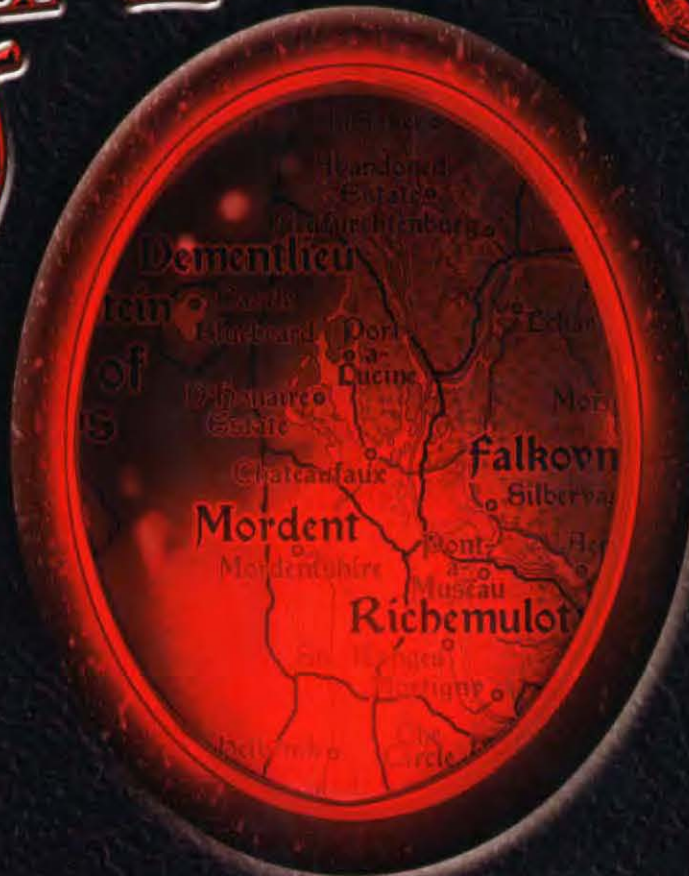


SWORD & SORCERY

# Ravenloft

# GAZETTEER



VOLUME III

A Ravenloft Campaign Setting Supplement



# GYZENTEEER™

## VOLUME III

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# GAZETTEER<sup>SM</sup>

## VOLUME III

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# Foreword

*“When the springtime came again, and the lovely flowers were in bloom, and the birds were singing their sweet songs; when the wind breathed softly through the pine-trees, and she was gone, the sunsets were in vain, and all nature seemed mourning. After this I busied myself with all kinds of occupation, but without success. Life became sadder and sadder, until finally in despair I took a foreign trip. I traveled far and wide, but always with the same weary despondency and gloom.”*

— Alexander Drake, “The Curious Vehicle”



# Foreword

*“When the springtime came again, and the lovely flowers were in bloom, and the birds were singing their sweet songs; when the wind breathed softly through the pine-trees, and she was gone, the sunsets were in vain, and all nature seemed mourning. After this I busied myself with all kinds of occupation, but without success. Life became sadder and sadder, until finally in despair I took a foreign trip. I traveled far and wide, but always with the same weary despondency and gloom.”*

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have now dedicated a full year of toil to the *Doomsday Gazetteer* project. By my estimation, this survey will require yet another two years to complete. As such, this anniversary strikes me as a prime opportunity to review my progress to date.

More than six years ago, as the patron of these works well knows, Azalin Rex all but destroyed himself in the cataclysmic Requiem, plunging Darkon into a desperate age. I spent five years following this disaster engaged in an independent study of the Slain City of Necropolis, uncovering countless occult truths about the origins of the Requiem and the nature of our world. My successful research should have more than proved my ability to obtain results in the face of unending peril and dangers that dragged down many folk less capable than myself.

*Ah, yes, my petulant little scholar. I have not forgotten your dead daughter — though not so dead as she wished to be.*

Indeed, when Azalin forced his way back into the mortal realm in the summer of 755 BC and set about reestablishing control over his kingdom, my research must have drawn his attention. Late that following winter, Azalin sought me out and commissioned my services for an epic undertaking — a thorough survey of all the lands of the Core. Of course, much of this information was withheld from me at the time. My obstinate patron has consistently placed his own petty interests above the expedient completion of my labors, demonstrating a profound and disappointing lack of trust in my abilities. Compounding my frustration, my patron shrouded himself in anonymity and used witless thugs as intermediaries. Even when my patron finally acknowledged his identity a mere three months ago, he would not deign to face me in person.

Having accepted my patron's challenge, I was unceremoniously shipped off to Barovia last spring and spent the next six months compiling reports on the lands of the southeastern Core. Presumably, these first surveys served to demonstrate my competence and earned my patron's confidence. As autumn fell across the land, my patron abruptly summoned me back home to Darkon, and I spent this past winter surveying the varied realms of the northern Core: Darkon, Necropolis, Lamordia and Falkovnia.

The winter snows have now retreated, and I pen these words from the safety and comfort of a cozy inn in Chateaufaux. My patron should thus be pleased to learn that I have passed through the gauntlet of Falkovnia without drawing the attention of Azalin's foes or exposing myself to harm. As if I would be so foolish! A troubling new concern has come to my attention, however — but more on that in a moment.

The next leg of my journey will take me through the enlightened lands of the western Core. I spent several years of my adolescence here in Dementlieu, and I look forward to reacquainting myself with my old haunts after an absence of more than twenty years. My mother died in giving birth to me, and my father — a cold and distant man — long suspected that his wife had been unfaithful. He never forgave me for my role in her death. Thus, he was more than happy to ship his little "cuckoo's egg" off to distant academies, and I was more than happy to go. After beginning my elementary education in Nartok, I concluded my studies in the boarding schools of Dementlieu before returning home to attend university. Of course, my frivolous school days are well behind me now.

I have wasted enough words on idle reminiscing. Allow me to add merely this: despite my recent hopes for improved relations between us, I remain as disappointed by my patron's conduct as my father was disappointed by my existence. By any reasonable measure, my competence and dedication should have thoroughly earned my patron's respect by now, yet establishing an amenable rapport has proven as vexing as slaying the multi-headed hydra of myth. No sooner is one obstacle cut down than another rises to take its place.

Thus I return to the focus of my new concerns. I draw my patron's attention to the bracer that Azalin's walking corpses ordered me to don as I left Darkon this past midwinter. At the time, my patron assured me that the black leather and cold onyx now wrapped around my left wrist contained protective magics that would keep me safe as I passed through the lands of my patron's sworn foes. This claim may well be true, but it is now beside the point.

I have now worn this bracer without complaint for three months and have yet to see any sign of the magical protection it supposedly offers. Rest assured that my successful passage through Falkovnia was due entirely to my own discretion.





Once I had put Vlad Drakov's tyranny behind me, I felt it safe to remove the bracer for the time being.

I find your little "gift" most distressing, dear patron. As you must well know, I have discovered that I cannot remove this blasted trinket, and it has proven impervious to harm. My arcane analysis initially revealed only a weak magical aura, but further probing shows that the true strength and nature of these enchantments have been deliberately obfuscated.

My patron forgets how well I know him. I am thoroughly versed in all of his grandiose schemes, and I can even grant him his petty mysteries. I am perfectly willing to continue with this project merely to satisfy my own intellectual curiosity, ignoring my patron's ongoing refusal simply to tell me what he seeks from my work.

Yet I tire of these games, Azalin. I spent the past year convincing you that I was not to be treated as a petty lackey. I do not intend to spend the next year being treated as a laboratory rat.

You cannot comprehend the scope of the forces mounting against you, little scholar. Your defeat would delight entities you cannot even imagine. Your annoyance is of little import when the alternative is your destruction.

## Report format

**D**ue to the overall time required to complete this project, I shall preface each volume of the *Doomsday Gazetteers* with a summary of my standard practices and formatting. I shall continue to uphold the regular travel schedule I have maintained this past year, allotting roughly six weeks to study each country, taking more or less time as required. I shall then immediately relay each report back to Darkon upon its completion. When so-called "local color" proves intriguing, I will provide direct excerpts of my interviews with the native populace. For clarity's sake, I shall present these anecdotes in sidebars.

Now that I am closer to home, I believe I can safely rely on the region's reliable postal services, saving my patron the bother of sending his loathsome toadies to collect my folios. To avoid confusion, all reports adhere to the following standard format.

## Landscape

In this section, I present a naturalist's view of each region, focusing on noteworthy features of its landscape, flora, and fauna. I also take note of important waterways and trade routes, and I describe prevailing architectural styles.

## Local Animals and Native Horrors

These sidebars present natural wildlife and unnatural monsters that are particularly well-suited for adventures in the domain; they are not exhaustive lists of all the creatures to be found. Creature lists are divided into "Wildlife" (common, natural animals) and "Monsters" (uncommon, unnatural threats). To make preparing an encounter quickly easier, creatures are listed in order of ascending Challenge Ratings. Any creatures in *italics* are under the influence of the domain's darklord (see "Enchantment" effects in Chapter Three of the **Ravenloft Campaign Setting**). Unless noted otherwise, all creatures can be found in the *Monster Manual*. Creatures marked with an asterisk can be found in **Denizens of Darkness**. Creatures marked with a page number are included in the Attached Notes.

## History

As this letter marks the opening of a new *Doomsday Gazetteer*, I should once again address the frustrations of historical study. Objectively speaking, many lands in our world have existed for only a very short time. Indeed, Dementlieu is scarcely older than I am. On those occasions when the Mists have parted, however, the lands they revealed have typically appeared fully formed and fully populated. The inhabitants of these new lands have full memories of lives well before the emergence of their home. In addition, their historical records often stretch back centuries. In short, dear patron, these folk believe themselves to be as real as you or I, and in truth I cannot disprove the claim.

Common wisdom holds that these new lands were simply "revealed" to the world, having existed all along while hidden deep in the Misty Border. Yet occultists in some circles posit the existence of other worlds — the supposed origins of the "out-





landers” with whom my patron is assuredly familiar. These occultists theorize that each of these realms was possibly drawn into our Land of Mists from one of these so-called outlander worlds.

I once scoffed at such wild theories, but I now accept them, at least on a theoretical basis. Yet when one probes into the recorded history — or even living memory — of a region before its emergence, such history often proves vague, incomplete, or even self-contradictory.

This situation leads me to the disturbing hypothesis that many lands in our world may simply have been created from whole cloth on the day that they first appeared in the Mists. Every aspect of the region’s history, memories, and lives that predate that day may be nothing more than an unfathomably complex phantasm. I hesitate to guess at the power of the nameless forces that would be capable of such creation, but the facts speak for themselves.

For the sake of clarity, I endeavor to establish a “seminal event” during which each land first

emerged — or, perhaps, materialized. Following this seminal event, cross-referenced historical documents from surrounding lands confirm the region’s objective existence. I cannot assert that anything *before* this seminal event actually occurred in any real sense. Therefore, although I include this “false history” in my accounts, I will endeavor to focus only on those historical events that still resonate in the present.

The historical records of some countries read as a chain of usurpers, one tyrant overthrowing the next. If one or more of the past rulers of a country proves particularly interesting, I will provide a brief biography.

## Populace

In this section, I present a census taker’s view of each land. My survey includes physical characteristics, fashions, demeanor, customs, cuisine, and an overview of prevalent religions. Thoroughly fluent in Mordentish, the prevailing language spo-







ken in the lands that occupy the next leg of my journey, I will thus present my patron with brief primers for this foreign tongue.

## The Realm

In this section, I turn my eye to the flow of power and the manner in which it is exploited. First, I provide an overview of each region's formal government, including law enforcement and the prevailing opinion regarding current rulers. Next, I turn to economic power, including forms of currency, natural resources, and notable industries. Lastly, I focus on matters of diplomacy, examining how each nation interacts with its neighbors.

In addition, my Requiem research and my year-long trek across the Core have taught me much about the true nature of power. My patron is of course intimately aware of the legends of what I term "dread lords": vile individuals who mystically bind themselves to their realms in the pursuit of power, receiving dire curses in return. It has come to my attention that my patron almost certainly already knows the identities of these dread lords, but I will continue to ferret out likely suspects whenever evidence presents itself to assuage my own intellectual curiosity. I suspect that my patron has me scouring the land to uncover occult means of release from the mystic bonds of his lordship. My

patron may wish to consider simply telling me whether I am correct, rather than letting me waste another nine months chasing a false hypothesis.

*Release? Perhaps, little scholar, perhaps.  
Yet not in the manner you suspect.*

## Sites of Interest

Here I present a brief travelogue of my journey through the significant settlements and other intriguing locales in each nation, including noteworthy structures and inhabitants. To capture the flavor — and at times, annoyances — of my travels, I list communities and sites of more esoteric appeal in the order in which I visit them.

Simply for my own reference, I also include a few notes on food and lodging for each community; to be thorough, my surveys have often required convoluted routes and extensive backtracking.

## Parting Thoughts

Upon the completion of my survey of each land, I compile my notes and conclude with my executive summary of the region as a whole. For my patron's benefit, I distill my impression of the land, including potential causes for concern and weaknesses that might be exploited.



## How to Use This Book

The book you now hold is an annotated version of the *Doomsday Gazetteer Volume III*, compiled from the narrator's reports and correspondence. The bulk of this text is a travelogue, relating the narrator's experiences and observations during a four-and-a-half month survey of three domains of the western Core: Dementlieu, Mordent, and Richemulot.

The narrator's patron, Azalin Rex, may also occasionally remark on the narrator's commentary, perhaps to offer a differing opinion, as can be seen above.

Sidebars such as this one present special game material that should be read only by the Dungeon Master (DM). If you are a player, reading these sections may spoil some of the mystery your DM has in store for you. Keep in mind that Rule 0 still applies; "Dread Possibility" sidebars in particular present secrets and adventure ideas that may or may not be true. The DM should decide whether these scenarios apply to her campaign.

The final section of this book, Attached Notes, is a collection of appendices covering new game rules, magic, creatures, NPCs, and locations. Whenever the narrator refers to attaching extra notes at the end of a report, game material on that subject can be found in the Attached Notes. As with sidebars, players should refrain from reading this section.

A single copy of each *Doomsday Gazetteer* exists within the game setting, written in Draconic and carefully encoded (requiring a successful Decipher Script check at DC 30 to interpret). Heroes can avail themselves directly of the information found within these pages, but first they must obtain the book, which should invariably entail an adventure in itself. Heroes would most likely intercept a *Doomsday Gazetteer* report as it is being delivered to the narrator's patron. Of course, Azalin will seek to recover his property....

While the primary purpose of the *Gazetteers* is to enrich the **Ravenloft** setting, DMs are just as strongly encouraged to plunder these books for chilling NPCs, locations, and concepts for use in any horror-tinged campaign. The Realm of Dread is a jigsaw world, and each element can be easily imported to other settings, including those the DM creates herself.

### Domains at a Glance

Each domain report opens with a brief account of the domain's vital statistics, in the following format:

**Cultural Level:** The domain's degree of technological and cultural development, ranging from Savage (0) to Renaissance (9). See Chapter One of the **Ravenloft Campaign Setting** for more details.

**Ecology & Climate/Terrain:** The domain's ecology rating (*Full*, *Sparse*, or *No*) and terrain types (see the *Monster Manual*). These factors determine the effectiveness of summoning spells within that domain. (See "Conjuration" effects in Chapter Three of the **Ravenloft Campaign Setting**.)

**Year of Formation:** The year on the Barovian Calendar when the domain first appeared.

**Population:** The domain's approximate total population. Undead and full-blooded Vistani are not included in population statistics.

**Races:** A racial breakdown of the domain's population. "Other" indicates a mixture of standard nonhuman races that are not explicitly cited, as well as a smattering of living, intelligent monsters that can pass for human. When more than one human ethnic group lives in the domain, these groups will also be broken down in descending order of social dominance.

**Languages & Religions:** Local languages and religions are presented in descending order of popularity. The official or dominant language(s) and religions(s), if any, are labeled with an asterisk.

**Government:** The domain's officially recognized form of government. In Ravenloft, however, the true, hidden chains of power may take a significantly different form. Not all domains have a centralized authority, and some have no formal government at all. When applicable, sidebars will also include notes and game statistics for typical members of local law enforcement.

**Ruler:** The domain's publicly recognized political ruler, should the domain have a centralized government.

**Darklord:** The domain's *true* master. Individual darklords are described in full in the Attached Notes.

### The Native Hero

These sidebars offer special notes and advice on creating PCs native to the domain. Such notes include the local role of the standard races and classes, recommended skills and feats that capture the domain's atmosphere, and examples of typical names.

### Law Enforcement

For quick reference, each report includes a brief sidebar offering game statistics for the typical member of local enforcement.

### Sites of Interest

Each settlement includes a sidebar presenting full community statistics. (See "Generating Towns" in Chapter Four of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.)



# Report One: Dementlieu

*In the future we are now preparing, politics and intrigues may still appear; but the springs by which they work will be so carefully concealed that no one will be able to see aught but flowers and paintings.*

— Alexandre Dumas, *The Man in the Iron Mask*



left the brutish realm of Vlad Drakov for the much more hospitable and civilized lands of Dementlieu with no small amount of relief. Having spent a number of years being educated at various

boarding schools in and around Port-a-Lucine, this place provides a level of familiarity I have missed during the course of much of my research. Often described as the cultural heart of the Core, the city of Port-a-Lucine produces the highest achievements of art, sculpture, music, and writing to be found. Some cite this feature as proof of Dementlieu's level of sophistication; others see it as a waste of good coin on frivolous pursuits.

In light of my recent reports, I had wondered if my recollection of my time here was clouded. I could not recall any ravenous beasts wandering the forests or beliefs of the dead rising to consume the living. I did not remember despotic rulers keeping the populace cowed in fear or superstitions of bogeymen or wizards preying on the weak. Could this land alone possibly be so free of the terrors that grip the hearts of so many in other lands?

I did not need to spend long among the nobles of Dementlieu, however, to realize that a different — and far more human — destructive force is at work here. Duplicity and hypocrisy pervade the upper classes like a plague, resulting in an unspoken war between the many factions and classes that divide the people. I needed all my willpower while in this domain to avoid being embroiled in the political manipulation that consumes so many of the residents in Port-a-Lucine.

## Landscape



Dementlieu's geography is far less dramatic than some of the surrounding domains and indeed is the gentlest of all lands I have visited so far as part of this research — almost as if Dementlieu is trying to demonstrate its sophistication not only through its culture, but in its serene landscapes.

Gentle rolling plains are Dementlieu's primary feature. In the east, rich farmland along the border with Falkovnia supplies some of the realm's food, although the majority is imported from its neighbors. Further west, away from the Musarde flood plain, the soil becomes sandy, eventually allowing few grain crops to be farmed productively. The plains give way to scattered temperate forests and the occasional orchard, but closer to the Sea of

## Dementlieu at a Glance

**Cultural Level:** Renaissance (9)

**Ecology:** Full

**Climate/Terrain:** Temperate forest and plains

**Year of Formation:** 707 BC

**Population:** 13,600

**Races:** Humans 95%, Halflings 3%, Other 2%

**Human Ethnic Groups:** Dementlieuse 99%, other 1%

**Languages:** Mordentish\*, Lamordian, Falkovnian, Halfling

**Religions:** Ezra\*

**Government:** Aristocratic republic

**Ruler:** Lord-Governor Marcel Guignol

**Darklord:** Dominic d'Honaire

Sorrows not even the trees survive the sandy soil, and low sparse shrubs dominate the landscape.

The coast of Dementlieu is far less forbidding to sailors than the rocky cliffs to the north and south, with gentle sand dunes and beaches the primary coastal features. Numerous bays and coves are spread along the seaboard, the largest and most well known being Parnault Bay. Deep water and the natural headlands (known simply as North Head and South Head) that protect the bay make it an ideal harbor for sailors during poor weather. Indeed, during a period of sustained poor weather out to sea, Parnault Bay can become overcrowded with ships, most unable to dock at Port-a-Lucine.

Just to the south is Sable Bay, a harbor almost as large as Parnault Bay and just as protected. By decree of the Lord-Governor, however, no ship is allowed to sail on its waters due to the many sandbars that make navigation difficult. The shores of Sable Bay also happen to be the location of the Domaines de la Vie Éclairée (Estates of the Enlightened Life), a collection of the larger houses of Port-a-Lucine's aristocracy, discussed in detail later. I suspect that this ban on shipping has more to do with not despoiling the nobles' vistas than any risk posed to shipping. The largest of these estates, the



d'Honaire family's Maison de la Vue, is frequently home to the business of government when the city of Port-a-Lucine becomes too hot or cold.

The Musarde River meanders along the eastern border of Dementlieu, forming a natural defense against the aggressions of Falkovnia. Quite deliberately, only one major bridge crossing is maintained on the road from Falkovnia to Chateaufaux. Small wooden footbridges and ferries, both up and downstream, serve other crossings. In times of heavy rain in other areas of the Core, floods often occur, providing valuable silt to the surrounding farmland. Further to the north, the Musarde joins the Vuchar River just before entering Lamordia. The surging waters at this junction can make riverboat travel treacherous if the waters are high; more than one barge has run aground there and lost its cargo.

A multitude of oxbow lakes nestle on either side of the Musarde, providing further defense against attack. Collectively, these lakes are known as the Boîte de Bijou (Jewel Box), due to the colored tints that can be seen in the lakes, particularly at sunrise or sunset. Some of the more brilliantly tinted pools are rumored to have rejuvenating qualities, attracting nobles to bathe during the summer months.

The main roads in Dementlieu (the Avenue de Progrès from Chateaufaux to Port-a-Lucine, and the Mill Road journeying south to Mordent) are well maintained and paved, allowing for speedy travel by those with appropriate transport. These highways are busy for much of the year, filled with the wealthy traveling to Port-a-Lucine to taste its lifestyle. The roads of Dementlieu are often lined with trees (usually plane or birch), particularly within a few miles of towns or villages. The shade provided makes traveling comfortable in even the hottest weather.

In the city of Port-a-Lucine and in Chateaufaux, the homes of the middle classes and the wealthy are generally narrow three- or four-story buildings densely packed alongside the flagstone streets. Most of these terraces are made of plain brown stone, but the wealthy paint their residences in soft pastel colors such as pale yellow or turquoise. Simple windows, often only one on each level, open onto the street over a spray of annuals growing in a window box. The shallow roof is usually made of dark black or brown wood shingles, and the edges are elaborately decorated with detailed patterned stonework.

### **Dread Possibility: It Came from the Sea**

Both Parnault Bay and Sable Bay are known as favored feedings grounds for vicious sea spawn and reavers (see **Denizens of Darkness**).

During the summer months, a solitary sea spawn master occasionally finds its way into one of the bays in order to feed off either the residents of Port-a-Lucine or one of the manor houses on the shore of Sable Bay. The recent disappearance of the reclusive Rousette family was the result of a sea spawn attack, although locals prefer to gossip about the possibility of the family entering a bizarre suicide pact. The "Widow's Walk" along the docks in Port-a-Lucine is actually so named for the numbers of sea spawn victims that have thrown themselves — or been thrown — into the Bay over the years.

In winter, when the ferocious storms of the north make the Sea of Sorrows a risky proposition for sailors, schools of reavers move into Parnault Bay to avail themselves of the easy pickings of the many boats moored there. On more than one occasion, sailors have discovered a boat on the bay completely devoid of crew, telltale bloody webbed footprints stamped on the deck.

