



Sundara
Dawn of a New Age

CITIES OF SUNDARA MOÜD



AZUKAIL
GAMES

CITIES OF SUNDARA: MOÜD

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WHAT IS “CITIES OF SUNDARA”?

In fantasy tabletop roleplaying games there is a tendency for settings to constantly be looking backward to a lost golden age, or a time of legend where great feats of magic and the techniques for creating potent items of power have been lost. Whether this downfall comes as a result of an apocalyptic event, societal collapse, destruction of knowledge or some combination thereof, players often find themselves struggling through a world that, for all its wonders, is not what it once was.

Sundara: Dawn of a New Age takes the opposite approach.

The world of Sundara has all of the monsters, magic, dangers and hardships you would expect in a fantasy RPG. However, the people of Sundara tend to look for the other side of the coin, harnessing the raw forces of their world in order to overcome trials and tribulations in strange, unexpected ways. Through discovery, industry, understanding and sheer grit, the people of Sundara are boldly stepping forward to master the world around them.

“Cities of Sundara” offers game masters and players alike a peek into this world. By visiting unique locations across the setting, it gives you a taste of what life is like in this setting. Not only that, but you can choose to use the cities in their original setting, or incorporate them into your own. Each supplement will also include resources such as new materials for weapons and armor, new creature types, as well as new weapons, magic items and more to enhance your game!

As the setting grows, even more elements will be included. So come, step out into the dawn of a new age with us, and revel in all the fresh possibilities that Sundara has to offer!

JOURNEY TO MOÜD

The desert wind howled beyond the walls of the stranded wagons. Ceravil had her hood pulled low, and a cloth wrapped around her mouth and nose to keep the gusts of sand out. Argor had a blanket around his shoulders, and his head down. They'd been stranded for days now, buried by the wind and sand up to the broken axle that had left them in such dire straits. The ox had died, its leg snapping when it stumbled, and they'd had to put it out of its agony quickly. Accusations had been thrown, arguments had started and fears vented... now they sat in tired silence waiting to see if the desert would devour them or not.

Then they heard it; a rhythmic thumping sound. It was far away at first, but it grew steadily closer. It was joined by the creak of hawsers, and the shushing of sand skids. Argor kept his head down, but Ceravil's ears all but twitched as she listened... and hoped. The sounds stopped close enough that the sand shifted, and made the broken down wagon lurch. Ceravil loosened the knot on the back flap, and stepped out into the blowing storm.

Something loomed nearby; a shrouded form that towered over the wagon. It was wrapped in black cloth, but white tusks protruded from its skull. Beneath the head, a flap shifted. A man in a gray cloak looked down at Ceravil, seated on a pillowed bench resting in the colossal creature's rib cage.

"How many are you?" he yelled over the howling winds.

"Two," Ceravil shouted back.

"No beasts?" the driver asked, holding back the flap as the wind tried to snap it. The silver skull on his hand gleamed, even in the dimness of the sand storm.

"No!" Ceravil said, shaking her head hard.

"There's room," the drover said, gesturing over his shoulder at the train of wooden wagons on sand skids. "Be quick! If we stop for too long even Milara won't be able to pull us out!"

Ceravil nodded, and ran back to her wagon, stumbling in the storm. Argor was on his feet, his eyes shining with hope.

"Grab the strongbox," Ceravil snarled at him. "And the hesh bag. The Wraiths will want their due when we get where we're going."

Argor looked like he wanted to spit, but he kept his words behind his teeth. He snatched up the heavy leather satchel, and kicked the secret panel of the wagon open. He pulled out the strongbox, and the small parcels of valuable goods they'd squirreled away. The necromancers of Moüd would get their gold, and with a little luck they'd still have enough left to turn this disaster in a profit in the City of Bones.



MOÜD: THE CITY OF BONES

Seen through the haze of rising heat from the empty sands of the Trackless Quarter, Moüd looks like something out of a fevered mirage. Granite walls rise from the sand like half-buried bones, with bright flecks in the stone winking and glimmering in the sun. Behind those walls rear towers and obelisks that look like something out of a legendary necropolis, and which have weathered over a thousand years of the desert's furies.

Those who enter Moüd's gates find a city of contrasts. It bustles with life, but it is built on the foundation of the dead. It is an ancient place, but it is also filled with the ideas, trade and commerce of the modern day. It is a city that for years only existed in myths and legends, but it has once again been found, and dug out from beneath the sands of time. It was once a place forbidden by tradition and edict of those who knew about it, and now it once again holds a place of prominence as a city of trade and travel.

HISTORY

Though Moüd has existed for over a thousand years, the city was lost to myth and legend centuries ago when a great disaster fell onto its people. A time capsule of lost culture, language and architecture, it has since been reborn as a center of commerce, education and transit through the empty waste of the Trackless Quarter.

DREAMS OF A DEAD CITY

The re-discovery of Moüd was not an accident of the shifting desert sands, or the culmination of some great adventure; instead, it began with a young man named Malik. Born to the Dorunna people who lived a nomadic life outside the rim of the Trackless Quarter, Malik grew up listening to the tales and lessons of the elders. While he committed many of the old stories to memory, the one that dug its fingers into him and refused to let go was the city of the waking dead, and the creature who supposedly ruled it from the underworld below.

Though the stories told of the Undying Prince seated upon his terrible throne haunted Malik, he couldn't banish them from his mind. He had too many questions, like who had laid the black roads that supposedly lead to the city, and why there were times it could be found and others it could not. Why some people who supposedly made their way there returned again with strange, ancient treasures, and why others were trapped behind its walls forever. He was admonished by the elders several times, but it wasn't until Kerrick, the old woman who'd first told him the tale, cautioned him against speaking of the dead city that Malik was given a reason for the reluctance others showed to talk about the place. They did not speak the city's name for the same reason they would not call the Undying Prince by his true title... if their names were spoken, they would reach out to the mind of the speaker and try to lead them deep into the Trackless Quarter, and into the gates of that forbidden place.

Malik didn't believe that part of the tale; not until he started to see the city of the waking dead in his dreams. He was reluctant to tell the elders of this, at first. He was afraid they would shake their heads, and say he was just a boy with an overactive imagination. As the dreams returned again and again, coming in greater detail, Malik found himself wandering out toward the Trackless Quarter in his sleep; drawn to it like a lodestone drew iron filings. When he could no longer hide what was happening, he was taken before the elders. Malik tried to tell them what he'd seen, but they silenced him. He was cast out from his people, cut off the way one might remove a gangrenous finger to save the rest of the body before the infection could spread.

THE UNDYING ROADS

Outcast from his people, most expected Malik to either die, or to be pulled into the heart of the city of the waking dead never to return. Which fate was worse none

seemed to know. Through grit, guile and ingenuity, though, Malik managed to resist the pull of his dreams for years. He tethered himself to heavy stones, and chained his waist around trees. Most nights he awoke where he'd fallen asleep, but even on nights he wandered he never had much of the night left by the time he unwound himself from whatever trap he'd slept in.

Malik knew he would be drawn to the city sooner or later, and if he expected to survive, he would need to know everything he could about it. He wandered among those who lived in the great desert, trading stories and knowledge for hospitality. And while many claimed they had never heard of the place Malik mentioned, others told him tales in hushed whispers. The Dunkari nomads, a people who were said to drink blood instead of water amid the arid wastes of their home, called the place Narunaida. It was the gate to hell, they said, and the dead screamed as it dragged them down. The pilgrims of the Breath of Dawn called the city Mithavuril, and they believed that it was the place where souls gathered during the darkness of the night before being called home to the sun. Malik even traveled to the port city of Palavashta, and in the great library he found the fragmented tales of the extinct people called the Kakanaru. They said the city, whose name was lost from the record, had once been a place of wisdom and learning. But their ambition had outstripped their control, and corruption ran rampant through the city. They referred to it only as the home of the eaters of the dead.

While these myths and tales were all different, each of them spoke of a forgotten city standing in the midst of the Trackless Quarter, a place that was often hidden from sight in the dry, lifeless waste, and in most stories, this place was found by a lone wanderer who stumbled across a smooth, black road that seemed to spring out of the sands.

After several years of learning everything he could, Malik finally made preparations to set out into the Trackless Quarter from the coast. He acquired provisions, bartered water and traded the gold and amber rings in his ears for a small satchel of dusty scrolls and a wand of scrimshawed bone that practically hummed with the potent energy harnessed in their arcane patterns. The night before he set out into the desert was the first time in nearly twenty years Malik slept without dreams. Whatever force that lived in the blasted waste knew he was coming, and it wanted him rested for the journey he'd resisted for so long.

