but since then she has developed a paranoia that Elena might be after her to make sure she dies for real.

Taken in by a kindly middle-aged man, Maya worked with him and his friends in their guild and within seven years was allowed to fight along with them. That was until it all came crashing down on her...

A group of adventurers had infiltrated the guild and taken out the members in a bloody battle when Maya was out taking a walk. The adventurers' leader, a paladin of the same faith as her hero, tried to console her, but his words fell upon deaf ears as the already weary party was slaughtered one-by-one.

Forbidden Lore: The kindly middle-aged man was the leader of a group of bandits that had lost his wife and newborn daughter in childbirth. Since Maya was the same age that his daughter would've been if she were alive today, he took her in. Maya was trained immediately, but was not allowed to help her new father in his work until she was ten. Having affiliation with scythes (for their relation to death,) she was given a uniquely custom made one after her first mission.

Forbidden Lore: Even though Maya believes that the adventuring group that killed the bandits who raised her was sent by Elena Faith-Hold to destroy her, it is pure coincidence that the paladin was of the same faith. Maya and her bandit father weren't extremely close, but he was all she had. In rage, she had killed the entire party who was already drained from fighting off the bandits.

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Alone at the vulnerable age of 15, Maya buried the bodies of her new family and disappeared into the mists. For the next two years she has been found in various domains as a warrior for hire, never staying in one place in fear that Elena's men would find her. And to make sure that they never get a chance, any Nidalian adventurer or cleric/paladin of the same faith as the Darklord were found dead within minutes.

Fate took a sudden turn when a group of petty thugs she was working with tried to rob the coach of Ivan Dilisyna. The thugs were greatly inexperienced and proved to be more of a hindrance to Maya. As her comrades were killed and she was subdued, the co-Darklord decided to get a look at this mysterious "Blue Lady" that he heard so much about and saw the very face of his sister, Kristina, looking back at him. Taken back by the uncanny resemblance and her exceptional fighting ability, he offered her the chance of being his head bodyguard. Maybe out of being tired of running or some weird infatuation, she agreed. Since then, the Blue Lady has succeeded in making one of the most untouchable men in Borca even harder to reach.

APPEARANCE:

Maya is a twisted jigsaw of lost childhood and the alluring dangers of adulthood. Her long blond pigtails contrast with the sleeveless blue dress she wears, but it all has a story behind it. The pigtails are a torch that she carries for the innocence that was robbed from her by Elena Faith-Hold and her dress, a final gift from her father when she turned 15.

The skirt part of her dress is silted at sides to allow her to move easily in it. She has also added a piece of armor that covers her chest from her adopted father's treasure stash. She also sports a low-hanging, thin silver belt that contains several tiny bags that contain an array of darts. An observant person will notice she wears a pair of elbow-length blue gloves that hide her mangled, twisted hands and arms as a result from a failed powers check in the form of

a paladin's curse that her sin would forever be on her hands. The curse has enhanced her strength, but will cause a horror check if anyone were to find out about it.

Everything about her is graceful and alluring. Even with some of the features she shares with Kristina, she can appear both as a seductive child or a graceful woman. Her voice is soothing and mature for her age, but if enraged or scared it begins to sound more like a girl her age.

MAYA HAWKTHORPE (AKA THE BLUE LADY)

Lv. 4 Human Fighter, Chaotic Evil

Str: 15 (+2)
Dex: 18 (+4)
Con: 13 (+1)
Int: 11 (0)
Wis: 10 (0)
Cha: 13 (+1)
HP: 38 (4d10)
AC: 16
Speed: 30 ft
Initiative: +4

Weapon: Masterwork Scythe, Darts (20)

Armor: Breastplate (chest area only) (+2 bonus, -2 penalty)

Skills: Bluff (+2), Hide (+3), Intimidate (+4), Knowledge (Nidala) (+2), Knowledge (Falklovia) (+3), Knowledge (poisons) (+2), Move Silently (+4)

Feats: Dirty Fighting*, Dodge, Quick Draw, Weapon Proficiency (Scythe), Alertness
Language: Nidalian, Balok, Falklovian

*Found in the Swords and Fists Handbook.

PERSONALITY:

Maya has little to no desire to ever see Elena Faith-Hold again and it would take an awful lot of convincing to make her agree to any rebellion groups that want to topple the Darklord. She is

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paranoid enough as it is and will fight to the death to have this stain in her past erased. Though her paranoia has eased a bit, she still believes that all paladins that cross her path are out to get her. (Ever since her family and adopted father were killed, she has harbored an intense hatred toward paladins.)

Even her own personality is just as varied as her appearance. The experiences in her life have greatly effected her, making her more mature than other girls her age. She often appears like an angelic warrior: alluring, untouchable, and powerful and only talks if she has something to say. On the other hand, she can be somewhat bratty and smart-mouthed toward those she does not like.

Her relationship with the co-Darklord is an interesting one and one would have to wonder if it is really love or a sick, twisted version of it. Maya has begun to fall in love/infatuation with Ivan. His power is her sanctuary from her imagined persecution by Elena Faith-Hold and his child-like eccentricity reminds her of lost childhood. It has been a long time since anyone has shown any real concern for her than she will do anything to keep her lot in life. For the co-Darklord, Maya is another Kristina that (hopefully) will stay with him this time. Her youth, grace, and fighting ability are also a nice bonus. (It is said that Ivan has her wear his sister's dresses during formal occasions.) How far this little relationship goes is better left to the rumor mills.

Maya is not blind to her employer's evil, but views him as a "lesser evil" compared to Elena Faith-Hold and her ilk. Like Ivan, she can be just as cruel and is a ruthless killing machine in battle that is not afraid to use her connections to do away with those that get in her way. Once a young paladin took an interest in her despite her hatred toward his kind. She secretly invited the paladin to one of Ivan's parties and told him to comment on how good the food was. Ignorant of the co-Darklord's curse, he did as he was told. Just as she planned, Ivan became insanely jealous of the young man's sense of taste and his attempts to woo Maya at the party. The guests

say that besides the paladin's screams of mercy, the laughter of Maya herself was the only thing that they could hear.

CURRENT SKETCH:

Since settling in Borca, Maya has become a source of fear, yet interest to the people. Most of the native refer to her as the "Blue Lady of Borca" and rarely use her real name (if they even knew it). Her grace and power have won her a few admirers as well as the contempt of Ivana Boritsi. "The Blue Pit Bull of Borca" as Ivana often refers to her, is becoming a bit of a thorn in her side. She has already lost an Ermordenung in attempt of getting rid of Maya.

CONFRONTING MAYA:

Watching the Blue Lady fight is truly a sight to behold. As she loses herself in the passion of battle, it is as if she is almost dancing as she slaughters her enemies. Some have become so entranced by her grace that they become distracted and get caught flat-footed.

Maya will usually try to take out the magic users first with her ranged weapons or her scythe if she's close enough. If there is a paladin in the group, she'll go for them. She takes great advantage of her high strength and dexterity. She is also not above grappling a weaker member of the party and using them as a human shield nor using any dirty trick from her bandit past to win.

If the battle also means protecting Ivan, she willingly does this to her utmost ability while relying on long-range attacks to keep attackers at bay and throwing herself in the way of any ranged attacks.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

-The PCs might be interested in the serial deaths of all the holy warriors Maya has killed or be friends of the paladin that tried to woo her. How are they going to bring her to justice when she's

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working for one of the most powerful men in Borca?

-Irvine (from the Book of Shadows) might find out that the "sweet little girl" that he remembered from Nidala has survived and may want to convince her to join his rebellion. But, what will happen when an honorable guerrilla soldier and a disillusioned girl running away from her past collide?

-For added fun, have Nidala become part of the core and have Elena finally learn about our little escaped heretic and send some her men after Maya for real. Sometimes when you're paranoid, they truly are out to get you.



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PLACES...

THE UNDEAD SEA SCROLLS

ARLINGTON FARM

BY EDDY BRENNAN
(THE LOST WICCAN)

Nightmares come in many forms, from the mundane to the most extraordinary. Places that these nightmares dwell within are also all too common, though where would you place a Scarecrow other than a cornfield?

THE LAND

Arlington farm is a small Island of Terror that floats adrift within the thick misty of Ravenloft. It is a lonely place filled with fields of corn for as far as the eye can see, though in all stretching almost 9 miles in length from east to west and about the same from north to south. This makes it almost a complete circle if it were to be drawn on a map.

Most of the land is covered by crops of wheat and corn, the ears growing on these plants in several states of ripeness and decay as they continuously grow in a looping cycle as time passes. Though if picked whilst even at their ripest, these crops wither and rot in seconds. The weather is also of interest in this land as it always appears ideal for what is needed to keep the crops bountiful. Though this is an effect brought about by the control the domains lord has over all the local weather. Around these fields is an only broken wooden fence, many of its posts still stand. However, many of the crossbars have long since collapsed and now lay rotting in the rich soil. Around these are steep, though short (30') cliffs that sink down into the mists around them. (Though if it appears within another domain, the border may appear invisible as the domain surface at ground level and not raised above the surface of the ocean or swallowed by mist banks.)

Within the fields themselves, scarecrows stand tall upon the shafts that hold them erect, spaced roughly 100 yards apart. Forever staring across the landscape below the constant cawing of the crows and ravens that circle high above.

Near the centre of the domain itself is the long abandoned Arlington farmhouse and storage barn, though no one lives here anymore except Henry Arlington. Most of the time however, the house stands empty as the lord travels its farm, keeping things just as they should be. To this house, no road exists though those who make it to the centre, where the house lays, they will easily be able to see and follow a road back to the cliff at the domain's edge.

CULTURAL LEVEL

Initially, the domain was of a Renaissance setting though through the long years, it has slipped to something more resembling the Dark Ages.

THE FOLK

There are no settlements within the domain where anyone living dwells. All that truly dwells here are the forever, circling birds, other small wildlife such as rodents, cats and dogs.

More terrifying than these wild creatures are the Scarecrows, these horrid things become animate at the whim of the local lord to attack those who intrude upon the farm's estate. It matters not whether those who intrude do so with intent or by accident, whether they friendly or hostile, it is all the same to Arlington.

NATIVE PLAYER CHARACTERS

There are no native player characters from Arlington Farm.

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THE LAW

Henry Arlington, who is known by several names to the sailors that have been luckless enough to land here and survive, rules the domain with an iron grip. All that live within it are in his dominion, his subjects, be they aware of this or not, living or created at his hand.

Other than this, there is but one law to Arlington Farm, that all those who enter are to perish at the hands of Arlington or those who serve him. Those who are killed by Arlington or his Scarecrows are taken in and transformed into Scarecrows, so they may serve him for eternity as their punishment.

PERSONALITIES OF NOTE

Arlington rules the domain without argument as none other may stand against him here. All those who may be threats to him are disposed of quickly.

ENCOUNTERS

Wild Dogs, Cats, Rats (both normal and giant), crows and ravens are by far the most common creatures here. There is a 30% chance of encountering these mundane creatures in combat encounters twice a day within Arlington Farm.

Night though is all the more terrifying in this place as this is when the Scarecrows rise to claim those who invade the land. For each hour of darkness in the domain, there is a 50% chance of encountering 1 (10% chance of d3) of these terrible creatures. These encountered are based within the cornfields, whilst within the area of the farmhouse, Scarecrows may be encountered any time, day or night, with a 50% chance of encountering a single Scarecrow each hour.

These ghastly creatures are common site by day, propped upon tall stakes driven deep into the ground.

LORD OF ARLINGTON FARM

HENRY ARLINGTON

Unique Scarecrow, Chaotic Evil

Armour class	5
Movement	9
Level/Hd	6
Hit points	30
THACO	12
No. Attacks	1
Dmg per attack	d4+8 or weapon +8
Special attacks	see below
Special defences	see below
Special Weaknesses	see below
Magic resistance	10%
Morale	Fearless (19)

Str	20
Dex	19
Con	-
Int	15
Wis	13
Cha	8

Henry is an amalgamation of rotting flesh and other common materials that go into making common scarecrows. What flesh there is has long since greyed and appears putrid in places.

Worms dig through his flesh and discoloured bone protrudes here and there. Much of him is flesh, though most of his right leg and upper left arm remain cloth stuffed with straw and grasses. His body is a continuous patchwork of stitches and splits where they haven't held. Patches of added sacking and flesh also spot him in places, though much of this is hidden beneath the ancient clothing he adorns.

This clothing is a loose shirt, worn through and torn with age, becoming more of a network of netting than the wool it once was. His pants have also become ragged and fallen into disrepair and neglect. His feet remain bare, as does his head but this reveals more of his ghastly appearance. Not that he cares.

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When seen, Henry appears somewhat far away in nature, as if his mind were on other matters. This is very much true with the fear he lives in and the farm requiring so much of his time. He rarely speaks and when he does, his language is not understood though the toning sounds harsh.

BACKGROUND

Henry Arlington was born and raised within the same farm he now inhabits. Bequeathed to him by his late parents that died in a tragic house fire, after he turned of age his elder brothers demanded their right to the ownership themselves. Neither of them being worthy in Henry's eyes, he challenged them to a duel. Their half-dead bodies left for the rats to gnaw upon in the ruins of the old farmhouse that marked their parent's resting-place.

When his brother's screams ended, the crops almost seemed to be listening and grew quickly and strong that season.

The New Year became with a late frost, severely damaging many crops and destroying some completely. Henry was mortified by the loss, though his fortune would save him easily, his land that he loved so much was failing him, or rather he felt that he had failed it. He flew into a wild temper and stormed through the fields, picking a fight with the first farm hand he met. Henry attacked suddenly and with no mercy, impaling the young lad on his own pitchfork. As the boy's blood ran into the ground, Henry cursed himself and the others that worked for him, the land and all else he could see and think of. Then, as the last drops of crimson liquid sank into the earth, a small shoot of a plant could be seen. When he became calm, he was in fear of his rage being discovered, at first he hid the body but soon he realised another way to conceal it. He cut the corpse up and grafted a piece onto different scarecrows along the farm, the rest he burned.

That year, Henry's farm once again produced a bountiful crop of corn.

The next year, his crops failed to grow once more early in the season and again he killed. This time it was a stray dog that had been lurking the land. Again, blood fell into the ground and the crops grew. Henry did not understand what was happening completely, but he knew what he must do to keep the crops bountiful. So he killed each year to get his crops and each time he did so, he would sew the corpses into the scarecrows and burn the remainder.

As this practice continued, it preyed on Henry's mind as something he once knew and lost, but eventually he remembered. As a child, his father and others had told him many tales that the scarecrows were the blood of the farm and that each year, some would go out into the field in early spring and place a piece of fresh raw flesh into their still forms. That night, the scarecrows would awaken and tend the fields and would do so until dawn, each night of the season until the crop was ripe for harvest. As a child, the story had captivated him and filled him with many nightmares. Now, a man with the proof he thought meaning the old tales to be true, he continued his murderous work.

After almost a decade of giving sacrifices to the land, Henry became ill and nothing grew that year. Through his greed and the medicines needed to cure the sickness, Henry almost fell bankrupt. This was the final proof he needed though, the blood and flesh was needed for the land to serve him.

More years passed and the land came to require more sacrifices, soon many of the scarecrows in the fields were more flesh than cloth and straw, crows pecked at them and the fields came to stink with the wretched stench of death. Still though, the crops would grow. However, Arlington Farm had gained a name as a dark place and none would come to work there.

Soon, all that was left was Henry, now a man in his late forties, his wife and six children. When nothing would grow, Henry knew what he must do. One night, he crept through the house, axe in hand, desperate for the crop he needed. He

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coldly butchered his family and fed their flesh to the scarecrows and their blood to the land. That season, the crops grew steadily until they were ready for harvest once more.

One evening, he stood outside his cottage and planned to begin the harvest in the morning. Not known to him that the scarecrows in the fields had other plans for the harvest that very night. So, when he rose the next day, he stepped out into the wondrous august sun and looked out in horror. For all he could see was burnt black and was only ashes on the ground, all that remained of Arlington farm were the house, scarecrows and him self.

That night, Henry lay in bed a broken man weeping into his pillow. He had sacrificed his entire work force and family, all he had went into the crop and it had come to nought. Through his sorrow, he failed to hear the muffled breaking of the window downstairs, the footfalls on the stairs and the door opening. He heard nothing until the hands were upon him.

Screaming in horror he looked around wildly, the room about him was filled with the scarecrows of the fields, though now they were different. In the faces of each of them he could see all that he had sacrificed to them, the scarecrows had become his victims, or rather the other way around. They dragged the man out into the fields and placed him upon the wooden pole, tying him tightly so he could not escape. They tore out his tongue so he would not scream and did to him what they felt he deserved, they made him like them. Though with Henry, there was difference. As he pleaded in muffled gargles and as the blood filled his mouth and throat, as they cut him open, removed his organs and stuffed him with straw, even as they stitched his mouth, nose and eyes closed, something answered the dying man's pleas for release.

The Dark Powers saw fit to punish this man for all that he had done and granted him a land suitable for him and as he died, the mists closed in around him, the scarecrows and his beloved fields...

CURRENT SKETCH

Henry Arlington is a bitter and callous creature as his heart turned black long ago. He still tends to his farm and wanders it often, tending to all that needs doing with old tools that are now rusted and encrusted with the blood of long forgotten intruders. However, some force unknown to him undoes whatever work he achieves. When he is not tending the crops, he is most likely found within the old farmhouse, staring blankly into space as time passes slowly around him. He always listens though, to the crows and ravens above the fields, the wild winds blowing the crops, the rats and mice under the floorboards and within the walls. He always listens, he has to listen as they always come for him if he is distracted for but a second. And always does he see the faces of his victims as they torture for him on the night of the first harvest every summer, the night when his victims rise in the bodies of his scarecrows and hunt for him once more. Only they are not memories, but reality. Each harvest moon his body becomes flesh and the scarecrows butcher him as he did to them so long ago in his memories.

CLOSING THE BORDERS

Henry Arlington may close his borders at any time. When he chooses to do so, a giant murder of Ravens and Crows encircle the cliffs around the domain. Anyone passing within 20' of these cliffs will start to be attacked by these feral birds and sustain d4 damage on the first round. This damage will grow to 2d4 on the second round and continue to rise by a further d4 on subsequent rounds to a maximum of 10d4 damage each round. Once the person attempting to leave turns back, the birds will cease their assault. However, if one chooses to attempt to leave once more as the borders remain closed, the birds will attack with the same ferocity as they had on the last round. (I.e. – if they received 3d4 damage on the last round they attempted to escape, the escape will receive 3d4 damage on the first round of his or her next attempted escape.)

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Arlington may only keep these borders closed for a single hour at a time before having to rest 3 rounds in order to raise them again.

COMBAT

Arlington attacks like all other Ravenloft Scarecrows, with either his claws or with an old farming tool. These tools are a sickle, scythe or pitchfork and all normal damage with a +8 for his high strength score. Likewise, his claws deal d4+8 damage from his high strength.

Like others of his kind, Arlington forces all that he strikes to make a saving throw vs. death magic or fall foul to the plague that his kinds touch passes on. If the victim does fall to the plague, stinging insects begin to flood towards the character at the start of the next round, inflicting d4 points of damage from their bites and stings. Damage that these insects inflict increases by another d4 damage each round (2d4 on second round, 3d4 on third, etc...). In addition to this, the cursed character suffers a -1 penalty to all attack rolls and saving throws for every die of damage they suffer from the insects that swarm them. This curse is harder to remove than that passed on by other Ravenloft

Scarecrows, requiring a second saving throw on the victims part against death magic with a -2 penalty to throw off the curse when a *Remove Curse* spell is cast. Also, this curse may not be lifted for as long as Henry is not destroyed.

Arlington is immune to all forms of Charm, Sleep, Hold, Death and Life Effecting spells and effects and receives only half damage from Electricity and Lightning based attacks and spells. Normal fire inflicts normal damage and magical fire inflicts +1 damage per die.

Mundane weapons inflict one point of damage per blow against him, though bludgeoning weapons inflict no damage. Magical weapons inflict 1 point of damage +1 per level of enchantment (+3 weapons inflict 4 damage, +5 inflicts 6 damage), fire based magical weapons inflict full damage. Extra damage inflicted for

high strength scores is always ignored regardless of the weapon used to attack Arlington.

Also, decapitation does not destroy Arlington, he can act just as well without his head as he can with it.

The Dark Powers have also granted Arlington several abilities, the first of these is the power to summon 3d8 Ravens and Crows, 3d4 giant rats or 10d10 rats up to thrice a day, these summoned animals arrive the next round and will carry out his will. He may also summon d3 Scarecrows to his aid up to twice a day, these arrive in d4+1 rounds. Both of these abilities may be used once a round and are mental commands, he may carry out other actions, such as attacking in melee whilst summoning aid.

His ability to control the weather within his domain is by far his most powerful piece in his arsenal. With it, he may change the weather in a single round to whatever he wishes it to be. From a blizzard to baking sunlight to torrential rain. This is not cast at his whim like he summons those who serve him; instead, taking his undisturbed concentration, forcing him to forfeit any other action that round. If he is struck whilst altering the weather, he must make a saving throw vs. rod or lose his concentration. He may use this ability up to once a turn as he sees fit.

If he forces burning sunlight, all living things in his domain suffer d10 points of damage from sunburn after every hour spent in it. Likewise, they become delirious from sunstroke, unless avoided with a saving throw vs. Breath Weapon. Resulting in a cumulative -2 penalty to their Strength, Dexterity and Constitution scores for each hour they remain in the baking heat. If they take cover away from it, even in a tent, they do not suffer further from the effect of this weather.

If he summons a blizzard, all living things within it are forced to lose a quarter of their movement allowance for each hour the snowfall continues (to a minimum movement rate of 1). There is also the fact that the constant cold

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blocks all forms of infravision and normal vision is reduced to a quarter. Furthermore, in combat, movement is slowed to half normal speed and a -4 penalty is inflicted on all attack rolls that any living creature makes. This heavy snow melts quickly once normal weather conditions return. Lasting no more than 13-24 hours in direct sunlight.

If torrential rain is used, the thickening mud slows movement to a half as long as it continues after the first turn of rainfall. Further, after an hour, the ground becomes so thick like soup so all that walks on it has a 10% chance of falling into a patch of bog that will swallow a creature like quicksand. This percentage chance grows by a further 2% for each round the rain continues to a maximum chance of 55%. Also, as movement is hampered so badly by the mud, all living things lose their AC bonus for a high Dexterity score and suffer a -4 penalty to all attack rolls. Again, like the snow, these conditions soon return to normal over 13-24 hours.

Henry is immune to all of the effects dictated by the weather conditions he may unleash. He prefers to weaken stronger threats with these powers and strike fleetingly to shake the morale and health of the interlopers.

If Arlington should ever be reduced to zero hit points, he will fall to the floor lifeless. Upon the next Full Moon or Blue Moon, Arlington will rise again in the body of another Scarecrow within the domain. As this happens, the new body will slowly change to appear like Henry's usual host Scarecrow.

Finally, Henry is unable to harm any scarecrow that attacks him, though none he commands would do so. His curse of the Scarecrows rising

to butcher him each year has left him with an irrational fear of any scarecrow that strikes him, whether it was with intent or not makes no difference. If such an event occurs, he is paralysed with fear and can do nothing for 1d4 rounds.

Arlington Flesh Scarecrows

Henry Arlington and his creations are somewhat unique in their appearances, that all of them involve flesh being sewn onto existing parts that go into constructing scarecrows. In some cases, but one or two minor appendages are present, yet in others, the creatures are almost nothing but rotting carcass stuffed with other materials. The most horrific of these creatures is Henry Arlington himself.

The ritual in creating these foul beasts is known only to Henry himself, Dungeon Masters wishing to include this ritual in their adventures should, draw upon bloodletting rituals and taxidermy as sources for these events.

These scarecrows are more gruesome than those others found within the confines of Ravenloft. They reflect this, any scarecrows encountered with fleshy appendages may inflict Fear Checks upon all that witness them. Otherwise they operate as normally described in the Ravenloft Monstrous Compendium 1. Except for being more hostile and are encountered in, groups of 1-4. They also inflict fear or horror upon those seeing them, depending on the individual.



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THE ETERNAL TORTURE

BY STEFAN MAC (KARGATWANNABE)

“The ocean is a place of paradoxes”
– Rachel Carson, *Atlantic Monthly*, Sept. 1937

The not-so-good ship *Eternal Torture* is the domain of the ghoulish lord Miles Havelocke. It floats through the seas of the Core and the Islands, consisting of the ship herself, and all the waters within a 100-foot radius. Regardless of the weather outside the domain, the weather inside is perpetually becalmed; although waves and rain can pass the borders, wind cannot.

The ship herself seems barely able to remain afloat, as huge, gaping holes dot the hull. Water passes through these gaps constantly, yet never fills the breached hold. The rigging and sails hang in limp, tangled shreds, flapping and swaying in the breeze, while the masts appear so fragile and rotted that it seems they can barely support what remains. All of the remaining wood is worm-eaten, mildewed, and rotten, and if the ship ever had been graced by paint, it has long ago flaked and peeled away. The name *Eternal Torture* is burned into the hull, just below the deck railing.

When first sighted, the ship shows the regular signs of life. Only upon drawing close will the condition of the ship be observed in detail, and the crew will have gathered at the rail to attack. During rough weather, however, alert characters will see the lord clinging to the rail, fighting his curse (see below).

CULTURAL LEVEL: Renaissance

THE FOLK

The ship is crewed by twenty-four ghouls and Havelocke. Any living creatures aboard her are prisoners waiting to be eaten. Normally, they go

about a parody of their tasks in life, including manning the crow's nest. When another ship is sighted, all hands will gather in preparation for battle. All are dressed in rags that are barely recognizable as the dress favored by living sailors, and as the ships draw near, their stench becomes more noticeable. Although claws have grown where their fingernails once were, many still clutch rusty cutlasses and hooks.

An adventure may be had if one or more of the prisoners is a person of some importance. Perhaps the heir to a noble house has recently disappeared in the nearby waters, and the PC's have been asked to find him. Alternately, the discovery may be a complete accident, with the adventure involving his return to a family that may not know he is missing, and may not even want him.

Ghasts (24):

Armor Class:	4
Movement:	15
Level/Hit Dice:	4
Hit Points:	20 - 24
THAC0:	17
No. Of Attacks:	3
Damage/Attack:	1d4/1d4/1d8 or by weapon (cutlasses, daggers, hooks, etc.)
Special Attacks:	stench, paralyzation
Special Defenses:	undead immunities
Special Vulnerabilities:	cold iron

SZ M (5' – 6'); ML Elite (14); Int Very (11 - 12); AL CE; XP 650.

Prisoners (2d6):

Armor Class:	9
Movement:	6
Level/Hit Dice:	1
Hit Points:	4
THAC0:	19
No. Of Attacks:	1

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Damage/Attack: 1d4
Special Attacks: nil
Special Defenses: nil
Special Vulnerabilities: nil

SZ varies; ML Unreliable (4); Int varies; AL varies; XP 5 (killing the prisoners should be grounds for a Powers Check)

THE LAW

Lord Havelocke captains the *Eternal Torture*, and all aboard her answer to him.

NATIVE PLAYER CHARACTERS

There are no native player characters from this domain. If the DM wishes, however, a player whose character has died may be able to find a replacement among the prisoners.

PERSONALITIES OF NOTE

Lord Havelocke is the only figure worth mentioning in the domain. The ghosts that comprise his crew are completely subservient to him.

ENCOUNTERS

The only encounters aboard ship will be with the crew and lord. In the water, however, PC's might expect to find sharks and other scavengers who have gathered to feed on the leavings of the crew.

FURTHER READING

The ship makes a brief appearance in the module *Ship of Horror* by Anne Brown, although it is not considered a domain at that time. Much of the description above is taken from that product. The domain's lord is loosely based on the character of John Simpson from the novel *Mr. Midshipman Hornblower* by C. S. Forester.

DEMILORD OF THE *ETERNAL TORTURE*

MILES HAVELOCKE

Ghoul Lord, Lawful Evil

Armor Class: 2
Movement: 15
Level/Hit Dice: 7
Hit Points: 38
THAC0: 15
No. Of Attacks: 3
Damage/Attack: 1d6/1d6/1d10
Special Attacks: see below
Special Defenses: see below
Special Vulnerabilities: see below
Magic Resistance: nil

Str: 12
Dex: 17
Con: 7
Int: 10
Wis: 10
Cha: 5
XP: 4500

Miles Havelocke appears to be a normal ghoul at first glance, but his higher nature becomes apparent as soon as he enters combat. His skin is the gray of rotted meat, and slightly desiccated from long exposure to the sun. His teeth and nails have grown long and jagged, and his tongue is a rasped instrument ideal for scraping bone. His hair was originally pulled back into a short ponytail, but in death much of it has fallen out. That which remains is filthy, and his beard is matted with the remains of his past meals. His face usually bears an expression of misery, as he still suffers from the malady that afflicted him in life.

Havelocke wears the remains of the clothing he wore in life, although it is mostly rags by now. He goes barefoot, and his trousers taper off around his knees. His shirt was once billowy, but now hangs listlessly on his frame. He also wears a few cheap and worthless trinkets that he picked up on his voyages.

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He and his crew speak a language unknown anywhere else in Ravenloft, but Havelocke has picked up a smattering of Darkonian. When speaking to each other, however, they use the form of telepathy used by typical ghoulish lords.

BACKGROUND

Miles Havelocke was born in a large coastal city, and like many boys in his day and age, was pressed into service aboard ship soon after his fifteenth birthday. Like others before him, he ran the usual gauntlet of seasickness, but Havelocke was one of those unfortunates who never got over the condition, and never got used to the motion of a ship at sea. The rest of the crew took every opportunity to poke fun at the “little softy”, as they called him. The captain of the vessel, wanting to “make a man of the boy”, often assigned him the worst possible tasks for his condition, such as rigging duty, or manning the crow’s nest. Havelocke would then be severely beaten if the results landed on deck, or worse, on one of his shipmates.

This treatment made Havelocke’s early life an absolute misery. As he grew older, he cried himself to sleep less often, but his days were filled with sullen resentment. He began to lash out at those younger and weaker than himself, especially the boys that were pressed aboard as the years passed. Above decks the officers treated him with contempt and derision, needling him about his constant seasickness. Below decks he was a tyrant, levying toll on the sea chests for clean shirts, claiming the best cuts of meat and the spirit rations, and meting out mean and trivial punishments for the slightest “infraction”. Even these petty victories brought him no satisfaction, as the boys and young men he lorded over would eventually be promoted above him, and respond in kind. His seasickness made a command post unsuitable, and his mathematical knowledge was insufficient to make him a reliable navigator. For twenty years officers came and went, but Havelocke remained an “apprenticed seaman”.

Then one day, his captain was chosen to make a voyage into the uncharted western ocean. Rumors had come of island civilizations filled with fabulous wealth, and the captain and crew that brought that wealth back for the king would be rich men for the rest of their lives. The entire crew was excited by the prospect, except for Havelocke. The few shore leaves he had been allowed were, he felt, all that had kept him sane, and as far as he was concerned, all the voyage would do was take him away from the sight and smell of land for a long, long time.

On a bright spring day the ship set sail. For the next several months they charted new islands and discovered new peoples, but the natives always told of richer islands farther to the west. Finally, there came the voyage in which no new islands were found. As the months dragged by, water was taken from the rain, but food began to run dangerously short, and the crew began to grumble. The captain and officers first argued that there were signs that land was ahead and then argued that there was not enough food to make the return journey. Havelocke, however, sick for the sight of land and sick from the waves, saw the opportunity to exact some measure of revenge. He began spreading rumors that the officers had hidden caches of food stored away, and that they were feasting while the crew starved. Although the reasonable among the men scoffed at these rumors, Havelocke soon gathered together the malcontents, shirkers and grumblers. He then bided his time, and planned his takeover.

The captain caught wind of Havelocke’s actions just as they were about to bear fruit. To quell the mutiny, he ordered that Havelocke be put in irons. To the crew, this only made Havelocke a martyr, and when he continued his treasonous conduct, the captain was finally forced to have him flogged. After all that the captain and officers had done to him, that last act was too much to bear. That very night, he and his men attacked. By the time the sun rose the next morning, Havelocke was in command of the ship and the officers were confined to the hold. His first order was to turn the ship and set course for the last island they had landed on.

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Havelocke's lack of seamanship, however, proved his undoing. He had chosen the worst possible time of year to begin the return journey, and within a week the ship was becalmed.

Havelocke was incensed at the delay, and ordered that the prisoners make themselves "useful" with makeshift oars. It was too little too late. The food was soon completely gone, and the men began to starve in earnest. Havelocke was then forced to make the decision that all captains dreaded, but in that decision he saw his ultimate revenge. Rather than have the bodies of the dead and dying used for sustenance, he ordered that the prisoners, beginning with his hated captain, be sacrificed to feed the crew. Several refused to participate in such a despicable act, claiming that such a deed would bring down a curse on the ship and crew. They were quickly subdued by the rest, and joined the prisoners.

The wind eventually freshened, and the ship made its way towards land. As the days passed, Havelocke began to personally undertake the task of choosing the next victim, reminding them about how they had tormented him about his seasickness. He became more and more sadistic in his selections, and even found that he was beginning to relish the taste of human flesh.

Even this grisly supply was running low when on a gray and rainy morning the lookout finally called that land had been sighted. Havelocke scrambled up to the foredeck, straining his eyes for even a glimpse of the hungered-for land. Just on the horizon, he caught sight of the coastline, and at that moment, the wind died and the ship drifted into a low-lying sea fog. Havelocke immediately ordered all hands to rowing, and after several hours of work, the ship finally pulled free. Havelocke dropped his oar and stared about him in disbelief. The land that he had so hoped for had disappeared, and they were drifting through an unfamiliar sea.

In despair, some of the crew took their own lives, while Havelocke and the rest merely sat and waited for death. Within a fortnight,

however, Havelocke and his crew arose as undead, and he ordered the course set for land.

CURRENT SKETCH

Havelocke is still desperate to reach land and never have to put to sea again. He would even be willing to live with his undead existence if he could do it with solid ground beneath his feet. The weather and the Mists work against him, however. Wind never passes the borders of the domain, so the ship drifts at the mercy of the waves and currents. Even rowing has no effect, as all of the wood on board has rotted to near uselessness. Every so often, the ship will drift close enough to catch sight of land. Whenever that happens, Havelocke is granted one quick glimpse before the Mists rise again and transport him somewhere else.

If that were not torment enough, his seasickness has carried over into undeath. If anything is worsened, and he cannot even watch a ship at anchor without having to battle his gorge. No matter how little he consumes, his gut cannot handle it, and he spends his existence in an agony of constant hunger and constant nausea. In a nod to his condition, he re-christened his ship under the name it currently bears, and takes out his frustration on the prisoners he keeps and the ships that get too close.

Havelocke himself cannot leave the *Eternal Torture*, but his crew is under no such restriction. When another ship enters the domain, they will use the makeshift oars to drift the *Torture* towards the intruder in a shearing attempt. Their goal is to collide with the other ship, although the condition of the wood and the speed they move at means that the most damage that is done is a jarring bump. All persons who are not braced somehow must make a Dexterity check to keep their feet. Once they have made contact, half of the ghosts swarm across and attack while the rest attempt to rope the two ships together. Quick thinking characters can cut these ropes with little effort, but the attacking ghosts will immediately target such characters. Once the ship is secure, the remaining ghosts

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will attack until either the ship is captured or they lose two thirds of their number. Those captured join the prisoners in the hull, and their ship is scuttled. Havelocke, however, will want any charts that may be found, in the hopes that he will be able to use them to find land.

CLOSING THE BORDERS

When Havelocke wants to seal his domain, the number of sharks in the water triples. Swimmers are torn apart, and rowboats are overturned by the vicious creatures. Those who attempt to fly find themselves being slowly dragged to the surface below.

COMBAT

Havelocke can strike with each hand and execute a biting attack each round. Each blow with his claws deals 1d6 damage, and those hit, including elves, are immediately paralyzed for 1d6+6 rounds. Unlike the typical ghoul lord, there is no saving throw to avoid this effect. His bite deals 1d10 damage and the target must make a save vs. poison or contract a special disease. The victim loses 1 point of strength and charisma each day, and must make an additional save vs. poison or begin to hunger for human flesh. If they are able to indulge this craving, they lose an additional 1 point of charisma and 1 point of wisdom for that day. When any ability score reached zero, the character dies and immediately rises as a ghost under Havelocke's control. The disease can only be cured by a *heal* spell. Once cured, lost points return at a rate of 1 point per week. Charisma remains at the level it was halted at because of the scars it leaves on the body, and due to mental anguish that the enforced cannibalism causes, 1d4 points of wisdom are permanently lost unless the victim succeeds a save vs. death magic.

Havelocke is immune to all *hold*, *charm* and *sleep* spells, even those specifically directed at

undead. He is immune to holy symbols, but holy water mixed with salt deals 1d8 damage for each vial splashed on him. Magical weapons deal normal damage to him, but iron weapons deal none, unless they are the types of weapons that are usually used by sailors. In fact, any weapon that is found aboard ship, such as marlin spikes, cutlasses, belaying pins and the like, deals double damage to him, even if it is not magical. A *circle of protection* is useless against him, even if iron is used to cast it. Although he can be turned as a Special undead, he will overcome the hindrance within 1d6 rounds.

Havelocke does not exude the carrion stench that ghouls and his ghosts do, but he does reek of evil. This aura is potent enough to affect anyone of non-evil alignment, and causes a -4 penalty on all attack rolls. Anyone who is forced to make a fear or horror check because of him or his crew does so at a -2 penalty. A *remove fear* spell does not negate this aura.

Whenever Havelocke enters combat, there is a 1 in 4 chance that he is severely seasick at the time. If that is the case, his attacks are at a -3 penalty, and a successful turning attempt will drive him below decks for the rest of the battle.

If Havelocke were to be destroyed, his essence will inhabit one of the prisoners on the hold. Unless the unfortunate is removed from the domain within a day, he will die, and Havelocke's spirit will take over the body. If the victim is removed in time, Havelocke's essence will dissipate, and he will be destroyed forever. Should the *Eternal Torture* be destroyed, Havelocke will claim the first one that arrives in his domain. Within a month, it will have rotted to the point where it resembles his old ship.



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GUSTAVSTAN

BY STEFAN MAC (KARGATWANNAE)

"But know, thou noble youth, The serpent that did sting thy father's life now wears his crown."

"Oh my prophetic soul! My uncle!"

Hamlet, Act I, Scene V

THE LAND

The domain of Gustavstan is a teardrop-shaped island and its surrounding waters located in the Sea of Sorrows, just over the horizon from Dementlieu's coast. It is about twelve miles long by eight miles wide, and has two major landmarks. The first, and most obvious, is Mt. Olag, a low mountain that rises from the center of the island. Though this mountain can be barely seen from the coasts of Dementlieu and Blaustein, it has become a tremendous aid to navigating that area of the Sea of Sorrows. The second is a large harbor that cuts into the eastern edge of the island. The western end of the island is a finger of land extending out into the sea for several miles, ending in several jagged reefs.

Most of the island is covered with rugged hardwood forests, but the coastlands have been cleared enough to farm. The peak of Mt. Olag is bare of trees, but even in the deepest winter it never develops snow. Regardless of the weather enjoyed by the rest of the Sea of Sorrows, the waters surrounding the island are always dark and choppy. Sudden squalls are common, and rains wash the domain about once a week. Deer and boar are the primary fauna, and local legends speak of bear that walk as men.

Two cities dominate Gustavstan. Forbaar, the capital, spreads around the eastern harbor, and

holds approximately 3,500 people. The other city, Eorl, is located on the end of the peninsula, and has a population of only 2,000. A sparse number of villages are scattered over the rest of the domain, bringing the total population of the island to somewhere around 6,500 people.

CULTURAL LEVEL: Chivalric

THE FOLK

Gustavites are a tall people, with both men and women averaging around six feet in height. Most of them are blondes, and both sexes wear their hair in long straight ponytails. The men are broad-shouldered, but lean rather than bulky, while the women tend to be even leaner, almost skinny. Clothing is usually a simple combination of shirt and pants, with the aristocracy's being only slightly finer than the lower class. Men among the aristocracy always wear hats when outdoors, while the lower class usually goes bareheaded unless it is for a special occasion. Although they come from different worlds, the Gustavstan language is very close to that spoken in Falkovnia. This has led to an uneasy alliance between the two governments.

Though the society is sharply divided, Gustavites are not a poor people. Taxes are relatively light, and demand from the rest of the Core has boosted the economy even more. Most of the lower class makes their living by logging or farming, and spare time is almost always spent in woodcarving. These range from tiny sculptures all the way to large bas-reliefs, and while most are merely hobbies, some have mastered the craft, and their work is displayed in the halls of the aristocracy. Since the domain joined Ravenloft three years ago, the Core's high society has begun to notice both these works and the quality of Gustavstan lumber, which includes both hardwoods and excellent cork, and

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merchants have come from as far away as Necropolis and Nova Vaasa.

The vast majority of the people worship a being they call Maunu, a god of the forest. This worship is led by a sect of druids, and consists mainly of sacrificing part of the family's income, which is burned, and the ashes placed within a special urn. Another major part of the belief is that once a generation, a child will be born that will "hold the power of the forest in his hand".

This belief is not usually taken seriously among the upper class. The druids of Gustavstan are currently unaware of the druids in Forlorn, but would be most interested to learn of their existence, and would need escorts and protection to go to the aid of their fellows.

While life in the domain may seem better than in other lands, corruption has begun to seep into the government. The populace is beginning to feel the weight of new taxes, while bribery and extortion has started to become common as factions secretly form around each darklord.

Residents have also noticed the increased activity of the army, and some have even witnessed clashes between companies.

The Law: Baron Gustav the Younger is ruler of the island, but the actual administration is divided among the four families of the aristocracy, each of who report to him. Each family controls one aspect of the government, which are Finance, Defense, Justice, Foreign Relations, and Religion, and the head of each family holds the office of Steward. These stewards meet with the baron each morning to discuss what decisions are to be made for the day, but due to the baron's increasing depression, these meetings have not produced much lately. The members of the council have, however, begun to take advantage of the baron's condition to further their own schemes. This has led to backstabbing and power plays, and if not checked, may even result in civil war.

The army is composed of both lower and upper class citizens, and officers are required to have

advanced through the ranks to be accepted. However, rumors say that some officers are beginning to gain their positions through bribery. There are even stories beginning to circulate that the army has begun to harass honest citizens and some even whisper that they do so on Baron Gustav's orders.

Despite the alliance between Gustavstan and Falkovnia, the baron refuses to allow Drakov's military access to the island, a fact that has led to harsh words between diplomats on more than one occasion.

NATIVE PLAYER CHARACTERS

PC's from this domain are usually fighters, rangers, or druids. Druid characters are limited to the spheres of all, animal, healing and plant, and since joining Ravenloft, are unable to progress beyond 11th level until a hierarchy is established. While the use of magic is known, wizard characters are very rare, as the teaching of Maunu claims that magic for any use beyond that of nature is evil. Because of that belief, native PC's will distrust non-priest magic-users.

Due to the wealth of this domain in relation to others, rogues are uncommon, and the player should have a suitable character history to explain why that character chose that path for his or her life. Finally, native PC's begin with double starting money and the bonus proficiency of Carpentry.

PERSONALITIES OF NOTE

Edgar Viicki is Steward of Finance, and since Baron Gustav's depression, has begun to institute new taxes, the balance of which usually go into his family's coffers, or to fund the army.

General Omar Arjo of Defense and Stephen Bartov of Foreign Relations have been working together lately in an effort to avoid war with Falkovnia, and have had success so far. General Arjo is also responsible for allowing the simony of military ranks, while Bartov has been advocating the need for a navy. Despite their

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common goals, the two are at the center of the struggle for control of the government, and work against each other as much as they work together against Falkovnia. Gunther Sirsti heads Justice, and has of late allowed his judges to start taking bribes for favorable decisions. He also is very vocal of his support of Bartov.

Finally, the druid Medwyn leads the people in Religion, and as the only uncorrupted member of the council, has become increasingly worried by the moral decline of the domain.

ENCOUNTERS

Deer and boar populate the domain, and a clan of werebears make their home deep in the forest. As their numbers are quite small, they avoid all contact with humans, but scattered sightings have led to the local legends.

DARKLORDS OF GUSTAVSTAN

BARON GUSTAV THE YOUNGER 3RD LEVEL HUMAN FIGHTER, CHAOTIC EVIL

Armor Class: 4
Movement: 12
Level/Hit Dice: 6
Hit Points: 42
THAC0: 12
Number of Attacks: 2
Damage/Attack: by weapon
Special Attacks: See Below
Special Defenses: See Below
Magic Resistance: nil

Str: 17
Dex: 18
Con: 15
Int: 11
Wis: 7
Chr: 14

Baron Gustav the Younger is a handsome man in his late teens. He tends towards somber dress, and appears to be depressed most of the time. Even during social functions or celebrations, his

presence seems to cast an undertone of gloom. At times, he seems almost suicidal.

BARON GUSTAV THE ELDER SECOND MAGNITUDE GHOST, LAWFUL EVIL

Armor Class: 0
Movement: 12
Level/Hit Dice: 10
Hit Points: 42
THAC0: 11
No. Of Attacks: 1
Damage/Attack: 1d8
Special Attacks: see below
Special Defenses: see below
Magic Resistance: nil
Str: --
Dex: --
Con: --
Int: 16
Wis: 12
Chr: 9

Baron Gustav the Elder appears as an old man dressed in a dark robe with the cowl up. He keeps his face shadowed, but one can plainly see his glowing eyes. Those meeting him are struck by the tremendous amount of frustration seething within him.

BACKGROUND

The baron Gustav once ruled a small kingdom in a now forgotten land. His rule was fair, and his subjects adored him. The baron and his younger brother Klaus had spent most of their lives in war, securing his own borders, and fighting alongside his allies. Even in his latter years, the two remained formidable opponents, and many a battle was won through Gustav's grasp of strategy, and his brother's inspired leadership.

As he grew old, however, the baron realized that Klaus, devoted as he was, did not want the throne, and began to search for a wife, so that his line might continue, and that he might live out his remaining years with the warmth of a family. He soon met Ingrid, the daughter of the

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ruler of a neighboring kingdom. Despite his age, the young Ingrid was smitten with the dashing baron, and Gustav felt his heart begin to stir for the first time with emotions other than those of war. He approached her father, and the two were soon wed.

With the birth of his son, Gustav felt his life was complete. He had a wife and son he adored, and his brother was content to lead the army in the baron's name. Gustav returned to his seat at Forbaar, and ruled from there, content to do so for the rest of his life. His happiness lasted exactly that long. Fifteen years to the day after the birth of his son, baron Gustav was taking his afternoon walk in his gardens, accidentally stepped on a snake, and died from its poison in minutes.

His wife Ingrid was able to bear the shock reasonably well, but young Gustav was inconsolable. He spent days at his father's graveside, and the rest of his time grieving in his rooms. His uncle and mother grew concerned as the young man remained unreachable, and then alarmed as reports began to come in of invasions to the north. Young Gustav refused to take up the crown, and the elderly Klaus was finally forced to take the throne and repel the invaders. In a misguided effort to secure the succession to young Gustav, he married Ingrid, thus ensuring that the crown would pass to Gustav. The boy, unaware of current events, began to despise both his mother and uncle for their apparent disloyalty to his father.

The elder Gustav's spirit had never passed on, and this seeming betrayal enraged him. Where once there had only been love in his heart, hate intruded, and he began to plot revenge against his brother and wife. To gain that revenge, he decided to utilize the only one close enough to the family to successfully destroy them both: his own son, young Gustav. Knowing that the boy's sanity had been dealt a blow by his father's death, the old Baron determined that by destroying what was left, he could not only use his son to destroy his brother, but also could also take over the boy, and live again.

The following winter, the castle watchmen began to spread reports of a mysterious spirit that walked the battlements in the form of the late baron. Young Gustav was intrigued by these reports, and one night spent watch in an attempt to see the vision for himself. When the elder Gustav appeared, the younger followed it, begging his father to speak. The ghost led his son along the battlements until the rest of the watch had been left behind, and then turned to face the boy.

The baron then told his son the lie he had prepared. He claimed that his own brother Klaus had poisoned him, and that the marriage between his wife and brother was part of a cunning plot by Klaus to keep the throne for himself. Young Gustav was overwhelmed by his father's words, and his fragile mind became convinced that the story had to be true. He immediately began to plot the deaths of both his uncle and mother, but the elder Gustav forbid him to harm Ingrid, having convinced himself that when he had taken over his son's body, he would regain his wife as well as his throne.

Upon his return to the castle, the young Gustav adopted a subterfuge of madness to cover his plans, and withdrew from his family and friends. Most hurt by this was Elaine, the daughter of one of his father's old courtiers. Before the elder's death, young Gustav and Elaine had often been seen together, and the talk about the court was that the two were considering marriage. Elaine's father was not in favor of the match, and had forbid her to see Gustav again. Now with the boy's seeming madness, her father and Gustav's uncle attempted to find out if she was the cause. They left Elaine alone in a hall where Gustav was sure to walk, and hid to watch as the boy came by. Elaine professed her love, and begged Gustav to return to his normal life. She failed. Full of hate for his uncle and despondency over his father, Gustav spurned the girl, and when her father tried to intervene, Gustav killed him. The murder was immediately hushed up, and Gustav was sent to a neighboring kingdom in an effort to settle his mind.

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Gustav's uncle and mother were then presented with a new problem. The double blow of being spurned by the man she loved and seeing her father murdered before her eyes unhinged Elaine's sanity. She began to wander the castle, convinced that Gustav was waiting for her to marry him. As the weeks passed, she became more and more desperate in her search, despite Ingrid's attempts to calm her. Finally, six months to the day of her father's death, Ingrid watched in horror as Elaine fled to the battlements of the castle, called Gustav's name, and threw herself over.

Unknown to the court, Gustav had escaped from his escorts, and had been making his way home. He arrived in disguise just in time to see Elaine's funeral procession go by. The loss of the girl he loved destroyed what was left of his sanity, and he burst into the throne room to confront his family. Despite the former's protestations, he attacked his uncle, accusing him of all the ghost had said. Outside the castle, a fog began to gather.

Age had not diminished the old man's strength or skill, but Gustav fought with the strength of madness. As the two struggled, Ingrid screamed for the guards, and tried to get between them. Finally succeeding, she begged Gustav to stop for her sake. He promptly ran her through, and she fell dying into Klaus's arms. As the old man held her, he looked up at his nephew, begging for an explanation, and was killed.

Stepping back from the bodies, Gustav turned and was suddenly confronted by the ghost of his father. Enraged at the death of his wife, the elder Gustav mocked his son, revealing that his brother had been innocent of the ghost's accusations, and that by killing Ingrid, the boy had ruined everything his father had planned. The revelation shocked the boy back into sanity, and he realized what he had done. Fury to match his father's filled him, and the two attacked each other.

Suddenly the throne room was filled with a thick mist, and Gustav found himself alone with the bodies of his family. Shouting for the guards, he

rushed from the throne room, out onto the battlements, only to find that his kingdom was now an island on a fog-shrouded sea.

CURRENT SKETCH

Gustav has never forgiven himself for the deaths of his uncle and mother. He blames his father, and has convinced himself that the elder is wholly to blame. As such, he has reorganized the army towards one purpose: seeking out the elder Gustav, and destroying him. However, his madness still lies within him, and he has begun to oppress anyone he believes might have knowledge of his father. This has led to several innocent families being murdered, and officers who question his orders have found themselves similarly accused. Though there have almost been several confrontations between the two, young Gustav has not yet been able to destroy his father.

Despite his efforts, the shades of his past continue to haunt him. Each night, the geists of Elaine and his uncle appear before him, cursing him for their deaths. No matter where he sleeps, or what wards he sets up, they seek him out, and while they cannot physically harm him, their mere presence is enough to terrify him. Because of this, and because he fears the reaction if the truth were discovered by his followers, he has cleared out all of the galleries beneath his rooms, and has given orders that no one is to disturb him after dark on pain of death.

Unknown to young Gustav, his mother survived his attack, and witnessed all that followed. The combined betrayal of her son and the plans of her husband shattered her mind, and she spends her time in the asylum of Eorl, locked away in a hidden room. The chief physician of the asylum, one Dr. Rolfson, believes that the orders to keep her hidden come from the younger Gustav, but in fact they have come from the baron's father.

Each dawn the elder Gustav is confined by the dark powers to his wife's cell, and forced to spend the day watching her in her madness. He is unable to do anything to help her, and when

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released at nightfall, he vents his rage and frustration on whomever is available. Because of the deaths this has caused, Dr. Rolfson has given instructions that the asylum is locked down, and the staff leaves at night.

The elder Gustav still wants his kingdom, and believes that by eliminating his son, he will be able to reclaim it. Towards that end, he has begun recruiting among the lower strata of the aristocracy, building a secret army against his son, and has even gone so far as to make contacts with elements in Dementlieu. He has used assassins, elements of the army, and even attacked the boy personally, but every attempt has failed. He is also aware of the council's recent actions, and is considering approaching some of them for an alliance.

CLOSING THE BORDERS

Neither the younger nor the elder Gustav are able to close the borders of the domain. The struggle between them is too strong to allow such a cooperative action.

COMBAT

Young Gustav has all the abilities of a 3rd level fighter, but fights as if he was actually 6th level. He has specialized in both rapier and dagger. In addition Ravenloft has granted him the ability to cause sadness or hopelessness in one target once per round. These function as the fourth-level spell emotion, and act as if cast at 10th level. The effect lasts until Gustav dispels it.

Elder Gustav has all the basic powers and abilities of a ghost of the second magnitude, and

is constantly in a semicorporeal state. In addition, he is able to cause hate and fear, which function as his son's powers do. If he is able to make a successful hit, instead of aging his victim, his touch drains one level of experience. Characters killed in this manner are truly dead and will not rise as undead.

Both darklords regenerate 3 hp per round, even after death. In order to destroy them, Ingrid must first be found and killed. The elder Gustav is instantly aware of anyone entering her cell, and will appear there within one round to confront the intruders. Furthermore, if any damage is done to her, the younger Gustav will also become aware of her existence, and will immediately take action not only to destroy those who harmed her, but to use her to find his father. Killing the old woman will cause the one who struck the fatal blow to suffer the effects of one failed powers check, and those who watched to roll a powers check. Despite the bond that holds them, wounding one darklord will not affect the other.

Due to the natures of their curse, neither darklord is able to actually face each other, nor are they able to effectively command their forces. This has led to the army dividing into factions between General Arjo and Steward Bartov, and the two darklords may soon lose political control of the domain for good.



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HIBERNATE

BY D-KUTJ

USS EDITOR'S NOTE:

This domain might need a more mature audience, as an important part of that domain is based on activities within a brothel !