In the poorer areas, residences are only one or two stories high and are constructed of poorly worked stone and wood. Rarely does any form of adornment grace the façades of such buildings — when it does, it takes the form of a simply painted doorframe.

The climate of Dementlieu rarely reaches extremes. In winter, only the occasional light layer of snow ever dusts the ground, and in the summer season usually sees only a few days of uncomfortably high temperatures. Rain is fairly frequent, especially during the spring and autumn.





## flora

Because of the sandy soil that dominates Dementlieu's rolling dales, the land presents few areas of dense vegetation. Sparse forests consist largely of deciduous hardwood trees such as beech, oak, and plane. The undergrowth is usually light, making travel easy for those keen to leave the busy highways. Approaching the sea, scrub and grassland (dominated by lantana, heather, and wax-myrtle) take over.

Gardens are an important feature of any Dementlieuse household, particularly in spring. In the cities, flower-boxes hang from the windows of any reputable household, while any rural mansion is expected to have large, elaborately styled gardens for summer strolls. Annuals such as primulas, snapdragons, and petunias create floral patterns in large flowerbeds, while more traditional roses and camellias provide borders and privacy where required. Herbs scent the gardens (and are used

Dementlieuse cuisine) and include lavender, thyme, rosemary, hyssop, and marjoram.

A friend from my schooling days in Dementlieu, Gaston, was keen to warn me of one herb I might encounter while in Port-a-Lucine. Dapplewort is an annual that produces bright pink flowers with a yellow center and grows on Dementlieu's coastal sand dunes. As it goes to seed, the yellow center of the flower swells to the size of a small pea. When squeezed, the seed exudes a viscous fluid with the consistency, smell, and taste of honey. If ingested, the liquid can cause subjects to be extremely receptive to the suggestions of those around them. An effect such as this makes the drug especially useful to unscrupulous nobles needing to enlist support or a favor. Gaston described dapplewort being used by others simply to encourage debauched behavior at private gatherings in some of the estates along the western shores.

## Dapplewort

Dapplewort is relatively easy to find with a Profession (herbalist) check (DC 10) or a Wilderness Lore check (DC 15) along the coast of Dementlieu during the months of April and May. The liquid from fresh dapplewort seeds (used within 3 days of being picked) can simply be squeezed into any drink or food. Dapplewort can be preserved for later use with a Profession (herbalist) check (DC 18). Anyone actively trying to detect dapplewort in her food or drink can do so with a successful Profession (herbalist) check (DC 16). The DM should make this skill check for the player, as a failure by more than 10 results in the concoction becoming slightly poisonous.

After a victim ingests food or drink containing dapplewort, anyone using a Charisma-based skill on the victim gains a +3 circumstance bonus. This effect lasts for 1d4 hours.

**Dapplewort:** Ingested, Fortitude save (DC 15); initial and secondary damage (see above); 50 gp.

**Dapplewort Poison:** Ingested, Fortitude save (DC 15); initial damage 1d6 temporary Constitution, secondary damage 0; 50 gp.

## fauna

The lack of any significant areas of wilderness within Dementlieu means that the land-based wildlife within the domain is relatively tame. Deer, roebucks, badgers, snakes, weasels, and wild boar live in the forests, with the occasional brown bear from Lamordia proving a bother for local farmers. Bird life is quite varied and includes kestrels, buzzards, and swallows, with seagulls infesting the harbor area in Port-a-Lucine. Within the cities, vermin thrive in the poorer districts and the sewers.

In trying to seek out some of the more unique creatures of Dementlieu, I was surprised at the lack of rumor or superstition about the horrors that seem to be mentioned in most other lands of the Core. Although the occasional account of a ghost, werebeast, or unnatural creature can be found, each case seems unique and suggests no domination of one type of supernatural creature. Truth be

known, most residents of Dementlieu's cities exhibit more suspicion and distrust of their friends and neighbors than of any unsubstantiated spectres of the night.

## Local Animals and Native Horrors

Most supernatural creatures (such as undead, constructs, shapechangers, or outsiders) are rare within Dementlieu — any present are likely to be unique creatures.

**Wildlife:** CR 1/10 — bat; CR 1/8 — rat; CR 1/6 — lizard; CR 1/4 — cat; owl; pony; weasel; CR 1/3 — dog; hawk; snake, viper (Tiny); CR 1/2 — badger; eagle; porpoise; snake, viper (Medium-size); CR 1 — octopus; shark (Medium-size); squid; wolf; CR 2 — boar; shark (Large); CR 4 — bear, brown; CR 5 — whale, baleen; whale, orca.

**Monsters:** CR 1/3 — dire rat; CR 1/2 — plant, bloodrose\*; CR 1 — homonculus; sea spawn, minion\*; CR 2 — sahuagin; CR 3 — bowlyn\*; doppelganger, dread\*; impersonator\*; CR 4 — fenhound\*; gargoyles; reaver\*; CR 5 — odem\*; sea spawn, master\*; wraith; CR 6 — bastellus\*; plant, doppelganger plant\*; CR 7 — phasm.

## History



iven Dementlieu's rich culture and heritage, I hoped to find a carefully documented history of its existence before emerging from the Mists to join the rest of the Core. Unfortunately, as with so much of the false history of these lands, I found scarce references to the land's existence before 707 BC. The Dementlieuse also seem not to bear an interest in creation myths, preferring instead to assume that the world just "is."

The earliest piece of false history that can be confirmed from several sources involves an individual named Léon, almost 300 years ago. These sources tell of a people beset by woe and tragedy, caused in part by the anarchy in which they lived and in part by the raiders who regularly invaded their lands. These times were so terrible that the people had begun to call their land the "mad place" (the literal translation of the name Dementlieu). Would-be leaders tried to use force, coercion, and bribes to unite the populace under a single leader,



but all to no avail. Léon, however, appealed to a different mindset. He gathered around him the most intelligent and respected members of each community — the healers, the chroniclers, the mediators, and the elders — and announced that this cadre of advisors, with himself at the helm, would provide the wisdom and guidance to lead this place of madness into a new era. Léon successfully captured the minds of his people.

**A talent that appears to be exhibited by the land's current ruler as well!**

With each community represented, the people were soon working together to make themselves stronger and to coordinate themselves in their efforts against the raiders. The intelligent and the thoughtful gave instructions to the strong and the nimble, which I suspect created the beginnings of Dementlieu's class divide. Many likened Léon's rule to the dawning of a new day — and thus, the Council of Brilliance was born.

In the centuries that followed, Dementlieu's history documents speedy intellectual and cultural

development. The Dementlieuse soon regarded themselves as being far superior to any of their neighbors (although the documentation neglects to mention just who these neighbors were) and believed their intellectual skills and cultural development to represent the most important cause of their success. The poor (who could not afford the luxury of education) and those without the mental capacity for such pursuits soon found themselves increasingly marginalized.

With each successive Lord-Governor the gap between the classes grew. When Bernard Foquelaine assumed the title, he began forcefully to segregate the peasants from the wealthy. Disquiet in the city of Port-a-Lucine grew steadily, until the day when 30 peasants were to be executed for swimming in Parnault Bay within 100 yards of a cove where noble ladies were bathing. The poor of the city erupted in violence, descending on the Lord-Governor's offices. Many *gendarme* and peasants died that day, and Lord-Governor Foquelaine ended up being executed by his own guillotine.

This event, occurring in 707 BC, appears the most likely candidate as the seminal event connected with the emergence of Dementlieu from the







Mists. The clearest documentation of Dementlieu's arrival in the Core is in relation to the Dementlieu Annexation, which occurred as soon as Vlad Drakov saw this realm appear to the west. Official texts attribute the defeat of Drakov to the superior firearms that Drakov had not faced before, but local residents of Chateaufaux tell the story quite differently. Monsieur Turcotte, a *gendarme* at the time of the invasion, related his version of events to me at length.

*"Those brutes made it a good way past Chateaufaux, as I remember. It was the first time any of us had seen a raid getting further than the Musarde, so we were worried. Early on, our muskets had kept them at bay, but there were just so many of them, row after row. When the front lines began to run out of gunpowder, we had to retreat and resort to ambushes... until something strange began to happen. Trapping the Falkovnians seemed to become too easy. In some cases, the Falkovnian officer would literally turn on his own men at the last minute, helping the rest of us cut them down!*

*"I heard tell from other men that one of them Talons actually arrived at a camp in the middle of the night, surrendered, and then gave away the positions of his comrades. Never did understand it, but if you ask me, that's what turned the tide against them.*

*"And you know what? Not long after the last was defeated, them Talons had to start wearing those bracer things you see on their wrists. Cause unbearable agony if they even think of betraying Drakov, they do."*

I must wonder whether my own bracers serve a similar purpose, patron. Do you trust me as little as Drakov trusts his minions?

*Always guessing, my little scholar. Did you but understand half my reasoning, you would be amazed at the amount of trust I have already shown you.*

With a new Council of Brilliance in place, headed by Lord-Governor Chambon, new laws were established to ensure minimum provisions of housing, food, and education to the poor. Claude d'Honaire and his family arrived from the southern land of Mordent at this time, and Claude was appointed to the Council. Although the arrival of a single family in the domain would not normally warrant a mention in my analysis, by the end of this report I am sure you will understand the event's potential relevance.

The Dementlieuse have enjoyed relative political stability since this time. Further border skirmishes with Falkovnia occurred during the Executioner's Campaign of 724 BC, but increased preparedness for battle kept the invaders at bay. In 728 BC, Lord-Governor Chambon was removed from office, reputedly after a faction of the nobility garnered enough support from within the Council to demand his removal. Marcel Guignol then attained the position of Lord-Governor and soon ensured that the few remaining supporters of Chambon encountered financial difficulties in their businesses. The landmark signing of the Treaty of Four Towers in 729 BC is the most significant political event since Guignol's assumption of the role, aside from the occasional change in membership of the Council of Brilliance.

## Populace

**T**he majority of Dementlieuse appear to be of similar stock to the Mordentish, despite the seemingly separate histories of the two realms. Few, though, are willing to draw attention to this apparent connection with their kin to the south. In the city, however, an array of nationalities can usually be found due to the constant ebb and flow of foreigners. Some (such as myself, all those years ago) come here to study, while others come with dreams of becoming a successful artist, sculptor, or singer; even more journey to Dementlieu simply to take in the sights, attend a function, or see one of the many cultural events that take place in Port-a-Lucine.

## Appearance

Natives of Dementlieu are generally tall of stature, with slim, athletic builds. Their skin ranges from the very pale to a tan or olive complexion, but these differences are often difficult to identify as a result of the frequent (and excessive) application





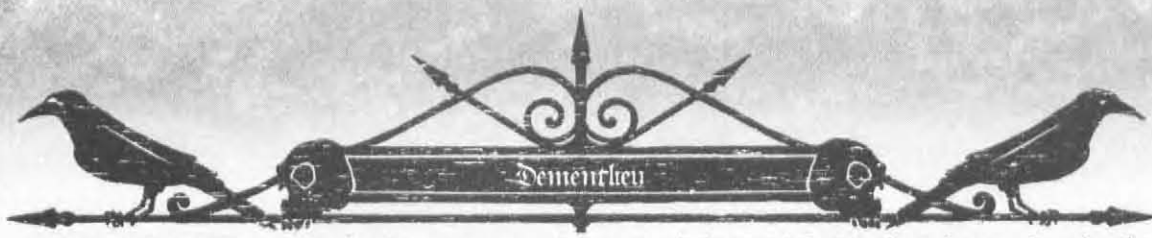
of pale make-up by the aristocracy. Eyes are quite varied in color and can range from dark brown to hazels, greens, and pale blues.

Hair color is most commonly blonde or light brown, although occasionally auburn hair appears. Men generally wear their hair short, frequently with a beard or mustache. Great care is taken in maintaining facial hair — it is usually meticulously styled, trimmed, and even curled with wax. Women grow their hair long, but usually wear it pinned up in elaborate buns, curls, or ringlets. Among the common classes, women usually wear a simple braid.

## fashion

For those who wish to mix with the rich and influential in Port-a-Lucine, fashion is as important an asset as political savvy, knowledge, or guile. Despite the clear division between rich and poor, the classification between the two is largely an issue of form over substance. Anyone able to *appear* noble, even if only through the wearing of expensive clothes of the current style, is likely to gain acceptance quickly among the aristocracy. Such a charade is unlikely to be maintained by any individual without significant wealth, however, as the Dementlieu fashion changes often enough to leave most pretenders penniless within months.

In the course of my research, I was afforded the opportunity to attend several functions of note in Port-a-Lucine and was required to dress appropriately. I can only describe the fashions of the women in Dementlieu to be awkward, heavy, uncomfortable, and time consuming. I required no less than two hours to prepare for my first ball, enduring unending



layers of petticoats, corsets, bodices, trains, and other accoutrements. I confess to losing my patience with the dressmaker more than once as she endeavored to make me fit for a meeting with the Lord-Governor and the Council of Brilliance. The dresses are made of heavy velvets and brocades, with wildly accentuated hips or posteriors, making it difficult to sit comfortably. The materials are brightly colored and often patterned with embroidery or lace. Despite the relatively mild weather, a fan is generally considered an appropriate accessory.

The current style among the men of Dementlieu calls for white silk shirts and breeches, often with a vest if the weather is cold. A knee-length coat with large folded back cuffs and gold embroidery is the main feature, usually in green, blue, or varying pastel shades. Tight white leggings are usually worn up to the knee, with black, heeled, buckled shoes. An elaborate silk or lace cravat is often worn, along with a broad, black hat with three points.

For important social functions, it is considered appropriate for both sexes to wear white, curled wigs (or *perruques*). These expensive items are somewhat of a status symbol and thus change frequently in line with the current fashion. Presently, men wear a relatively simple, straight white wig with a ponytail of medium length, usually tied off with a large, colorful ribbon. Women's wigs, however, involve absurdly large coils of curls and feathers and are difficult to wear for more than an hour at a time (and, I find, are particularly obstructive at the theatre).

I doubt you will be surprised to learn that the dress of the common classes is significantly different to that described above for the aristocracy. Commoner men wear simple woolen trousers with white cotton shirts, and commoner women wear dark skirts with plainly embroidered bodices. The men wear simple cloth caps and the women don white bonnets when outdoors.

## Language

Mordentish is the primary language of Dementlieu. It is a curious tongue, in that it has two quite distinct dialects. I could find no particular explanation for the two diverse dialects and can only assume that they are the result of some long-forgotten merging of two separate languages. In total, the language is very flexible, with a wide vocabulary. Generally, class defines the use of the

two dialects: High Mordentish is spoken by the upper classes, while Low Mordentish is reserved for peasants and farmers.

High Mordentish is a very soft language, forsaking the harsh consonants of a language such as Lamordian for rolling vowels, silent consonants, and a structure that seems to string words together seamlessly in a lyrical, almost sensuous cadence. One particularly amorous gentleman described High Mordentish to me as "the only language in which love can truly be expressed." His subsequent attempt to demonstrate this point left me unconvinced, however.

Low Mordentish has a more forceful tone than the High dialect and uses more harsh consonants. Extensive use is made of compound words — for example, a "child murderer" is simply child (*beam*) plus murderer (*myrthra*), giving "*beam-myrthra*."

In Dementlieu, the High dialect is predominantly in common usage. Virtually all of the commoners also speak High Mordentish, particularly if they work in or near any of the areas frequented by nobles. In their homes, however, they are more likely to revert to Low Mordentish. All forms of artistic expression in Dementlieu are performed in High Mordentish at the command of the Council of Brilliance.

### Mordentish Dialects Primer

English	Low	High
greetings	<i>Wes thu hal</i>	<i>bonjour</i> ( <i>be you well</i> )
farewell	<i>Wes thu hal</i>	<i>adieu</i>
yes	<i>giese</i>	<i>oui</i>
no	<i>nese</i>	<i>non</i>
ah! alas!	<i>la! eala!</i>	<i>oh! hélas!</i>
go away!	<i>faran aweg!</i>	<i>s'en aller</i>
painting	<i>searo</i>	<i>peinturex</i>
literature	<i>bokcræft</i>	<i>écriture</i>
performance	<i>plegende</i>	<i>présentation</i>

## Lifestyle & Education

Dementlieu culture and lifestyle are dominated by two extremes — the wealthy nobility and the poor lower classes. Between these extremes, the artists of Dementlieu ascend and descend the





social hierarchy according to their popularity or otherwise and create the artistic output that makes Dementlieu the cultural heart of the Core.

The upper classes consider themselves the epitome of sophistication and cultural advancement in this world and live a life of extreme comfort. Wealthy aristocratic families make up the bulk of the nobility and own major businesses that operate within Port-a-Lucine. Much of the work is carried out by subordinates, however, leaving the nobility with significant time to rest, gossip, and generally contribute little to society.

The lower classes live much harder lives. Those with jobs can usually maintain a very basic standard of living, their employers extracting the maximum possible amount of work for their wages. In the cities, laboring is the most common job in any of the large workhouses. A significant proportion also works for the nobility as maids, footmen, or cooks.

Ever since the deposing of Lord-Governor Foquelaine in 707 BC, the nobility has funded the provision of basic food and housing for those without work. This benevolence is often cited by the aristocracy as a demonstration of Dementlieu's civil advancement; a closer examination of the hard, dry breads, watery gruel, and overcrowded tenements that are provided suggests that the nobility is doing the absolute minimum required to prevent a repeat of the 707 rebellion. Unrest is unsurprisingly growing among the peasantry, and I suspect that the nobility will realize this too late to take action.

Professional artists often find themselves flung carelessly between Dementlieu's two social worlds.

The casual whim of artistic taste among the wealthy can rapidly accelerate entry into the noble classes, but it can equally send unfortunate fops back to the poorhouse if they have not made careful use of their artistic profits. The creative community is not restricted to Dementlieu natives, with many foreigners earning themselves a comfortable place in Dementlieu society through their art.

Art in all of its forms is highly respected by both the upper and lower classes. For the rich, it is considered appropriate for all children to engage in artistic pursuit for at least a year after completing their formal education. Most achieve little, resulting in banal or tasteless exhibitions of a noble son or daughter's craft being imposed on unsuspecting patrons. Despite this experience, the spoiled child will spend the rest of his or her life claiming to be a misunderstood creative. Among the poor, artistic talent is viewed as the only way to achieve wealth and to gain acceptance among the aristocracy. Children are encouraged to pursue artistic hobbies, with parents often willing to forego meals to pay for a child's education in dance or song.

*Interesting that an entire country should place so much value on something so fleeting and trivial as art. Rather than wasting time on popular whim, I would channel the artists' production toward some greater goal than mere decoration. Perhaps someone already does so to his own gain. This bears watching.*

### Secret Society: L'Ordures

Anger and bitterness has long seethed among the lower classes, but most see themselves as too powerless and weak to affect change. L'Ordures (The Refuse) is a growing collection of young men and women unwilling to put up with their treatment by the nobility. To date, they have avoided violent means of resistance, preferring instead to strike the nobility with weapons that truly cause them pain — embarrassment, belittlement, and loss of face. Recent achievements have included the defacement of Yvette Guignol's premiere art exhibition and the poisoning of the wine with a strong sedative at a party function called by Claude LaGrange.

The leader of L'Ordures, Serge Lamond, has a wry sense of humor that he puts to great use in the group's "attacks." Although he does not wish to pursue more violent actions, other members of the society are beginning to demand more decisive action. These more aggressive members are being encouraged — and in some cases controlled — by the Living Brain (see the Attached Notes).



Jean-Pierre Theroux is the government's patron of the arts and is the single most influential individual in the artistic community. Despite being a foppish sycophant, with a hideous laugh and an offensive wardrobe, people appear to fawn on this man's every opinion regarding the city's artistic events.

The most well known piece of Dementlieu high culture is the *opera*, a kind of drama performed entirely in powerful, bold vocals with musical accompaniment. The premier of a new work at the massive Port-a-Lucine Opera House is the highlight of the Dementlieu cultural calendar and attracts large numbers of the nobility and foreigners. Art galleries are also frequently attended and occasionally include works of sculpture. A peculiar form of dance rarely found outside of Dementlieu is *ballet*, a highly structured style of movement used to tell stories to music. Plays are frequently performed in the open amphitheater at Parnault Bay during the summer, and authors release their major works during the winter months. As mentioned previously, fashion is considered as much an art as singing or writing. I have even attended an event purely designed to display new styles of clothing.

For every piece of high culture, there are many demonstrations of mediocre examples of the craft. During my stay, increasing numbers of itinerant musicians and singers began arriving for the summer months, playing or singing on street corners for coin. A growing number of cheap tawdry literary works, such as the "Dead Travel Fast" romances, are popular among even the wealthy. The lower classes obtain their artistic input from local taverns, where rowdy musicians play late into the night and peasants dance energetic jigs.

Education is an important part of the upbringing of any child in Dementlieu. The Lord-Governor provides basic schooling for all young children, no matter how poor. Families of means will often pay for their children to attend one of the many boarding schools for further education. These institutions are also popular with wealthy families in other realms of the Core, who will send their children to Dementlieu for a number of years to broaden their horizons (or, in the case of my father, to be rid of them). Only the richest, however, can afford for their children to attend the prestigious University of Dementlieu.

Marriage is more a matter of political convenience than a consideration of love among the aristocracy. Daughters are significantly guided by

their parents' wishes when selecting a suitor, which are subject to their current social, political, and financial agendas. I was less than surprised to discover that this practice has led to an intricate network of clandestine relationships. Few nobles in Dementlieu are without a "dirty little secret" that can be used against them.

Among the laborers, marriage is more a matter of love and is left primarily in the hands of the young. Any potential fiancé with promising signs of artistic talent, however, is considered quite a catch, if only for the possibility of social advancement.

Food in Dementlieu is a carefully crafted affair, bordering on art itself. Meals are generally light and frequently include meats such as wild boar, mutton, beef, and venison. Mushrooms, onions, peppers, and courgettes often accompany the meal. Fish and shellfish (such as mussels and oysters) are popular in Port-a-Lucine. Unusual ingredients such as quail eggs, *foie gras* (goose liver), pig's feet, and even *escargot* (snails) are used in the classiest meals; herbs such as basil, tarragon, fennel, and oregano flavor most dishes; and garlic is included in large amounts in many dishes. Meals are usually finished off with a range of medium to strong cheeses, accompanied by a syrupy sweet yellow wine that can quickly go to the head.

Many eating establishments have begun setting up tables *outside* of their actual premises, to allow patrons to eat and drink in the outdoors. These *cafés* have become extraordinarily popular, most likely because of the increased social interaction they provide and the ability for patrons to be "seen" at the more reputable and expensive establishments.

Travel within Dementlieu is most commonly achieved in black, enclosed carriages with comfortable plush seats. Carriages owned by the noble families display their crest on the side. This crest is usually removable, however, in order to provide anonymity if one is heading to an amorous rendezvous or a secret meeting with a noble conspirator.

My final observation about the personality of the people of Dementlieu is a curious one. I am, as my patron surely knows, a skilled interrogator. As such, I am used to getting the information that I request, when I request it. The people of Dementlieu, however, displayed a remarkable ability to resist my pointed probing, and a surprising number seemed unaffected by my spells when I resorted to them. I was unable to discern the exact





nature of this resistance, but it is apparent to me that something of an uncanny nature has affected the minds of many people in Dementlieu.