THE SECRETS IN THE SANDS

Malik's journey into the Trackless Quarter was fraught with peril, but he had survived the worst the desert could throw at an outcast. He traveled with a caravan to the Sunfire Oasis, and then turned his steps south. His journey led him through smaller and smaller watering holes, with the hard pan and cracked arroyos falling behind to reveal the true emptiness of the cursed desert beyond. Malik traded his stout pony for three extra water bags at the place called the Weeping Crevice, where hot water that tasted strongly of alkali trickled from a cleft in a carved statue's face. This left him nothing but his riding camel, and what the two of them had the strength to carry. The nomads who took his pack horse thought him mad, and gave him a small loaf of flat bread wrapped in cloth as an offering to whatever gods had touched him.

It was nearly two months before another living person saw Malik.

The young man had been changed by what

he'd seen out in the wastes. The hale, hearty, handsome figure who had first ridden out into the desert was nearly unrecognizable. His face was haggard and gaunt, with the skin practically hanging off of his sharp cheekbones. Several of his teeth had gone loose in their sockets, and one of his eyes no longer worked properly; the dark pupil always opened wide and staring at the world. His hair, once thick and black, had fallen out in large patches... and where it hadn't fallen out it had gone a sickly gray.

When Malik came to the chapter house of the Silver Wraiths in Kalcuth, he was at first mistaken for a beggar. When the potent taint of necromancy that exuded from him set off a warning, one of the guild's necromancers was summoned. Malik was escorted to a securely warded chamber, and kept under guard until he could be

seen to. He sat, slumped over and exhausted, until the door was opened by a tall, angular woman with the tight lips and suspicious eyes of a schoolteacher. Even through the protective magics of her guild symbol, the silver skull ring worn on her right hand, Hezvarda Sinde could feel the aura baking off of Malik. It should have been enough to kill him, but somehow, he was not only still alive,

but he was awake, alert and though a little wild-eyed, seemed sane enough.

The necromancer had barely seated herself when Malik began his tale. He told her how he'd walked into the Trackless Quarter, going mile after mile under his camel had died under him. He told her about a black road of aged, time-worn stone that led him to the gates of a huge, silent city. He spoke of half-fallen towers, sand swept streets, and of a huge mausoleum that led to the



tunnels beneath the city. He spoke of creatures with mouths full of fangs and fingers that were little more than bony claws, and of huge figures armored in black, their faces hidden behind fine, steel veils. He spoke of a strange figure of rotted majesty, seated upon a throne that pulsed with power. He couldn't understand the words the figure spoke, but he knew their meaning. Time was short, and he had to bring help. Then the escorts in black led him back to the surface, and saw him out of the gates once more. He had followed the road until it vanished, and then retraced his steps until he once more found an oasis. He was allowed to drink, and given a horse, but the experience had marked him among the desert folk. None approached him, and many were afraid to even look upon him.

Before Hezvarda could so much as open her mouth, Malik reached beneath his ragged robe and placed something upon the table. When he took his black-nailed fingers away, he revealed a silver ring of ancient design. It was heavy, twisted in upon itself, and it bore a sigil that had not graced a banner or seal in centuries.

It was the signet ring of the House of Tharne, the last rules of the ancient city of Möüd.

THE LOST CITY FOUND ONCE MORE

The true name of the forgotten city that sat in the middle of the Trackless Quarter, the name removed by all the legends and myths that had sprung up over the centuries, was known to the Silver Wraiths. While there was little information about the fall of the city, or what had become of it in subsequent years, the state even a short visit had left Malik in spoke of the kinds of energies that had been unleashed within it. The guild was perhaps the best qualified to deal with that level of necromantic taint, but it would be an undertaking of massive proportions that would require the full skill and resources of the guild as a whole.

If even a fraction of what Malik claimed he saw was waiting beneath the sands, though, it would be a more than worthwhile endeavor.

The decision was made, and in less than a fortnight the gray-robed guild was marshaling its forces. Practitioners were recalled from other cities, caches of material components were readied for travel, and the ossuaries maintained by the guild were opened. Skeletons were carefully wrapped and prepared, along with the tools, weapons, and armor they would need to fulfill their purpose. Large sand wagons, which ran on skids rather than wheels, were prepared to transport the guild members and supplies. Members of the Deathstalkers, the elite martial members of the guild whose steel often succeeded where a spell had failed, were assigned to the expedition. Perhaps most impressively, the guild also assembled the bones of elephants that had been carefully preserved and carved with whorls of eldritch symbols. For it was these huge pachyderms that would allow the guild to follow in Malik's footsteps into the dead miles of the Trackless Quarter.

Lastly, the guild brought Malik. For though he had been permanently changed by his experience in the city, he was still the only living person to have seen what lay inside Möüd and escape to tell the tale in generations.

The journey was not an easy one. Dust devils blew, obscuring distance and direction. Oases closed themselves off, mistrusting the strangers and their unsettling entourage. They were stalked by creatures who considered the dunes their territory, kept safe only due to the perimeter of undying guardians. The operation sent back word to the guild house regularly, releasing trained ravens to carry word of the distance and direction they'd traveled. They also drove huge poles deep into the ground, letting a black pennant fly from

the top to mark their progress.

Moüd was just how Malik had left it... but the signs of danger he had not been able to see were clear to the guild's practitioners. The walls had been carved with protective sigils, but time and the elements had eaten holes in the wards, and it didn't take the Silver Wraiths long to realize why Moüd had been abandoned; the place radiated necromantic energy. The invisible taint spilling from Moüd energized the necromancers' undead escorts, and provided an easy well of power for them to draw on... but it would kill anything living trapped behind those walls in days. While the Silver Wraiths had the knowledge to contain the energy and cleanse the city, an undertaking of that size would take time. Time, and a great deal of sustained effort; assuming they could find the source the taint was spilling from.

THE DEAD CITY REBORN

It took weeks for the Silver Wraiths to establish a firm foothold around Moüd. The necromancers first repaired the ancient sigils, and laid additional protections around the walls to ensure the city was contained; at least on the surface level. Raiding parties of Deathstalkers entered the gates, slaying the wandering undead who crossed their paths and building a map of the city. They found water, and though it tasted as if it had been boiled until everything in it was dead, it was safe enough to provide the most precious resource that deep in the desert.

Once the Silver Wraiths established their camp,

the next step was to create a steady supply line. In the coming months the sight of their sand trains pulled by the cloth-shrouded skeletal elephants became somewhat common place, both in Palavashta and in Kalcuth, each city on opposite sides of the great desert. Supplying the Silver Wraiths became something of an industry in itself, even if the guild representatives kept quiet about their operations. As the guild started to pay for goods with strange coins that bore the faces of kings only mentioned in the dustiest of history books, speculation ran rampant as to just what it was they'd found out in the desert. Not only that, but within the year, the guild was hiring outside individuals to assist in its endeavors. Mercenaries, historians, tomb breakers and others all found that the guild was more than willing to pay handsome fees for their services... and for their silence once their tasks were performed.

It took five years of sustained effort by nearly the entire guild, and the expenditure of several small fortunes, before Moüd was safe for habitation by the living once

again. Once the guild was satisfied that it had expunged a majority of the dangers posed by the undead that had inhabited the city, as well as purifying as much of the city as they could, they moved their operations within the walls and began repairing the structures from the ravages of time. This kind of work took masons and carpenters of skill, in addition to the individuals already employed by the guild, and on their heels came merchants and metalworkers, cooks, washers and more eager



to establish a foothold in this mysterious, reclaimed city.

The factor that led to Moüd rising from the sands of time, though, was its location. Situated in the middle of the Trackless Quarter, Moüd sits in the center of a straight line between the port city of Palavashta and the trading hub of Kalcuth. A trade caravan going around the rim of the Trackless Quarter can take months to get from one city to the next going round the long way, while the tireless sand trains maintained by the Silver Wraiths and their undying teams can make the journey in less than a fortnight. Though the cost is higher, the sheer numbers of goods and passengers who travel the Skeletal Road ensures that Moüd always has a fresh supply of everything a bustling trade city could want. And though it is possible for a well-outfitted transport to follow along the well-trodden path to the City of Bones (especially since the Silver Wraiths have been expanding the roads and way stations over the decades), most would rather trust their fortunes to the gray-clad guild and their guarantees of safe passage.