THE LAND

Hibernate is a small island in the Sea of Sorrows, about 20 miles west-southwest of the Isle of Agony. The domain's climate varies from sweltering heat in the short summer to unbearable cold during the long winters. During the winters, the ports freeze up and are rendered all but useless. It rains almost constantly in spring, and by summer, the roads have turned to mud. Mosquitoes and other biting insects flourish during the spring and summer seasons, bringing irritation and occasionally disease to the animals and the people.

The major settlement is Stratford, a city of about 2,000 inhabitants (registered; there are hundreds of vagrants in the streets that are unaccounted for). About a day's ride from Stratford is a quaint little spot called Lutuk, which holds about 850 people and some of the best farmland in the domain. Daily shipments of grains, meat, and dairy products are sent to Stratford to feed the populace. Unfortunately, food preservation technology is nonexistent; most foods spoil en route.

Architecture in Hibernate is not very developed, at least when it comes to the housing for the lower classes. The people of this caste are crammed into small dwellings, never more than two rooms in size. The upper classes, however, live in opulence, with many spacious rooms, which are never at a loss for toys.

CULTURAL LEVEL: Chivalric.

THE FOLK

Hibernatians are sharply divided into two classes: the upper classes are filthy rich and do not hesitate to show it with extravagant meals, clothing, and decorations. They receive the best education that money can buy, and thus are proper, well behaved, and generally irritating with their insistence on petty customs.

Beneath them are the lower classes; those who cannot make ends meet in any conventional manner. They live in squalor, riddled with lice and resorting to begging, theft, or prostitution to obtain any sort of hard currency. Joining the lower class are refugees from Darkon, who are treated with even more disdain from those above them than is normally given to these unfortunate souls.

Their language is similar in some ways to that of Lamordia, but inhabitants of the two domains will find it difficult to communicate. The Darkonese refugees speak Darkonese, and are mistreated for not learning the native tongue.

Religion and superstition are a way of life. The church masterminds aristocratic education, drilling into students the notion that "the Devil" is the source of evil, and that arcane magic supposedly is his doing. They discourage free thought, accusing the Devil of everything that could be easily explained if they took time to examine it.

An illness similar to Valachan White Fever continually sweeps through the population, with no known cause or cure. Exorcisms and fanciful elixirs have had no effect on it. The only connection between victims is that they are all

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from the upper class, and they spent the night with high-priced call girls who work for the madam Elizabeth.

PERSONALITIES OF NOTE

Robert “Bobby” Haight is chief of police in Stratford, striving to maintain law and order in a land that is steadily unraveling. He doesn’t blame the Darkonese refugees or the lower classes. Robert is the only sane man here, it seems. Even his “Bobbies,” the police force in Stratford, are more concerned with oppressing the refugees and the dregs of society than actually enforcing the law.

In social circles, there is a group of call girls who serve the depraved whims of the “nobility.” They are all attractive, charming women who work for a marble beauty named Elizabeth. Their rates are high, and Elizabeth herself is all but unapproachable.

THE LAW

What law gets enforced is the purview of the Bobbies, a slang term for the police which is derived from their boss, Robert Haight. Most of the Bobbies are corrupt in some form or another, taking bribes to look the other way, and making sure “pillars of society” are never caught with their pants down (literally).

The Bobbies are all 1st and 2nd level warriors, with the occasional mounted officer, and they are led by Robert Haight, himself a 4th level fighter.

NATIVE PLAYER CHARACTERS:

PC’s can be from upper or lower class. Upper class characters have a 55% bonus to starting money, but they have a -2 competence penalty to Wisdom to reflect their lack of common sense. The lower classes have +2 to Constitution (as they are exposed to disgusting gunk every day) but -2 Charisma (being clothed in rags and never bathing is sure to hurt your social life).

Upper class characters are often clerics and fighters, and lowers are restricted to rogue and bard. Wizards and sorcerers are constantly oppressed for supposed “dealings with the Devil,” and thus have to be constantly on alert, in case somebody decides to “deal with the sinners.”

Hibernatian clerics receive no spells, cannot channel positive or negative energy, and cannot turn undead. They are clerics in name only, as their “God” does not exist. As a matter of fact, neither does their “Devil.” Non-player character clerics are occasionally false ones (see the Book of Souls).

ENCOUNTERS

Outside the major settlements, most encounters will be with small forest animals (33% chance/hour) during the day. When the sun sinks, the things that eat meat wake up, and the chances of meeting a pack of (dire) wolves or worgs is 50%/hour. Also, flocks of insect-eating bats roam the night (45%).

DARKLORD OF HIBERNATE: ELIZABETH

Female Eminent Vampire 9th Level Aristocrat

Strength	24 (+7)
Dexterity	19 (+4)
Constitution	—
Intelligence	19 (+4)
Wisdom	17 (+3)
Charisma	20 (+5)
Fortitude Save	+3
Reflex Save	+9
Will Save	+9
Alignment	Chaotic Evil
Speed	50 ft.
Size	M (5’9”, 148 lbs.)
Initiative	+8 (+4 Dex, +4 Improved Init.)
Armor Class	20 (+4 Dex, +6 natural)
Hit Points	63
Melee Attack	+13/+8

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Ranged Attack +10/+5

Special Attacks: Blood drain, children of the night, create spawn, domination, energy drain.

Special Qualities: Alternate form, cold & electricity resistance 20, damage reduction 25/+3, fast healing 5, gaseous form, spider climb, turn resistance +4, undead, vampire weaknesses.

Skills: Bluff +23, Diplomacy +21, Disguise +11, Gather Information +17, Hide +13, Knowledge (history) +15, Knowledge (Hiberstate local) +8, Knowledge (Hiberstate nobility & royalty) +8, Listen +17, Move Silently +11, Perform (ballad, dance, harp) +10, Search +12, Sense Motive +20, Spot +14.

Feats: Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Expertise, Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike, Leadership (14), Lightning Reflexes, Quick Draw, Skill Focus (Diplomacy).



Appearance: Although Elizabeth appears to be in her late 20's, she is actually over 500 years old; she is a vampire. Her skin is cold to the touch, like the marble it resembles, and her hair—long, black, and luxurious—seems to blend with the black silks she enjoys wearing. Elizabeth's lips and nails are as black as her hair (and her heart), and her eyes are blood red. Her fangs normally appear merely as slightly enlarged canines, but they extend up to ¾ inch when she bites.

She wears black silks and satins, accentuating the pallor of her skin. Elizabeth also decorates herself with precious jewelry of questionable origin; most of it was stolen from her girls' clients, but she's too smart to let anyone check it.

Personality: For five hundred years, Elizabeth has lived in death. She is very morbid, and she loves to sing about death and loss. She has an affinity for death, and surrounds herself with objects invoking the sensation of death: skulls, tapestries of the Grim Reaper gathering souls, and black tallow candles, among other things.

Despite that, Elizabeth seems to enjoy her situation. She exudes sexuality, seducing men and women every night, laying with them, and then draining them of their life force. She doesn't care about the welfare of anybody except herself and her girls, seeing the living as humans see cattle: serving no purpose but to feed her hunger.

As a former noble, Elizabeth is used to having her every whim satisfied within moments. She alternates between a noble's spoiled impatience and a vampiric indifference to time quite fluidly. She has difficulty dealing with her anger, and holds grudges for decades.

Background: Elizabeth Michelle Cole III was born in the year 5716 CE / 1234 AC, to Marianne and Arthur Cole, at the time the head of the Cole lineage in the land of Hybernaya on Boram'ith. She was indoctrinated with all the regular manure about how bad the lower classes were, but she was forceful of will and would not

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accept such lies. When her parents found out she was seeing a peasant, they had him arrested and executed via beheading on trumped-up charges.

While Marianne and Arthur thought that was that, Elizabeth retrieved his head and had it cleaned. The skull is a constant reminder of her parents' cruelty and ignorance.

She left home at the age of 28, saying she "needed some time to think about inheriting the Cole name." Elizabeth went to Mozcwa, in the nation of Saltaria, and stayed there for some time. During her stay, she met a devilishly handsome, sinister-looking man named Alexander Berzinski. They fell in love, and when they lay together one night, Alex told her he was an *upuir*. She didn't understand at first, but when he sunk his fangs into her neck, she knew he meant "vampire."

Elizabeth returned seven years later, greatly changed. Her dark brown hair had turned raven black, and her skin was deathly white. When her parents met her in the foyer of Cole Manor, Elizabeth grabbed her father and drained him of his blood before tearing his head off.

"I've always hated you two," she told her mother, "but until I met Alex, I couldn't act against you. Now, I have the power."

Elizabeth clamped her fangs on Marianne's neck and drained her as well. The vampire ruled her family's holdings with an iron fist for a decade. In 1289 AC, Elizabeth vanished without a trace. Almost five centuries have passed, and the lands have yet to fully recover from that dark period.

She had gone into the service of "The Unspeakable One," the god of death and destruction. She served the foul god well, and was sent to obtain the service of a long-prophesized being: "The Son of the Black Moon."

What nobody knew was that the Son, Kerad Dyilf, was just a young man, but an irresistibly handsome young man, with tremendous

potential. His life force was the strongest Elizabeth had ever felt, and she gave him an offer he could hardly refuse. Elizabeth offered him "a king's ransom and more" if he would give his soul to Thanatos. He signed the contract in blood, and Elizabeth was very pleased; she was close to savoring his life force.

Her pleasure would soon end. Kerad already had a significant other, and he would not allow Elizabeth anywhere near her. That half-elf was a thorn in Elizabeth's side, and she continually attempted to split them apart and taste his life. Kerad broke his ties with Thanatos later that year, executing a loophole he placed in the contract, and died shortly after.

Using her network of slaves and unwitting servants, Elizabeth got him resurrected three months later. As an added bonus, she also got his lover killed, and then approached him in order to get his life force. She persuaded him to go with her to the Lower Planes, supposedly to enter the employ of a demon lord, but something went wrong with the *gate*, and they were separated en route. Elizabeth came out in the realm of Darkon, in 1745 AC / 735 BC, and cut off from Thanatos, her patron for more than four centuries.

After interfering with the Kargat, she was forced to flee the realm, ending up in the Sea of Sorrows, where a familiar island beckoned to her. When she set foot on shore, she found that she could not leave. Thus was born the domain of Hibernata.

Combat: Elizabeth did not spend the last 500 years twiddling her thumbs. Although she normally shies away from combat, she will cut loose with her incredible powers if there won't be any witnesses. She can easily kill a mortal barehanded, often with no more than a single blow, or take the form of a 9-HD dire wolf or dire bat.

Elizabeth has slightly varied vampiric weaknesses due to her age: she can withstand an hour of exposure to sunlight, although it is extremely uncomfortable and leaves her utterly

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powerless; holy symbols have to be presented with force and the bearer must have faith, or else she can ignore it (touching it will still inflict damage and leave a burn, though this doesn't apply to Hibernatian symbols); she can freely cross running water, although immersion is still potentially lethal; a stake through her heart will only paralyze her, unless it is made of pine, which is instantly fatal. The effects of garlic, mirrors, and holy water are unchanged.

If Elizabeth is ever destroyed, one of her girls will fall into a deep sleep for one month. During that time, she slowly changes into her mistress and Elizabeth will awaken, fully renewed and very angry (this is similar to Hazlik's yellow gem's power).

CURRENT SKETCH:

Elizabeth has a near-endless supply of energy in the form of the decadent upper class, but it is all thin and weak. Every time she feeds, she longs for the most potent force she has encountered: Kerad's. Elizabeth knows he has been drawn into Ravenloft, but she cannot pinpoint his location.

A short while after entering Hibernatia, Elizabeth set herself up as a call girl, taking some street prostitutes under her wing, sheltering them from their horrible lives and introducing them to an even more bizarre world than they had left.

Her girls are trained to pump their clients for information about Kerad's whereabouts, and all leads are followed. She has twenty-eight loyal girls (25 1st level rogues, 2 2nd level aristocrats, and 1 3rd level aristocrat), all vampire spawn under her control. They have occasionally expressed disdain for their condition and the perversions of their clients, but Elizabeth reinforces their loyalty with talks of how she took them off the streets and into a den of luxury, as well as threats of destruction.

Travelers in the domain who fall victim to Elizabeth or her girls are dominated and told to

find Kerad Dylf. To date, none of them have ever returned with information, or even returned at all. Elizabeth expresses a fear that Azalin will retaliate for her interference in Kargat business, and she sees to it that Darkonese refugees are treated poorly (the mayor of Stratford is one of her regulars and she has him mentally dominated). In her paranoid mind, no Kargat assassin is ever going to get close to her.

CLOSING THE BORDERS:

Elizabeth can surround the outer borders of the domain with a wall of fog. It is impossible to see more than five feet into the fog, and even if one manages to get through the fogbank intact, he will find that Hibernatia is right in front of him.

FURTHER READING:

Elizabeth is a minor character in "Shinobi Densetsu: Legend of the Ninja," but takes a greater role in "Shades of Grey." These stories can be found at SteelFalcon.Net (<http://www.geocities.com/dfloyd84/>).

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APPENDIX:

Kerad Dyilf

Male Human Rogue 4 / Fighter 2

Strength	10 (+0)
Dexterity	16 (+3)
Constitution	10 (+0)
Intelligence	15 (+2)
Wisdom	13 (+1)
Charisma	10 (+0)
Fortitude Save	+4
Reflex Save	+7
Will Save	+5
Alignment	Chaotic Neutral
Speed	30 ft.
Size	M (5'10", 155 lbs.)
Initiative	+3
Armor Class	16 (+3 Dex, +2 armor, +1 dodge)
Hit Points	38
Melee Attack	+5
Ranged Attack	+8

Special Attacks: Sneak attack +2d6

Special Qualities: Evasion, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC)

Skills: Balance +11, Bluff +6, Climb +5, Hide +10, Intimidate +8, Jump +6, Listen +7, Move Silently +10, Open Lock +10, Pick Pocket +11, Search +8, Spot +7, Technique +9, Tumble +9.

Feats: Ambidexterity, Dodge, Initiation into the Way, Iron Will, Quick Draw, Weapon Focus (katana).

Martial Arts Maneuvers: Block, Combination (block and strike), Defensive Stance (x1), Enhanced Strike (x1), Instant Stand, Martial Arts Weapon (katana, wakizashi), Roll with the Blow, Unarmed Combat Expertise.

Languages: Boram'ith Common, Oerth Common, Nihongo

Possessions: *Satsujin* (+1 katana), *Korosujin* (+1 wakizashi), *bracers of missile snaring* (functionally identical to *gloves of arrow snaring*), a *ring of warmth*, and a heavy sack containing three days' worth of trail rations, a bedroll, masterwork thieves' tools, an *everburning torch*, and a water skin. His clothing protects as leather armor.

Appearance: Kerad is tall and handsome, but a "bad boy" kind of way. He's not imposing physically, and his black jacket and pants are very good at making him look smaller than he actually is, so he makes up for his lack of physical prowess with superior agility. Metal plates protect his shoulders, and smoky gray *bracers of missile snaring* protect his arms. At his hips, Kerad bears his paired blades, *Satsujin* (Killer) and *Korosujin* (Destroyer).

His long hair is dark brown, and his eyes are cold and dark green. Beneath his ankle-brushing jacket, Kerad wears two dark leather straps across his chest, which can be used as restraints (no, he is not into that kind of thing). When it's not covered, his most prominent feature is his wound: a thin scar on the left side of his face from his lip to his hairline, over his eye.

Personality: Kerad is at once a bitter, cold man, and a passionate, eloquent individual, though very few ever get to see that side of him. He never looks anyone straight in the face; he always gives them sideways glances, and he loves to play mind games. He does not give details about his past to anyone.

He has an attitude like "The world owes me a living and I want to collect."

He lives by his own rules and has a hard time dealing with authority (stemming from a poor relationship with his father).

Kerad is more intelligent than he lets on; he once deceived a god and is very proud of it. Most people think he's random, but there is a method to his madness, a method that only he knows.

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Two alternative pictures of Kerad Dyilf.
The author prefers the first one.



If he thinks he can get an advantage by playing the other side, he'll jump the fence, but he's always searching for a better deal.

He seems to take no pleasure out of anything in life, refusing many luxuries; it's like he's missing a vital part of his soul. When he stares into the silver locket he carries in his inside pocket, his expression softens, and he looks like he's on the verge of breaking down.

Background: Kerad Dyilf was born in 6202 CE on the world of Boram'ith, but his destiny was written for him almost 1200 years before; Ander Nostradama prophesized in 5006 that "Ruinination will follow the Son of the Black Moon."

On the hot summer night that Kerad was born on, the moon was black. It was a dire omen for the things to come. His older brother despised him from the moment he was born, and his family, which was well off before, was suddenly hit with hard times. His father became a regular drunk, taking out his alcohol-fueled rages on his wife and sons, his mother's sanity slowly unraveled, and Kerad himself was the target of all sorts of cruel jokes from other children.

At the age of seventeen, Kerad murdered his father and tried to escape his fate. His fate followed him, dogging his steps wherever he went. He found his way to the desert town of Albard, days before raiders attacked. Their leader challenged Kerad to a fight and cut a wound into his face. Kerad plunged a sword into his neck in return.

He moved through the country of Arcania, hid in Nihon for a while, and found his way to the R'itni Islands. He met a fellow social outcast, a female half-elf named Malra Mytil, and the two decided to go together, depending on each other for acceptance. They later met two more rejects, Keane Kominda (male tiefling) and Dokem Nupaji (male drow), and they came together as the Outcasts.

In 6226 CE, Kerad was given an offer he couldn't refuse: join the forces of "The Unspeakable One" and achieve immense power

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in exchange for his soul. Kerad hesitantly agreed, but demanded to amend the contract. The intermediary, a vampire named Elizabeth, seemed intent on having him for herself, but he continually fended off her advances.

Now in the service of a god, Kerad was exposed to many things that would drive a man insane. Despite all the attempts of Elizabeth and The Unspeakable One to subvert him, Kerad would not turn to evil; he always kept the safety of his friends foremost in his decisions.

Three years after he joined the forces of darkness, Kerad fought—three times—the champion of good: Falkyn. He intentionally lost their last fight, even though Malra's life was being threatened. Taking up the swords given to him by The Unspeakable One, he took them to a volcano and threw them in, and then stood his ground as an eruption came down on him, Malra's name on his lips.

He was dead for three months before being resurrected. A high cleric of a goddess of war wanted to ascend to godhood, and was told that he would be an excellent source of help. Kerad located the Outcasts, dispersed after his death, and rallied them to his new "cause." Dokem and Keane died trying to obtain the two artifacts that the cleric needed, and Malra was killed fending off Falkyn.

Kerad, Falkyn, and the Arcanian hero Rowin Baker stopped the cleric before she could become a god, but Kerad was devastated when he discovered Malra's demise. He blamed himself for letting them all die, and he carried this burden with him when he followed Elizabeth through a *gate*. Something happened, and Kerad found himself alone on Oerth (local time: 584 CY).

Current Sketch: He wanders around with some Oerthlings out of convenience: Tahni, Corien McIntyre, Odin, and Thorn of the Oak Forest. Although he doesn't trust them implicitly, he

won't betray them. That doesn't mean he won't walk away from them, though.

Kerad takes up the rear, always looking over his shoulders, and always with one hand on his blade. He has a streak of paranoia stemming from the knowledge that Thanatos, the Unspeakable One, wants him dead. In his eyes, anyone can be a potential assassin, so he sleeps little and always has his swords at hand.

Kerad very much is "The Son of the Black Moon." It seems that wherever he goes, some misfortune befalls him or the people around him. Any time that Kerad kills by plunging his sword into the neck, his facial scar begins to bleed profusely, reminding him of how he received it.

The one thing that Kerad wants more than anything else is to resurrect Malra and beg forgiveness for letting her die. Any possibility of bringing her back will send him off to confirm and act on it. It is the only time anyone has ever seen him so focused and intent on anything. He carries a silver locket containing a portrait of him and Malra during their time together. One can see the love in Kerad's eyes in the image as he holds her in his arms. The locket has a special compartment behind the picture, containing a lock of Malra's hair.

Further Reading : Kerad is an antagonist in the fantasy stories "Shinobi Densetsu: Legend of the Ninja" and "New Faces, Old Foes." The stories can be found at SteelFalcon.net (<http://www.geocities.com/dfloyd84/>).

Kerad is built with the "d20 Skill-n-Feat Martial Arts System" by Ken Hood, at the Sleeping Imperium (<http://www.sleepingimperium.rpgghost.com>)



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MISERIA

BY THE BROTHERHOOD

THE LAND

Somewhere in the treacherous Mists floats the island of Miseria. Living conditions are difficult at this inhospitable place, and human populations do their best to feed, and protect themselves from the many spectral creatures roaming the countryside.

Miseria is approximately 40 miles wide east to west, and 25 miles north to south. The domain is filled with hills, and small mountains accented by many rivers, and hidden valleys. This domain is minerally poor, however; heavy and rare metals like gold, silver, and iron are very rare. The most common types of metals encountered are tin, and other soft metals unfitting to the construction of metallic weapons, and armor. Despite the scarcity of ore, mines are common in Miseria largely due to the vast network of caves, and tunnels native to the domain. These often run quite deep, and many hold untold dangers for the unlucky who, due to circumstance, have become miners in order to feed their poor families. The land is vastly forested, but much of the trees are twisted, and gnarled, as if the very forests were growing in agony. The major fruit harvested in Miseria is the apple. Miserian gnarled apple trees produce good-sized fruit having a beautiful crimson color with some hints of green. Miserian's cider is considered a delicacy. Forest wildlife is abundant with all manners of game animals appropriate for a temperate climate. Unfortunately, there also seems to be a slightly higher share of predators in this domain; bears, wolves and lynx are found in abundant numbers.

The majority of the living population lives in the north of the domain. The port city of Notre-Dame-Des-Récifs is the most influential with a

population of 2,500 habitants. The city lies on the border of what the natives simply call "The Sea." More than one fishing boat has met its doom in these troubled waters. The remaining villages are scattered among the countryside, most of them being far from one another. The further south one travels, the less likely one is to encounter a village.

The most creepy and morbid feature of the land is its status as a magnet for spectral activities. All manner of ghosts, and incorporeal undead can be encountered roaming the wilds. The appearance, and disappearance of ghost towns is frequent, and most disturbing. Rumors speak of whomever is present in a ghost time when it vanishes will disappear with it, so the population readily seeks to flee them should one be encountered. At the southern edge of the domain lies the ghost city of Elthiana that seems to be of Greek origin. Unlike the other ghost cities, this one is anchored to the land by the continuing evil of "The Children of Hecate"; a misguided group of arcanists believing they have found evidence, and lore of the worship of the one true goddess, Hecate. Another site of interest is the "Ancient Battlefield." No one knows what battle took place there, but the physical remains of the warriors are still evident. Few dare to go observe it with their own eyes; fewer still return to tell the tale. Rumors report that at night the warriors continue to wage an unending battle against one another, and any who dare steal one of the items lying on the ground would be haunted by the spirit of its owner for all eternity. The truth is far worse however...

CULTURAL LEVEL

The living inhabitants of this domain are at a chivalric cultural level despite the notable lack of heavy ore in the domain. The ghosts' towns that keep blinking in, and out of existence,

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however, are another matter entirely. In fact, they can come from any place, from any time. For example, the Greek ghost city of Elthiana is from an antique society. Another ghost town could be quite easily from a renaissance period. This allows player characters to sometime retrieve mysterious, and anachronistic items from time passed or future eras.

THE FOLK

Miserians live in difficult conditions. Most of the population must strive simply to provide food on the table. Most trades are accomplished by exchanging goods, and services. They speak a fluent language called Kaenyth, similar, but unrelated to Mordentish. Villages are scattered, and far between. Wandering tinsmiths travel from town to town to fix pots, and pans as well as spread rumors, and information all across the domain.

THE LAW

The inhabitants of the domain are wholly ignorant that Cassandre Desesprits is the lord of the domain; those that know her only know her as a barmaid at one of the inns at Notre-Dame-Des-Récifs. Most towns are free to rule themselves as they see fit. The port town of Notre-Dame-Des-Récifs is ruled by a Town Council elected among the few land owners, and the clergies of Sainte-Marthe, and (rarely) Saint-Ambroise.

NATIVE PLAYER CHARACTERS

Humans are the sole race available for native Miserian characters.

Rogues are the most common type of adventurer encountered in Miseria. After all, life is difficult, and the temptation to live at the expense of others is great. Of course, not all are thieves who live by stealing from their neighbors; many of them can be simple tradesman who have learned a trick, or two, and found a calling for adventuring. Although some Vistani have been known to wander the domain, there are no native

gypsies in Miseria. Psionicists are not unheard of, but are extremely rare.

Many also have embraced a warrior style of life. However, it is worth noting that since hard metal is rare, and that most of the dangerous encounters are with spectral beings unhurt by mundane weapons, people do not usually get in the warriors line of work as easily as a soldier, or a mercenary would. Rather, they should have acquired their skills according to their trade, and profession in the society. A skilled hunter, or a courageous lumberjack could have developed the abilities of a ranger. A hardy miner, or a town militant could certainly be a good candidate for the fighter class. Avengers may be permissible, but are rare compared to warrior classes. Also keep in mind that weapons, and armor are much more difficult to obtain. Studded leather armors being among the best armors available at a fairly high price. As for the weapons, they usually correspond to the tools of their wielder's trade: Axes, bows, hammers, and picks replacing the swords, maces, and flails encountered elsewhere. Even town militias are usually equipped with only simple leather armor, and a club.

Wizardry. Now that is a profession that inspires respect (through fear) in the populace. This fear leads to a secretive hatred of those who practice the Art. The folks blame the wizards as being responsible for the presence of ghosts in the domain. All kinds of wizards are permissible, although they should be alert to not reveal their true nature to the general populace.

Priest characters are also available to players, but they do not worship gods like in other domains (although there is one exception). They believe that the gods created the world, and then left it. Otherwise why would they leave the living in such misery? On the prime material world where Miseria came from before its induction into the demi-plane of dread, they worshipped a pantheon of immortals; once powerful beings who gained immortality, and godlike powers due to their efforts, and dedication to their cause. Only two of them are remembered now: Sainte-Marthe, the immortal

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of law and healing, and Saint-Ambroise, the vigilant protector of the souls, and patron of the exorcists. It is worth noting that a secretive church dedicated to an ancient evil goddess of the moon, and of magic also exists, but no clerics of this religion are known. Their church is instead composed of a lay clergy of evil arcanists. All three religions are described below in the section ‘Further readings’.

PERSONALITIES OF NOTE

In the town of Kentill, one of more prominent members of the town council is Kairin Grimalk. He arrived many years ago, and, with his genius of technology, and political affairs, elevated Kentill to a cultural level surpassing most in Miseria. A slender man in his mid-forties, with piercing green eyes, and long blond hair, he has gentlemanly manner that emanates a noble upbringing. Kairin is rarely seen in public, and spends most of his time in his own manor house.

Amongst the secretive dealings of the black market, and illegal traders, there is a name whispered among them. The name of Valdrin, a man of dark tones, and mood, who appears infrequently on the outskirts of towns with a large hordes of treasure that could only come from the tombs of the rich. It is said he fears no spirit, lives amongst them in the forests, and may even be a ghost himself.

Above Notre-Dame-Des-Recifs, there are several hills, one of which is feared by adults but heavily trafficked with children. The top of this hill has a steep drop, enough to kill, but no children ever fall. This is attributed to the presence of Overlook Annie, a ghost who haunts the Overlook, the hill where children love to play. There are many stories surrounding who she was in life, but most see her as a good spirit who protects children. Adults are another matter, and most have learned to let their children play their games without their presence while on the Overlook

ENCOUNTERS

Except natural predators in the forest, almost all encounters are made with ghosts, spectres, and any other kind of mostly spectral undead.

FURTHER READINGS:

MISERIAN'S RELIGIONS

Religion is of deepest importance for Miserian's native, for it has long been their last line of defense against the spirits that dwell across the region. So it is that both churches of Sainte-Marthe, and Saint-Ambroise, each in their own ways, have been stalwart defenders of the populace. Alas, there is also those who seek mastery over the spirits, thus, the Cult of Hecate was born by a fell group of evil arcanists. Just like anyone else in Miseria, none of the three groups suspects Cassandre Desesprits to be the real domain lord.

Sainte-Marthe, Lady of Healing, Keeper of the Law.

The rigid Church of Sainte-Marthe works hard to promote the law. As so, they are greatly involved in the political life of the domain. High-ranking priests of Sainte-Marthe can often be found as members of towns' councils, or as judges in courts. Laws are primarily based on social order, and duties to the community rather than individual rights. Any transgression is severely punished to the maximum extent of the law. Although this may seem harsh at first, it had to be imposed in order to insure the security of the populace. Otherwise crime would be on the rise in Miseria. Thankfully, justice is applied with wisdom, and honesty.

Since suffering, and misery is the lot of the bulk of the populations, Sainte-Marthe's clerics are also in charge of Miseria's hospital making them the most popular religion of the domain. Alas! Even magical healing is not as potent as elsewhere. Whether a priest of Sainte-Marthe, or a cleric from another domain, curative magic

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always cures the minimum amount of hit points possible. Thus, healing magic is kept only for the direst of circumstances, or to those who can afford to pay high prices for it.

The few anchorites who happened to find there way in Miseria swear that the icon of Sainte-Marthe is a perfect copy of their goddess Ezra, although it is quite clear that despite some minor similarities in their faiths, the method of Sainte-Marthe's priests' religious practices are dissimilar to the anchorites.

All towns, and villages maintain at least a small church, or chapel dedicated to the immortal Sainte-Marthe. The main headquarters of the clergy is based at the cathedral of Notre-Dame-Des-Récifs under the supervision of the archbishop Jean-Pierre DeCourtville, head of the order, and prominent member of the city's council.

The church of Sainte-Marthe is primarily a lawful neutral religion, although both lawful good, or lawful evil characters fill its ranks. Her priests have access to the following priestly spheres: Major access to All, Healing, Necromantic (never used to create undead of any sort), and Guardian, with minor access to Divination, and Law. They cannot turn, or control undead.

Saint-Ambroise, The Pious, Protector of the Souls, Patron of the Exorcists.

The church of Saint-Ambroise is certainly among the most pious, and virtuous monastic orders in Ravenloft. They also command great powers against the undead, but somehow are scorned, and despised by the population. Perhaps is it because of their inability to drive away all the spirits from the land. Sadly, the truth is because there are too few of them to fulfill that great task; a fact that the general populace strangely refuses to acknowledge. Yet, the exorcists of Saint-Ambroise do not fret, accepting their lot with a passive resignation. They have no time to devote to change the public opinion, nor do they harbor any hard feelings against the inhabitants.

The church of Sainte-Marthe knows that the monks of Saint-Ambroise command greater power than themselves, and are jealous of that fact. However, as long as the monks do not threaten their power base, and keep battling the undead, Sainte-Marthes priests tolerate Saint-Ambroise's flock.

Few villages maintain a chapel to Saint-Ambroise. Those that do so are mainly located near the southern part of the lands where the power of the exorcist monks is mostly needed. A small church is also present in Notre-Dame-Des-Récifs, but very few city dwellers gather there to pray. The main place of gathering, and worship of the monks is L'abbaye Des-Précieuses-Âmes (abbey of the Precious Souls), located on the hills near the south. An extensive library about almost any type of spectral being can be found in the abbey. The patriarch of the order is simply known as Father André.

Rumors hold that the monks may be members of the Order of the Guardian. While it's true that members of the Guardians once found shelter at the abbey, no proof of the claim could ever be verified. This remains a mystery...

The Exorcist monk is a whole new specialty priest created for the church of Saint-Ambroise. All members of the priesthood are exorcist monks.

THE EXORCIST MONK

Alignment: LG, LN, NG,

Ability Requirements: Wis 15, Con 13, Int 9

Races allowed: Human

Arms and Armor: As standard clerics for their weapons. Despite the fact that exorcists are sometimes called to fight, armor are almost useless against a ghost, or a spectre. Besides, Miseria is a metal poor domain, so these priests are restricted to leather, padded, or studded leather armor. The use of a shield is not permitted, as they need their other hand to lift their holy symbols more often than not.

Spells and Magical Items: They use the same magical items as all priests. They have major

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access to All, Necromantic, Protection, Sun, Time, and Wards; and minor access to Charm, Combat, Divination, and Guardian.

Duties of the Exorcist: The job of the exorcist is to drive away incorporeal undead, and fiends. This does not only include those who possess the living, but also undead haunting particular sites. An exorcist should never give up on a possessed individual, and will work as long as he can to save them, but to sometimes fail is human. Failure does not call for a penalty on the next attempt, but should inspire the monk to work harder with more resolute faith in his next battle.

Benefits: At 1st level: Since exorcists deal with undead on a day-to-day basis, and are specially trained with driving them away, they turn as if 2 levels higher. Exorcists get a +1 bonus to all fear, horror and madness checks brought about by spectral undead. Miseria is almost solely filled with ghosts and spectres; fiends are so rare and instill so much fear that even the exorcist has no bonus against them.

At 3rd level: Because of their devotion, Miseria's exorcists are more resistant to attacks that attempt to possess the living. They are granted a bonus of +3 on their saving throws against such attacks.

At 6th level: The exorcist can Detect Spirits (see "Spells and Magic") twice a day.

At 9th level: The exorcist becomes totally immune to all aging effects from ghosts, and other spectral undead.

Hindrances: People look down upon the exorcists, not because they see them as witches, or warlocks, but because they seem incompetent in ridding the land of all spirits. Since the exorcists do not provide many services to the community, they also receive a -2 penalty on their charisma checks.

Exorcists must donate 50% of any money they receive to the church.

An exorcist must spend at least 1 hour per day in exercise, meditation, and silent prayer to keep his body, mind, and spirit fit and ready to do battle with evil. This can be postponed for 2 or 3 days depending of the circumstances, but the time needed to spend in his regimen will be cumulated day-to-day. This extra time must be put in as soon as circumstances permit.

Hecate, ancient goddess of the night, and magic.

To the south of Miseria, passed the great battlefield, looms the ghost city of Elthiana. Once a thief by the name of Alexandre LeNoir thought he found proof of Hecate's existence. So it is said that he decided to dedicate the rest of his life to her, creating a secretive cult known as Hecate's Children. They believe her to be the goddess of the night, and the source of all non-clerical magic. Alexandre, and his followers searched deep under the ruins of Elthiana, and managed to uncover old spell books, and various fragmentary texts on Hecate. Aided by some unholy power (probably the Dark Powers themselves) they managed to quickly grasp, and learn the working of magic, and were granted ascendancy over undead as well. All those things blessings were received from their goddess, or so they thought. As they delved deeper, and deeper into knowledge not meant for them, they came to be overcome by their need to understand, and control all kinds of occult lore and items, effectively turning them into true arcanists. Today, they seek to master all the spirits in Miseria to undertake their bidding. The monks of Saint-Ambroise are their mortal enemies.

The church of Hecate works secretly with ruthless cunning, and deadly precision. As such, they have chosen a select group of rogues, specially trained, and indoctrinated in the misguided faith of Hecate to act as spies, and assassins (DM are suggested to use the invisible kit provided in Champions of the Mists).

Their main headquarters is a shrine in the ghost city of Elthiana, where they perform gruesome, and diabolical rituals each three nights of the full

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moon. Those deeds anchor the city to the Miseria, which explain why the city does not randomly shift out of existence.

The lay clergy of Hecate's Children is entirely made up of lawful evil arcanists (wizards). They have the same abilities just like all arcanists, except the dark powers also grant them the power to speak with the dead once a night. Should one do so, the restless soul spoken to would arise as a ghost exactly one year later, a fact unknown to the arcanists themselves. Fate is sometimes ironic, for as they curse others, so are they cursed themselves. Should one arcanist die, that individual would rise as an undead creature exactly one year later.

DARKLORD OF MISERIA

Cassandra Desesprits

Human

2nd-Level Diviner

Neutral Evil

Armor Class	10	STR	9
Movement	12	DEX	11
Level	2	CON	9
Hit Points	6	INT	15
THACO	20	WIS	16
No. of Attacks	1	CHA	15
Damage/Attack	1d4/1d4 (dagger)		
Special Attacks	Spells		
Special Defenses	Spells, Summon Spirits		
Magic Resistance	Nil		
Age	Unknown, but appears 18		

Weapon Proficiencies: Dagger

Appearance: Cassandra Desesprits is not the sort of person that one would assume to be a powerful force for evil. With her lustrous brown hair, sensual eyes; soft, fair skin, and innocent face, the only evil act she could be guilty of would be giving a man the wrong impression of how she feels about him. Dressed in the plain garb of a simple barmaid, she completes her tasks with grace, and ease.

Every once in a while, she may joke with the customers or even tease them a little, but for the most part she keeps to herself. Rarely has anyone ever seen her frown, but if one is careful not to be noticed, one might see her gazing around the taproom, the purest look of disgust on her face. Strangely enough, all that attempt to press themselves upon her, or accidentally spill a mug of ale on her shoes, have been known to disappear, or even be found as little more than ancient husks with all their vitality drained away. The people that know of this coincidence often think that the girl has some sort of overzealous guardian taking care of their helpful orphan. While they are impressed with how she has refused to become afraid at this prospect, they fear that her mysterious lover will come after her one day, expecting payment for its help.



Background: No one is quite sure which power Cassandra developed first. It was clear from a young age that she was very different, because

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she was talking constantly to imaginary friends, and always in "the right place at the right time". As she grew older, she began to give her parents advice, as to which crop they should plant, the best time for harvest, when and where to buy their tools, and so forth. She had the ability to see several possible futures, and understand what steps would have to be taken to achieve each. Every time her parents took her advice, they would narrowly avoid a disaster of some sort. Eventually, they refused to make any important decisions without consulting Cassandre. This eventually led to her powers being revealed to the entire village. Up to that point, Cassandre's life had been pretty normal. Her parents accepted her imaginary friends as a slight eccentricity that went with seeing the future, and the other children her age disregarded it, because she always knew what games to play.

During a festival, Cassandre's father was offered a new tract of land for his farm. It wasn't cheap, and if it didn't pan out, he would go bankrupt. As he had to make a decision right at that moment, he asked his young daughter what she thought he should do. At first, she would not answer, but when he insisted, she told him the land would make him very, very rich. Later that night, at the local pub, her father was celebrating the fact that he had found a large box filled with coins on the new land. One of his friends asked why his daughter made all the important decisions for him. In his drunken stupor, Cassandre's father revealed everything. Now, as is the nature with something good, everyone wanted his, or her own fair share. The entire town would constantly bombard Cassandre with questions. What should they plant, was so, and so being faithful, who will vote for who, and so on. Also in the rare moments that Cassandre had to herself, she found her old friends wanted nothing to do with her. All alone, Cassandre was forced to keep herself company with her imaginary friends. In truth, these friends did actually exist. They were ghosts, and it was they who told Cassandre the future. Cassandre was the only one who could see them, so they crowded to her for company, and alleviating their loneliness. Over time, Cassandre devised a

plan for vengeance against her village. When someone would come to her for advice, she would give that person the advice that would give that person what he or she wanted, but in the long run would cause the death of a child. In this manner, Cassandre was able to gain quite a large number of followers. No one ever questioned the rapid number of accidental deaths among the villages' youths. By the time she was 16, Cassandre was completely self-centered, egotistical, and immoral. She only cared about how a person could advance whatever goals she had set for herself. Then the war began.

Several neighboring villages had banded together with the sole purpose of acquiring her as a personal seer. As her own village joined together with others to fend off the attack, Cassandre saw a perfect opportunity. She began to refuse to make predictions. As her village lost battle after battle, they became desperate. Finally, Cassandre set a price. For every prediction, she was given whatever she desired. Very quickly, she had been given an elaborate home, beautiful furs, fine food, and glittering jewelry. The alliance that had sworn to protect her launched an offensive, winning battle after battle. Victory seemed to be on the horizon. Unfortunately, Cassandre had other plans. Realizing that without a war, she wouldn't be able to remain in the lap of luxury very long, the seer contacted the other side. Fabricating a story that she, in fact, wished to help them, she began to give them predictions that would keep them from losing. In this way, Cassandre kept the whole valley in the grips of war for two years. Feeding both sides with just enough info to keep them fighting, and in her opulent surroundings. Countless numbers died on each side, until the entire valley had taken a side on the conflict. While Cassandre feasted on veal, and goose, soldiers and civilians starved. While she listened to bards, and watched plays, children who were just old enough to walk were trudging through mud-covered battlefields salvaging arrows. During this time, Cassandre became interested in magic. Considering the fact that her powers for divination might be honed, she even hired a mage to teach her the arcane ways of the wizard. Yet, Cassandre did not have the dedication to

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achieve anywhere near the power that she craved.

The valley had never been rich in metal, but now, because of war, its resources were taxed completely. Cassandre was told daily of the suffering that was occurring, to which she offered her condolences, and turned back to her latest romance novel. Finally, both parties gained the employ of wizards. Through the bragging of her contacts, Cassandre learned that they each had a spell that would ensure victory in the next battle. As she gazed into the possible outcomes, it seemed that no matter what, the war was destined to end. The only question was who would be the victor. Then, Cassandre realized that there was one possible future she had not seen. What would happen if both spells were cast at the same time? She guessed that the battle would end in a stalemate (with massive casualties on both sides, of course) and the war would continue unabated. With a quick word to her contacts, Cassandre explained that is crucial to "The Cause" that the spell be cast at exactly 6:00. Not a minute sooner, or later. On the day of the battle, a thick mist settled on the valley. Cassandre took a seat where she figured she would be safe, and prepared to watch her plan play out. At exactly 6:00, the spells were cast. According to her calculations, the spells would fizzle each other out, and the battle would be fought man to man as usual. Instead, the spells combined and twisted. The added component of the mists seemed to magnify the effect, and a gigantic explosion engulfed the entire battlefield. The force blew Cassandre through the air, and into unconsciousness. When she awoke, she found herself in the domain of Miseria.

CURRENT SKETCH

Since ending up in Miseria, Cassandre has been working as a barmaid in a local pub. The kindly innkeeper, and his wife give her free room, and board, and let her keep all the tips she makes during a night's work. Still, she pines for the days when she could summon a feast by snapping her fingers. For this reason, she revels

in her ability to use her undead servants to punish those she hates. Any that insult her (whether in reality, or just in her mind) find themselves the target of an onslaught of ghostly attackers, an impish spirit, or maybe possession. She is constantly biting back her true feelings, and hates the fact that everyone treats her with kindness. Having been used to so much selfishness in her early life, she cannot even consider these feelings are genuine, and without an ulterior motive.

It seems that entering Ravenloft has both increased and decreased her powers. Her talent for divination has been completely corrupted by the Dark Powers. While she used to be able to see several futures, and how to bring them about, her visions only reveal one possible outcome, and any action she takes, regardless of what changes she makes in her plans, always comes true. She has begun to second-guess herself. Meanwhile, her ability to see ghosts, which has always been secondary in her life, has been amplified. Any incorporeal undead in Miseria becomes hers to control. Not only does she have the ability to see, and command them, but she can also understand them, making them the perfect spies, and assassins. Also, whenever a ghost uses its aging attack, the life force is given to her. While she just begun to notice it, Cassandre has not aged a day since her arrival in Miseria. Cassandre's greatest desire is to once again have the entire valley treat her like royalty. Yet, any attempt to regain this status always fails. It seems she is now doomed to spend the rest of her unnaturally long life as a barmaid.

CLOSING THE BORDERS

When Cassandre wishes to close the borders, a wall of thick red fog surrounds the domain. For every round a character spends in the fog, they age by 5 years (saving throw with cumulative -1 penalty). If they do not leave the fog, they will eventually crumble to dust and become ghosts under Cassandre's control.

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COMBAT

Few if any know Cassandre to be the real lord of the domain, and she never had to fight for her life yet. Still, in order to protect herself, Cassandre took a little time to learn how to properly wield a dagger. Hiding it on her person, she is able to brandish it at a moment's notice. However, she hates the thought of getting her hands dirty, and will only use it as a last resort. As a very charismatic person, she will usually try to persuade others to fight for her. While Cassandre has minor talent in the Art, she knows how to use it to her best advantage. She has complete control over all incorporeal undead in her domain, and when she calls for aid, 2d4 incorporeal undead creatures (DM's choice) will appear over the next 3 rounds. If Cassandre is killed, she reforms as a ghost. In this form, she can do nothing to influence the people. In 2d4 days, she will become flesh again, and move on to a different town, where she can plot the deaths of those that defied her. The only way to permanently destroy her is for an exorcist of Saint-Ambroise to denounce her past crimes, and banish her from the world of the living. Of course, discovering what Cassandre has done to deserve her imprisonment is easier said than done.

Spell list (3): 1st level: Detect magic, Detect undead, Read magic, Spook and Wall of fog.

PROMINENT NPCs

Tyrian Valdrin

Half-Elf

10th-Level Thief / 8th-Level Fighter

True Neutral (with chaotic tendencies)

Armor Class	5	STR	11
Movement	12	DEX	17
Level	10/8	CON	12
Hit Points	53	INT	13
THAC0	13	WIS	13
No. of Attacks	1	CHA	8
Damage/Attack	1d6/1d8 (short sword)		
Special Attacks	Backstab		
Special Defenses	Nil		

Magic Resistance	Nil
Age	60

Thief abilities:

Pick Pockets	30%
Open Locks	95%
Find/Remove Traps	95%
Move Silently	70%
Hide in Shadows	85%
Detect Noise	15%
Climb Walls	95%
Read Languages	0%
Detect magic	10%
Detect illusion	15%
Bribe	10%
Tunneling	10%
Escape bonds	15%
Backstab	x 4

Weapon Specialization: Dagger, Short Sword and Staff.

Tyrian Valdrin is an expert tomb robber, quite possibly the best in all Miseria. He spends the majority of his time infiltrating graves and looting the treasures inside. For there is little else he can do. Tyrian Valdrin is a very rare occurrence. Tyrian is a half-elf. His mother was a sylvan elf who stumbled into Miseria from somewhere on Krynn. Of course, she was not welcomed by the xenophobic, superstitious folk, and they attempted to kill her, accusing her of bringing the evil spirits with her. Of course, by the time she arrived, the ghosts had been terrorizing the populace for quite some time, so this idea was completely ludicrous. As she sat in her cell in the town jail waiting to be burned, a man clad in black clothes liberated her. He quickly, and deftly defeated the guards in care of her, released her from her bonds, and rode off with her into the night on his black horse.

After hours of riding, the pair stopped deep in a forest. It was there that the man removed his black hood and revealed himself to his rider. He introduced himself as Lodris. He bid the elven maiden tell him her name. The elf, stricken by his handsomeness and weak from all that happened that day, managed to squeak out.

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“Salania Leafskipper.” Lodris then went on to explain that he was a master thief, and had been in town examining the mayor’s manor to find the best way to break in, and saw her in all the commotion with the townsfolk. When he saw her, he had been immediately taken with the strangely beautiful alien creature. He could not see her burn. So he had decided to break her out. Then he asked Salania to explain how she had come to Miseria. Lodris was confused by the talk of Kryn, elves, and dragons, but he also felt great pity for this poor creature so far from home. He bade Salania to stay with him, for he loved her, and she had nowhere else she could go. They later became inseparable. For several years they lived as best they could, keeping to the forests to hide Salania, and to keep as close to Nature as possible. Lodris built his stronghold deep in the forest, and stole what they needed. Eventually, they bore a son, whom they called Tyrian. Tyrian looked very odd from most, because even though he was a half-elf, he bore the dark eyes, hair, and skin tone of his father, while keeping the ears of his mother. His facial features were an odd mix of hard, and soft.

As Tyrian grew, his father taught him the secrets of thievery, loving that Tyrian had infravision, and combat; and his mother raised him on the ways of the elves, and how to live with nature. His relationship with his mother was to be short lived, however, as the twisted, evil and cold nature of Ravenloft sapped her strength. Her sylvan nature needed the lush, rich forests, and Miseria did not suffice. So within years, she died. The nature of Miseria, and its habit of trapping spirits managed to bind Salania to the forest in which she lived. Her spirit still haunts the site at which her body was buried, singing of times gone by, and places long lost. Tyrian, and his father continued on, stealing and surviving. Tyrian aged too slowly for Lodris to manage, and the dashing thief grew older.

While Lodris was known amongst the local law, they were not a large problem. Much more prominent were the spirits that were disturbed by the pair’s grave robbing. It was not uncommon for Tyrian, and Lodris to flee a tomb, or cemetery clutching their ill-gotten gains while

frantically outrunning a zombie, skeleton, or ghost. It became a game to them.

One day the game ended. While infiltrating a rather intricate tomb, Tyrian and his now aging father came across the largest horde of treasure that they had ever seen. They were entranced by the mass of precious stones, so much that they lost track of themselves. It would be a fatal mistake. They were rocketed back to reality by an otherworldly snarl. They quickly turned to see a monstrous ghoul looming in front of them. The ghoul struck Lodris, sending him to the ground, paralyzed. Tyrian, in pure terror, broke, and ran. Only after he had escaped the ghoul did he realize that he had let his father behind. When he heard the sickening crunch, he realized it was too late. His father’s spirit now resides in that tomb, unable to move beyond. Tyrian has never returned to that tomb, or his mother’s grave, for he blames himself for their torment.

He continued to run, running farther than he had ever run before. He found himself in a town, the same town that had taken his mother to be burned so many years ago. He had never been there before, as his parents had kept him from that place for fear of townsfolk would do something to them. Tyrian, with his dark tones, and long hair obscuring his elven ears, walked into the town square nervously, and frightened by the large multitudes of people, passed out. He awoke in the same cell that had held his mother. He awoke to find the guards muttering about, “Another one.” Another what? Another elf? Tyrian thought. The only other elf he had ever known was his mother. Were there more elves around? Tyrian waited for the guards to rotate, and picked the lock of the cell quickly. He escaped into the night.

He never returned to that town. Instead, he traveled to different towns inquiring about elves, often meeting with suspicion. No one seemed to know of the elves, except the occasional vague legend. From these encounters, Tyrian learned to move among the humans, though never to be friends with them. The only human he could ever love was his father, for the humans had done terrible things to his mother. Tyrian

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decided that the humans could never be his family, and the elves that he seeks are never to be found.

From this, he took on a new name, a name relayed to him in the stories of the elves that his mother had told him in his early youth. He became Valdrin, the dark stealer.

Tyrian Valdrin stills lives in the forest in the stronghold of his father, collecting rare artifacts and keeping them in a private collection. He is almost always in a grave, or tomb of some sort, adding to his collection.

Valdrin has taken up trading the residents of the villages that surround the forest in which he lives, trading in a black market with his ill-gotten gains for necessities that he cannot furnish himself. However, he keeps the exceptionally valuable artifacts that he steals, for he feels that he risked himself for them, so he gets first pick of the spoilings. He is known among the more underground trading persons as a good source of material. If the PC's manage to establish a relationship with some local thieves, or illegal traders, they may learn of Valdrin.

Valdrin has a penchant for rare, or exquisite pieces of art of metalwork, and if he sees one, he will be hard-pressed not to take it.

Valdrin has encountered so many types of ghosts, and undead, he is very knowledgeable on almost any kind that will be found in Miseria. He also knows the layout of many of the cities at this point, and would be a good guide if convinced to give his services.

Valdrin, if encountered, will be very cautious, and keep his guard. He has grown quite cold, and trusts no one. He will never reveal his name to be Tyrian. He is always Valdrin.

Valdrin has two distinct phobias. He is afraid of crowds, for being alone all the time. He is also terrified of ghouls, and it will be almost impossible to keep him from running if he encounters one. If the PC's are able to aid him in

slaying one (not an easy task), they will earn great gratitude from him.

Valdrin has yet to face his guilt in what he feels is his responsibility in the deaths of his mother, and father. It is a source of constant torment for him. Meeting the spirits of his parents would be a hard thing, indeed.

He is almost always successful in searching for secret doors, and traps. He has an iron will, which allows him to handle most things that would horrify others (except ghouls).

He handles the dagger, short sword, and staff with exceptional skill, and fights barehanded well, also. A half-elf ends up fighting a lot. If the PC's are with him and encounter humans, expect a brawl.

Valdrin is of deeply tan skin, shoulder length black hair, and brown eyes. He is unusually big for a half-elf. He usually ties his hair back, but allows it hang loose when going to a public place, to hide his ears. He most often wears black from head to toe, and is generally clad in leather armor.

If the PC's encounter him, it will be difficult to convince him to aid them, as he does not handle company well, and is rather rude. However, if the PC's know anything about elves, the party contains demihumans, or the party offers some rare treasure, they will get Valdrin's attention.

Boris Gustaffe

Half-Vistani, Dual Class 5th-Level Arcanist / 7th -Level Gypsy, Lawful Good

Armor Class	6	STR	13
Movement	12	DEX	16
Level	2	CON	15
Hit Points	33	INT	18
THAC0	17	WIS	16
No. of Attacks	1	CHA	16
Damage/Attack	1d6/1d8 (short sword)		
Special Attacks	Backstab		
Special Defenses	Nil		
Magic Resistance	Nil		
Age	29		

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Weapon Proficiencies: Dagger, Short Sword
Magical Items: *cloak of protection* +2, *Talon* (+3 dagger of venom holding holy water within), *Savior* (silver short sword given to him from the Weathermays), 2 doses of *zombie dust* (a powder used to make the living slowly turn into undead), vials of holy water, 1 potion of *undead control*, 1 wooden stake, 1 holy symbol of Ezra (has been blessed by LG Ezra Priests, and contains a mirror on back, worn around the neck)

From the Journal of Boris Gustaffe:

To whoever reads this journal... This journal is a testament of my life as it now stands. I wish that the wisdom gleaned through years of anguish and hard work, can someday be used by those who read this book. May prosperity be to you reader, and may fortune always be on your side.

I, Boris Gustaffe, was born on the banks of the Musarde River. My father was a male Caucasian, and my mother was a Giorgio, a Vistani. The love between my parents was a secret affair, not condoned, or accepted by anyone but them. My parents met while my father was helping deliver cargo down the Musarde River. His traveling companions felt it necessary to stop, and make camp on the riverbank one night while they were traveling. My father agreed, and the men set up camp, not knowing that a group of gypsies, or more precisely, a group of Vistani, was also making camp not far away. When the cargo-men found out about the Vistani, they wanted nothing to do with the strange people, fearing a curse would be put upon the head of any foolish enough to go snooping. My father was a brave, and curious man, however, and set out to see the gypsies, despite warnings to the contrary by his companions. When my father reached the gypsy camp, he hid among the shadows of Madame Mishka's vardo. He watched as the strange, olive-skinned people danced widely around a campfire and sung many songs in a language he couldn't understand.