### The Obedient

Any creatures that fail three consecutive Will saves against Dominic d'Honaire's *domination* ability become slaves to the darklord's will, acquiring the Obedient special quality immediately upon failing the third save. A character who knows that the Obedient is enslaved unwillingly and still attacks such a being may be subject to a powers check.

**Obedient (Ex):** The creature is permanently affected by Dominic d'Honaire's *domination* ability. The creature receives a +1 bonus to Will saves against mind-influencing effects from sources other than Dominic. This bonus increases by +1 for every year that the creature possesses the Obedient quality, to a maximum of +10. The Obedient quality is removed if the creature leaves the domain of Dementlieu or fails a save against a mind-influencing effect from a source other than Dominic.

### Attitudes Toward Magic

I obtained my first exposure to the wonders of the arcane arts during my education in Dementlieu. An acquaintance from my boarding school, Gaston Delapont, abandoned his studies to pursue stage magic (much to my disdain at the time). At subsequent meetings, he demonstrated his burgeoning skills to me. I found myself fascinated by the techniques and methods involved in the arcane arts, but simultaneously dismayed at the petty and frivolous uses to which it was being put. That dismay characterizes my overall reaction to Dementlieu's use of the arcane arts.

The Dementlieuse enlightened attitude appears to have manifested in what I would describe as a careless disrespect for magic. It is generally dismissed as an eccentric interest of little value to modern culture. The healing aspects of divine magic are more readily accepted, with other more "vulgar" divine magic rarely seen.

Magic is most apparent in common street entertainment. Performances of legerdemain or deception are generally not regarded as true artistic pursuits here, but nevertheless a strong tradition of prestidigitation abides among the spring and summer crowds on the streets. These entertainers (including Gaston Delapont) are part of a guild known as *La Société de Legerdemain*. All manner of entertainers such as conjurers, escape artists, and mesmerists are trained in basic elements of wizardry to enhance their acts, but they progress little further. To belittle the importance of their studies even more, the performers insist on adopting absurd monikers designed to excite the audience, such as "The Amazing Astoundo" and "Ubaldo van Mesmer."

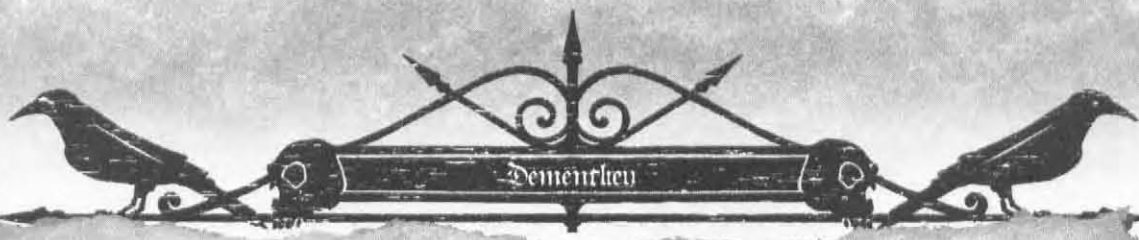
One small pocket of respectable magical study exists in the University of Dementlieu. Lord Balfour de Castele, the president of the University, has managed to support a faculty of arcane studies for many years. The University has also managed to establish a sizable collection of magical treasures in the Guignol Museum. At the University, arcane magic is studied in depth, but usually follows esoteric lines, seemingly failing to consider magic as a source of significant power.

### Religion

The first site that one sees of Port-a-Lucine when approaching along the road from Chateaufaux is of the ruins of a large cathedral at the center of the city. The decayed and neglected walls of *Ste. Mere des Larmes* ("Sainted Mother of Tears") are the most telling symbol of the Dementlieu attitude toward religion.

For the majority of residents, faith is not a significant part of their daily lives. During my stay in Dementlieu, I rarely witnessed anyone visiting the few houses of religion, and it was rarely a topic for discussion. Among the wealthy, strong faith is often viewed as a sign of weakness, while the poor generally find greater solace in the church, but often only in times of need or despair. Fortunately, neither of the faiths with a presence in Dementlieu seems overly concerned about the attitudes of its flock.

**Ezra:** Despite the decrepit appearance of *Ste. Mere des Larmes*, it houses the Dementlieu sect of the Church of Ezra. This sect arrived in Port-a-Lucine in 709 BC, when Warden Joan Secousse discovered a stained glass window in the ruined cathedral that appeared to depict the common



## Secret Society: La Société de Legerdemain

Ostensibly, this society is a loose organization of street entertainers and performers. Behind that front, however, is a haven for those wishing to further their arcane study without fear of attracting a disapproving gaze.

The society developed many years ago, when a group of stage magicians began to further their talents using curious ancient texts obtained from a Vistani caravan. Before long, they realized that arcane magic was far more than the trivial power they believed it to be. Keen to pursue their studies, they realized that they would need a cover to prevent their friends, family, and partners from knowing about their peculiar hobby.

The Société does not have any single overriding goal or agenda. It simply aims to provide a means by which curious scholars can study all forms of arcane rituals and magic. Almost any type of research is tolerated, as long as the Société is not at risk of being exposed. As a result, the membership covers a diverse range of interests; some simply read about new spells, and rarely actually use magic, while others have disappeared after investigating unholy texts and demonic pacts.

The Société's membership is controlled through a strict sponsorship structure. Anyone joining the Société must be sponsored by another member of at least five years. The sponsoring member is then completely responsible for the training and education of his protégé and is held accountable for the member's activities in the Société for the member's lifetime. During the first year, the protégé usually receives only basic training in the practical aspects of his chosen field, with only elementary training in real magic. Once that training is complete, and if the member is considered talented enough for further study, he or she is admitted to the Hidden Library.

The Société is based in a modest building named *Club l'Artiste*, located just outside of Port-a-Lucine's government quarter. Here, members can find lodgings, a meal, and further their training. Long-term members of the Société enjoy luxurious smoking rooms and make use of the Hidden Library, which contains numerous arcane and obscure texts such as *The Tainted Writings of Blackcomb*, *Sources de Puissance*, and even several volumes of *The Madrigorian*.

The most senior member of La Société de Legerdemain is Claude LaGrange, an aging member of the Council of Brilliance. Outside of the Société, only Dominic d'Honaire is aware of LaGrange's membership in the organization.

representation of Ezra. Investigation of the site began hurriedly, and soon tunnels and cellars were uncovered beneath the foundations that contained the teachings of the cathedral's original faith, from more than 400 years ago. Startling similarities between these teachings and the texts of Yakov Dilisnya prompted Secousse to pen *The Third Book of Ezra* and return to Lechberg to deliver her news. The Church soon determined that Secousse had indeed discovered a new aspect of the Grand Scheme, and she was named Bastion of the Port-a-Lucine sect of the Church of Ezra.

This sect believes that in Ste. Mere des Larmes they have discovered the original words and faith of Ezra and that other texts were merely crude copies of the truth. They spend the majority of their time furthering their study of the texts found

in the ruined cathedral, attempting to understand Ezra's true nature. Anchorites also scribe some of the most elaborately illuminated scriptures of Ezra to be found in the Core, for Sentires able to afford the cost. A printing press acquired by the sect is now making more mundane copies of the scriptures available to all who desire them.

Port-a-Lucine appears to have developed a significant interest in the numerological aspects of Ezra's scriptures. The number five regularly occurs in the scriptures of Ezra, and many of the faithful attribute good luck to the number. The studious Port-a-Lucine anchorites, however, claim to have found many patterns and hidden mathematical codes in Ezra's scripture. In addition, they have been examining the cathedral itself and other holy relics for signs of the numerological code. One





student I interviewed spoke excitedly of five-pointed flowers in the stained glass window and complicated calculations based on the angle and number of buttresses. The exact goal of this study appears to be unclear, with few able to communicate any clear result of their findings.

Their focus on esoteric study has meant that the Church of Ezra in Port-a-Lucine spends little time seeking new followers, or even preaching to existing followers. This secluded approach to their faith has drawn criticism from other sects, feeling that they are not spreading Ezra's word. The Port-a-Lucine sect willingly accepts those who seek it out, and worship is conducted with a small group of attendees on every fifth day.

The most common reason for the Dementieuse to visit the church is to seek succor from the miraculous icon of Ezra in the wall of the western transept. The only surviving piece of stained glass in the cathedral, its elaborate design includes the text, "Cry no more, for I will cry for you." The faithful say that if one prays to the icon, Ezra may take the supplicant's sorrows onto herself. Those who are not pure of heart or motive, however, may have Ezra unleash her stored sorrows upon them, making this a risky proposition for many manipulative and deceptive citizens.

Bastion Secousse decided long ago not to restore or repair the majority of the cathedral, leaving it as a symbol of the age of the faith of Ezra. The roof and walls of the nave collapsed centuries ago, along with part of the eastern transept. The anchorites have done the minimum amount of work required to protect the remainder of the church from the elements. A small chapter house adjoining the western transept is the home of Bastion Secousse and some of her attendants. Although I was could not gain entrance, there are said to be any number of secret passages and rooms underneath the structure in which the anchorites continue to discover extraordinary secrets of Ezra.

At 78 years of age, Bastion Joan Secousse is now a very elderly woman and is rarely seen in public. Rumors suggest that she has fallen severely ill on at least three occasions, and each time the prayers of the faithful to the Sainted Mother of Tears resulted in her recovery. Most Anchorites have unsurprisingly called this a miracle of Ezra, but a few are concerned that Ezra is not willing to accept Bastion Secousse into the afterlife. Meanwhile, questions hang over the Bastion's successor. Although the Bastion formally announced that

Warden Armand Pineau (a senior scholar among the sect) as her successor, during her delirium Bastion Secousse has apparently repeatedly summoned Warden Leonie Caille to her bedside. Suggestions that she will renounce her appointment of Warden Pineau just before her death are rife.

*Dogma:* Ezra was a goddess who saw that the gods had abandoned the Hollow, a place hidden by mists and burdened by suffering. She beseeched the gods to tend to these people, but they refused. Ezra left the realm of the gods and gave herself to the Mists in order to watch over the mortals within the Hollow. Other faiths simply worship other aspects of Ezra. The Grand Scheme has not yet been revealed to mortals, and thus study must be devoted to Ezra's other aspects. Ezra waits for us at the end of our life, on the other side of the Mists of Death, to take us to our final reward.

## The Church of Ezra Revisited

Games rules for the Church of Ezra can be found in the Attached Notes.

**The Icon of Ezra:** This immaculate likeness of Ezra in stained glass is a relic, as discussed in *Van Richten's Arsenal*. As such, it has the power to *cure minor wounds* twice per day, *cure moderate wounds* twice per week, *cure critical wounds* twice per month, and grant a *miracle* once per year. These powers are activated by prayer and are granted at the Dungeon Master's whim.

In addition, the Icon can *heal* once per week. Any diseases, blindness, deafness, poisons, or other conditions that are *healed* by the Icon are actually absorbed by the relic. If Ezra considers a supplicant unworthy, she may choose to unleash the stored sicknesses upon him, in which case he is immediately afflicted with whatever disease, poison, or condition the Icon has previously absorbed. The Icon can only store the sickness of up to five people at any one time. Once this limit is reached, the Icon cannot *heal* again until it unleashes its woes upon an unfortunate victim.

The Icon has healed Bastion Secousse three times in the last six months, at the behest of her faithful. As her death approaches, her sicknesses will likely be bestowed upon whichever of the two claimants to the title of Bastion proves to be untrue to Ezra.







**Hala:** The Halan witches do not have a strong representation in Dementlieu, but they do maintain a number of hospices in Port-a-Lucine and Chateaufaux. Although few actively follow their faith, the hospices provide needed care for the poor, and so the witches are regarded with some respect by the lower classes. By and large, the rest of the Dementlieuse pay little attention to the witches, which I suspect they are suitably happy with.

## The Realm

**L**ike so many aspects of Dementlieu life, the politics of this realm appear to have two facets. On the surface, Dementlieu's government would appear extremely successful. The current Lord-Governor has held power for almost 30 years and from many accounts has received strong support for the entire duration of his rule. Beneath this façade, the actual

maneuvering and plotting among the noble families seems to drive the majority of the actual political processes. Rarely does a conversation pass among the nobility that does not involve hidden agendas, requests for favors, or implied threats.

Beyond the supposed stability of the government and the political spider web of the nobility, I believe there may be other major influences on the events of Dementlieu. I have already mentioned the apparent resistance of the Dementlieuse to my interrogations. In a similar vein, during many of my interviews I found my subjects extremely unwilling to speak unfavorably of their government: preternaturally so. Even the use of magic, in most cases, failed to obtain more candid views — an absurd result given the continual plotting and conniving among the nobility. This drought of anti-government sentiment broke after I attended the launch of Francois de Penible's new book *The Forgotten Sensations* and met Mademoiselle Lucie Frenois, a former aide to one of the Lord-Governor's advisors.

## The Dementlieu Hero

**Races:** The majority of the population in Dementlieu is human. A small enclave of halflings, usually referred to as "the little people," lives in Port-a-Lucine. Other non-humans can occasionally be found, but are often looked down upon by others.

**Classes:** Bards, clerics, fighters, rogues, and wizards are the most common classes found in Dementlieu. Bards form the backbone of much of Dementlieu's artistic heritage and are easily the most respected among Dementlieu society. Fighters are generally trained by one of the aristocratic families as members of their personal retinue or are members of the *gendarmierie* or army. Wizards are generally enchanters or illusionists — as these schools are the most appropriate for performance magic — but are not well respected. Rogues are most common among the lower classes within the cities. Clerics are generally scholarly types worshipping Ezra and are uncommon. Sorcerers are the only class regarded with suspicion — while arcane magic learnt from a book is accepted, sorcerous powers arising in the untrained is considered abnormal, and such people are often forced into seclusion. Other PC classes are rarely found within Dementlieu. PCs may also have levels as an aristocrat or expert, due to the civilized nature of their upbringing.

**Recommended Skills:** Appraise, Bluff, Craft (blacksmithing, bookbinding, carpentry, clockmaking, gemcutting, gunsmithing, locksmithing, painting, sculpture, shipmaking, weaving), Decipher Script, Diplomacy, Disguise, Escape Artist, Forgery, Gather Information, Hypnosis, Innuendo, Knowledge (local, nobility and royalty), Perform, Profession (bookkeeper, brewer, cook, farmer, sailor, scribe, tanner), Sense Motive.

**Recommended Feats:** Ancestral Legacy, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearms), Iron Will, Logical Mind, Muse, Quick Draw, Open Mind, Smitten, Weapon Finesse.

**Dementlieuse Male Names:** Alphonse, André, Bertrand, Donatien, Florian, Gerard, Hervé, Jacques, Jean, Mathieu, Philippe, Raoul, Remy, Renard, Serge, Thibault, Valère.

**Dementlieuse Female Names:** Antoinette, Celeste, Charlotte, Danielle, Dominique, Éloïse, Genevieve, Josette, Lucienne, Marie, Rolande, Solange, Tatienne, Vivienne, Yvonne.





Under duress, she revealed to me the existence of an underground crime lord who acts in opposition to the Lord-Governor and his Council. This individual is apparently known only by a childish epithet — “The Brain” — and has eluded the government of Dementlieu for decades. Lucie provided me with some limited additional information regarding this individual, which I have included in the Attached Notes.

Locating Mademoiselle Frenois when I did would seem fortunate, for the following day she was found drowned in Parnault Bay.

## Government

The head of the Dementlieu government is the Lord-Governor, a position currently held by Marcel Guignol. The noble families of Dementlieu elect the Lord-Governor to the position for life from among their own number. I was able to see Lord-Governor Guignol only once during my stay in Port-a-Lucine, when he attended the first opera of the season, an entertaining tragedy entitled *La Mort de Mon Coeur* (“The Death of My Heart”). From the sight of him, Monsieur Guignol is not agile of mind or body: he required two assistants to help him walk the stairs to the Lord-Governor’s box in the Opera House, and his eyes conveyed the look of a confused man. At 74, he is the oldest Lord-Governor in the documented history of Dementlieu.

Fortunately, the Lord-Governor is supported by the Conseil Éclat (or Council of Brilliance), made up of five advisors selected personally by the Lord-Governor. I soon understood that the *real* governing of Dementlieu occurs among this select group of men and women. Each councilor is granted responsibility for specific areas of government such as the arts, trade and industry, defense and order, social welfare, and other matters of state. Although the advisors are in theory enacting the Lord-Governor’s will, the Council’s decisions appear to be governed primarily by a complex web of intrigue, blackmail, backstabbing, and manipulation among the nobility. With the multitude of agendas to be pushed among the social elite, it is no wonder that the councilors find themselves the target of all too many secret letters and bribes.

The Council of Brilliance formally meets at least once every month in the *Palais Dirigeante* (Ruling Palace) in Port-a-Lucine’s government quarter. At these meetings, formal decisions about laws and important trials are made, and discussions are held concerning the activities of each of the

councilors. In addition, there is a tradition of allowing a limited number of supplicants to approach the Council and request a boon or a particular course of action. Of course, all but the most foolish have assured the outcome of their request through careful discussions with the individual councilors beforehand, making this practice all too often a simple formality. More than one noble has come unstuck in such a situation, however, finding out too late that one of his rivals was also whispering in the Council’s ears.

Once every three months, the Lord-Governor hosts a feast at an opulent location for a select collection of invitees chosen primarily by the Council of Brilliance. These feasts normally coincide with some major artistic event such as the publishing of a new book or a performance by a renowned diva. I was surprised to find that my acquaintance Gaston was sufficiently connected to obtain an invitation for me to one such event, being hosted at the d’Honaire estate on Dementlieu’s coast. Here, I made certain to converse with each of the councilors. I found myself both perplexed at the curious mix of personalities that make up the Council and impressed by their obvious cunning and guile. In a conversation with a member of the Council, every nuance of every utterance conveys hidden meaning—subtle jibes, hidden probes, and gentle inferences create a web of words that can entrap the unwary.

I have already mentioned Jean-Pierre Theroux, the Council’s patron of the arts. Despite his buffoonery and offensive personality, his value to the government has become quite apparent to me. Popular taste is so driven by his whim, that Jean-Pierre is quickly able to suppress any potentially disruptive piece of theatre or music. In one reported case, the play *Courage* (which told the story of the turbulent lives of two friends in a workhouse) ended its run after the first performance when Jean-Pierre uttered an unfavorable comment after the curtain closed. While I personally would not wish such an outlandish fop to be censoring what I view, this situation is undoubtedly an efficient but surreptitious means of controlling what influences the public is exposed to.

Charles LaGrange, a middle-aged man with a serious demeanor, is responsible for all trade activities within Dementlieu and is the primary contact on the Council for all matters of business and guildcraft. I shall discuss his role further in my thoughts on the Dementlieu economy, below.





Josephine Chantreaux, a heavy-set woman in her fifties, deals with matters of defense. Through a voluntary program, Josephine operates a militia known as the *gendarmerie* in all settlements of Dementlieu, providing basic defense and law enforcement. For some time now, the *gendarmerie* has received considerable assistance from Alanik Ray, the supposed "Great Detective." A Darkonian elf, Alanik has built quite a reputation in Dementlieu, helped considerably by public interest in several collections of overblown stories about his work.

Although effective in law enforcement, the *gendarmes* are not numerous or well trained enough to stave off the threat of invasion from Falkovnia, and so the private retinues and guards of the noble families supplement them in times of war. Josephine ensures that proper training for all of the nobility's guards is provided, usually focusing on the use of the rapier and musket. She also ensures a ready supply of firearms; gunpowder and other weapons are on hand in case of an attack by the tyrant in the east.

Helené duSuis is the newest member of the Council of Brilliance, having been appointed only five years ago. A svelte and distant woman who appears to eschew the excesses of the usual Dementlieu fashion sense for slim fitting dark dresses, she appeared to be distinctly uninterested in conversation with me when she discovered I was but a traveler from Darkon. I feel that Helené is an adept manipulator, keen to talk only with those who might further her social position.

Helené's role on the Council covers all manner of public institutions—from the funding of the University of Dementlieu, to the provision of basic food and accommodation to the destitute through a network of poorhouses.

The final member of the Council, and Chief Advisor to the Lord-Governor, is Dominic d'Honaire. He is currently the longest serving advisor to Lord-Governor Guignol, having attained the position in 727 BC when his father (Claude d'Honaire) became ill. As chief advisor, Dominic chairs all meetings of the Council, represents Marcel Guignol at official functions that he cannot attend, and may conduct affairs of state in the Lord-Governor's absence.

In addition, Dominic is responsible for the setting of law and the dispensing of justice. Laws are discussed by the Council, but finally ratified by Dominic. The vast majority of these laws are enforced by local *prononcers* in each community, who

are appointed personally by Dominic. Only the most serious or public crimes are elevated to the Cour du Justice, where crimes are heard and judged by the Lord-Governor and his Council. The law rarely indicates specific punishments for each crime (excepting major crimes such as treason or murder), giving each *prononcer* significant flexibility when handing down sentences. Of course, the *prononcer* is usually thoroughly enveloped in the local scheming and politicking, and so sentences frequently depend on the good graces of the rest of the nobility rather than on the actual severity of the crime. The poor also suffer under this system, usually receiving a longer or more severe sentence than a noble equivalent, particularly if the crime was committed against one of the wealthy. The most severe punishment that can be meted out is death by guillotine in the Place de Léon, in Port-a-Lucine. Most often applied to traitors or captured Falkovnians, these executions attract large crowds of spectators.

Of all of the members of the Council, Dominic d'Honaire struck me as the most astute and politically motivated, despite being one of the less prominent players among the Council on the noble social scene. I was disturbed, however, by an uncanny sensation during our discussion of being interrogated by *him*, rather than the reverse. Veiled references and inferences left me with no doubt that Dominic had been aware of my investigations and that my scope was about to be "severely limited."

Aha! My little scholar is caught out!  
A fraction less bravado and a little  
more care is warranted when dealing  
with matters of manipulation. I trust  
you will not be making a habit of such  
gaffes.

Fortunately, this event occurred near the end of my survey and so has not noticeably curtailed my investigation. Nonetheless, the encounter prompted me to consider d'Honaire more important in the politics of Dementlieu than I had previously realized, and hence I have included some additional discussion of him in the Attached Notes.





## The Council of Brilliance

Dominic d'Honaire completely controls all appointments to the Council of Brilliance. He ensures that only the most useful and influential nobles ever join him on the Council. All except one of the Council members are Obedients. Some additional details about each of the advisors to the Lord-Governor are listed below.

**Jean-Pierre Theroux (male human obedient Ari5):** Jean-Pierre is little more than he appears — an over-the-top gallant who loves to be seen at all manner of social functions. Jean-Pierre's opinions on most artistic events are usually given to him beforehand by Dominic, who always arranges to learn of the subject matter of every major theatrical or artistic event in the realm before it reaches the eyes and ears of his public. Despite his outrageous demeanor and raucous laugh, Jean-Pierre is in truth a deeply lonely and troubled individual. He is conscious of the superficial nature of his role on the Council and has no true friends among the nobility. In recent years, Jean-Pierre's self-loathing has triggered bouts of self-mutilation, the scars kept carefully covered under his elaborate fashions.