It's the advantage of location, and the near monopoly on the ability to move safely through the Trackless Quarter, that has let Moüd rise from the dusts of history to take her place once more as a hub of travel, trade and learning. Even now, nearly a century after its original re-discovery, there are still secrets being plumbed from the necropolis deep in the bowels of the City of Bones.

THE SILVER WRAITHS, AND GUILD LAW

Before they used their mystic arts and arcane knowledge to resurrect Moüd from the graveyard of history, the Silver Wraiths were already a well-known and well-respected guild. While necromancers are often thought of as black-garbed occultists

wielding dark powers for their own ends, the Silver Wraiths attempted to show that necromancy itself was neither good nor evil; it was all about the ends it was turned toward. While their more notable services involved exorcising infestations of spontaneous undead and cleansing hauntings from tainted locations, the guild also used its arts to help preserve meat for travel, and to use their undead servants to provide aid and service in situations that would be too hazardous for living people.

In order to maintain their reputation, the Silver Wraiths are dedicated to ethical acquisition of bodies, and compensation for the materials rendered. While the guild tries to use the remains of beasts whenever possible (particularly for transportation needs and raw labor), there are times when a humanoid form is required to complete certain tasks. In these cases, permission is always sought from an individual before their death whenever possible, or from their next of kin when it isn't. While some individuals will leave their remains to the guild in their wills, hoping to help further the Silver Wraiths' works, the guild has been known to purchase corpses for their use... in some cases even paying living persons their burial fee so the guild may claim them after death. In most cases the guild only uses corporeal undead, viewing the spirit as out-of-bounds, but some extreme cases have called for extreme actions throughout their history. Lastly, in order to prevent misidentification, undead created by the Silver Wraiths always bear unique arcane marks as well as scrimshaw along their bones, the patterns written in the dead language of Hausfaran so there's no mistaking guild property.

While there are dozens of different ranks and divisions within the guild, employing academics, researchers, hunters and field practitioners, the ruling body of the Silver Wraiths are the individuals known only as the Phantom Council. Their identities are kept purposefully hidden in order to protect

them, to the point that only higher ranking within the guild even know how many members sit on the Council. When they call in individuals to present information, or to have meetings with them, every member of the Council witnesses the meeting through the eyes of a robed skeleton rather than being present in-person. This provides for safety and security for the council members, but it also has the added benefit of unnerving the more arrogant merchant princes and monied interests who insist their position and demands be brought directly to the Phantom Council rather than to their underlings.

THE SILVER ORDERS

While there have been grumbles in some circles about the necromancers simply declaring themselves rulers of an entire city, the hard truth is that their unique arts are the only thing that keeps Moüd running, and that even if someone were able to take the city away from them after crawling across the inhospitable waste surrounding the walls, the city would rapidly fall apart without the necromancers maintaining the wards and undead performing the necessary labors. So while other cities, merchant confederacies and trade guilds may not like the situation, they've found that contracting with the Silver Wraiths is simply better for business in the long run.

The Silver Wraiths run their city as an extension of the guild itself, and they hold it to many of the same rules and standards. The Silver Orders are the bylaws the guild enforces, and important aspects are posted for all individuals who enter the city so that none can claim ignorance of the law. While there are sections of the Orders that deal with business practices, licenses and fees, the largest section of the collection of rules deals with the practices of nec-



romancy while within the city. It lays out which forms of magic are allowed, and the necessary rules and limits for practicing necromancy in the city if one is not a guild member. The laws actually go into fairly intricate detail, and punishments for breaking these particular aspects of the law often seem unexpectedly harsh.

In all the time since Moüd has reclaimed its title as a major trade city, though, the number of people who have pushed back against the Silver Wraiths' laws can be counted on one hand. Every tale ends with the same lesson; if you are going to challenge a guild of necromancers, it is best not to do it in the very city where they keep their guild headquarters, train their apprentices and maintain a small army of servants of the living and the dead alike.

A BURIED SECRET

Over the past century the Silver Wraiths have unearthed a great deal of Moüd's lost history. Grimoires inked on preserved skins, enchanted items whose creation and manufacture was thought lost and coffers of coin and gems have all been found in the catacombs that run beneath the city. While the material wealth has enriched the Silver Wraiths (or at least made rebuilding the city less costly), the lost records and knowledge was worth far more than the amber and gold stored in the underground vaults.

There was one treasure the Silver Wraiths found that they have kept secret, though. Something known only to the Phantom Council, and to a select handful of people outside their chamber walls; the Undying Prince was not a myth.

Aban Suir was one of the most accomplished of the wizard kings of Moüd, with an indomitable will that

led him to master the arcane arts as well as the political and philosophical divisions among the ancient court. Highly respected among the other practitioners of the noted city, he was the one who led the ritual to pierce the veil between the worlds, and to open a well into the Prim; the realm where the raw power of magic was drawn from. Something went wrong, however, and the well they formed was unstable. Worse, the combined power of those involved in the rite was not enough to close the gap once they'd managed to open it. Reality was tearing all around them, and there was no telling what damage the breach would do if it was not contained.

Someone would have to stay behind to hold the breach while the city evacuated, and the others closed the wards. It would have to be someone strong enough to hold out against the tide of magic, in order to buy the others time. Aban Suir placed the Horned Crown upon his brow, seated himself in the great throne that sat before the breach, and bid the others to leave him. To seal this place, and ensure that no one returned.

The courtiers did as their king bid, and sealed him in the subterranean throne room. Moüd was evacuated within hours, the people running through the grassy hills and fleeing along the roads as the remaining wizards and sorcerers wove and empowered the protections across the length and breadth of the city. Their final ward was laid across the very walls of Moüd to contain the energies flowing out of the hole they'd burrowed into the realm beyond in an attempt to siphon its power for themselves.

Aban Suir knew that no matter how strong his mind, or how iron his will, no living person could hope to hold back the tide of power. It would destroy him utterly, and once he was gone it would crash against the wards. Sooner or later, he knew they would also crack, and the breach would

grow. To maintain his vigil, he focused and channeled the energy flowing out of the Prim, and used it to alter himself. His body became an undead, skeletal thing, covered in tattered, leathery skin. Wisps of hair clung to his scalp beneath the ivory crown, but he anchored his soul to the ancient throne beneath him. Freed from mortal concerns, Aban Suir held the breach as a lich who would come to be known in myth and legend as the Undying Prince.

The lich had planned to hold the breach as long as he could while attempting to find some way to turn the erupting power back on itself to seal the tear. Time was no longer a concern for him, but as the years went by, he found that it was very much a concern for the world around him. The energies of the breach were killing the land and everything in it, making it impossible to sustain life; they were also raising corpses left in the vaults of the city. Those risen dead could not pass the wards yet, but they stalked the streets and tunnels, awaiting anyone unwary enough to enter the lost city. Aban Suir needed help, and so he cast a sliver of his mind out into the world to try to bring that help to him.

Malik was not the first that Aban Suir attempted to contact. Many were declared mad, cast out from their people to die alone, or they took their own lives in fear of the lich king's summons. Others were killed by the hazards of the growing waste of the Trackless Quarter, and even those who managed to arrive were devoured by the undead who waited within the walls. The Undying Prince had sat his throne for nearly a thousand years before the Silver Wraiths came to Moüd, adding their strength and knowledge to his own. It's only been with his aid that the guild has managed to purify and ward the city as effectively as they have, and though it is mostly stable, the danger is far from gone.

Though progress has been made in controlling the breach over the past several

decades, the throne room where Aban Suir sits is still steeped in necromantic taint. And while the Council agrees that sealing the mistake made over a millennium ago is in the best interests of all, some are questioning just what will happen if they manage to succeed, and the lich's vigil is finally over. Some suggest he should be embraced as a master necromancer, provided he abides by both the spirit and the letter of the Silver Orders. Others have put forth far less... welcoming suggestions for what to do with the last of the line of Tharne when that day finally comes.

GAZETTEER

Moüd is made up of several districts, segregated by the activities and planning of the Silver Wraiths. Each of these districts comes with locations of note, NPCs players are likely to meet and rumors that they may come across while spending time in a particular district.

NORTH DISTRICT

A place of grandeur, the North District was the best-preserved part of the ruins of the ancient city. Restored to its former glory, the huge palaces of bloodstone and smooth, polished walkways interspersed with fountains and greenery gives one an idea of what life must have been like so long ago. Instead of bejeweled nobles and opulent wealth, though, the district is filled with the gray-clad members of the Silver Wraiths, the guild's servants and their acolytes in training... as well as the black-swathed skeletons who perform the maintenance required to preserve the beauty and function of the North District.