Eventually he saw my mother. I knew her to be a vision of loveliness as a child, at a time when lines of care were worn upon her face, and the years of raising me shown upon her. She was in her prime, a young vivacious woman of around 18 who had not a care in the world. He fell instantly in love with her. This growing obsession with my father to see, and profess his love for my mother drove the cautious man from the shadows and into the light of the large campfire. The men gypsies surrounded my father, grabbing him roughly, and hauling him away as he screamed out the love he had for my mother. My mother took notice of my father's good-natured looks, and deep blue eyes and wanted to get to know such a bold man. It was on that night that she set out to the cargo-men's camp, when she had the chance to slip away, and came to meet my father. The two spent the night talking to one another, my father going on, and on about how lovely my mother looked in the moonlight, and the two agreed to see each other again. The two young lovers saw each other sporadically from that point on, always meeting in secret, and sharing no tells of their trysts together with those that knew them. Eventually the meeting of the two led to the birth of me. It was on that night of my birth that a tragic twist enters unto this story.

My parents were joyous to see a healthy baby boy, with his mother's olive skin and brown hair and brown eyes, and with an intelligent spark that shown in his eyes. The two had known for nine-months that this day would come, my mother always making up excuses in her tribe of why she was gaining weight. They now were faced with the choice of what to do. Begrudgingly they decided to inform my mother's tribe of the birth, not knowing how awful a mistake such a decision truly was. After telling Madame Mishka about my birth, and informing the old Vistani that they were planning on being wed, my parents were treated to a cruel surprise. Madame Mishka was furious. She turned blood red, and said many curses in the Vistani tongue. She ordered that my father be killed along with the demon child he helped bring into the world, which of course was me!

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My mother watched in horror as the gypsy men surrounded my father, and brutally stabbed to death, his screams echoing out throughout the night. My mother saw all this and could do nothing, not really accepting all this as being real, thinking it more to the liking of a nightmare. Unfortunately for her, and her newborn son, the nightmare was real and was just beginning. The Vistani were going to kill me, and make sure that any memory of birth was left unspoken of, except maybe by my mother.

My mother, however, had different plans, when the gypsies came after me, her motherly instincts kicked in, and she began to run. She ran hurriedly into the surrounding forest, not knowing where to go, or how she would outrun the men. She ran for what seemed a half a day, at least that is what she told me when I was old enough. When she could run no farther, she dared look around, but was able to breathe a sigh of relief that no one was behind her. She said it was remarkable, the whole time she made her trek to the domain of Mordent, she said that I did not cry once, even though she was barely able to keep me fed. Her journey took about a half a week, at which point she found the town of Mordentshire, and decided on getting supplies for me. My mother was almost broke, never having any real amount of money, always relying upon the gypsies in her camp, or my father to support her. With what money she had, she was able to buy her and me some food. She searched about town, looking for a job with which to support the two of us. The townsfolk though, were hesitant to hire a Vistani, fearing that such an act would bring down the curse of my mother's tribe. Eventually, though, my mother found a job being a cook for the rich folk of Heather House, the most prominent family in Mordentshire then, and now for that matter. Working for the Weathermay family, my mother was able to raise me into a young man of 16 years. She taught me to always obey the law, and to what was good. She taught me how to use divination magic, and the Weathermays taught me how to read. My mother was so impressed with the ease with which I learned things, she wished that I would attend Mordentshire's

boarding school, but I refused, wanting to work to help support her as she had done for me.

The information I learned about my father's death, and my parent's meeting was gleaned exactly one night before my sixteenth birthday, and my mother's death. I was sitting in what served as the living room of the building that we lived in on the Heather House estate, when my mother came to me, and told me that which I have told previously in this journal. I asked my mother why she disclosed this information to me, but she only looked at me with a sense of worry, and said that she "felt" that she should tell me, that it might be her last chance to. I looked up worriedly, telling her not to speak in such an ill way. She only smiled that sad way she was known to do, and said that no matter what happened to remember that she and my father always loved me, and to try my best to do well in the world. I promised her that I would always love her, and my father whom I had only heard of in bits, and pieces up until that night. I also promised to be the best I could, to strive to do good in the face of all things evil. My mother was pleased, she said goodnight to me, and that was the last time I saw her alive... The next day I awoke to find the estate of the Weathermays in an uproar. My beloved mother had been found near the well of the house; her very life seemingly sucked from her body. The Weathermays forbid me to see her corpse, but I insisted. What I beheld chilled me to the bone, and changed me for the rest of my life. I saw my beautiful mother, the very woman that had raised me from a child and who had taught me to do well, dead. Her body was aged beyond that which one can live. Her hair was stark white, and her skin was wrinkled and lay withered upon her bones. I...I...it still pains me to think of her that way, I will not dwell on it here anymore. I asked the Weathermays what could do such a thing to my mother. Surely a normal living, breathing creature could not do such a thing. They said, "Nay, tweren't a living being, but a ghost." I told them that ghosts only existed in fairy tales, in stories told by children to scare one another. They sat me down, and told me the truth. I was horrified to find that such creatures truly existed. I swore that I would hunt down the

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creatures, to destroy them, and their entire ilk. This was my calling, I was sure of it, and I would bend my utter will against such supernatural creatures. The Weathermays told me not to be in haste, to remember the old adage, "Don't go seeking evil, and it won't come seeking you." I told them that the old adage was wrong that my mother never sought out evil, and that no one was safe until such creatures were destroyed. They agreed to let me leave, and pursue my quest, equipping me before I went so that I wouldn't be without protection. They gave me the short sword "Savior", a blade that wasn't named until by myself. Appropriately named because I would have perished in my pursuit of evil if not for it. I set out into the world, ready to take on anything, not knowing the peril that I sought. I went out only knowing the divination magic my mother had taught me, and what little use I had with what was then an unnamed, silver short sword.

My first brush with death came when I found the home of a ghostly arcanist that lied about five, or so miles outside of Mordentshire proper. I was very inexperienced then, and heading into things without using the good mind that Ezra had bestowed upon me. My battle with the arcanist was one with disaster, the creature used a chilling touch, and drained my strength from my bones, and I had barely enough strength to run for protection away from the creature. I decided on finding a weakness of the creature. I stayed in the shadows watching it as it moved about at night. Never did it stir during the day I noticed and the creature never visited a section of its aging home where green ivy grew, abhorring the plant for some reason. It also spoke of a wand it had lost. I say spoke, I should say it whispered, a barely audible sound over the blowing of the wind. Observing this, and speculating the creature would depart if it found its wand. I searched about the house, on the outside, of course. I eventually found the wand, lying buried beneath the ivy in what must have been the creature's rotted hand. Also lying amongst the decaying form I found a spellbook, full of the arcane rituals necessary for necromancy. I took the book for my own benefit, and then took the wand to the ghost. The

creature looked angered until I handed over the wand, at which it turned around, and slowly dissipated, along with the wand. I learned on that day to rely more on the wits that had been bestowed upon me than to rely on my fighting skills. Don't misunderstand me, though, I also recognized the need of proper fighting skills. One must be able to do battle if they are to rid the world of the creatures of the night, because some creatures don't move on as peacefully as others. So I set out to gain experience and to help more innocent folk whom were being preyed upon and didn't even know that their lives were in danger.

My crusade took me through Darkon, through Barovia, through Invidia, and through the neighboring domain of Dementileu. I passed through other domains to get to these locales, but in those other domains I never saw anything or anyone that needed looking into. Surely if I had looked beneath the surface, I would have been able to discern some trouble. My crusade, however, was a hot-blooded one, one in which I didn't tolerate inaction. The more I waited, searching for some sign of the supernatural, the more death, and suffering that would be had by the victims of these creatures. So I strove from domain to domain, with a grim goal, and an even grimmer outlook on life. I met others in my crusade. There were, to my surprise, other good-natured folks that had had their lives torn apart by some gruesome, vile creature. Some of these adventurers had reasons that resembled my own. Others had darker, more hidden reasons for giving up a decent life, and going searching for death at the hands of the unknown. I joined a few adventuring parties during my crusade, but these either ended badly, with many party members meeting less than noble fates, or with me having to part ways because I had different ideas about such matters. I was restless, the image of my withered mother upon my mind's eye, and I would not stop in my search for an end to the supernatural. I would have continued acting out of hate, and passion, slipping further and further from the goodness I sought so hard to protect, if not for the intervention by one man, Dr. Rudolph Van Richten. I met Dr. Van Richten one fateful night in Barovia. I say

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fateful for two reasons. On that night, I learned of the evil that was corrupting me, and I also came into possession of the most prized possession in my adventuring equipment. I was in the local tavern, drinking ale and pouring about some old tomes I had gotten from a local sage, one who keeps in secret fearing death at every corner. The tomes were of some help, revealing to me some information I could use in my latest adventure, to find and kill the creature that had attacked a family of wereravens. It might sound strange to hear that I took a job from a band of lycanthropes... (The journal ends abruptly)

Kairin Grimalk

Half-Elf

11th-Level Necromancer

Neutral Evil

Armor Class	10	STR	13
Movement	12	DEX	14
Level	11	CON	14
Hit Points	40	INT	16
THAC0	17	WIS	16
No. of Attacks	1	CHA	12
Damage/Attack	1d6/1d6 (quarterstaff)		
Special Attacks	Spells		
Special Defenses	Spells		
Magic Resistance	Nil		
Age	45		

Spells:

Animate Dead Animals, Corpse Link, Locate Remains, Spectral Voice, Living Link, Skeletal Hands, Bone Dance, False Face, Brainkill, Empathic Wound Transfer, Summon Spirit, Bind Undead, Bone Blight, Graft Flesh, Ghoul Gauntlet, Transmute Bone to Steel, Wound Conferral, Death Shroud, Life Force Transfer, Death Ward, Life Force Exchange

Kairin Grimalk was a gentleman of stature in Dementlieu, learning the noble arts of fencing, music, and etiquette. However, he had a fascination with death that was highly unusual for one in his position. Instead of mingling at parties, and courting ladies, as would be expected of him; Kairin would be found in the

manor library, reading books on the occult, and the dreaded superstition, "MAGIC". Kairin, to maintain somewhat of a good standing in Dementlieu society, would make brief appearances at required events, be seen, make idle small talk, then disappear quickly. Kairin found that he had a natural talent for necromancy, but could never tell anyone; hence he would be driven away.

One night, in his mid twenties, during one of his frequent visits to the local graveyard, Kairin put his abilities to the test. He stood over a coffin that awaited burial in the morning. Kairin raised his hands, made his secret gestures, and spoke his forbidden words. The RAISE DEAD spell was a success. Kairin heard movement in the coffin, and smiled to himself. Yes, this power was very useful Kairin thought. However, when the coffin opened, and the zombie crawled out, Kairin was overwhelmed with terror at what he saw, and ran from the graveyard into the Mists that had gathered to surround the place.

When the Mists parted, Kairin found himself in Miseria. He thought it a nice change from the place he had been; a chance to start again, but he was appalled when he saw the cultural level of this place. Kairin, being from a Renaissance domain, was shocked that he would find himself in a Chivalric place. Kairin decided to immediately bring these people to a proper level. He attempted to establish himself as the lord of a town (which one will come later), but the local clergy was wary of this newcomer. Kairin managed to establish a rulership for a short period, for his advanced education allowed him to impart information that allowed the towns farming and architecture to unheard of levels for Miserians. Knowing that the unusually high spiritual activity of the area made this place prime for developing his craft, Kairin continued his necromancy. However, he was wise enough to keep it a secret, for the common folk were terrified of the ghosts, and would see him as an accessory to their activity.

Kairin made a mistake however, when he started raising corpses to use to perform activities. The clergy learned of this, and ran him from the

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town. Kairin took up refuge deep in a forest, and continued his craft. He found that he could sense the presence of incorporeal spirits, but could not see them. He could only perceive their most basic thoughts, and energies. In them all, Kairin could read a similar feeling, a nagging pull towards Miseria, and a source of the pull. Cassandra, being the “ghost magnet” that she is, drew spirits from all over Ravenloft. From these spirits, Kairin learned of Cassandra, but does not know who, or where she is. Kairin wishes to overthrow her and rule Miseria himself. Once attaining what he felt to be adequate power, Kairin infiltrated yet another town some distance away. The distance between the towns, and untrusting nature of the people of Miseria made the communication of Kairin’s abilities, and identity all but impossible to catch up with him. Kairin used his high-class charm, and intelligence to once again attain a high position in the society. He is now a town elder, and uses it to his full advantage, while ever seeming the benevolent public mediator. While Kairin has been gone from the original town for some time, some people still remember him and the events that led to his exile. If Kairin is ever confronted with this information, he will coolly deny the events, insisting that the self-righteous clergy of that place condemned him because his ways were not theirs, and he left of his own free will.

Kairin has learned the secret to becoming a lich, but currently lacks the proper components to create the potion. He may utilize the PC’s assist him in acquiring them. At present, Kairin is torn in his desires. On one side, he wishes to rule Miseria. Power is a very beautiful thing to him. On the other, living forever, and continuing to develop his abilities is equally tempting. He will most likely attempt to realize whichever goal proves to be easier to attain. Little does Kairin realize that if Cassandra were ever to be truly destroyed, and then he would become the new Darklord of Miseria.

Kairin, on the surface, remains ever the gentleman. PC’s meeting him will notice that he is unusually refined for the domain. He will show good manners, but underneath all this, is extremely untrusting, and suspicious. He likes

to strike a gentleman’s deal, but often will not follow through on his end of the bargain unless it benefits him in some way. Kairin still enjoys fencing, and playing the flute and mandolin. He will gladly take on a challenge in either from a PC. Winning will earn a favor from Kairin, but he is still a sore loser. Kairin is extremely power hungry, and wants to acquire total control of Miseria.

Kairin is extremely pale, has long blond hair, and piercing green eyes. He still moves with an arrogant grace. Kairin does have a limitation. From his time in Dementlieu, he has a post hypnotic suggestion left over. While engaged in a gentlemanly contest, he cannot break the rules of the contest (meaning no raising zombies, kicking the groin, breaking the instruments of the PC’s, etc.). Before, or after the contest has formally begun, he has no restrictions, but while performing, he is bound. Kairin still does understand why he cannot break the rules. Therefore, when he can, he will attempt to deal with his opponents from afar, with zombies or whatever. But if drawn into a duel of swords or music, he must follow the rules. But do not underestimate him in that regard, he is still very good at both, without cheating.

OVERLOOK ANNIE

Lying above Notre-Dame-des-Recifs, are several hills. One of them is often the spot for the Annual Summer Festival, when merchants of all types set up their wares in the open air amidst a grand carnival atmosphere. Another is the site of an ancient ambush, it is rumored to be haunted by marching soldiers. An odd collection of large white marble boulders found nowhere but atop one hill gives rise to the legend of two giants, who fought, and died there. Yet another location is rarely visited by adults, but is often the congregation point of groups of children. Worried parents allow their children to play on the open flat clearing, in spite of the treacherous cliff overlooking the city. The odd reasoning for this in a ghost fearing populace is the hill is rumored to be haunted.

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The Overlook, as the city's residents call it, is a wide flat-topped hill, sparsely populated with trees along the edges. Its almost as if the gods had shaved off the top of a hill to create the football field sized area on the top. On the city's side, the apparent shaving has continued, slicing off a vertical section leaving a steep rocky cliff. A person falling from this 75 ft height would surely perish when hitting the rocks below.

Children often gather on the hill's top, running to and fro, and even up to the edge itself. No fencing or rope exists to prevent anyone from falling over the edge, yet there are no reports of any accidental falls by children. There are a few suicides once in a while, but adults seem uncomfortable on the hill, and often stay away.

There are many rumors about the haunting, and why no children ever fall. One tells of a young girl that fell when the city was first built, and who stayed on as spirit to protect other children. Another speaks of a merchant that died far from her home, and family, who now sees those surrounding her as if they were her family. Yet another is of an old midwife who could never have children of her own. Even more; a cleric of an orphanage that hasn't let go of her charges; a very odd one of a she-wolf thinking that she was protecting her pups; a dryad who's tree has long gone fulfilling an ancient promise. A darker tale speaks of a woman cursed after drowning her own children. All the tales have a common element; the protection of the children on the hill, and the mysterious female. The city even has a name for her: Overlook Annie.

Annie's actual history is long forgotten by the living city residents. Centuries ago she was the poor mother of a young girl who decided to enjoy a family picnic one sunny day after a long rain. As they sat on the hill, several wicked mercenaries of "the Wyvern Band" came upon them. The men caught up Annie, and began pushing the young hysterical girl back, and forth between themselves. At one point, she broke free, running blindly toward the edge, where she slid on the wet grasses, and went over the cliff. Annie wailed and thrashed about, injuring the

man holding her. He decided she was too much to handle, so he threw her after her daughter.

After death Annie's spirit remained. She now sees all children on the hill as her own child, and acts to prevent them from falling, as she was prevented from doing in life. She also has animosity towards adults, because of her poorness, and the attack by the mercenaries. Adults are encouraged to leave, so that she can enjoy the company of the children as she did on that last day of her life.

Overlook Annie **Second-Magnitude Ghost, Lawful Neutral**

Armor Class	-1/6	STR ---
Movement	Fl 12 (A)	DEX---
Level/Hit Dice	5	CON---
Hit Points	30	INT 9
THACO	15	WIS 9
Morale	20	CHA 13

No of attacks 1 XP 2000
Damage/attack as per telekinesis
Special Attacks: Cause Despair, Perform Telekinesis
Special Defenses: Insubstantiality (semicorporeal), invisibility, rejuvenation, typical ghost magic immunities, +1/0 or better magical weapons to hit
Special Vulnerabilities: Unable to leave a child in danger near edge,
Insignia of Wyvern Band acts as Allergen

Appearance: Overlook Annie is most often invisible. On the rare times that she becomes visible-usually only the dates of her death, her daughter's birth, and the nights of the Annual Summer Festival, she appears as a vaguely female shaped haze with flowing hair. Eyewitnesses often report the sound of a woman crying accompanying the sight.

Personality: Overlook Annie is calm, and peaceful when surrounded by the children playing on the Overlook. After they leave, or when an adult comes into the picture, she becomes horribly saddened, almost distraught.

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Her origin is somewhat due to stewardship, as she now protects those who fall, as she couldn't in life, but mostly because of her extremely emotional state at the time of her violent sudden death.

Annie will always act to save a child falling on the hill. She feels a sense of responsibility for them all. She may be fooled into thinking a halfling, or elf in disguise is a child, especially if using the disguise proficiency.

The insignia of the Wyvern Band, a long defunct mercenary group, may be used as an Allergen-as according to VRG. The insignia can be located within very old town records, but only through extremely careful searching.

Combat: Annie usually uses her semicorporeal state and Perform Telekinesis abilities to push fallers back upon the edge to save them. These abilities could be used to do the reverse, however, in the case of an obvious foe. Her other ability, Cause Despair, is linked to her own sorrow. Instead of the usual aura of despair, she directs this attack against an intruder. A failed save produces a negative modifier to all dice rolls of -3, as if she were 4th magnitude. This is due to the focusing of the normal Cause Despair ability, mirroring her own. The concentrated despair gives the victim a horrible feeling about the situation, as if they should leave quickly. Most do. A few that don't, end up as the infrequent suicides that happen off the Overlook. None, of course, are ever attributed to Annie, because she is seen as a good spirit that protects the children of Notre-Dame-des-Recifs.

NEW SPELLS

Curse of the Waking Dead

(Necromancy)

Level: 4 for priests, 6 for wizards

Sphere: Necromantic

Range: 20 yds.

Duration: permanent, or until removed

Area of Effect: 1 creature

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 rd.

Saving Throw: None

This horrid spell is used by priests, and wizards who guard tombs and graveyards. They use it very rarely, as it is the very last resort to punish grave robbing. Once cast upon an individual, it will not appear that anything has taken effect... until the subject of the spell enters a tomb, or graveyard. Once the grave robber enters an area where there are dead at rest, they will get a horrible feeling that something is definitely not right, and that they are going to die if they do not leave the grounds right away. This feeling results in a -1 to all attack rolls, and saving throws. If they do proceed to rob a grave or tomb, the results can be quite gruesome. As soon as they open the lid of a coffin or otherwise expose a dead body, an Animate Dead spell is triggered. The corpse that they are robbing, along with adjacent corpses, or corpses within the area of effect (see Animate Dead spell for details on area of effect and the number of animated corpses) will rise as zombies. The dead body that is being robbed will rise as a zombie with half of the hit points of the being that bestowed the curse. It has a movement rate of 12, is turned as a wight, and will follow the grave robber until he/she is slain, after which it will return to its grave. The remainder of the zombies will return to their graves after the robber has fled the graveyard, or if the he/she is slain. The lesser zombies will not leave the graveyard.

Note that this spell is not good in nature, as it creates undead, and a Powers check must be issued whenever it is cast. It is again used only as the very last resort to grave robbing.

The material components for this spell are earth from a grave, and an eyeball from a corpse.

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MAGICAL ITEMS

The Assassin's Claw

(1d6) +3 {1d6 depending on the accuracy of the blow, and +3 for it's magical attack adjustment (+3 to THAC0 and damage)}

Armor piecing: The most fearsome power of the claw is its ability to pierce armor. Only the opponents AC modified by dexterity, and magical bonuses offer any resistance to the attack. Example: Grog the Brute has a dexterity of 17 (-3 to AC), and is wearing plate mail +1. His usual armor class is -1, but when attacked by the assassin's claw, his AC drops to 6 (-3 AC for dex, and -1 from plate +1). Every successful hit made by the claw has a cumulative 10% chance of permanently damaging the opponent's armor rendering it useless until repaired by a blacksmith. Example: Grog is struck 3 times by the assassin's claw. The first two strikes Grog made his save, but on the third strike (30% chance), Grog failed, and his armor became useless.

Proficiency in small blade weapons (such as a dagger, or stiletto) is sufficient in order to properly wield the claw, and catch an opponent off guard...

Description: The Assassin's Claw is composed of 5 razor sharp blades protruding along the

fingers on the palm of an ordinary looking leather glove. The blades are made of a strange black colored metal with a slight green tint, suggesting an otherworldly origin. Dried blood can be seen covering the tips of the blades. The claw is generally paired with a similarly looking harmless leather glove to avert suspicion.

History: Little is known of the Assassin's Claw. The claw first made its appearance in Darkon in 732, having been discovered in a ghoul lord's treasure horde by a cunning professional assassin named Tybalt Lagaro. Over the next 5 years, the claw was utilized to destroy many of Ivana, and Ivan's political enemies in Borca, until Tybalt was challenged, and defeated by an unnamed Knight of the Shadows. An underling of Ivana stole the claw from the Knight's possession, and sold it at a black market in Il Aluk (before the big bang of 50') to a tall, pale man wearing a sparkling jade necklace hosting an ivory skull emblem. When asked about where he was from, or where he was going, the man mentioned something about a new land dubbed Miseria... slit the would-be merchant's throat, and fled into the night.



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НУЕВА АРАГОНА

BY NATHAN OKERLUND
(DMITRI STANISLAUS)

11 NOVEMBER, YEAR OF OUR LADY OF
SORROWS 1132

The winter rain slashed at the two men walking across the courtyard of the small stone fort; the torchlight from the windows danced crazily on the wet cobblestones, staining the rainwater to the color of blood. The pair stopped and conferred briefly with each other, then turned their steps toward a small tower in the southeast corner of the structure. The taller of the two threw the door open and they entered together, removing their heavy cloaks as they did so.

Divested of their cloaks, the pair could be seen as a young man in military dress, with dark brown hair cut short and an small mustache perched precariously on his upper lip, and a small man, perhaps in his late fifties, with shoulder length hair, mustache, and goatee all white and the dark yellow complexion associated with certain chronic diseases of the tropics. After a brief muttered discussion the younger man stepped to a wall sconce and removed the torch in it; with this in hand the two proceeded down a short hallway ending in a heavy wooden door.

The soldier opened the door and stepped into the room; the dull torchlight revealed a chamber about two meters by three, without furniture, and a young woman, a girl, really, no more than nineteen or twenty years old, dressed in a tattered white dress and several months pregnant, lying on the damp straw piled in one corner. Her appearance suggested that she had not bathed nor had a change of clothes for several months, but the undeniable beauty of her dark hair, black eyes, and stern expression

seemed to light the room as brightly as the torch. As the elderly man entered she stood, with difficulty, and faced him with chin raised.

« Joaquín, please fetch the señora and myself chairs, » the elderly man directed. The soldier nodded and moved toward the door.

« No! » the young woman replied sharply. « I will not sit with you, Don Santiago. » Turning to the soldier, she continued, less forcefully, « No chair will be necessary for me, Señor Joaquín. » The elderly man grimaced sourly and gestured to the soldier, who departed and returned moments later with a rough stool. The elderly man seated himself and stared at the young woman before him; even in the weak light the gold buttons and epaulettes of his blue coat gleamed, as did the buckles on his boots. He opened his mouth to speak, but was convulsed by a series of hacking coughs; he struggled to bring a snow-white handkerchief from an inner coat pocket and coughed into it for several minutes, leaving it spangled with blood. Finally gaining control of the attack, he dabbed at his lips and handed the cloth to Joaquín, who took it silently and handed him a clean handkerchief as white as the first, which he folded and placed in the same coat pocket. Turning again to the young woman before him, he asked, politely, « And how is your health, Señora Isabel de Maconda? »

« Well enough, Don Santiago, » she replied, equally polite. « And yours? »

Don Santiago made a dismissive gesture, then queried, « And your condition? Will you need a midwife soon? »

Isabel's hands moved protectively to her swollen belly, and she nodded once. « Within weeks, perhaps days, » she replied softly.

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Don Santiago nodded curtly. « I will arrange for it. » Shifting his weight and adjusting his coat, he continued, « Well, then. To business. Have you had a change of heart, milady? Will you do your duty as a subject of the King and inform me where your rebel husband makes his lair? »

« My answer is the same as it has always been, Don Santiago, » Isabel replied coldly. « I know nothing of my husband's whereabouts, and I would rather die than speak of it to you in any case. And I am no subject of your bloody-handed king. »

At this last sentence, the Don's yellowed complexion darkened to ash-grey; standing and stepping forward, he slapped the young woman once on each cheek. Stumbling, she caught herself against the wall and leaned there, panting, unable to stand and unwilling to fall. Don Santiago observed her coldly for several seconds, then turned and fetched the stool. Placing it behind her, he pressed gently at her shoulders and caused her to sit. At his signal, Joaquin left the room and returned with another stool; seating himself again, the Don shook his head and commented sardonically, « So much for your rebel pride, Señora. Here we are seated together after all. »

She made no reply, and he continued, after a brief pause, « I do not understand this from you, Señora. I can understand the appeal of this republican claptrap to peasants and malcontents, but from a person of refinement and social stature such as yourself, no, it is inconceivable. And to denigrate the person of the King? Why, madam, he himself is the foundation of the state and the representative of Our Lady in this world. What possesses you to speak so of him? »

« First and foremost, that such a man as you should support him. »

At this, Don Santiago's mouth twitched into a snarling rictus, which he smoothed with visible effort into a one-sided smile. « I am the least of His Majesty's servants, lady. But I endeavor to serve him well. »

« Yes, by the slaughter of innocents. »

« Innocents? Rebels and the spawn of rebels! Filthy riff-raff, peasantry, the dregs of these colonists, who are the dregs of the kingdom! A fig for the slaughter of such! It is an act worthy of encomium. »

« What? Do you pretend to justify yourself, sir? Do you think I do not know of the hundreds of men you killed under a white flag at Martyr's Lagoan? »

« Should I show mercy to men, no, not men! Knaves, poltroons, rabble!--taken in arms against the King? Never! The blood of a hundred thousand such would not stain my conscience! »

« And what of the blood of women and children, Don Santiago? Do you not know how your men, if they can be called men, have had their way with wives and maids alike? And did not I, myself, see one of your bloody ruffians strike a child dead at your very feet with the butt of his musket? »

Don Santiago's mouth worked slowly, then, leaning back, with an air of unconcern, he said coolly, « Have you never heard, Señora, that nits make lice? What can the child of a rebel and a republican grow to be, but a creature like his father? And as for these claims you make of my soldiers, they provide what I demand: loyalty to the throne and bravery in combat. I have no reason to complain of their conduct. »

« Do you pretend to justify them, Don Santiago? » Isabel queried, in a mix of astonishment and scorn.

« Do you pretend to justify yourself, Señora? » Don Santiago responded coldly. For a long moment, the two glared at each other; then Don Santiago continued, slowly, « Consider your position well, Senora. Until this time I have not offered all of my...inducements...in view of your gentle breeding and your condition. But I warn you, if you continue recalcitrant I shall be

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obliged to invoke every means at my disposal to open your mouth. »

The young woman laughed aloud; with an edge of hysteria in her voice, she asked, « And is this how you serve your King, Don Santiago? By threatening to torture women? Such nobility in you, Santiago the Butcher. But know this, » she said, fixing her black eyes on the elderly man and speaking low, but fiercely, « I would die before I tell you where my husband hides, and you will die without defeating him and this people will never, never again be ruled by you or by your king. »

Don Santiago stared at her, his mouth working; a vein began to pulse in his forehead, and his yellow complexion darkened again to gray, then blanched to the color of old parchment. Finally he hissed, « Very well, señora. So be it. »

Standing abruptly, he gave her a jerky, graceless bow, and, turning, stepped to the door. Joaquin came forward and took both stools, setting them in the hall; Don Santiago remained in the doorway, his face a mask of revulsion as he stared at the young lady before him. At last he turned to Joaquin and grated, « Joaquin, there will be no midwife for the señora's birthing. Am I clear? No midwife. Good evening, señora. Come, Joaquin. »

The two soldiers left; the cell was plunged again into darkness, filled only by the steady hammering of the rain, the rustling of the rats leaving their homes in the walls, and the breathing of the young woman.

27 NOVEMBER YEAR OF OUR LADY OF SORROWS 1132

The late afternoon sunlight beat down on the encampment; men wandered among the weather-beaten tents pitched in something like military lines, some leading horses, others cooking or cleaning their weapons; the sentries drooped at their posts. The tropical air was still and thick with the stink of rotting things; the

jungle around the clearing seemed to press inward on the men, dwarfing them and muting their muttered words to each other.

Suddenly, a tall, thin man appeared from the undergrowth and tapped a fat and particularly sleepy sentry on the shoulder; leaping and turning at once, the sentry brought his musket to bear and then laughed, a bit shamefaced. « I never catch you, do I, Armando? Have you brought news? »

Armando nodded slowly. « Yes. Where is the General? »

« In his tent. Is it about...? » The sentry fell silent, but looked significantly at Armando and gestured at his own full belly. Armando nodded again, and the sentry whispered, leaning forward, « Good news? »

Armando looked at the sentry, expressionless, and then shook his head slightly and turned away, making his way to a large tent on the north side of the encampment. Nodding to the man slouching at attention outside the tent, he opened the tent door and stepped into the dark heat within.

« Clap! How many times...ah, Armando. » The tall, muscular man seated at the field desk stood and made an effort to smile pleasantly; the expression sat oddly on his serious face, framed by long black hair and handlebar mustache and obviously more accustomed to a scowl than a smile. « What news? »

Armando replied, « Well, General, Quijada casts about like a dog who's lost the scent; he's divided his men into platoons and sent them to scour the northern part of the island. Apparently he's convinced were still there. »

General Martín Jose Maconda nodded, not quite smiling. « So much the better. And may snapbone fever carry off his men while he searches. » He paused, and then continued awkwardly, « And did you hear...ah...did you hear...My wife is she well? »

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Armando did not reply immediately; then he said, « Do you wish to sit, General Maconda? »

Maconda's face went white, then flushed red; through clenched teeth he responded, « I do not, Captain de la Rosa. I wish that you should tell me of my wife. »

Armando glanced at the chair; Maconda stepped forward in a single fluid motion and seized him by the collar of his threadbare shirt, hissing, « Tell me. »

Looking Maconda in the eye, Armando replied softly, « She died in childbirth two weeks ago. The boy-child also. I understand...that he did not bring a midwife for the birth. »

Maconda released him and Armando stepped back; the peculiar immobility of Maconda's expression struck him more forcefully than his previous anger, and he watched in concern as Maconda's hands worked aimlessly. « The dog, » Maconda whispered. « The black-hearted dog. I will kill him. I will kill all of them. No midwife... » He stood, blank-faced and unmoving, in the center of the tent; Armando ducked through the tent door. « Keep everyone out, » he muttered to the guard. « Everyone. I won't answer for the life of anyone going in there, do you understand? »

The guard nodded, his eyes wide. « No-one, Captain, I promise, » he replied, edging away from the tent door. « No-one will go in. » Armando nodded and walked away through the encampment; as he entered the jungle undergrowth again the still, heavy air was split behind him by a keening wail of grief and rage

General Maconda left the camp at sundown, alone. His mind was caught between horror and numbness; he did not seem to feel anything at all, but he noted the reactions of those who saw him as he left, fear, even terror written on each face when their eyes met his. He noted, as if in someone else, that he had bitten his lips until the blood came and scraped his forearms raw, but the hatred and grief in him dulled the pain to nothing. He would exact the utmost payment

from Santiago the Butcher for this act of bloodshed; nothing, nothing would prevent him from taking his last scarlet revenge on his enemy.

Under his breath he chanted the rhyme he had learned as a child, a rhyme from the stories his nurse had told him of the fairies and ghosts and black magic, the rhyme that told how to find the Brujo del Cumbre, the Warlock of the Peak:

*Go into the jungle at midnight
With only a lantern for your light;
Then when the moon begins to rise
You'll find your goal before your eyes
There the Witch-king of the mountain lies;
He'll grant your boon and name his price.*

« If you enter the jungle at nightfall and walk toward the mountains, you will find him, » Maconda whispered to himself. And it was a true story; he had seen the black handprint on the back of one of his father's slaves where the warlock had touched him, healing the broken back which had left him paralyzed but causing him to suffer from epileptic fits for the rest of his life. There were many other stories, but they all began in the same way : go into the woods at nightfall, and you will find him or he will find you.

Night had fallen with tropical suddenness; the mosquitos and moths flocked to the lantern and battered themselves against it. Something huge buzzed in the darkness, and Maconda ducked instinctively, swinging the lantern wildly to reveal a red-green beetle the size of his hand, also drawn by the light. Cursing, he closed the shutter to reveal only a thin line of light and stumbled forward into the tenebrous jungle. The path he had followed petered out rapidly; he cleared a way with heavy blows of his saber, blaspheming monotonously as he tripped across vines and entangled himself in the branches of bushes. His arm rose and fell, clearing a path, seemingly without his control; he stumbled forward, hardly knowing or caring when he struck his face against the bole of a tree. He had no clear thoughts, no conscious emotion, only an ill-defined rage muttering in the back of his head

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as he made his way forward, going to his knees and standing up awkwardly.

Suddenly he burst into a clearing; raising his lantern high, he found himself at the foot of a mountain, at the edge of a pool of water. He gradually became aware of the rush of a waterfall from somewhere ahead of him; raising the lantern higher still, he could see the light reflect from the fall at the far side of the pool, falling perhaps some fifteen meters into a basin perhaps three times that in diameter.

The tale is true, he thought, dimly. The stories all agree; the Brujo del Cumbre lives behind a waterfall...

Stumbling forward, he called out hoarsely, « Brujo, come out! Brujo! I would ask a boon of you! »

Peering into the gloom, Maconda could see nothing; he inhaled to call again, then stopped in mid-hail as something, no, someone, appeared, standing in the pool as if it had been waiting for him and had only chosen this moment to make itself apparent to him. Maconda, noted, with a distant sense of relief, that it was human, a man. But there was something wrong about him. The lantern light seemed to refuse to fall on him; his form was curiously indistinct, impossibly shadowed by some thing which seemed to interpose itself between the brightness of the lantern and his body. What Maconda could see of him showed him to be an old man, as he had heard, wearing only a sort of loincloth; the water of the pool came to his thighs. His hair was white, but he did not seem to be balding; the muscles of his arms and chest ran along his body like ropes and writhed beneath the skin. The brujo gestured at the lantern, apparently irritated by the light, and grated over the roar of the waterfall, « Cloak your light, General. » His voice was the voice of an old man, harsh and slightly tremulous.

« You know me? » Maconda asked, feeling oddly flattered and, at the same time, feeling a breath of terror make its way along his spine. He closed the shutter of the lantern and the

stygian blackness of the night fell about them like a cloak; from the darkness he heard the warlock reply. « Yes, indeed, General. I know the name and the desire of every man who sets foot on the trail which leads to this place. »

Maconda stared at the old man, his mouth working and his mind a welter of conflicting thoughts. « What I desire, then? » he asked, sharply. Perhaps the rush of the water obscured the question, for the brujo did not reply. Maconda waited uneasily for several minutes, his eyes becoming accustomed to the blackness; at last he could perceive the faint reflection of light from the pool and the black form of the warlock, silent and motionless. The thunder of the fall seemed to be subsumed by the roar of the blood in his ears, and for a brief, dizzy moment he wondered if he were deaf, or blind, and the figure of the brujo were only some imagined image left from the remembered lantern-light. Thinking of the lantern, he lifted it with wooden fingers and struggled to open the shutter again, but it seemed to have been jammed into place; pulling at it frantically, he tipped the lantern to get a better purchase and the hot oil flowed out onto his hands. With a hiss of pain, he dropped the lantern and heard the sizzle as it fell into the water and was extinguished.

« Leave it, » the warlock commanded. « We have no need of such a thing. » His voice broke oddly on the word « we », and Maconda was seized by the feeling that the jungle was filled with eyes gazing on the two of them. Suddenly the rage which had almost been consumed in his unreasoning fear of the dark returned, doubled, and he felt the urge to leap into the darkness and slash at the watching eyes, to bring out his saber and bury it in the warlock and the presences with him in the dark, to slash and stab and stab and stab and stab...

« Put down your sword, » the warlock's voice commanded; the words seemed far away and almost nonsensical to Maconda, wrapped in his black rag of hate, and he brandished the saber and screamed, « Not until you give me my desire! Give me my desire or I slaughter you

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where you stand, and neither saint nor spirit will keep me from drinking the blood from your heart! »

From somewhere in the darkness the brujo laughed, and if Maconda had not been so full of rage he would have turned and run, because the voice of the warlock had changed. He no longer spoke with the trembling voice of the old man, but with some other throat, a deep voice, and almost pleasant, but for something like the echo of a scream which buzzed between every word.

« Name your desire, Martín Jose Maconda, and I will set the price. »

Again the roar of the fall mixed with the rush of the blood in Maconda's ears; screaming to hear himself speak, he shrieked, « Give me power to drive my enemy from this land! Give me revenge upon the man who has killed my wife! » Falling silent, he stared into the darkness; two flecks of red light from the top of the black pillar who was the warlock seemed to stare back. Clearing his throat, Maconda shouted, hoarsely, « The children's nurses of this country tell stories, brujo, of the heroes who could not be harmed by any weapon forged by mortal hands, who called on the beasts of the jungle and had their aid. Give me that power, and give me the life of my enemy in my hand, and I will give you anything you ask of me. »

The two points of light seemed to flare, then darkened; the voice which was not the voice of the warlock asked, « What will you give me, my son? Will you give me your life's blood? Will you give me your fortune? »

Maconda laughed brokenly and shouted, « Yes, of course. »

« Will you give me your honor and your good name? »

« Yes. »

« Will you give me your obedience? Will you give me your soul? »

The night seemed to close around Maconda like a mouth, and strange things danced at the edge of his vision; for a moment he could not speak, and the face of Isabel appeared within him like a flower blooming in his mind. Caught in wrath and desperation, he muttered, « I do it for you. All of it. I do it for you. » Her face did not change in expression, but somehow he felt a thin edge of hatred for himself as he stared into her black eyes. In rage and shame he bellowed, « Yes, yes! All of that and more! »

The two lights flared more brightly still, and Maconda gasped and closed his eyes, for he had caught a glimpse of the warlock's face. As he stood, eyes closed, the warlock's voice came again, seeming to penetrate his ears and whisper from within his skull. « More... the blood, the lives, the honor of those you lead, will you give me that? »

« YES, DAMN YOU, YES! ANYTHING! » Maconda howled, and surged forward into the water, slicing blindly with his heavy saber, stumbling on the slick stones of the bed of the pool. He lurched forward and lost the sword, but struggled on, reaching with his hands to take the warlock and crush the life out of him, to destroy the power which had taken on the warlock as he might put on a shirt, and he heard the thousand voices of the warlock laughing in derision as he shrieked curses and groped blindly in the dark, seeking only to kill or to die, until the darkness faded into nothing and nothing into insensibility.

When he awoke it was early morning; he lay at the shore of a small stream, his sword near his hand, his shirt and pants muddied and torn as if from a night of struggling through the jungle. From his left he heard the sounds of men talking in low voice; standing, he saw that he was only about a hundred meters from the encampment he had left last night. He shook his head, wondering and a little afraid, then brushed at himself and turned toward the camp, walking slowly.

The sentry posted at the stream saw him and shouted, « It's the General! » The camp

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instantly filled with a buzz of confused speech, men abandoning breakfast, laundry, and sentry duty to crowd around Maconda as he strode through the camp. He refused to speak or to reply to their questions, shaking his head and holding his hand up; the more perceptive of the men pulled their fellows away, whispering that the General had suffered a cruel loss, that now was not the time to be cheering him and pulling at his shirt-tail, and what about sentry-duty, anyway?

Maconda reached the confines of his tent at last; ordering his aide-de-camp to leave him alone and keep anyone else out, he threw himself on his bed and stared at the peaked ceiling of the tent. « Isabel, » he whispered. « Isabel. I will avenge you, my love. » The rage he had felt yesterday crackled along his nerves as he thought of her, so young, so beautiful, and dead, together with his first son...He lay, entranced, until the filth on his shirt began to gall him. Sitting, he pulled his shirt over his head and threw it aside, then gasped, staring down at his torso. A sooty black tattoo lay imprinted on his chest, looking exactly as if someone had pressed a hand rolled in charcoal over his heart.

4 JUNE, YEAR OF OUR LADY OF SORROWS 1133

The lemon-yellow light of early morning spilled into the room from between the cracks in the shutters and fell on the bed where Don Santiago de Quijada y Alvarez lay dying. Each breath rattled between his teeth, and his hands wandered aimlessly along the bedcovers; periodically his heavy, wet cough racked him, leaving him in breathless agony. His manservant sat in a hard chair at the foot of the bed, half-dozing, until he was startled into wakefulness by the tap of boots in the corridor outside and the hum of conversation and rushing of feet somewhere in the fort.

Sitting up, he opened the door slightly and muttered, « His Excellency is not to be disturbed, » pitching his voice so as to avoid the attention Don Santiago. He was unsuccessful;

with an massive effort of will Don Santiago brought himself erect and rasped, « Send him in, damn you. What news? What news? » Gasping, he fell back, catching himself on his elbows. The young soldier, Joaquín, exhausted and dispirited, glanced around the door, exchanged a look with the manservant, and entered, standing with his best military posture at the foot of the bed.

« Disgraceful... » Don Santiago muttered hoarsely. « Dirt on the breeches, no cap boots unshined, I'll warrant. »

Joaquín shifted uneasily and answered, « I've come from the field, General. »

« Did I ask for excuses? » the old man asked querulously, then was seized by another coughing fit, leaving his goatee flecked with red froth. « Give your report, » he gasped at last.

Joaquín hesitated, then said, « I have no good news, General. Maconda has broken through the barricades in Ascension; the men broke ranks and fled... »

« Dogs, rabble, no discipline... » Don Santiago muttered heavily.

Joaquín continued, woodenly, « Colonel de Sanchez has offered Maconda his sword. »

« WHAT? » Don Santiago shrieked, jerking upright. « Surrendered, the knave, the traitor! May the dogs drink his blood, the coward! »

« General, there was nothing to be done. Maconda's men outnumber us by ten to one; there can be no hope of relief now that we've lost the port of Juanvallejo and the cannon. »

« A fig for the cannon and Maconda's men. »

« General, the war is over. I have given the order to abandon the fort. By now, only we three are still here. »

Don Santiago stared at his junior officer with bloodshot eyes, breathing stertorously, his face a

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yellowed mask of hate. Finally, he replied, quietly, « You are insubordinate, Joaquín, and I will break you for it. But that is neither here nor there. This is what you must understand, Joaquín. The war is not over until I have won. Do you understand? » he said, his voice rising in pitch and volume until it became a grating howl. « It is not over. It will never be over until I grind the rebel Maconda's bones under my feet and bathe my hands in the blood of every traitor in this country. Do you understand me? Never. Never. NEVER. By my life and honor, by Our Lady on Her throne in Heaven and by the demons in Hell, I promise my life and my eternal soul to any power which will hear me! I...WILL...NOT...LET...IT...END! »

Don Santiago screamed the last words and fell heavily back into the bed, coughing and retching; Joaquín and the manservant were absolutely silent, stunned by the blasphemy of the General's oath. At last the General fell silent, and the two men stared at each other for a moment before approaching the bed. A single bead of red hung at the corner of his mouth, and the morning breeze plucked at the disheveled white hair, but he no longer breathed.

The soldier and the servant stared at each other; Joaquín spoke first, muttering, « We should bury him before the rebels get here. »

« What for? » the servant grunted. « Why not let the old goat rot in bed? »

« Because he is the King's servant, » Joaquín replied coldly. « Dress him, no, he's already dressed. What on earth for? »

« He insisted on it, » the servant muttered. « You know what he was like, spit and polish, even when he was choking out his lungs in bed. »

« Very well, » Joaquín answered. « All the better for us, I suppose. Where can we take him? »

The servant hesitated, then replied, « Is it true that we were trying to make a secret passage

from the cellar to the cathedral? » At Joaquín's nod, he continued, « We could put him there. »

Joaquín thought for a moment, then nodded once and said, « That will have to do. Bear a hand, there. Is there anyone to say the rites over him? »

The servant looked at him in astonishment. « After dying with those words on his lips? » he asked softly.

Joaquín shrugged. « Well, perhaps you're right. And neither of us are priests...He'll have to do without. There, take his sword. We'll leave it with the body. »

The old man's body was light and frail; they carried him easily from his room in the tower down the stairs, across the courtyard, through the kitchen, and into the cellar, where Joaquín raised a flagstone in the cold granite floor, revealing a space cut from the stone beneath, large enough to hold a dozen men. They thrust the body down; Joaquín dropped into the chamber and arranged the limbs as best he could, placing the sword in the folded hands, then scrambled back out with the help of the manservant. Replacing the flagstone, they left without a backward glance.

4 JUNE, YEAR OF OUR LADY OF SORROWS 1133

General Martín José Maconda looked across the lagoon of Juanvallejo, his face set in an expression of displeasure. The men around him caught something of his mood, and there was little of the exuberance that had followed the surrender of the royalist troops that morning. Now the late afternoon sunlight fell on them, only a little less tangible than the blow of a hammer on an anvil, and the captured royalist troops, disarmed and despondent, and the newly-independent rebel army suffered alike in the brutal heat.

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« Where is he? » General Maconda barked again, hoarsely. « Where is that black-hearted, yellow-faced son of a whore? »

The ranks of troops before him, royalist and revolutionary alike, maintained an uneasy silence; finally Captain Armando de la Rosa broke from a group of officers of the rebel army and approached the general, his booted feet slapping loudly into the mud of the tidal flat. Reaching Maconda's side, he muttered, « I am given to understand that he died sometime last night or this morning, General. He was too ill to participate in the battle, and the shock of hearing of his defeat overmastered him. »

« Dead? » Maconda hissed. « I swore to kill the mongrel with my own hands. Even dying he thwarts me...at least he died knowing he had lost... » After musing for a moment, he asked, slowly, « And where is he buried? »

Captain de la Rosa returned to the group of officers; after a brief, muttered conversation he retraced his steps and said, his face wooden, « The men who claimed to have buried him are dead. »

« Dead? How? »

« Apparently some of our men wanted the watch of the one and the boots of the other, and they were a bit slow in handing them over; at any rate, they were bayoneted and left to die back in Ascension. They're certainly dead by now. »

Maconda ground his teeth in frustration and rage; seeing the wild look in his black eyes and the peculiar set of his jaw, the normally impassive captain stepped backward, uneasy. « Damn them all, » Maconda muttered. « I will have my revenge, and I will have it here. Gather the men, all except those we need to stand guard, and bring the two cannon we captured down to the water's edge. I have something to say. »

De la Rosa nodded; returning to the officers, he spoke a few terse sentences and the officers and men came to life, bringing the cannon down to the water's edge; the royal soldiers were ordered

forward into the lagoon, where they stood in ragged files, knee deep in the pale blue water, dispirited and frightened. The revolutionary soldiers formed neater files on the shore, their faces serious, even somber; Maconda turned to face them and addressed them in the hoarse roar of a man accustomed to bellowing orders through artillery fire.

« Men and brothers! Today we celebrate our victory over the forces arrayed against us, the king and noblemen who would grind us into the dust, denying us our liberties and the work of our own hands! » This brought a rough but enthusiastic cheer from the men; nodding and almost smiling, Maconda continued, « Here we see before us the hand of that malevolent head, the force sent to bring us to heel by bloodshed and terror! » A roar of hatred rose from the men in response; his face now contorted by rage, Maconda shouted, « Three and a half years ago, this lagoon ran red with the blood of your brothers in freedom! These soldiers of our former king, these very men slaughtered our compatriots at this place, and their wives and children were left to mourn and curse the name of the Butcher Santiago de Quijada! » Lowering his voice, Maconda rasped, « I lost a wife to him; all of you have lost brothers and friends because of him, and because of them. » Gesturing behind him, he roared, « Today vengeance is ours, and we repay! Let no man of them live to see another sun! At my order, shoot them where they stand! »

At this some of the men raised a feeble cheer; a very few raised their muskets, but many remained silent, shifting uneasily and looking at each other. Maconda looked at them in amazement, his bloodshot eyes narrowing in disbelief; then he bellowed, « Who's with me? If any of you wants to save these butchers, let him stand forth and deal with me! »

There was a stir in the ranks, and a young man dressed in the white and red robes of a priest of the Church of Our Lady stepped forward into the water. « I wish to save them, General, » he replied strongly.

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General Maconda scowled, lip curled, at the priest; moving toward him, his voice low and dangerously polite, he asked, « And why do you wish to save them, Father Machera? »

The young priest replied clearly, « Because, General, they are fellow believers in Our Lady. Because until our independence they were our countrymen. And because if we kill them now, unarmed and in cold blood, we are as bad or worse than they ever were. »

General Maconda nodded, fingering the hilt of his saber idly. « I see, Father Machera, » he said. « You sympathize with these men. Your religion and your ideas of forgiveness lead you to plead for them. » Father Machera nodded warily; something in Maconda's face warned him that the general had certainly not had a change of heart. Maconda went on, softly, « And perhaps, you sympathize with them in other things as well as fellow-countrymen, perhaps. Perhaps you wish their freedom so they can struggle again for their king, is that right? »

Machera began to protest, but Maconda shouted him down, seizing him the cowl of his robe and screaming in his face, « You traitor! Damned self-righteous hypocrite! You want to keep me from my revenge, do you? You want to protect these maggots, these butchers, these boot-lickers? » Throwing Machera back into the shallow water, Maconda brought his saber singing out of the scabbard and charged him, hacking at him with horrible strength; the priest was certainly dead after the first blow, but Maconda continued to drive the heavy saber through the body, gasping and grunting with the effort of each stroke.

The men on the beach and those in the lagoon watched, stunned and horrified, as Maconda turned and lifted his bloody sword. « Who else speaks for them? » he shrieked, brandishing the sword. No-one spoke; no-one moved. After a long moment he waded out of the water, breathing heavily; he gasped out, « Kill them all. »

The rebels slowly took their places and raised their musket to shoulder level; the royalist soldiers stood stock-still, too shocked to move or protest. At de la Rosa's signal, the cannon and the ranks of musketry fired in unison, and the lagoon became a charnel house, musket balls and grapeshot ripping through flesh or water; after the first shock the royalists attempted to flee, but none escaped the hail of metal. The rebels fired until all was still.

THE CLUSTER: - REPUBLICA DE NUEVA ARAGONIA

THE LAND:

RESISTENCIA

The domain of Resistencia consists of several islands in the ocean called Mar de Lagrimas (Sea of Tears) by the inhabitants; the largest island (actually two islands connected by a mangrove swamp, each about twenty miles by thirty) is also called Resistencia, and more than nine out of ten of the inhabitants of the domain live on the eastern half of the island of Resistencia. The climate is quite dry for ten months of the year, with a season of heavy rains in July and August. The population is concentrated along the coast in small fishing villages; the interior of the eastern part of the island is dominated by the Sierra, an imposing mountain which overlooks the entire island. The center of government, Ascension, is the only major inland city, and is located at the foot of the Sierra and surrounded by its foothills. The total population of the island is probably only some six or seven thousand people.

MACONDA

The domain of Maconda is a strip of land about two hundred miles in length, with stunningly beautiful white-sand beaches mixed with stretches of rocky, inaccessible coast. The land runs from the sea about forty miles inland,

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where it meets a mountain range running parallel to the coast; the intervening space is mostly tropical jungle. The coast is dotted by fishing villages, while the jungle is occasionally broken by great stretches of land under cultivation for sugar cane, cocoa, bananas, several exotic spices, coffee, and other cash crops. These crops are transported overland to Libertad, capital and principal city of the Republic, and from there they are shipped to the other lands of Ravenloft. It is not uncommon for the Mists to deposit trading ships from the Core in the Mar de Lagrimas, and the merchant captains are always eager to obtain the exotic goods of the Republic; this commerce forms the backbone of the Republic's cash economy. The mainland has a population of perhaps twenty thousand people, about equally divided between Libertad, the plantations, and the other towns along the coast and nestled in the hills.

The natives of the Republic have taken to calling the mainland « Maconda », after the president of the Republic. The reason for this is not clear.

CULTURAL LEVEL

The Republic of Nueva Aragoña is a renaissance domain; warfare is conducted with cannon and muskets rather than sword and shield, and body armor is a ridiculous anachronism. Before being brought into Ravenloft the Republic's mother country, Aragoña, had higher technology than is found in any domain save Zherisia or Nosus, including guns with rifled barrels and accurate chronometers, but the Republic does not have the skilled craftsmen necessary to maintain that level of technology itself; its current level of technological sophistication is therefore more or less on par with Dementlieu or Lamordia. Culturally the question is quite different; the Republic was a backward colonial outpost of a rather culturally backward kingdom and they are extremely impressed by the cultural refinement of Dementlieu and Mordent. In fact, the upper class of the Republic is rapidly become a cultural colony of Port-a-Lucine.

THE FOLK

The natives of Resistencia and Maconda are a beautiful people; the mix of the Aragoñan settlers with the native peoples and the further admixture of the blood of black slaves imported to work the sugar cane and cocoa plantations have combined to produce a people of uncommon grace and elegance. Skin tone varies widely, from the pale gold of the Aragoñans to the copper-brown of the natives to the deep purple-black of the slaves, with every mixture and shade in between. Almost everyone has black hair and dark brown or black eyes, but a very few have green eyes; this is considered both exotically beautiful and (among the more superstitious) a sign of the inborn ability to communicate with spirits.