**Claude LaGrange (male human obedient Wiz8 [III]):** Unbeknownst to most members of the Council, Claude is actually a skilled illusionist and an Elder of La Société de Legerdemain. Claude joined the Société as a young man, performing as a knife-thrower. When he discovered real magic, he gave up his limited talent as a performer and pursued arcane knowledge and study, disappearing from most aspects of public life for many years. Eventually, Claude became one of the Société's elders, and as the group of wizards grew, Dominic became increasingly interested in them. Realizing the significant knowledge and power magic can bring, Dominic thought it wise to bring the group under his control and so requested that Claude assume a position on the Council. Claude's studies have taken a darker turn in recent years, and he has already failed a powers check, which has granted him the unusual ability turn his head a full 180 degrees.

**Josephine Chantreaux (female human obedient Ari4/Pis2):** Josephine's work on the Council is driven by a trauma she suffered when only a child. The daughter of a farmer near Chateaufaux, Josephine's life was shattered when Falkovnia at-





tempted to invade Dementlieu shortly after its appearance in the Land of Mists. A particularly brutal pair of Talons invaded her home after her father shot one of their number. They cruelly tortured her father while she watched, taking revenge for their comrade's death. When Josephine whimpered or cried, she suffered blows across her cheeks from their mailed fists and sword hilts, scarring her for life. Since then, Josephine has been dedicated to the defense against, and ideally the destruction of, Falkovnia. In addition, Dominic has found her skills in diplomacy extremely useful in dealing with the surrounding nations, given his inability to leave his prison of Dementlieu. Now in her fifties, Josephine wears very heavy make-up at all times to conceal the scars on her cheeks. (For more information on the Pistoleer prestige class, see **Van Richten's Arsenal**.)

**Helené duSuis (female human Ari7):** Helené lost her status in the aristocracy many years ago, when her father made an embarrassing *faux pas* that resulted in other nobles quietly and efficiently causing his business to fail. Determined never to repeat his stupidity, Helené slowly worked to regain her place in society. Realizing that Dominic was an important figure on the Council, she ingratiated herself with him over many years. During this time, as d'Honaire's affection for her grew, he

became increasingly repulsive in her eyes. Her fierce resolve and strong will has allowed her to suppress any reaction to his apparent hideous appearance. Dominic, not used to women responding in such a civil manner, has mistaken Helené's tolerance for love. In return for her apparent affection, he has furthered her re-establishment in the aristocracy and subsequently brought her onto the Council, as was her wish.

### Law Enforcement

The Dementlieuse *gendarme* below represents the average individual recruited by Josephine Chantreaux to work in her militia.

**Dementlieuse gendarme:** Human War1; CR 1/2; SZ M humanoid (human); HD 1d8; hp 4; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10 (touch 10, flatfooted 10); Atk +1 melee (1d6, rapier) or +2 ranged (1d10, pistol); Face/Reach 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.; AL LN; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 11, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 9.

**Skills and Feats:** Gather Information +2, Intimidate +1, Listen +2, Ride (horse) +1, Sense Motive +2, Spot +3; Alertness, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearms).

**Possessions:** Rapier, pistol, 20 bullets, light war horse.

### Dread Possibility: Helené the Traitor

Unlike all of the other members of the Council, Dominic has *not* made Helené an Obedient. This extraordinary risk is a result of two things: Dominic's growing affection for Helené and his desperation to learn more about a hidden enemy within the city. Keen to discover the truth behind his lurking foe known only as "The Brain" (see the Attached Notes), he has decided to use Helené to infiltrate the underground operation. Previous Obedients he has sent after the Brain have all been discovered and murdered, despite the number of mental protections and blocks he put in place, and so Dominic has concluded that the only solution is to send someone whom he has not turned into an Obedient. Thus, he is trusting Helené with the most crucial investigation of his rule as Dementlieu's darklord.

Ruthlessly ambitious and calculating, Helené is using this situation to her advantage. She has successfully infiltrated the Brain's operation, assisted by her role on the Council in the public services and operations of the government, which allows her to frequent the lower class areas and meet with the Brain's operatives. The Brain has similarly avoided dominating Helené, fearing that Dominic would remove her from her powerful position on the Council. Helené is now playing this situation to her maximum advantage, teasing the two with tidbits of information about the other. She can see the conflict beginning to escalate, and when it does, she will choose the winning side as the one where her real allegiances lie. Helené has never met the Brain and is not aware of its horrific nature.



## Economy

Dementlieu's cultural influence over the surrounding realms is a testament to its strong economy, which keeps the aristocracy living in the manner to which it is accustomed. Only through this strong economy has Dementlieu been able to invest so completely in its own cultural and scientific development. It is somewhat circular, then, to realize that Dementlieu's primary economic asset is its culture. The domain's economy is dependent on the income brought in by wealthy travelers coming to taste Port-a-Lucine's artistic pleasures, bringing with them coin for fashion, food, and any other excesses that present themselves. In addition, the many artists of Dementlieu frequently travel to neighboring domains to "export" their music, theatre, literature, and artworks — and the coins earned serve to grow Dementlieu's wealth significantly.

Fortunately for Dementlieu, such a thriving business of the frivolous exists, for this small domain would struggle to support its own population with food if it could not afford to import grain from the surrounding lands. Limited farming in the east of the realm provides some wheat, oats, and barley, yet ironically Dementlieu depends on its most feared neighbor to generate the bulk of its grain. Some fruit orchards operate close to the major settlements, and near the coast a number of pig farms produce quantities of ham, bacon, and pig's trotters for the Dementlieu dinner table. Fishermen scour the bays along the coast for some of the most delicious shellfish and plaice along the eastern waterfront.

Port-a-Lucine's role as a major port on the Sea of Sorrows has resulted in significant economic gain. The port offers a safe means of transporting goods from the northern lands of Lamordia and Darkon by avoiding treacherous Falkovnian roads, making it the transport mode of choice for almost anyone with a valuable cargo. In addition, Dementlieuse captains have begun exploring the Mistways upon the Sea of Sorrows and are pursuing trade with distant lands I have heard little of, such as Sri Raji and Rokushima Táiyoo. The exotic baubles and curious fashions being brought back by these expeditions fetch very high prices, and not least because several ships setting out on the journey to these lands have never returned.

The business of craft and manufacture in Dementlieu is more focused on efficiency than on craftsmanship or care. In order to maintain its

exorbitant lifestyle, the aristocracy has generally found it necessary to improve significantly the productivity of its businesses. The result is large workhouses (which the aristocracy euphemistically call guild houses) that operate for up to 14 hours a day. The workforce is primarily made up of poorly paid laborers, who are driven to ruthless efficiency by their foremen. Skilled craftsmen oversee the work to ensure that the final product is of a reasonable quality, but obviously such a process results in more flawed products than a skilled artisan would normally produce. These workhouses make a wide variety of common goods: clothing, furniture, linen, barrels, household implements, and even weapons and firearms.

Skilled craftsmen and scientists do exist, however, usually working alone or on commission for the nobility. Significantly advanced as a result of their study at the University of Dementlieu, these artisans appear to be breaking more ground in new applications of their knowledge than in any land I have yet visited within the Core. In years past, the development of the moveable type printing press, the pocket watch, and the most advanced firearms have created significant economic boons. The interest of the nobility in anything new means that these artisans rarely find funding an issue, and they are often left to do their research in relative isolation.

Trade is conducted purely by coin in Dementlieu; anyone suggesting barter is likely to find himself being rudely jeered by the locals. The Lord-Governor orders the minting of coins on a regular basis, with a youthful image of himself on the face; the obverse side has various designs depending on the value. The platinum corona carries Dementlieu's elaborate coat of arms; the gold solar shows a brilliant sunburst, the silver lunar a crescent moon, and the copper bit a constellation observable in the Dementlieu night. Dementlieu coins are noted for the fine detail achieved in the minting process. Given the many travelers that visit Dementlieu from the surrounding countries, foreign coins are commonly welcomed by all merchants.

## Diplomacy

Few realms have impacted their neighbors as significantly Dementlieu. Driven by the Lord-Governor's desire to form strong relationships with nearby leaders and Josephine Chantreaux's capable negotiation and execution, numerous trade



and defense deals have been signed between the civilized western lands. Of particular importance is the Treaty of Four Towers, a plan devised by Chantreaux to formalize a mutual defense pact between the domains of Borca, Richemulot, Mordent, and Dementlieu. Although the alliance appears particularly strong, it has yet to be tested since the signing in 729 BC. I suspect that the very existence of such an arrangement and the greater military technology of muskets and cannons have put Drakov in two minds about attempting yet another invasion of his surrounding realms.

**Falkovnia:** An extremely precarious relationship exists with the tyrant Drakov. Dependent on Falkovnia's farms for food, the people and government of Dementlieu are also terrified of aggression from the east. Many laws have been introduced through Chantreaux's influence to reduce the risk of Falkovnian aggression, such as the ban on export of firearms along the Prey's Road into Falkovnia (despite Drakov's apparent disinterest in such weapons) and the banning of any Falkovnian refugee from entering any public building of Dementlieu. The need for most people to travel through Falkovnia to reach the southern parts of the Core only exacerbates their fears.

**Lamordia:** Lamordia presents somewhat of a frustration to the Dementlieuse, being the only civilized domain in the region that has largely failed to absorb any aspect of Dementlieu culture. Much of the nobility has flippantly attributed this to Lamordians being "boring," failing to recognize that the Lamordian dedication to common sense and science does not lend itself to the rash excesses of their own proclivities. Still, the political relationship between the two is cordial, despite some concern at Baron von Aubrecker's unwillingness to join the mutual defense treaty orchestrated by Chantreaux.

**Mordent:** The citizens of Dementlieu have an almost patronizing view of their sister land to the south: they happily welcome Mordentish people as being of their own, but pity them for their "lack of success" and "backward ways." The Mordentish are frequently riled by this condescension, but a productive diplomatic relationship abides nonetheless. Although Mordent can contribute little military might to the Treaty of Four Towers, Dementlieu feels little resentment given the lack of an actual border between Mordent and Falkovnia.

**Richemulot:** If Mordent is considered to be Dementlieu's dowdy sister, Richemulot is the poor

### Dread Possibility: Chantreaux's Crusade

Josephine Chantreaux's hatred of Vlad Drakov does not stop at the setting up of the Treaty of Four Towers and bans on the export of firearms. Her activities against Falkovnia are far more extensive.

Josephine has been seeking out high-ranking defectors from Vlad Drakov's ranks to supply her with crucial inside information about Drakov's army. One such defector, a high-ranking officer from Silbervas, was smuggled into Port-a-Lucine and now advises Josephine on crucial issues of Falkovnian strategy. He is also the city's executioner, a job that allows him to keep his brand on his forehead hidden behind the black executioner's mask. On at least one occasion, a Falkovnian officer was kidnapped and tortured to learn secrets about the Talons' military tactics.

The Freeman of Falkovnia are a growing group of resistance fighters within Drakov's domain. Josephine has sought out contact with these people, promising to provide funding and weapons to aid their cause. To her frustration, some other foreign benefactor appears to have already struck a deal with this group.

Josephine feels a great deal of pity for Falkovnian refugees that cross the border into Dementlieu, but she is unwilling to allow them to stay in the cities due to the risk of infiltrators providing Drakov with vital information. She has set up a growing community of refugees near the relatively unpopulated northern border with Lamordia, not far from the Heath of Fevered Tears.

Should Drakov discover these activities, Josephine risks triggering a new attack from Falkovnia. She is acutely aware of the risk, but her childhood anguish will not allow her to do any less against the cruel tyrant.

cousin. The Dementlieuse feel some degree of kinship with the Richemuloise due to the similarities in language and culture, but find their fashions



and style hopelessly out of date. When nobles throw out old clothing, they are said to be “donating them to Richemulot.” The political relationship between the realms is strong, however, and all trade and diplomatic discussions are cordial and productive.

**The Sea of Sorrows:** There is little in the way of formal relationships with the scattered islands of the Sea of Sorrows. While many ships transport cargo up and down the coast of the Core, a few have ventured to the islands of Ghastria and Blaustein in an attempt to encourage trade. Dementlieu has attempted twice to settle a colony on the island of Markovia; on both occasions, no trace of the ship or its crew was ever found.

## Sites of Interest



My journey across Dementlieu began with the crossing of the Musarde River while traveling the Prey’s Road from Falkovnia. After a restful stay in Chateaufaux, I journeyed onwards by carriage to Port-a-Lucine, where I spent the bulk of my time during this survey.

## Chateaufaux

The foreign impression of Dementlieu is often, in actuality, an impression of the city of Port-a-Lucine. Chateaufaux, to its credit, has established its very own identity, even if that identity is not well recognized by other lands. Citizens of Chateaufaux are quite proud of this distinctiveness and will take great pains when traveling to indicate that they are not from Port-a-Lucine.

Chateaufaux literally means “false castle,” which is interesting only in that I was unable to discern a castle (false or otherwise) anywhere in the surrounds of the town. Instead, the main feature of the town is the *Boulevard Jardine*, named for the captain that led the Dementlieu forces against Falkovnia in 707 BC. The boulevard is lined with large plane trees for the entire distance, hiding the busy network of maze-like streets that extend to the sides. The center of town is made up of three-story terrace buildings, but further out larger manor houses and estates accommodate the wealthy. The mayor’s offices in the center of town are fronted by a row of marble pillars holding busts of Dementlieu’s previous Lord-Governors. Mayor Harrould Bellamont governs from this building, reputedly with a fair and just hand.

Skilled craftsmen and students of science seem to gravitate toward this town as a preferred place to work. I found that students of science see themselves as woefully under-appreciated among the artistic excesses of the capital, and craftsmen express disdain at the poor quality of Port-a-Lucine’s workhouses. Thus, many move to Chateaufaux, where they can practice their craft away from the nobility. Ironically, this situation creates significant aristocratic interest in the wares of Chateaufaux, generating considerable numbers of visitors seeking to buy furniture or other goods. Of particular note are the respected carriage manufacturers Clerque & Verbois, who operate not half a mile from the center of town.

This concentration of craftsmanship and science has resulted in many of the newest developments in the Core arising in Chateaufaux. Miniature clockworks, allowing the development of the current fashion of pocket-watches, were researched here, and the continuing developments around the moveable type printing press generate impressive new printed material. Some less educated locals are suspicious of these types. An explosion created by one inventor’s experiment burnt down three houses just last year; the damage was so great that it was impossible to tell what the man had been working on. In another case, a small house just out of town has been boarded up for over 10 years, after Jules D’Aubigne found that his new printing press had begun to print disturbing messages of its own devising during the night. This last incident piqued my own curiosity, but a pressing schedule unfortunately kept me from investigating further.

The most curious story about this area, however, surrounds an occurrence just over 15 years ago, when an apparent bout of insanity overcame the entire town. Most locals refuse to speak of it, but others talk of friends turning on one another, the militia imprisoning numerous people for scant reason (many never to be seen again), and several beatings in the streets. These events appear to bear some connection to the Mayor at the time, for the problems resolved themselves upon his death. I have been unable to locate a satisfactory explanation for these events, but I did speak with Dr. Vilhelm Mikki, a noted doctor of mental illness in the area. Dr. Mikki moved to Chateaufaux after these events in order to study the phenomenon and has since found a significant number of residual individual cases of madness among the population.







Unfortunately, he has yet to discern the nature or the cause of the regular incidence of insanity among the locals.

### **Dread Possibility: Something in the Water**

During the Grand Conjunction, two baatezu fiends entered Ravenloft and set about corrupting the town of Chateaufaux. They took the places of Mayor Henri Melano and the Captain of the *gendarmes* and poisoned the town's water supply with a powerful hallucinogen derived from a hamatula. Although their evil plan was soon thwarted and the fiends destroyed, remnants of the powerful fiendish poison linger in the water supply used by everyone in the town. Any character residing in Chateaufaux for at least three months in any twelve-month period faces a 1% chance of requiring a Madness save (DC 14). This taint has driven many locals insane, many of them cared for at the sanitarium of Dr. Vilhelm Mikki (although the number of sufferers has meant that some patients needed to be sent to neighboring domains for treatment). Others still live among the community, unaware that they are suffering from an illness.

The frequency of insanity has not gone unnoticed by locals in Chateaufaux, but for obvious reasons they will never bring up the topic with visitors. A small number of residents have grown deeply suspicious of Dr. Mikki, noting that his arrival appears to coincide with the increased incidence of madness. If they manage to organize enough support, one of the Core's premiere institutions for the study of mental illness may be under threat.

### **Where to stay in Chateaufaux**

The large number of travelers coming through this town on the way to Port-a-Lucine means that numerous inns can be found along Boulevard Jardine and in the surrounding streets. Given the clientele, most are of at least passable quality. For an economical but comfortable night's rest, The Laughing Pig (common quality rooms, common quality food)

will suit nicely, if you can stomach the manageress' interminable stories about Rudolph van Richten's apparent visit to the inn many years ago. Of the more expensive options, The Silver Coach-House (good quality rooms, good quality food) offers the most spacious rooms and will provide coach transport to Port-a-Lucine for a fee.

**Chateaufaux (small town):** Conventional; AL LN; 800 gp limit; Assets 56,000 gp; Population 1,400; Isolated (humans 97%, halflings 2%, other 1%).

**Authority Figures:** Mayor Harrould Bellamont, male human Ari3; Captain René Thoubold (captain of the *gendarme*) male human War5.

**Important Characters:** Dr. Vilhelm Mikki (alienist), male human Exp8; Marcel Bodine (inventor), male human Exp5.

### **Port-a-Lucine**

After a speedy carriage ride (the comfort of which was much appreciated after my sojourn in Falkovnia), I arrived in the heart of Dementlieu. Port-a-Lucine as a whole looks to be of great age, but many of the individual structures within exude modernity. Built on the side of a gentle hill that slopes down to the edge of Parnault Bay, Port-a-Lucine is walled. In the center, at the highest point of the city, stands Ste. Mere des Larmes, around which a number of distinct districts are arranged.

To the northeast lie the Quartier Marchand (Merchant's Quarter), which houses many of the places of business, and the salacious port district, which is most certainly unsafe for women. By day, the docks are an extraordinarily busy area, bustling with carts attempting to transport goods through the narrow streets of the city. At night, the area becomes almost deserted, except for ruffians and the occasional drunken sailor. The road that runs alongside the bay is known as the Widow's Walk — some say this is because of the number of murders that occur late at night in this area, but others claim that the name is for the frequency of suicides from people jumping into the bay. Just to the south of this area, large buildings house the workshops where much of the poor population earns its meager keep.

To the southeast, the squalid Quartier Ouvrier (Worker's Quarter) is a mess of ramshackle, multi-



story wooden buildings packed with multitudes of the poor. The magnanimous Dementlieuse belief that they provide for their poor would be sorely tested if any of the wealthy ever had to visit or live in this area. Buildings are constructed at the absolute minimum cost and maximum capacity, and they occasionally collapse. Infrequent government food providers and small hospices of Hala are scattered throughout the quarter. In contrast, the opulent aristocratic residences in the southwest cover three times as much area as the tenements, yet house only a third of the population.

The Quartier Savant (Noble Quarter) contains elegant three- to four-story terraces, all perfectly maintained, with parks filled with floral gardens providing the occasional respite from the narrow streets. In the wealthiest area, alongside the Government Quarter, large houses crowd for space next to each other. Numerous expensive shops operate in this district, catering for all tastes of fashion, food, and jewelry.

The most impressive area of the city is the Quartier Publique (or Government Quarter), which surrounds the wide Rue du Soleil, leading from Ste. Mere des Larnes down to the Place de Léon in

front of the Ruling Palace by the bay. When one considers the small population of this city, the sheer enormity and number of elaborate buildings of the arts and government are quite a mystery. True ownership of these public buildings always lies with the Lord-Governor, but the Council of Brilliance grants operational rights to members of the nobility. The terms of such appointments are not specified, and changes are frequently made at the whim of the Council.

The most impressive of these buildings is the *Grand Opera Nationale*, or simply the Port-a-Lucine Opera House. Four large pillars dominate the façade, each topped with a gold-leaf statue representing one of the arts presented therein — singing, music, dance, and drama. Elaborate sculptures of cherubs, musical instruments, and costumes adorn the parapet, which is dominated by the large green dome that rises above the building. Within, one can see that no expense was spared. After the grand marble staircase in the foyer, one enters the actual theatre to find soft, red, velvet-covered seats, gold sculptures alongside the stage, and a crystal chandelier larger than most carriages. I found myself feeling quite unsafe sitting underneath it, having heard





stories of the chandelier falling into the audience some five years ago. A plethora of superstitions and rumors exist about the opera house; some say that the building has been haunted since the day it was constructed, while others say that a curse placed upon the theatre by an angry Vistana will result in every performer's life ending in tragedy. More believable rumors exist of a network of underground catacombs beneath the opera house, although the owner, Ricardo Diosa, denies this suggestion. The nobility loves to gossip about the possible supernatural aspects of the House. It does not stop them attending in droves to see stunning performers such as Maria Diosa (Ricardo's daughter), Alice Buckham-Smythe (a young Mordentish girl who has impressed this season with her strong voice), and Jerome Cencou (a baritone who has captured the hearts of many foolish young women of the city).

Other large civic constructions include the *Musée du Port-a-Lucine* (an art gallery featuring Dementlieu artists and works acquired from Borca, Mordent, Darkon, and even distant realms such as Kartakass and Nova Vaasa), the *Théâtre de la Baie* (an open amphitheatre hosting all manner of drama), and the *Grande Bibliothèque* (the Great Library, a massive structure housing a copy of every published work of Dementlieu and many foreign tomes as well). Smaller venues and attractions include the *Voix de l'Âme* (Voice of the Soul, an intimate venue for poetry readings), the *Maison de Cire* (a museum of lifelike wax recreations of notable public figures), and the curious *Puits d'Orchestre*. At this last venue, attendees sit around a 30-foot pit, with a chamber orchestra playing at the bottom. The acoustics are almost haunting, and the identities of the conductor and musicians have never been revealed. Amid the proliferation of performance spaces, one can also find any number of restaurants, fashion houses, private art galleries, and bookshops.

Not half a mile from the city, the University of Dementlieu sprawls haphazardly along the shore of Parnault Bay. This well respected seat of learning attracts students from all over the Core. Faculties of Arcane Science, History, Military Studies, Divinities, Medicine, Physical Sciences, and more find funding in the expensive fees levied against students and from the limited philanthropy of the nobility.

## Where to stay in Port-a-Lucine

Paying for accommodation is not so much a matter of the quality of a bed, the size of a room, or the size of the breakfast; instead, it is a matter of where one is seen to be staying. The most exclusive place to stay in Port-a-Lucine is the Governor's Hôtel (good quality rooms), if you can afford the extraordinary cost of the plush, elegantly furnished rooms with four-poster beds. Those wishing to dabble in society, but with fewer delusions of self-worth, will choose the Auberge de la Première (good quality rooms) or the Manor Retreat (good quality rooms). Eating where one stays is not considered appropriate (lest one fail to enjoy the social life), so travelers often seek out one of the many popular eating-places, such as Chez Léon or The Golden Fig (both good quality food). Dinner can be a lengthy affair at these places.

In the Quartier Marchand and poor areas of the city, more reasonably priced lodgings can be found, although the level of risk increases significantly. A number of respectable merchant families gather at the Broken Spire Inn (common quality rooms, good quality food), where games of Jeu Force (a game played using round markers on a board marked off in squares, twelve to a side) are played late into the night. The Mutinied Sailor (poor quality rooms, poor quality meals) is a disreputable location not far from the docks, where almost any vice can be assuaged for only a small amount of coin.