Formerly the domain of ancient Moüd's wealthy elite, the North District is now a place of learning, scholarship and training. The former palaces have been turned into offices and meeting rooms, lecture halls and archives for the guild's ever-expanding

knowledge. It's said by some that if there is a rite, ritual, spell or incantation related to the dead that can't be found in the North District's archives, then there is no one among the living who knows it.

NOTEWORTHY LOCATIONS

- **College of Bones:** Located on the northern side of the district, surrounding a central courtyard, the two dozen buildings that make up the campus of the College of Bones are where the Silver Wraiths train new members in the arts of necromancy and in dealing with the dead. Anatomy and physiology are taught using carefully preserved corpses, but spells, rituals, animation and control are all hands-on affairs. The buildings also contain dormitories for the students, as well as college records, and preservation and upkeep rooms for relics that have been discovered in the vaults beneath the city.
- **Purity Gardens:** Once kept as pleasure gardens for the long-vanished elite of Moüd, fanciful fountains still burble with crisp, cool water, and walking paths lead one through a forest of hanging gardens in the largest open space in the North District. The fruits and flowers are maintained by silent gardeners, their heavy robes hiding their bony fingers and skeletal faces.
- **Salter's Row:** Running along the southern border of the district, Salter's Row is a series of warehouses where the Silver Wraiths store many of the necessities for maintaining the city. From stone chambers filled with cattle and oxen carcasses held in stasis by preservative rites, to chests filled with dried fruits, and indexed holds of bulk components for common spells, Salter's Row is perhaps the liveliest place in the City of Bones. The largest structure, built from ancient timbers, is known as the Death House. It is the location where the district's teams of undead workers and skeletal beasts are kept when they

are not needed, and the place has an almost palpable chill even on the hottest of desert days.

the city, the only officers above Vestergen's authority for contracts are the Phantom Council itself.

PERSONS OF INTEREST

- **Shareed el Song:** The chronicler of the crypts, Shareed is a short, dark-skinned woman with round cheeks and sharp eyes. She keeps the records of everything that lies beneath the city, and where it's been moved if it is no longer in its original resting place. An accomplished linguist who has managed to translate everything from burial scrolls to ancient coins, no one living has a more complete understanding of Moüd and its history than she does.
- **Kerner Tunnelspark:** A thick-shouldered, foul-tempered dwarven man with heavy-knuckled hands and a tongue as harsh as a miner's rasp, the silver skull ring on his middle finger marks him as an adept of the Silver Wraiths. The manager of the Death House, Tunnelspark upkeepes the bones that collect the city's waste, clean the streets, harvest food and perform a hundred other unseen duties every single day. It's said by many lower-level guild members and acolytes that he treats the animated bones with more respect and consideration than the living persons who help him manage and maintain the city's staff of workers.
- **Vestergen Nox:** A rangy gnome, Vestergen has all the hallmarks of a guild member who over-exerted himself in the field. His skin is sallow, his hair pale as milk, and he walks with an ebony cane tipped in silver. Though he has been taken off of field duty on guild orders, he still acts as the face for a large amount of business conducted in Moüd by the Silver Wraiths. From meeting with individuals looking to contract with the guild for their services, to dealing with flesh merchants, craftsmen and freelance dungeon delvers looking to explore as-yet unopened crypts beneath

WHISPERS AND RUMORS

- It's said that the water and soil of the city still have a small amount of the taint that inundated the city for centuries; all you have to do is take a bite of the foods growing in the Purity Gardens to taste it. While the fruits and vegetables will nourish those who eat them for a time, the taint inside this food will harm you as surely as a sailor drinking sea water to try to quench their thirst. While the Silver Wraiths have attempted to quash these rumors, insisting there is no danger posed by the city's food supply, imported foods (and even imported water) are growing far more common even if they're far more expensive.
- Suspicion grows that teamsters guilds and caravaner alliances are trying to sabotage the Silver Wraiths' operations in Moüd. Though the necromancers haven't attempted to replicate their success with using undead teams or animals to increase speed and efficiency for transporting goods and passengers outside of the Trackless Quarter, their competition has no desire to try to outperform the living dead, and they're supposedly taking precautions to undercut the Silver Wraiths.
- The acolytes from the College of Bones have been doing more and more field work all around the city, and spending a great deal less time in their lecture halls. While there's the usual talk of accelerated learning and hands-on experience from the guild itself, many in the district are off-put by seeing flocks of black-robed students in the streets... especially since, according to some observers, there seems to be a real urgency to the tasks their instructors set them to beyond a need for more practice at their craft.

ELMBARROW

Filled with narrow roads that wind between stacked, stone structures that look almost like over-sized mausoleums, Elmbarrow is a place for the living as well as the dead. Shaded by the branches of false elms and with patches of vines clinging to many of the lower structures, the district has the calm, peaceful feeling of a memorial park. There is far more life present than one might expect, if one looks closely. Filled with small markets, outdoor eateries and underground taverns, Elmbarrow has far more going on beneath the surface than it may at first appear.

A place where the living and the dead existed side-by-side in ancient Moüd, Elmbarrow's initial population came from the travelers who couldn't find room in the already-settled parts of the city. So Elmbarrow became the spill over space, and it's now home to ragged scholars, traveling merchants and many others who are simply just passing through. The district's permanent population is growing, though, and enterprising individuals have been serving the needs for more space in unexpected ways... many of which have earned the ire of the Silver Wraiths over the years.

NOTEWORTHY LOCATIONS

- **The Tomb:** A former crypt, the Tomb is located roughly in the center of Elmbarrow. Easily identified by the burning green lanterns that mark the stairway down to its entrance, the nightclub is the district's most infamous hot spot. With skulls lining the walls, and bone chandeliers hung from the ceiling, the place never fails to draw a crowd who want to take in the unusual



and the macabre. The place is run by a woman named Ruthana al' Fakir, and though she is not a member of the Silver Wraiths she appears to have some arrangement with the guild that allows her to fill her club with undead servants and musicians.

- **The Dead Market:** Typically found in the southern part of the district, the Dead Market specializes in charms, trinkets and services related to the dead. From amulets that will protect you from the touch of the walking dead, to exorcists who claim they can break curses, to fortune tellers who can read one's future in a cast of carved knuckle bones, the faces at the Dead Market are constantly shifting. Also, while there may be bits and pieces of genuine magic there from time to time, the whispers one can pick up listening to the chatter are more valuable than any grave goods or superstitious fetish.
- **Weeping Hollow:** A large clearing not far from Small Gate, the Weeping Hollow is a small area filled with false elms; the trees the district is named for. Tall for scrub trees, they have wide, flat leaves, but they tend to bow under their own weight. This gives them the impression of being wracked with grief, and unable to hold themselves up straight. Weeping Hollow is a carefully cultivated park, and it is a common place for those looking for a peaceful respite to go. It's also popular with many lovers, as the false elms can provide more than a little privacy... particularly during the twilight hours.

PERSONS OF INTEREST

- **Ruthana al' Fakir:** With hair the bleached white of desert bones, and blue-black skin that feels cool to the touch, Ruthana has been marked by death

since the day she was born. The owner and proprietor of the Tomb, her mastery of necromancy is rare for one in the city that doesn't wear the guild's silver ring. No one seems to know where her powers spring from, but there are some who say she was stillborn, and that she brought death into the world with her when the midwife managed to revive her. Others say she was conceived in a boneyard, and that the taint of the grave seeped into her mother's very womb. Those with the courage to speak to her find that the sorceress seeks beauty in death, and that she views the Tomb and its many rooms as a kind of gallery for her strange art.

- **Sange Derosen:** A wiry, orc-blooded man with stringy gray hair, Sange is unflappable when it comes to the bizarre sights one might come across in the City of Bones. A grave digger by trade, he's found there's little enough call for a living person with his skills in Moüd. He's since become a grave robber and a crypt breaker, and he keeps his large ears to the ground to make sure that any changes in the wind don't catch him off guard. Though he often has a blanket covered with items for sale in the Dead Market, most who come to his stall are looking for information rather than for tomb trinkets or corpse pennies.
- **Leshara Vines:** A bronze-hued woman with a touch of elven blood, Leshara is often seen wandering through the Weeping Hollow with her tall yew staff in hand. She speaks to the trees, patting them, examining their roots and taking trimmings of some of their flowers. A herbalist who has been contracted by the guild on more than one occasion, she's mostly known in the district for providing tinctures and poultices, along with herbal remedies for heatstroke and aches. While friendly, if flighty, Leshara never discusses what she's doing among the false elms... and those who have tried to press her have learned

there are thorns among the Vines, so to speak.