The natives of the Republic are a study in contrasts. When at work in the early morning or evening, they work hard, almost frantically, at whatever task is set to them; but during the blindingly hot afternoons they laze in hammocks, drinking, talking, and sleeping. On holy days the cathedral and churches of Our Lady of Sorrows are packed to overflowing and those present show deep and sincere religious feeling, but on festival days the streets are scenes of revelry, debaucheries, and abandonment. Devotion to the family is a cardinal virtue, yet infidelity, extramarital affairs, and domestic abuse are commonplace. Generally they are quick-tempered and given to holding grudges, but some minor event may, in a moment, reconcile enemies whose families have been at odds for generations and make fast friends of them. They genuinely believe in a democratic ideal, with equality before the law, no hereditary nobility, and civil liberty, yet they are extremely class conscious and discriminate among themselves by a whole range of criteria, ranging from family name to wealth to skin color to manner of speech.

The society of the Republic is entirely patriarchal; only men can hold office, vote, or be priests of the Church of Our Lady; the only situation in which an adult women may own

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property is when she is left as a widow, and then only if she has no sons old enough to assume title (the age of majority is 25 in the Republic). Vices such as adultery or drunkenness which would destroy a woman's reputation are shrugged off in a man. The natives of the republic are also extremely clannish; family business is kept in the family, and to speak of family troubles to anyone outside of the clan is tantamount to high treason. The importance placed on family relationships means that every Aragoñan can recite his genealogy to several generations and can usually determine his relationship with any other Aragoñan after no more than several minutes of debate over who-married-whom,

The culture of the Republic is, practically speaking, uniform, but the natives themselves draw sharp distinctions between the inhabitants of this pueblito and that, such that the natives of Puerto Brazon are considered notorious skinflints, while the natives of San Juan del Cumbre are known as terrible liars and the people of Libertad are noted for their over-elaborate, drawling manner of speech. An outsider would probably conclude that no real difference exists, but the natives insist that these variations are real and important. Superstitions are many and varied; the more educated, upper class folk scoff at such things, but the peasantry openly profess belief in the efficacy of their rituals and almost everyone believes in such things to some degree. The people of the Republic are also, generally speaking, highly fatalistic; they have a way of accepting their condition which outsiders find startling and extremely frustrating. Many difficulties which another people might struggle to overcome are met by the stock phrases, «It's the will of Our Lady» and «That's how things are» and accepted as inevitable.

Religious feeling is real and deep for nearly every native of the Republic. They believe implicitly in the power of Our Lady of Sorrows and apply to her both personally and through her priesthood for her favor; the priests of the Church occupy a very high place in society. The Republic has no official state religion, but

virtually every person of the Republic is a member of the Church, at least in name. Contact with the Core is slowly bringing change in this area; the agnosticism or mysticism of Lamordia and Dementlieu have become popular affectations among the upper classes, but the common people believe implicitly in the power of Our Lady and of her priesthood, and almost everyone believes in Our Lady and the Church at some level.

The practice of santería is also very common in Maconda; this belief is very similar in nature to the voudan of Souragne, but the natives apply the names of the saints of the church of the Lady of Sorrows to the spirits summoned. The practitioners of santería tend very strongly toward being black magicians (called alternately brujos or santeros), although some few white magicians are also known. Whether white or black, this religion is considered abhorrent by the Church of Our Lady and its priests preach constantly against the acceptance or practice of santería, but to very little effect.

The economy of Nueva Aragoña is largely based on a thriving trade with the Core. Resistencia trades largely in exotic fruits, such as oranges and lemons, as well as in the many large and beautiful pearls brought from the sea floor near the islands, while the mainland trade is more diverse, although still based mainly on agriculture; common articles of trade include tropical hardwoods brought from the interior, rum, sugar cane, cocoa, exotic spices, and the like, grown on the enormous plantations found near the mountains. Most fine metalwork, good cloth, fine clothing, jewelry, perfume, and so forth is imported from the Core.

Unlike some drawn into Ravenloft, the natives of the Republic are aware that their world has changed in some fundamental way; to most, born and bred in an environment limited by the jungle on one side and the sea on the other, the lands over the sea where almost legendary anyway, and they have accepted the fact that the voyage which once led to Aragoña now leads to Dementlieu, Mordent, Nova Vaasa, or still stranger parts with little fuss. The sailors and

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the more educated among the people find the change far more unsettling, but they too are learning to live with the situation as it now stands.

Although the cultures of the two domains are virtually indistinguishable to foreigners, a few general trends can be noted; the islanders are rather more fatalistic, more friendly and accepting of outsiders, and more firmly devoted to the Church of Our Lady; additionally, there is a sharper distinction between the merchants and landowners of the upper class and the laborers, fishermen, sailors, and pearl divers of the lower class, with little or no middle class. Those native to the mainland are rather more active and decisive, more proud and reserved, and more given to santería, if of the lower classes, or to agnosticism, deism, or mysticism, if of the upper classes. The mainland also boasts a fairly significant middle class of artisans and small landowners, mostly clustered around the capital Libertad. There is also one sharp difference in superstition between the island and the mainland which some outsiders have considered significant; on Resistencia it is considered the worst of bad luck to name any dead person, while no native of the mainland will intentionally harm a snake.

Further details on the history, classes, and economic system of the Republic are available upon request.

THE LAW

Theoretically the Republic of Nueva Aragoña is a genuine republic, governed by an elected president, a one-house elected congressional assembly, and a judiciary appointed by the president and confirmed by the congress; the franchise is extended to every male over the age of twenty-five who pays taxes in excess of ten gold pieces per year and to every male over twenty-five who served in the War of Independence. The republic is further subdivided into four administrative districts: Resistencia, composed of the islands of the

republic and administered from La Ascension on the island of Resistencia; Libertad, consisting of the city of Libertad and its environs; Rios del Oriente, consisting of the mainland east of Libertad and administered from Rio de Lagrimas; and Cumbre Brazón, consisting of the mainland west of Libertad and administered from San Juan del Cumbre.

Although Neuva Aragoña is a republic by law, in practice General Maconda rules the mainland as a dictator; he has had himself declared president for life and exerts nearly total control over the Congress and judiciary, with personal power to strip any member of either of office and call new elections at will. The only significant check to his power on the mainland comes from the Church of Our Lady of Sorrows, which has registered a strong, if usually quiet, disapproval of his tyrannical acts. The feelings of the common people for Maconda, both personally and as a ruler, are highly ambivalent. On one hand he is a revolutionary hero and a patriarchal figure to a people accustomed to the rule of kings, and there is still a great deal of sympathy for him for the tragic way in which he lost his young wife; but his brutality, his usurpation of power in the supposedly republican government, and, most of all, the strong opposition of the Church to his rule tend to prejudice the common people against him. Although most do not approve of many of his actions, few or none outside the Church dare to speak against him, even in the privacy of their homes, for those who do often die in strange and horrible ways.

The island of Resistencia, however, pays only lip service to the government of Maconda; practically speaking, the island is the personal fiefdom of the Obando family, the oldest and wealthiest merchant family of Resistencia. However, the governor, the head of the Obando clan and effective ruler of the island, Roberto Obando, is no kinder a man than Maconda; he cheerfully and ruthlessly exploits his position and influence to dominate the fisherfolk, farmers, pearl divers, and lesser merchants of the islands, diverting most of the wealth produced by the islanders to his family's coffers.

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Maconda has gone to great lengths to bring Obando to heel, but his efforts up to the present time have failed completely.

Native PCs

Native PCs of the Republic may be any of the classes listed in Domains of Dread other than that of gypsy or anchorite, as the Republic has no native gypsy population and native priests must be of the church of Our Lady of Sorrows; outside of the Republic, this will almost certainly create awkward situations, as most people will consider them some heretical splinter group of the Ezran church and react accordingly.

Encounters

Resistencia

During the day is only a 10% chance for an chance encounter (check twice), usually with a poisonous snake or a giant spider, if in the less settled parts of the island, or with a person dominated by an odem if in a village or town. At night the chance of an encounter rises significantly, to 25% (check twice) with the most likely encounters being with spiders, incorporeal undead and vampire bats, which live in caves in the Sierra.

Maconda

Maconda being much larger and less densely settled, a wider variety of creatures may be encountered there. If the party finds itself in the jungle, there is a 33% chance for an encounter four times a day, usually with poisonous snakes but also possibly with jaguars, caiman, anacondas, and giant spiders of several kinds. In the cities

THE CHURCH OF OUR LADY OF SORROWS

Commerce with the Core has brought the people of Nueva Aragoña into contact with the Church of Ezra, which has caused no small stir among the members of both churches. The similarities

are striking; most importantly, both worship a goddess capable of appearing in multiple incarnations who makes herself responsible for the troubles of her worshipers, and there are certain similarities in doctrine, ritual, and sacraments (although there are substantial differences, as well). All things considered, it seems doubtful that any real connection exists between the two churches, since the one originated on a Prime Material world more than one thousand years ago, while the other appeared in Ravenloft less than one hundred years ago. However, there are some members of both churches who would disagree. The official dogma of the Church of Our Lady of Sorrows is that the Lady of Sorrows can appear in any number of incarnations to anyone, but always with the same message of grace; the natives of the Republic are therefore inclined to consider Ezra as a manifestation of Our Lady, a doctrine which most of the clergy of Ezra find entirely unacceptable; they insist that if the Lady of Sorrows is a genuine deity she must be a manifestation of Ezra. This nasty theological tangle was never resolved to anyone's satisfaction; although there was, for a time, speculation that the Church of Our Lady would be discovered as the long-awaited fifth sect of the Ezran church, this has come to nothing, at least for the time being, partly because nearly all of the priests of Our Lady insisted on the primacy of their own church, but more importantly because the priests of the Church of Our Lady show no manifestation of the Shield of Ezra (although their other spells are granted normally). The two churches generally maintain an attitude of uneasy neutrality toward each other; the other religions of the Core have been pronounced anathema by the priests of the Church of Our Lady; although the government respects no official religious establishment, this pronouncement effectively places those who practice some other religion outside the society of Nueva Aragoña.

MORE DETAILS ON THE ORGANIZATION AND HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF OUR LADY OF SORROWS AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

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SANTERÍA

Santería is a religion native to the republic, similar in some respects to the voudan practiced in Souragne. Its male practitioners are known as brujos or santeros (the female equivalents: brujas or santeras); they receive their spell abilities by inviting powerful spirits into their bodies through ritual chants and sacrifices. These spirits are known by the names of saints of the Church of Our Lady of Sorrows, although it seems virtually certain that no real connection exists between the saints and these spirits. The spells which the santeros can cast depend on the spirits they can summon to them; this, in turn, depends on the level of the caster. The santeros may elect to attempt to summon a more powerful spirit than is appropriate to their level, but doing so carries the possibility of an extremely dangerous backlash.

Some santeros achieve a greater intimacy with the spirits they summon by effectively abandoning control of their body and allowing whatever spirit which wishes to enter them free access. This allows the santero to channel spirits without the draining and time-consuming rituals usually associated with spells cast in this manner, but the spell caster can no longer choose to refuse a spirit entrance to his body. Santeros who have given up control of their bodies in this way are usually referred to by other santeros as «casas solas» or «empty houses», apparently because the spirits are free to wander into and out of the body just as thieves might enter and exit an unguarded home. It is believed that the Brujo del Cumbre has taken this dreadful step; if so, he is probably the only santero of the republic who has done so.

The abilities of santeros are rather broader than those of most clerics; many of the spirits they summon are demanded to produce love potions or charms to ease childbirth, to ensure a good harvest, to bring a horse luck in an upcoming race, and so forth. Player characters are most likely to interact with santeros as a way to obtain healing or divination spells; in such a case treat the santero as a cleric of the appropriate level.

They will charge whatever they think the market will bear for their services; wealthy foreigners, such as most PCs, will be forced to pay through the nose for the santero's help.

It should be noted that the casting of spells by santería, as mentioned before, involves long and elaborate rituals (as a rule of thumb: one hour per level of the spell). The santero is, therefore, not really a viable adventuring class.

Details on the mechanics of santería, the names of saints and how they are summoned and so forth, available upon request

RESISTENCIA:

DON SANTIAGO DE QUIJADA Y ALVAREZ, DARKLORD OF RESISTENCIA

4th magnitude ghost, lawful evil

AC: -3 or 2

MV: 12

Level: 7 (a 7th level fighter at his time of death)

Hit points: 32

THAC0: 13 (see below)

No. of Attacks: 1

Damage/Attack: 1-2+special

Special Attacks: See below

Special Defenses: See below

Special Vulnerabilities: see below

Magic Resistance: 50%

Strength: N/A

Dexterity: N/A

Constitution: N/A

Intelligence: 12

Wisdom: 19

Charisma: 10

BACKGROUND:

Don Santiago de Quijada y Alvarez was born as the eldest son of an impoverished nobleman of Aragoña; his family, once one of the greatest of the region, had fallen in stature to such a degree that their ancestral lands had been mortgaged to the hilt and they lived at a level hardly above

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that of their peasant tenants. Don Santiago's father lived obsessed by the idea of restoring his family to their former glory, and he never ceased to tell his son of the past glory of their family and of the duty which he had to uphold that glorious tradition, regardless of his circumstances. Don Santiago learned early that his name and his history separated him from the peasants around him as surely as if they were of two different species, and he whole-heartedly accepted that difference and the necessity of restoring his family name to its proper prominence as the cornerstones of his life.

Through many years of scrimping and the mortgaging of the last of the family lands Don Santiago's family obtained the means to send him to court in the style which they imagined was appropriate for a member of the illustrious family of Quijada. Don Santiago arrived young, proud, and desperate to establish himself as a member of the court and win respect to his family name. He soon discovered that the money provided by his family was nowhere near sufficient to maintain the lifestyle of a stylish courtier; he found himself the butt of jokes as his education, his lack of manners, and his backwoods manner of speech came under the merciless scrutiny of the court wits. The joking referrals to him as a hayseed and a peasant putting on airs cut him to the very core; enraged and humiliated, he fought several very ill-considered duels with far more skilled opponents and came near to losing his life on several occasions. This mockery had two effects on Don Santiago; it served as a spur to his desire to succeed and lord it over his erstwhile mockers, and it bred in him a hatred for the peasantry from which he so desperately desired to differentiate himself.

He determined that the best place to win advancement and respect was as a member of the army; buying a commission as a colonel with the last of his family's money, he gave himself to his task with grim efficiency. He had always had poor health, no better than average ability with the sword, and little genius for the command of men or the intricacies of tactics and strategy, but he resolved to achieve success on

sheer determination. He dedicated every waking moment to study of the great military minds of the past and to the administrative duties of his unit; he ignored the demands of hunger and thirst and further weakened his health by limiting himself to four hours of sleep in the night. Some thought him mad, but most, even his former mockers, came to hold a grudging admiration for his thoroughness and dedication to the cause he had set for himself.

Being, himself, so fanatically disciplined, Don Santiago held his troops responsible for maintaining a humanly impossible level of spit and polish. His punishments were generally considered draconian, even by the standards of the Aragoñan army; he thought nothing of ordering a man lashed for failing to polish his boots to the general's exacting standards. His treatment of enemy prisoners was even more harsh; he gladly extended a hand of fellowship to fellow officers, but would order common soldiers sentenced to death on any or no pretext whatsoever.

However, despite all of his efforts, true military genius was well beyond his abilities. After a few fairly creditable actions he was made a general early in his career and awarded new lands and titles by the king, but a series of reverses dimmed his star and he soon found himself placed in hardship assignments, putting down small internal revolts and tied down with administrative details as the military governor of a rebellious province in the backwater of the kingdom, rather than being given command of troops in the all-important foreign wars which had racked Aragona for most of the last generation. Each setback caused him to strive harder and demand more from his men; with every failure he took matters more into his own hands and delegated less, with a corresponding loss of initiative and efficiency among his troops; and each effort met with failure and a further loss of prestige. Desperate, he attempted to establish his reputation as an able administrator by instituting draconian military rule in the areas he held under his control, but his unreasonable demands and callousness toward the feelings of the common people led to continuous and ever

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more serious outbreaks of rebellion in the land under his control.

At last the King stepped in; taking him from his governorship, he sent him to deal with a recent rebellion in the minor overseas colony of Nueva Aragoña. The King presented it as a great opportunity for Quijada to bring an important colony back to the mother country, but Don Santiago rightly interpreted it as being tantamount to a sentence of exile for a general considered both a political and a military liability.

This news plunged Don Santiago into near-despair, but his iron will asserted himself and he resolved to prove his worth to King and country by bringing the rebellious colonies back into the Kingdom at sword's point, receiving the plaudits of the court and King, and achieving the fame deserved both by he himself and by his illustrious family.

Don Santiago arrived at the head of an army of some two thousand troops in the summer of 1129; he determined to take the island of Manzanilla (now called Resistencia by the rebels) and use it as a base of operations for quelling the insurrection on the mainland. However, he found that the situation was not at all what he had expected. He had believed that the revolution was the product of a few malcontents feeding the populace with fairy tales of utopia and that the mere presence of a strong force loyal to the king would cause said malcontents to fade into the woodwork, winning the struggle with hardly a bullet fired. He discovered instead a mass uprising driven by centuries of abuse and neglect on the part of royal governors, determined to throw down the rule of the distant king and forge a republic in its place. Don Santiago, who almost worshiped the king and hated democracy and republicanism with every bone of his patrician body, was horrified. Ignoring one or two chances for peaceful discussion of terms, he began to implement the military government which he had put into place in his governorship in Aragoña, instituting a curfew, forbidding public gatherings and travel between towns, and

punishing offenders with summary execution or floggings so heavy they amounted to the same thing. On hearing of the flag of independence being raised in Juanvallejo, a village of the island, he took his troops there by sea; catching the rebels off guard, he drove them from their fortifications, catching them between two wings of his army and forcing them to surrender; he then killed them all, although they were under the white flag of truce. Heartened by this success, the royal army won several victories on the island and the mainland, bringing much of the colony back under the nominal control of the king.

However, the news of Don Santiago's atrocity raced through Resistencia and the mainland, and the revolutionary movement received new impetus; realizing that they could not hope to beat the more numerous and better trained royal forces in open battle, the rebels began a guerrilla campaign, striking at isolated outposts and supply stations and retreating into well-concealed hideouts in the hills of the island. The royalist army, spread thin over the island and the mainland, was extremely ill-equipped to deal with this kind of struggle, and morale began to decay among the royalists and surge among the rebels. A man named Martín Jose Maconda, one of the prime movers of the independence movement, began to make a name for himself, leading daring raid after daring raid and wearing away the resistance of the royal army; Don Santiago grew to hate him and plotted to find some way to catch and destroy this most dangerous of the rebels. At last, he had what he considered a stroke of luck; a chance raid at a house in Puertomar led to the arrest of Maconda's young wife, Isabel de Maconda. Don Santiago placed her in solitary confinement at his headquarters in the Castillo Ascension, a small castle overlooking the town of Ascension and made sure her husband knew of her imprisonment. Being a young woman of more than common resolution and fortitude, she refused to speak to him of her husband's whereabouts for any reason or plead for her release; Maconda, (now calling himself General Maconda) left the island and hid on the mainland, gathering supporters and planning his

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return to liberate his wife and crush Don Santiago's army. He dared not attempt to free her himself, as he felt that the revolutionary movement might crumble if he were captured; instead, he turned his energy to the liberation of the mainland, which he achieved in a relatively brief period. He then turned his attention to the problem of invading and recapturing the island of Resistencia, still strongly held by the royalist troops, where Don Santiago's methods had succeeded, at least temporarily, in crushing resistance. These methods had also earned him the nickname « Santiago the Butcher » and the implacable hatred of the islanders, but the opinion of rebels and democratic malingers troubled him not at all, and he remained convinced that a silent majority, loyal to the king, approved of his methods and would say so as soon as Maconda was crushed and they had no more fear of retribution from the few rebels left struggling, and that those who were not loyal deserved such treatment in any case.

Don Santiago continued to hold Isabel de Maconda captive, partly in the fading hope that she would offer the clue to victory and his return to the king's good graces, but mostly for a reason which Don Santiago hardly dared admit, even to himself. He had become desperately enamored of the young woman. He attempted to deny it to himself, but found himself visiting her cell more and more frequently; desperate, he ordered her confined in a tiny cell on the far side of the court, which he found himself passing by every day, not entering, but simply standing outside the door and thinking of her. Distracted by thoughts of her beauty, he ordered that she be given no chance to bathe nor any clean clothing, but even these measure failed to diminish her haughty beauty in his eyes. When her pregnancy was discovered, he felt as if he had been betrayed personally. Whenever he met with her to ask her about her husband, he felt obliged to speak as harshly as possible to conceal any sign of tenderness; her obvious disdain for him and the king burned within him, causing him to writhe in agonies of shame when he thought back on them and even, on occasion, breaking his near-legendary self-control. He was ashamed to love a rebel who spoke openly

against the king, ashamed to love another man's wife, ashamed to hold the woman he loved prisoner and brutally mistreat her; and as often happens, his thwarted love and shame became hate; he made more and more strenuous attempts to break her spirit, to cause her to plead for mercy, pleas she never made, and which he admired her for never making, loving and hating her even more.

At last, only a week before she died in childbirth, Don Santiago realized that she would never love him, and that her heart would always belong to her husband, his most hated rival; in his rage and embarrassment he swore that she would have no midwife for her birth. After two days of labor the child was born stillborn and the mother died soon afterward.

When he was informed of her death Don Santiago wept.

In the days after her death Don Santiago's government of the island became ever more despotic and less effective; spontaneous outbreaks of rioting weakened the army, and Maconda and his forces soon regained a toehold on the island. Don Santiago fought on with a desperate, dogged persistence, his conscious thought reduced to the idea that he must win the war and regain the honor of his family name; never an easy sleeper nor a healthy man, he soon stopped sleeping entirely and his health worsened dramatically. He was forced to his bed, where he lay in feverish delirium in the tropical heat, hoarsely discussing strategy and tactics with himself and planning on what title he would accept when he returned to Aragoña at last. The fever was punctuated by periods of lucidity; at such times he understood that the war was going against him and struggled to devise new ways to achieve the victory he thirsted for. At last he had only one thought, he would never give up the struggle. The victory over the hated rebels must be won at any cost. He died with those words on his lips, but in vain; on the day of his death the last royal army was captured and the final defeat of the king's forces assured.

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That evening a fog from the sea enveloped the island; as the sun set Don Santiago rose as a ghost, pacing the fortifications of the Castillo Ascension and attempting to plan his counterattack against the rebel forces he knew were attempting to thwart his return to honor.

CURRENT SKETCH:

As a ghost, Don Santiago appears as he did just before his death : a short, slight man, with white hair worn to the shoulders, handlebar mustache and goatee. He is impeccably groomed and dressed in the blue coat and white knee-breeches of the Royal Army, but the epaulettes of a general no longer gleam on his shoulders. He seems to walk with the assistance of a heavy cane with a silver head and worn iron ferrule and has the gait of an old man in ill health. His complexion is dark yellow, and his features are continually twisted into an expression of querulous bad temper mixed with self-righteous fastidiousness; the lines on his face are deeply etched and mark him as a man of evil temper.

Don Santiago may wander freely in his domain, but by day he almost never leaves the Castillo Ascension. By night he often wanders the battlefields of the revolutionary war, trapped in reminiscence of the strategic and tactical errors which led him to defeat. He is cursed to relive every battle in memory and see with perfect clarity the choices which brought him to failure; he thirsts for another chance to put his new insight into practice and bring his campaign to crush the rebel movement to fruition, but his plans are doomed to failure. He generally attempts to deny his undead status to himself and often succeeds for a time, making elaborate plans for collecting an army, winning a glorious victory over the hated peasants of the island, and returning to receive the plaudits and respect he strived all of his life to obtain, only to be crushed by the remembrance that such goals are forever out of his reach when some chance event points out his unlife. On occasion he has used his ability to dominate others in an attempt to achieve his aims by fomenting a counter-revolution, but these attempts have been

universally unsuccessful. When at the Castillo Ascension, he often laments the loss of Isabel de Maconda; he can often be found pacing the doorway outside the cell she died in, gesticulating madly and pleading with her to forgive him.

Obsessed as he is by his bitter memories and dreams of glory, he is usually entirely unaware of his surroundings and will, generally, not attack or even notice the living in his domain; by day, he is invisible unless he wills otherwise or if he attacks, when he takes on semi-corporeal form; at night, he may choose to be invisible but usually appears in his semi-corporeal state. However, his aura of despair radiates continually in either state unless he consciously suppresses it. This aura of despair has a three hundred foot effective radius; any person within this distance of Don Santiago must make a save vs. spell at -4 or be afflicted by a piercing despair which dulls the mind and causes those affected to make all attacks, saving throws, and proficiency checks at -4 on the die. This aura, combined with the evil reputation of the place, is one of the principal reasons that no native of the island of Resistencia will willingly approach Castillo Ascension, even in daylight.

COMBAT:

When attacked, or if encountered by night, Don Santiago usually manifests himself as a semi-corporeal ghost; he will generally not initiate a battle, as he has no enthusiasm for combat, but if attacked, threatened, or simply brought out of his memories he can certainly be provoked into an attack, and in such a battle he will bring all of his abilities to bear. His first action will almost certainly be to call on the undead of the island to defend him; the result will depend on where he is when he makes this summons. If he is in or near the Castillo Ascension, 5-8 specters will respond immediately to this call; if he is near a battlefield of the war (DM's discretion) 1-4 specters and 3-6 lesser incorporeal undead will respond within 2-5 rounds; and if he is attacked somewhere else, this call will bring 1-2 specters and 2-5 lesser undead within a turn. He will

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allow his minions to attack, possibly joining the battle himself by dominating one of his attackers; he will only take semi-corporeal form and attack if the tide of battle goes very much against his summoned servants, and will flee if defeat seems imminent. (Note that those involved in combat with the Don must save against his aura of despair, described previously.)

His first personal attack will usually be an attempt to dominate one of his attackers; the object of his attack, almost always the person he perceives as being the group's most powerful fighter, must save vs. spell at -2 (or at -6 if the battle takes place at the Castillo Ascension) or fall under the control of Don Santiago. He will then use that body to attack until combat ends or he is forced from the body. If this gambit fails, he takes semi-corporeal form and strikes with his heavy cane. This attack deals only 1 or 2 hit points of damage, but counts as a touch attack, negating any armor class bonus due to armor or shield; the person struck loses three levels of experience. Generally he is affected only by weapons of +2 or greater enchantment, but a weapon used by a rebel soldier during the war of independence will deal half damage per successful blow. Any spell aimed at him has an outright 50% chance of failure. If severely damaged he will attempt to retreat and rejuvenate himself; he may perform this action three times in a night, restoring himself to full hit points, but he may not act for the next turn after so regenerating himself. If encountered away from Castillo Ascension he may be turned normally, although with a -6 penalty to the die roll, while his minions are turned with a penalty of -3 on the die while he is present. If encountered at the castle he cannot be turned and a -6 penalty is assessed to attempts to turn the undead under his control.

If reduced to below zero hit points, Don Santiago will dissipate into mist; this is not his ultimate end, but he will be trapped within the confines of the chamber he is buried in until the next full moon. He may attack anyone who enters the chamber, but may not leave it. He can only be laid to rest if the killing blow is dealt

with his own sword, taken from the skeletal hands of his corpse.

CLOSING THE BORDERS:

When Don Santiago closes the borders of Resistencia the sea takes on an eerie, unnatural calm. No breath of wind ruffles the sea, and the waves die down until the ocean's surface is almost literally as smooth as glass. Sailing is impossible; those attempting to row away from the island may get as far as a half-mile from the shore, but after that point they will strive in vain to make headway and will find themselves no farther from the island than they began, even after hours of rowing. Anyone attempting to fly away will find the strange, still air will not support them and gradually sink into the sea,

The islanders refer to this calm as « la calma de la muerte », or « the calm of death », and will not venture onto the ocean in this weather for any inducement whatsoever.

IMPORTANT NPCs OF RESISTENCIA:

The Obando family:

The Obando family is among the oldest and is certainly the richest of the landowners and merchants composing the upper class of Resistencia. They own a fine villa in Puertomar, but are usually found at their family hacienda just outside Ascension. The family consists only of Roberto, a tall, handsome, and charismatic man of about forty with the coloring of the native Aragoñan; his brother Ricardo, some years younger but eerily similar in physical appearance; Roberto's wife Anabella, perhaps the only redhead of the entire Republic; and their teenaged daughter Luisa. The family has always been small and had the habit of never marrying anyone from the island; as in many other families of the upper class, the young men and women were always sent back to Aragoña to be educated and to find husbands and wives. Because of the prestige attached to close connection from the mother country and because of the social polish obtained in the universities

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and salons of the capital of Aragoña, the Obando family always carried an air of superior culture and refinement. This, combined with their personal holdings, made them unquestionably the leading family of the island.

The other natives of the island have always assumed that the Obandos habit of sending their young people to the mother country stemmed only from the snobbishness common in the upper class of the islanders, but they have had another pressing reason, as well. The Obandos are a family of vampyres; they sent their young back to the mother country to find and mate with others of their kind, while maintaining their permanent household on the island because of the ease and security of their position. They feed from among their many field workers and servants; the whispers of «something odd» happening to those called to serve at the manor house is shrugged off as untrue, irrelevant, or unavoidable. The charisma and charm abilities of the Obando clan, combined with their wealth and breeding, have made them the natural leaders of the island, which they run as their private preserve. Most of the trade conducted is done in their ships; the pearl divers and fishermen are forced to sell their goods to representatives of the Obando interests, who then re-sell the goods and pocket the difference; and they own the finest arable land of the island, as well.

Due to their connections with Aragoña and their comfortable position under royal rule, the Obando family were quietly supportive of the royal troops in the war of independence; only when it became obvious that Maconda would carry the day did Roberto Obando declare for the rebels. Obando became governor of the district of Resistencia after the war ended and the republican government was established; he promptly began to do his best to isolate the island from the mainland government, doing his best to ensure that all the administrative posts were held by men favorable to him and his interests rather than by Maconda's partisans. Maconda has made a variety of covert attempts to subvert his position by weakening his

monopolies and political influence, but most have met with little or no success.

Obando's present desire is to find a husband for his daughter; Ricardo has traveled to the Core on two occasions, attempting to discover the communities of vampyres which the family is sure must exist in this new home. He has not yet had success; at the end of his last trip he heard stories of the existence of vampyres in Lekar, but the other stories he has heard of Falkovnia lead him to believe that, although they may possibly of the correct race, they are almost certainly not of the social class he believes appropriate for his own wife or for the husband of his niece. He personally hopes to find vampyres among the upper classes of Mordent or Dementlieu, the Core domains most familiar to the Nueva Aragoñans.

Roberto, Ricardo, Anabella, and Luísa Obando, vampyres, lawful evil.

The Guzman family:

The men of the Guzman family of Puertomar, Andre, Cristobal, and Jose María, are famed throughout the Republic and even beyond as pearl divers; they routinely bring more pearls to the surface than all of their competitors put together. They attribute their success to their intimate knowledge of the reefs and shoals near the island and their special diving grounds, a knowledge they have actually won over three generations of pearl-diving. They defend their territory to the point of bloodshed and on at least one occasion they have burned the boat of a competitor suspected of visiting their special sites on the sly. However, a large part of their success is also due to their family curse: the men of the family are weresharks.

The Guzman family are bitter enemies of the Obando family; they deeply resent the Obandos monopoly of the pearl market, which they feel has impoverished them, and they are also admirers of General Maconda; two of them served under him in the revolutionary war and they have the highest respect for his abilities and his ruthless way of dealing with those who

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oppose him. They are actually members of the Brotherhood of the Salamander, a secret society dedicated to advancing Maconda's interests in the Republic; they are attempting to organize a movement among the pearl divers to destroy the Obandos monopoly of the pearl trade.

Andre, Cristóbal, and Jose María Guzman, weresharks, neutral evil.

La Sirena de Piedra Negra:

One of the stranger spirits of the island of Resistencia is referred to as « la sirena de Piedra Negra », or « the siren of Black Rock ». The siren is not a mer-creature, but the ghost of a young girl whose lover was lost to her at sea. The young man had taken ship from Puertomar; as he and the young woman parted, he swore he would return to her and she swore that she would wait forever for his return. Every day she returned to the pier he had sailed from, dressed in the same dress, waiting all afternoon and into the night, searching for the approaching sail that would bring her lover back to her; but the days became weeks, months, and then years without his return. She grew silent and strange, eating little and speaking less, and spending more and more time at the pier. At length, perhaps unsatisfied with the view from the pier, she took to rowing to the Black Rock, a tiny island marking the entrance to the harbor, and waiting there. One day she failed to return; it was days before anyone thought to ask for her, and a search of the rock revealed nothing. It was widely assumed that she had drowned, and the matter rested there.

Not long afterward, the fishermen and pearl divers leaving the harbor began to report hearing the voice of a woman emanating from the Black Rock, a voice singing the sweetest song they had ever heard. At length one pearl diver, entranced by the song, dove from his boat and swam to the rock; his companions waited for his return, but it never came. At length they rowed to the island themselves to find his body lying cold beneath the tropic sun. Quickly the word spread that the young woman still sought her lover in death; the pearl divers and fishermen of Puertomar will

never go out to sea in groups of less than four, as the siren's song seems to entrance only one person at a time (although the others can hear it as well) and the other three men can almost always restrain their companion before tragedy strikes again. Still, the siren has caused the death of seven men in as many years, all of whom were found cold and dead on her island. The sailors of Puertomar accept the loss with their characteristic fatalism; the ideas of using some other port or putting the spirit to rest are generally dismissed as irrelevant.

La Sirena de Piedra Negra, 3rd magnitude ghost, neutral evil.

Curate Elias Machera, priest of Our Lady of Sorrows:

Curate Elias Machera is an elderly man, tall and imposing, with a rather handsome face marred by eyes too wide set and too protuberant. He is quite intelligent and able, but is also rather sanctimonious and given to currying favor with those he considers above him, most notably Roberto Obando and his cronies. He is not well-liked by most of the common people of his curacy, who see him as grasping and self-serving.

His standing in the Church of Our Lady has also come into question in recent days, as he has begun to campaign for a union of the Church of Our Lady of Sorrows with the Church of Ezra. When the first members of the Ezran church landed in Resistencia he was among the loudest in denouncing them as misguided at best, heretical pretenders at worst, but he has change his tune, apparently with an eye on advancing his own position in the Church. He resents bitterly that Josué Navarro, the curate of the cathedral of Libertad, has become the de facto leader of the Church of Our Lady of Sorrows since its separation from the church hierarchy on entering the Mists; he feels that he, as the older curate and holder of the older curacy (the cathedral of Ascension was built before that of Libertad) ought to be the spiritual leader of the church, but he has been swept aside by Navarro's youthful enthusiasm, bravery, and

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charisma, and the fact that Libertad is a much larger curacy in population than is Ascension. He has therefore begun to discuss the possibility of bringing the Church of Our Lady into the Church of Ezra, with himself as bastion, of course. The Ezran churches of Mordent and Borca have rejected his overtures out of hand, and the church of Dementlieu has not seen fit to respond, but Bastion Raines and the Darkonese branch of the church have encouraged and supported Machera in his attempt to bring the two churches together. Up until the present time he has had little success, but the movement seems to be gaining ground as more and more people begin to believe that contact with their homeland will never come again.

Elias Machera, 5th level priest of Our Lady of Sorrows, lawful neutral (evil).

Game statistics on the NPCs of Resistencia available upon request.

IMPORTANT PLACES OF RESISTENCIA:

The Sierra:

The Sierra is a massive peak dominating the interior of the eastern island of Resistencia; it rises about four thousand feet above sea level and from its summit almost the entire island is visible. Ascension, the capital city of the district of Resistencia, lies at its foot on the southeast side of the peak.

The Sierra is widely considered haunted; strange lights are often seen on the mountainside at night, and many highly varied tales are told of the source of these lights. Some ascribe them to the ghosts of soldiers wandering the mountain with their lanterns lifted high, searching for their enemies or their friends for all eternity; others say that the lights are due to malicious demons of the mountain who use their lights to lure the unwary traveler into pits or ravines; still others ascribe the lights to the meetings of witches, meeting to practice their unholy rituals on the mountainside. The bolder young men of the island will willingly explore the mountain by

day, but only the foolhardy venture there by night.

Ascension:

Ascension lies at the foot of the Sierra and is the only important inland town of the island; it has a population of about five hundred people, many of whom are associated with the government of the island in some way (as La Ascension is the district capital). Most of the rest are employed by the Obando family in some way; the traditional estate of the Obando family lies just outside the town.

Castillo La Ascension:

This small castle lies atop a hill just east of the town of La Ascension; the castle has been deserted since the end of the revolutionary war and has an exceedingly evil reputation in the town and, indeed, in the whole island. No native of the island doubts that it is haunted, and in this they are perfectly correct. Don Santiago walks the ramparts of the castle nightly, looking out over the island, lost in the bitter memories of how his mistakes led to his defeat and obsessed by planning his ultimate conquest of the upstart revolutionaries. He will attack without mercy any person who disturbs his reverie. Don Santiago is actually buried beneath the castle and can manifest himself more strongly here than anywhere else on the island.

The hill is also haunted by other, lesser specters, who are bound to the service of Don Santiago. Some of these specters are royalist soldiers who died in battle here when the castle was taken by the revolutionary forces; others are the spirits of foolhardy souls who came to the castle searching for the incredible wealth reputedly buried here by the royalist army at the very end of the war. Enough of these treasure hunters have died of fright, some in broad daylight, that no native of the island will set foot on the hill.

La Restinga:

The two parts of the island of Resistencia are connected by a stretch of mangrove swamp,

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divided by thousands of tiny saltwater channels, known as the Restinga. The interlaced branches of the mangrove trees leave the entire area under an eerie gloom at all hours of the day; the vegetation is so dense that passage through the swamp can only be achieved by boats small enough to navigate the twisting channels, and visibility is almost nil. The waters of the Restinga are peculiarly clear and clean, and in the rare places where the sunlight reaches the water the bottom can be seen clearly even at a depth of three meters of water, but the limited visibility and intertwined roots of the mangrove trees in most of the swamp limit visibility underwater as sharply as they do above water.

The few people living in the Restinga are an unusual group; they make their living by hunting the exotic fish and birds of the swamp and selling the flesh, hides, or feathers of their catch in the markets of Puertomar. The folk of the Restinga are among the most superstitious of the island and have a whole set of propitiatory rituals designed to calm the restless spirits and devilish sea-men of the swamp.

Most of the other islanders give credit to the many ghost stories told by the natives of the Restinga, but few believe the stories of « sirenuchos », or fish-men, also told by the folk of the swamp. In fact, the tales are based in fact. Many pirates frequented the Restinga in years gone by, and their intrigues and feuds have left the swamp filled with uneasy spirits, as well as at least two caches of pirate gold; in addition, a small colony of reavers inhabit the swamp. The humans of the swamp have reached an uneasy truce with the reavers by leaving offerings of fish and birds in specific places at specified times (and by proving to be difficult to kill when hunted), but the reavers will attack any entering the swamp who do not observe these rituals. These attacks have given rise to the rumor that the tales of sirenuchos are invented by the folk of the swamp in order to disguise their unholy practices of ritual murder and cannibalism, rumors which are generally not taken seriously, but which do effectively separate the inhabitants of the Restinga from the culture of the islanders at large.

Juanvallejo:

Juanvallejo is a small fishing village on the northwestern coast of Resistencia. Some of the island's trade is also conducted here, but the village's growth has been curtailed by the fact that many of its inhabitants have moved to other parts of the island since the end of the war.

Laguna de los Martires:

This lagoon just outside the village of Juanvallejo was the scene of some of the more horrifying moments of the War of Independence. On October 22, 1129, the royalist army, commanded personally by Don Santiago, attacked the city from the sea and overwhelmed the rebel force stationed in the small fort overlooking the bay and the city; the rebels were forced to retreat and attempted to escape across the knee-deep lagoon. Unfortunately for them, the royalist forces had divided their forces; the other company had already secured the city and lay in wait for them on the far side of the lagoon, leaving the rebels surrounded. The rebels attempted to surrender; Don Santiago accepted their surrender, disarmed them, and then ordered them slaughtered to the last man. One hundred seventy men died in the lagoon that afternoon, and the lagoon became known as Laguna de los Mártires (Martyr's Lagoon).

After the decisive defeat of the royalist army on the morning of June 4, 1133, General Maconda ordered the captured royalist soldiers marched to Martyr's Lagoon, where he had them killed to the last man. Some four hundred royalists added their blood to the blood of the rebels killed there almost four years earlier.

Martyr's Lagoon is an unpleasant place, partly because of the stink of the brackish water and partly because of a curious heaviness in the atmosphere. Every year on July 24, the Independence Day of the republic, the alcalde (mayor) of Juanvallejo gives a eulogy for the martyrs of the republic on its shore, and flowers are cast into the lagoon by the young ladies of the town, but a darker commemoration takes place twice a year, on the nights of October 22

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and June 4. On these nights at moonrise the lagoon undergoes a powerful phantom shift, and the spirits of the royalist and revolutionary forces go to battle again. The cannon of the fort can be heard dimly, and the screams of dying men and shouted orders of officers echo faintly in the night air. Any person coming within sight of the lagoon on that night will, as he approaches the lagoon, see the night become broad afternoon and the royalist forces attempting to sweep the rebels from their position in the fort; that person is immediately trapped in the phantom shift and must participate in the battle. He may choose to fight for either side, hide, or attempt to flee, but he must interact with the phantom shift until sunrise, and if he does not fight, he will almost certainly be discovered by partisans of one side or the other and forced to declare his allegiance or be shot as a collaborator, a rebel, or a deserter. Any wounds experienced during the course of the battle will be healed and appear as scars many years old at sunrise, but if the person trapped in the phantom shift dies in the battle he is forever lost.

Needless to say, no native of Juanvallejo will set foot outside his house on those nights for any reason.

Puertomar:

Puertomar is the largest city of the islands and the main center of trade; although much less haunted than Juanvallejo or Ascension it has its famous hauntings as well, most notably the Sirena of Piedra Negra. Most of the well-to-do merchants of the island make their home here.

MACONDA

GENERAL MARTÍN JOSÉ MACONDA.

DARKLORD OF MACONDA

8th level fighter, were-anaconda, neutral evil
(see also the "Weresnake" article in *Book of Secrets*)

AC: 10 or 3

MV: 12 or 6 Sw 18

Level: 8

Hit points: 81

THAC0: 9

No. Of Attacks: 2 or 2

Damage/Attack: By weapon (8-15 with saber, 1-8/1-8 with pistol) or 1-8/4-14

Special Attacks: see below

Special Defenses: See below

Special Vulnerabilities:

Magic Resistance: 20%

Strength: 19

Dexterity: 12

Constitution: 20

Wisdom: 8

Intelligence: 14

Charisma: 17

Background:

Martín José Maconda was the only son of rich landowners on the island of Manzanilla; his elderly father was distant and severe, while his young, fashionable mother seemed to consider him a charming, life-sized doll, taking great pleasure in dressing him in fine clothes and exhibiting him to her friends when they came to visit, and ignoring him at all other times. He was raised mostly by the household servants; from his nurse he learned the folk-tales and superstitions of the common people, how to fend off ghost and fairies, and the names and personalities of the many spirits summoned by the santeros to do dark and marvelous deeds. His father's groom taught him to ride and shoot a pistol; his tutor endeavored, largely in vain, to teach him geometry, algebra, history, and classical literature. He was alternately charming

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and terrorizing; he was an unusually handsome child, tall for his age, with wavy black hair and a complexion just a shade darker than a native Aragoñan's, and his good looks and charming manner made him the pet of the female servants; he could also be capable of a genuine generosity, on one occasion giving his much-prized pocket money to a servant so he could buy presents for his children on the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows. However, he was also capable of holding a grudge, sometimes showed horrifying fits of temper, and also manifested an ability for cold-blooded manipulation which was, in its way, even worse. On one occasion, when a cook refused him the pastries she had just cooked for her son's birthday celebration, he accused her of stealing from his father and had her dismissed; he knew very well that the servants could not accuse him to his parents, and their discipline was far too intermittent to have much effect on so headstrong a boy at any rate.

As he grew older his tendency to fall into fits of rage became more pronounced, and the consequences of his anger less predictable. When he was thirteen years old the butler found him standing over the body of his favorite dog, a pet of his own age given to him by his father when he was born. Maconda held a heavy metal rod from in the vats used to ferment cane sugar into rum; the dog had been beaten until it could hardly be known for a dog, the head smashed and the ribs broken in many places. At the butler's gasp, Martín looked up at him and said, coolly, « He did not come when I called him. » Tossing the rod on the cool tile floor, he left without a backward glance. The tale soon spread among the servants, and they were more careful than ever not to fall foul of young master Maconda, whose evil temper was already becoming well-known throughout the island.

As he grew, however, Maconda began to discover that there were people whom he could not dominate at will. He discovered, to his embarrassment and rage, that despite his wealth and good looks he was not able to enter the upper echelon of society on the island. He had been born on the island, rather than in the home country of Aragoña, and, additionally, it was

rumored that his mother had a grandmother who had been a native of the island, hence her own dark beauty and Maconda's skin color, always a shade darker and more easily tanned than that of the true elite of the island, who were pure-bred Aragoñan and eager to flaunt their superiority. Not surprisingly, Maconda resented this distinction greatly. At first he strove to gain the approval of his peers by excelling at the graces demanded of an Aragoñan gentleman, fencing, dancing, elaborate rituals of courtesy, poetic composition and the like; but having been raised and instructed principally by the servants of his father's house he did not have the advantage of childhood training for such things and found himself looked down on for his lack of the social graces as well. Maconda, so accustomed having his way that he hardly realized that he could be refused, grew to hate Aragoña and the native Aragoñans with intensity.

He was hardly alone in this hatred. The lower and middle classes had suffered for generations under the colonial system implemented by the royal governor of Nueva Aragoña, the granting of trade monopolies, mining rights, and land to a few families had created a rich upper class of a handful of people, nearly all Aragoñans who spent as much of their time as possible in the home country and left their properties under the supervision of brutal and corrupt landlords. Law enforcement was irregular; landlords were effectively the tyrants of their estates, with any punishment less than death being entirely at the judgement and execution of the landlord or his representative. The growing middle class deeply resented having no say in the policies set forth by the royal governor governing trade and taxation, which mainly affected them; the slaves and day laborers were discontented with their lot as a matter of course.

Rumors of rebellion in foreign lands and the creation of republican governments in far parts of the world reached the ears of the native population of the island; the works of humanist writers preaching a « gospel of humanity » and promoting democratic and egalitarian thought began to circulate among the more literate of the natives, and whispers of rebellion began to be

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heard through the colony, both island and mainland. Maconda found himself drawn to these discussions and soon became an ardent advocate of absolute independence. His social position made him unusual in the movement, and some were initially suspicious of his motives; he overcame their objections by his firebrand fervor for the cause of independence and by emphasizing his connection with the common people, his knowledge of their ways and customs, and what he referred to as his « native heritage », the fact that he was not pure Aragoñan, but one-eighth native. His charisma made him a natural leader for the young men of the movement, and his instinct for the dramatic and his desire to be a leader soon led him to form a secret society dedicated to the overthrow of the royalist government, a group calling themselves the Brotherhood of the Salamander after the mythical beast which symbolized purifying by fire. The Brotherhood was regarded as an irresponsible band of fire-eaters by most of the older and more conservative advocates of independence, many of whom favored only a limited independence, but their active opposition to royal rule and dramatic deeds made them influential far beyond their numbers. Their influence increased when Maconda's aged father died and he inherited the estate; with the resources of his new wealth and a discreet meeting place at his manor, the Brotherhood became even more aggressive, raiding the armory at Ascension, burning a gunboat in the harbor of Puertomar, and many other lesser strikes designed to provoke a violent response from the government, a response which they hoped would catalyze a colony-wide movement of resistance. Maconda met with remonstrance by those pointing out that his dramatic actions were destroying any chance of peaceful reconciliation by replying that peaceful reconciliation would never give true independence. In truth, he had no desire for peace; he hoped to instigate and win a war, both punish the Aragoñans whose airs of superiority he had resented so deeply and to carve a place for himself at the head of a new republic as a national hero. Although he talked sympathetically of the plight of the laborer, the craftsman, and the small merchant, and how

their lot would be improved by independence, his true objectives in seeking independence were those of personal vengeance and self-aggrandizement.

At last, on 24 July, Year of Our Lady of Sorrows 1128, the representatives of the different groups advocating independence met at Ciudad Rey, the principal city of the mainland. They renamed the city Libertad and signed a declaration of independence; the document bore Maconda's name, among that of many others. That summer was also marked for him by his wedding to Isabel Reyes, one of the island's great beauties and daughter of one of the leading men of the island, one of the few other supporters of independence among the upper class. Although obviously advantageous economically and politically, it was also seen as a love match. It was certain that Isabel de Maconda was a formidable young lady, proud, well-educated (unusual in a woman), and strikingly beautiful; she was also considered to be generous, kind, and genuinely interested in the betterment of the lot of the poor people of the colony. Certainly her presence moderated her husband's behavior, and his legendary evil temper was much less in evidence after his marriage.

Their happiness together lasted for only a year, however. Aragoña was embroiled in wars on its own continent and the revolt of several other colonies inspired by the example of Nueva Aragoña, and had relatively little attention to spare for a relatively unimportant colony at the edge of the known world; it was only a year later that a general, Don Santiago de Quijada y Alvarez, arrived at the head of a sizable army and began to put down the uprising with his characteristic brutality. The cooler heads of the independence movement had hoped to discuss terms for a peaceful settlement with the royal government; he brushed their suggestions aside, stating that he had come to punish traitors, not meet them as equal. He imprisoned the messengers and as many advocates of independence as he could find and began implementing a brutal military government. Startled by his creation of a police state, the patriots, as the independence movement began

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to call themselves, were unable to organize resistance for some months. Finally gathering a small army at the lightly fortified village of Juanvallejo, they raised the flag of the independent Republic of Nueva Aragón. Hearing of this defiance, Don Santiago set sail from Puertomar and attacked the village from the sea, surprising the patriot defenders and massacring them to the last man, even after they had surrendered.

This crushing defeat demoralized the patriot forces and they lost several battles on the island and the mainland, but it also generated a powerful backlash against the royal government. Up to that time the Church of Our Lady of Sorrows had supported the royalist cause, but after the massacre they withdrew their support; this, combined with horror at Quijada's brutality, had a powerful effect on many who had been sitting on the fence. Those who had been unconvinced previously began flocking to the banner of independence, and a long guerrilla war of attrition began. Maconda, already well-connected and having stockpiled large quantities of arms through the activities of the Order of the Salamander, became a principal player in the resistance and soon became known as General Maconda, the de facto leader of the patriot troops. Their unorthodox hit-and-run tactics drove Don Santiago to exasperation, and exasperation drove him to further brutality, sometimes pulling people from their homes and executing them summarily on suspicion of supporting the independence movement. At last Don Santiago had what he considered a stroke of luck; in one of these he arrested Isabel de Maconda, in hiding in Puertomar, and imprisoned her at his headquarters. At the urging of his men General Maconda fled to the mainland, vowing with all the force of his vengeful nature to take revenge on Don Santiago for this additional act of brutality. His rage redoubled when he learned that she was pregnant with their first child.

Fired by his hatred, he led the patriots to victory after victory on the mainland, but his attention was entirely on retaking the island, killing Quijada, by now known as «Santiago the

Butcher», and regaining his wife. His tactics became more and more brutal, and some among his men began to question if his treatment of their prisoners was any better than that ascribed to Santiago the Butcher; he soon quelled such talk by brutal disciplinary measures, leaving his men fearful and uneasy of his wrath, now quicker than ever.

At last, having dealt with the last royal troops on the mainland, he turned his attention to an invasion of the island. It was at that time that he heard of his wife's death, effectively murdered by Don Santiago. Lunatic with rage and grief, his mind fixed on the stories his nurse had told of the Warlock of the Peak «the Brujo del Cumbre» who would grant any wish to the man willing to meet his price, and he resolved to find him and demand that the santero grant him the means to take his vengeance on his enemy.

That night he went into the hills alone; his men worried all night over his absence, and were overjoyed to see him return the next morning, his face a mask of exhaustion and cold rage. From that time forward he threw himself into battle, careless of his personal well-being; many claimed to have seen bullets strike him to no effect and sword cuts heal within moments of their being given. In addition, he seemed to have foreknowledge of all the enemy's movements; it was whispered that a snake, no, a salamander, entered his tent by night and spoke to him of what the animals of the jungle had seen that day, warning him of the royalist troops movement. Some of the troops felt that this was a sign of divine favor; many more ascribed it to the intervention of dark powers. However, fear of the General's brutal temper meant that little speculation was made on the subject.

Whichever was the case, it was certain that from that time forward the patriot troops were only rarely defeated; they staged a successful landing on the island, now known as Resistencia for the spirited resistance the islanders had given over the last three long years, and six months later, on June 4th, they defeated the last royalist troops in a climactic battle outside Ascension at dawn. Maconda ordered the royalist troops marched

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from the site of the battle to the Laguna de los Mártires, the site of Quijada's massacre of the patriot troops, and commanded that a search be made for Don Santiago. On discovering that he had died, Maconda's rage exploded again; feeling cheated of his vengeance, he ordered the counter-massacre of the royalist troops on the spot, killing a priest of Our Lady of Sorrows who protested that such an act would be cold-blooded murder and seeing every man of the royalist force shot down.

Taking ship that very afternoon from the harbor of Juanvallejo, Maconda swore by the memory of his wife that he would never return to the island. As the ship left the harbor, a dense fog gradually rose from the sea, eventually limiting visibility such that the island was no longer even visible. The captain was terrified, as such a fog in mid-afternoon was completely unknown in those seas; all were relieved when the fog cleared the next morning and they found themselves near Libertad.

By the end of the year a constitution for the newborn Republic had been written and Martín José Maconda, hero of the revolution, had been elected president of the country; he promptly moved to consolidate his power, disposing of any political opponents by winning over those whom he could by bribes, gifts, and honors, and launching vicious whispering campaigns against those who proved incorruptible by such means, ruining their reputations and driving them from office in disgrace. At least two of his most vocal critics died under circumstances never revealed, and several others died of snakebite, so many that it came to be said that to vote against Maconda was to put your hand in the adder's nest. Those opposed to Maconda's policies soon learned it was wisest to say nothing and not risk the new president's legendary wrath. Maconda made use of his position to strip the former landowners of their holdings and distribute the land among his cronies, placed his friends in all the key posts of the government, and quietly made all the newspapers of the republic organs of the government, requiring the registration of all printing presses and examining their output regularly. Within months, Maconda's tyranny

had surpassed that of the royal government just overthrown; he has maintained his iron-fisted rule to the present day, eight years later.