**Port-a-Lucine (small city):** Nonstandard; ALLN; 15,000 gp limit; Assets 4,050,000 gp; Population 5,400; Isolated (humans 95%, halflings 3%, other 2%).

**Authority Figures:** Lord-Governor Marcel Guignol, male human Ari5; Dominic d'Honaire, male human Ari10.

**Important Characters:** The Living Brain, disembodied brain Psi9; Alanik Ray (the Great Detective), male elf Rog10; Maria Diosa (diva), female human Ari3; Bastion Joan Secousse, female human Clr6/Anm8. (For more information on the Anchorite of the Mists prestige class, see Van Richten's Arsenal.)





## Domaines de la Vie Éclairée

During my stay in Port-a-Lucine, I made several journeys to Sable Bay to visit the Domaines de la Vie Éclairée (or Estates of the Enlightened Life). For several miles along the edge of the bay, the wealthiest members of the aristocracy maintain large houses and gardens on extensive pieces of property.

The central focus of each estate is usually a large mansion, two to three stories high and in a similar architectural style to the terraces of Port-a-Lucine. The interiors of these mansions are shrines to excess and opulence, with ceilings painted by famous Dementlieu artists, gold-gilt cornices, sumptuous leather chairs, the finest silver service, and dazzling chandeliers. Most mansions also have a sizeable ballroom in which to hold functions.

Each family's approach to the surrounding land is quite different. Some simple estates just have large oak trees, providing comfortable shade for summer garden parties, while others create intricate garden beds that explode in color during spring and summer. Formal gardens, with a symmetric structure focused around constructed ponds or fountains, are currently in vogue. Large 10-foot iron fences surround every property so that no unsavory characters obtain entrance.

The most notable of the estates is that of the d'Honaire family. Their mansion consists of two wings, one of which is used by the Chief Advisor to the Lord-Governor, while the other is used by his extended family. In between them, a large foyer and ballroom provide the location for many functions organized by the Lord-Governor. Several mirrors make the rooms feel much larger than they

actually are, but at the same time give a sensation of being constantly watched from all angles. Behind the mansion, a large hedge maze (which I found to be a most frustrating entertainment) sprawls between the house and Sable Bay; nobles jokingly suggest that one could lose days in its twists and turns.

## Parting Thoughts



I can see that there is great political uncertainty within Dementlieu. The Lord-Governor appears to be effectively powerless, with my suspicions turning to the enigmatic Dominic d'Honaire as the true seat of power in this land. Although he (or at least *someone*) obviously has a strong hold on the minds of Dementlieu's people, a number of factors suggest that unrest will continue to grow. The lower classes are becoming increasingly unsettled, the nobility is already maneuvering to ensure a favored candidate is the next Lord-Governor, tensions with Falkovnia continue to grow, and the mysterious "Brain" is working to some unknown agenda. This web of deception will begin to fray and break soon enough.

The potential impact of an unstable Dementlieu on the Core could be significant. With its cultural and scientific heart in chaos, who can tell what might happen in surrounding lands? Of course, such turmoil would also make it a prime target for any other neighbors keen to take control.

With significant relief, I now cross the border to the rural land of Mordent, where I can leave behind the pretenses and facades of social life in Dementlieu.





# Report Two: Niordent

*There are some trees, Watson, which grow to a certain height and then suddenly develop some unsightly eccentricity. You will see it often in humans. I have a theory that the individual represents in his development the whole procession of his ancestors, and that such a sudden turn to good or evil stands for some strong influence which came into the line of his pedigree. The person becomes, as it were, the epitome of the history of his own family.*

—Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Adventure of the Empty House*



pon first treading foot in Mordent, I quickly realized that it is most likely the land with the deepest natural connection to the Mists outside of Barovia itself. Indeed, once the moon has risen and the night is late, determining where the night mists end and the Mists begin is often difficult in this desolate land. More than once I have begun a journey outside of one quaint hamlet, only to find myself many leagues away after passing through a bank of dense fog. Indeed, sometimes I think that only the prevalence of the faith of Ezra and the priests' uncanny tie to the Mists makes this land at all traversable.

*How odd! And how potentially useful, if true*

Another truth I learned early in my travels through Mordent was that precious few maps of the land are available. Rather, one finds one's way through the land by following the lonely trail of abandoned manor houses and ruined cemeteries that litter the countryside, each a silently decaying testament to the lost noble families that once held sway but now have passed into history. The local populations keep track of these morbid landmarks and their histories obsessively, frequently using them to measure both time and distance — a practice that can leave foreigners quite confounded until they brush up on local history.

For example, asking directions for the next closest town, one may be directed to "Head on past the old Whitby estate and then turn south for two days," on the assumption that everyone should know where to find that particular landmark. Or a curious visitor might be told "About the time the last of the cursed Valmont family was laid to rest" in response to an inquiry about when a ghastly murder took place, with the locals considering this more than enough information to answer the question.

Perhaps this practice is the only way to keep track of these qualities in such a cloudy, Mist-shrouded land as this. Be that as it may, travelers are advised to be very attentive when asking for directions of any kind and to do as much of their own research as possible about the area through which they intend to travel. Having provided that caveat, I shall now do my best to describe the terrain and other salient features of this land.

## Mordent at a Glance

**Cultural Level:** Renaissance (9)

**Ecology:** Full

**Climate/Terrain:** Temperate forest, marsh, and plains

**Year of Formation:** 579 BC

**Population:** 5,500

**Races:** Human 99%, Other 1%

**Human Ethnic Groups:** Mordentish 93%, Dementlieuse 3%, Richemuloise 2%, Borcan 1%, Other 1%

**Languages:** Mordentish\*, Falkovnian, Vaasi

**Religions:** Ezra\*, Hala

**Government:** Hereditary aristocracy

**Ruler:** Lord Jules Weathermay

**Darklord:** Lord Wilfred Godefroy

## Landscape



According to native sources, Mordent is broken down by the natives into several rough regions, although these distinctions can be difficult for foreigners to distinguish given the lack of many of the more traditional and recognizable landmarks used to indicate such boundaries in other realms. Still, certain distinctions are acknowledged within the land. Among these areas are the Forest of the Ancients, the immense forest that borders Dementlieu to the north, and the Great Moor, a treacherous boggy marsh to the north of Mordentshire between it and the Forest of the Ancients. Mordentshire proper covers Arden Bay, the town and its environs, and coastal Mordent, along the great chalk cliffs. There is the Lightless Wood, as the forests and swampland of southeastern Mordent are known, and the Gray Heath, which comprises the large inland moor between the Lightless Wood and the Arden River. Lastly, the land that falls between the fork of the Arden River on the border of Richemulot, Verbrek, and Valacha is called the Vale of Silence.



Upon crossing the border from Dementlieu in the north, one is almost immediately immersed in a vast, silent evergreen forest. A tiny hamlet by the somewhat ominous name of Hope's End stands at the edge of the trees, as if afraid to go nearer than absolutely necessary — an apt assessment, I discovered, since that is precisely the attitude of the local population. They refer to the woods as the Forest of the Ancients, a name that sounds like the most absurd hyperbole until one catches a glimpse of the towering evergreen trees that give the forest its name. Local legend claims that the de Boistribue family manor, a magnificent three-story affair of stone and massive timbers, can still be seen through the trees on nights when the moon is high, but I saw no evidence of this estate on my travels. There are tales that the manor itself stalks through the forest like a hunting animal, never appearing in the same place from night to night, and that those unfortunate enough to be caught in its path are never seen again.

I should note, however, that occasionally I spotted what appeared to be evidence of what were once other settlements in the woods, such as rotting building frames and even a faded sign post so worn with time and weather as to be unreadable. When I brought these items to the attention of the innkeeper at the nameless little tavern I stayed at upon emerging from the forest, however, he ignored me until I finally persuaded him to quiet me and answered, "No lord ever takes kindly to squatters, not ever." What that means, I cannot say for certain, but it sent a chill through me just the same, and I assume it is also the reason the woods — possibly the largest single area of the entire realm — remain largely untouched by human hands.

South of the forest, just before reaching the Arden River, the gloomy woods give way to a vast expanse of low-lying bog and marshlands where travel slows at best to a crawl and at worst vanishes into deep pools of mud and brackish water. Were it not for the existence of Mill Road, some parts would quite possibly be nigh inaccessible. Known as the Great Moor for reasons that make themselves abundantly obvious to travelers within hours, a perpetual fog seems to cling to these lands, lending the land a moist chill even during the heat of the day. According to local residents, the marsh has been expanding steadily for the past century or so, when it at last stopped not that far away from Mordentshire. Local legend places the blame for this unsettling expansion on a curse placed on the

vanished Wescote family, but if that is the case, then either the curse has been lifted or it lies dormant, awaiting a new victim to ensnare in its misery. Perhaps as a reaction to the uncertainty of its future, little effort seems to have been made to tame these desolate lands, save for the occasional farmstead or lonely tavern whose lights form small islands in the mists.

As Mordentshire and its environs are covered in more detail later in this manuscript, I shall not speak of them at this time, but rather move on to the coastal area. Mordent's coastline is composed of massive chalk cliffs, which are interrupted only by the mouth of Arden Bay. According to the sailors working the docks in Mordentshire, the two stretches of cliffs are named the Pale Lady (to the north) and the Ashen Man (to the south), in accordance with an old legend that also is covered in more detail below. I should like to point out, however, that when one reaches Mordentshire itself, the promontories that jut out over the bay have different names entirely. Mostly sailors or the hardy souls who live in the wind-battered thorps that dot the coastline use the two other names. Still, they serve to help differentiate which area of the coast one is from, aiding immensely in locating the general whereabouts of the often-anonymous shantytowns.

Turning south of Mordentshire and Arden Bay and heading inland from the dizzying heights of the Ashen Man, one encounters the Lightless Wood, another stretch of dense, unusually quiet forest. Unlike its neighbor to the north, the woods here are lean, almost stunted, with none of the grand old trees that mark the Forest of the Ancients. Yet do not be deceived as I was into thinking that the fog will be less or the light more — quite the contrary, in fact. A thick canopy forms not far into the forest, trapping the ever-present mist and blocking out all heat save from the harshest midday sun and keeping the trails dim and difficult to follow even under the best conditions. Constant vigilance is essential to traverse this labyrinthine forest, no less because my guide was only able to recall two small hamlets within. The more respectable of the two can be found near the northwestern border of the wood, not far inland from the bay, and is noted for its excellent provisions as well as a fair number of local gentry who have retired for a "country life." The other, the ramshackle village of Tumbledown, is described later.





Traveling through the Lightless Wood is exceedingly damp as well, a feeling that only worsens as one proceeds farther inland; little surprise, since the forest eventually emerges onto a wide plain of muddy heath and swampland. I understand that the locals refer to this region as the Gray Heathlands, or simply the Gray Heath. If it bears another, grander title, I have yet to encounter it. After watching mile after mile of empty marsh, windswept moor, and the occasional lonely farmland pass by the carriage window, I can understand the lack of enthusiasm for lending this place a name. Imagine my surprise, then, when I discovered that this desolate place houses many of the realm's more active farms. What I supposed were a few isolated and struggling hamlets are in fact a good portion of the land's food supply. I must commend the Mordentish people for bringing forth anything of sustenance from these blasted fields, let alone the kind of yields that were described to me. Truly, it is a miracle of diligence and perseverance — not the least because of the eerie noises carried on the wind and the strange tracks that often appear outside of an encampment during the night. While I took

comfort in the assurance that the legendary fenhounds of the Mists did not threaten those of good heart, such comfort seemed small protection indeed with the ominous howls that frequently sounded across the windy moors at night.

At last reaching the eastern border across the Arden River, one comes to the aptly named Vale of Twilight, a lonely stretch of foggy heath and murky forest even by the standards of this windswept realm. While a number of small towns and a fair count of sizable farms can be found in this area, its most salient feature is the graveyards. To hear the local folk tell it, more graveyards are in this area alone than in the rest of the realm put together, a contention that is difficult to dispute when one passes the multitude that litter the region. Nearly all of them are deserted now, having once been tended by the vanished Mournsworth family. It is a frightening journey indeed, most particularly at night, when the fog settles on the ground and all that is visible are the crypts and monuments, standing like islands in the sea of mist. Despite the proximity to the border, or perhaps because of it,







the natives here are even more taciturn and suspicious than those encountered elsewhere in the realm. They barely take the time to point the overly curious in the direction of the town of Blackburn's Crossing before returning to their work with dark eyes and disapproving glances. The huge expanses of funerary ground next to meager farms and unfriendly towns are deeply unsettling as well.

As for waterways, Mordent's primary artery is the Arden River. At first a welcome relief from the unnerving quiet of the trees or the dull expanses of the moors, I soon realized that the equally hushed waters of the Arden were little more comforting. Gray and featureless by appearance, the river almost appears as a pane of darkened glass until one realizes that it is in fact moving extremely quickly, as if becoming ever more eager to rejoin the sea. The water is very cold and surprisingly deep, allowing for a number of ferry crossings along its length as it winds toward the ocean. A small but steady number of traders make their living working the

river, transporting goods south to Richemulot and Valachan. Traveling further down the river, one soon finds the forest giving way on either side to lowland moors as the Arden widens bit by bit on its way to rejoin the Sea of Sorrows at Arden Bay.

Most notable of the ferry crossings is Smythe's Shadow, so named for the wizened ferryman that runs it, who lives in a tiny shanty house at the base of an old hanging tree at the edge of a ruined town. River legend cautions against attempting any ferry crossing after dark, however, especially when the fog is deep. Many tales speak of travelers who stepped onto a mist-shrouded ferry only to find the ferryman to be little more than bones and their ferry headed for someplace terrible indeed.

A conversation with Smythe revealed that his post was once the town of Steadwall, which was owned by the vanished Halloway family until a series of mysterious events that occurred well over a quarter century ago. Their decrepit manor still sits on a hill overlooking the crossing, flanked by

### **Dread Possibility: Smythe's Secret**

Smythe the Ferryman knows only too well what happened to the town of Steadwall. He was the one who caused the tragedy that brought about its untimely demise. Ferrying Lord Halloway's young son and his bride back to town late one night, he was overcome by greed and decided to murder the young couple for the riches they carried. Yet no sooner had he slain them, than he looked up and saw that one of the dreaded Mist Ferrymen had paddled silently up to his craft, drawn by the violent bloodshed in the mists. Desperate to save his own life, Smythe bargained frantically with the creature. Intrigued by his offer, the foul creature spared him. The pact struck between the two was deceptively simple: in return for guiding victims into the ferryman's waiting talons, Smythe would receive all the riches of Halloway House, at which time he would be released from his terrible service.

Smythe obliged, carefully arranging things over a span of time to avoid suspicion. A sinister reputation grew and people began to desert the "haunted" village, but Smythe never wavered, dreaming of the day its riches would be his. So fixated was he on his prize, even rumors that the unquiet dead of Steadwall and the Halloway family haunted the house did not deter him.

He did not realize that the ferryman's pact had bound him to the ferry crossing itself, rendering him unable to retrieve the riches he craved on his own — a fact that he discovered to his bitter surprise after carrying out the murders of the last members of the Halloway line. Bound to the river, he still brings victims for the ferryman, but now he also tries to lure adventurers into recovering the riches of Halloway House, then murders them and steals their treasure when they return weakened by the traps and creatures they have battled. So far, he has slain a number of groups this way, but since he is still bound to his crossing, he realizes there must still be treasure to be found. Only then will he be freed, though in his heart he suspects his reward may well be to become like his tormentor and ply the Mists forever. He thus both fears and craves the day he will finally find out, but has resigned himself to fate and in the meantime cultivates the image of a kindly old man with an enticing tale to tell....





woods on either side, with the scattered remains of the rest of the town arrayed on the hill's slope as if slowly sliding into the river in their decay. Once, Steadwall was a bustling trading port, one of the last stops before Arden Bay, but now it lies quiet, the lone ferryman its only inhabitant. According to Smythe, occasionally groups of adventurers will seek out his crossing in search of the fabled wealth supposedly still locked away up in Halloway House, but none have ever returned successful. He has not gone farther into town than his tree in many years and has no desire to.

Arden Bay at first appears to be much the same as its artery, a solemn gray slate with only a small sprinkling of whitecaps to show that tidal forces are at work. High white chalk promontories — Weathermay Point to the south, Keeldevil Point to the north — rise to either side, forming a small natural cove for the bulk of Mordentshire in which to shelter. As such, it has also earned a reputation as a stable and reliable trading port, though foreigners are often puzzled why the majority of the buildings around the bay are built either halfway up

the cliff or a fair distance inland. Natives know better, though, because when roused by a sizable storm (as happens at least once or twice each winter and sometimes in the summer as well), the bay takes on an entirely different appearance. Waves of startling size and power rise like tiny mountains from the gray waters to slam into ships and shore alike.

Some sailors claim that not only the weather is responsible for these sudden surges, but a great serpent that dwells at the bottom of the bay. Each great storm awakens the beast, or so they say, and the movements of its tremendous body are what cause the waves to rise up and disappear with such violent suddenness. Of course, sailor's tales being what they are, I feel it is equally likely that the violent waves are simply the product of the steep cliffs interacting with the increased tidal activity, but then I have never witnessed the bay at its worst. Judging by how the local population has used brick levees and natural wave breaks to elevate the waterfront, I would say that whatever the cause may be, the Mordentish are very cautious when it comes to the bay.





Although saturated with fog and perpetually beset by storms, this land offers surprisingly little other standing water, unless one counts the bogs, at which point the amount soars too high to count. Although this may seem preposterous to those who sail along the high chalk cliffs on their way to enter Arden Bay, many of Mordent's boggy lowlands actually lie below sea level. These bogs remain saturated year round, even through the warmest summer months (which are scarcely warm enough, as even those times do not cause the Mordentish to doff their long sleeves for any real length of time, nor to abandon their heavy coats at night virtually year-round). I encountered a countless array of small ponds and creeks as I traveled the lowland areas. These areas may just as likely vanish one rather dry year only to reappear later with the return of more humid weather, and thus any names they are given are transitory at best and limited to the memory of the local population in either event.

The most deplorable aspect about all of Mordent is the condition of its roads — or rather, the lack thereof. One road of any note leads from the Forest of the Ancients to Mordentshire: Mill Road, which seems a rather humble thing of mud and stone until one realizes that nearly all the other roads in the domain are little better than grass-covered wagon ruts. Considering this is the main artery of overland commerce to such a valued trading partner as Dementlieu, I would have thought the Mordentish might create a finer avenue. Then again, considering the terrain they are forced to contend with, perhaps Mill Road is indeed the best they can manage. Thus, the Mordentish nobles who travel to Dementlieu to catch up on the latest fashions and other fineries and the Dementlieuse merchants who come south for the excellent wool and fresh seafood available in Mordentshire are forced to share the bumpy, uneven road. There is something humorous to be found in the idea of fishmongers and aristocrats being trapped in the same sort of space, but I shall leave any such jests to the reader's imagination.

The only other road of any note is the South Road, which lies across the Arden River from Mordentshire moving through the Gray Heath all the way down to the border with Valachan. Most of the traffic on this road seems to be agricultural in nature, as the Gray Heath supplies most of the food for Mordent's largest settlement, although a fair amount of traders from Valachan can be found on it as well. Or perhaps I should say Mordentish

traders with Valachani wares, as most Mordentish folk consider the Valachani people somewhat savage and keep them at arm's length whenever possible, using a system of middlemen to hold the actual number of Valachani who cross the border to an absolute minimum. Oddly enough, South Road is in stretches smoother than the ostensibly more important Mill Road, perhaps owing to the fact that while it is built more on marshland than its cousin to the north, it is also built on more level ground, which contributes greatly to a pleasurable ride. A terrible shame, then, that all it does is pass through endless expanses of moor and marsh.

Another quality noted about the landscape is what the natives have placed upon it, which is often the only relief for the eyes on such aforementioned long journeys. Owing to a general lack of available stones suitable in size for the purpose, most Mordentish folk live in houses constructed entirely of wood. They fill the chinks with putty made from the readily available mud of the moors and thatch their roofs with insulating layers of earth, timbers, and even peat moss. Likewise, metal is used sparingly during construction, due to its relative scarcity in local markets. Mordentish folk used wooden pegs and other ingenious means to attach pieces and lock structures into place. A chimney is essential for the hearth needed to battle the cold climate, but it is usually the most expensive part of the building since adequate stones must be scavenged, quarried, or purchased from afar. For this reason, one can often tell the general prosperity of a Mordentish home by the prominence and size of the hearth. The inside of Mordentish houses is thus often quite dark and somewhat musty, lit mostly by the fire of the hearth or candles carried by hand; even the large fires of the local tavern often serve only to create darker areas of shadow in the corners.

Mordentish nobles generally live in wooden houses as well, but as a rule have shingled or tiled roofs instead of thatched ones. They can afford to incorporate a certain amount of extra stone- or metalwork into their estates as well — a high iron gate, a low stone wall, iron balconies, and so forth. These houses generally stand at the edge of a given town, whereas the dwellings of the common folk are clustered together around a small, earthen town square, often centralized at the local church and tavern when those structures are present. This distance denotes distinction, requiring one's associates to make a point to come and see their





wealthier friends. As well, it ensures that the nobles are never seen in town looking anything but excellent, since they may choose when they wish to interact with the regular townsfolk and the impression they wish to create while doing so. Of course, I have noted that even the most proud of the aristocrats seldom make their home *too* far from town, perhaps out of fear of falling prey to whatever did away with the last group who settled there.

Most notable of all the additions to the landscape, however, are the many magnificent and crumbling manor houses I encountered on my travels. Indeed, many thorps and villages are situated at the base of a forgotten, decaying manor house or its estate, the once beautiful lawn choked with weeds, the statuary cracked and broken, the windows dark and glaring. According to local legend, many of these houses still contain much of the finery they did when they were first abandoned, if one were brave enough to take a close look. Yet these houses remain untouched not only out of respect for the dead, but for fear of them as well. Curiously enough, many are built with a great deal of stone, iron, intricate woodwork, and other flourishes not found in abundance even among the wealthier residences built in modern times (not to mention flourishes such as carved gargoyles and the like). Such elements only add to the houses' unusual and somewhat disturbing appearance after seeing so many other residences built in a different fashion.

At first, I attempted to keep count of how many of these forgotten estates I saw, as well as some of the towns that still struggle on in their shadows, but I quickly lost track. Nearly every place I came across apparently had one such ruin not far away, each with a story sad and tragic in the telling. Perhaps one day I shall return to chronicle the many tales of these crumbling manors, but such a task could take decades, and for now I must move on.

## flora

Although first-time visitors may swear otherwise when they see the vast expanses of the moors, there really is a fairly diverse array of flora to be found in Mordent, though seeking it out does perhaps take some diligence. True enough, on the moors there is little in the way of flora, save for the occasional lonely tree that finds a patch of more nourishing earth to support it. Yet the farms of the

Mordentish testify to the fact that even the moors can be coaxed into providing basic essentials such as wheat or barley if the laborer is persistent enough. Willow trees are also quite common where the moors run along the Arden River, sometimes alone or in a few cases in ancient groves that border either side of the river like silent honor guards.