WHISPERS AND RUMORS

- The Dead Market is even brisker than normal, with buyers and sellers alike casting eyes over their shoulders. While the guild often turns a blind eye to the market's activities, they've been sending agents to sift through the stalls looking for something... or so many merchants believe. No one can say for certain who may or may not be a guild informant, but the idea they're being watched is making everyone very nervous.
- It's said that ghoulish fever has been running through parts of Elmlarrow. The Silver Wraiths have cordoned off several locations, guarding them with intimidating skeletal champions in black armor both night and day. There seems to have been no outbreaks of the disease among the general populace, and while some say that's due to the guild's swift actions, others wonder if the supposed instances of the fever are merely a cover story to hide something even worse.
- Many of the false elms throughout the district have begun to grow strange, dark fruit. The fruits are sweet and soft, but they are dangerous to eat. No one seems to know what they are (as these trees do not typically grow fruit at all), but the guild has decreed that these fruits are to be left alone by anyone without prior authorization. Enterprising individuals are stealing them anyway, with many trying to cultivate their own crops, or to see if the fruits can be made safe (or at least safer) through fermentation.

LIGHTHALL

A restored masterpiece that feels like stepping back in time, Lighthall is filled with buildings, mosaics and statues older than many modern states. A rustless pole of

iron stands in the center square, the massive pillar bearing the code of the city's ancient kings in a language that had been all but forgotten. Crowds bustle through the district, and coins of a dozen different mints change hands for a hundred different kinds of goods. Lighthall is, without a doubt, where the past meets the present in the City of Bones.

The center of Moüd is always buzzing with activity. In addition to marketplaces and space for visiting envoys, the district also boasts breath-taking hanging gardens, locations of historical significance and a variety of unique shops and services. Lighthall also boasts the center of the Silver Wraiths' administration, and it is the first place many prospective acolytes and clients go upon first entering the city.

NOTEWORTHY LOCATIONS

- **Silver Hall:** A brooding structure just off the district's central square, Silver Hall has the guild's banner hanging from the roof, and the doors are flanked by guards in gray armor who keep a steady eye on all comings and goings. Inside, the hall is as quiet as the grave, with the gray-robed guild members going about the daily duties demanded of them. The interior is polished stone, and it has the feel of a chapel that's been converted to new, more practical use. And though much of the city boasts tombs and crypts of one variety or another, it's said the catacombs beneath Silver Hall are far more extensive, and that even after all these decades the guild still hasn't fully plumbed their depths.
- **The Oasis:** Located just off the meeting

place of two of the city's main roads, the Oasis is a cool, shady spot that has a nearly constant breeze riffing through it. With the soft splash of fountains as a complement to dulcimer players, the Oasis is where many of the city's merchants come to drink while they make their deals. While most of the business done at the low tables surrounded by soft cushions is legitimate, more than one bargain for illicit grave goods or smuggled mummy wrappings has been made beneath the swaying palms.

- **The Three Kings:** Just south of Lighthall's main square, this palatial estate has been carefully resurrected to recreate what life was like in the ancient city Moüd used to be. Undead in livery of the period move about the grounds offering refreshment to guests, and they perform tasks the same way they were done so long ago. The tableau is fascinating, but eerie for those who haven't grown used to the presence of the undead throughout the city. Still, the Three Kings is often touted as one of the most unique sights that a visitor to Moüd can witness... if they have the spine for it.

PERSONS OF INTEREST

- **Nefran Kai:** A dark-skinned woman with long, curly hair and wide hips, Nefran is a near-constant figure at the Oasis. While there are those who name her a rumormonger, there's no denying that the only way she could know more about what was happening in the city would be if she possessed a scrying mirror. Often seen holding court over drinks, it's common practice for newcomers to seek her out for directions... though it's not uncommon for her to



ask more questions than she answers of those who cross her path.

- **Ardeth Sul:** A tall man with tattoos on his face that mark him as a member of the Shorani people of the northern desert, Ardeth Sul is the head of the Deathstalkers. The silvered falchion at his side has served a dozen heads of this guild branch before him, and it has slain countless foes who have attempted to defy death's calling. While most see him as a grim-faced harbinger, there is often a black humor to his comments... when he chooses to speak, at least.
- **Dionna Rooks:** A halfling woman with long fingers and short patience, Dionna is always in the midst of some flurry of activity. The chief organizer at the Silver Hall, she's perhaps the only person who doesn't wear a silver ring who still has keys to the guild's doors. Nothing, no matter how strange, ever seems to phase her, either. Not even the clattering, shuffling, skeletal minions of the necromancers who handle much of the manual duties around the hall. She's even been known to give pet names to the undead, many of whom have been commanded to follow her commands should she assign them tasks.

WHISPERS AND RUMORS

- The strange, iron pole in the central square is a unique relic, but there are some who say it goes much further into the ground than anyone knows. In the subterranean chambers beneath the distract it's said to list the rules that must be followed by the dead, just as the section above ground lists the laws for the living. The knowledge kept out of sight is said to have greatly expanded the guild's know how in regards to both creating their own undead, and in commanding those created by other means.
- Lighthall is one of the only districts in the city that is watched by the Deathstalkers rather than by the typical city watch employed by the Silver Wraiths.

While some say that it's merely a matter of numbers (with so few of the elite company available, there's not enough of them to go around), there are others who suggest that the unique skills of these fearless slayers are going to be needed in Lighthall as they wouldn't be needed in other districts. They insinuate there is something beneath the Silver Hall, and that the Deathstalkers aren't there to keep the public out, but to keep whatever secret the guild is hiding in.

- Some have claimed that the Three Kings is far more than an undead museum, recreating the city as it once was. According to the rumors, one of the Silver Wraiths has gone mad, and believes they are one of the ancient rulers of the city as it used to be. This place, complete with its "staff" of attendants is there to pacify them. Some rumors go so far as to suggest this person is a member of the Phantom Council, and that their knowledge and skill is too great to set aside even as their mind loses the ability to tell the past from the present.

WEST GATE

The district is a strange hodgepodge of ancient foundations and fresh additions. Colorful cloths draw attention to merchant stalls, and flags and banners bearing maker's marks and heraldry fly from a dozen different buildings. Sun-baked bricks sit side-by-side with imported lumber and fresh-cut sandstone, all of it creating a strange blend that can be a riot to the senses. The population of West Gate is nearly as diverse as its structures, creating a mixing bowl of some of the most unexpected elements found in the city.

Perhaps the most common route for trade to come into the city, West Gate is also where passengers embark or disembark from the huge conveyances pulled by the Silver Wraiths' elephantine teams. A hot spot of news, gossip and of travelers who

are fresh to the city, West Gate is always filled with entertainers, peddlers and others looking to unburden newcomers from as much of their coin as possible.

NOTEWORTHY LOCATIONS

- **Skyhall:** Off to the west of the main gate, Skyhall is a beautiful remnant of the old city that's been laid bare and restored. With towering columns, a fanciful tiled floor and reflection pools along the side to help moisten and cool the air, Skyhall is a popular place for those looking to take their ease while soaking in one of Moüd's famous sights. The location earned its name because it has no roof, which allows for a breathtaking view of the stars once the sun goes down and the night spreads over the sky.
- **The Smokehouse:** One of the oldest structures in the city, this long, low series of counters, fryers, grills and cooking ranges is teeming with custom every single day. From fresh, seasoned chicken served on a skewer, to slices of goat meat turned on a spit and served on a fresh flatbread with onions and peppers, there are dozens of different foods on offer. The aromas often entice those fresh off the road, many of whom have had to make due with travel rations and flat water, and as a result the Smokehouse tends to be a place to get fresh news as well as a fast, greasy meal.
- **Bearings Place:** Just far enough through the main gate to avoid traffic gluts, Bearings Place is a guide post for anyone who needs to, as the sign proclaims, find their bearings. The long, low building is dug into the ground in order to avoid the worst of the day's heat, and it offers maps of the city in half a dozen different languages. There are guidebooks too, as well as posted notifications of changing ordinances an-

nounced by the guild. Those who need to book passage out of the city can also do so through Bearings Place, paying a small fee to the business for handling the arrangements to the client's specifications.