CURRENT SKETCH:

General Martín José Maconda (he still uses his military title in preference to the title of President) is 6'4", a height at which he towers over most of the natives of the republic, and strongly muscled. He wears his black hair to his shoulders and affects a handle-bar mustache, but is otherwise clean-shaven; his high cheekbones, sharp features, and coppery complexion show that he is not pure-blooded Aragoñan, although he is rather pale for a native Nueva Aragoñan. His face is almost always set in an expression of displeasure, jaw clenched and mouth set in a hard line; he is almost never heard to laugh or even seen to smile. He usually wears a white linen suit, white leather shoes, and broad white straw hat in public, and a white shirt, leather trousers, and boots or bare feet in private; in either case he is almost always armed with his service pistol and saber. His physical appearance gives no sign of his other form: that of an anaconda a monstrous thirty feet in length.

After visiting the Brujo del Cumbre on the night he learned of his wife's death, Maconda soon discovered that the Brujo had given him all he had asked. The language of the beasts of the jungle had become clear as human speech to him, especially, for some reason, the language of the dozens of varieties of snakes native to the land. Additionally, he soon discovered that bullets and sword-thrusts had no effect on him. He exulted in his new powers, but deep within him he feared, as well. He knew the mark of the Brujo's hand over his heart carried a curse with it, as well as a blessing, but he did not know what it was. It was several months before he began to realize the connection between his own dreams every first night of the new moon and the regular disappearance of one of his men from his tent on that night. At last the connection became blindingly clear; for the first time two men found the giant snake in the middle of its meal, torpid and sated on human

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flesh, and followed it through the camp, at last seeing it enter the tent of the general. Horrified, they rushed forward to warn him; throwing open the flap of the tent, they discovered General Maconda, lying naked and bemused on the floor of the tent. Their stuttered explanations and horrified expressions confirmed his darkest fears; dismissing them, he lay awake all night, self-loathing and guilty. At last he convinced himself that the men sacrificed to the beast within him were simply casualties of battle, victims of Quijada and the king just as he was himself; but he never lost the feeling of loathing for his animal form. He will never voluntarily assume snake form, but like all maledictive were-anacondas he is forced to assume it every new moon, and he cannot take human form again until he feeds to fullness on human flesh. Every new moon a citizen of the republic disappears, victim of the General's curse. He also has the weapon vulnerabilities and allergen common to were-anacondas; he is vulnerable to weapons made of silver or the wood of the caobo tree, and he cannot abide the smell or taste of the guava. He himself is not aware of these weakness; no enemy has yet used weapons to which he is vulnerable against him, and he attributes his dislike of guava to memories of Isabel, who had a particular fondness for the fruit. However, he does not suffer lethargy after feeding, as most were-anacondas do.

Maconda's lycanthropy is unique in one other aspect; he cannot transmit his own lycanthropic curse to those whom he bites, most of whom are already dead by that time at any rate, but his blood can infect those drinking it, touching it, or even spattered by it with lycanthropy. Those contracting the dread disease in this fashion become were-fer-de-lances or were-bushmasters, two large poisonous snakes native to the republic. (They may be considered neutral evil were-cobras, from the Book of Secrets, except that they have no hybrid form and their weapon vulnerabilities and allergen are the same as for the General.) He has infected the members of the Brotherhood of the Salamander with lycanthropy in this fashion; the Brotherhood now acts under Maconda's direction to discover and suppress opposition to

his government, some acting as government officers and others as informants at every level of society. He sometimes amuses himself by inviting some opponent to his hacienda and inviting him to share a glass of rum « of my own special vintage » with him; the rust-red liquid has been liberally laced with Maconda's blood and the drinker must save vs. poison at -2 or contract lycanthropy from the drink. He can cause those were-snakes infected by him to assume animal-form (or human form, if in animal form) at will.

In addition to the abilities of a were-anaconda, Maconda has several others as darklord of his realm. The Dark Powers have granted him the strength and constitution of his animal form, and a magic resistance of 20%, making him nearly impossible to kill in combat; he can communicate with and command any animal of his realm and he can summon 10-40 poisonous snakes to do his bidding at will; they will arrive within 2-5 rounds. He can use this ability three times a day. He can also use the spells sticks to snakes and neutralize poison as an eighth level cleric three times per day; all the snakes created by sticks to snakes will be poisonous.

Despite his powers, General Maconda quite literally hates himself in his new form; his self-loathing is based partly on his disgust for his animal form and partly on his belief that his dead wife Isabel would hate him if she could see what he has become. He is constantly tormented by her memory, reproaching himself for failing her and letting her die and imagining how she would react in disgust if she understood his present nature. He attempts to replace the esteem he can no longer feel for himself by winning the love of the people he rules, but he attempts to do so by repressing or removing all the people who disapprove of him or oppose his policies, a procedure which ensures the continued hatred and fear of those he rules. He, in turn, resents their disapproval and feels that they have no appreciation for the sacrifices he has made for them; this leads him to maltreat his people by way of punishment, ensuring further ill-feeling and opposition. This vicious cycle continues, leaving him ever farther from

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the love of the people he so ardently desires and driving him to further brutalities to maintain his position.

COMBAT:

Engaging General Maconda in combat at all is difficult; unless the party finds him during his period of forced snake-form during the new moon he is generally surrounded by four to six bodyguards, by large crowds of people, or both. If attacked by what he deems an inferior force, he will allow his bodyguard, all of whom are members of the Order of the Salamander, to dispose of his attackers; if the battle goes against them or if he deems the threat serious enough, he immediately summons the snakes of the domain to fight for him as well and will leap to the attack himself. They will arrive over the next four rounds of combat, acting under his mental direction and attacking whomever he wishes. Maconda will commence combat by firing his double-barreled service pistol at the person he perceives as being the most dangerous, usually firing both barrels at once. He will then draw his heavy saber and leap to the attack, careless of his personal safety; he believes himself immune to mortal weapons, having never yet battled an opponent wielding enchanted weapons or weapons made of silver or hardwood. He maintains the inhuman strength of his animal form at all times; furthermore, in hand-to-hand combat he achieves a manic energy and purpose which gives him two attacks per round. Once personally engaged in combat he will continue to strike, regardless of how the battle goes, halting only if victorious or if reduced below twenty hit points. If brought to twenty hit points or lower he is forced to assume snake-form, which heals 50-100% of the damage done to him, and will do his best to flee the battle, summoning snakes to cover his retreat. In such a case, just as happens during the new moon, he will be trapped in animal form until he feeds on human flesh. If brought to zero hit points or below he will not die, but will always flee combat and be forced to stay in snake form until the next new moon. He will do his utmost to

destroy any opponent who inflicts the humiliation of forcing him to take animal form on him.

Any opponent who succeeds in dealing damage to Maconda with a slashing weapon has a 2% chance per hit point of damage dealt of being infected with lycanthropy from contact with the General's blood.

If the party happens to come across General Maconda while in animal form he will summon 10-40 poisonous snakes and 5-20 other animals, giant spiders and jaguars being two favorites, from the surrounding jungle. The snakes arrive in the first round after summoning, the other animals within 3-6 rounds. He will attempt to constrict the most powerful fighters of the party, leaving the spellcasters for his minions; if the battle goes poorly he will escape through the trees or rivers, leaving his minions to hold back any pursuit.

CLOSING THE BORDER:

When General Maconda closes the border the mountainous jungle becomes thick with venomous snakes, which attack anyone attempting to beat through the jungle. Any person attempting to thrust through the jungle will be bitten a number of times equal to his base armor class per round (discounting magical, shield, and dexterity bonuses) and must make his saving throw against poison for each bite. He will die within 2-8 rounds of the first failed saving throw.

Persons attempting to escape Maconda by way of the sea will discover that the sea is full of sea-snakes--so many that even the largest merchant vessels are unable to make headway through the interlaced bodies of the serpents as long as they attempt to sail away from Maconda. Ships sailing toward Maconda, on the other hand, find that they are able to move at about one-half their ordinary sailing speed for the given conditions. Those sailing or rowing in small boats will be subject to attack by the sea-snakes.

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Anyone attempting to fly out of Maconda will find himself coming to rest in the jungle (or the sea), surrounded by poisonous snakes.

THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE SALAMANDER, A SECRET SOCIETY OF MACONDA

«I am the serpent who burns to purify my land.»
countersign of the Brotherhood of the Salamander

The Brotherhood of the Salamander is a secret society whose members occupy many of the most important positions of the Republic, at least on the mainland; Roberto Obando's influence has largely shut them out of positions of power on the island of Resistencia. The members of the Brotherhood are all werebeasts; most are weresnakes created by General Maconda, but he has also attracted certain other allies who approve of his aims and admired his fighting ability and leadership in the War of Independence. The brotherhood is united by their admiration for Maconda, their hatred for the Church of Our Lady of Sorrows and for anything remotely associated with the former royal government, and their desire for power. They consider the Church a particular enemy both because they regard it as a bastion of elitist and royalist sentiment, because it remains outside their control, and because it has crusaded for many hundreds of years against werebeasts, completely eradicating them in many areas under its control.

The stated goal of the Brotherhood is to strengthen the Republic by weeding out royalist and elitist sympathizers; practically speaking, this means that they act as General Maconda's enforcers, informing him of the opinions of the people, intimidating those whom they can and permanently removing anyone who remain unconvinced of the wisdom of supporting Maconda. They are effectively the secret police of the Republic.

Currently, Maconda perceives Roberto Obando and Josué Navarro, curate of the Church of Our Lady of Sorrows in Libertad, to be his most dangerous opponents. He has therefore deputized the Guzman brothers, who are wereshark pearl divers making their home in Puertomar, to organize the other pearl divers and break Obando's monopoly on the pearl trade, hoping to weaken his stranglehold on the island's commerce. He hopes to weaken Navarro and the Church by promoting the schism between those who feel that the Church should attach itself to the Church of Ezra and those who wish it to remain independent; Maconda hopes to promote the movement in favor of attaching the Church to the Church of Ezra and, once the ties have been formalized, denounce the Church as an instrument of foreign influence and elitist oppression.

In many cases, Maconda feels that he dares not act openly to promote his agenda; he is extremely sensitive to the mood of the people and wishes to avoid antagonizing them by brute shows of force. He uses the Brotherhood in such cases as a *deus ex machina* to produce the desired end as if from coincidence or happenstance. The people of the Republic know that Maconda manufactures his own luck, but they do not know precisely how or through whom he does it.

The members of the Brotherhood are identified to each other by an elaborate series of signs and countersigns; each also bears a tattoo on his body in the shape of a snake with stylized flames running along its back. The members able to attend meet on the night of the full moon every month at General Maconda's hacienda outside Libertad to discuss their various projects and to receive instructions. On the full moon nearest June 4th the Brotherhood hold an extraordinary meeting, which all are obligated to attend; on this day the new brothers, recruited from Maconda's admirers and indoctrinated over the course of the previous year, are brought into the society.

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IMPORTANT NPCs OF MACONDA

Curate Josué Navarro, priest of Our Lady of Sorrows

Josué Navarro is the curate of the cathedral of Our Lady of Sorrows in Libertad and General Maconda's most outspoken political opponent, using his pulpit to subtly denounce the General's tyrannical actions. He is a young man, especially for a curate, not past his early thirties, and his charisma, good looks, and speaking ability have made him a popular figure in the more respectable circles of Libertad; it is said, with some reason, that more young ladies attend his services to sigh over his dark hair and dramatic pale coloring than to hear the word of Our Lady. Like almost all in the Republic, he is unwilling to call Maconda to repentance openly, but his pointed lessons and homilies have caused many to consider Maconda's behavior in a new light. Maconda hates him and even fears him to a degree, but is unwilling to act against him, because of his position in the Church and his popularity, especially among the middle class.

Navarro has also found himself deeply involved in a complicated theological conflict with Elias Machera, the curate of the cathedral in Ascension. Machera advocates the union of the church of Our Lady of Sorrows with the Church of Ezra, on the basis that Ezra is obviously the manifestation of the Lady of Sorrows in this place and the church hierarchy should therefore look to the Great Cathedral of Levkarest for direction. Navarro takes the more orthodox view that the Ezran church ought, if anything, to look to him and the other priests of the Church of Our Lady for leadership; at any rate, he rejects the idea of making the Church subject to any outside power. (He still hopes to establish communication with his ecclesiastical superiors in Aragoña, an idea which Machera derides as impossible). Up to the moment Navarro's school of thought holds sway among the church members in general; most have little understanding of the theology involved, but do not want to see control of the church placed in the hands of « outsiders ».

Armando de la Rosa, werewolf patriarch

The de la Rosa family are among the principal supporters and agents of General Maconda. They live a gypsy-like existence in a semi-permanent camp in the mountains of Maconda, making their living as loggers of exotic hardwoods. The clan numbers about twenty, all told, all of whom are lowland loup-garou; the patriarch of the family is Armando de la Rosa, and he rules his pack with absolute authority. The rest of the family consists of his wife and sister, his sons and their wives, and a handful of grandchildren.

Armando is a commanding figure, tall and lithe rather than heavily muscled, with the dark gold skin and wavy, dark brown hair of the pure-blooded Aragoñans. He is apparently about forty years of age, although he is actually fifty-six years old. He, his wife, Anamaria, their oldest son Marcos, and Armando's sister María Auxiliadora emigrated from their homeland in Aragoña some thirty years ago because their way of life was seriously threatened by a pogrom conducted by the state and supported vigorously by the Church of Our Lady of Sorrows. The werewolves of that country had always wandered the country in gypsy wagons, moving from place to place as the whim took them and naturally blending into similar gypsy communities of true humans. Unfortunately, this association turned to the detriment of the werewolves when an attempt to exterminate or drive all the gypsies from Aragoña was inaugurated by King Alfonso VI. When it was discovered that some of these gypsies were, in fact, the dreaded *hombres lobo* or werewolves of the fairy tales, the pogrom doubled in intensity; the king's soldiers were ordered to kill any gypsy showing any resistance to arrest and deportation, and the werewolf communities began to die.

Armando and his family hoped to escape to the new colonies being formed beyond the ocean, where fewer would know their kind; accordingly, they took ship from the old country, hoping to form their way of life anew in their new home. The attempt has been a qualified

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success; the lack of wolves in this tropical environment is a burden, and the smallness of the community is a grave worry to Armando, but he has raised four sons to adulthood in this new land and the clan has begun to grow again. Contrary to the traditions of the old way of life, they have had to marry human wives, infecting them with the dread disease after the wedding and so bringing them into the family, but Armando has been relieved to see the next generation of his people before his death. He has also endeavored to ensure the security of the clan through association with and service to General Maconda, aiding him in removing his political enemies and raising support for him in the small communities of the deep jungle, many of which have a great regard for Armando as a semi-legendary hunter, tracker, and freedom fighter in the revolutionary war. Armando and his sons are members of the Order of the Salamander and act to support Maconda's interests among the lower classes in particular.

Armando's sons are absolutely loyal to him; their wives, on the other hand, have (as might be imagined) deeply ambivalent feelings for their father-in-law and their husbands. On the one hand, their upbringing stresses the importance of subservience to their husbands, and their husbands treat them quite well by the standards of their society. On the other, they quite naturally resent and fear the men who have effectively robbed them of their humanity and placed an impassable rift between them and their former family and friends.

Armando and his sons are always armed with machetes, knives, and their wood axes and mauls; they leave the two service muskets left to them from their army days at their encampment for the protection of their womenfolk. Anamaria and Josefina are both proficient with the musket and will each take one musket apiece; the other women will only fight in a life or death situation. If any member of the family is forced to take wolf-form in the presence of outsiders the family will do everything in their power to make sure the witnesses will never live to tell the tale.

Armando de la Rosa, lowland loup-garou, 6th level fighter, neutral evil.

El Brujo del Cumbre, santero

Many of the folk-tales of the Republic center around this dark and mysterious figure. Very few doubt his existence, but the accounts of his personality, abilities, and appearance vary so widely as to create the impression that the brujo has a different appearance to every visitor. However, nearly all accounts agree on that he is an elderly man and that he is far and away the most powerful santero of the republic, and every tale agrees that there is only one way to find him and ask for his aid: the person (or group of people) must set out into the jungle just as the sun sets and walk toward the mountains, taking no more light than a single lantern, no matter how many go. At moonrise the person or group will arrive at the edge of a large pool beneath a waterfall; there the Brujo del Cumbre will receive them.

The Brujo del Cumbre is an 20th level santero and is also what the santeros of the republic call a « casa vacía ». He can therefore receive spirits without long and complicated rituals, but he has little or no control over which spirit appears. Which spirit appears will depend on the request made of the brujo; it will usually, but not always, be one appropriate to the request. If the spirits are in a malicious or playful mood it may require lengthy negotiation to invite the spirit appropriate for the desired end, and the desired spirit may not appear at all. He will accept gold or other gifts, but does not demand them and does not consider them to be payment for his services; he sets the price after he knows what boon is desired. He may demand some service, some rare plant or animal, some finely crafted item, or something less tangible, as in the case of General Maconda. His demands are often capricious and sometimes horrible; he will do his best to make sure that the boon he grants will do more harm than good.

If attacked, the Brujo will cause a cloud of darkness to fall across the jungle surrounding his pool and retreat into his home behind the

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waterfall. This darkness is absolutely impermeable to any kind of vision and cannot be lit by magical means. Characters will be effectively blind for as long as they continue to search for him, possibly striking each other if their enthusiasm is not checked; if they venture into the pool, they will eventually lose their footing and be swept downstream. Practically speaking, it is impossible to engage the Brujo in combat.

Characters attacking the Brujo or failing to render the recompense required of them in payment for services rendered run a very serious risk of falling under a curse, the strength of which will vary from situation to situation.

El Brujo del Cumbre, 20th level santero, neutral evil.

Mama Doña, santera

Mama Doña is one of the more powerful and respected santeras of the Republic and one of the very few known as « white » magicians. She is an extremely elderly woman, balding and toothless, but still quite cheerful and very intelligent. She lives alone in a small hut of mud and wild cane on the outskirts of Rio de Lagrimas, the most important port of eastern Maconda. Her widespread reputation has worked against her to some degree; the priests of the Church of Our Lady have used her as a focus in their fight to exterminate santería, preaching against her « demon-forged hexing » and « heretical notions » and hinting ominously about « wolves in the raiment of sheep seeking to lead away the souls of the faithful ». Still, many of the natives of the Republic see no difficulty in venerating Our Lady of Sorrows and, at the same time, coming to Mama Doña for love potions, minor healing, and spells to ease childbirth, among many others. She is friendly and down-to-earth, willing to waive her fees for those who show their need, especially young women and the natives of Rio de Lagrimas, which is her home town; she is rather impatient with most men and also very convinced of her own wisdom, abilities, and importance, but she is almost always willing to lend her abilities to a

good cause. She fears and resents the priests of the Church and will usually refuse to have anything to do with causes they sponsor, although in extreme need she might be willing to stretch a point. She is a 9th level santera.

Mama Doña, 9th level santera, human, chaotic good.

La Hada Negra de Punta de Arena

The white-sand beaches of Maconda are exquisitely beautiful, but one of the finest, at a point of land called Punta de Arena, is curiously empty of the beachcombers and bathers who frequent many of the mainland's other beaches. Only the most foolhardy of young men bathe along this beach, and every so often one of them does not return. Several people have spoken of seeing a beautiful young woman walking alone the beach, weeping and wringing her hands; a very few, survivors of her hunger, have told of this young woman's transformation into a hideous old woman with nails and teeth of iron, leaping upon her hapless victims and dragging them into the sea or into some grotto in the rocky cliff at the north end of the beach. The tales they tell of the « hada negra », the « black fairy », have spread throughout the republic, and people of good sense avoid the beach like the plague. On the other hand, taking a swim at the beach has become something of a rite of passage for young men in their middle teens, and many disregard the horrifying stories and their parents advice and visit the beach in groups and during the day, of course. Nearly all return without incident, but every so often the « hada » actually a sea hag, finds and disposes of a lone swimmer or some young man foolish enough to believe her illusion of youth and beauty. This occurs rarely enough averaging no more than once a year that swimming at the beach offers the thrill of the forbidden and frightening, while still allowing the statement « It can't happen to me » to ring true.

The sea hag makes her lair in the rocky cliff at the north end of the beach; a cave entrance, underwater at high tide, opens into a maze of caverns trapped with deadfalls and pits. The

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only expedition ever mounted to exterminate the hag wandered for several hours in the labyrinth, never coming to grips with the hag and losing two of their number to traps; no subsequent effort to kill her has been made since.

La Hada Negra, sea hag, chaotic evil.

Game statistics for all NPCs and additional information on the family de la Rosa available upon request.



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THINGS THAT BUMP IN THE NIGHT...

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ANNA

BY JOËL PAQUIN
(GOTTEN GRABMAL)

Unique shape shifting flesh golem

Chaotic Evil

D&D Edition used: 2nd

Armour Class	6	(10)
Movement	18	(12)
Hit dice	10	(2)
Hit points	48	
THACO	9	(20)
No. Attacks	2	(1)
Dmg per attack	2-16 +3	(1)
Special Attacks	Nil	
Special Defenses	See Below	
Special Vulnerabilities	See Below	
Magic resistance	20%	(20%)
Size	4' 6"	
Strength	22	(7)
Dexterity	18	(12)
Constitution	20	(10)
Intelligence	16	
Wisdom	7	
Charisma	4	(9)

(Scores in parenthesis reflect Anna whilst she is in her human form)

APPEARANCE

Anna is a bizarre though wondrous accident that occurred in the creation of a Flesh Golem built from obsession: Anna is a unique shape-changing oddity.

During the day, Anna usually appears as a normal girl aged around 12 years of age. She stands at 4'6" , weighs somewhere near 70 lbs. In that human form, Anna dresses in normal

peasant girl clothing. Her hair is red and kept short. Her face is ordinary and dull, allowing her to blend perfectly in any crowd.

She can transform at will between both shapes, little girl and golem, and this transformation takes one full round.

Then, none can mistake Anna as being human. She becomes hunchbacked and her legs are of uneven length. Even those who saw her in the shadows would notice something odd about her shape.

Anna's appearance changes to that of an overly stitched, crudely made, distorted flesh golem. As most flesh golem, she is very grotesque to look upon. Her face is distorted but, horribly, still childlike, and her eyes shine with malignity. As a golem, her voice is the same as when she is a little girl.

After the transformation, her body is still the size of a 12 year-old girl. She thus wears the same attire.

BACKGROUND – ANNA'S CREATOR

Paul Veneer had great success in his business as a tailor. He had good flair, trading and selling what the market wanted. He married 20 years ago and the couple got their only child, the sweet red-haired Anna some 8 years later.

The family dwelling was a two-story mansion, near a cliff, on the north edge of town.

Paul Veneer had the reputation of drinking hard and chasing women. His marriage was not a happy one.

However, Anna was the most important thing in his life and he spent a large proportion of his

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time with her, even if his business sometimes suffered from that. No expense was too much for Anna's pleasure and she was always dressed like a queen. Anna had private teachers and she showed early signs of high intelligence. Paul Veneer could listen for hours to Anna's impressive violin playing, while he drank hard liquor.

But one day, tragedy struck the family. Anna received a horse as a 12th anniversary birthday gift from her father. Paul Veneer had promised Anna that in the afternoon they would go for a ride in the woods.

Surprisingly Paul never showed up, this was totally out of character for him in his dealings with Anna. He was again drinking liquor and playing cards in a tavern, and he forgot his promise to his child.

The young Anna, after having waited for hours, decided that she would go riding alone. With the help of Louisa, a maid, she saddled the newly acquired horse and went for a short ride. The horse responded well to Anna's command and she was pleased.

But fate had decided otherwise: the sky darkened quickly and a storm came from the sea. In less than 20 minutes, a fierce thunderstorm was under way. Anna was in the woods when she saw the storm building, so she directed her horse back toward the mansion, where a concerned Louisa was still outside waiting for her return.

The tragic events happened quickly. From Louisa's account, it is known that lightning struck near Anna's horse, causing it to panic: the horse started running out of control near the edge of the cliff. Young Anna was not able to calm it.

Lightning struck again near the mansion and the panicked horse lost its balance and fell off the high cliff with its rider. Everybody in the mansion heard Anna's scream while she fell down with her horse. She screamed "papa" and it seemed to echo forever.

When Veneer later came back to the mansion, the grief-stricken servants informed him of the tragedy. His first reaction was rage and the maid Louisa had to be protected from his fists. Later, his rage turned to despair, then to guilt caused by his broken promise to his daughter.

It is said that he tormented Louisa so much that she committed suicide about two months after Anna's death. One year after Louisa's suicide, Paul Veneer's wife died from a sudden sickness.

Now alone, Paul Veneer sold his tailor business and all but retired from public life. He continued his heavy drinking, but no longer chased women or played cards with friends. He hid in the mansion most of the time.

He kept blaming himself for the tragedy. Also, his hatred for Louisa and his late wife, for not having been able to save Anna, was soon transformed into a deep hatred of all women.

He spent his time drinking and listening to Anna's music box. It reminded him of Anna's exquisite violin playing.

Paul Veneer's diary extract:

*After many long years of solitude, I put in this diary my thoughts of despair.
Anna died three years ago today.
I miss her smile, her happiness.*

Anna, I think about you all day and night. I feel like a block of ice is permanently in my guts, forever reminding me of your loss.

*Why wasn't I there when you needed me?
I can't think of anything else. I find no pleasure in life. I thought of ending my days but then if I die, my memories of you will fade as well, so you will truly die and this is unbearable.*

Your mother was buried nearly two years ago. I often told her she should have done something to save you. Anyway, I was bored of seeing her and she reminded me of you too much. It was unbearable that after having committed that fault she was still alive while you were not.

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I did add "spices" to her tea. She wasn't worthy of surviving after you had gone. Nobody knows but me and this diary.

Why did I give you that stupid horse? I curse myself every minute for having bought that gift.

I would give anything to hold you in my arms again. I'm so alone. The house is empty without you. I kept your music box and often wind it up.

All the women in the world cannot make me happy. I hate them all because they make me think of you and it's painful to see them alive while you are dead.

BACKGROUND – ANNA'S CREATION PROCESS

One day, in a rare effort to do something with what was left of his life, Paul Veneer made a trip to another coastal domain, Lamordia, to meet some business associates.

There, he found a dusty black-leather-covered book in a lousy bookstore. The book claimed it contained a method to bring lost loved-ones back to life.

Hands trembling, Paul Veneer bought the book, a copy of the infamous *manual of golem*, and brought it back to his mansion.

With excitement, he recorded this event for posterity within the leafy pages of his journal:

Hope! Chance is on my side, at last! Yesterday night I met a drunken bookstore owner who told me of a wonderfully blessed book. His wife said that he should not sell me this book, because she said it was evil. That stupid woman! I should have hit her stupid face to silence her. Anyway, the drunken owner sold it to me.

I have already read the book twice, without stopping. I took long notes. It is clearly written and I think I can understand all of it.

It's a crazy project but it's a most noble one! My dear Anna, we will soon be together again! I'm

so excited! My sweet Anna, you will play the violin again!

I swear I will not fail this promise to you!

After studying the tome long and hard, missing many nights of sleep, his exhausted and now impressionable mind decided to jump into chaos and recreate Anna the way she was. He then spent six months discretely buying the needed laboratory materials and fine tuning the methods in his mind.

To the others in town, Paul Veneer looked alive and happy again. After a long self-inflicted period of seclusion, he was often seen in public places or chatting with old friends in taverns.

Unknown to all, Paul Veneer was then selecting the victims of his mad plan, whom would provide him with the needed body parts he would use to bring his lovely Anna back to life.

Paul Veneer's diary during this project shows every detail of this plan: he described the beauty of each victim, and why he selected them. He needed to murder seven red-haired women to get the body parts needed for the golem construction.

Because he wanted Anna to be perfect, only red heads could provide a perfect skin tone all over the body.

For those that would dare attempt to follow the trail of breadcrumb clues that might lead to him. Paul carefully laid together a plan that would instead lead them to other men in town, such as Bruce, a hapless, insane hobo he knew of in the poorer part of the city.

The murders started in the month of January, when it was cold so the harvested parts would stay well preserved. It lasted a month and the murders happened once every 3 to 5 days.

Most murder scenes were horrific and bloody, the bodies barely recognizable.

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The first two were prostitutes, found with missing limbs in blood baths. These first murders were mostly ignored by the good thinking folks and constabulary of the city.

Then, the mayor's wife was found dead, her body mutilated by a sharp cutting weapon or butcher's tool. Her left arm was missing from the murder scene. That murder created a commotion in the quiet town.

To the disbelief of many, the investigators then revealed that there were similarities between these three murders. The same arcane sign had been drawn on a wall with blood at each murder scene.

A note had been left at the first murder scene:

*The first of many meals I will have
I'm hungry
I need more*

The investigators were then looking for a mad cannibalistic killer. The fear in the city rose closer to panic with the murder of Sister Letov in the small shrine of Bane where she often prayed.

The same sign was drawn on the wall and a message was written on the wall with the victim's blood:

*I take her miserable useless life to fuel
something beautiful
May her soul rot in the mists
I hated her
I hate them all*

Three days later, the daughter of a coal merchant, Deirdre Pracas, went outside one night to enjoy the fresh air and was found dead in an alleyway not more than 100 yards from her home, killed in the same manner as the others were. But the body was left there and free of the mutilations found on the other bodies.

It will be later found in Paul Veneer's diary that he was nearly caught by a passer-by and ran

away from the scene. Her body was buried the next day.

The next morning, to everybody's surprise, her grave was found disturbed. Upon investigation, it was learned that her head had been severed and taken. The same grim arcane sign was found drawn on her tombstone.

It is then that an investigator made the link between the victims: all were red-headed, petite women. The investigators were then publicly warning the population against a psychotic murderer that was haunting the town streets.

The town people barricaded themselves in their homes after sunset. The town people submitted to the investigators 17 different names as potential murderers, adding more confusion to the investigation process.

Many men were then wrongly arrested and interrogated for the murders. The longest held was Bruce, a mad and often drunk homeless man. Though he was arrested according to his plan, Paul's madness was too advanced and in his excitement he killed again, warranting the release of the derelict man.

This new victim was a fisherman's wife that lived on the bay front. Paul once again left a message above the corpse, this time reading:

*Deliverance is close!!!
At last reunited!!!
I love you!!!*

Suspicion then went toward a butcher, Mr Arusha Mosher, often prone to insulting women; he was also a known drunk and a brute. He was questioned but also released, after the following murder.

Three days after the murder of the fisherman's wife, Deborah Colaria, a fairly well-known bard visiting the town was killed in her hotel room. She was a woman with extremely beautiful red hair with silver streaks in it. It was found that her brain had been removed from her cranium and she had been entirely drained of her blood.

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The first inspector that arrived at this scene found another note:

*I'm looking forward to read you more
bedtime stories
I have to work quickly
I love you too much to fail*

Unknown to Paul Veneer, Deborah was a newly infected Werefox. He surgically placed her brain and her tainted lycanthropic blood with the other body parts... and unknowingly created a unique, shape-shifting golem.

At this point, Paul Veneer had all the body parts he needed. He then discharged all his staff on indefinite paid leave, claiming that he required complete solitude to write a book on the finer points of the art of trading.

In his diary, he started to write about the creation process itself, which he carried out in the silent cellar of his mansion.

Working hard and sleeping little, he succeeded in little more than 3 weeks after the last murder. His Anna was finally brought back to him one stormy winter night.

As told in Paul Veneer's journal, Anna was the perfect child after her animation, though sadly, this period was short to say the least.

Within weeks of her reanimation, Anna started to annoy her father. She would meddle in his work, have little accidents by dropping things and blaming it on a cat that got in. Her behaviour deteriorated steadily and quickly

Anna then started to grow angry at her father, Paul had no answers to why this was and when he questioned Anna, she had no answer, forcing him to punish her when she threw a tantrum.

This only caused Anna to withdraw even further from the love her father gave her and allowed her to see the first real glimpse of the mad mans' mind.

There is also a note in the diary on "how she was very angered" when Veneer showed her the music box and made it play for Anna.

In a bid to win back his daughter's love, Paul offered Anna the violin "she used to play so well". She took it and started to play. Anna played the instrument around the clock. Even when Paul was away from her, he could hear the sour notes echoing in his mind. This event was very disappointing for Veneer.

Finally, only four weeks after her creation, Paul's final entry in his journal discussed what may have gone wrong, cursing the manual he found and its creator. He also decided to place Anna back where she belonged, with the dead.

With this redemption, he could have been able to find release from his madness, had he lived.

After this, there is one last entry in Paul's journal, the handwriting is remarkably different, a telltale sign that it is from another hand, probably a child's:

My father is dead. I will go to the village to make some friends.

This diary has not yet been found by anyone, and is located in the basement of the Veneer's mansion with his laboratory equipment, many foul smelling liquids, a table covered with dried blood, and the *Manual of Golems*. The servants later found Paul Veneer's broken body, beaten nearly beyond recognition. His funeral was quick, and, since he had no next of kin, the mansion was abandoned

At first, Anna stayed hidden in the now uninhabited mansion and read her father's diary as well as the manual of golem. For the next two weeks she only went out at night, unseen, to spy on the nearby city.

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Now able to fully control her strange shape changing ability, she wandered in the town during the day, in her little girl shape.

One day, the baker, Mr Megre, in need of help, asked her if she was looking for work. Anna did not answer, but, curious, she followed the baker inside his shop where he showed her how she could be of help.

CURRENT SKETCH

In this town, many lower class girls work at factories to help their family. Anna works at the market, helping the baker, Mr Megre. At the market, her normal working hours are 5am to 3pm.

Most people do think Anna works to help her poor family. The baker pays her honestly and never tried to meet her parents. Anna is hard working and she never fails to show up for work.

Those who know her during the day would never guess Anna could transform into a monstrous creature. They would describe her as hard working, not talkative, and maybe a little retarded.

While working, she is always observing those around her, the clients, the passers-by, etc. Some might say her gaze is sometimes strange when she stares at someone.

During the day, when she is not working at the bakery, and that is after 3 pm and on weekends, Anna wanders the streets and the outskirts of the town, staying quiet and observant of the world around her.

She seldom plays with other girls of similar age, as they shun her.

However, after sunset, alone, Anna usually transforms into the flesh golem monster for her night activities.

Anna spends some of her free time crafting exquisite dolls, made with various material such as fine fabric, straw, wood, clay, paint, etc. These dolls are very finely made, with many details and countless hours of work go into making them. They would cost a fortune on the market if they were sold.

She drops them over the cliff when she is bored with them, and then starts making a replacement doll to play with. She brings these dolls with her to work. So far, none have questioned how someone of her status can possibly possess dolls of such great quality.

She uses the money she earns from work at the bakery to buy supplies to build the dolls.

As a girl, Anna spends most of her days working for the baker, while looking at the town people in order to select her next victim.

She selects handsome males (this could be the male in the PC party with the highest charisma score). She will spy upon him at night, hidden deep in shadows. The sole spying part can last up to two or three weeks.

When she has persuaded herself that he could be her lover, Anna starts to send him anonymous, childish love letters. At other times he will receive gifts from her in the way of dolls, recently slain rabbits or other small tokens of her twisted childish affection.

If this man already has a lover or a close female friend, Anna's jealousy will make her spy that lady as well, and will childishly report in her love letters to him any fault Anna sees in the lady. So far, she never hurted these lovers.

Then, after a while, she will send the last letter, one offering a rendezvous with his anonymous admirer. One that instructs the man to meet her at the cliffs at sunset that day.

Anna will try to lure her victim on the edge of the cliff at night or just after sunset. It is then that she takes on her golem form and starts to

THE UNDEAD SEA SCROLLS

embrace and hug her victim. Her victims are always horrified by her transformation and try to run away or hit her.

This makes Anna angry and she usually grabs the man, now unworthy of her impossible childish love, and drops him over the cliff (100' feet fall, then sharp rocks below).

COMBAT

Anna, in her golem form, has all the standard abilities and resistance of a flesh golem in Ravenloft, as found in the Ravenloft monstrous compendium or the Van Richten's Guide to the Created.

Those rare individuals witnessing her transformation from little girl to golem need to roll a horror check, with -2 penalty. The reverse also calls for a horror check, without penalty.

In her little girl form, if Anna is harmed or very angered, which has never happened before in public, there is a 10% per round, cumulative, that she transforms unwillingly into the golem monster.

Due to her link with the cliff, where Anna Veneer died, the golem Anna has an odd means of escape : if she jumps off the cliff, her body turns to mist just before touching the rocks below. Those that search will find nothing. Anna reappears in the mansion cellar on the next moonless night.

She can use this escape ability if the odds are ever against her during battle: she will jump off the cliff by herself, maybe just after having grabbed a victim. A grabbed victim that falls with her is not carried by the mists and suffers the fall on the rocks below (any victim she still holds onto has one chance to escape through that of a Bend Bars/Lift Gates check. Those that fail this check plummet from the cliff top with her onto the rocks below.)

Back to her little girl form, she will then resume her work at the bakery and will find another victim.

Anna's zeitgeber is the music box. It is currently located in Paul Veneer's bedroom, on the second floor of the uninhabited mansion. When she hears it, it makes her very angry. If she is not in golem form, she will shape-change to this form and attack the holder of the box to make it stop.

This music box's melody also has the following effect. Should Anna jump off the cliff on a day when she heard it, she can't become mists and will fall on the rocks below, taking falling damage for that height.

DM'S NOTE - LOCATION

The DM wishing to include Anna in his campaign should use any coastal domain, of at least chivalric cultural level. The town should be large or have a slightly higher than normal population of red-haired people.

If the DM also wishes to include in his campaign the events before Anna's creation (Paul Veneer's murders, etc.), then the domain of Lamordia should be avoided, because of the possible obvious link for some players between this domain and flesh golems.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

- ♦ The heroes happen upon a bizarre string of murders in a city or large town.

Though the players may investigate, their quarry shall always elude them.

Also, if the adventurers are investigating the murders, Paul Veneer will, most likely write about them in his diary. Then, the last diary entry (written by Anna) could be modified to add "*In his diary, my father writes of a (insert name, class or other descriptive word for one of the adventurer), will he love me?*".

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That player character could be Anna's first target of her impossible love quest.

Though the players may not realise that Anna is a Golem, this should be revealed over time as Anna turns out to be related to the murderer and his daughter no less. When the players do confront her on this matter, she will admit being related to the man, though not to being a Golem. When Anna does get into a romantic setting with her love interest, she will then take on her Golem form.

- ◆ There are sightings reporting a zombie-like monster near the cliff at night.

Anna could easily be this creature, but the real culprit could be a zombie or similar undead. This leaves much scope for a low level adventure that features Anna as a minor NPC.

- ◆ Somebody known to the players is found dead down the cliff, along with a few finely crafted dolls that have been likewise thrown.

In the days before he died, he had received girlish love letters and gifts. He had decided to go to the rendezvous with the girl hoping to explain to her candidly that she is too young to love a grown up.

Taking this rejection rather badly, Anna takes on her Golem form and kills the young man.

The players must then track the man's final days and the elusive mad killer in the area.

- ◆ The "classical" lonely golem twist: after many failed attempts to find a worthy lover, Anna starts building a companion, another

golem, with her father's note and the *manual of golem*.

A similar streak of murders happens in town as when Anna was created by Paul Veneer, but this time, men are killed and mutilated.

Like the first adventure synopsis, this is a twist in that the Golem is now creating something from her own obsession.

The players have to halt this insane creature before she awakens another as terrible as herself.

ADDITIONAL NOTES :

When I submitted that text to the Kargatane, their comments made me realize that a few things needed clarification :

1. Anna's *life* so far is a short one, i.e. she is a newly created golem. Anna has 1 or 2 years at the most (so the DM shall take into account that Paul Veneer died recently when telling the story) – her current setting is too stable to stay like that for a long period of time.
2. While Anna's hit dice change according to her form, her hit points do not, i.e. in little girl form, she has 48 h.p., but she strikes as a 1 h.d. monster.

There you go!

This lovely girl was tested with friends with lots of fun!



THE UNDEAD SEA SCROLLS

THE BIRD OF DEATH

BY EDDY BRENNAN
(THE LOST WICCAN)

Climate/Terrain	Any settlement
Frequency	Rare
Organisation	Nil
Activity Cycle	Night
Diet	Nil
Intelligence	Semi- (2-4)
Treasure	Nil
Alignment	Neutral
No. Appearing	1
Armour Class	7
Movement	1 fly 24 (B)
Hit Dice	1-1
THACO	20
No. Of Attacks	1
Damage/Attack	d2
Special Attacks	Gaze
Special Defences	Iron weapon to hit
Magic Resistance	See Below
Size	T (1-2' tall)
Morale	Special
XP Value	120

The Bird of Death is a grim creature, appearing as a crow, raven or falcon shaped creature as black as the night itself. Ominous beady yellow eyes contrasting this darkness, with only these betraying their position. When spotted at night, they as dark as their surroundings, making any familiar details rare indeed. Many rumours and descriptions of these animals appear throughout nearly all parts of society, all of which claim to be the true description of these nightmarish birds. Those of a more progressed nature (Chivalric or Renaissance) take these tales with a pinch of salt, believing them to be false. One constant however, is that most, if not all visited by this omen, die shortly after, making them a much, feared creature.

COMBAT

The Bird of Death is a timid creature, preferring to avoid all forms of aggressive confrontation though if forced to they defend themselves with their sharp beaks that lash out for d2 damage. All of these attacks are aimed at the eyes of their aggressor and any attacks of 18 or higher strike the eye demanding as saving throw vs. Paralysis. Failure resulting in permanent blindness in that eye. The wound is extremely agonising and always leaves a hideous deep red scarring, reducing charisma by 2 points also remains unless healing magic is applied within 5 rounds. Spells such as *Regeneration*, *Heal* or a *Wish* are required to restore sight in the blind eye, though the scar only partially fades, still inflicting a loss of a single point of charisma.

Though the bird uses its gaze to warn others of their impending demise, it may also be incorporated as a form of defence. This gaze has a range of up to 60' and targeted only at those the bird is there to warn, requiring a saving throw vs. Death Magic to all it falls upon. Failure results in a vision of the victim's death that he knows will occur within the next 2 or 3 days. This vision also calls for a Fear Check for the victim, though if the vision is particularly gruesome in nature, a Horror Check may be called for in addition to the Fear Check. Any vision inflicted by the gaze will last only moments (a round in game time), however, the victim believes it to have lasted far longer if it contained many details.

These birds unwillingly torment those they warn whilst the victim sleeps, the bird will then perch outside the window to their room. It will gaze at the victim or peck upon the wooden or glass panes. This disturbance in the person's sleep will cause repetitions of the vision as they sleep, in the form of nightmares. Though this won't inflict further Fear or Horror checks, it does cause severe nightmares until the next dawn.

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(This is described in Domains of Dread chapter 6 under the Horror result of Nightmares)

Sleeping potions, medicines or a *Sleep* spell will still counteract the victim being awakened every 30 minutes, but these nightmares will nonetheless continue and the victim will sleep only lightly and nervously. This causes the victim to gain only half of the rest normally allowed for a full night's rest. When the victim awakens, they remember only a small inkling of the visions they dreamed (maybe in the form of water if they are to drown or food if they are poisoned). Magic and Psionics cannot enhance what is remembered from these visions however. Also, it will never inflict harm knowingly upon the victim of the visions, as the bird is there only to warn and not kill.

The Bird of Death is not undead though is linked to the Negative and Positive energy planes equally, sharing the same immunities to Sleep, Charm, Hold and Life Effecting magic and effects that undeath bestows. They may be struck for half damage by iron weapons, magical weapons inflict full damage. If a victim is protected but deities that represent life in some way (a protective circle of charms for instance), the bird is powerless to gaze upon him.

HABITAT/SOCIETY

This breed of undead has been known to appear in many worlds within the ethereal plane as well as the Demiplane of Dread. However, where they came from or where they naturally reside is a mystery. They are never seen in the light of day, no matter where they are encountered. Many rumours and descriptions of these animals have appeared throughout nearly all parts of society over time, all of which claim to be the true description of these nightmarish birds. Those of a more progressed nature (Chivalric and Renaissance level) take these tales with a pinch of salt, believing them to be old wives tales at best.

ECOLOGY

These birds visit those they believe are soon to die of premature deaths that are not natural. They serve as messengers of death to those who need warning. Though they nearly always fail in warding it off.

Being equally filled with Positive and Negative energy, the bird believes in a balance to all things and that death should never be premature. This causes them to strive towards maintaining this balance at all times. Though the most common stories told of these birds tend to be linked to the wealthy victims and heroes, common are visited just as, if not more so, as they never distinguish others by social classes or importances as man would.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

Escaping the death envisioned by a player character may well inspire the opening of another adventure with several distinct endings and possibilities. It is best that the Dungeon Master prepares for several instances where the same character (the one the bird visits) suffers unfortunate accidents but have them narrowly miss. Also, the bird can also be used to spur up quests to seek out what wishes harm upon the victim.

On the other hand, an NPC visited by one of these creatures will inspire a scenario where the players are driven to both investigate the source of these visitations and rumours they may hear and protect him from their impending death they have foreseen.



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CELTIC BANSHEE

BY EDDY BRENNAN
(THE LOST WICCAN)

Climate/Terrain	Celtic Urban or Rural settlement
Frequency	7 known
Organisation	Solitary
Activity Cycle	Night
Diet	Nil
Intelligence	Average (8-10)
Treasure	Nil
<u>Alignment</u>	<u>Chaotic Neutral</u>
No. Appearing	1
Armour Class	0
Movement	12 fly 18 (B)
Hit Dice	6
THACO	15
No. Of Attacks	1
Damage/Attack	Special
Special Attacks	Sorrow Wail, Dread
Special Defences	Iron or +1 or better weapon to hit
Magic Resistance	75%
Size	T to M (2-6' tall)
Morale	Elite (13)
XP Value	4,000

These creatures are the stuff of myth and legend passed down through many Celtic peoples and societies. They are the remains of those that have died in the greatest tragedy, risen from death by those whose struggle reminds them of their own. They vary in appearance and race, though almost all are human or half elf.

Celtic Banshees tend to resemble those they were in life, a pregnant woman in the throws of labours, her face contorted with terrible pain and emotional suffering, and the fear that her life is almost over. Her body is wrought with sweat and her clothes stick to her ghostly form, she also has tears streaming from her eyes on many occasions or cradling in skeletal child in their

arms that remains attached to them by an umbilical chord.

Infant Celtic Banshees mostly appear as children about the time of their birth, very rarely do they appear older by some unknown way and then they are still in the first few months of their lives. All of them remain naked and float above the ground, they cry out of utter terror and agony at the world about them that they cannot touch, feeling the suffering of all that are destined to die as they did. From their navels hang umbilici, reaching off into the darkness beyond.

COMBAT

Though these creatures will avoid combat, they are willing and able to defend themselves from whatever may attack them. Their hands are able to lash out and inflict numbing dread and worry upon their victims, draining d3 points of Charisma to simulate these emotions bombarding the victim. These lost points return at the rate of one point per day after they are lost. The feeling of dread and worry never leaves the victim however until all of the lost points of Charisma return.

A loss of a characters entire Charisma score (being reduced to zero or less) results in a System Shock, failure results in death, otherwise they collapse from emotional exhaustion until the Charisma score returns to 3. Creatures that do not experience dread and worry are immune to this attack.

The mere sight of these creatures is terrible enough to inflict a Fear check if they are witnessed during their wails of sorrow. Anyone seeing one is forced to make a Fear check or suffer its effects it brings (outside Ravenloft, a saving throw vs. Paralysis to avoid fleeing for d10 rounds).

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When common Banshees wail, they may be terrifying enough to kill. Yet this is not so with the Celtic Banshee. These creatures wailing causes the regular saving throw vs. Death Magic. If it is failed, the victim is overcome with sorrow and a strong sense of loss. Yet the Celtic Banshee's wail is not powerful enough to instantly kill, failure inflicts a -4 penalty to all die rolls until the next sunset or until the spirit is destroyed, whichever occurs first. As long as the spirit remains within 50', those who suffer these effects also have a 25% chance each round to break down crying. Those that suffer this additional malady cry for d3+2 rounds and are unable to act for this duration. After this period is over, another saving throw vs. Death Magic. Failure results in another d3+2 rounds of crying while success ends the crying, though the 25% chance still applies.

Celtic Banshees are incorporeal and invulnerable to all non-magical weapons except those, cast from iron. Even these inflict only half damage. Weapons of +1 or greater enchantment do full damage.

In addition to this, they are heavily resistant to magic in general (75% magic resistance) and are immune to all Charm, Sleep, Hold, Cold, Heat, Fire, Death Magic, Power Words and Electric and Lightning based attacks, spells and effects.

They may be turned as Banshees by priests and might be controlled by evil characters that may do so for a number of rounds equal to their experience level or hit dice. If touched by holy water, they suffer d4 points of damage, the same occurs if a holy symbol is placed in contact with them. The latter inflicts a morale check upon the spirit or it is forced to flee. A Dispel Evil spell has no effect on these creatures, since they are not evil, though a Raise Dead spell will banish the creature to the Astral plane where it may rest eternally.

Celtic Banshees do not detect life as other Banshees do instead, they detect the karmic resonance of those that struggle with death during childbirth. Because this ability is limited to a radius of 5 miles, the Banshee will normally try to avoid conflict and will attempt to escape if

it is discovered by adventurers (unless one of them is with child).

If it is confronted in combat, the Banshee may wail three times a night resorting to its touch if necessary. Celtic Banshees do not have lairs like others of their kind, instead, residing in their own graves and tombs unless they sense the aforementioned karmic. They will remain in their graves throughout the day.

HABITAT/SOCIETY

These Banshees long for the life they once had or were to have and lost. They mourn the passing of those who die as they did and carry them off to the next life. Though mortals assume they are evil, they aren't. They preserved strong ties to live despite being undead. They are not responsible for the deaths of those that do perish in the process of childbirth, they merely mourn their passing, even if others do see them as the direct cause of these tragic events.

When a death is to happen, the spirit is summoned once more from wherever the spirit normally lingers and wails in reparation for the loss to happen. This wail cannot be heard by the living, though the spirit hears it and causes sorrow and a sense of loss in them. Many break down and weep for no reason when they hear this inaudible cry in the night

ECOLOGY

Celtic Banshees are created when someone dies in childbirth, either mother or child. Their karmic resonance is so great for them to pass over to the afterlife, becoming a messenger of sorrow, mourning the passing of those who die as they did. When death is bound to occur in childbirth, the spirit sits or stands on the rooftop of that person and wails for three nights before that person's determined death. These periods cause great sorrow and depression upon those who dwell within 5 miles of the home. This sorrowful wail is inaudible to the (demi) human ear though, animals are similarly effected, though they hear the cry, as do unborn children

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that fidget. Plants wilt slightly and undead listen with attention. Dogs' howl and bark when the Celtic Banshee wails and cats become restless.

Those that somehow manage sleep through this are known to cry in their sleep.

When a child or woman dies in childbirth, they do not automatically become one of these poor creatures. This will only happen if the suffering and karmic resonance has been exceptionally great. So rare is it that there is only a 10% chance that those who die in this manner rise as these incorporeal undead

In addition to the above process, the woman or child to die in this way must have been part of a Celtic community, even following the beliefs of Celtic pantheons and religions. This is illustrated through the process of childbirth in these communities. A priestess of a Celtic deity is always present for this type of birthing, and iron is placed above the door, normally a horseshoe. Incense is burned in the fireplace that is constantly stoked in order to perfume to room, filling it with the blessing of the deities. Other traditions may be found in addition to these practices but these are the most common basics in the process of childbirth in Celtic practices of childbirth.

The elements linked to the karmic resonance of the Celtic Banshee create a strong tie between it and the place where its mortal life ended. This produces a number of allergens in the poor creature. Though the presence of iron and burning incense is enough to bar it entry into a room or small structure, forming a barrier to the creature for as long as it is in place.

In a similar fashion, the burning of any afterbirth from a birthing in the past month is also sufficient to keep the creature at bay for a short

time, though this tends to burn completely in 2d4 rounds. Once burned, the barrier it creates collapses.

Anything that may come into contact with a woman when she is in labour and is part of the birthing process is quite dangerous to these pathetic creatures. As are the toys and possessions given to small children. Hot water, sodden cloths or towels, cradles, cots and rattles are the most common of these. If any of these are present, the Celtic Banshee knows of their presence once within 100 feet, though this does not cause a problem unless wanting to approach within 30 feet. To do this, the Banshee must make a saving throw vs. Death Magic. Failure keeps the Banshee from approaching any closer.

Physical contact with these items can prove dangerous to the creatures, resulting in a years imprisonment within their graves if a morale check is not made. Success results in 3d6 damage upon the Banshee. If the allergen once belonged to the mother (or child) that became the Banshee, they hold much greater danger to them. They must make a saving throw vs. death magic for every 10 feet with wish to approach the item if it is within 150 feet. Failure halts the Banshees approach until the next sunset.

Contact with these items also inflict a morale check upon these fallen women and children, success results in a decades imprisonment within their graves and failure resulting in their ultimate destruction and not freeing the soul to rest.



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THE CHANAK

Evil Unborn.

BY DION FERNANDEZ

-Aliguyun Balang-ud

Snake hunter, Tabuk nation, Igid Rabi-i.

We entered the dank lair with utmost caution, lest we awaken the haggard she-demon before we could fight back. With all the wards put up by the Apo Mumbaki to protect our mountain homes from these creatures, they came anyway. Our farms they have ravaged, our livestock they have drained of blood, our kinsmen they have killed, and now the spirits of the rice terraces ask for our help. So powerful these creatures are, the Mumbaki tells us, that even our ancestors fear their coming.

"It was dark inside the lair, so Pakdal set fire to the tip of his spear. What we saw was so frightening; so horrible, in fact, that I can never will away the thought from my memories.

"The she-demon was in front of us, her sickly blue eyes set upon us, yet she was asleep. Behind her were bubbles of living membrane, each encapsulating the corpses of unborn children floating in some sickly liquid. But that was not all.

"One of the children moved, and opened its bloodshot blue eyes and mouth to reveal sharp fangs. The truth came upon us: the fetuses were in league with the unliving.

"Pakdal and I ran for our lives as far away from the lair as possible. We returned to the village tired, and I was so horrified by the gore I saw that I retched. It will be a long time before I ever return to that place, but even then I may never go back there again."

ASWANG, CHANAK

Small-size Undead

Hit Dice: 2d10

Initiative: +3 (dex)

Speed: 30 ft; climb 30 ft.

Armor Class: 12 (+2 natural)

Attacks: tongue +4 melee; claws +2 melee; bite +4 melee.

Damage: tongue 2d4; claws 1d4; bite 1d4+1.

Face/reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Special attacks: fluid drain, create spawn, aswang's feast, spider climb, pounce

Special qualities: turn resistance, darkvision 60 ft.

Saves: Fort +2; Ref +6 (+3 base); Will +3

Abilities: str 10; dex 10; con --; int 8; wis 8; cha 5

Skills: Hide +4, Listen +4, Move Silently +4, Open Lock +2, Search +4, Spot +4

Feats: Alertness, Lightning Reflexes, Multiattack

Climate/Terrain: any

Organization: solitary, cluster (2-5) or nest (1-20 plus 1 manananggal).