The true diversity of plant life to be found in Mordent, however, is located within the forests that interrupt the seemingly endless stretches of heath. The Forest of the Ancients in the north is an excellent example, a forest of striking evergreens that nonetheless shelters a number of smaller plants and shrubs, most particularly a species of berry-producing shrub known as Devil's Tears. This small shrub is famous for the dark red berries it bears, which when consumed produce an exceedingly hot sensation as well as a rush of very sweet flavor and are thus sometimes used to spice dishes, especially desserts. It is also considered high comedy by Mordentish youth to squeeze one or more of these berries into an unsuspecting person's food or drink when she is unaware, then watch the results when the poor soul realizes her meal is now considerably spicier than it used to be. I did not see the humor in it, myself.

To find the natural home of the most famous of all Mordentish flora, however, one must travel to the forest-swamp known as the Lightless Wood. Although larger hardwoods can be found farther from the heart of the marshes, as one travels into the swamp the vegetation becomes increasingly stunted yet closer-knit, until it forms a low-hanging but nearly impenetrable canopy of small trees, hanging vines, and shrubbery. Wraithroot becomes evident in this area, growing wild in the marshlands. The tiny white flower glows faintly in the moonlight and is a natural trail marker in the grim depths of the swamp. Wraithroot has since been transplanted to other areas of the domain where it thrives, especially in areas of high decay similar to its home in the bog, such as graveyards. The flower is also notable as one of the only plants Mordentish folk trust near a cemetery: legends of horrifying flora that has become possessed with the spirits of the dead or that has fed from corpses are common cautionary tales in this domain, and all Mordentish folk know better than to approach a tree that grows in a cemetery or the weeds that spring up around haunted houses....





## A Nice Cup of Wraithroot Tea

**Wraithroot:** This small bone white flower is commonly used to mark paths in cemeteries. Its pale blossoms catch moonlight exceptionally well, making it easy to see even at night, so long as some little light is available. Enterprising individuals sometimes mark other paths with wraithroot as well, though local superstition holds that one should never mark a path all the way to one's door with this flower, lest wandering spirits take it as an invitation to visit. Characters attempting to find a trail of wraithroot flowers at night receive a +1 circumstance bonus to all relevant Search, Spot, and Wilderness Lore checks.

What even many natives do not know, however, is that if wraithroot is grown and harvested just right, it yields a tea that allows those who imbibe it temporarily to see into the Near Ethereal — a frightening sight indeed in haunted Mordent. Only cemetery wraithroot that has seen one Nocturne pass and that has been harvested during the new moon is suitable for this purpose. Once those requirements are met, preparing the tea properly requires only a successful Profession (herbalist) check (DC 18). Those who imbibe prepared wraithroot tea gain the Ghostsight feat for 1d4+1 hours per every 3 points the herbalist succeeded on the skill check, to a maximum of the next dawn or dusk, whichever is nearer. Those who already possess the Ghostsight feat receive a +2 competence bonus to all relevant checks regarding detecting ethereal creatures. Certain hunters of the supernatural highly prize prepared wraithroot for its aid in tracking down spirits.

This contact is not without a price, however, and certainly is not for the faint of heart. Those who imbibe the tea must make a Will save (DC 15) or suffer a -2 penalty to any checks requiring concentration or careful attention for the next two days, as the dead of the ground from which the wraithroot was taken whisper in the imbiber's ear at inopportune times. Anyone who spends more than 4 hours at a time under the influence of wraithroot tea must also make a Madness save (DC 20) or suffer from Paranoia (see Madness effects in the **Ravenloft Campaign Setting**). Failure causes the imbiber to believe the dead are stalking her at every turn and to perceive friends and associates as malevolent spirits of some kind. This Paranoia passes after two sunrises, during which time further doses of wraithroot only serve to exacerbate the illness (-1 penalty to associated Will saves for each extra hour).

## fauna

Mordent's natural wildlife is rare indeed. Few creatures care to dwell permanently in the moors, where they are constantly exposed to the wind and the elements, and the coastal cliffs are home to little other than seagulls. That leaves the forests and marshes of the land to account for most of the wildlife, but even they have a rather paltry array compared to the more lush lands neighboring them on most sides. There are a certain number of deer, foxes, and even some wild boars that provide a meager supply of meat and skins to those few who hunt for a living, but these animals are generally limited to the forests of the north. Wolves can be found in relative abundance, but most Mordentish folk avoid hunting wolves whenever possible, believing that bad luck will haunt your footsteps until the last of the pack is dead. Perhaps the distant howling of wolves is a common sound in the land because of this tradition.

The wildlife Mordent does have in rather alarming numbers is creatures related to the Mists, which naturally seem to find this land very hospitable to their unique natures. Legends abound of Mist ferrymen who steal away unwitting or unscrupulous passengers, and fenhounds that stalk the foggy moors nightly seeking offenders who have yet to pay for their crimes. Tales speak of portions of the Mists themselves seeming to come to life — which I believe may actually be elementals at work — and striking down the prideful and the unrepentant when they thought themselves safe. I suppose such notions are only natural, given the amount of time the Mordentish folk find themselves immersed in the disorienting calm of the fog, but they do little to stave off a chill at the thought of traveling through that immense silent barrier, particularly at night.

Indeed, Mordent seems to be a natural gathering-place for all things incorporeal, as the only type





of tales more common than stories of the dangers in the mists are those of ghosts and hauntings, for which the land is justly famous. While the Mordentish make few distinctions, calling just about every restless spirit a ghost, those knowledgeable in such matters can discern evidence of not only ghosts but also spectres, odems, animators, bastelli, geists, rushlights, bowlyn, remnants, corpse candles, and all manner of other, stranger spirit creatures in these folktales.

Surprisingly enough, however, during my travels I found the area to be relatively free of lingering presences, particularly as one draws closer to Mordentshire. Perhaps the many superstitions the Mordentish observe regarding the Other Side actually succeed in deflecting attention from these restless spirits, or maybe their habit of taking great care to avoid people and places who might be haunted has more to do with it. In either case, despite what they may believe, the actual number of Mordentish folk who encounter a restless spirit firsthand seems rather low, but the fear and horror such meetings engender linger on in the community long after the encounter has faded into memory. I am not arguing that the Mordentish feeling of being surrounded by spirits is entirely unfounded; indeed, I did encounter a higher number of signs of spirit activity as I proceeded throughout the land than anywhere else I have ever traveled. It is simply

not the everyday occurrence that listening to their folktales would lead you to believe.

## History



his haunted realm barely manages to maintain a population equal to some of the larger cities of other lands, and yet it and the heroes it calls its own can be found at the center of some of the most pivotal events in history. Mordent has one of the best-preserved histories of any region I have visited, but it is a history fraught with folklore and anecdote as well, where local legends are treated as venerated truths and foreigners often must have a great deal of patience in order to separate fact from hearsay. One does not research the history of the land so much as trace back the noble families that once ruled it and follow their decline into tragedy.

Although precise genealogical records are maddeningly elusive, I have learned that Mordent was once host to ten ruling families, although of these great houses only the Weathermay family line remains intact at present. This situation would also seem consistent with tales that Mordent was once more populous than it is now, although exactly what happened to cause such a decline in population remains a subject of sharp scholarly debate. Rulership of the realm was divided among the ten families, with each lineage tending to its

## Local Animals and Native Horrors

Humanoid monsters such as goblins and kobolds are exceedingly rare in Mordent, save for occasional clashes with reavers and sahuagin along the coast; one is far more likely to encounter various predatory animal species, especially in the more remote reaches. The land, however, is justly famous for its large variety of restless spirits. While within a few miles of Mordentshire the land is surprisingly clear of such monstrosities, the rest of the land seems naturally to attract them, much to the dismay and dread of the local populace. Also attracted are a small but significant number of creatures with an affinity for the Mists themselves; why this is so remains unknown.

**Wildlife:** CR 1/10 — bat; CR 1/8 — rat; CR 1/6 — raven; CR 1/4 — cat; owl; pony; CR 1/3 — dog; snake, viper (Tiny); CR 1/2 — porpoise; snake, viper (Medium-size); CR 1 — hound, mastiff\*; octopus; shark (Medium-size); squid; wolf; CR 2 — shark (Large); CR 4 — shark (Huge); CR 5 — whale, baleen; whale, orca.

**Monsters:** CR 1/3 — dire rat; CR 1/2 — *geist*\*; plant, bloodrose\*; CR 1 — animator; ghoul; sea spawn, minion\*; CR 2 — hearth fiend\*; hound, phantom\*; plant, crawling ivy\*; sahuagin; worg; CR 3 — allip; assassin vine; bowlyn\*; dire wolf; drowning\*; elemental, Mist\*; ghaist; giant owl; scarecrow, dread\*; shadow; wight; CR 4 — fenhound\*; gargoyle; Mist ferryman\*; reaver\*; CR 5 — elemental, Mist\*; lycanthrope (werewolf)\*; odem\*; sea spawn, master\*; wraith; CR 6 — bastellus\*; corpse candle\*; jolly roger\*; will-o'-wisp; CR 7 — grim reaper\*; spectre; zombie fog\*; CR 8 — bodak; rushlight\*; CR 9 — plant, death's head tree\*; CR 10 — radiant spirit\*; CR 12 — kraken.





own land and meeting occasionally to discuss matters of importance to the realm as a whole. Disputes between families were rare, given the provincial lifestyle favored by Mordentish folk, and those few conflicts that threatened to develop into larger feuds were resolved by the arbitration of the eldest members of three uninvolved families. Apparently, this style of government suited the tastes of the Mordentish folk, for I have unearthed only the bare minimum of tales of revolt or unrest. Though it was a long time in making and may yet contain some inaccuracy of which I am unaware, I believe this record to be an excellent accounting of the history of Mordent and the major families that make up its principal players.

Before any of the known families arrived, however, Mordentshire itself was first settled at least 600 years ago, a remote and nameless fishing thorp at the natural cove of Arden Bay. Mordent was largely untamed wilderness back then, and the original inhabitants likely all spoke a distinct language that has evolved into the “Low” or common dialect of Mordentish of the present day. About 180 BC or so, following wars and conquests fought in lands now long since nameless and vanished, the notable explorer and adventurer Jacques Renier settled in the region with his family. A servant to a king now forgotten, he was a member of the ruling elite — a foreigner speaking the language that has since become the dialect known as Noble or “High” Mordentish. Renier assumed control of the thorp and started expanding it according to his own grand designs for the area. When the hamlet at last began attracting sea trade and to prosper, he celebrated by building a grand fortified manor for his family just outside of town: what is now known as the House on Gryphon Hill.

According to legends whispered to this day, though, something was terribly wrong with Gryphon Manor from the day the first foundation stone was laid. Accidents and misfortune plagued the construction, resulting in the death or permanent maiming of several workers. In one case, a night watchman was struck permanently blind and crazed by *something* he encountered while walking the half-finished layout of the house one night. Stubborn and prideful, Renier refused to admit that anything was the matter with his dream home, even going so far as to refuse to allow an exorcism that his laborers’ begged for to rid the newly-finished house of the restless inhabitants it already

possessed. He moved in with great style early one autumn.

One night in the middle of winter, he and his family fled the manor with nothing more than the clothes on their backs, swearing never to return. They refused to disclose what had prompted such a drastic decision, and their servants were admonished under penalty of hanging never to reveal it either.

Although embarrassed by the nature of his eviction, Renier recovered quickly and ordered a second manor, Heather House, to be constructed on the southern promontory now known as Weathermay Point. Fortunately for his sake, Mordentshire grew under his shrewd business leadership, and the promise of prosperity drew more aristocrats to the region, eager to carve out names and estates for themselves in this rapidly growing land. While the Renier family at first welcomed the arrival of fellow members of the upper class, they soon found their own grip on the region slipping as newcomers attempted to outmaneuver them and claim power for themselves, until they at last vanished for other lands. Eventually, ten families asserted themselves as the primary landholders and business leaders of the realm, dividing rulership of the region now officially known as Mordent among themselves as per the edict of a distant and now-forgotten king. Mordent’s society began to stabilize into two classes: the “High” speaking newcomers who made up the noble elite, and the local “Low” speaking commoners who formed the underclass. Their languages and cultures slowly merged, but class divides retained certain distinctions still seen in the language to this day. I should note that Gryphon Manor remained shunned throughout the years; once a generation or so, a different noble would dismiss the tales and move in, only to flee inevitably not long after.

A different fate greeted the Godefroys. The most powerful of all the families to emerge after the founding of Mordentshire was the Godefroy line. Easily the wealthiest and most influential of the old ruling families, they took Gryphon Manor as their primary residence. The Godefroy family was comprised of great leaders and diplomats, and seemed inextricably tied to the very well-being of the land itself — its fortunes rose as they ascended to power and waned slightly on those rare occasions when a less adept member came to the head of the house. Firm believers in *noblesse oblige*, it was the Godefroys who largely introduced and encouraged the prac-



tice of the aristocratic families working alongside the folk of their lands in daily life, a practice that seems to have outlasted them as it remains common to this day.

A curious mania for power periodically plagued the line as the years passed, however, eventually reducing the family's numbers even as its fortunes grew, until only a single bloodline remained. Indeed, the line's most famous member is the last scion of the family, Lord Wilfred Godefroy, who killed himself in the house on New Year's Day in 579 BC following the tragic deaths of his wife and daughter. Most Mordentish folk believe that his ghost haunts the house still and refuse to come closer than a stone's throw from its weathered gates and ominous dark windows. I myself made an effort to brave the perils of Gryphon Manor, with mixed results, but I shall save the recounting of that harrowing experience for later on in this narrative.

I should note that "official" records extend only as far back as 579 BC in the local time, though one quickly gets glimpses of things far older at work in Mordent, even if some of these elements often remain elusive at best. Nearly all Mordentish folk

hold to legends that their land was brought into this world from another place, due to the disastrous results of a failed experiment conducted by a person known only as the Alchemist. Though the exact nature of this experiment is lost to superstition and supposition, the Mordentish also widely believed that this disaster was largely due to the operation of the Apparatus, a device so terrible its very purpose is the subject of morbid myth and whispers to this day. Although the precise details seem to swim in an ever-swirling fog of myth and conjecture, I believe I have been able to piece together certain unsettling elements to this history. First, that following the death of Lord Godefroy, the Weathermay family rented Gryphon Manor to a visiting noble who desired intense privacy for his experiments. Although warned about the House's sinister reputation, he seemed not to care and moved in along with a number of boxes full of strange equipment and bizarre texts. Numerous folktales simply call this figure the Alchemist; one document I studied, which appears to all inspection authentic, contained a copy of a lease signed by one "Strahd von Zarovich."





Though no reliable report exists as to what occurred during this time, it is known that a wave of madness and dementia swept the land during the month of October in 579 BC. Presumably, this

period is when the Alchemist activated his mad device, as it also marks the last time that Mordent seemed to communicate with lands outside of those known to us today. As for the exact nature of

### **Dread Possibility: The Discarded Mortality of Strahd von Zarovich**

Although factual records surrounding the event have since fallen into decay, the most startling element about all the legends of the Alchemist is that they are, in essence, true. Count Strahd von Zarovich was an alchemist of supreme intelligence and kindly disposition who was disgusted and repulsed by the darker urges that flitted through his mind. In his arrogance, he presumed to devise some method of separating the wicked half of his soul and casting it away, so that it might never trouble him again. Most bizarre of all, he appeared to have succeeded at first and cast his other half off into a nebulous other realm. Content at last, the shy Count eventually fell in love with Lady Virginia Weathermay, the beautiful daughter of his neighbor Lord Byron Weathermay, and nothing seemed to trouble their fairy tale romance — until Strahd's darker half returned.

The other half of his soul had apparently found form in a distant realm as a brutal and dispassionate warlord. In turn, his darker self made his own presumptuous bargain with Darkness in order to stave off death and win the lovely young bride he had always wanted. Yet the pact was not quite what it seemed, and she was lost to him forever before he had a chance to sate his desires even once, much to his endless frustration.

Nevertheless, his undead state allowed him to devise such magic that eventually he gazed across other worlds, only to catch a glimpse of his other self and the happiness it was enjoying — happiness that the darker Strahd felt should rightfully have been his. With the aid of the lich-king Azalin, who also sought an escape from the prison in which the Dark Powers had trapped him, the evil Strahd managed to cross into Mordent. At first, he was only a shadowy possessing force, but gradually more and more he became substantial, establishing a hold in the land while simultaneously terrorizing the countryside and striking terror into the heart of the good Strahd and his lovely bride. Unbeknownst to the Alchemist, the fiend began experimenting with the Apparatus, the device used to separate the two of them in the first place. Initially, he transposed the souls of monstrous undead into the bodies of helpless villagers (while simultaneously trapping said unfortunates in the decaying bodies of the undead). Ultimately, he arranged for a ferocious battle against his noble counterpart and a band of stalwart adventurers during a raging thunderstorm. The Apparatus was destroyed during the fight, both Strahds vanished in a final struggle... and the Mists rose to claim the humble land of Mordent.

Of course, even casual visitors to Barovia get an inkling that at least one half of Strahd survived that fateful confrontation. Such were the energies unleashed by the Apparatus' destruction (not to mention the formation of Mordent as a domain) that not even Strahd or Azalin remember exactly what occurred during their brief stay in the domain. Which naturally begs the question: what if not one but both halves of Strahd's personality managed to survive their struggle? One of the vampire lord's final acts was an attempt to try to switch bodies with the good Strahd and trap him in his undead state; with this intriguing possibility, combined with the knowledge of a master alchemist, who knows what might be possible? Perhaps he lingers on in some obscure, forgotten state, still trying to return Mordent to its place of origin or banish his dark half from the world forever. Even if the fabled Alchemist did not survive to the present, any notes or other personal effects he left behind could easily contain a wealth of information about his malevolent counterpart and possibly even some weaknesses or quirks unavailable elsewhere. Naturally, the current Strahd would be quick to bring death to any who dared possess such secrets, should he learn of their existence. Yet these secrets may be the only truly reliable sources regarding one of Ravenloft's most feared darklords — and what is necessary to ensure his final destruction.



the device itself, its workings are (probably fortunately) lost to history, not that this has prevented each person I spoke to from forming his or her own private theory. The most popular belief I encountered is that this machine was designed to rend or even switch the minds of any unfortunate subjects placed inside it. Some even whisper that souls were but another fluid to be trapped and experimented with by means of the Alchemist's mad devices, though I find such tales too horrible and far-fetched to be true. What is also known is that the Alchemist perished in the resulting catastrophe, whatever other mad experiments he had planned remaining thankfully unfinished. Local legend claims his mad laughter can still be heard on the anniversary of the incident every October.

Naturally, I should also like to point out that no few authoritative persons have lent their support to the rumor that Count Strahd von Zarovich of Barovia and my own patron Azalin of Darkon played some part in the malfunction of the Apparatus. Some claim that they stayed in Mordent for a while following the disaster before returning to their own lands. I find such accounts incredibly difficult to believe; I know well that both Strahd and Azalin were in Barovia at the time, working on magical experiments intended to open a portal to another world. Thus, they could not possibly have been involved in the manner suggested by such tales. At the same time, I cannot entirely discount the word of the native scholars out of hand; certainly, the coincidence of a second "Strahd von Zarovich" seems too incredible to be summarily dismissed. I have simply heard it from too many scholars that I consider reasonable and intelligent individuals to believe that it is another of this land's many whispered folktales or dreadful ghost stories. I have met with failure to locate any direct evidence to support these claims, however, which leaves me at something of an impasse. As the only others who presumably know the truth are Azalin and von Zarovich themselves, I have no expectation of receiving a detailed explanation very soon.

### *Wise of you, my little scholar.*

Though it pains me to leave such critical questions unanswered, due to the haze of uncertainty that surrounds such powerful events, I feel I must turn back to the matter of detailing what other history I was able to uncover. With the obvious exception of the Weathermays, detailed more fully below, most of the other families have

fallen into such great obscurity that I can attest to little faith in much of what I learned about them. Still others records were lost after the emergence of Dementlieu on the northern border around 707 BC, as many of the remaining noble bloodlines fled north to a culture more receptive to their refined way of life.

### **The Noble families**

Despite the difficulties of research in Mordent, I have managed to uncover a certain amount of information about each of the noble families that I feel is reliable, which I will share here.

### **The de Boistribue**

First is the de Boistribue family of previous mention, reputed by some scholars to be the oldest bloodline in the realm; certainly, their name seems to suggest a slightly different origin than the rest of the noble families. By all accounts, the de Boistribue was a reclusive family compared to its more egalitarian peers. While the family was large and close-knit with one another, they resided almost as one in the majestic family manor house I described previously and had little contact with foreigners save to collect rent and appear at the occasional high society function. Indeed, certain dark rumors circulated about just how close the de Boistribues were with their kin. The matter shall probably never be settled — the entire family disappeared late one December night around 493 BC, leaving only one servant behind alive, driven hopelessly mad with pain and fright. Judging from the bloodstains throughout the manor, the partially eaten bodies of several servants, and the numerous jagged claw marks on the walls, the local population suspected the involvement of lycanthropes of some kind. Whether the family members were the victims of the attack or the cause of them, none could say for sure. One fact is known, however: none of the family's remains were ever found.

In the time since the family disappeared, it has become customary for the locals to avoid any contact with the woods during nights of the full moon.

While no recorded lycanthrope attacks have occurred in the forest during living memory, as is Mordentish custom, the natives believe it is better to be cautious than foolish in such matters. If the need is great, the stoutest warriors and spellcasters the town can muster will gather their lanterns and venture forth into the misty woods in as large a





group as they can muster, surrounded by packs of trained hounds and alert for any sign of danger. Yet the circumstances must be truly dire to summon forth a party in this manner.

Small wonder, then, that catching sight of the family's manor house is supposed to be an ill omen for those who stumble across it as they travel through the forest's eerie depths. Indeed, according to local legend, many of those who do see it disappear within three turnings of the moon, though whether the forest comes to claim them or whether they simply flee to avoid the doom they feel is about to befall them is a matter of no idle speculation. One might assume plotting a course around the manor's location would be simple; the locals assured me in hushed tones, however, that when it desires, the house apparently has a habit of moving — or perhaps *stalking* would be a better term.

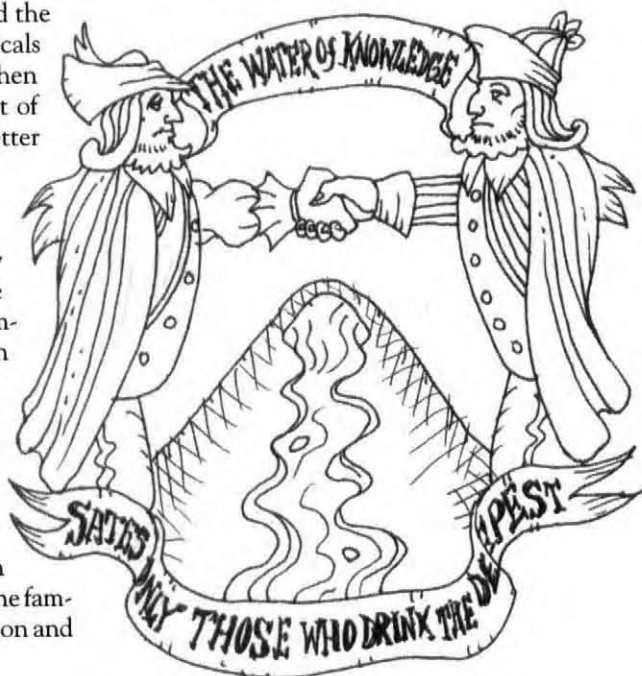
## The Blackburn-Bruce

Another striking case of a noble family suddenly vanishing, though perhaps not quite as inexplicably, is the Blackburn-Bruce family. Originally formed as the union between the eldest children of two powerful merchant houses, the joined families soon grew immensely wealthy from their controlling shares in the businesses in Blackburn's Crossing and over time parlayed this wealth into status as part of the aristocracy. Free from the concerns of working the land with which their rural counterparts contended, the family chose to spend immense sums on education and

leisure pursuits and soon became renowned as leading scholars in a number of subjects.