PERSONS OF INTEREST

- **Arturo Bearings:** A rangy young man with orcish blood, deep gray skin and a head of multicolored braids, Arturo took over managing Bearings Place from his older brother several years ago. Garrulous and outspoken, Arturo seems particularly well-acquainted with the seedier parts of the city. A capable linguist who's done his fair share of traveling, Arturo always seems to have another story to tell about somewhere he's been, or an adventure he's had. And for those willing to pay a small fee, he'll even act as a guide to Moüd's... unique night life.
- **Essa al' Wahi:** Thin, dark-eyed and shaven-headed, Essa bears the badge of a guild officiant, though not the ring of a Silver Wraith necromancer. The head of trade and customs at the gate, she ensures that travelers and merchants alike are screened, and that all deliveries are in order. Humorless and clipped, there are some who not-so-jokingly wonder what boneyard the guild pulled her out of... even if none would have the courage to say that within her hearing.
- **"Cook" Strahan:** Always manning a stand at the far end of the Smokehouse, Strahan is a broad-shouldered, big-bellied man whose been burned dark by the desert sun. Strahan seems to know everyone who comes by his counter, and he's always laughing and joking with his customers. Beneath the rough humor, though, are dark eyes that have seen far more of the world than most. Eyes that rarely laugh along with the man's mouth.



WHISPERS AND RUMORS

- Those who've spent time around Arturo known he's been through his share of close calls and whirlwind endeavors. He always wears a heavy leather cuff around one wrist, though, and he seems particularly sensitive about it. Some have begun to suspect that he was branded for a crime, and that mark is why he needed to pull his stakes immediately to move to a city where no one knew him, or his past deeds.
- There has been a larger presence of guild officials than normal at the gate, and they've been unusually diligent about checking what goes out of the city as well as what's coming in. Some rumors say there have even been raids on store houses and caravans, but no one claims to have seen such things with their own eyes. The Silver Wraiths are looking for something, but no one seems to know what could possibly have drawn their eyes so firmly toward West Gate.
- Most of the statuary throughout West Gate has been worn down to the foundational white stone. Many statues, though, are being painted bright colors in the night, as well as draped with the latest fashions of clothing. No one knows who's responsible for this bizarre trend, but it's quickly catching on in other districts of the city. Whether it's the same hand behind all of these "defacements," or imitators picking up the torch, no one seems to know.

THE OUTER DISTRICT

Small collections of structures cling to the outside of Moüd's walls in several places. Newer constructions for the most part, they sit in the shadow of the greater city. Dusty, and a little disheveled, these pockets of people all seem to live with their backs to the City of Bones. Warding gestures and hanging charms are common sights here, and though members of the

guild are shown courtesy they are far from welcome among those who choose to live outside the city walls.

While Moüd itself is a huge city, there are those who distrust both the Silver Wraiths and their use of the undead to maintain the City of Bones. Most of those who object will stay out of the Trackless Quarter entirely, but some have found that necessity brings them to Moüd all the same. This has led to several small communities springing up outside the city that are outside of the Silver Wraiths' official control, but whose continued existence requires them to remain on good terms with the guild. These are the most common places to find people who fear the goings on inside Moüd, or who want to avoid scrutiny by the Silver Wraiths and their agents... for whatever reason.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

- **Ravenhouse:** One of the oldest parts of the Outer District, Ravenhouse's foundations were an ancient guard barracks that had managed to survive more or less intact since the original fall of Moüd. Though it was used as a staging ground by the Silver Wraiths when they first arrived, it was abandoned after the city proper was reclaimed. The most notable part of Ravenhouse is the building for which it was named; the aviary. Housing the descendants of the ravens first brought to Moüd as letter carriers, the birds refuse to cross the city walls. Bird tenders, scribes and others make up the majority of workers in this particularly small community.
- **Smallgate:** An area that caters primarily to travelers, Smallgate offers lodging, food, entertainment and the necessities of the road to all of those who need to rest on their journey, but who do not wish to do so within the City of Bones itself. Set up primarily outside a person-sized gate, this community only sees the colossal teams used by the

guild from a distance, allowing them to maintain a kind of false independence from the presence of the Silver Wraiths. The niche Smallgate serves is small, but as long as there are travelers who wish to remain outside the city gates there will always be custom for this community.

- **Shortcliff:** As Smallgate provides for travelers, so Shortcliff provides for drovers and shippers. Though a majority of the goods and passengers that come to Moüd are dragged by the undead haulers, others are willing to take their own chances along the dead roads that lead to the city. Shortcliff has warehouses for goods storage, and it provides housing for beasts of burden as well. Duty free markets are common, drawing several people out of the city and ensuring that one can avoid paying extra fees to do business in Moüd itself. Shortcliff keeps a sharp eye out for those who would peddle contraband, however, as the last thing they want is the guild paying closer attention to their doings.

PERSONS OF INTEREST

- **Shen Sang:** A bronze-skinned woman with brass bells in her braid and a touch of elven blood in her veins, Shen is the mistress of the Sundown House in Smallgate. She's run her establishment going on ten years now, and she's never once entered the city proper in all that time. All her supplies come from merchants in Shortcliff, or are delivered to her from the city's markets. While she will tolerate those who wear the silver skull as representatives of the powers-that-be, she will not willingly serve them in her inn, and her courtesies are notably chilly when she offers them.
- **Haroud Makur:** Tall, rosy and with a braided gray beard that contrasts his black skin, Haroud is the master of the aviary in Ravenhouse. A scholar who can speak half a dozen languages, Haroud's knuckles may be arthritic,

but his penmanship is as immaculate as ever. Often found with a cup of tea and a book, he rarely hurries anything. A task rushed, he often says, is a task you will need to do twice.

- **Tran Sunstrider:** Broad-hipped and long-haired, Tran is short even for a dwarven woman. Good natured, and with a love of particularly crass humor, she possesses a tireless energy that allows her to juggle a dozen tasks without slowing. The stall organizer in Shortcliff, Tran is who people come to whenever they have a problem. And whether it's finding where they need to set up shop, or reporting someone who is trying to peddle banned materials, Tran always seems to know just what to do.

WHISPERS AND RUMORS

- The ravens always seem eager to depart their roosts, but many of them refuse to return once their messages have been delivered. While they're brought back on transports by the guild, the caged birds seem less than pleased to be returned to the aviary. Several people have put forth the notion that the birds know something is wrong, but even the smartest of the ravens don't have a way to put it into words.
- There was a break-in at the Shortcliff warehouse no more than a handful of hours before the guild's representatives were to examine a shipment. While some believe the Outer District simply needs better guards, there are others who believe it was staged by the merchants themselves. They didn't want to get caught with contraband in their possession, so they claimed thieves had taken some of their goods. After all, if they're the victims, who's going to accuse them of also being the thieves?
- The Sundown House has closed recently. Shen Sang claims it's a minor matter of repairs and a problem with unsafe water, but there is talk there may be more going on behind the closed doors.

While no one claims they've seen any of the guild necromancers, one or two people have suggested that the Deathstalkers have shown a personal interest in what's happening at the inn.

ALTERNATIVE SYSTEM: NECROMANTIC TAIN

Necromancy is a potent tool, but much of it is powered by negative energy. This energy is anathema to living creatures, and long-term exposure to negative energy can leave a mark on someone; this mark is commonly referred to as necromantic taint.

Not every spell in the school of necromancy relies on negative energy. However, if a necromancy spell creates undead, deals damage to a living creature or causes a harmful effect or penalty to a living creature (*ray of enfeeblement*, *bestow curse*, etc.) then casting this spell rubs off on the caster. One point of necromantic taint is generated per level of the spell cast (a first level spell bestows a single point, a second level spell bestows two points, etc. However, if a higher-level spell slot is used to cast a lower-level spell, then the higher-level spell slot is used to determine the necromantic taint), and if your Channel Divinity class feature deals necrotic damage then you gain a number of points of necromantic taint equal to half your level in that class, rounded down.

Additionally, areas that are filled with potent negative energy (haunted locations, sites of potent necromantic rituals, and similar locations) may bestow points of necromantic taint to living creatures simply for being present

in them (either at a rate of 1 per round, 1 per minute or 1 per hour depending on the potency of the area). Particularly powerful undead who have aura effects may also bestow necromantic taint on those within their aura at GM discretion.

A living creature can endure up to their Constitution score in necromantic taint with no noticeable ill effects. If a living creature has more temporary necromantic taint than their Constitution score, they take a -2 penalty on all skill checks, attack rolls and ability checks. If a creature has more necromantic taint than double their Constitution score, they roll with Disadvantage on all of these checks in addition to taking the -2 penalty.

Living creatures with Resistance to necrotic damage take half the amount of necromantic taint, rounded down to a minimum of 1. Undead are immune to this condition.