Challenge Rating: 3

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral evil

Advancement range: 7-9 (small)

Chanak are the ghastly spawn of the creature known as the manananggal, a species of aswang (for more information, refer to the Kargatane's *Book of Sacrifices*). In the course of feeding, a manananggal inadvertently may drain a woman's unborn child, killing it in the process. Due to some power, however, the dead fetus

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reforms itself in the uterus of the manananggal and would be "born" within the short span of three days. The new creature would then reside with the new "mother" in its lair.

Chanak look like small fetuses with smooth but reddish-brown skin, and have glowing blue eyes and a mouth full of fangs. They also have the added bonus of having claws on both their hands and legs.

Chanak, unlike the other aswang, hide their ghoulish forms only when in the presence of a mother who just had a newborn (see "Chanak society"). Chanak cannot speak.

COMBAT

Being overly protective of both their "mother" aswang and their lair, chanak are the first to enter vicious combat and fight by any means possible when either is threatened.

The chanak have the following abilities which are common to the aswang:

Fluid Drain (ex): a chanak can drain the body fluids of a living being with its tongue, inflicting 3 points of Constitution drain per round from a helpless victim as a full-round action.

Create Spawn (su): any humanoid slain by a chanak's fluid drain attack rises as an aswang 2d6 hours after death. The new aswang is independent of its creator's control.

Aswang's Feast (su): a chanak can turn any corpse in its early stages of decomposition into an unknown meaty substance it considers as "food." This works just like the *polymorph any object* spell cast by a 12th-level sorcerer.

Turn Resistance (su): a chanak has +4 turn resistance.

Unlike their much larger counterparts, however, chanak do not have a twilight scream or an alternate form. They have, however, abilities unique to their gory kind:

Spider climb (ex): similar to the *spider climb* spell.

Pounce (ex): if a chanak leaps unto an opponent during the first round of combat, it can make a full attack even if it has already taken a move action.

CHANAK SOCIETY

The chanak are overly vicious, and probably the most aggressive of the aswang subspecies. These creatures tend to act less like normal fetuses and more like predatory animals. And like such, for their size, they usually hunt in packs.

Depending on the manananggal prevalent in the area, the number of chanak it possesses varies from at least five to dozens at a time. Like many undead, chanak conserve their energy by sleeping in transparent membranous sacks made of unliving tissue. These sacks are filled with an unknown liquid where the creatures float around in.

A chanak's favorite ploy is to kill a newly born infant and disguise itself as a normal infant in place of the innocent baby. The chanak then subtly attempts to turn the mother into an aswang at night-time.

CHANAK CHARACTERS

Because of their nature as undead fetuses, there are no chanak characters.



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THE HEADLESS MULE

A Folk Tale to explain Folk Taboos

BY LUIZ EDUARDO NEVES PERET
(ARIJANI)

*"Because Superstition is found mainly in
Women."*

(J. Sprenger and H. Kramer, "Malleus
Maleficarum")

"On the Tale of the Headless Mule and its use
as a Lesson on Moral and Ethic Values, a
Treatise in Sociologic Folklore"
by Professor Lucian Bertaux, Respectful
member of the Academe of Port-a-Lucine.

At night, gathered around the fire in small villages and hamlets, with doors and windows tightly shut against the horrors that stalk the Land of Mists, mothers tell their children tales with moral aspects, tales to teach them how to avoid the major sins recognized by society, such as greed, hatred and gluttony. Lust, however, is perhaps the hardest to explain, for the innocent minds are not yet prepared to recognize and prevent it, and a mother is never certain as to what moment is the best to start teaching a child about the mysteries of love. Then, here comes into play the tale of the Headless Mule, a bogeyman story most children are prone to remember forever.

The tale varies from village to village, as to its characters and the way they interact, but it is always sad and never has a happy ending, for what is the purpose of a ghost tale with a "and they lived happily forever after"?

Some scholars claim that the Headless Mule is not just another creature from legend,

but actually a true entity, if not a member of an ancient, unknown race. Others contend this belief with the argument that the Headless Mule has many archetypal features that fit only too-perfectly within a traditional folktale to be true. So far none has brought up proof of either theory, so the Headless Mule remains another of many unsolved mysteries.

The core of all tales concerning the Headless Mule, however, is always the same: lust winning over innocence, and broken vows bringing up misery, tragedy and madness. According to some experts in literature and folktales, the "original" legend of the Headless Mule would be like that:

"Once upon a time there was a small farming community, protected by a good priestly order. The order had built a temple at the edge of town, where services were performed once a week. As it was the custom, the first son of each family was trained to be the heir and manage the farm or family trading business, while the second son was sent to the temple to serve the Gods of Fertility.

The cult accepted only men in its ranks, and those holy men were educated to serve the Gods with every breath and heartbeat, making a vow of celibate as the first initiation. They should remain pure and give away their own fertility to Mother Earth, while their earthly families would be safe concerning heirs – that was the job of the firstborn."

Most tales start to drift apart from this point, as many parents are reluctant to talk straight about birds and bees with their children, and prefer to demonstrate by comparisons and examples. Some, more religion-oriented, will spin complicated webs of theological dogmas to explain the mystery of celibate, while others,

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more practical, will simply tell their children that a monastic life leaves no time to get married and raise children

Whatever the reason pointed out, the tale goes on explaining that “*the religious order was devoted to keep the grounds, crops, animals and people fertile by appeasing Mother Earth with gifts and symbolic sacrifices, chastity being the first one.*” The other sacrifices are another matter entirely, and here is another point where the legends disagree, depending on what is to be considered taboo or bad and “mundane” manners – like drinking, smoking, eating meat, consuming any kind of hallucinogens or medicines, or even other habits that vary from culture to culture, like eating more than the strictly necessary to prevent starvation – that would be a dangerous sin in G’Henna – or wandering in the city streets after nightfall, for example. As for the purposes of this essay, the other “sacrifices” are irrelevant.

Continuing with the so-called “official” legend, at some point the victim is introduced – one of the novices, most of the time, but he also can be an elder clergyman, depending on the moral the adults wish to impart. The important aspect here is the vow of celibate, the oath to be broken.

That is when the temptress arrives – she may be a young lass from the victim’s own community, or a wandering adventurer, or even a priestess of another yet similar cult – in the last case, a cult that accepts women but also determines a chastity vow to be taken. This specific case of “double sin” will be studied later. So far our folktale can perfectly go on with the local girl.

Initially, she may be a pious, devoted member of the flock, attending the cults without fail, and perhaps even joining the layman activities, such as collecting donations or voluntarily working in the temple’s asylum. During the course of one of such activities, she meets the victim.

“Their eyes met for the first time, and in his heart of hearts he felt a strange sensation, a

new feeling, a feverish heat as he has never felt before. Then he immediately knew he should turn away and run, race back to the ranks of the faithful, find once again his true calling and renew the strength of his vows. But no, now she had stabbed his very heart with the dagger of passion, with mundane desires that he was never meant to know. And he accepted her dark gift, so that he was doomed from the beginning.”

Of course, this is not always the way things are shown. Once again, some parents will avoid the words “passion” and “desire”, as to not awaken a morbid curiosity in the children they mean to protect by telling the tale. So they skip that part and simply say things like: “*He looked into her eyes by accident, and was imprisoned by her evil charms.*” Now, that is a good way to keep things supernatural and fantastic, far away from day-to-day reality, and still works as intended. It also ensures that the female will be the sinner, not the good priest. He will be characterized as the victim of a powerful entity, an inhuman monster that lives solely to sow madness and death.

This combines with the theory that this legend is purely archetypal in a male-oriented society such as most in our land. In such societies, men are naturally pure and thus may receive the sacred mission of guiding the common people, either by religious counsel or by temporal rulership; women, on the other hand, are prone to perform evil acts and must not be permitted to raise in condition above men. Such are, at least, the common opinions in many societies, both uncultured and well developed.

The tales once again diverge from this point on, as some parents will skip the details and go straight to the punishment, while others will give in just a hint or two of what the sin of lust really means, according to their own culture and the listener’s age. Such hints are not intended to entice the child or teenager into thinking about them too much, though, otherwise the entire purpose of the tale would be lost. No, the intention here is to show to the adolescent the dangers associated to the false pleasures of the flesh, and right after that, open the curtain of that horrid stage known as “The Deserved

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Punishment”, making sure once and for all that the teenager will never forget the danger.

Whatever the path chosen by those who tell the tale, it flows from that first meeting to the internal conflict in the good priest’s heart, then to his fall into temptation, and finally to the sad end as the creature finally shows itself for what it is.

“Then, as the lights of the day faded, so did the poor holy man’s brave devotion and focus. He let himself be taken away to an isolated place, there to be seduced by the seemingly innocent damsel, and corrupted beyond any point of return. But his enjoyment would not last, for right after the first wave of passion and heat had finally cooled down, the creature finally showed herself for what she truly was: a headless spectre, similar to a nightmare made flesh.

The body was that of a sturdy, black equine creature, more similar to a mule than to a horse, whose neck ended in ghostly flames, with two bright red points of light shining where the eyes should be. The monster’s mere sight was enough to turn the poor man mad, and then the monster would leave the place, galloping fast as lightning and letting out a deep, blood-freezing whine that sounded more like a demoniac laughter.”

This is it, right to the point: sin and punishment, simply put. As we all can see, the “corruption” is not determined, so that any society might insert any action considered a sin. The priest might eat raw meat, drink forbidden beverages or even dress up in inappropriate colors. For the purposes of this essay, though, we shall consider the sin of lust as the object of the final corruption.

The description of the monster as a black mule with no head is one aspect that seems mostly immutable wherever someone listens to this tale, and there is a number of reasons for this. A common source of the legend is the most logical, of course, but then there are others: it has been noticed that this legend is popular among farming villages in Nova Vaasa,

where black monstrous horses are believed to stalk the wilderness at night. On the other hand, the infamous Vistani have their own version of the tale, and it may be that they spread the description of the creature throughout the lands they have visited.

Also, there are social aspects to be considered here: it has been said that this legend pushes all the weight of the blame for the sin of lust over the shoulders of women, as this creature always takes on a female disguise. In some societies, man is considered “the head of the family”, and it is said that a woman who does not marry “has no head to guide her”. Passion is commonly related to heat and flames, hence the spectral fire. The mule is a crossbreed between a horse and a donkey, an hybrid animal who lets no heritage, and also is a fast creature and a beast of burden, so it fits perfectly with the concept of a female with no links to society, who bears a terrible burden and leaves no heirs. A whine that resembles a maniacal laughter only helps gathering horror elements.

There is another aspect of the legend, more appropriate for those who still believe in happy endings: some versions talk of brave holy men who survived the sight of the nightmarish entity, and were able to defeat it driving a silver blade through its heart. Unfortunately, according to these same versions, rare is the case of a man wise and pious enough to, after having fallen to sin, is able to gather enough strength of mind and spirit to resist the creature, and ever rarer is the case of a man strong enough to battle against the monster and win. Such men are, obviously, repentants who are trying to regain some small measure of their former clean state. The tales say they enter a hard and solitary process of self-cleansing right after their victory, and some would be travelling the lands, warning others about the dangers of succumbing to lust and the need for repentance and chastity.

Scientifically speaking, it is only logical to believe that guilt is a powerful tool, or a powerful weapon. Sometimes it acts against the guilty, in the form of a shock so strong, as when they face their sins, that they either die or lose their minds. And sometimes it acts in a positive manner,

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helping them refocus their minds and spirits in a new life mission. That, I believe, would be the source of the new strength such men find in order to fight the monster and, after that, to spread word of it and help others.

The use of silver to kill the monster might have the same reason that explains this noble metal being used to kill the legendary werewolf and other creatures of nightmare: there is a primal aspect related to silver, some cleansing quality that men have attributed to it since the dawn of time. Also, silver is primarily associated with the moon, which is both the more prominent celestial body during nighttime (the period when the beast is more powerful) and a symbol for ancient deities, mostly related to fertility, motherhood, keeping of the family and other “female” aspects.

Of course, legends and superstitions aside, this other part of the tale also serves a purpose, teaching the listener about the possibility of repentance and atonement, albeit a slight one. If one is to believe that the Headless Mule is nothing more than the monster of guilty given shape and life by a tormented mind, one should also be given the relief and hope of a way out of the madness and grief caused by guilt, no matter how narrow this way might be.

This is, ladies and gentlemen, the anatomy of the Headless Mule: a fictional monster whose sole purpose is to make children and teenagers afraid of being too eager to learn the mysteries of love and passion.

Professor Lucian Bertaux
Academie of Port-a-Lucine

THE HEADLESS MULE

Large (long) Shapechanger

Hit Dice: 4d8+12 (30hp)
Initiative: +2 (Dexterity)
Speed: 60ft.
AC: 15 (-1 size, +2 Dexterity, +4 natural)
Attacks: 2 hooves +6 melee
Damage: hoof 1d8+4
Face/Reach: 5ft. by 10ft./5ft.
Special Attacks: breath weapon, madness gaze
Special Qualities: alternate form, damage reduction 15/silver (as animal), fear aura, scent
Saves: Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +6
Str 18, Dex 17, Con 17, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 17
Skills: 30 points: Bluff +9, Listen +10, Spot +10, Hide +9, Disguise +9
Feats: Alertness, Dodge
Organization: solitary
Challenge rating: 6
Treasure: none
Alignment: always chaotic evil
Advancement: 5–6 HD (Large)

Rather a scary folktale, the Headless Mule is a true menace for decent men. Unfortunately, most men who succumb to her charms normally end up in sanitariums, as screaming wretches, while others do not even live to tell the tale. She is driven by the desire to corrupt chaste or otherwise virtuous men. The DM may adapt the creature to fascinate men with different sins, according to the local culture.

The creature has two forms: the first resembles a lovely young humanoid maiden, a respectful lady or even a representative of a religious sorority, according to the situation. This is the chosen form the creature will be most commonly using while trying to seduce a specific target. The Headless Mule cannot change her humanoid form unless she changes targets, and once she abandons a target she can never try to seduce him again, so she will try her best to achieve her primary goal before moving on.

The second form is that of a jet-black, robust mule with no head, whose open neck constantly breathes out cold, bluish, ghostly flames. Two red spots shine in the place of eyes.

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Its gallop sounds like thunder, and its whine simulates the laughter of a madman. The Headless Mule can only adopt this form between sunset and sunrise. She usually waits until her companion has finally yielded to her charms before revealing this frightful shape.

The Headless Mule is a solitary creature, and there may be only one, although it is unlikely, since there are legends of it across most domains in the Core and even in some Islands as well. No one knows how the first Headless Mule came into existence. Perhaps it was a woman who was cursed for having seduced a priest, or perhaps it is a member of a supernatural race of shapeshifters, who treat men as toys, very much like werewolves. Most scholars are like Professor Bertaux, and consider the Mule a mere fiction, so they have never tried to understand its true origins.

ECOLOGY

The Headless Mule contributes in nothing to the ecosystem, destroying everyone and everything she finds in her path. The few sages who believe in her existence also believe that her hide might be used in a stronger type of leather armor, perhaps with magic attributes. No one has heard of any armorer testing this theory, though.

COMBAT

The Headless Mule avoids combat in humanoid form, even though she enjoys the same high Strength score as in her animal form. She prefers to play the “damsel in distress” and make men fight for her. That is, until night falls and she is once again able to take care of her enemies in the most painful way she finds.

In animal form, the Headless Mule attacks anything that moves around her, but rarely kills, unless severely threatened. She likes to inflict pain and spread destruction everywhere, and enjoys turning strong enemies into babbling madmen. She will usually try to frighten opponents with her fear aura and her whine, then she will use her breath before an

opponent approaches her. If engaging direct combat, she will use her powerful hooves to smash and trample enemies, while trying to catch her opponent’s vision in a gaze attack.

Alternate Form (SU): the Headless Mule can assume two forms, as described above. This functions as a Polymorph Self spell as cast by a 8th-level sorcerer, with the following restrictions: she can only change between humanoid and animal form once per night; she can stay in animal form only between sunset and sunrise; she can change her humanoid form only if she abandons a specific target, and she will do all she can to corrupt or destroy that individual before giving up.

Fear Aura (SU): the Headless Mule exudes an aura of supernatural fear as a free action. The aura affects living creatures as a Fear spell cast by a 8th-level sorcerer (Will DC 17, those who save are immune to the effects for one day).

Breath Weapon (SU): the spectral flames that replace the monster’s head may advance as a cone of dark blue fire, spreading to 30ft. and causing 3d8 points of cold damage (Reflex save for half damage, DC 15). The Headless Mule can use her breath attack as a standard action three times per night, once every 1d4 rounds.

Madness Gaze (SU): the Headless Mule can aim a single target every other round as a move-equivalent action. The victim is entitled a Will save to resist (DC15). If she has just made a man fall from grace, his DC goes up to 20. Those who fail the save suffer the effects of a failed Madness Check. A result of a natural “1” means the victim has suffered a seizure and faces imminent death. The victim must attempt a Fortitude save (DC15): failure means death, success means loss of 2d4 temporary Wisdom. The victim remains comatose while regaining lost Wisdom points (1 per day).



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ADVENTURE

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DIRE OMENS

BY ANDREW PAVLIDES
(ALHOON)

Few are the wizards that seek to prolong their lives with dark rituals and foul magic to become the powerful undead beings called liches. But far fewer are those that seek to undo what necromancy what done and take back their lives after initiation to lichdom.

Balipur is one of those few. Turned to a vassalich by the darklord Azalin against his will for impersonating him, Balipur, after Azalin's departure at the destruction of Il Aluk, seeks to imitate his former master's Grim Harvest project, inverted, in a smaller scale to forge a soul from the lives of other men.

THE PLOT

Azalin was not able to learn and cast new spells, so in order to complete his Grim Harvest project, he had to rely on the spellcasting abilities of his followers to cast the spells he created. Balipur was one of his most powerful wizards, so his share in the project was quite large, but Azalin was secretive, so Balipur didn't know the whole puzzle of the Grim Harvest or how to reproduce the project.

So after Azalin's disappearance he started collecting books containing arcane knowledge, secrets of dark rituals, biology factions and interference with magic and generally every book related to magic or undead rituals. He started assassinating wizards and sages to steal their books.

In his research he found out that the ghost Frostshadow gained his fearsome powers and his undead status by stealing and using a dark potion created by collected and correctly forged lives. Balipur located and then approached

Frostshadow peacefully, and he convinced the ghost to cooperate with him. Frostshadow would help Balipur in his plans, and Balipur would enhance the ghost's magical powers. As a sign of good will, Balipur gave the ghost the ability to weaken his victims with a ray. Frostshadow would keep the books and all of the lich's magical items safe and house Balipur's other "associates" in an abandoned manor house, formerly occupied over by two spectres.

Frostshadow with Balipur found and recruited the help of an unique greater mummy, with incredible physical strength called Direhand. They gave him shelter in the manor and powerful minions to control (mummies and elite skeletons). Then Balipur located an assassin, turned to a ghoul in the transformation of Il Aluk, named Blackorn. He offered him an enchanted suit of armor as payment, with promises of more magical treasure in the future.

Before granting them their gifts, Balipur enchanted them in order to be able to control the three undead mildly. They are not aware of this enchantment, as it is very subtle. It acts more like a suggestion spell affecting these three undead. The enchantments are specially made for these three undead.

Those three servants of Balipur do their best to steal magical books and spellbooks in the nearby villages. They think they obey Balipur, not (only) out of fear but also because he is generous with his payment, giving them what they desire most. They cooperate well enough with each other, but they also tend to not interfering with each other's affairs.

VARIANT RULES

In this adventure I use a variant ruling for level advancing. Instead of giving out experience after every battle, I rule that after certain events and

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completed goals the PCs gain one level. If you want, award experience by the system proposed by the DMG, the results will be about the same.

Also I rule that because magical items are rare in Ravenloft the price of the magical items (base price, XP cost, everything except of time needed for creation) is double the normal (i.e. a +1 sword would cost 4000 gp instead of 2000 gp), so the PCs will have about half the normal magical treasure. If you don't use this rule, add to the foes of the PCs 1 or 2 hp per HD.

This Adventure is for 4 characters of 8th level. A spellcasting PC (preferably a wizard but even a single cleric will do) is essential for this adventure and a cleric will be much needed. Also the PCs will need some magical weapons in order to complete this adventure. The adventure takes place in the domain of Necropolis, about 6 months after the transformation of the domain. This adventure relies on that the PCs are either natives or have spent a long time in Ravenloft and have a good reputation.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The Mayor of the town Maykle asks the PCs to solve a problem with a haunted manor that lies near an under construction road and stop the attacks of the ghost there to the workers. He tells them to visit Cirmus and Grachtan there, two scholars that might help.

On their way to the Lestaz, they save a wizard and his hirelings from a dark naga and its minions. The wizard, rewards them with a magical book of arcane knowledge.

When the PCs come to Lestaz, they find the local community quite afraid, and learn that they see the PCs as heroes come to save them and let the construction of the road continue. The mayor, the sheriff (Vionter) and the village's most powerful wizard (Tregaz) and cleric (Father Ergoz), brief them to the happenings of the last few days. When the PCs try to find Cirmus, however, they will find that he is missing and a large stain of blood in his house

(Blackorn killed him the previous night to make sure that the PCs will not speak with him). Grachtan will be alive however and he will ask the PCs a few days to end his research, so he can tell them the results and how to battle the ghost.

The second day the PCs meet a strange old lady prophet (NOT a vistani!) named Ashavea who, after a ritual, gives the PCs some clues and some warnings in the form of drug-created dreams. This night Direhand breaks in (through a wall, cloaked with a silence spell) Tregaz's house and kills him. Blackorn contacts a band of assassins the "Black Capes" and hires them to assassinate the PCs. Balipur asked this not because he thought that the PCs would be so easily killed, but to test them and study their tactics in battle.

The third day the PCs find Tregaz turned to sand and the wall blasted open. At noon, Balipur assuming the shape of Balrut, Tregaz's cousin, comes to the village and offers his help. This night Direhand and Blackorn kill the two guards that found Tregaz's corpse. Blackorn will leave a piece of black cloth in the guard's house.

The fourth day the mayor, Father Ergoz and Vionter ask them to cooperate with "Balrut" to solve this problem as the villagers are very scared, the guards are afraid to do their job and people die and disappear. The people by now think that perhaps the PCs brought bad luck to the village or that they are unable to defeat the ghost, and are generally disillusioned with them. Some may even become unfriendly.

This night the "Black Capes" attack the PCs and Balipur helps the PCs to defeat them. The sheriff recognizes the trademark capes and the band's leader as a wanted criminal in Maykle.

The fifth day, Balipur leaves saying that he will stay in Maykle for a time. At night Blackorn will try to steal every spellbook and book of arcane knowledge the PCs have by the time. Hopefully the PCs will stop him from taking their books and kill him.

The sixth day, the PCs will be rewarded for their efforts so far by the mayor. Then a boy tells the PCs that Grachtan found information about the ghost and wants them to inform them. Grachtan

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tells the PCs about the ghost's identity and history and gives them some clues about Frostshadow's powers and weaknesses. Then Direhand along with a few minions crush in Grachtan's house (through the stone wall) and kill him. Then they confront the PCs. Direhand flees when wounded enough.

The seventh night Direhand, enhanced by Balipur's spells, breaks into the PCs' residence and tries to kill them. Probably he will be killed.

After this failure Balipur will start transferring his stolen books to another more secretive (but less guarded) place, and wait to see if Frostshadow will kill the PCs. After all, if the ghost kills them he can always bring the books back.

From there on, every few nights Frostshadow will haunt the PCs (unless they attack the manor), harassing them but not fighting to death.

Whatever the PCs do they will not foil Balipur's plans, although they will cause him trouble and they will not learn that he is a lich, although they will notice some weird things about him. Even if they destroy a part of his dark library (the most likely scenario) those books will be the less useful to Balipur's plans and already read by him. If they guess that he is a lich, give them false clues to confuse them.

After a few weeks of study Balipur will have enough information to start gathering components for his project and start researching for the right rituals to become mortal.

NEW SKILLS

For this adventure I have created many new knowledge skills. These knowledge skills give the character possessing them, knowledge over certain categories of monsters like undead, aberrations, monstrous humanoids etc. Clerics and paladins have the undead knowledge as class skill, bards and wizards have all those as class skills, rangers have the knowledge of their racial enemies as class skills, and also beasts and animals knowledge as class skills. Druids have

beasts, animals and feys knowledge as class skills. All the other monster-type knowledge skills are cross-class skills.

Many of the NPCs in this adventure have some of those skills. If you want you can let your PCs have some of them as well.

NEW SPELLS

As with the skills, I have created a few new spells that the NPCs have and perhaps you will let your PCs have. I have checked them with the DMG and "tome and blood", and I have used them repeatedly in campaigns, and I found them balanced. Anyway you can substitute them if you like with the spell in parentheses.

Frost blast:

evocation, 2nd lvl spell (Sor / Wiz)

Components: V, S

Casting time: 1 action

Range: close (25ft + 5ft/2 lvls)

Area: 10-ft radius

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving throw: reflex half .

Spell resistance: yes

Substitute with: Flaming sphere

A frost blast spell creates a frigid blast in the area the caster points that does 2d10 cold damage to all creatures in the area. There must be no barrier that blocks the caster's view of the area. A caster trying to cast a frost blast spell into a room behind an opaque curtain will fail and the blast will go off on the curtain. If the curtain however has a small hole the caster can see through, he or she will be able to cast the spell correctly.

Searing ray:

evocation, 4th lvl spell (Sor / Wiz)

Components: V, S

Casting time: 1 action

Range: close (25ft + 5ft/2 lvls)

Effect: Ray

Duration: Instantaneous (about a second)

Saving throw: reflex half.

Spell resistance: yes

Substitute with: Shout.

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This spell creates a ray of searing heat to project from the caster's finger. The caster must succeed at a ranged touch attack to hit the intended target. The ray does 1d10 of fire damage per caster level up to 12d10. As the ray exists for almost a second the target after being hit by the ray, can make a reflex save, to avoid half the damage inflicted by the spell. In essence, the ray hits the target for half the duration if the target makes a successful save.

Spell resistance:

abjuration, 5th lvl spell (Sor / Wiz)

Components: V, S

Casting time: 1 action

Range: touch

Target: creature touched

Duration: 1 minute / level

Saving throw: will negates (harmless)

Spell resistance: yes

Substitute with: Spell immunity

The target creature gains SR equal to 8 + caster level. The creature may voluntarily lower the spell resistance in order to benefit from some spells.

Distort life I,II,III:

Necromancy, 4th-6th lvl spells (Sor / Wiz)

These spells are used to change aspects of unborn creatures (like improving abilities, giving resistances, altering color, giving fangs, breath weapon etc), according to the caster's will. They can take several generations to bear fruit and tend to have moderate chances of success. They will not be used in this adventure. Balipur has them anyway, as he used to make such genetic experiments under Azalin's service.

Open the living:

Necromancy 5th lvl spell

This is a spell that helps keeping a vivisected creature alive for a few weeks so that his internal structures and functions can be directly observed and understood. When the experiment is over, the creature dies. This spell is an accompanying spell of the distort life spells, helping the caster to raise his chances of success.

Age animal, Hasten Growth:

Necromancy 6th and 5th lvl spells

These spells are used to accelerate the growth of the subjects of genetic experiments. They can only be used on vermin, animals, beasts and magical beasts.

NEW MONSTER:

ELITE SKELETON: (MEDIUM UNDEAD)

HD: 4d12 (26 hp) initiative: +1

Speed: 20' (armor)

AC: 24 (+2 shield, +5 chain mail, +6 natural, +1 dex)

Attacks: 1 longsword+9, melee

Damage: 1d8+5

Abilities: Str 16, Dex 13, Con -, int 8, wis 8, cha 6

Saves: Fort+1, ref + 4, will +3

Special qualities: weapon resistance, cold immunity, undead

Skills: spot +4, listen +4, climb -1, jump -1

Feats: Alertness, Lighting reflexes, weapon focus, weapon specialization, power attack, cleave

CR: 4

Elite skeletons originate from skilled fighters. Their corpses are used as vessels to be infused with skills that a common skeleton could not have. In order to create an elite skeleton, the corpse must be that of an at least a 5th level fighter. Lesser fighters cannot accumulate enough negative energy to become elite skeletons.

The process of making them undead strips them of their identity and their memories. Their skills and their abilities change to much the average shown above, as do their feats. From their former self nothing remains. Their intelligence is low but enables them to take actions in battle and make decisions. They are not free willed, however. They must obey their animator. Because they have intelligence, more specialized orders can be given. Their animator can command them to kill everyone they think

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hostile or dangerous, for example, or anyone they do not know. Their low intelligence anyway means that they will not always make the right decision. In the former example, they might attack a 2nd level fighter just because he wears plate armor mail and seems to be strong, and leave unbothered a 16th level halfling thief. They obey their animator and anyone their animator tells them to obey, without question. They understand common.

Combat: In combat, they use their abilities and usually follow orders at the best of their ability. They will fight to the death without fear if so ordered. If there is none to command them they will keep attacking the group of enemies they were ordered to attack, until they kill them all. They feel no pain and they have no self-preservation instincts.

Weapon resistance: Elite skeletons take half damage from slashing and piercing weapons, like normal skeletons.

Cold immunity: Elite skeletons have cold immunity like normal skeletons.

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 LARGE VILLAGE OF LESTAZ:

Lestaz is located 15 miles east of Maykle and is about 2 miles west from the haunted manor. It has about 270 men and 380 women with about 200 children most of them human. 2% are half-elves, 1% dwarves and 1% halflings. The community's alignment is Lawful neutral with good tendencies.

Lestaz has a gp limit of 200 gp and a cash reserve of 6500 gp.

The village consists of the following characters: a 1st lvl barbarian (half-orc), a 2nd lvl bard, 2 1st lvl bards, a 4th lvl cleric, 2 2nd lvl clerics, 4 1st lvl clerics, a 5th lvl fighter, a 3rd lvl fighter,

2 2nd lvl fighters, 5 1st lvl fighters, a 2nd lvl ranger, 2 1st lvl rangers, a 4th lvl rogue, 2 2nd lvl rogues, 4 1st lvl rogues, a 1st lvl sorcerer, a 6th lvl wizard, a 2nd lvl wizard and 2 1st lvl wizards. Lestaz also has a 3rd lvl adept, a 2nd lvl adept, 3 1st lvl adepts, a 2nd lvl aristocrat, 3 1st lvl aristocrats, a 5th lvl commoner, a 3rd lvl commoner, 2 2nd lvl commoners, 550 commoners 1st, a 3rd lvl expert, a 2nd lvl expert, 18 1st lvl experts, a 4th lvl warrior, 2 warriors 2nd and 24 warriors 1st.

Only the highest level class of the following NPCs appear in the previous paragraph. For example, the 2nd lvl Aristocrat from the previous paragraph is the mayor, but he also has a lvl as a fighter. Also the 4th lvl warrior is the sheriff, but he also has a lvl as fighter. Still there are 5 more 1st lvl fighters.

IMPORTANT NPCs OF LESTAZ:

The mayor Galastol Delvan, a lawful neutral Aristocrat, rules Lestaz. He is about 55 years old, tall (6 ft) and strongly built. He has graying black hair and a moustache. The mayor is not ashamed to ask advice from anyone he thinks worthy to ask. Most often he listens to the opinions of Father Ergoz and the wizard Tregaz.

The mayor rules fairly and justly the village and he is respected by everyone. He also acts as judge. He respects his associates and request equal respect from them. He is married and he has a son and a daughter (all aristocrats). He has a masterwork chain shirt in his house but doesn't wear it without a reason.

Galastol: Ar2/ fig1, L.N., hp 16, AC 9, mw rapier +3, damage 1d6. Saves: F+2, R-1, W +4. Dex 8, int 13, wis 12, cha 13. Skills: appraise +4, bluff +4, diplomacy +9, geography +4, local +4, history +3, nobility +4, listen +4, sense motive +7, spot +4. Feats: Weapon focus: rapier, skill focus: sense motive, skill focus: diplomacy. Initiative -1.

The sheriff Vionter, is a lawful neutral half elf. He is about 80 years old, about 5ft and 7" tall, with green eyes and dark hair. Vionter not really

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fitting in the elven community soon became a loner.

35 years before, Recardin Delvan, Galastor's grandfather, found him and realizing his potential recruited him to become the village's sheriff. Vionter found a place that accepted him and also a position of respect. He works to the best of his abilities all these years in order to keep on this respect.

When the murders and the disappearances start, he is greatly concerned. He cares for the villagers and also doesn't want it to restrain his career. He will be casual with the PCs but he will constantly try to cooperate with them, not only to help them solve the mystery, but also for him to play some part in the solution. He understands that the PCs are far more powerful than he is as it is the challenge before him.

He is equipped with a magical bastard sword, a crossbow, a large wooden shield and he wears a chain mail.

Vionter: War4/ fig1, L.N., hp 33, AC 18, enchanted +1 bastard sword +9, damage 1d10+3, crossbow +6, damage 1d8. Saves: F+5, R+2, W +1. Str 15, Dex 13, con 13, int 12. Skills: Spot +4, listen +4, search +4, sense motive +3, climb -3, jump -3. Feats: Weapon focus: bastard sword, exotic weapon bastard sword, dodge. Initiative +1.

Lieutenant (2): War2, hp 12, AC 16, longsword +6, damage 1d8+2, crossbow +2, damage 1d8. Saves: F+4, R+0, W +0. Str 14, con 12. Skills: Spot +4, listen +4, climb -1, jump -1. Feats: Weapon focus: longsword, alertness. Equipped with a large wooden shield, chain shirt, masterwork longsword and crossbow. Initiative +0.

Guard (6): War1, hp 5 or 6, AC 15, longsword +3, damage 1d8+1, crossbow +1, damage 1d8. Saves: F+2, R+0, W +0. Str 12 or 13. Skills: Spot +3, listen +3, climb +0, jump -1. Feats: Weapon focus longsword, alertness. Equipped with a large wooden shield, studded leather armor, longsword and crossbow. Initiative +0.

(Guards, have more than the average hp for warriors.)

Militia warrior (12): War1, hp 4 or 5, AC 13, longsword +1, damage 1d8. Saves: F+2, R+0, W +0. Skills: craft or profession +6, climb +2, Jump +2, Spot +2, Listen +3. Feats: alertness, skill focus. Equipped with a small wooden shield, leather armor, and longsword. Initiative +0.

Militia commoner (8): Com1, hp 3 or 4, AC 13, crossbow +1, damage 1d8, club -2, damage 1d6. Saves: F+0, R+1, W +0. Dex 12 or 13. Skills: craft or profession +6, climb +2, Jump +2, Spot +2, Listen +3. Feats: alertness, skill focus. Equipped with a leather armor, club and Crossbow. Initiative +1.

Father Ergoz is the head of the local temple of Boccob. He is lawful neutral, about 60 years old, 5ft and 9" tall and overweighted. He has white hair and dark eyes. He served in the temple all his life.

He is a wise man respected by the community and frequently asked for opinion on various topics by everyone. The mayor frequently asks his advice and help, particularly on trials. He is close friend with Tregaz and the mayor.

When the disturbances start, he will try to give comfort and some sense of security to the people. When he learns that powerful adventurers are coming from Maykle to help, he assures the villagers that the problem will soon be solved. After Tregaz's demise, however, his sorrow and fear become apparent, and this has a great impact on the villagers. He will recover a bit after the death of Blackorn, but will remain skeptical and a bit pessimistic.

He asks half the payment from the PCs if they ask his services, or the services of any of his subordinate clerics. He and all the other clerics of this temple turn undead and don't rebuke them. He also has a scroll with 2 cure disease spells in the temple and a scroll of restoration. He carries a potion of healing 2d8+3 hp with

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him and a scroll with 3 cure light wounds spells. Also, he wears bracers of +1 AC

Ergoz: cl4 L.N., hp 20, AC 10, mw staff +3, damage 1d6-1. Saves: F+5, R+0, W +7. Str 9, Dex 8, int 14, wis 17, cha 14. Skills: Spot +4, listen +4, sense motive +7, concentration +5, spellcraft +5, arcana +5, local +4, religion +6, undead +5, history +5, geography +3, heal +6, diplomacy +4. Feats: Scribe scroll, brew potion, combat casting. Initiative -1. Domains: knowledge, magic

Spells:

detect magic, light, mending x2, resistance detect secret doors*, bless, shield of faith, protection from evil, command detect thoughts*, hold person, spiritual weapon, lesser restoration.

Father Ergoz lives in the temple of Boccob in a large room, and can be found there most of the time. Also in the temple serve 4 more "brothers": A 2nd lvl cleric and 3 1st lvl clerics. Only one 1st lvl "brother" lives in the temple in a room next to Ergoz.

Tregaz Firehand is the village's most powerful wizard. He is about 45 years old and has a long history of protecting the village with his spells. He is one of the symbols of power of Lestaz. He is tall (almost 6 ft) and thin, with a gray goatee and shoulder long gray hair. He is neutral good.

He is respected and loved by all in Lestaz, as much as his friend Father Ergoz. He will constantly (when alive) offer his help and advice to the PCs. He is quite serious and doesn't laugh easily or often, but he likes to help in any way he can. However he is a pleasant company and when he is at the right mood he will laugh heartily at jokes. His spell repertoire is usually filled with battle spells, just in case something needs immediate attention. This has saved his life more than once.

He will offer his advice to help them in their adventuring in general and their lives, not only on the ghost hunting or disappearances topics. He likes telling stories and he is good at it. On

stormy nights, he leaves his laboratory to go to the inn and sit with the villagers and tell them adventuring stories about other heroes or even from his own past. When the PCs come to town, the first night, he will tell the villagers stories about the PCs own adventures! At 8th lvl they should have a reputation and more than an interesting story or two (except if they are not natives). As usual the story will be exaggerated, but he will listen to corrections.

When he is found dead, the village's already low morale will go down to the mud. All villagers will attend to his funeral on the third day's evening. A great list of his exploits will be read by the mayor, the sheriff and Father Ergoz. Vionter's enchanted sword as Ergoz's bracers were provided by Tregaz. (He found the sword when he killed a vampire and gave it to Vionter as a gift.)

A melancholic light rain will start falling and there will be the feeling that this is not only Tregaz's funeral, it's Lestaz's funeral as well. Nobody (except the clerics and the guards) will speak a word to the "false" heroes at the funeral. Even if the PCs try to talk to the villagers, they will be answered only with suspicious and unfriendly looks. The four deaths the same night will hardly improve the mood.

When the PCs kill the Black Capes and Blackorn, a sense of justice will come to the people but not very much. Tregaz and the dead have been avenged, but that will not bring them back.

Tregaz: wiz6 N.G. hp 23, AC 11, mw dagger +3, damage 1d4-1. Saves: F+3, R+2, W +6. Str 8, con12, int 17, wis 13, cha 14. Skills: Alchemy +6, spot +4, listen +4, concentration +12, ride +2, spellcraft +7, arcana +7, local +4, history +4, geography +4, engineering +5, performance (story telling) +3, monstrous humanoids +5, shapechangers +5, undead +6, geography +5, sense motive +3. Feats: Scribe scroll, combat casting, extend spell, craft wondrous item, craft wand, craft magic arms & armor.

Tregaz has the following equipment: mw dagger, wand of frost blast (5 charges), scroll of

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mage armor (3rd lvl), and the following that will be looted by Direhand before leaving the house: scroll of identify x2, scroll of protection from arrows x2, scroll of endurance x2, scroll of lightning bolt x2, belt of AC +1. Initiative +0.

Spells memorized:

detect magic, mending, ghost sound, mage hand, magic missile, mage armor, burning hands, silent image, resist elements, frost blast, levitate, invisibility, fireball, hold person, Halt undead.

The Black Capes, although not residing in Lestaz, will be encountered in the village the forth night. It is a band of merciless killers who kill for gold. Blackorn had connections in the organization, and contacted them giving them an amount of 800gp in front and promising to pay 3200 gp more when the PCs die. That will not happen however, and Blackorn knows it. He told the leader that the PCs are dangerous but are full of magical treasure. The leader knew them and their reputation and sent one third of his organization for the task.

Black Cape wizard: Wiz 6/ Rog1, N.E., hp 39, AC 13, mw crossbow +7, damage 1d8 + poison. Saves: F+4, R+7, W +6. Str 12, Dex 16, con 14, int 18, wis 12. Skills: Alchemy +7, appraise + 4, bluff +3, diplomacy +3, concentration +16, forgery +5, gather information +2, listen+6, spot +6, move silently +11, hide +11, undead +5, arcana +7, scry +8, sense motive +5, spellcraft +8. Feats: Alertness, combat casting, silent spell, craft wand, craft wondrous item, scribe scroll. Initiative +3.

With an * are marked the spells and scrolls he had already used before the battle and are active when the Black Capes confront the PCs.

Spells memorized:

light, ray of frost x2, ghost sound, magic missile x3, mage armor*, Melf's acid arrow x2, silent true strike *, frost blast, dispel magic, lightning bolt, major image.

Equipment: mw crossbow, potion of healing 3d8+5 hp, cape +2 hide, boots +2 move silently,

scroll of invisibility sphere *, 3 scrolls of bull's strength *, scroll resist electricity *, scroll resist fire *, scroll of circle against good *, scroll of levitate *, scroll protection from arrows (4th lvl) *, scroll of lightning bolt x2. Crossbow bolt, poisoned initial/secondary constitution damage 1d6, fortitude save vs. DC 15

So he has AC 17 (19 vs. good), arrow damage reduction 10/+1 until it absorbs 40 hp of damage. Resistance to fire and electricity 12. CR 7

Black Cape soldier (3): Rog2 / Fig2 , N.E., hp 35, AC 18, mw crossbow +9, damage 1d8 +1. Rapier +8, damage 1d6 +1 Saves: F+5, R+4, W +0. Str 13, Dex 17, con 14, int 12. Skills: bluff +3, climb +5, jump +5, disable device +6, disguise +3, gather information +3, move silently +11, hide +11, intimidate +2, spot +5, listen +5, open lock +5, search +6, sense motive +9. Feats: Alertness, point blank shot, weapon focus: crossbow, weapon finesse rapier, weapon focus: rapier. Initiative +3. Sneak attack +1d6 dam, Evasion.

Equipment: mw chain shirt, mw small wooden shield, mw rapier, mw crossbow, potion of healing 2d8+3. Cape +2 hide, boots +2 move silently

Bull's strength raises the Str to 16 or 17 giving the assassin, melee bonus + 10 damage 1d6 +3. AC 18 (20 vs good). CR 4

CLUES OF LESTAZ'S CITIZENS

If the PCs ask questions, they will get various answers and clues. Some will be false, some will be true. The System I propose is the one I found in "Night of the Walking Dead". The PCs make a gather information check vs DC 14 to learn something from a villager, and a gather information check vs DC 11 to learn something from a store or in the tavern. The temple of Boccob will give them a clue without a roll, as will Tregoz EVERY day they ask him (he will not live too much anyway). Also the mayor and the sheriff may offer a clue. Once every day roll

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1d4 for them. If an 1 comes up, then they will offer a clue.

After Tregoz dies, the DC raises by 3 for villagers and by 2 for shops. The people don't trust the PCs so much anymore, also they don't care to talk among themselves so much as before, so they also don't know as much as before.

The clues I suggest here are just a few offers, you should probably create more.

Before Tregaz dies:

1. Ashavea has foretold that a dire period will come soon, when the cry of death is heard over the village, just a week before the appearance of the ghost (true).
2. Cirmus has found a cursed item that led him to his death (false).
3. A band of killers from the nearby town performs the killings (false, a rumor straight out of Blackorn).
4. A vampire, 10 years before, was destroyed by disappearing while a large stain of blood littered his coffin (false), just like Cirmus.
5. The night after the destruction of Il Aluk, all garlic in the village was destroyed. (True but Irrelevant. Anyway Tregoz believes this to be a serious clue.)
6. The ghosts (many) of the haunted manor, were awakened by a curse. Cirmus, trying to investigate, drew their attention. (False)
7. A secret necromancers' cult is stealing dead bodies, to create an army of undead. (False, Balipur and Direhand indeed animate corpses, but they have already what they need.)
8. Some people of the village are acting a bit strange lately, and they don't remember that afterwards, they might be possessed by the ghost. (True and false, Blackorn impersonates

them while spying on the village, but they are not possessed.)

After Tregaz Dies (along with previous):

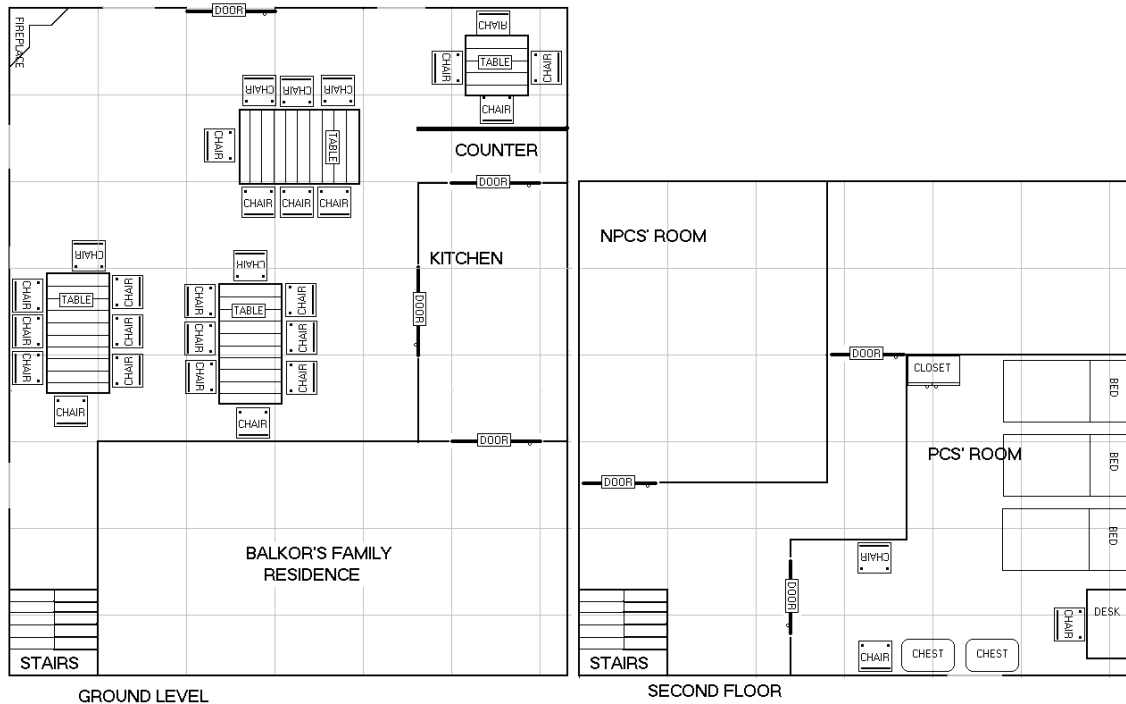
9. Tregaz has found a book about dark rituals (True)
10. In the nearby towns and villages, spellbooks and book of arcane rituals have also been stolen, but with other methods. (True)
11. Tregoz has called his powerful cousin Balrut to find what happened in Il Aluk. (True)
12. There is not only one ghost in the manor. The souls of the victims that the first and more powerful ghost took are imprisoned in the haunted manor to guard it for a hundred years (false).

BALKOR'S TAVERN

Balkor owns the only inn in Lestaz. He lives there with his wife (Sinica), his son Vinort and his two daughters, Makra and Karesta. The inn serves food from the morning till deep in the night. It serves as the central social point of the community. It has good and cheap wine (half the normal price for the PCs even after Tregaz's death). It is a 30-ft tall wooden building (8 x 9,5 meters) 27 x 30 ft, but the ground level is larger (37 x 30 ft). The adventurers get a good room for five people on the second floor. The room is 13 x 17 ft (4 x 5 meters) and has 2 two-story beds, and a single bed. It also has a closet, two small chests (with poor quality locks) and a small desk. He will charge about 8 sp per PC, a logical price for the room he offers (a little better and more expensive than common lodging.)

In the next room there is another band of low level adventurers (barbarian 1st, bard 1st, 2 1st lvl fighters and a cleric 1st). These are neutral good adventures (exactly like the NPCs of the DMG). For this band, the powerful PCs is everything they want to become. They will try to help them in anyway they can, but they should never get involved in any way in the adventure.

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The only exception will be to attack the two ghouls that Blackorn will send to attack the patrons of the inn, to draw the PCs attention, in case the PCs ignore the screams, or are already missing. This NPCs understand better than the villagers the hazards of adventuring, and will not become disillusioned when Tregoz dies.

Just another room is occupied by travelers that have no idea for the events. The travelers will leave at the third day.

Balkor is a 45 years old man, commoner 3rd lvl, Vinort is a 1st lvl warrior, Sinica is a 1st lvl adept, that will advise the PCs to go and see Ashavea and the two daughters are 1st lvl commoners. The women are neutral good, and the men are lawful good.

BALIPUR

Wizard, lich, 13th level. Neutral evil.

Str 12/+1, dex 10 /-, con -/-, int 21/+5, wis 14/+2, cha 15/+2. HP 83.

Melee bonus +7/+2, range bonus +6/+1, AC 20 (+5 natural, +5 magical items)

Fortitude +6, Reflex +6, Will +13, initiative +0.

Skills: spot +13, listen +13, heal +9, move silently +10, hide +10, search +13, scry +7, spellcraft + 13, concentration +24, sense motive +7, bluff +7, diplomacy +7, appraise +7, KNOWLEDGE: biology +9, arcana +10, undead +10, mists +7, geography +9, history +9, aberrations +8, monstrous humanoids +8, magical beasts +8, planes +8.

Feats: Scribe scroll, craft wondrous item, craft wand, craft staff, empower spell, extend spell, brew potion, craft magical arms & armor.

Languages: Balok, Darkonesse, Falkovian, draconic, infernal, abysmal.

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Powers (saving throw DC 18): Standard lich abilities: fear aura, turn resistance +4, touch attack 1d8+5 damage + paralyzation, damage reduction 15/+1, immune to cold, electricity, polymorph, mind affecting attacks, death spells. Unique powers: resistance to energy 20, fast healing 2hp/ round.

Powers from permanency spells: detect magic, tongues, resistance (all saves), protection from arrows (10/ +3), read magic, see invisible.

Equipment: I gave Balipur treasure as if he was a PC, doubled for his lich status, so about 220.000 gp. For every magical item he has made himself I used the rule that it costs 70% of the price. So he ended up with a tremendous amount of magical items, even with the doubled costs for magical items. Anyway that was my purpose. In case the PCs attack him, they will regret it. Ring of change self, 6th level (like chameleon power, without the +15 hide bonus)
Ring of minor protection from fire (15 resistance)

Robe of the evil archmage
- +5 AC
- SR 17
- Pierce magical resistance feat
- +1 to all saves

Pocket of holding: (a pouch containing about 500 lbs. of equipment, like a bag of holding, but with a locate object spell active, so the owner can find whatever he is looking for in just one round.) This one is protected by a magical alarm spell, that rings loudly when someone tries to get it.

Balipur's belt
- Inflict serious wounds 3d8 +5 up to 2 times/ day. It has 25 charges remaining.
- Enabling the wearer to cast evocation spells as if having the evocation focus feat.
- +5 enchantment bonus to concentration skill.
- Enabling the wearer to cast 3 spells / day, 3rd spell level or lower, without verbal component as if he has prepared them with the Silent spell feat.

Balipur's staff 30 charges, hardness 10, 20 hp
- dispel magic (7th)
- resist elements (3rd)
- empowered cone of cold (13th), 2 charges
- empowered searing ray (12th), 2 charges

Scrolls (all x2): stone skin, spell resistance (13th), protection from elements, repulsion, spell turning.
1000 gp in gems in the pocket, and 500 gp in coins (450 gold, 500 silver)

Balipur has placed a contingency spell upon his cloak, staff and belt. The items will teleport to the phylactery's hiding place in case he returns there. He has cloaked his staff with a spell like Nystul's undetectable aura, but it doesn't mask the aura completely, it just lessens it. He changed his staff appearance with a permanent image spell. The black ebony staff, now looks like an oaken straight staff, with golden endings.

In this adventure he will NOT use his staff, unless seriously threatened (unlikely).

Balipur's phylactery is a large ruby. He encased it in a crystal statuette of his former self, 10 inches tall, very detailed, where the heart should be. When Balipur's spirit is in the phylactery, it glows faintly. Balipur has left his phylactery in the place it always was, High in the towers of castle Avernus. He has not touched the ruby ever, as he hates it, but he has appointed many of his creations to guard it, and he has enhanced it with spells from a distance. Anyway just the fame of the place is the best ward against intruders. There he also has a few corpses near the phylactery, just in case something goes wrong, and he keeps there a copy of his 3 spellbooks.

Appearance: Balipur in life was of average to tall height and lean. In lich form, he is a disgusting, rotten thing, with dried skin tight over his bones. His head is almost a skull, with tight skin over his cheekbones and red pinpoint in the eye sockets. He has a few gray, littered hair hanging about his head. He wears his black robe and a purple cloak, although the latter is tattered and the colors are fading.

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When imposing with Balrut's appearance, he is a man about 5ft and 9", lean about 50 years old with gray to white short hair, with a goatee not very different from his brother. He always keeps his fear aura in check, although everyone will have some uneasiness around him. Explain to the PCs that his penetrating and judging gaze unnerves them, any time he is near, even if he doesn't watch them at the moment.

Background: When Balipur was alive was a powerful mage that cared for only for himself. He often used his great power to help the highest bidder, to intimidate or assassinate. In "Roots of Evil" details that he used to impose as Azalin himself sometimes, so Azalin eventually noticed that. He made Balipur a vassalich and used him as a servant for many years. He kept Balipur's phylactery under his care.

Balipur, lamenting the loss of his life and its pleasures, passed his free time making experiments with animals, studying biology, anatomy, and everything about life and the living organisms. He was also creating a new race of monstrous spider, although his specimen were destroyed in the Grand Conjunction.

Balipur grew further in power under Azalin's servitude, and in order to prepare for the Grim Harvest, Azalin taught Balipur many spells and increased his power. He improved his status to lich, shortly before Azalin's experiment. Azalin didn't care, he still had Balipur's phylactery after all, was far more powerful than Balipur, and also was occupied with his project to mind.

Balipur is 92 years old, 48 of which as an undead

Current sketch: Balipur hates his current state. He dearly misses the emotions and pleasures of life and feels completely hollow. He doesn't even remember many of the pleasures of life and that despairs him even more. He thinks that in his current state he is nothing more than an animated object that has free will (and he is right). That for Balipur, which thinks himself very important, is ultimately frustrating and most of all insulting. His apathy, his lack of emotions, his lack of sensations hurts him

deeply. He doesn't have the will strength however to commit a suicide to end his unlife.