Most notable of all was the family interest in alchemy, and with their great wealth, the Blackburn-Bruces were able to procure all manner of exotic texts, rare materials, and other tools of the Art. As the years went by, rumors began to spread that family members were slipping out into the countryside to conduct bizarre and unholy experiments on unsuspecting villagers. The family's heated denials only added fuel to those who doubted them. Rivals began exploiting the talk as a means of cutting into the Blackburn-Bruces' business, and the family fortune began to decline, though not their interest in the Art.

Then came the disaster with the Apparatus, and soon after the rumors began that the Alchemist must have been a Blackburn-Bruce, since their knowledge of the craft was second to none. Upon hearing those whispers, the family knew the end had come. Those that could, escaped with as much money as they could carry, changing their names and going into hiding, never to re-emerge. Occasionally, talk surfaces of a member of this family being found somewhere as the cause of some alchemical nightmare, and always shortly thereafter comes word that they have vanished again. In some instances, however, the family may not have vanished as completely as one would hope.





### The Gauldamon

Such is the case with the Gauldamon clan. Once the undisputed lords of the Lightless Forest, they long had a tradition of allowing anyone into their land in the name of sanctuary — in exchange for becoming the family’s loyal servant. They thus acquired a reputation for harboring all manner of criminals and other societal dregs, and while none could fault that they kept these miscreants working at honest labor (for reneging on the contract was a sure death sentence), this fact did little to improve their standing in polite society. Caring little about the disapproval of others, this rather twisted family took great pleasure in outraging their staid peers.

Their only saving grace was their passion for the theatre, which was then almost unknown in Mordent outside of their land. Those visitors who braved their invitations were treated to lavish entertainment enacted by their so-called “captive performers” and opulent outdoor parties held in the glow of hundreds of colored lanterns. Shortly before the disaster, however, servants began disappearing, and whispers placed the blame on sinister sorcerous rites performed by the family’s elders in order to maintain a pact made long ago with the forbidding spirits of the Lightless Forest.

An investigation carried out by a brave group of adventurers in 621 BC revealed the worship of a demonic entity known as Lou’gal the Smiling One, whose sacrificial rites included the taking of firstborn daughters and even such bizarre rituals as sinister performances in which the actors died for his entertainment. Thanks to the heroic efforts of these adventurers and a well-timed revolt of the family’s servants, the eldest of the family were destroyed and the rest scattered into the forest, where the local population hunted them down as the years went on. The last confirmed appearance of a Gauldamon family member was in 673 BC, though the local folk still like to attribute any strange swamp lights or the occasional disappearance to “that damnable lot.” I believe that there is

no little amount of hyperbole in many of the lurid accounts the local folk told me of the evils at work in the forest. Yet most of the small numbers of calibans born in Mordent are born to families in this area, even those that moved here long after the Gauldamon clan was destroyed. Perhaps some dread taint yet lingers over the bleak paths and desolate wastes of this blighted area, or maybe the demon and its followers were not as completely destroyed as the local populace hoped. In any event, there is talk in the Church of Ezra of sending investigators to follow up on these reports and if necessary perform another cleansing of the area.

### The Holsworth

By contrast, the more recent demise of the Holsworth family line seems to have been an occasion of some sorrow for those who lived on their lands. The original lords of the western coast, the family was renowned for their love of the sea and their prowess as sailors, and they made a small but steady fortune out of the coastal port trade. The Holsworths were known for their honesty and took great pride in delivering their goods on time at an honest price. Two problems marred this otherwise upright family, however: the legend of the Pale Lady and the

Ashen Man, and a peculiar curse known as the Yearning. According to local folklore, a Holsworth captain made the fateful decision to sail into the storm that ended up taking the life of a young man.

This event led the man’s bride to put on her long white wedding dress and throw herself into the sea upon hearing the news of her husband’s death. Over time, the cliffs came to be named for the two star-crossed lovers, since they come close to touching at Arden Bay but are destined to be forever separated from each other by the sea. As the sailors tell it, with his last breath this young man cursed the captain, saying that since his foolish decision had prevented the young man from ever reaching home, so too would the captain be cursed forever to seek a destination he could never reach. The power of the young man’s words soon became apparent: the captain grew obsessed with locating a strange island far out at sea, drawing and redraw-



## The Lost Families of Mordent

What follows is a brief accounting of the major aristocratic families that once held sway in Mordent, as well as their lands, crests, and mottoes. Of these, only the Weathermay family remains intact in the present day, and even their numbers have greatly diminished.

**de Boistribue:** Forest of the Ancients; *Crest:* A wolf and a bear standing on either side of a patterned shield adorned with an ax, a coin, a book, and a crescent moon; *Motto:* "The land knows its true master."

**Blackburn-Bruce:** Blackburn's Crossing, Arden River; *Crest:* Two gentlemen shaking hands over a flowing spring, one holding a compass in his off hand and the other a book; *Motto:* "The water of knowledge sates only those who drink the deepest."

**Gauldemon:** Lightless Wood; *Crest:* Two impish winged creatures standing back-to-back with lanterns in hand, one smiling and one weeping. *Motto:* "Approach friends and enemies alike with a smile; both are equally deserving of it."

**Godfrey:** Mordentshire; *Crest:* A griffin holding a stout club in one claw and a staff of wheat in the other; *Motto:* "Those that are strong survive to lead."

**Halloway:** Steadwall, Arden River; *Crest:* A ferryman surrounded by a ring of gold coins; *Motto:* "Only by action does any man succeed."

**Holsworth:** Coastal Mordent; *Crest:* A stylized lighthouse with a mermaid on either side; *Motto:* "Cradled by the waves, guided by the light."

**Mournesworth:** Vale of Twilight; *Crest:* A hooded figure with face obscured, one hand skeletal and holding a symbolic cup of life, the other hand normal and bearing an hourglass; *Motto:* "Death makes all men equal; Life makes all men brothers."

**Scottmatter:** Gray Heath; *Crest:* A farmer and a gentleman clasping hands over a table of harvest foods; *Motto:* "The work of the hands is the joy of the soul."

**Weathermay:** Mordentshire; *Crest:* A pair of hounds on either side of an open book, which has the family motto inscribed on it; *Motto:* "None would survive but for the efforts of those whom history has forgotten."

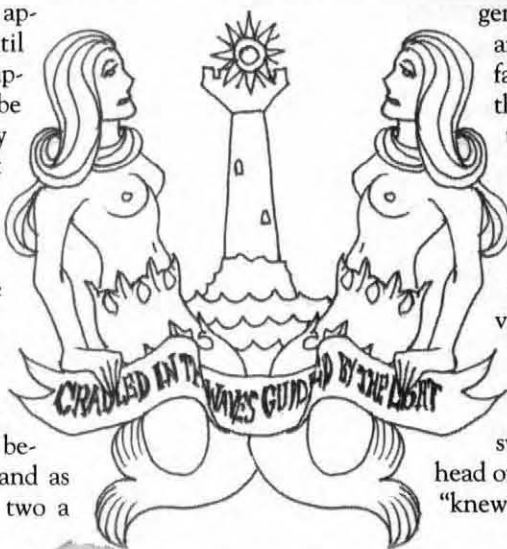
**Wescote:** Great Moor; *Crest:* A stylized image of a man holding a sword in one hand and a lantern aloft in the other, a hunting dog posed at his feet; *Motto:* "Those who are righteous receive what they deserve."





ing maps that he claimed appeared to him in dreams, until he and his ship finally disappeared one voyage, never to be seen again. The stories say that the flame of the great lighthouse rising from the center of the family manor at Cloudsbluff flared blue for three days and three nights after he left.

At first, the curse was seemingly satisfied with the captain's disappearance. Then other family members became obsessed with the island as well, initially only one or two a



generation, but gradually more and more until the last of the family members vanished into the sea in 543 BC. Most chartered small vessels to pursue this Yearning, though eventually no local sailors would go with them, forcing them to search farther afield for others who would crew such voyages. Nothing proved effective in restraining individuals once the Yearning took hold: they would steal ships or even swim if necessary in order to head off in search of the island they "knew" was there. Some tried to

### Dread Possibility: The Sinister Gallery

Although the events surrounding the disappearance of the Scottmatter family are tragic enough as it stands, no chance visit brought the mysterious "Lord Sithington" to their door and their doom. Rather, in the course of her landscape studies, Lady Margaret had the misfortune to paint the location of a lair for one of the lords of the dreaded shadow fey, which caught the creature's attention enough that it decided to pay the family a visit. Deciding that the knowledge of the location of its lair was too great a secret to leave exposed, the creature descended on the Scottmatters and trapped their spirits in the very painting Lord Andrew had hoped would win them over.

Yet despite popular belief, Lady Margaret was not spirited away by the creature: she had stumbled on it while it was doing its horrible work and fled while it gave chase, laughing madly all the while. It ranted that since she had violated the sanctity of its home, it would ensure that she remained trapped within hers forever, along with her helpless family. Lady Margaret ran into the gallery and tried to hide, but Sithington's wicked magic was too clever. He came upon her as she huddled, crying, at the base of the wall where so many of her beloved paintings hung.

He closed in for the kill, but much to his surprise, she produced a knife and stabbed herself through the heart rather than face torture at his hands. Enraged, he tried to ensnare her spirit with his dark arts, but she instinctively fled beyond his reach, into the one place she had always loved above all else: her own paintings, where she hid from him until his anger subsided. He laughed again then, reminding her of her own family's grim fate and how she had effectively done herself what he had sought to do anyway. Still cackling, he took down her painting of his lair and stalked out of the house, leaving behind a small guard of his minions to ensure that the significance of the theft would never be discovered.

Lady Margaret remains in the gallery to this day, tormented by her family's piteous cries and subject to occasional malicious treatment at the hands of Sithington's guards. She cannot leave her paintings, but she can travel between them, and she has recently learned of her ability to appear in the locations they depict as well, if only as a silent, transparent phantom. She has not attempted to materialize near Sithington's lair and is deathly afraid of what he might do to her if she did. Instead, she waits for someone to make their way into the gallery again, so that she can try to point them in the direction of the creature's lair and hopefully free herself and her family from his imprisonment.

She appears in the paintings as a woman in a beautiful white gown; she cannot speak aloud, but is an excellent mime. Should she get the attention of observers, she will attempt to lead them from one painting to another until she arrives at the last in the series before the one that was taken, in hopes that they will make the connection.



escape by moving far inland, only to be sighted months or years later onboard a vessel sailing off into the horizon, never seen again.

No one living remembers why the curse eventually took hold of the whole family. Was it due to some unknown sinister complicity the rest had in that fateful voyage? Perhaps as the sailors themselves say, "The sea simply got a taste for that family and wouldn't let 'em go." Even those poor raving souls that the family tried locking inside windowless rooms eventually wound up vanishing overnight, leaving behind only a small pool of water and the sharp smell of the ocean.

Try as they might, nothing anyone inside or out of the family could do prevented the Yearning from taking hold, and so the local populace were forced to watch in mounting horror as the family withered away to nothing. Now, only the network of lighthouses the family helped build along the western coast remains, engraved with the family crest at their base. Some say that the flames of these lighthouses still burn blue from time to time, though with the last of the family long gone none can say why this might be.

## The Scottmatter

Another unsettling set of circumstances came to light while I was investigating the dreadful reports surrounding the vanished Scottmatter family, who had once been great farmers and landholders on the Gray Heathlands along the Arden River. Long considered the most sensible and down-to-earth of the aristocratic families, they were well known for their generosity and their willingness to aid personally the tenant farmers under their care when necessary. Many apprenticed themselves to master craftsmen during their youth, and these artisan skills served to cement their bond with the common folk. To this day, a true Scottmatter work forms the centerpiece of more than a few lavish parlors or

well-to-do inns, though genuine articles are becoming harder and harder to find as the years pass.

Of the last true generation of the family, most notable were Lord Andrew Scottmatter and his sister Lady Margaret, who went in a different direction than the rest of their pragmatic family and began painting, with Lord Andrew mastering the traditional somber portraits that remain popular in Mordent while Lady Margaret explored the previously untouched area of pastoral landscape painting. With such a gloomy environment to work in, however, most of her pieces remained as eerie and haunting as they were beautiful, despite her best efforts to inject life and color. By contrast, Lord Andrew's subjects seemed almost to come alive off the canvas, as though they would move when one was not looking. Due to their atypical pursuits, both were known to clash with their family on occasion, although in general their lives remained happy ones.

Unfortunately for the family as a whole, the siblings' work had also captured the attention of a young gentleman known simply as Lord Sithington Gray. Entranced by the otherworldly beauty of Andrew's and Margaret's art, he began a correspondence with the two young painters that ultimately resulted in him receiving an invitation to a large family dinner party. Exactly what transpired at the party is unknown, save that when the family had not emerged the next morning to help

with the daily chores as was their custom,

a party was sent in to investigate. They found Lord

Sithington standing amidst

the smashed and empty

remains of the dining

hall, staring intently

at a family portrait

that Lord Andrew

had completed

only days before

in an effort to win

his family's affection

for his art. When

confronted, the lord

smiled and repeated

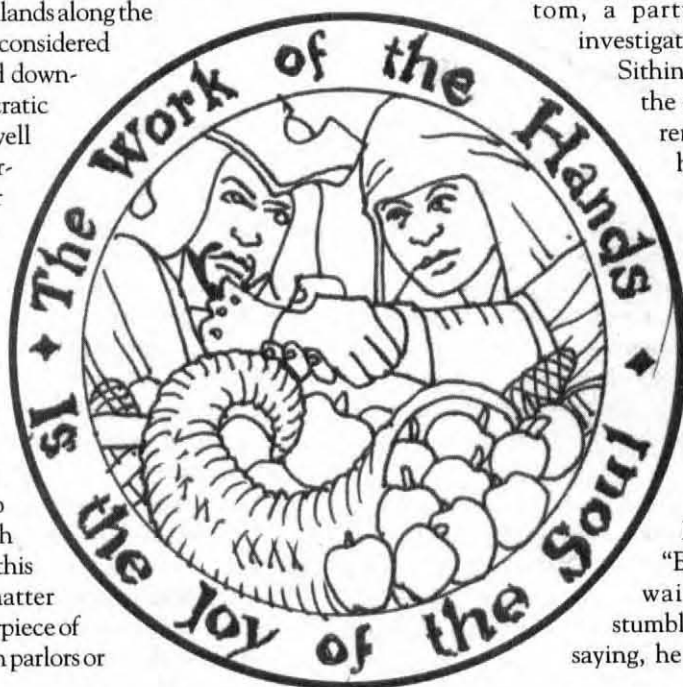
an old Mordentish proverb:

"Evil watches / evil

waits / Goodness

stumbles / Evil takes." So

saying, he vanished in an ex-





plosion of living shadows that slithered from the house, leaving behind the portrait just as one of the servants remembered, save several terrifying changes. Lady Margaret had disappeared from her place in front of Lord Andrew, replaced by a slightly smiling Lord Sithington; more horribly still, all of the family members bore expressions of absolute terror. No trace of their bodies was ever found, nor had anything been removed from the manor. Even the wing containing the young artists' paintings was apparently untouched, save a single empty frame that once held one of Lady Margaret's landscapes.

As not all of the family was present at the party, the locals were quick to spread warning, but it was already too late to stop whatever sinister force was at work. With each passing night, more of the Scottmatters vanished, only to have their likeness appear in the family painting, the same look of horror frozen across their faces. When the last of the family materialized in the awful portrait, the townsfolk hung it in the gallery and fearfully sealed the house up tight, not wanting to be any nearer to the cursed thing than was necessary. Before long, tales of the family's unquiet spirits coupled with unnerving beings of pure shadow spotted around the manor confirmed the local suspicions. I discovered firsthand that they are unwilling to come closer than the rusted iron gates, let alone venture across the wide mist-shrouded lawn that was once a favorite subject of Lady Margaret's.

Forgive me. The somewhat sensationalistic nature of Mordentish history can be quite intoxicating to the unwary, especially when one hears it coming from such a normally reserved and sensible folk as the Mordentish people. Certainly, sitting in an inn listening to the rain outside on misty eve-

nings does little to soothe a fevered imagination either. I shall therefore endeavor to relate the rest of the history I have learned with as little overstatement as possible.

## The Halloway

Perhaps the best way to clear one's mind of such fevered suppositions is to look into the Halloway family, who rose from origins as humble innkeepers to earning large sums of money from the Arden River trade, in large part due to a series of shrewd alliances with the Blackburn-Bruce and Godefroy families. The Halloways were known for their lavish parties, their taste for jewelry (unusual for Mordentish aristocrats), and their late night lantern-lit processions from

their extravagant manor on Halloway Hill. Historians are at a loss to explain what happened to this prosperous family, save that apparently — in the words of one scholar — “the river itself turned against them.” Over the span of the years 502–547 BC, no less than two dozen family members drowned, disappeared, or were found murdered on the banks of the Arden, along with numerous servants and business partners unfortunate enough to be with them at the time. Those victims

whose bodies were found appeared to have been slashed by some kind of terrible blade; others never turned up at all, or worse still in pieces. Despite large sums of money offered in an attempt to track down the killers responsible for the murders, as well as the efforts of several stout groups of adventurers to locate the persons responsible, no suspects were ever brought to justice.

Before long, the family's anger soured into fear and paranoia, and rumors started flying that not just the river but the Mists themselves sought the family's destruction, since the attacks were always carried out on nights when the fog was thick. Cooler heads noted that given the climate of the realm as a whole and the propensity of fog to gather







over any body of water, it only made sense that a perfectly mundane band of killers would naturally wait until the fog was thickest to strike, but such is the power of rumors and gossip that before long the Halloways' own town of Steadwall was being deserted for fear of the Mists' vengeful grasp. Unable to travel on or even cross their beloved river for fear of their lives, the family's fortunes quickly disappeared. Surviving members spent the end of their days in their grand house, looking down fearfully on the river below and waiting for the Mists to rise off the water, roll up the hill, and claim them forever. Perhaps they wait there still, as travelers who pass the once-thriving town of Steadwall often claim to see ghostly lights in the windows of the long-empty house atop the hill. I saw no such signs, but as noted before, I in no way desired to linger there either.

## The Mournesworth

The last of the great bloodlines to pass into antiquity was the Mournesworth family, whose nominal claim was to the border lands in the Vale of Twilight. By all accounts, they were landlords in name only, however, and rarely interfered in the day-to-day affairs of those who lived in their holdings. Instead, the Mournesworth family often traveled outside of their lands or even outside of Mordent itself, for the family's true interests were in all things divine and, perversely enough (or perhaps not), all things pertaining to the realm of death and spirits.

Seeing members of the other families employing Mournesworth chaplains or advisors or seeing a Mournesworth crusader laying to rest some unquiet spirit or driving out a possessing entity were not uncommon sights. Not that they were in any way considered servants. Quite the contrary, in fact! Those families that dealt with them went out of their way to accommodate the Mournesworths, offering large salaries and all manner of side benefits in order to attract and keep one of the renowned family priests and scholars.

Only two families had little to do with these devout souls, the jaded Gauldemon and (more surprisingly) the equally intellectual Blackburn-Bruce family. Numerous accounts tell of various society parties and private salons where members of the Mournesworth family clashed quite heatedly with the noted alchemists and philosophers, with the most frequent matter of contention being the latter's avowed atheism. Mordentish history also

widely holds that this schism prevented the family from ever achieving anything but the most minimal of financial success, as their lands were bordered on both sides by the river territory held by the Blackburn-Bruce line. This quiet but serious hostility remained one of the most persistent feuds among the normally amiable relations between the aristocrats.

Less sociable or intellectually rigorous members of the family took to purchasing and maintaining many of Mordent's vast cemeteries, where they became known for their unswerving diligence in service of the needs of both the departed and those they left behind. Many Mournesworth elders also accepted the responsibility of ensuring that their adopted burial grounds were kept free of undead and other abominations, sometimes employing younger family members or even outside adventurers to help them cleanse cemeteries that had become home to such creatures.





They even adopted a bizarre custom of arranging to transport the bodies of any who could not afford a respectable burial back to their enormous family graveyard in the heart of the Vale of Twilight, where they would be interred with all due ceremony and respect. While whispered tales sometimes alleged that this practice began to further all manner of foul necromantic experiments, in truth the family only performed this service when it was asked of them, and no trace of foul play or dark magic was ever found in connection to any of these funerals. Eventually, the custom was considered just a curious quirk of this compassionate but intensely secretive family. While it raised no end of eyebrows in high society, it helped endear them to the common folk all across Mordent, who lived in fear of an improper burial that could cause them to rise as one of the restless dead.

Sadly, Mournesworth family records are rare in the extreme, not the least because the family valued its privacy above all else, save helping those in need. Yet fragments of the diary belonging to Sir Timothy Mournesworth, eldest son of the last known patriarch Lord Leslie Mournesworth, attest that shortly before the destruction of the Apparatus, many members of the family were pursuing several troubling rumors. First, that there had been a sharp increase in the number of mindless undead rising in the cemeteries tended by the family, with no apparent cause. Second, that several members had tracked a disturbing and unusual shipment of alchemical supplies (though sadly no manifest of these components is listed) as far as Blackburn's Crossing, where they assumed that the Blackburn-Bruce family had taken possession of them. Lastly, and most disturbingly, that in response to "ominous signs" and "visions of mists," the eldest, youngest, and most infirm members of the family were being called home to the family estate in the Vale of Twilight, in preparation for something the diary records simply as "the ceremony." The exact nature of this rite or whether it was even performed is unknown, as the rest of the diary has yet to be located, and even if it was, the last record is dated only scant weeks before the Alchemist's disaster.

This evidence is especially significant because as soon as the Mists had receded, the Mordentish folk found that the Mournesworth family had vanished down to the last, as though the Mists refused to bring them — or perhaps that it consumed them utterly. All that remains are the scattered records of their presence, the rotting remnants of their

family estate, and the vast, perpetually mist-shrouded graveyard attached to it. A few other legends live on as well, the most notable of these being that the graveyard continues to increase in size, that rather than being reclaimed by the forest or the moors it sweeps both of them before it.

More chilling still are the tales of those who search the desolate graveyard and sometimes find fresh gravestones not there days or even hours before. These markers are usually emblazoned with the Mournesworth name and current local dates, but they sometimes feature names and dates unknown to the land or, for that matter, to the lands beyond. As even the most superstitious locals admit the graveyard is so vast and the mist surrounding it so thick that it is fully possible one simply stumbles across "new" things each visit by virtue of chance alone, I find it hard to believe such lurid tales. Yet if they are true, the possible causes for such vandalism are curious indeed.