REMOVING NECROMANTIC TAIN

Since it's caused by negative energy, necromantic taint can be removed by the application of positive energy. Any spell that heals hit point damage with positive energy (primarily *cure* spells) removes a number of points of necromantic taint from the target equal to the spell level (or the spell slot used if the slot is higher than the spell level). Positive energy from Channel Divinity removes a number of points of necromantic taint equal to half the character's level in that class rounded down, and this applies to all living creatures affected regardless of how many hit points they receive. A full night's rest removes a number of points of necromantic taint equal



to a living creature's Constitution modifier. Lastly, creatures with regeneration remove a number of points of necromantic taint per round equal to their regeneration, but this does not extend to fast healing.

Additionally, spells that grant temporary hit points (like *false life*) can shield a creature from necromantic taint. In this case treat points of necromantic taint as if it were hit point damage, reducing the temporary hit points appropriately.

LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF NECROMANTIC TAIN

While necromantic taint is rarely dangerous in small doses, extended exposure (such as that faced by a practicing necromancer) can have deleterious effects on one's health. It's thought by many that the stereotypical image of a necromancer, with sunken eyes, pale skin, white hair and an overall frail appearance, is directly because of the toll taken by channeling large amounts of negative energy. To avoid this, most who deal with the undead in any capacity will protect themselves with charms and spells, and ensure proper cleansing takes place as soon as possible to halt any physical changes.

Generally speaking, these physical effects won't manifest until someone spends at least 24 hours with more points of necromantic taint than their Constitution modifier. If an individual spends more than a week carrying that burden, physical changes should start to manifest.

NEW PLAYER SPECIES: HALF-DEAD

Necromantic taint can create numerous unusual effects. Perhaps one of the strangest is the phenomenon referred to as the half-dead; living creatures whose bodies have been warped and twisted by exposure to negative energies, dragging them to a

point somewhere halfway between life and death.

There are several, documented ways that a half-dead can be made. The most common is that the creature was exposed to necromantic taint while in the womb, either as a result of parents who carried some taint, or by being conceived in a tainted location. In some instances, creatures who have been gravely injured and left in an area of potent necromantic taint (such as an unhallowed ritual site, or a battlefield filled with the taint of the undead) will find the energy takes root inside of them instead of killing them. There are legends and stories that tell of drinking tainted blood, or a bite that fails to transform someone entirely into an undead creature, but even learned necromancers have yet to understand how certain conditions can lead to the creation of a half-dead.

What is known, though, is that these individuals possess strange gifts and unusual powers. Though they may be unsettling, there are as many myths of heroic half-deads as there are of villainous ones.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

In the broad strokes, a half-dead will resemble their parent species; there are always hallmarks that make them noticeably different, though. These marks will vary by individual, and they are often tied to the particular incident that led to their transformation. One half-dead may be thin and wasted, looking like a victim of a ghastly plague. Another will be stiff and slow, with skin that's cool to the touch. Some will smell of grave dirt, while others will have an unnatural, sickly-sweet aroma that follows them. One may have a wasting touch that reduces food to rot and siphons life from their foes, while another will boast rending teeth and a hunger for raw meat.

Half-deads are kept in a perpetual twilight by their state of being, and it greatly ex-

pands their lifespan. There are documented cases of half-deads that have lived to 500 years, but some tales speak of individuals who lived double that length of time. However, in exchange for that greater lifespan, half-deads are nearly sterile due to the energies coursing through their bodies. There are stories of some half-dead who have borne children, but these events are rare in the extreme, and often required particular rituals or unusual circumstances to make such a thing possible.

SPECIES TRAITS

Ability Score Modifiers: +2 Constitution, +1 Strength. A half-dead is resistant to harm, and able to overcome many physical limitations.

Creature Type: Half-deads have whatever creature type as their parent species, in addition to the half-dead subtype. For player characters, options should be limited to player-appropriate species.

Size: Half-deads are typically Medium-sized, and thus receive no benefits or penalties for their size.

Speed: Half-deads have a base speed of 30 feet, or 20 feet if they're Small-sized.

Languages: Half-deads gain no bonus languages.

Negative Energy

Affinity: Half-deads have Resistance to necrotic damage.

DEFENSIVE TRAITS

Death's Endurance:

Half-deads are known for their durability. They receive Advantage on saves against disease and poison, as well as any effects that would cause them to become Exhausted. Additionally, they gain Resistance to bludgeoning dam-

age.

MAGICAL TRAITS

Touch of the Grave: 1/day a half-dead can cast *chill touch*. This ability progresses with your hit dice, and will deal extra damage as the half-dead gains in level according to the spell.

SENSES TRAITS

Darkvision: Half-deads can see perfectly in the dark up to 60 feet.

VARIANT HERITAGES

The above species description is for general half-deads. However, there are several more specific varieties that have manifested over centuries of study. While there is still diversity even among those of a single type, they are alike enough to have been grouped under the same general name, and to share similar abilities and characteristics. The circumstances that created these specific variants tend to be similar, as well, making them spiritual cousins.

Ghoulborn: Swift and deadly, ghoulbourn tend to be marked by vicious claws and tearing maws. While some legends saw they are created by mothers who ate human flesh while they were pregnant, others claim that those who managed to fight off ghou fever may find this condition marks them, or is carried onto their children. The ghoulbourn gain two claw attacks that each deal 1d4 slashing damage, and a bite attack that deals 1d6 piercing dam-



age. Additionally, a ghoulborn gains a +2 to their Dexterity and +1 to their Constitution. Lastly, Ghoulborn are immune to ghoulish fever, but only receive a +1 bonus against resisting other diseases, as well as poisons. This replaces Touch of the Grave, and alters ability score modifiers and Death's Endurance.

Lichkin: Often frail in appearance, lichkin tend to be created as a result of exposure to potent necromantic rites. In some rare cases they may even be created by someone who managed to survive being slain by a high-level necromancy spell, or curse. Lichkin gain a +2 bonus to their Intelligence and +1 bonus to their Wisdom, as the essence of the magic that created them leaves echoes in their minds. Whenever a lichkin casts a spell to create or take control of an undead creature, it increases the total number created or controlled by 1. Anytime a lichkin would gain necromantic taint, they gain 1 points less. A lichkin can cast false life on themselves once per day as a spell-like ability. This spell is cast as if using a 2nd level slot at 4th level, a 3rd level slot at 8th level, and a 4th level slot at 12th level. This replaces Death's Endurance and Touch of the Grave, and alters ability score modifiers.

Wightsoul: Sickly in appearance, often with flesh that seems sallow, or even leprous, a wightsoul can be recognized by its red eyes that tend to glow with cold light when provoked. Wightsouls are often said to have their origins in an insurmountable will, whether it was as a stillborn child who refused to give up its life, or as a warrior who fell in battle and would not stay down; that determination combined with the right circumstances yields this particular variety of half-dead. Wightsouls receive a +2 to their Wisdom and a +1 to their Constitution. Wightsouls do not need to breathe, allowing them to ignore inhaled poisons and spell effects, as well as drowning and suffocation. This also grants them Advantage on Deception checks to appear truly dead.

This replaces Touch of the Grave, and alters ability score modifiers.

Blackblood: Born from the raw energies that create shambling zombies or clattering skeletons, Blackbloods are easily identified by their dark veins and nearly-absent pulses. A blackblood's slowed heartbeat means they are immune to the bleeding condition, and they have Resistance against precision damage (such as that dealt by sneak attack). Blackbloods are immune to disease, as well as to being paralyzed. This replaces Touch of the Grave.

Breathstealer: Wan and languid, breathstealers are birthed from those who have survived encounters with undead who can sap the strength from the living, or who have had that hunger bored into them through having some of their own life force permanently taken away. Breathstealers gain a +2 to their Dexterity and a +1 to their Charisma. A breathstealer can use *vampiric touch* 1/day, and at 8th level they're considered to be using a 4th level slot, at 10th level they're considered to be using a 5th level slot, and at 12th level they're considered to be using a 6th level slot. This alters ability score modifiers, and replaces Touch of the Grave.

RANGER ARCHETYPE: DEATH-STALKER

The Silver Wraiths tend to rely on magic when dealing with a haunting, or a manifestation of the corporeal undead. However, where spells fail it is the steel of the Deathstalkers that ends the threat. Elite hunters and warriors, the Deathstalkers are uniquely suited to handling the threats of necromancy gone awry.

Fearless: Deathstalkers must regularly kill creatures that would send even bold warriors screaming. At 3rd level, a Deathstalker is immune to the frightened condition.