However he is very willing to sacrifice others to end his unlife. From the instant he understood what Grim Harvest was all about (and with Azalin's secrecy, that took long), he became fascinated. He thought that his genius but powerlust master has found a great gift, discovered a great secret and just threw it away, using the right idea for nothing more than a stupid goal. Balipur wouldn't make the same mistake. He would use the ingenious process his master used, but he would be as fool as his master to waste such a plan. Anyway he knows that he is far less powerful than his master, but thinks that his power is enough to gain back a life while off course keeping his immortality, or at least prolonging his life by other means.

He has very high opinion about himself and will seem egoist. He is a moving library and he knows it, but he will not tire others with lectures, he will not care to teach anything. He will sometimes correct (perhaps impolitely) others and other times he will seem to not pay attention to anything someone has to say in a scientific matter, unless he approves him. That means, only the party's wizard for spells and arcane knowledge and the party's cleric for undead. If someone however shows a skill in some area of knowledge, Balipur will hear him in this area. Balipur's interest and respect must be gained.

Balipur hates Azalin, but he is more afraid of him. He doesn't know the Darklord's fate and he is afraid that his former master may some day come to force him in servitude again. He doesn't expect this to happen soon and he plans to leave Darkon just after his transformation. He will avoid any talk for Azalin, and he will seem nervous and unsettled if someone talk's to him for Azalin. In order to hide this he has a -3 penalty to his bluff check, but even if successful, it may seem odd, that someone so "I know everything", will have so little to say about anything concerning the famous Darklord and his fate.

While posing as Balrut, he will not talk much. Anyway he will point out any mistakes he thinks

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the PCs are making, in not a very friendly matter. The villagers will give him a wide berth, fearing him and his powers. They will however excuse him as they sympathize with him for losing his "cousin". He will cast his spells as a 9th level wizard, not 13th. He will not let his tremendous interest for the book the PCs have slip, but he will try to buy it if they "inform" him in anyway of its existence. He is interested in any such book they have, and of course, for the party wizard's spellbook.

He doesn't use his charisma to be liked. His high score means that his remarks are painful when he wants them to sting, something he usually does.

Spells in spellbooks memorized with an *:

all 0 lvl, mage hand **, mending *, ghost sound *

ray of enfeeblement *, alarm, identify, mage armor *, magic missile *, burning hands, silent image *, charm person *, magic weapon, shocking grasp, change self, protection from good.

Arcane lock, obscure object, protection from arrows, resist elements, melf's acid arrow **, command undead *, invisibility, see invisible, frost blast, minor image *, mirror image, bull's strength, knock *

Dispel magic *, explosive runes, nondetection, protection from elements, stinking cloud, tongues, hold person *, suggestion *, fireball, lightning bolt, major image, gentle repose, halt undead, fly *, haste *, shrink object, greater magical weapon.

Stoneskin *, Evard's black tentacles, minor creation, Arcane eye, detect scrying, locate creature, scrying, confusion *, fire shield, ice storm, searing ray, improved invisibility *, enervation, bestow curse, dimension door *, polymorph other *, distort life I, lesser Geas.

Cloudkill *, major creation, wall of stone, dominate person, magic jar, hasten growth, dismissal, distort life II, animate dead, fabricate, teleport, spell resistance *, cone of cold *, permanency, empowered lightning bolt *

Distort life III, repulsion, circle of death, disintegrate *, legend lore, contingency, chain lightning *, mass suggestion, Geas, permanent image, stone flesh, age animal.

Power word stun, prismatic spray *, finger of death, limited wish, spell turning, Mordenkainen sword.

DC 15 + spell lvl (+2 vs evocation)

DIREHAND

Mummy, Fighter 3rd level/ Cleric 6th lvl. Lawful evil. HP 70

Str 26/+8, dex 10/-, con -/-, int 13/+1, wis 16/+3, cha 12/+1

Melee bonus +15/+10, range bonus +7/+2, AC 23 (+8 natural, +3 magical items, +2 deflection)

Fist damage 1d6 +12, flail 1d10 +13

Fortitude +8, Reflex +3, Will +8, initiative +0.

Skills: spot +6, listen +6, move silently +7, hide +7, spellcraft + 6, concentration +16, KNOWLEDGE: arcana +5, undead +6, religion +6.

Feats: Scribe scroll, brew potion, combat casting, Weapon focus: flail, power attack, cleave.

CR 11

Powers: mummy rot (DC 20), despair DC 15, half damage from weapons, damage reduction 5/+1, double damage to fire.

Unique powers: +2 deflection, +2 strength. When someone infected with Direhand's mummy rot dies, he instantly becomes fine sand (even if he dies by Direhand's blows) only a few seconds after the infection. The remains cannot be raised or used for speak with the dead spells.

Equipment: Bracers +1, Belt +1 (That's Tregaz's belt), Flail +1, Potion protection from fire (5th), Potion Inflict serious wounds, Scroll Inflict serious wounds x2 (remember that inflict spells, heal undead).

Appearance: Direhand is a very tall and strongly built mummy. He is covered head to toe with funeral linen as many mummies. He is straight-built 6 ft and 5" (1,92 m), with huge, muscled limbs.

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Background: Direhand was once a strong evil fighter that liked bullying his subordinates. To rise in his career, he joined the ranks of a temple of a war god (Sarameous), not unlike Hextor, that promoted violence as means to accomplish one's goals, but always the superiors (more strong and powerful) make up the directive. By proving tough and useful, one becomes more powerful, and goes up in the hierarchy.

He soon became a cleric, and started rising in the hierarchy. But as a human he was afraid that years would slow him down, and upstarts would claim his position and kill him. The oldest member in the temple was 55 years old, and not so high in rank. When he was 40 years old, he was already leader of a band.

On a mission to recover a powerful magical item held by a greater mummy, they discovered some books detailing the process of mummification. Direhand thought this would greatly improve his powers. Hiding this information from his superiors (he planned to claim their position after becoming mummy, so he didn't want them suspecting or preparing), he started assembling the necessary materials.

The process was successful, and Direhand emerged after a weeklong absence as a mummy. But the last day of his absence, a traitor told the temple leaders of his plans, and many thought that he should be banned as heretic. Many disagreed however telling them that if someone exchanges his life for power and physical strength, he is in perfect order with the beliefs of Sarameous. With the come of Direhand and his claims for higher rank and status, a split formed in the temple. Direhand was not that naïve to believe that even with his powers he would be able to take over the temple, so he took his followers and left the temple, in a not-so-friendly confrontation. The survivors of this confrontation fled to the nearby swamp to regroup and plan their strategy.

The next morning, Direhand, used his stealth to move out of the swamps and spy on his former allies. He thought that the morning's mist would improve his stealthy approach. He was wrong.

The mists got thicker soon and he ended up in the Demiplane.

When he figured that, he wasn't very disappointed. After all he had centuries to live and organize a new group of followers, without any more powerful antagonists. However, the fact that he was obviously a monster was a big problem with negotiations. He started tracking bandits and killing their leaders. He then asked peacefully who wanted to join with him and his growing army. He didn't want to have in his bands members that would betray him easily, so he left (almost) anyone not wanting to join with him to flee.

But after three years, the Kargat took notice of him and his activities, and quickly eliminated this threat. Direhand managed to survive and hid in the mountains. He planned to use the same trick again, when Balipur located him. The prospect of having mummies and elite skeletons under his absolute control was something he couldn't resist.

Current Sketch: Direhand is satisfied with his current position. He has no problem cooperating with a lich, and respects Balipur's intelligence. He thinks that after 10 years, with Balipur's help, he will be able to form a large army of mummies and elite skeletons and perhaps a few mutants from Balipur's experiments (he doesn't know why Balipur studies biology and arcane) he will be able to escape the Demiplane and smash his former allies like bugs.

He has no problem acting as an assassin and not actually ruling subordinates, after all he still admires his battle prowess. Balipur, understanding his deepest desires, once every few months, gives him a group of elite skeletons and mummies and tells him to attack a target on the road. The Real Balrut, was the last one of Direhand's games.

He likes the feats of strength he is able to do, so he crushes through walls when he assassinates someone in Lestaz. The wooden walls are like paper to him due to his increased strength. However he will not underestimate any opponents, or make any obvious mistakes. He

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will always fight with his back at an easy exit, perhaps a hole in the wall he created, or even a window.

Combat: Old habits are not easily forgotten, so Direhand still enjoys using his incredible strength to smite opponents. He uses most of his spells to enhance his already great battle abilities and he becomes very powerful. His best spell is, predictably, bull's strength. He will use early in combat his domain granted powers, both in the same round to do tremendous damage with one blow, to make his foes swoon. (+10 damage, +7 melee bonus!)

When he comes to melee he usually has the following spells active, making him a killing machine (in that order): Bull's strength (+2 hit rolls, +3 damage rolls), magic vestment (+2 AC), protection from fire, magic circle against good (+2 AC, saves vs good), shield of faith (+3 AC), divine favor (+2 h/d rolls).

So he is as follows, Str 30-31, heavy flail +21/+16 damage 1d10 +18, AC 28 (30 vs good) and he has a +2 to saves against good spells, or spells casted from good creatures. His hit and damage rolls are enough to remind the typical 8th level dwarven fighter with 18 con, and 90 hp that he is not invincible.

Spells memorized:

detect magic, mending, inflict light wounds x3
Cause fear, divine favor, shield of faith, endure elements *
Sound burst, darkness, bull's strength *, hold person, silence
Magic vestment *, Magic circle against good, dispel magic, protection from fire.
Domains: Strength and Destruction. (* domain spell)
Saves DC 13 + spell lvl.

BLACKORN

Ghoul, Fighter 4th level/ Rogue 4th lvl. Chaotic evil. HP 55

Str 15/+2, dex 20/+5, con -/-, int 13/+1, wis 14/+2, cha 15/+2
Melee bonus +9/+4, range bonus +12/+7, AC 22 (+5 dex, +2 natural, +5 enchanted chain shirt)
Dagger +11/+6, damage 1d4 +5, thrown dagger +16, damage 1d4 +6
Bite +9, damage 1d6+2 +paralysis, 2 claws +7, damage 1d3+1 +paralysis
Fortitude +5, Reflex +10, Will +6, initiative +5.

Skills: bluff +7, diplomacy +7, sense motive +7, pick pocket +9, open lock +9, move silently +15, hide +15, spot +11, listen +11, search +12, disable device +7, climb +7, jump +7, use magical device +4, decipher script +3, forgery +3, innuendo +4, gather information +7, intuit direction +4, balance +6, undead +5, disguise +4.

Feats: multiattack, weapon focus: dagger, point blank shot, iron will, expertise, ambidexterity, weapon specialization: dagger.
CR 10

Powers: paralysis 1d6+2 min DC 16

Unique powers: Damage reduction 10/silver, summon rats (3d6 dire rats will come in 2d6 rounds and serve for an hour, 1/day).

Equipment: Chain shirt +1, Ring of change self (like chameleon power, without the +15 hide bonus, caster lvl 6th), Dagger +1 returning, Potion of inflict wounds (3d8+5)

The ring is usable only by evil characters.

Appearance: Blackorn is a bit short, only 5ft 6" tall. His real features are twisted and rotten, as are all ghouls' features. He wears trousers, and his chain shirt, covered under a loose shirt, and a normal set of boots. All those are modest and when he changes his appearance, he has nothing special about him.

Usually he has different appearance than his ghoulish self. His ring is so enspelled, as to hide

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his deathly odor, so he can pass freely for a human. He obviously prefers his human appearance, but he is not offended by his undead nature. He doesn't keep any one appearance for too long, and will not usually impersonate someone for long if it can be avoided. In the small community of Lestaz however, everyone knows each other, and travelers draw unwanted attention, so he sometimes has to impersonate villagers when their relatives are not near. This caused some problems, however, as he doesn't know more than the names of those he impersonates.

When Blackorn was alive, he was in Dark path to become a wererat. So he had a strange faint smell of rat around him. This odor however was replaced by the smell of a rotting corpse in undeath.

When someone touches him, however, he will notice that his skin is cold.

Background: Blackorn never met his father, he was the son of a prostitute in Il Aluk, never really liking his life or anyone else. His mother never cared for him or his younger brother more than feed them from time to time. They had to steal and fight to eat regularly.

When Blackorn was 15 years old, he and his brother ran afoul of a rich merchant. His guards cornered the two brothers in an alley. Blackorn succeeded to climb over a nearby 12-ft tall fence, separating the alley from a garbage fill. Just when he was ready to jump over the fence, a guard caught his brother by the ankle. At this instant Blackorn had to decide, to jump over and save himself or try to carry his brother over the fence risking to be caught too...

He jumped over the fence. The instant he landed on the other side, he felt a strange affinity with the rats he found there. He thought that strange but the screams of his brother reminded him of his position and he left running.

After a few hours, he went to the alley and he found his brother seriously wounded. He carried him back to home, but after a few days he died. Blackorn, for once in his life felt a bit guilty, but

he got over it quickly. At the instance of his brother's death, he found that he had the power to call the rats. 10 large rats, bigger than anything he had seen, came to his call and devoured the corpse of his brother. Blackorn, with his newfound affinity with rats, thought this a fine and respectful funeral. He left the house and his mother, and wandered the streets of Il Aluk.

He joined a local thieves' guild, and served there for 3 years. After that time, a rival guild found them and stormed the guild house, killing anyone in the guild by this time. Blackorn was not there at this moment, but knew that he would be persecuted soon. He left the town for 2 years and traveled east, to Maykle. There, he became an assassin, cooperating with the Black Capes some times, but not actively joining their guild.

He came back to Il Aluk, and continued his life as successful assassin for five years in a large and loosely organized assassin's guild. He preferred taking jobs out of Il Aluk. In those years however, his life was quite exciting. He made many enemies and he constantly had to look over his shoulder. He stole his ring of change self for this reason. He could trust nobody but the rats he summoned.

Azalin's experiment caught him in Il Aluk however and turned him to a ghoul. He found that he was not under Death's rule and quickly fled Il Aluk. He kept his affinity with the rats even in undeath, but the rat's odor disappeared, replaced by the corpse odor.

Current sketch: Blackorn never fitted entirely in any organization and plans to part with Balipur soon after he ends his experiments. He is very interested, however, in acquiring magical equipment, and knows that Balipur can provide it. If he is able, he will steal magical items from the PCs. His personality hasn't changed dramatically in the transition to undeath. He has become a bit more aggressive, and he likes eating dead flesh. He chops his victims in Lestaz in pieces, devours some flesh quickly, and he carries the bones and the rest flesh to the haunted manor to let it rot. So, only a pool of blood remains.

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FROSTSHADOW

Ghost, Fighter 12th level. Neutral evil. HP 85

Str -(15)-, dex 16/+3, con -/-, int 13/+1, wis 12/+1, cha 14/+2

Melee bonus +14 (manifested), range bonus +15, AC 17 (+3 dex, +4 deflection)

Corrupting touch +14, damage 2d8+3 + energy drain.

Fortitude +8, Reflex +9, Will +7, initiative +7.

Skills: spot +10, listen +10, hide +11, bluff +6, diplomacy+6, (climb+1, jump+1), search +9, sense motive+3 KNOWLEDGE: arcana +4, undead +8, history +3, geography +4.

Feats: (exotic weapon: bastard sword, weapon focus: bastard sword, weapon specialization: bastard sword, power attack, cleave, sunder), iron will, improved initiative, expertise, dodge, mobility, flyby attack, lightning reflexes.

CR 14

In parentheses are the skills and feats he can't use due his incorporeal status.

Powers (Save vs supernatural abilities DC 18): manifestation, incorporeal, turn resistance +2, corrupting touch (damage increased to 2d8+3), telekinesis (60 lbs. gently like using a hand, 300 lbs. violent thrust.), fly 40' with good maneuverability, rejuvenation.

Unique powers: +2 deflection, Spell resistance 13, energy drain (2 lvls, gains 5hp per level drained, any extras are lost after 10 minutes), ray of enfeeblement 2 /day (3rd lvl sorcerer, 1d6+2 strength damage for 3 min, given from Balipur), allergen.

Equipment (in ethereal plane): Masterwork bastard sword, Breastplate +1, Large wooden shield +1

Appearance: Frostshadow is a 4th magnitude, humanoid, incorporeal ghost, created by dark pacts, according to Van Richten's guide to ghosts. When manifested, he appears to be a transparent, tall (6 ft and 1") and muscled warrior, donned in breastplate, holding a shield, with a sheathed bastard sword. He doesn't wear a helmet, and his hair is short and straight. He

has a thin moustache and a short triangular beard on his chin. His transparent body has a bluish-gray hue.

Background: Frostshadow was formerly called Revaric Stormsword and was mercenary leading a small band of skilled warriors, hiring their services to the highest bidder. For two years they served a strange cult trying to create a special potion, collecting souls. This potion would give incredible powers to anyone drinking it.

A few days before the completion of the potion, one of Revaric's mercenaries, under his commands, informed the Kargat of the vile experiments and murders of the cult. He left some clues for them to find. He guided the Kargat in the headquarters of the cult, when the potion was almost ready.

The Kargat attacked and started killing everyone and everything. Revaric's mercenaries attacked their former comrades from the back and Revaric stole the potion. However, the Kargat members attacked his mercenaries too in a killing frenzy, not understanding or stopping to figure why their enemies battle among themselves.

During the great upheaval Revaric finally drunk the potion, before his former allies had time to recover their potion. He fell to the ground and started trembling violently. Then the Kargat members reached him, and the others retreated. Revaric died with agonizing spasms in front of the Kargat.

When his body stopped twitching, a Kargat soldier approached and kicked the corpse. Then Revaric's ghost (renaming himself to Frostshadow), appeared and laughing hysterically touched the surprised guard. The guard collapsed dead instantly. Two officers immediately changed form to werewolves and attacked the ghost. They carried magical weapons and more members of the Kargat with magical weapons stormed the room, forcing Frostshadow to flee.

He wandered the land for about three years, killing randomly to test his power, before

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finding the manor and decided to reside there for a time.

Allergen: Allergen is something (object or place) holding power over a ghost. Usually it is something that held some special significance to the spirit involved.

In Frostshadow's case, the allergen is a vial filled with blood, not necessarily human blood. This for him symbols the potion he drunk to become a ghost; the potion for which he sacrificed his allies, his band and his life. It is a potion of blood, because the potion he drunk was made by collected souls. The liquid was blood red contained in a small glass vial, larger than those used for healing and magical potions.

Although most ghosts are repelled or held at bay from their respective allergens, Frostshadow will become fascinated by the vial. A presented vial of blood, as described above, will cause Frostshadow to instantly manifest himself, if he can see the vial. For one round, he will remain almost immobile, even if attacked. For the next 1d3+2 rounds, he will either attack the one holding the allergen or, if nobody holds it, will approach the vial, his eyes fixed on it, and will not attack anyone. If he is attacked while in this short trance, he will defend himself with a -2 penalty to AC. Each round he is under attack, he should make a will save with a DC 18 to come out of the trance and attack. Once out of the trance he will attack with a -2 penalty in his attack rolls.

If a potion with blood is spilled on him, he will become more vulnerable to prime material plane attacks for 10 rounds. An enchanted weapon's or spell's chance to miss him will lower to 20% only. If a second vial is spilled on him, it will just lengthen the period of this vulnerability.

Frostshadow will be laid to rest without a rejuvenation roll, only if the allergen is used in his destruction. He doesn't know of his allergen, as he hasn't figured yet that he has vulnerabilities. After it's initial use however, he will take steps to protect himself.

If the vial causing him the trance is broken or emptied, he will come instantly out of his trance. He cannot be fascinated more than once in a battle.

Also, Frostshadow dislikes the sun. He is not harmed in anyway or barred from the sun, but he will avoid sunlight if possible. If the PCs escape the manor and go out in the light, he will either abandon them or chase them for a few rounds only.

Current sketch: Frostshadow wants to increase his power. It is one of the few feelings that he carried over the grave. He is not in a big hurry, however. He has centuries in front of him, so he can wait for Balipur to enhance him further. In the meantime, he can remain hidden, and do an assassination or two for Balipur.

While not anchored to the manor in any way, he doesn't want anyone to approach it. He killed the workers for this reason, a mistake he admits he made, as many complications (the PCs) have their roots in those murders. However, he is confident that he will be more than able to destroy the PCs. In his twisted sense of humor, he will think the PCs a more formidable foe, a good challenge.

He is quite willing to talk with the PCs, while remaining hidden in a wall or on the roof. He will reveal not much information however, except if the PCs have trouble finding the secret library. In this case you should make Frostshadow do some mistakes, leading them to the right clues. Remember however that Frostshadow is smart. The PCs shouldn't have an easy time tricking him to tell them clues. Anyway, if the PCs insult him or he is bored he will attack them, probably with his abilities, not in close combat.

He will not talk them for years however. He will speak a few words if asked, or phrase or two and then vanish. For him to talk the PCs must talk to him first, calling him by his new name (Frostshadow). Else they will get surprising telekinetic attacks only, or a hand will come out of a wall and drain them without a sound or word.

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Combat: Frostshadow will not approach the PCs in direct combat, except if they use his allergen. He will use his telekinesis and ray of enfeeblement powers, and will wear them down. He will possibly close in for an energy drain, but only if he has high chances to surprise a foe. He will not risk to even get a single hit, without a reason. He will possibly attack from a hiding place use his telekinesis ability, and then instantly retreat. He will try to terrorize the PCs for his pleasure before killing them.

Usually even if he is bored, or ordered to attack the PCs (in the town) he will retreat after losing 20 hp. However, he will fight to death if the PCs find their way to the secret Dark library. A good tactic the PCs can use while exploring the manor is to protect themselves with empowered negative energy protection spells. Frostshadow will be quite harmed when the ward goes off, and if a PC injures him a bit more (until the ghost loses 20 hp), he will retreat and let them in piece for the day, unless they discover the secret library.

If however Frostshadow wears the PCs down enough, he will attack to kill. Still by surprise, he will kill PC after PC.

THE ADVENTURE BEGINS:

Notes: In the following adventure, important clues will be bold, so you will have a better idea of what should you tell the PCs, or what has importance.

There are NO boxed text pieces with what you should read to the PCs. Tell the story your way. For every useful clue the PCs find themselves without anyone helping them or telling them so, award them 100 XP, except if the clue is a reward by itself. For example finding Frostshadow's allergen and using it correctly is a reward by itself. Also the hp of the monsters are recorded like this: monster(3): 15,18,22 hp, meaning: 3 monsters, the first with 15 hp, the second with 18 hp and the third with 22 hp.

The "mw" means "masterwork".

Map scale: I use a gray square box for 5 x 5 ft

square on the maps.

When the adventure begins, the PCs should be in Maykle, and they shouldn't have any serious obligations. They should have spent enough time adventuring, so that they will probably be famous by the time and respected. Also they should speak Darkonesse, even as a second language, in order to understand the folk.

The mayor of Maykle, sends a guard to the adventurers' current residence (inn, house, wherever) and asks them for what the guard describes as an "interesting job for the common good".

When the PCs get to the mayor's house, he tells them that workers, constructing a road to Nevuchar Springs were attacked by a ghost, while working a short distance from a small village called Lestaz. The village is about 25 miles east of Maykle. He tells them that the road was to pass near a haunted and abandoned manor. The workers, knowing the place's reputation, gave it a berth of 1500 ft. After a few days of work, however, a few adventurers approached the manor, but they figured that the house is indeed dangerous and retreated.

After the sunset however, the ghost attacked, driving the workers away, killing two of them. The next day, adventurers from the village with the scholar Cirmus went to the abandoned construction site and retrieved the fallen bodies to the village for a proper funeral.

Then the Mayor informs the PCs that he will give them 5000 gp in gems if they solve this problem. If the PCs ask for more he will remind them that they may keep whatever treasure they find in the haunted manor. If they ask for more, he will (not so happily) will offer them the manor house, along with the aforementioned 5000 gp for repairs. If the PCs are not even then satisfied, he will tell them that if they don't take the job, he will find others who will. If they insist, he will show them the door.

If the PCs accept, he will tell them to visit the scholars Cirmus and Grachtan in Lestaz and ask them for assistance.

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THE ROAD:

Most probably the PCs will use the new road to Lestaz. The road is a cleared patch of earth, 12 feet wide. The workers, after clearing and leveling it, placed white stones at the perimeter, and put a layer of sand and soil over the road, pressing it with heavy flat tools.

While traveling, after 16 miles, they will hear battle sounds, behind a small hill, in their way. The road circles the hill.

A dark naga and her worgs waylaid a wizard and his 4 hirelings. By the time (wherever) the PCs reach the battlefield, they will see a robed man falling after being hit by the Naga's sting (asleep). Two more men are down (laid to sleep by Naga's poison) as are two worgs. Two injured men, two injured worgs, and the slightly wounded naga remain. Before the PCs have a chance to interfere, the two worgs kill one of the remaining fighters. The PCs have the naga's full attention. Roll for initiative at this point.

Remaining fighter: Fig, L.N., hp 15(out of 26), AC 19, mw crossbow +5, damage 1d8. Masterwork bastard sword +7, damage 1d10+2. Saves: F+4, R+2, W +1. Str 15, Dex 12, con 12. Skills: spot +4, listen +4, ride +4, climb -3, jump -3, swim -9. Feats: Alertness, exotic weapon: bastard sword, weapon focus: bastard sword, power attack.

Equipment: mw breastplate, mw bastard sword, mw crossbow, potion of healing 3d8+5, large wooden shield.

Worgs: 13 hp, 19 hp, out of 34, 36 hp

Naga, dark: 43 hp, out of 61. Spells per day 6/7/7/5. Spells remaining 5/2/3/3.

Spells known:

detect magic, read magic, ray of frost, mending, light, ghost sound, mage hand.

Mage armor, magic missile, magic weapon, alarm, charm person.

Resist elements, frost blast, invisibility. fireball, dispel magic.

Active: mage armor, resist fire, resist electricity, magic weapon.

When the battle ends, the wizard and the survivors introduce themselves. The wizard is called Rachal (5th level) returning to Nartok, from his last expedition into an abandoned crypt formerly occupied by bandits. He went there with 5 hirelings, but they lost one while fighting traps, ghouls and animated armors. They found interesting treasures, however, 3-4 of which were magical items. On their way home however, the dark naga attacked them.

He insists the PCs to take as reward the only treasure he had time to identify: a magical book. It is crucial for the adventure that the PCs take this book. He is lawful good, and recognizes that if the PCs haven't interfered, he would have lost all his magical treasure, along with his life.

The book holds many arcane secrets, and radiates magical aura. The contents were written by 3 different wizards. Two thirds of the book are written in draconic. With an arcana check DC 14, anyone studying the book, understands that the book doesn't just contain details and information about the creation of magical items and enhancing spells, but is enchanted in a way that with a few days of study, it will enable the reader to reproduce those effects or create some magical items. If the check succeeds by more than 4, (beats DC 18 in the same check) the reader knows that this is one of the 6 magical books of an old guild of wizards, that made them in order to help their apprentices study magic. The first trilogy was at the library of the guild, and the second trilogy was sold to various rich wizards. Bandits destroyed the guild before 50 years. Rumor says that the Kargat unexpectedly helped the bandits to destroy the guild (unknown to all, under Azalin's jealous commands).

In essence, the book will enable any spellcaster in the party (when he or she has an empty feat slot) to gain one of the following feats, without spending time or money. The necessary time needed to study and learn the feat was spent before the level gain.

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The book is heavy and has about 230 pages. It contains only 9 of the following feats: craft wand, forge ring, craft staff, craft magic arms & armor, craft wondrous item, empower spell, maximize spell, still spell, silent spell, quicken spell, extend spell, enlarge spell.

Six of them are in Draconic, 3 in Darkonesse. Your choice which feats are in the book and which are in Darkonesse.

If the PCs win the battle saving the last fighter: 1800 XP.

If the last fighter dies in the battle: 1400 XP

VILLAGE 1ST DAY:

When the PCs get to the village, they found the sheriff Vionter waiting for them to guide them to the mayor. If they reach the village at night, the guard in the gates will tell them that they can't get in until morning. They will be guided by the guard to spend the night near the gate, and he will keep them safe. He will insist that they can't get in, at night. If they make havoc, he will send someone to call the sheriff, and he will greet them and let them in the town, but he will not be happy for the transgression. He tells them to go to the mayor in the morning.

If (most likely) they spend the night outside, and they keep watch, they will have a chance to spot Blackorn. If the PC in watch makes a Spot check with DC 24, he will spot a shadow at the distance, jumping over the wooden fence (10 ft high) that surrounds Lestaz, carrying a bag. The shadow will stand for a moment and then run away. Because he is with heavy load, however, (Cirmus' corpse), he will run with a speed of 60 ft/round. If someone closes, he will drop the bag with the body. If the following PC opens the bag, he will find a body in parts, with pieces missing (eaten) and with unrecognizable face (ripped over and eaten). This is a call for a Horror check with DC 13 (I propose to use Nausea as a minor effect). Blackorn will soon be lost after that.

If the PCs most likely arrive at the village some time during the day, they will be accompanied by Vionter to the mayor's house. One of the few

stone-made houses, two-story, 30 ft x 40 ft. Galastol and his family stay on the 1st floor, and he uses the ground level as an office. If they entered the village peacefully, he will hear whispers like "who are those people? Are they the great heroes from Maykle?"/ "I heard that they... (Put a heroic act here)"/ "I heard that the (X PC) defeated 3 (Y monsters) in single combat! " etc.

There, the PCs will find Galastol, Tregaz and Ergoz. They will explain them the situation with the road, and they will detail them the 2 killings the ghost made. They tell them that Cirmus with a band of adventurers (bard 1st, barb 1st, 2 fig 1st, cl 1st) made an expedition to retrieve the bodies of the fallen workers. Galastol will advise them to talk to the two scholars. Tregaz will guide them (after telling them about Balkor's tavern, if they ask where they can stay).

When they get to Cirmus' house (25 x 30 ft), they will find only a large stain of blood in the bedroom. If a PC has failed a horror check, he may need to roll again. If the PCs search the house, with a DC 23, they will notice a jammed window and with a second check (DC 23 again) they will notice that the library has been searched and perhaps one or more books are missing (3 books). Tregaz will search with them if they do (roll normally). If a PC specially look for jammed windows or locks or checks the library, give him or her a +6 bonus.

If the PCs don't think to ask his companions, Tregaz will tell advise them to do. The 5 NPCs will gladly come and the cleric will notice (if the PCs ask about the library) that a book of anatomy and biology is missing, a book of undead lore, and a book for arcane rituals. The cleric used these to further his healing skills and undead and arcana lore. If the PCs haven't checked the library he will notice that these books are missing (25% chance, or 1 on a 1d4 roll). Also the NPCs will tell the PCs that Frostshadow killed healthy workers with a touch. The corpses only had a cold, death aura around them, not a sign of wound.

Tregaz will go to his laboratory then but he will advise them to look for Grachtan.

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Grachtan will hear their story, and tells them that he is looking for information in his books about ghosts and this ghost in particular. He tells them to not even think to go to the haunted manor before he has at least some theories or some useful advice about ghost hunting for them. He informs them that he will call them when he has reached to a conclusion.

VILLAGE 1ST NIGHT:

At night when the PCs return to tavern to eat dinner, they find the place full of villagers. EVERY adventurer will be there along with Ergoz, Tregaz, the mayor's family and many commoners. The tables are all pushed in a corner except the small table free for the PCs, moved near the fire (10 ft). Only the mayor's family, Tregaz, Ergoz and a few old men will have a chair to seat. There will be about 70 more people sitting on the floor, on stairs even on the turned upside down tables, with more peeking through the open door and windows! Common people will come in for a few minutes and then go out, as many wait to have a closer look of the PCs.

Make sure in all this havoc, that Sinica will approach the PCs and tell them about Ashavea's prophecies and that they should visit her.

When the PCs sit in their table, people will literally harass them with questions about everything. Many will ask for the ghost and Cirmus' death, however, optimism is apparent. As dusk turn to night, Tregaz will raise, move near the fireplace, and ask the villagers to become silent. All talk will cease abruptly. A circular area of about 6-ft in diameter will clear for him.

Tregaz with his deep voice will start to tell the villagers the PCs trials. Even their mistakes will be told more subtly, sweeten. Their exploits will be a bit exaggerated, but surprisingly not too much. Tregaz is a skilled storyteller and smart enough to know how to extract the truth of a story from the exaggerated fame. It will be quite a show, as ALL the lower level wizards of Lestaz have agreed to study ONLY silent image spells (totally 7 such spells). As Tregaz is good

in his descriptions, they will cast their spells to flesh out some of the PC's most glorious moments. Tregaz in his more serious manner and opinion about the use of magic will not cast any spells. Tregaz will accept (even suggest) that the PCs should tell their adventures themselves. But not before he tells a few of their exploits himself, (magnetizing the audience with his voice and storytelling). In essence rule that Tregaz achieved to beat a grand total of DC 19 in story telling (with the bonuses of the visual help).

Many hours will pass with Tregaz spinning stories about the PCs exploits. He will stop only when the sky at the east starts getting gray, telling everyone that it is time to go to bed. Only a few will have left by that time.

VILLAGE 2ND DAY:

If the PCs don't follow Sinica's advice to visit Ashavea, Tregaz meets them at noon and ask them to join him for lunch at the tavern. He will ask them about their conclusions, discuss their strategies, and he will offer them a clue. Sinica will again suggest them to visit Ashavea and Tregaz will agree.

The encounter with Ashavea, will be a lengthy one, about 10 hours. If the PCs go to Ashavea in the morning, they will meet Ergoz with Tregaz at the tavern. If they go at noon, they will return to the Tavern deep in the night and meet only Tregaz.

Ashavea is a 65 years old human, not a vistana, but she seems to be 80 years old, due the use of her special drug. She lives in a small 15x20 ft hut, outside of the village and she is a 3rd lvl adept. She wears curious wooden and metallic tokens in her fleece-made clothes. The house has many herbs and curious tokens and talismans. She knows and calls them by their names and she knows about their past. She doesn't talk much, and if asked to explain her own prophecies or advises, she will tell them that "What can I advice, that a dream cannot foretell?"

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She will tell them that in her past "reverie" she saw the village suffering, a wise man dying (Cirmus, but also Tregaz), the PCs coming, as a transparent somehow skeletal figure (NOT Frostshadow, Balipur) hanging over the village, she couldn't see clear the features or the shape of this figure, or the wise man's figure.

She tells them that dreams will talk for the future, and in order to accept this kind of prophecy, they have to drink from a certain brew of special herbs. She also warns them that the first time they drink the drug, they may experience severe headaches, and to have no memory of the dreams. She doesn't ask for payment. If some of the PCs hesitate, she will try to convince them. If all of them hesitate and remain adamant, she says that they possibly waste their lives. It is not crucial for all to drink the brew, but if no one remembers the dreams, the PCs will probably die.

She bids them to relax on the fur carpet. She drinks the drug first and then passes the cup to the rest of the willing PCs. Anyone drinking the drug, should make a Fortitude save vs DC 13. Someone failing will have no memories of the dreams, and will have severe headaches, inducing a -1 penalty to all his mental ability checks and skill checks, until he rests.

When every willing PC drinks the drug, Ashavea starts singing and chanting in an incomprehensible way. As slowly the PCs lose sensation of place and time, the first vision comes. The rest follow in the order I suggest below.

Dire Omens:

1. A tall muscled man clad in breastplate, with a thin mustache and beard, holding a blood red potion in a vial, looking at it in ecstasy. It's Frostshadow's former self Revaric, a moment before he gulps down the potion. The image is just a flash (about half a second), so the PCs just have a look of Revaric and the potion's color. The image goes out too fast for them to find out what the shape of the vial is, but they should remember that the potion was in an unusual vial.

2. Frostshadow's transparent and unclear image and Ashavea's voice warning that only an insane one would hunt a ghost before knowing its past, and its weaknesses, and before testing the ghost's powers against his own.

3. A mummified hand, breaching through their door. The image is just a flash. This should warn the PCs to anticipate an attack from Direhand, and tell them that there is a mummy out there. They don't have to deal with just a ghost. Frostshadow has friends around.

4. An image of a roaring fire, with only the flames visible and Ashavea's voice warning them to watch and be careful for "the one that has not life and life seeks". This is a warning for Balipur, but also for Frostshadow's energy draining attacks.

5. Grachtan's disembodied head, with blood coming out of his mouth and ears, looking sadly at them and telling them in a melancholic tone to come to him.

6. A man shaped shadow in their empty room, reaching for the party wizard's spellbook. The image is just a flash. This should warn the PCs for Blackorn's attempt to steal them.

7. A green crossbow bolt, killing a child. The image is just a flash. In the future, Balipur will equip his facedancers with enchanted crossbow bolts to send the portion of the soul to his soul bank. This is not covered in this adventure.

8. Every PC will see himself walking in an empty and dark field, that is mystically lighted by a yellow light. This is just a delusion.

9. The Black Cape wizard, covered in blood, without his mask but wearing the cape smiling at them from a cracked mirror. This is a subtle warning to the PCs that the wizard is doomed to fail, but it will most possibly work as misleading clue.

10. Fiendish figures dancing a wild dance around a fire. In the middle of the fire there are the PCs tied on a raised wooden platform. Suddenly the image changes; the fiends

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disappear the landscape becomes instantly frozen and the PCs now stand on a block of ice. However the PCs seem confident and a subtle aura seems surrounding them, protecting them. Ashavea's voice warns them to prepare for the coming battles. This is a warning that they should protect themselves from cold and fire attacks (cone of cold spells, and searing ray attacks). This will have a meaning when the PCs finally confront Balipur (unlikely in this adventure, but will happen more than once in the future).

Every nonparticipating PC, will watch as the rest PCs and Ashavea fall in reverie. At some point they will fall asleep even for a few minutes. When they wake up (if all participated that's after 10 hours) Ashavea is missing. In her seat, there is a scroll of arcane lock. Even if the PCs have the spell, the scroll is a warning that they should use it.

VILLAGE 2ND NIGHT:

This night, after meeting with the PCs and talking about their plans and informing them that Balrut, his powerful cousin will come the next day to help in the adventure and him in a research, Tregaz goes back to his laboratory. Make sure he gives valuable suggestions, the PCs should like him so they can better feel the villagers' sorrow after his death.

Tregaz's house is 30 x 30 ft wooden house. The laboratory & library, take up 17 x 30 ft. The rest is divided in a bedroom and a living room. It is decorated well enough.

This night he spends time studying his notes for the arcane book he has found recently. The book is hidden in his bedroom, under a locked chest with nothing particularly valuable. It is a book of arcane lore (not exactly rituals), explaining in theory how necromancy can forge and use for enhancement trapped life force. It consists mainly of the thoughts of the writer, and theories, but it details several theories and examples of magical items. The book gives a +1 circumstance (not magical) bonus to any arcana knowledge checks about necromancy. Tregaz

(rightly) believes that this has something to do with the destruction of Il Aluk. He needs help, however, so he called Balrut.

Late at night, Direhand, casts his bull's strength spell, slips in the town, evades the patrols and goes to Tregaz's house. There, he casts silence and protection from fire on himself. Then he breaks in through the wall, catches Tregaz by surprise and kills him quickly with his fists (in order to turn the body to sand). He searches the house, getting most of Tregaz's magical equipment and his spellbook.

Make sure Tregaz dies, whatever the PCs do. Even if they spend the night in his house, Direhand will go in, and kill Tregaz. Even if the PCs are alert and guard his house, patrolling it from outside, Direhand will go in with improved invisibility.

Before he locates the book of necromancy however, a patrol of 2 guards, notices the whole in the wall, and closes in, after waking up the neighbors and asking them to call more help. Direhand, notices them in time and evades them using his silence spell and his stealth skills undetected.

Blackorn this night will be teleported by Balipur to Maykle. He will contact his ties with the Black capes, telling the organization he needs the PCs killed, giving 800 gp in advance, warning them about the PCs power, and telling them that they have much magical treasure. The Black Capes agree to do the kill. Blackorn's duty is to provide them with information.

VILLAGE 3RD DAY:

This morning the sky is overcast. Gray clouds hang low, and a light wind blows in the village.

Early this morning Vionter as close to panic as the PCs will ever see him, will go to the Tavern and wake the PCs. He will inform them that Tregaz is killed and will ask them to help him in the investigation. He will ask them to prepare and meet him downstairs. He tells them to equip themselves and asks them to hurry. He will

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please them to forfeit spell memorizing, as it is lengthy.

When the PCs go to the common room downstairs, they will find Balkor and Sinica along with a few villagers, already informed that Tregaz's house has been breached and he has been turned to dust. They are very scared, Sinica is crying softly seated by Balkor, while Marta cries in his arms, along with her sister. The villagers stop their talk of dire fates and the certain doom that hangs over their heads and look at the PCs. There is a betrayed look in their eyes, mixed with sorrow. The powerful and glorious heroes failed to protect the region's most powerful wizard. To their opinion, as with the rest of the villagers the PCs will meet this and the following days, a band of superheroes failed, and another superhero died, without even crying for help. What dread fate can they expect for themselves?

Vionter, Ergoz, the mayor and the rest adventurers of Lestaz, will not be disillusioned by this failure, although they will be scared as the rest of the village. They know the risks of adventuring and they know that it wasn't that easy to predict that an attack would occur and take out Tregaz. Also the villagers, although all will be scared for their fates and all will feel sorrow for the killed protector, will feel betrayed and will be disillusioned in various degrees. Balkor and his family, along with few others, will not be terribly betrayed and disillusioned, knowing that little could the PCs do to know that even on their second night, Tregaz would be killed. However, there will also be a few others who will turn the sorrow and fear to anger. They will go as far as to accuse the PCs that they brought bad luck, and that they didn't care to protect them, only to take the reward. Few of these villagers will tell the PCs that on the face however, most will circulate that fame. They will tell that although the PCs accomplished some great things and solved some problems, perhaps they didn't try to solve them from the start; the problems found them and the problems found them in Lestaz again. Most of the villagers will be somewhere between these extremes.

However at the funeral this evening, even the less prejudiced villagers, in their sorrow and having fresh the fame about the bad luck and the uncaredness, will not speak to the PCs. Balkor, feeling a bit guilty for this, will keep giving them wine at lower price.

Vionter will accompany them to Tregaz's house and show them the large hole (7 x 6 ft) on the wooden wall. Splinters are every where inside (someone came in through the wall), but the neighbors heard nothing. Tregaz's corpse has been turned to fine sand (like dust), and lies on the floor. Since Direhand searched the sand, it is a heap. The laboratory's equipment is obviously searched, as many objects are misplaced and lying upside down on the floor, and some are broken. The books are all lying near the library on the floor. The library's furniture is broken down to splinters. Tregaz's notes about the book are missing as is his spellbook and most of his magical equipment.

The PCs can find many useful clues here, along with magical treasure. Vionter will actually ask them to take the treasure, as he is afraid that anything killing and looting Tregaz, might come back looking for the rest. He also believes that the treasure will find better use by the PCs, rather in Tregaz's tomb. He warns them to not tell anyone that they took anything, at least until the sorrow pass. With a Search DC 18, the PCs will find under the sand Tregaz's wand of frost blast and his scroll of mage armor. With a successful undead knowledge check vs DC 16 (+3 if the PC making the check remembers the dream) the PCs will remember that victims killed by mummy rot, turn to fine sand, like this. With a successful spellcraft check vs DC 16 (10+splvl) the PCs will remember that a disintegrate spell, turn someone to dust like this. The PCs should decide which of these is true.

With a search DC 26 (24 if specified) the PCs will find the book that Balipur seeks and Tregaz died for. If they PCs ask if it is an evil book, and think that perhaps Tregaz was not that good after all, and perhaps he died of his experiments, Vionter will remind them that Tregaz saved the village more than once, and that everybody knew him and liked him. He will offer anyway if

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the book is found that perhaps Tregaz called his cousin to help him understand this book and he will tell them that Tregaz was trying hard to find what happened to Il Aluk and why no one has returned from the slain city. He has no idea what this book has to do with Il Aluk's destruction.

Vionter then will ask him to accompany him to ask the neighbors and the two guards. The neighbors are terrified and will ask far more questions that they are ready to answer. The guards tell that they found the hole in the wall and instantly waked up the neighbors and sent them to ask for reinforcements. Then they got inside, one from the front door one from the hole in the wall. In fact, that took precisely the time Direhand needed to get away. When they found Tregaz's dust, they panicked and left, running to Vionter. The rest of the neighbors only heard the guards screaming after entering. The whole guard came after 5 to ten minutes.

Vionter will inform them that after Cirmus death, the guard requested some help from the militia. 2 militia members guarded the gate, 2 more stand guard at the central plaza, where the fountain is, and 2 guards patrolled the village. He will also admit that many of the guards are thinking of abandoning their career.

After the investigation the PCs are free to complete their rest and study spells.

At noon Balipur will come to the village and pose as Balrut. He will go to Tregaz house, ask a few questions to the neighbors (he knows what happened), then he will go to Vionter and then to the mayor, pretending to be the shocked cousin. He will not pretend to be a wreck (he doesn't remember how to do that anyway), he tells that he loved and most of all respected his cousin, but they weren't that close and used to cooperate only rarely. Anyway, he will tell the mayor and Vionter that he will be glad to help, although he came for a special arcane book.

He then goes to the PCs, introduces himself and offers his help. He tells them about the book he wants, and whether the PCs have the book or not, have searched the house or not, he will insist to go and check again. If the PCs don't

accept and don't have the book, he will go to the house and find it. If the PCs haven't found the book and search with Balipur, he will find it quickly, perhaps advising the PCs to not be so careless when investigating.

If the PCs have found the book, or if he finds it, he will ask for it. He will even try to buy it, exchanging it for a scroll of lightning bolt (5th) or another 3rd lvl scroll. He will argue that since his cousin asked him to study this book, he should have it. If the PCs are adamant, he will be infuriated but he will not react (for now). If they sell him this book, and they tell him about the other book they found, he will try to buy it too, but he will not show that he is very interested by it. However with a successful sense motive check (DC 19) the PCs will understand that he is more interested in the book than he seems to be. With a sense motive check vs DC 23, they will also notice that he is more concerned for Tregaz's book than his fate.

This afternoon there will be Tregaz's funeral as described in Tregaz's part in the NPCs of Lestaz chapter. The light rain will continue through the night. It is a chill day, in the hearts of the people and in the weather.

VILLAGE 3RD NIGHT:

This night Direhand and Blackorn will kill the guards that witnessed the attack, with their Families.

Direhand will crush through the wall of the first and kill him and his wife in complete silence. They will not have time to even be aware that their heads are crushed. Only the usual sand will remain.

Blackorn will pick the lock, and paralyze the guard and his wife. Then he will go to the next room and kill the 2 years old son. He will drag the paralyzed couple to the floor and kill them there. After eating, he will dismember the remains and carry them out of town. He will go back however to leave a scrap of black cloth on a bush next to the door. He will also dismember the son and take out his eyes and leave them on his bed. When the PCs find the bloody little bed,

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with the eyes on it, they will have to make a horror check with DC 14.

VILLAGE 4TH DAY:

When the PCs wake up, they will probably notice that the mood is even worse at the tavern, although it is an atmosphere of resignation. Balkor will almost casually inform them that the families of the guards died the previous night.

After a minute or two, Vionter will come looking for them. He wants them to help again in the investigation, but first they will have to give a report to the mayor. There they will find also Ergoz and "Balrut". Ergoz is in bad mood, and his pessimism will be apparent. Vionter also is in bad mood. The mayor will tell them all, Balipur included, that the people are very afraid, and that they have to protect the village more "actively". He offers them 1000 gp in gems if they solve the mystery. This is a sign that Galastol gives some value at the fame that the PCs are not "motivated" enough to help them. The mayor asks them for their conclusions so far.

If the PCs haven't thought that they have to face a mummy, Ergoz suggests it, and "Balrut" agrees. He says that a so powerful wizard, able to disintegrate someone would have used more subtle methods of entering, than breaking the wall. He will NOT say that wizard of this power, wouldn't serve a ghost, to not help them conclude that a lich is around. He will not however ignore completely the possibility that an assassin wizard may be behind all these. After all, there are many eccentric wizards.

Balipur will try to make the PCs think that they have to do with a mummy and a ghost. He wants to avoid complications, and refers to powerful wizards and liches, in fear that Azalin is not as destroyed as he would like.

Vionter will inform the mayor that the guards are afraid to do their job, and as all the killing takes place in the night, he asks the PCs to substitute the guards in this night's patrol. He says that since 2 guards are dead, he will put 1

remaining guard and 3 militia members to guard the entrance and 1 more guard and 3 militia members to guard the fence from outside. So none remains to patrol the village. He will ask the PCs to patrol, as it is the most dangerous job. If they don't agree to help, they have to pass a Dark Powers check, for minor betrayal.

If the PCs haven't accept "Balrut" to their ranks yet, the mayor assures them that he is a powerful and known wizard, that he has heard of him many times and asks the PCs to accept him.

If the PCs agree to go with Vionter to investigate the houses, to find the cloth they have to succeed at a search DC 15. If they don't find it, and Balipur is with them, he will find it, again with a few stinging comments. If they haven't Balipur, Vionter will find it. If they do not investigate, Balipur with Vionter will search, and Balipur will find it.

VILLAGE 4TH NIGHT:

If the PCs haven't accepted Balipur with them, he will spy on them invisible. He will not interfere in the battle. The Black Capes will attack this night. They will try to ambush the PCs at the plaza, in the center of the village. If the PCs didn't accept to help the villagers, they will attack the PCs wherever they are. They will have no clue about who Balipur is, and they will attack him normally.

The Black Capes know when the PCs will be on patrol, and when they will be at the plaza. Balipur told Blackorn, and Blackorn told the Black Capes. So one member was hidden on a roof and when he figured that the PCs will arrive in 3 to 4 minutes (800 ft distance) he told his companions and they started preparing.

When attacking the PCs, the wizard has already casted bull's strength on his companions before they spotted the PCs (an hour before the battle), along with invisibility sphere to make them all invisible and circle of protection against good (2 minutes before the battle). On himself, he has cast mage armor (an hour before), levitate, resist electricity and resist fire (2 minutes before). He

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is floating about 15 to 20 ft high. The rest of the assassins are spread about 5 to 10ft behind him, but less than 30 ft away than the PCs.

The wizard will give the signal for the attack, with the first blow, the true stricken poison bolt (with +20 bonus). This will happen when a PC gets 15 - 20 ft from him, If more PCs approach, he will attack the less armored one. As the others have readied their crossbows too against the PCs, they will all surprise the PCs. Roll for initiative after the first volley of crossbow bolts.

The 2 Black Capes soldiers will use their rapiers while the other will again use the crossbow, for a round or two. The wizard will use offensive spells from the air against anyone seeming dangerous, with a preference to wizards. Make sure Balipur (if accepted by the PCs) cast his spells as a 9th lvl wizard and that he gets hit by a lighting bolt, but he doesn't seem harmed at all. If he gets hurt (way unlikely), his fast healing will also be apparent. The point of this is to give the PCs some clues about his immunities and also hint to his power. If they ask him, he will tell them that he is protected by magical items. Make a sense motive DC 18 to let the PCs know that he is hiding something.

10 rounds after the battle starts, a lieutenant will come from the barracks. If the battle isn't finished, he will start shooting with his crossbow from a safe distance, about 60 ft away. 5 rounds after him, Vionter will come wearing only a hastily donned studded leather armor. So 10 rounds after the attack the lieutenant arrives, after 15 rounds the sheriff, after 17 rounds the militia and after 20 rounds the guards from the gate.

Balipur will attack with spells any Black Cape trying to leave. He will save 2 melf's acid arrow spells for this reason. He will have forfeited his usual spell list for directly damaging spells. He will try to kill, as he thinks that taking prisoners will probably complicate things.

Vionter will identify the trademark black capes of the killing band, and recognizes the wizard by descriptions from Maykle (and the PCs should recognize him from the dreams). One soldier's cape is a bit torn at the bottom, not by a hit.

With an intelligence check DC 15 the PCs will understand that, and also that the cloth on the killed guard's home is from the same cape. If they don't get the clue and Balipur is with them, he will point that out but later, he wants the PCs to think of it themselves. At your opinion, he might cast a suggestion to Vionter later that night when everyone (else) is sleeping. If they are not sure, but guess it, he will agree that it is the same cloth.

Ergoz, along with a 1st cleric will arrive soon. Ergoz seems in better mood now that some "justice" has been brought, but just a bit. "Balrut" and Ergoz will start a discussion, whether the PCs participate or not. They will conclude that the mummy perhaps worked with the killers, and that the wizard stole the spellbooks, but they will not find a connection to the ghost. However, Ergoz believes that the killings have something to do with the ghost. Balipur will agree.

Balipur will try to not show dramatically different in these discussions, but the PC might notice that he is far more interested to hear their conclusions in this matter. If they ask why, with a sense motive vs DC 25 (Balipur's bluff, but also a +6 modifier), they will see that with this strange behavior "Balrut" hides something. If they fail, they just think that justice improved "the poor cousin's Balrut" mood, as it did to Ergoz's.

Ergoz will also suggest that the bodies were destroyed in order to avoid speak with the dead spells. After that, the PCs are free to go to sleep.

If any member of the Black Capes is arrested, however, nobody will believe that they indeed killed none. Balipur later this night will (invisible) plant a suggestion on the prisoner that "perhaps if you admit working against Tregaz, the slain wizard, but not killing him yourself you will save your life. The blame will possibly go to your already dead partners." The next day the prisoner(s) will say that.

This will keep them safe from Balipur, as the lich doesn't need to kill them himself, but the people of Lestaz will become infuriated. They

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will not believe that the arrested Black Cape hasn't killed Tregaz. Vionter will keep him alive until the end of the adventure, and then he will turn him to the Kargat. He doesn't want any executions in the village, and doesn't want the Black Capes coming for him. Also, he rightly believes that the Kargat will be better at making him speak for the assassin band than him.

Balipur will again visit him while invisible sometime, and plant a suggestion that "everything is going well, stick to the story and you will be spared."

If the PCs kill all the Black Capes with Balipur: 2500 XP (divided among the PCs, NOT Balipur)

If the PCs kill all the Black Capes without Balipur: 3500 XP

For every Black Cape they arrest instead of kill: +250 XP.

For every guard or militia member killed by the Black Capes: -300 XP.

For every guard or militia member injured seriously by the Black Capes: -75 XP.

VILLAGE 5TH DAY:

Next morning, before leaving, Balipur will want to take with him one of the spell books the PCs have acquired. If they refuse despite all his arguments, he will go to the mayor as a last resort". He will accuse the PCs and ask the mayor to interfere. He will NOT plant a suggestion, in fear that the PCs might detect it. The mayor will tell them that he believes that they should part with a book for a few days, as he knows where Balrut's tower is (while he doesn't know that Balrut is dead) so they can find him anytime and take a copy, or the original books back.

If Balipur has no books from the PCs the mayor will insist unless the PCs succeed in a diplomacy check with DC 23. If he has one book the DC goes down to 18. If he has bought 2 books at the beginning, the mayor will be convinced that the PCs are right without check.

Balipur will leave at noon, whatever the outcome. If he has no books he will at least ask

the PCs to promise that they will come to his tower and let him copy at least a book.

For every arcane book they give Balipur: - 500 XP.

During the day, even before "Balrut" leaves, Blackorn tries to find an opportunity to attack any PC with a book while alone. He will attack preferably a wizard, since he knows them to be the easiest to kill while unprepared. He will try to trick the PCs to split up, using any diversion he can, like rats, children bribed with candies or shapechanging (like a beautiful woman asking the PC wizard in alley).

If he succeeds, he will attack with his claws and bite, trying to paralyze the PC. Then he will try to take any arcane book or spellbook the PC has. If Balipur hasn't succeeded in taking any books yet, Blackorn will indeed succeed to take a book of the three the PCs have. Then Blackorn would have tried to kill the PC and take every magical item he or she had.

Then a lieutenant and a guard will arrive and Blackorn will leave, even if not successful. He will also leave if the PC seems to be tough (injures him more than 20 hp). Blackorn must survive this encounter. This should not be difficult, as Blackorn will leave if any other PC approaches, or even if the isolated wizard proves tough. If he is destroyed however, the just forfeit this night's encounter and give the PCs the XP for killing him.

If Blackorn doesn't succeed in splitting the PCs and attacking a PC alone, he will not attack. If Balipur has two of the books already, you may very well forfeit this encounter. Anyway even if Balipur has all the three books, he wants the PC wizard's spellbook too.

VILLAGE 5TH NIGHT:

This night Blackorn will send a ghoul and 7 dire rats in the tavern to distract the PCs. This will happen after the PCs finish their dinner and are ready to sleep. Blackorn actually wants the wizard to leave his spellbook and the rest arcane

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books Balipur wants to steal. He is peeking through the window from a nearby roof. The PCs can spot him with a DC 25. He can't see (the PCs' room is 5 -6 ft higher) everything inside, but he will see when they smolder the oil lamp to sleep.

He will use his ghoul appearance all the night, as he doesn't want the PCs understand that he can take other shapes as he believes he will have his chances the following days to ambush the PCs.

10 rounds after this, there will be screams from downstairs. The PCs will probably respond immediately. If they don't go to help within 12 rounds, 2 commoners will be killed and more along with the NPC adventurers will be injured. Their blood is on the PCs hands and this is a major betrayal for the dark powers or a minor betrayal if they indeed responded but are late (perhaps donning armor).

If a PC is in the common room he or she will see rats jumping in through the windows and the ghoul coming in through the door. If they respond and they come back in the room within 4 minutes, they will find Blackorn searching for the books and for everything else valuable. If they are back in 10 rounds or someone stays in the room, they will see Blackorn breaking in through the window. If they waste a lot of time, their books will be stolen, if in the room. If they took the books with them he will sneak attack them.

If they find him in the room, he will fight until he is seriously injured, and then he will try to escape from the window or from the door. When he has lost enough hp he will drink his potion.

If they waste too much time (more than 4 minutes), and Blackorn stole the PC wizard spellbook and the arcane books, the PCs will hear shouting from the road back of the tavern. Blackorn found the books and then he tried to return to the haunted manor. He jumped out of the window; straight in Father Ergoz hands.

Father Ergoz, coming to the conclusion that a mummy was involved, ordered 10 flasks of Greek fire and created 10 vials of holy water,

just after Tregaz death, spending much of his reserve money and that of the temple. He gave 5 flasks of Greek fire to the guard and kept the rest. After the attack last night, and the extermination of the Black Capes, he concluded that the mummy would be seen soon enough. So he asked all the clerics of his order in the temple, with one man at watch anytime.

When they heard the screams from the inn, they took the vials and the flasks and went out to check. They got there before the guards, just in time to see a ghoul landing on the road and then rising. They immediately recognized that this is not a common ghoul. They caught Blackorn by surprise and doused him with Greek fire and then with holy water to avoid harming their comrades as the (flaming) ghoul attacked on melee enraged.

At the start of the first round Blackorn will have been damaged for 15 hp. At the start of the second round he will be damaged for 30 hp. If the PCs don't come to help the priests within this or the following round, in the 3rd round Ergoz will be wounded and paralyzed but alive. After the 3rd round the clerics will attack with cure spells and Blackorn will drink his potion. The books will have fallen from the flaming ghoul and will be safe from the Greek fire. The clerics will leave when the guards arrive (after 5 rounds), taking Ergoz with them.

If the PCs loose Blackorn in the night at the pursuit, he will end up facing Vionter, a lieutenant, 2 guards and 5 militia members. They will delay him for up to 4 rounds, and Vionter will be paralyzed but alive, but some of the guards not.

In any case, the priests of Boccob will be at the inn in 4 minutes and Vionter with his escort will arrive 5 rounds after them. In Blackorn's pocket the silver wedding ring of the second guard will be found, easily identified by Ergoz or Vionter. 10 minutes after Blackorn is killed, normal rats will come from every dark corner and moving ceremoniously slow will cover Blackorn's corpse. There is no way to stop them besides killing them. When they reach the corpse, they will stay there and start devouring it. More and

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more will come until they completely hide the corpse like an always-thickening blanket. After twenty or thirty minutes, they will leave the same way, leaving back only Blackorn's bones and his clothes and equipment.

If the PCs kill Blackorn themselves: 5000 XP.

If the PCs find Blackorn with the priests at the second round: 3500 XP.

If the PCs hunt Blackorn and the guards delay him for them to catch: 4000 XP.

For every guard or cleric killed by Blackorn: -500 XP

For every guard or cleric seriously injured by Blackorn: -200 XP

VILLAGE 6TH DAY:

After the events of the two last nights, the villagers will have become a bit less pessimistic and a bit friendlier towards the PCs if few or nobody was killed the last two nights, where the PCs were actively protecting the village. Their mood is still bad, and most believe that they are doomed, but some justice has been enacted after all. Still, many accuse the PCs that they were late to protect the village, and many lives are already lost. The more people were killed the last days, the more villagers will judge harshly the PCs. However, the villagers like Balkor that still believe in the PCs are increasing.

When the PCs wake up, a guard will inform them that the mayor wants to see them. There they will find Vionter and Ergoz. The mayor, with the first signs of relief after many days, will ask the PCs' report for the Black Capes and the ghoulish assassin. After that Ergoz will remind them that the mummy remains, and the ghost as the connection between these villains. If the PCs (most likely) responded to the screams and killed the rats and ghoulish in the inn, Galastol will give them half the reward, 500 gp in gems.

In any case, he will offer them to use Tregaz's laboratory and library. He will ask them, however, to refrain from using it for any other purposes than working because this will not seem good in the eyes of the villagers. There is

all the necessary equipment to create scrolls and potions. There are some remaining components enough to reduce the cost for scribing scrolls (but not potions) to half, but the XP cost remains the same.

Lestaz has a gp limit of 200 gp, so ruling that a magical item has at least a component costing half its creation money (i.e. one fourth the base price), the most expensive magical item they can make, should have a base price of less than 800 gp. For everything more expensive they have to order materials from Maykle, but this increases the item's cost by 10%, the construction would start the next day. Even from Maykle, the most precious component they could find would cost up to 1000 gp, so they can't create any item costing more than 4000 gp.

If the PCs refuse to accept payment for their actions: 500 XP

When they finish with the mayor, a boy will inform them that Grachtan the scholar has reached to a conclusion and wants to see them.

Grachtan lives in a house 3 minutes walk from the village gate, with his fighter brother. His house is a small one (17 x 23 ft) made from stone. His brother is named Retrad.

Retrad: Fig2 N.G, hp 17, AC 18, mw bastard sword +6, damage 1d10+1. Saves: F+4, R+1, W +0. Str 15, Dex 12, con 12, int 13. Skills: Spot +2, listen +2, undead +3, climb +0, jump +0, swim -8, ride +3. Feats: Weapon focus: Bastard sword, exotic weapon: bastard sword, power attack, expertise. Initiative +1.

Grachtan greets them and tells them that in his research he is positive that the ghost is the mercenary Revaric Stormsword. He tells them that Revaric was serving a secret cult trying to create a potion from human victims. However the Kargat learned of their plan and attacked the headquarters, killing everyone. Revaric stole and drunk the potion taking advantage of the havoc. He died with violent spasms in front of the Kargat.

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Grachtan says that as a member of the Kargat kicked the corpse, the ghost appeared and started laughing hysterically. He bellowed "I'm the invincible Frostshadow, bow before my unending power!" and attacked. The Kargat he touched died immediately. He will tell them generally how the Kargat driven the not-so-invincible ghost away.

Grachtan will tell them that these facts he heard with his own ears in a Maykle tavern from a surviving witness of the scene. He will also tell the PCs that the Kargat member also told him later that the survivors of the ghost's touches, needed complicated spells from the eternal order to heal completely. He was told that perhaps the ghost took part of the victims' life with every touch. The Kargat member had described Frostshadow, and the filling of chill following him. This same description Grachtan heard from the workers constructing the road.

Grachtan will then explain them about the five magnitudes Van Richten gave to ghosts. He will tell them that from research he believes Frostshadow to be a third magnitude ghost, a false and dangerous mistake, as Frostshadow is a 4th magnitude ghost. He will tell them that this means he is a dangerous ghost with several powers, but can be hit by even lesser magical weapons. That's true as +1 weapons hit Frostshadow, so he thought Frostshadow to be 3rd magnitude, but Frostshadow is an exception in this matter.

Comparing what he heard and witnessed from the bodies of the workers to what he knows about ghosts, Grachtan concluded that Frostshadow's touch also injures, except of draining life. Flesh he touches turns red and cold. This effect goes away with time or healing spells, but those healed by time still have a paler spot, like a wide scar on their skin, like the Kargat member he talked to. From the magnitude of the ghost, he believes the wound he inflicts to be something like a good sword wound, from a skilled and strong fighter, like his brother.

He will tell the PCs that in order to face a ghost, they must first guess his powers and weaknesses

and also what can harm it. Then they should observe the ghost and perhaps have one or two skirmishes with it, in order to test their theories, and learn whatever they can. They should have a quick way out in those skirmishes however. He will also warn them that the ghost is not an animal. Frostshadow will observe them too, and learn from the skirmishes too. They should be careful not to show their most powerful abilities lightly.

Grachtan will also tell the PCs that they don't just have to win the battle to get rid of the ghost, as it may reappear even a week later unless the right method is used.

Grachtan will tell them that the most important thing they have to find is the allergen, and will explain to them what powers allergens generally have over the ghosts. He will tell them that allergens can weaken permanently or temporarily a ghost, drive it out or immobilize it. He will tell them that an allergen has always to do with the ghost's past. Perhaps something that has a connection with death of the former living self of the ghost.

He called them because he thinks he found a theory about the ghost, and he needs them to test it...

Just then Direhand enters.

He smashes through the 8 inch thick stone wall, followed by 2 elite skeletons. He naturally gets the PCs by surprise so at the surprise action he gets to the stunned scholar grabs him by the neck, hoists him on the air and with a fist he shatters his skull, sending brains, blood, and chips of shattered bone throughout the house. This is cause for a horror check, with a DC 16 (every PC remembering the dreams, has a +2 bonus). Then Direhand drops the headless corpse to a corner (where it starts turning to fine sand), and turns to the PCs, casting a silence spell.

Roll for despair and then for initiative. Direhand's orders are to kill the PCs if he can but to not risk his head yet. His goal is to kill Grachtan and learn more for the PC's battle

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tactics. Direhand will use whatever knowledge Balipur has for the PCs' tactics. If he remains with less than 35 hp, he will leave, ordering two normal mummies to block the PCs' way out. These two mummies will not interfere with the battle inside at any point. They stand out of sight in each side of Direhand's impromptu "doorway" and will block the way if Direhand leaves. They will attack any PC trying to follow. After seeing the majesty of Direhand, these lesser mummies seem not that frightening, so the PCs have a +2 bonus on their saves against these mummies' despair.

Naturally, Direhand will not leave if he has far the upper hand in this battle, even if he is temporally lower than 35 hp, but his magical defenses (against fire in particular) are in good shape. In essence if 2 out of 4 PCs are down and the rest are seriously wounded, even if he has 25 hp he will not even think to leave (but since he will most probably kill the PCs then, better avoid such results).

Generally he will attack the most dangerous PC for him first, leaving the elite skeletons to delay the others. Remember that physical attacks do half damage to him, but fire does double damage, after the protection from fire is over. If Balipur warned him that the wizard or cleric use powerful fire spells, he will attack them if his protection from fire thins enough. If he is warned that a PC has a powerful magical weapon, or is a killing machine, he will attack him first. He will use silence on spellcasters in the first round of the battle.

The first time he is under 50 hp he will use a scroll of inflict serious wounds to heal himself if he can use an elite skeleton to protect him, or he is not facing more than one character.

When he leaves, after gaining some distance, he will use his hiding skills to get safely away. He must not die in this battle.

Mummies (2): 39 hp, 48 hp
Elite skeletons (2): 22, 28 hp

Retrad will stand frozen throughout the battle, until Direhand leaves. Then he will go over his

brother's dead body. He will stay there until ignoring the battle and the world around him until a PC talks to him. His name will bring him back in the world. With red eyes he will ask the PCs to avenge his brother's death. In order to help them, he will offer them a scroll of restorationx2 and if some PC has died, a scroll of resurrection. He knows that resurrection can do nothing to his brother, as he is just sand. Then Retrad will take his adventuring sack, ask the PCs to bury his brother, and he will leave for ever.

If the PCs succeed to drive out Direhand and kill his minions: 9000 XP

If you use another system for XP awards, since Direhand won't fight to death, give the PCs half the XP you would give if they killed him, and full award for his minions.

VILLAGE 7TH DAY:

Vionter will ask them about last day's events if they hadn't told him already. He tells them to listen to Grachtan's advice and prepare themselves before going to the haunted manor, perhaps by creating a few useful magical items. But he suggests that they shouldn't waste too much time now, since they are the only living targets. Also since magic item creation is costly, some reconnaissance should be made before spending a fortune creating useless magical items. He tells them that he would lock his door at night if he had survived such an attack. He will also tell them that since the mummy attacked them, perhaps Balrut met with a dire fate after leaving the village alone (that's false, he met with dire fate before coming to the Lestaz).

VILLAGE 7TH NIGHT:

After these battles, Balipur has enough information for the PCs actions. He will discuss the PCs strategy extensively with Direhand, and enhance him with his spells. He will try to eliminate any advantage the PCs had in the previous fight against Direhand.

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He will imbue him with empowered bull's strength (+3 hit rolls/ +4 dam rolls), greater magic weapon (extra +2 h/d rolls with the flail), stonesskin, invisibility, protection from elements (fire), resist elements (fire again or anything else the PCs use), spell resistance, haste less than a minute before teleporting him to the inn. It will take Direhand 4 rounds to get at the PCs door (he stops to cast his divine favor spell one round before approaching the PCs door. from the common room below (he knows it better and doesn't want to risk sending Direhand anywhere else). He is invisible, so nobody will take notice of him. Direhand will keep his memorized spells the same, in case Balipur's protection from fire and empowered bull's strength are dispelled. Perhaps Balipur will use see invisible on Direhand if necessary.

If the PCs don't spend their night in the inn, Balipur scrying them will find where they are and will send Direhand there, perhaps even lengthening the time his haste spell will be effective.

So Direhand will be like this in this battle: Str 32, heavy flail + 26/+21 damage 1d10 +23, AC 27 (29 vs good) and he has a +2 to saves against good spells, or spells cast from good creatures. Also he has spell resistance 21, damage reduction 15/+5 until the stonesskin gets 130 hp of damage and he will be hasted for the first 6 rounds of battle, giving him a +4 haste AC bonus and a free partial action.

Direhand has used his animate dead spell to bring 9 zombies under the PCs window. In case he remains with less than 20 hp he will jump out of the window and have the zombies delay the PCs as he cures himself with the scrolls.

At the tavern, Ergoz will talk with the PCs about ghosts, mummies, Tregaz, life in Lestaz before the attacks etc. until late at the night. When Balipur scrys them (Scry DC 20 to notice) he will see Father Ergoz raising and announcing that it is late and he has to go to sleep, prompting the PCs to do the same. Balipur will stop scrying, and wait for a few minutes for the PCs to go to bed and remove their weapons. The PCs will probably wait to be the target of

another attack, so they will probably not go to bed. Balipur, however, with his lack of understanding (he is undead) that the PCs are afraid to go to sleep after these attacks, and lost in his overconfidence will make this mistake. After he stops scrying, he and Direhand will start casting spells on Direhand for the coming battle.

Anyway if the PCs want to go to rest, instead of going to bed, Father Ergoz will remember something important about the mystery, the ghosts or mummies. If you don't find anything better, give them a clue from the list I proposed for Lestaz. This should keep the PCs talking with Ergoz for about 10 minutes, so they will be fully armed when Direhand knocks their door. Perhaps it was Boccob blessings, Ergoz's sixth sense or even a whim of fate, but this 10 minutes will probably save the PCs life. If Direhand by any chance, finds (even some of) the PCs sleeping and unarmed The PCs will be surely killed. This encounter is probably too difficult for unarmed PCs. If they don't want to discuss, Ergoz will tell them that perhaps they should listen him. Let them decide...

As it is late, Balkor will gently ask them to go to their room as he will lock up for the night. If they want, let them go anywhere. Direhand will find them.

When Direhand is ready, he will approach silently the PCs' room (hear DC 23, as the door is probably closed). He slams the door trying to break it. If the door is not arcane locked, it comes down in an instant. The PCs are probably surprised, and Direhand will be hasted for 9 rounds of battle.

If the door is wizard locked, Direhand's first slam, will make a hole in the door, but not open it. In the following round (first round the PCs have to react) make the save vs despair as the mummified hand breaks through the door. Any PC remembering the dream has a +2 bonus to the saving throw. Dire hand smashes 2 more large holes, one at the door's upper and another at the lower half.

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At your opinion, let the PCs attack with spells or anything they have from these holes, and the holes he will open later. Direhand should be very well prepared for this battle, as Balipur helped him, but the whole point of this suggestion is for the PCs to have more chances to survive.

On the second round, the NPCs from the second room will open their door notice Direhand. The barbarian and a fighter will attack Direhand from the back but they won't even come close. The mummy turns suddenly and with two powerful blows sends them dead and broken over the stairs' rail. This is cause for fear check for everyone watching with a DC 14. The remaining NPCs will jump out of their room's window, on the roof of the tavern's front, and then jump down calling for the guard.

On the third round, Direhand will cut out the door's upper half, and then kick in the door's lower half. All this time, he threatens the PCs that he will kill them and then anyone in the building.

On the fourth round the door will have disappeared, so he will attack the PCs. If the PCs have left through the window he will follow them and attack them on the road while the zombies delay them. If they have left using magic, he will indeed kill everyone in the building in 2 minutes and then flee to the haunted manor, to come again another day. As the PCs were warned of Direhand's attack from a dream, and also he warned them himself that he will kill everyone, to escape and let the villagers die is an act of ultimate darkness. Assign the chance of losing yourself but at least half the PCs should lose such a powers check.

Since the zombies will block anyone attempting to escape, there will be NO survivors to say where the PCs were at the time of the attack. Balkor's family, 6 more commoners and the NPCs returning with Vionter, 2 guards and 5 militia, as Vionter himself will ALL be killed. Direhand will have finished with the inn's residents by the time the guards get in the now silent tavern, and he will attack them while the zombies block all exits. The next thing the

villagers will know is that the tavern has 24 piles of sand, while the PCs were missing.

OR: Afraid to draw more attention to the manor by killing more people, Direhand may just leave everyone in peace, and go to the manor to attack the PCs another time.

Pick what you think most likely to happen. If there are many powerful adventurers like the PCs in the region, drawing attention could be a fatal mistake. However, if the PCs are the most powerful heroes in the region, few complications will occur if Direhand gives in to his murdering instincts.

Most likely, however, the PCs will face Direhand. If Direhand manages to escape he will return to the haunted manor. Balipur will be afraid to send him against the PCs again. He will let Frostshadow do the job, while Direhand (if alive) will guard his dark library. He will start transferring his most precious books to another place. Remind any fire using spellcaster that the tavern is wooden.

If the PCs kill Direhand: 12000 XP
If Direhand escapes: 7000 XP

HUNTING FROSTSHADOW:

Now, it's Frostshadow's turn to test the PCs. If they don't go to him within 2 days, he will pay them a visit the 9th night. From there on, he will be haunting them once every while. He will find them wherever they are and attack. This is just for him to study their tactics, though, and also to taunt and scare them. He will retreat to the ethereal plane if he remains with less than 65 hp. He will not use any powers beyond his touch attacks. If he finds them sleeping, he will kill them on the spot. These attacks will remind the PCs to hurry. If the PCs visit the haunted manor at least once every two days, these attacks will not (generally) happen, although he may go to them for a touch.

The haunted manor: The PCs will probably notice that there are many magical traps in the house. Balipur placed these to protect the Dark

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library. Frostshadow will fight to death only if the PCs find the way to the Dark library. If the PCs destroy all the difficult guardians of the library (Frostshadow, Direhand, flesh golem) and then retreat without destroying the Dark library (unlikely, probably they will), if they come back, they find Balipur in Balrut's form ready transfer the last of his books. He will not reveal that he is a lich, but he will try (and possibly will) kill the PCs for interfering in his plans. Even if Balipur's body is destroyed, his most precious possessions will be teleported away, and his body will explode with a fireball.

The manor is built with Dark Age standards. The walls, floors and ceilings generally are from sub-yellow limestone masonry. Large carpets cover much of the floor. The walls are decorated with paintings, carpets, decorative armor and granite statues in the living rooms of the family and the central hall.

The furniture are large, massive and made of ebony or oak. The rooms for the staff have simple furniture and no decoration.

The roof is 12 ft from the floor, and the ceiling has about 1-ft thickness.

Torches dimly illuminate most of the rooms with continual flame at night, but there is only one such torch in every room except the central hall, that has 2 such torches.

Daylight would illuminate the house by day, but the windows are sealed by the undead, and the place remains gloomy at day.

The manor has many spiders, cobwebs and dust, but in many places they are disturbed (by passing corporeal undead).

1: central hall: The central hall is the largest room and most decorated room in the manor. It spans two floors, making it about 25 ft high. The large oaken stairs, lead to the first floor. There is a large 7ft wide corridor, overlooking the floor. A wooden rail, about 5 ft high, protects anyone standing there from falling.

Hidden in the room (Spot DC 21), are 3 wights, victims of Frostshadow's energy draining attacks.

Wights (3): 17, 24, 33hp

2: kitchen: The kitchen has a large fireplace and many drawers, shelves and closets. There is no food here, naturally.

Only one small chest made of ebony on a table seems to be out of place here. This is just a bait. The chest contains nothing but a magical trap. If someone tries to open the chest a cold blast, 10 ft radius centered on the chest will go off. Anyone within range will take 3d6+6 cold damage. A successful reflex save with DC 14 (17 for the one opening the chest) halves the damage. The search/ disable device check for this trap has a DC of 26.

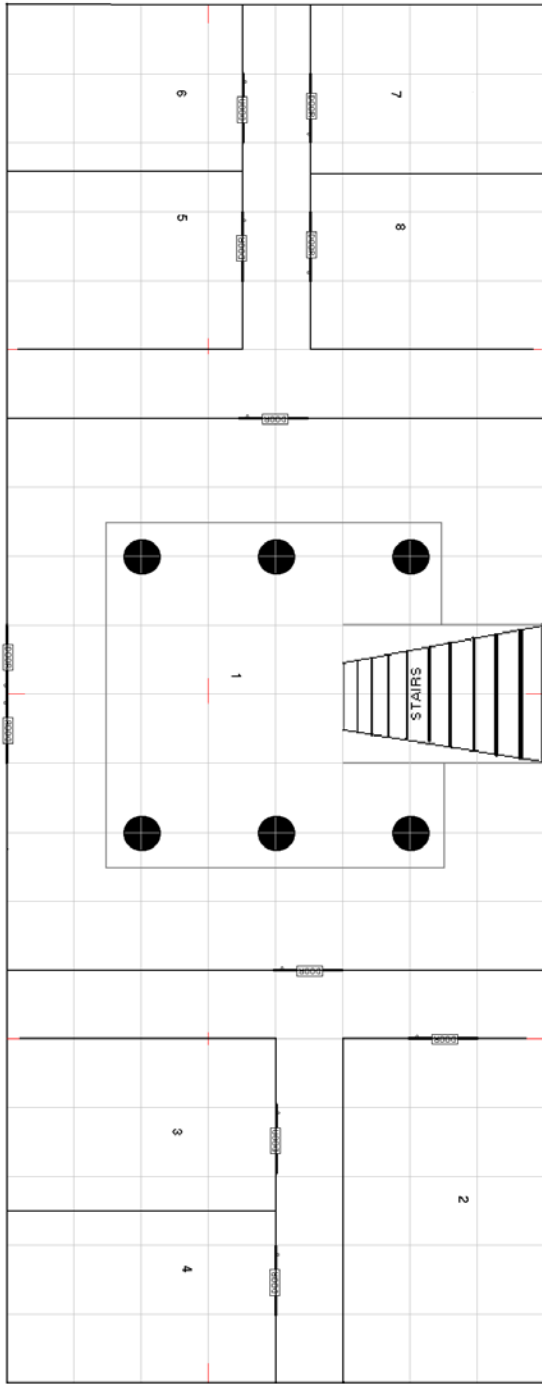
3: Servants' family room: There is nothing special in this room. It was used to house servants and their families. It has common furniture, two beds, a small chest, a closet, a desk, two chairs and such.

4: Servants' family room: This room is almost identical to the previous room. It has one more small bed. This time, the chest is trapped. If opened, a cloud of poisonous gas will affect anyone in 5-ft radius. The Fortitude save has a DC 14, and the poison's Initial/Secondary (from there on I/S) damage is 1d6/1d6 con. The trap has a search/ disable device DC of 21.

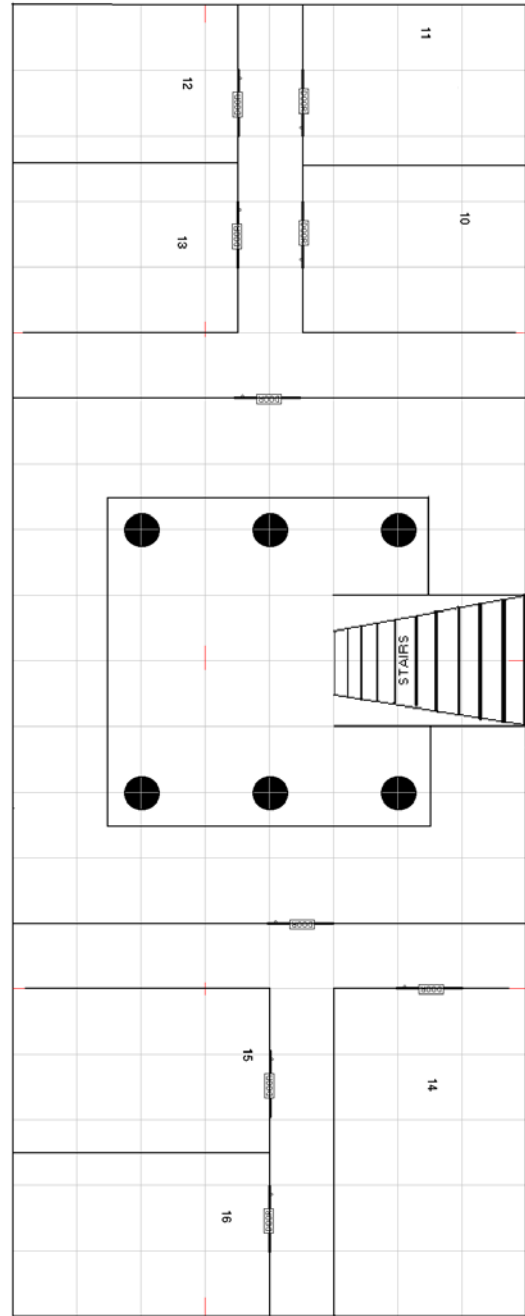
5: Guests' servants room: This room is identical to the 3rd room. It was used to house the servants that the guests sometimes brought with them.

6: Servants' family room: This room is identical to the 3rd room, except that it has 3 beds.

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GROUND FLOOR



1ST FLOOR

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7: Guests' room: This room was used to house normal guests. The furniture are not overly expensive but are decorated and of good quality. There are two comfortable beds, a desk, a nightstand, 2 chairs, a covered chamber pot, a chest and a closet. On the wall is a painting of a forest.

The door is trapped. There is a subtle and special contagion spell on the door, which will not be noticed immediately by the PC opening the door. The PC has to make a fortitude save vs DC 19 or catch a red ache disease. The disease will have incubation period of only 1 day. The saves against the disease in the future are with a DC 15.

8: Guests' room: This room contains the entrance to the Dark library. The room is like the 7th room. The door is behind the closet, and can be found with a search DC 25 (+4 if they move the closet.) If they find the door, Frostshadow will manifest and fight to death. The door is wizard locked and magically strengthened. It has hardness 20, 90 hp and break DC 35. If the door is attacked, when it gets the first hp of damage, a cold explosion with 10ft radius goes off. This does 8d6+28 damage with a reflex save DC 17 for half damage.

This trap has a search DC 23 to find and a disable device with a DC 30. The door has a spell resistance of 20.

The password to instantly open the door is "Bartakass". Bartakass was a good wizard and he was the last owner of the house. He was quite secretive and he conducted his experiments in the secret place now used to house the dark library. No divinations lower than 3rd lvl can pass through the door. Bartakass died 30 years ago while trying to save his son from Drakov's prison in Falkovia. As he failed and he had no other relatives, the house remained empty for about 2 years. After these years, two spectres (the same that lurk in room 12), took over the manor. The villagers recognized that the manor must be haunted when people passing by the manor at night started disappearing.

10: Bedroom: This room was used as the bedroom for one child of the House's owner. It is decorated with expensive furniture and paintings. It has one large and comfortable bed, a desk, a nightstand with a large mirror, 2 comfortable chairs and a closet. With a search DC 21, the PCs will find under a floor stone tile a small hole with a few gems totally worth 500 gp.

At morning nothing dangerous lurks in this room. At night seven shadows will come out of every dark corner to attack the PCs. They will attack by surprise the PCs unless they spot them (DC 20).

Shadows (7): 32, 24, 23, 20, 19, 18, 14

11: Bedroom: This room is almost identical to the 10th, but in the center of the room is a marble pedestal. On the pedestal is attached a glass statuette that slowly changes shapes. The shapes have nothing special. All this is just another trap. If someone enters within 2,5-ft from the pedestal, he should make a will check DC 19 or become cursed. The PC will feel "a weight on his or her very soul" that will put a -4 penalty to their will saves until a remove curse spell is cast upon him or her.

12: Special guestroom: This room was for higher status guests. It has expensive furniture and decorations, like the bedrooms. There are two spectres hidden in here (spot DC 24). With a search DC 20 in a secret chest under the bed the PCs will find a sword.

This is a sword+2 BUT it is cursed! A day after the first use, this sword will cause a special disease upon the user. This disease has a fortitude save with DC 15, CANNOT be cured by any means except a heal spell, while the owner still has the sword in possession and does 1d3 Con and 1d3 Str damage. If a heal spell is cast upon the owner, the disease will reappear a day after the first use. The only way to get rid of the curse is to get rid of the sword and then cast a remove curse upon the former owner and then a cure disease spell.

Spectres (2): 36, 41 hp.

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13: Special guestroom: This room is like the 12th room.

14: Bedroom: This was the bedroom for the owner of the manor and his wife. It is decorated and has expensive furniture. It has a double large comfortable bed, a nightstand, a desk a table, two large closets, a big chest, a smaller one, and a large silver mirror. This is the mirror Balipur uses for his scrying spells.

In this bedroom are the remains of Blackorn's victims. The stench is terrible, and there are rotten body parts throughout the place, with obvious signs that they have been or will be used for food. There, Balrut's corpse guards the place as a common zombie. It's the first time the PCs will see the real killed wizard Balrut. This is a scene of evil and twisted feeding habits, and also a former comrade is obviously dead. The PCs should make a horror check with DC 22 (20 for the corpses +2 for an ally).

Zombie Balrut: 20 hp.

15: Study: On the study's large and massive desk are engraved the following words: "Bartakass the iron mage". With a history check with DC 20, the PCs know about him. With a spot DC 15 the PCs will notice it, or automatically in case they search the desk. There are a few books of history and geography, but nothing special. There is some laboratory equipment, but nothing too outstanding. The study has a large and comfortable chair, and two more chairs. It is heavily decorated with trophies from Bartakass's adventures. The most impressive is the head of an illithid on a pedestal, but there are many more.

With a search DC 20 they will find an old piece of paper, 30 years old, writing: "To transfer at the lab: Bat guano, sulfur, squid tentacles, nitric acid, copper, zinc". With three spellcraft checks DC 15,16,16, they recognize the materials for fireball, Evard's black tentacles, and scrying.

16: Library: In the library are many books, some are for literature, scientific, Bartakass's notebooks and diaries and a few books about the construction of simple magical items (up to 3rd

lvl spells) and spell research. Obviously, there will be no books of biology, necromantic rituals and complicated arcane books. There will be some books about fighting undead and other monsters, many written by Bartakass himself, recording his experiences. In these experiences he records many times of magical items he created in the laboratory.

With a search DC 22, the PCs will locate a book titled "The cult of Blood", and also note that behind the cover it writes: "The cult of Blood, creation of the Evil potion.". If they don't succeed, it means that perhaps they noted the title but didn't open the book to see the first page.

The book details Frostshadow's former cult, its goal and its activities. It details the cult's history (a long one, 30 years before this book, so about 60-65 years before the current date.), probable members and headquarters, members caught by the Kargat, members that escaped the Kargat etc.

Most importantly this book details how caught members described the vials that should be used to contain the potion. With an intelligence check with a DC 13, any PC remembering the dreams will remember exactly how the vial was. If not, they have 50% chance each time they create or buy a vial to fight Frostshadow, to find the right shape.

If Direhand has escaped, a flesh golem will be in this room, sitting hidden in a hole behind an almost empty bookshelf. The PCs can spot it with a DC 23. If the PCs open the "cult of blood" book, the flesh golem will spring to attack. As it spends its surprise action getting up and throwing away the shelf, the PCs roll initiative with the golem.

The golem has strength 23, wears a brooch of AC +1, and a contingency spell giving it an empowered mage armor spell.

Flesh Golem: hp 60, AC 25, 2 slams +11, damage 2d8+6

If Direhand is dead, the flesh golem will guard the Dark library instead.

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The following rooms are not shown in the map.

17: Corridor to dark library: this corridor is 40 ft long, and 10 ft wide. It is a desecrated area, so undead have a bonus here. Every time the door is opened, poisonous gas comes out. Fort DC 16 I/S 1d4/1d3 con. If Direhand is alive, he will come in 10 rounds, fully prepared by his spells. There are also 2 mummies and 4 wights in here.

Mummies (2): 33, 38 hp
Wights (4): 19, 21, 23, 28 hp

If Direhand is already destroyed, use the following hp for the encounter:

Mummies (2): 45, 51 hp
Wights (4): 24, 28, 30, 32 hp
Specter (1): 38 hp

18: Bartakass laboratory's: Here is the laboratory of Bartakass. Most of the equipment is missing, however, and there are still no books of arcane knowledge. If Direhand was destroyed in Lestaz, the Flesh golem will be here instead.

There is a secret door to the Dark Library, like the one in the 8th room. To find the door, a search with DC 22 is needed. The password is "Balipur" (but the PCs shouldn't know that), the hardness is 12 and the door has 90 hp and a Break DC of 30. If a living creature touches or attacks the door, a blast of negative energy will sweep through the whole laboratory. The damage is 3d6 +12 with a will save DC 12 for half damage. This trap can be detected with a search DC 23 and a disable device check DC 28.

This is perhaps the most crucial point of the adventure. If the PCs have reached so far, and leave without destroying the Dark Library, if they come back to check if Frostshadow is destroyed, and again go to the library, they will find Balipur.

19: Dark Library: Here is the dark library. The PCs will see much laboratory equipment and almost empty shelves. Also there are 2 desks and 2 chairs in here. Much of the laboratory equipment will be obviously moved, as large clear spots will be among the dust, where Bartakass' devices have been for 30 years.

In the room there will be 10 - 15 books of arcane rituals and undead lore, 3 - 4 books for necromancy, 5 - 10 books of biology, 3 - 4 spellbooks of mages between 6th - 9th level and all books "Balrut" have acquired from the PCs, except Tregaz's book. This will be nowhere, but the PCs will find his spellbook.

If the PCs get in the manor before the 8th day: If the PCs ignore Grachtan's advice and visit the haunted manor, at the start of the adventure, while Direhand and Blackorn are both unidentified, Balipur will cast on Blackorn an improved invisibility and send both the invisible ghoul and Frostshadow to attack the PCs.

Blackorn will throw his dagger from a distance most often. Frostshadow will attack even if seriously hurt, and will leave only if he has less than 20 hp remaining. Balipur will not want to give the PCs more clues than they have. If Frostshadow is seriously threatened however (unlikely), Direhand will also join the battle.

After the PCs recognize for sure that a mummy is at work, the things will be far tougher for them, as all of Balipur's lieutenants will attack them. Direhand passes his time upstairs usually training with Blackorn. When Frostshadow warns them for the attackers, Direhand will cast his combat spells, and Balipur will make Blackorn (if not out to find the Black Capes) invisible. When the mummy and the invisible ghoul are in position, Frostshadow will manifest and attack along with Direhand, while Blackorn will throw his returning dagger from a distance. Balipur will watch the battle invisible but he will not help the others unless absolutely necessary. He doesn't want the PCs to recognize that a lich is involved and will not risk it.

After Blackorn dies, Balipur will join the battle invisible. As he will surmise by that point, that the PCs will probably guess that a lich is around (from the spells he will throw), he will use potent skill, and he will kill the PCs. They should have listened to Grachtan.

All of the villains will fight together, but only Direhand with Blackorn will pursue the PCs in daylight (and they will let them escape if they

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haven't found out anything important). None of them will pursue if seriously wounded. They won't pursue for too much, however. They (think they) can kill the PCs another time.

However, if Blackorn is involved in the fight, then all surviving undead will pursue the PCs, even in bright daylight, until they kill them all. They will pursue even in Lestaz, something that will make Direhand happy, as they will kill anyone in their path, just to force the PCs to confront them. The PCs and many villagers will die if this happens.

If the PCs kill Frostshadow without his allergen: 18000 XP

If the PCs kill Frostshadow with his allergen: 22000 XP

If the PCs destroy the secret library: 5000 XP

If the PCs kill the specters on the bedroom: 3000 XP

If the PCs kill the golem: 2000 XP

If the PCs kill Direhand: 3000 XP

The end of the adventure: The PCs should be 9th level by the time they utterly destroy Frostshadow and well on their way to 10th level, especially if they destroyed the Dark Library or took the books from there. Remember that their goal is NOT to destroy the Dark library but to destroy Frostshadow.

Balipur, however will have already moved the majority of the stolen books and the most important of them. Even with this delay, he will be able to proceed with his plans. As his recruits are lost (only Direhand has some chances of surviving, if the PCs didn't find the Dark Library), he will be content with the books he already has. They will prove enough. After a few months of study and preparations, he will know what components he needs for his project.

The most difficult component to find, however, will be the soul of a Nightwalker...

Special thanks to Alexei Podgousov (Igor), for his patience to correct most of my mistakes Frank Arlond (Werzaque) and the hosts of this book, for reviewing my work and for their suggestions.

End



THE UNDEAD SEA SCROLLS

SUPERSTITIONS, OR... ?

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SUPERSTITIONS, OR... ?

WELL... WHO KNOWS, I MEAN, WHO KNOWS REALLY? THE IMPORTANT THING IS THAT FOLKS BELIEVE THOSE TALES ... WHEN THEY FEAR THEM, THEY STAY HOME AND DON'T CHASE US...

THE KARGATANE (WWW.KARGATANE.COM) HAD A CONTEST THAT ENDED IN JUNE 2001. THE CONTEST WAS ABOUT SUPERSTITIONS IN RAVENLOFT. THEY HAD A WHOPPING 170 ENTRIES! THESE ARE SOME THAT DIDN'T MAKE THE BOOK OF SACRIFICES, AND SOME OTHERS THAT ARE BRAND NEW FOR THE U.S.S. ...

THEY ARE CLASSIFIED BY DOMAINS.



Domains: Barovia

By: Alex Miranda (William Cairnstone)

Being espied by a bat is an awfully bad omen. If a bat mounts a nest near someone's home, or looks at a house for a long time, then the next stranger to knock at the house's door will bring extremely bad luck with him. If the residents open the door, one person from the household will be dead in less than a year. If the visitor comes in the house, death will visit in less than a month.

A similar variant is that if a person is looked upon by a bat, even if the person does not look back, bad luck will follow the person everywhere. If the bat looks the person in the eyes for more than a few seconds, the person will not reach the end of her journey.



Domains: Dementlieu, Lamordia, Mordent

By: Alex Miranda (William Cairnstone)

In the most backward domains, physical disability is merely looked at with contempt and distaste. Handicapped are discriminated and set aside begging on the streets, interned in asylums or outright killed. In the most advanced domains, the general distrust is not smaller, but curiously, these people are so far removed from society that a number of superstitions has grown around them. Distance has made them more menacing and unknown, turning what was seen as defect into an unknown dangerous ability.

The most common belief concerning these poor hapless ones is that a simple kiss from one of them will be destructive to the kissed person's health. If kissed on the forehead, the person will grow slowly feeble-minded or even insane. A kiss on the cheek will cause a deformity clearly visible in that person's face, like a mark of some kind, or a rotting wound.

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Other rumors spread through the domains assure mothers that their babies will be born deformed if they have any contact with a handicapped during their pregnancy.



Domain: Invidia, Borca

By: Alex Miranda (William Cairnstone)

On the eve of the first of May, people hang a bouquet of a local flower named "maias" on their front door. It's believed to be an amulet to prevent the entrance of bad spirits. They are hung on the eve of May 1st, and remain there during the whole following day.

Related notes and curiosities:

- the "maias" are a yellow flower, that grow in bushes. Each flower is perhaps an inch in size, and the branch has thorns.
- the religious tradition behind is that Jesus was once hiding at a certain house and a guard saw him and marked the house with a branch of these flowers, intending to come the following day with a full group of soldiers to have him arrested. The next morning, a miracle had happened whereby all the houses on the street had the same flowers hanging at the doors.
- the same story, with some changes, appears in one of the tales of Arabian Nights, Ali Baba and the 40 thieves. After entering the cave and stealing things from the thieves, Ali Baba is seen by a thief when entering his house. The thief made a cross with a chalk on the entrance of Ali Baba's house, so that next morning they could identify it when the whole group came to take him. Ali Baba's servant, although, found this plan and marked all houses in the street equally.



Domains: Mordent

By: Gotten Grabmal (Joël Paquin)

In Mordent, it is believed that the money found on a drowned victim, or earned looking for a drowned victim, should only be given to a church or poor people.

Also, if you try to fish on Nocturne Day (October's first moon – see Book of Secrets “A year in Ravenloft”), you will not catch any fish: all you will catch are bodies of drowned persons.



Domains: Nova Vaasa, Barovia

By: Gotten Grabmal (Joël Paquin)

When a person is dying in a household, a great turmoil seizes the occupants. It is believed that the spirit of the dying person will soon roam the house before leaving for its long voyage. Because a new spirit is believed to be very clumsy, the inhabitants of the household remove all furniture from the bedroom where the dying person is, so the spirit won't hurt itself on it.

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Also, they empty all water bowls and close other liquid containers, so the spirit won't drown. Next, they mask the mirrors in the house, so the spirit won't see itself in the mirror and stay there and haunt the house instead of leaving. Finally, they will only light a fire in the hearth when the body is gone from the house.



Domain: Souragne

By: Eeve Beiderbecke (Marie K.-L.)

In Souragne, it is believed that some nights there is a powerful sorcerer knocking at doors randomly. He can be recognized by his long black beard and red cloak. He doesn't say a word and you should not say anything to him either. You let him enter your house and sleep in your own bed. You have to watch the fire all night during his sleep to keep your guest warm and make sure he has enough water for his thirst.

When morning comes, you should feed him with best your house can offer. After that, he leaves and never comes back. If you do not welcome him in your house and closes the door on him, he will summon a huge pack of fire zombies who will destroy your house and eat its inhabitant.

(Many disguised peoples fooled the superstitious people of Souragne for a good meal and a cheap bed, and others, less superstitious, uses this excuse not to show up for work or for something important "I had to be awoken all night")



Domains: Southern core, except Valachan

By: Alex Miranda (William Cairnstone)

In these domains, some folk believe that someone will turn into a wolf if drinking water where a wolf has drunk after the rising of the sun. It is the reason why all drinkable water reserve have a hard cover, well closed, to prevent animals access.



Domains: Tepest

By: Alex Miranda (William Cairnstone)

In Tepest, it is widely believed that milk can be poisoned by letting it merely be outside in a full moon night, in such a position that the moon shines upon it. This has extended to bathing in the moonlight, which is thought to be equally nefarious for the person in question, that would be forever affected by some kind of lunacy.



Domain: Tepest, Hazlan, Nova Vaasa

By: Alex Miranda (William Cairnstone)

In those domains, belief in the protective powers of those that have already died is very strong. People believe that if their dead relatives are well honored, their spirits will provide protection for the living. The

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spirits are usually believed to wander invisibly in one's house or to be constantly behind the person in question. The most usual way to honor them is to lay flowers on their grave or give them a prayer each night.

In a broader sense, though, these same spirits are also believed to wander the roads, but there they may be as much dangerous as protectors. For that reason, it is very common to see, on the border of the roads, small constructions of stone about 3ft in height, bearing the general aspect of a chapel facade, with an engraved niche where a small statue, usually 10" high, or a drawing, evokes the many wandering spirits. These spirits are placated by lighting small red candles which are left on the niche. For that reason, the roads and streets outside town at night are always eerie lit with small flames and red lights, sometimes lined by the dozens.

These little chapels are known as the "Dear Souls", or "Alminhas". Sometimes, things other than red candles are left by the "Alminhas". They can be the picture of some loved one who needs help, or a coin, which represent a wish for money. But when these are black candles or the remains of some black chicken, it is usually the sign of witchcraft, and it is best to stand very far from those places. The same candles are also very often lit at graveyards by the grave of the loved ones.

Travelling on the road without invoking the help of these spirits when passing in front of an Alminha is believed to result in some serious injuries or accidents.

Although the tradition of the "Alminhas" is widely spread, it is actively shunned by the official church and the religious people. This kind of superstitions is seen as Pagan and dangerous, and when one asks such a person about the "Alminhas", they usually make some protective sign and say they have nothing to do with Witchcraft and superstitions, and that it is just a tradition.

(inspired by superstitions in Portugal. "Alminhas" is a plural diminutive form of "Alma" (Soul), but the diminutive "alminha" can mean many things: smallness, contempt, fondness, worthlessness, dearness, tenderness - contradictory meanings... choose the one that seems the most appropriate in this case...)



Domains: mostly any domain with dangerous wildlife animals
By: Alex Miranda (William Cairnstone)

Toppling in the road when going somewhere, as long as it is out of town, and after noon, is a bad sign. The person that just toppled will fall again later on that road, so that the trip will take longer than normal and only finish after the sun has set. For this reason, many people abort their journey and settle for a nearer objective before the day has gone out.

There have been many cases of people who fell so much that despair took a grip on them and they were chased by wolves and other forest creatures, and never reached home.

(This superstition is so widely believed that people often despair too soon and make themselves easier targets.)



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THE OBITUARY (CREDITS) †

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Eddy Brennan (The Lost Wiccan)

E-Mail : Demongod@elhazard.net

Being Welsh, I thought the Bird of Death and Celtic Banshee, both being based on Welsh folklore, were ideal things for me to create. Sadly, they didn't make the cut with their original goal, but at least they get some publicity here.

Other than spending long hours pondering over how I can pour a deluge of helplessness on my willing players, I spend my time working as a freelance illustrator / animator, when I get the work (it is a big bad market out there and I am in the wrong place to make the best of it).

Of course, I do other things as well, but this would get really boring if I went into them as well.

The Brotherhood

The Miserian project began in 1999. We wanted to create a domain for the Book of Shadows made up by the efforts of many Ravenloft fans from around the world! So it is that our brotherhood is composed of members from Canada to New Zealand!

The task was not always easy as communication between us was often difficult, but here it is, and we dare hope you'll like it as much as we.

*So we stand despite the distance between us,
Brothers in the Mists!*

Andreas J. Aumer III (The Masked Marauder), Missouri, USA: Our fearless leader in the mist, and instigator of the project. His vigilant work made all of this possible. He is a valuable friend to us all.

(Brom Van Tassel), Canada: The mastermind behind one of the most important additions to Miseria: the Darklord herself.

(Edziu), USA: How old is this man? It remains a mystery, but he must be laidened with experience indeed, since he claims to keenly

remember when he laid his hands on the first D&D basic boxed-set. His wisdom was an invaluable addition to our crusade.

(Boris Gustaffe), Kentucky, USA: We owe much to this one, since he provided his own message board so that we may communicate amongst each other. He didn't stop there, of course, and helped us flesh out the domain in great detail.

Jason Janes (Dark One, or Valdrin), Illinois, USA: Another valiant soul (despite his nickname) in the project with us to the final round! He designed many of the wonderfully detailed NPCs. We all hope to work with him again for another project.

Marc-André Bédard (Thorgar), Québec, Canada: The man, the myth, the legend... his dedication, and love for Ravenloft made working with him an honor. With the support of fans such as he, Ravenloft will be alive, and well for many years to come.

Claudio Pozas (Klaus), Brazil: A good friend and skilled artist whom we owe the fantastic drawing of Cassandre Desesprits. Some of his wonderful artworks truly appear in official D20 products!

Lost in the Mists, but not forgotten: These are our brothers whom mysteriously vanished never to be seen again. However, without their contributions none of this would have been possible:

(Nero), USA

(The Servitor of Shadows), New Zealand

(Chipper), USA

(The Grim Sage), Italy

(Thrax), Turkey

We also want to express our gratitude to one of the editor of the Undead Sea Scroll netbook, **Joël Paquin (Gotten Grabmal)**. He kindly did the formatting of this text for us.

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Carrie Kube (Yaoi Huntress Earth)

E-Mail: yaoi_huntress_earth@hotmail.com

In the real world, I'm just a cute, third-year college student studying animation and hoping to get my writings published.

There's not much to say except that I'm a huge fan of the Ravenloft since I started playing Spellfire when I was in middle school and fell in love with the series when I learnt more about it.

Dion Fernandez (of Midway Haven)

E-Mail: souragne@yahoo.com

Dion Fernandez is a 21-year old writer, visual artist, paranormal researcher and graduate student taking up a Masteral Degree in Linguistics and Literature under the St. Louis University Graduate Studies Program.

Dion lives in Baguio city, the only city in the Philippines where people speak terrific English.

He absolutely loves anything with tomato sauce and chili and has a good sense of humor everytime he watches Japanese pop culture on TV.

When he's not ranting around about how he doesn't get enough air time on national television, he hones his sense of dark, twisted humor for his friends.

D-Kun

E-Mail: dfloyd84@yahoo.com

Also known as DarkSoldier on the Kargatane message board, I'm an avid writer and artist. My work can be found at my site (the address is in my text).

Stefan MAC (Kargatwannabe)

E-Mail: mac_costilow@hotmail.com

The author is currently doing time aboard the not-so-good ship, on a cruise that's taken a lot

longer than three hours, and desperately wishing to be part of any group of castaways.....

Alex Miranda (William Cairnstone)

E-Mail: AlxPinto@netscape.net

Alex arrived to these Misty Domains only three years ago, and is thus a fairly recent fan of the Ravenloft Setting. This, however, was attracting him ever since he first read about it in the back pages of the PHB.

Ever since, Ravenloft has been a hope of realizing everything the films and books always fell short of doing, of feeling all the emotions these couldn't evoke. Ravenloft is the way to find and tell the perfect Horror story, the way to finally purge all the unresolved fears and mysteries of childhood.

Even though he hasn't ever played or DMed a Ravenloft campaign yet (he's finishing preparing one, though), he has been a fan since he bought Domains of Dread. His learning process passed mainly through the Malodorous Goat Board, where many other fans taught him several important lessons about mood, setting and general history. Now, he feels proud to contribute with his own work for those same fans' campaigns, in a sense paying back his debt of gratitude.

Right now, he just hopes to successfully bring this world to the daring players who have accepted to enter the Mists with him."

Nathan Okerlund

e-mail: sealionii@hotmail.com

As the USS Netbook picks up steam, I've gained a new appreciation for netbook compilers.

Even acting as Joel's rubber stamp has been quite a bit of reading.

Nueva Aragona--too modern for Ravenloft, not modern enough for MotRD--was a labor of love and a borderline obsession, as its ungainly

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length proves. I hope the reader will find it useful for adding a gothic South American touch to his campaign.

Joël Paquin (Goffen Grabmal)

e-mail: joekin@hotmail.com

I have two descendants so far. Thomas, 9, just started a promising D&D career (no, not in Ravenloft, not yet... I started lightly *grin*). He invents monsters in his leisure time at school. I raise him so that in the not-so-near-I-hope future, when I'll be senile (I mean more than now), he will teach me the changes between the 5th and the 6th D&D edition.

My daughter Rosalie is 8. She once convinced her friends that she is a vampire, also tells them horror tales and knows the types of dragon breath by their color. That is a good start, I think. :)

I dedicate the Anna article to them and to my lovely wife, Marie-Jo, who really has lots of patience with my numerous passions and hobbies.

Also, I want to thank the Kargatane for keeping Ravenloft alive. Well, I meant *undead*. The future now looks darker for the Ravenloft setting, new fans are getting lost in the mists, and it's a good thing :)

Oh? Me? I have been playing D&D for, well, way too long (20 years this year...). And have been a Ravenloft fan since the infamous "black box" release...

During the day, I work in an gloomy Montréal downtown office domain, where the darklord is mad and really tormented, believe me.

Andrew Pavlides (Alhoon)

E-Mail: apavlides24@hotmail.com

I'm a 21 years old from Greece. I study at the Technical University of Crete in Chania. I played D&D for more than 10 years

Luiz Eduardo Neves Peref (Arijani)

E-Mail: rakshasa2010@ibest.com.br

This is my second year writing articles for Ravenloft netbooks. I have had a few articles accepted both for the Book of Shadows and the Book of Sacrifices, as well as a "demon" included in the "Children of the Night: Demons" project.

I have been playing and DMing Ravenloft for the last five years, and it's my favorite setting. As for my articles, I usually prefer to use folkloric tales and mostly unknown monsters of legend.

Those who care to read my works will see that some of them fit better in the Masque of the Red Death setting, exactly because my main sources of inspiration come from our own superstitions and legends.