Inured to Corruption: Rot and pestilence are the primary weapons of many undead, and a Deathstalker has learned to overcome them. At 7th level a Deathstalker gains Resistance to necrotic damage, or immunity if they already had Resistance. A Deathstalker also gains Resistance to poison and disease (or immunity if they already had Resistance), and immunity to paralysis.

Refuse the Reaper: A Deathstalker's sheer will often means they can fight on when they should, by rights, lay down and die. At 11th level a Deathstalker rolls with Advantage against all spells or abilities of the necromancy school, or any spells or abilities that deal necrotic damage.

Eternal Rest: At 15th level any creature slain by a Deathstalker can never be raised as an undead. Additionally, a Deathstalker ignores any resistances or immunities an undead would normally have to their weapons (though not to effects like necrotic damage, poison, etc.).

NEW MAGIC ITEM

SILVER WRAITH GUILD RING

Ring, uncommon (requires attunement)

A symbol of membership in the exclusive Silver Wraith guild of necromancers, this ring is a silver skull that is traditionally worn on an individual's spellcasting hand. Slightly chill to the touch, the silver always gleams as if it were just polished, and the sockets always brim with shadows even under bright lights.

DESCRIPTION

The wearer of this ring can exercise great control over

the undead. Any undead created or controlled by the wearer, either through *animate dead* or *create undead*, remain permanently under their control until they are destroyed, or that control is relinquished (either by dismissing the spell, the ring bearer's connection being broken or the ring itself being destroyed). This control extends only to a total number of hit dice of undead equal to the wearer's hit dice + their spellcasting modifier. Additionally, when using the necromantic taint system, this ring provides a shield against the first 10 points of necromantic taint the wearer would take. These points refresh once every 24 hours. If that system is not being utilized, the ring can instead be used to cast *false life* on the wearer once per day. This ring acts as a focus for any necromancy spells cast by the wearer.

NEW SPELL

REPAIR UNDEAD

1st-level necromancy

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S

Duration: Instantaneous

An undead creature you touch regains a number of hit points equal to 1d8 + your spellcasting modifier. This spell has no effect on living creatures, or constructs.

At Higher Levels: When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, increase the hit points restored to the undead by 1d8 per spell level above 1st.



"Leaving us so soon?" the young man with the orcish teeth and the rakish glint in his eyes asked as he leaned on the counter. The rustle of parchment maps filled the travel station as other customers planned their routes, and cool air puffed out from grates in the floor where water ran. "It might look pretty straightforward as cities go, but I can promise you that Moüd's got secrets worth digging for."

"I'm sure it does," Argor said, putting on a smile that was trying to be polite but wasn't quite managing. "But we've done all we came here to do."

The orc-blooded man shrugged, as if to say their business was none of his, before spreading his hands on the wooden counter top. "What direction are you going, and when would you like to start going there?"

"To the coast," Argor said. "And as soon as can be arranged."

The young man pursed his lips, his eyelids narrowing slightly. He looked like a big cat contemplating a course of action. "One of the sand trains leaves this evening, traveling through the night."

"That-" Argor started to say before Ceravil cut him off. "Will be fine," she said, offering a smile of her own. She felt Argor's irritated gaze on her, but wouldn't turn to meet it. "We had an unfortunate accident coming here in the first place. Better to trust the guild when it comes to getting out of the desert."

"Hard-learned wisdom," the man said, nodding hard enough to make his long braids sway. "And a lesson I wish I could teach others who come through here."

He named a price. Argor bristled slightly, and the negotiation began. Ceravil stepped away to let Argor do what he was best at, running her eyes over the maps and pamphlets. Silkgift caught her eye, as did Hoardreach. Those places were far from here, but after the sights they'd seen in the City of Bones, she felt a need for a change. The smell of a clean sea, or the sights of a place of wonder she'd only ever heard about. Behind her Argor opened his coin purse, carefully counted a fee, and handed it over.

"I'll send word when your passage has been arranged," the man said, giving them another grin that showed off his too-long lower tusks. "A pleasure doing business with you."

"I never want to set foot here again," Argor grumbled as they turned their steps to the heat of the street. "The dead stay below, the living stay above. That's the way it's supposed to be."

"You say that now," Ceravil said, clucking her tongue and smiling slightly. She watched as the newest arrivals to Moüd came down the street, bearing the accents and fashions of a dozen different lands. She smelled the scents of spices and cooking meats, and looked off in the distance at the bulk of the city's hanging gardens. "Once the chill in your skin fades, you'll remember this place more fondly."

He grunted, but Ceravil knew. The footsore miles and uncomfortable seats always faded from Argor's memory, but the wonders he saw in their travels always lingered.

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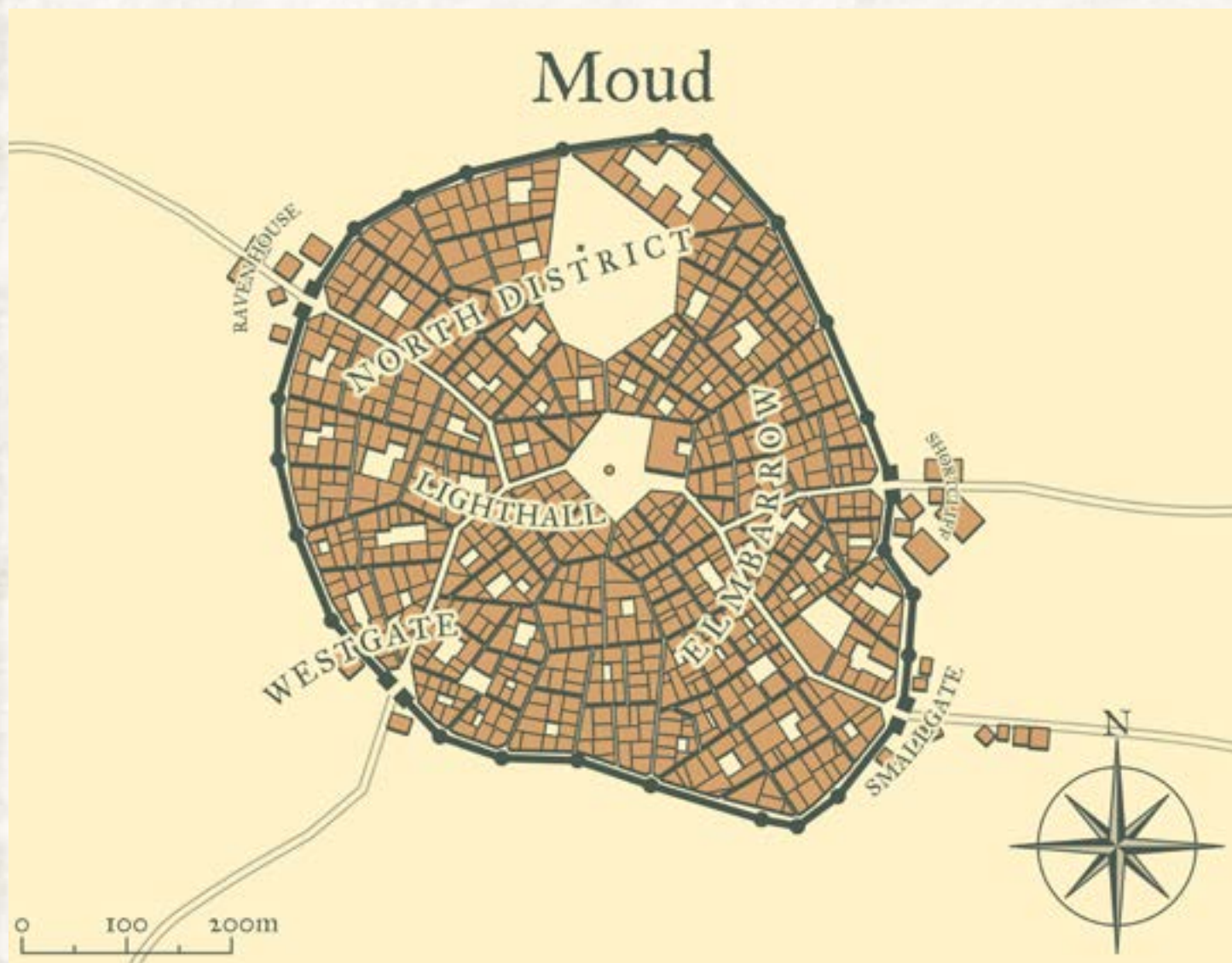
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MOÜD MAP



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