## The Weathermay

When the Godefroy line died out, ownership of Mordentshire and de facto rule of the realm fell to the previously steadfast if somewhat unremarkable Weathermay line. Although the exploits of George Weathermay and his nieces are well known, I was surprised to learn that the Weathermay family has only recently come into such high regard. Previously, the Weathermays had lived largely in the shadow of the Godefroys, due to persistent rumors that they were involved in dabbling in the black arts. Rumor held that with the demise of the Godefroy family, the Weathermays had secured their power by sacrificing one of their own to a "creature" that dwells within Gryphon Manor. Their fortunes were thus quite minimal, in effect making them aristocracy in name only, before the efforts of this latest heroic generation, which have restored their name to a place of honor once more. Sadly, it may be too late to do more than lend their legend a proper shine. Like the Godefroys and others before them, the Weathermays have diminished to a mere handful; still, if the darkness claims them, it will not be for the lack of the light borne by this generation.

Of the Weathermay family alive today, the most notable include the aging and sickly Lord Jules Weathermay, who rules Mordent from Heather House, the magnificent family estate. Also holding fame are Daniel Foxgrove, mayor of Mordentshire and widower of Lord Jules' daughter





Alice and father of the twins Gennifer and Laurie Weathermay-Foxgrove; and George Weathermay, son of Lord Jules and legendary crusader against creatures of the night. Gennifer and Laurie remain in Mordentshire to this day, running the herbalist shop opened by no less than the famed hunter and family friend Rudolph van Richten, whom the twins idolized during childhood and whose heroic efforts they now seek to emulate in their war against the minions of darkness.

At present, who will follow the ailing Lord Jules as ruler of Mordent upon his passing is unclear. George is the most obvious choice, but his crusading lifestyle and taciturn demeanor make him an uneasy fit for the position even with his valiant reputation. That would seem to leave the burden on the twins, but unless they choose to take husbands, it will only forestall the inevitable demise of the Weathermay family and leave the position of leadership in uncertain hands. The family that has risen to rule this land faces a difficult time, and the stubbornness of the younger generation may well prove its undoing if none of them realize their duty to their nation comes before their own sense of adventure.

You never cease to annoy me, my little scholar. An exhaustive listing of one dead family after another — perhaps I should have hired you to trace my family tree? — and yet you leave one out? Where is your history of the Wescoates? We shall speak of this when next we meet.

## Populace



Given its small size, insular customs, and unwelcoming terrain, one should not be surprised that the folk of Mordent are by and large all descended from the same stock, which traces its line back to the Renier family and the first groups of settlers that came to try and tame this unforgiving land. This is not to say that Mordentish folk all consider themselves on equal footing — far from it, in fact. While the noble families may have all but died out and their blood long since mingled with the common folk before then, distinguishing a certain deviation between the upper class or “High” Mordentish and the working-class or “Low” folk of the realm is still possible.

The sharp features and slightly more delicate physiques easily distinguish those of aristocratic blood. While few in this land are strangers to labor of one kind or another, there remains a certain refinement of form in those of noble lineage that betrays itself to the trained eye. By contrast, those of more common origin are generally rounder of face and stockier of build, as befits their lives spent in hard labor in the field or at the artisan’s trade. These distinctions are immediately apparent to natives; with some time and practice, they are readily observed by foreigners as well.

I could not distinguish any true regional differences or ethnic types among the Mordentish themselves, perhaps not so surprising given the small populace and its rather remote environs. If an



ethnic group among the Mordentish folk can be identified, it is those whose ancestry lies outside Mordent itself. Few claim any special sort of identity for themselves, content simply to live among their neighbors as honest folk of no particular distinction. The differences in their features are usually apparent to the native population, who treat them as well as their nation of ancestry is thought of at the time. Naturally enough, the most common foreign blood hails from Dementlieu, Richemulot, or Borca. Few of these superstitious folk would dare marry into the notoriously accursed families of Verbrek, and hailing even in part from Falkovnian stock is nearly the equivalent of fighting words to many proper Mordentish folk, given the tense relations between the two lands. Likewise, marriages between the Mordentish and the Valachani are so rare as to be nonexistent, even along the border. For the well educated of Mordentish natives to refer to the Valachani as "savages" in private company is not uncommon, and while the two nations have a fairly healthy trade with each other, it is seldom more than strictly business.

Indeed, those few actual foreigners who make their home in Mordent are primarily either of Richemuloise or Dementlieuse descent. While they may suffer no overt prejudice so long as they comport themselves politely in public, they are frequently subject to more than their fair share of gossip, rumor, and innuendo from their neighbors. Those of primarily foreign ancestry can rest assured that their movements and their social dealings are carefully tracked by communities of native Mordentish folk. The suspicion that most of these people have toward strangers is well-known, and even those who have stayed in the area for some time are seldom treated fully the same as natives unless they perform some great service for the community that erases this unspoken burden.

The Mordentish peasantry knows well that the Dementlieuse are a people overly concerned with politics, fashion, and other "frivolous" endeavors. Their acceptance of magic, particularly for such a common activity as entertainment, is seen as quite scandalous, and arcane spellcasters from Dementlieu are watched closely by natives who learn of their talents. Nevertheless, Dementlieuse fashions and ideas retain a certain appeal for more cosmopolitan Mordentish aristocrats, though no few others heap scorn on their neighboring land for the flight of many aristocrats

to that nation not so long ago. Richemuloise folk are considered a touch better, due to their focus on education and personal worth over outward displays of power and finery. Yet they are still mistrusted, given their penchant for intrigue and gamesmanship. It is a rare Richemuloise native indeed who is allowed to hear the latest local gossip, because who knows what he might do with such information?

Most beloved of the Mordentish people, if such a phrase is truly an accurate description for such a reserved folk, are those rare traders and travelers who hail from Borca. Borcans and their dour outlook are in many ways an excellent match to the taciturn Mordentish, and one can sense a certain natural sympathy between the two peoples. While contact between them is generally rare and restricted to the occasional merchant caravan or river traffic, their similar dispositions tend to make them ready drinking partners and even somewhat fast friends, at least on the scale that the Mordentish judge such matters.

The prevailing attitude seems to be that what the Mordentish folk suffer by way of weather and the natural design of their land, the Borcans languish under their ruler's treatment and therefore receive that much more sympathy for the artificial cause behind their suffering. Those that have risen to a level where they can travel abroad under such circumstances, then, deserve an extra degree of respect for their fortitude and ingenuity in doing so. Mind you, for even the most outgoing of Mordentish folk to embrace a total stranger openly just because he is from Borca would be unheard of, but Borcans are likely to receive a more friendly welcome than other foreigners, or at least not such a cold shoulder.

Even less common are members of the demihuman races, native or foreign. While they are not so unsophisticated as to believe these beings to be mere monsters or evil spirits, the deep distrust harbored in most Mordentish hearts for all things magical sees full expression in their reaction to those of nonhuman descent. Such beings are seen as innately part of the magical world and thus not to be trusted unless one wishes to invite sinister forces down on one's own head, something no Mordentish citizen in good standing ever wants to do. Few elves visit this land for long, much less choose to stay here — the chilling cold seems not to agree with them, nor do the grim moors or endless bogs. Even the forests of this land feel





uninviting to the elves; those that care to put the experience into words have described an “emptiness” in the heart of this domain’s forests, as though they were missing the very element that seems to embrace elvenkind—or that the trees had actively turned against them. While there is no evidence of any overt phenomena to back such claims, this subtle feeling of incompleteness and barely-formed dread inspires such unease that most elves do not linger any longer than they must. Likewise, half-elves are extremely rare in Mordent; in some particularly rural communities, they are still referred to as “fey-touched” and thought not to be the result of human and elven joining but of interference by mischievous fairies. As such, the native population gives them a wide berth, though they are seldom mistreated for fear of angering their fairy parents.

Correspondingly, the smaller demihuman races are even less represented. Gnomes and dwarves are so rare as to be essentially nonexistent in this domain; it lacks the mountains that the dwarves love and the fast-moving culture on which the gnomes thrive. Occasionally, a dwarven trader or smith travels one of the trade routes of the domain, selling his wares. Save for the most practical items such as farm implements, artisan’s tools, weapons, armor, and the like, the Mordentish have little need for the elaborate jewelry and costly adornments that make up the higher end of a dwarven merchant’s stock, meaning that profits are usually minimal at best. Those dwarves that do remain usually carve a niche for themselves as one of the town’s skilled craftsmen, where their skills earn them a measure of respect but seldom much in the way of friendship; fortunately, most dwarves are just as dour and taciturn as their neighbors in this respect. Gnomes find their sense of humor unwelcome and their penchant for illusionary magic downright despised at nearly every turn. Most do not tarry long in this domain if they can avoid it—more than one overly persistent gnome has been “mistaken” for a fey creature of some kind by a group of angry townsfolk over the years, which results ranging from darkly comic to outright tragic.

Halfings share many values in common with the Mordentish folk, from love of the hearth and an honest day’s labor to a penchant for storytelling. As such, they can be found in slightly higher numbers than dwarves or gnomes. Their wandering habits, though, do not sit well with the sedentary Mordentish disposition, so while they are tolerated

better than other demihumans, most natives keep some distance from halfings, knowing that they will likely move on before long.

This sentiment goes double for the Vistani and their half-breed kin. Their vagabond lifestyle, innate magical talents, and outgoing manner run strongly against the grain in most Mordentish communities, and the legends told about Vistani seers and their ability to converse with the dead send most natives scurrying for shelter, making small signs of protection as the Vistani pass. While not outright unwelcome in Mordent, the Vistani know their presence is grudgingly tolerated at best by most of the realm’s communities and so seldom pass through unless they can take no other route. Needless to say, extremely few half-Vistani are born of one Mordentish parent. While forbidden trysts dot legends, as a rule the natives will not allow themselves proximity to the Vistani long enough to make such affairs possible, and both parents and child are disgraced by the illicit circumstances surrounding any such tryst. Most half-Vistani of Mordentish heritage leave the realm as soon as they come of age, unable to bear any longer the accusatory stares of the villagers that follow them everywhere they go. Few ever return.

Also deserving of special mention are those wretched souls known as calibans. While quite rare, Mordentish folk view the birth of one of these deformed monstrosities as the sign of great evil in the area, matched only by the shame and horror of the parents. Keeping such a child in the community is forbidden, in the belief that doing so would encourage the evil to dwell there as well, but harming the child is also strictly forbidden, for fear of inviting further wickedness upon the family. Many such children are thus left abandoned at the doorstep of a local church of Ezra or given to be raised by wise women in the wild. Those that attempt to seek out their true parents find themselves treated as strangers and turned out by the local population at the first opportunity, a too painful reminder of the evil that visited the town long ago. While many of the calibans here display the variety of deformities common to their race (if that is what to call them), a certain set of characteristics seems more common to Mordent than elsewhere, what is called Howling or Wailing Ones. These calibans are born with chalk white skin and hair, pure black eyes, and wide, distorted mouths, as though set in a perpetual unearthly howl. They also tend to be more wiry than other calibans,





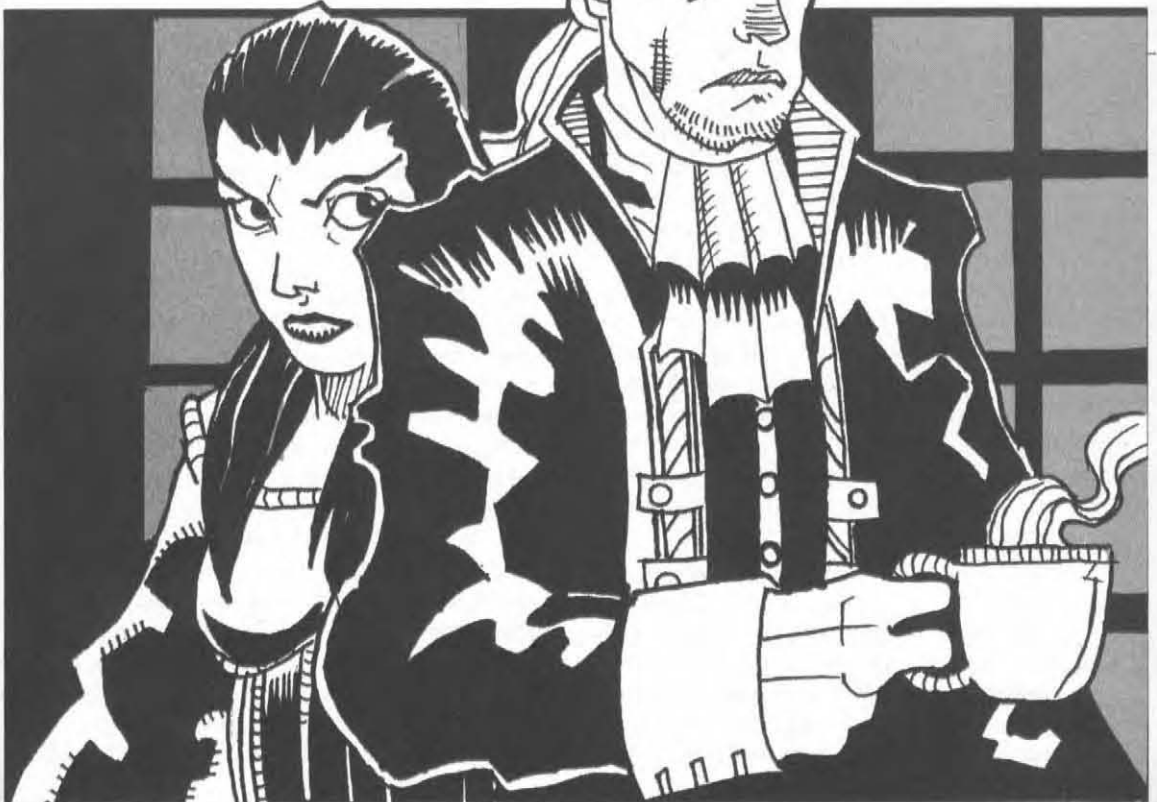
though still retaining the peculiar strength of these cursed beings, and the birth of a caliban is considered a sure sign that a powerful spirit rests uneasily nearby.

## Appearance

As one might suspect of the people from a land so often shrouded in mists, Mordentish folk themselves are generally very fair-skinned, though those that dwell by the sea or on the more desolate moors develop a ruddiness on top of that fairness thanks to the wind's constant caress. They tend toward the taller end of the spectrum for humans but stay very lean as well, more than likely due to the hard lifestyle and meager foodstuffs common to the realm. Indeed, generations of plying the sea or working the unforgiving soil have given most Mordentish folk wiry strength and a stout constitution that belies their sometimes willowy appearance; more than one foreign sailor has lost his wages betting against a Mordentish man arm-wrestling an opponent twice his size. Even the most aristocratic of gentlemen or refined of ladies cannot afford simply to waste their time in idle diversions, and it is fairly common for aristocrats or

other socialites to be found working alongside their hands in the field or alongside the help in the manor house.

One of the more striking elements to be noted about the Mordentish people is their eyes, so like the sea they love and the Mists that surround much of their lives. Gray-blue and blue-green are the most common colors, with the blues and greens becoming curiously more pronounced while traveling through fog of any kind... almost as if the mist has drained away the gray and left the true color behind. Even more striking are the Mordentish folk who have solid gray eyes; sometimes called "children of the mist" or "children of the wind" by their peers, these folk are reputed to see through mists of all kinds as though they were nothing. It is also widely held that one can predict the arrival of fog or rain by watching the eyes of one of these people closely — as soon as they begin to lighten, weather is on its way. Regardless of the truth of such tales, noting that their eyes seem to make a perfect mirror for the mist around them, growing lighter the thicker it gets until they are





almost silver, then darkening to a slate color when the mist has passed is indeed impressive.

Although one would think that a nation that has so long embraced an aristocratic class would be rife with fashion, such is not the case. Indeed, Mordentish folk pride themselves on being above such petty considerations, especially in contrast to their neighbors in Dementlieu. While some class distinctions are naturally apparent, as a whole the Mordentish have no real love of or humor for finery without purpose; even those of the highest social standing are most often distinguished by the quality of their clothing material as opposed to any obvious accessories adorning it.

Mordentish men of all stations favor simple dress of predominantly dark colors, with breeches, high socks, and loose shirts covered by buttoned waistcoats. Three-corner hats and long coats with tails make up a man's traveling clothes and are considered a necessity against the invasive chill of the evening mist and the fine drizzle that accompanies many Mordentish nights. Most men cut their hair quite short, where it will trouble them least while working, though young men out courting or gentlemen of leisure will often grow their hair long and tie it back in a single braid. It is also accepted practice for a man to carry some kind of walking stick with him when he goes for a constitutional, though again whether it is simply a stout oaken cudgel or an ornate ash cane with a silver head is a matter of social class.

It has lately become something of a fashion for men to display an embroidered handkerchief in the pocket of their waistcoat, with the color and pattern of the handkerchief serving as a subtle display of a man's marital status and social standing. A husband will carry a handkerchief of the same color and pattern as his wife's dress when they go out to a party. Lads too young to be courting will carry ones of plain white, and young men out seeking a wife will find the brightest colors and patterns they can. While more than a few elders disapprove of such "frivolity," many younger natives consider it a grand game indeed, especially in the realm's sedate taverns, where they can play as eagerly as they want without ever raising their voice.

Mordentish women, like their men, also favor dark colors, but enjoy a bit more freedom with their fabrics; even most farmer's wives have at least one nice dress of fine make, which they show off at the harvest festivals that occur every season. For day-to-day wear, most common women prefer plain

long dresses of wool or cotton, often with a durable leather apron or thick cloth smock worn to protect their clothes from the worst of the day's chores. By contrast, aristocratic women prefer long dresses that adhere closely to the figure on top and then flare out substantially at the waist; this style is also emulated by the finer dresses of common women, though naturally with less expensive materials. Smaller details, such as lace on the cuffs or buttons of ivory, serve as another indicator of wealth or standing. While women generally adhere to the same aversion to adornment as most Mordentish men, many aristocrats consider it excellent sport to see how close they can come to that line without appearing ostentatious. Another fashion for Mordentish women is to wear their hair extremely long, often in a mass of curls or several large, ornate braids and to decorate it with ribbons on holidays and other celebrations. During less festive times, common women prefer to keep their hair back with a simple kerchief, while noble women prefer a bonnet or hooded traveling cloak.

In regards to women's fashions, wearing lockets on social occasions has recently become quite the rage, most commonly ones containing engraved ages of a husband and wife or a woman's parents if she remains unmarried. While such intricate jewelry is well beyond the reach of most common folk, many women of humbler means purchase simpler lockets containing silhouettes instead of a full likeness. More than one traveling merchant has secured a tidy sum of money selling such items to hamlets of impressionable young ladies. Certain daring aristocrats have even taken to wearing their lockets outside of social functions as a sign of their station, which is considered somewhat scandalous by proper society and downright shocking in the more rural areas of the land.

## Language

I understand that originally there were two similar yet subtly different dialects of Mordentish, one spoken by the nobility and another, coarser version spoken by the common folk. While the two dialects have since blended into one tongue owing to the depredations of time and the disappearance of the noble class, a good number of phrases and even some isolated pockets of the dialects yet remain, especially in the more remote reaches of the region. This experience can come as a surprise to the traveler who, like myself, thinks herself fluent in the local tongue, only to occasionally find



## Mordentish Primer

Having already introduced the basics of the Mordentish tongue, I will use the rest of the primers in this volume to expand upon that vocabulary.

## Mordentish Dialects

English	Low	High
day	<i>dæg</i>	<i>jour</i>
night	<i>niht</i>	<i>nuit</i>
sun	<i>heathusigel,</i> <i>sôl, sunne</i>	<i>soleil</i>
moon	<i>môna</i>	<i>lune</i>
town	<i>tûn</i>	<i>ville</i>
inn	<i>hûs, inn, tôcirhûs</i>	<i>auberge</i>
spirit	<i>feorh, gâst,</i> <i>(evil) scucca</i>	<i>fantôme</i>
ocean, sea	<i>holm, mere,</i> <i>(seashore) brim</i>	<i>océan, mer</i>
mist, fog	<i>lyfthelm, mist, nîp</i>	<i>brume,</i> <i>brouillard</i>

large gaps in her understanding even when she is certain the person to whom she is speaking is still addressing her in the same language! Naturally, I have done my best to catalogue a number of these words and phrases in an effort to prepare others who might face the same difficulty; a primer can be found later on in this account.

As for the tongue itself, it is a deep, rather guttural language whose dichotomous origins are clearly evident when one listens to it. The language is a curious mixture of shorthand expressions and rather standoffish utterances, which are used liberally throughout everyday life by even the most refined aristocrats, balanced against a tendency to describe certain things at great length, often with very descriptive and elaborate metaphors. Common people or those long accustomed to each other's company can have whole conversations with nothing more than a brief exchange of rapid, almost unintelligible short phrases.

On the other hand, Mordentish folk meeting each other in a formal environment or who wish to display great respect to another can summon up

concise but eloquent language to rival any orator. The effect can be quite jarring, especially if one has only known a Mordentish acquaintance in one capacity or the other. To hear a refined aristocratic colleague converse in the hearty banter of the innkeeper or a hired maid address one as politely as any society matron can be a disconcerting experience. Furthermore, as befits a land so occupied with gossip and whispered superstitions, storytelling is a finely honed but quietly practiced art among these reserved folk. Those who "spin a good yarn" are welcome around any hearth, but those who are perceived as overly flamboyant performers or simply interested in boasting about themselves are dismissed as self-important fools. There is a fine line between knowing how to speak this language well and "putting on airs" with it; the natives keep careful track, either way.

## Lifestyle & Education

Mordentish folk, common and noble alike, pride themselves on their simple, honest lifestyles. An average Mordentish commoner rises early and eats a simple meal of bread, eggs, and tea or milk before tending his farm, firing his forge, or running his small shop. On holidays or other special occasions, breakfast may include jams or jellies for the bread or a small bit of fruit. As this is all done before sunrise, leaving candles at one's bedside is customary so that they are readily at hand when one needs to rise in the morning. Work is then conducted as normal until noontime. Most of the common folk take leave of their chores and duties and head back to the farmhouse or to the local tavern for a more substantial lunch of meat, bread, and some vegetables when available, served with either weak ale or warm wine. Given the frequently sparse crops in the realm, this meal is often served as a stew with a potato or tomato base in order to stretch the meager rations a bit farther. Conversation at the lunch hour is frequently very quiet and business-like, as many store owners take the time to make deals and haggle with each other over materials or to entertain visiting merchants in a similar fashion. Particularly religious Mordentish folk may also visit the local chapel of Ezra during their lunch ime for a brief observance as well as to speak to the anchorite about matters both religious and secular. Lunch is kept rather short, however, as few common folk have much time to spare indulging their appetites, and before long it is back to the fields or the store to continue with the day's business.





Work continues until mid-afternoon, at which time it is customary for most common folk and all of the nobility to take a break for hot tea and a light refreshment of toast, small baked confections, and the like. Tea is also a prime time for making social visits, as opposed to the more businesslike lunch hour. Many Mordentish folk use this break to come calling on dear friends or relatives; courting couples also commonly spend this time together, though never without a chaperone, of course. Although this may seem an odd indulgence for such a forthright and hard-working people, one should remember that Mordentish weather is frequently less than pleasant. Between the ever-present chill and the light to heavy rain that marks at least one or two days a week, this break evolved from a need to ensure that farm hands did not catch ill from the inclement weather from being out too long at a time. What was created from simple need by the common folk has become quite a lavish occasion for much of the nobility. They take great pains to have only the finest teas and refreshments and keep careful track of who calls upon whom to see where the currents of favor and trend are heading. Regardless of station, tea lasts for perhaps an hour or so, at which time work resumes until sundown.

By contrast, a day for a nobleman or gentlewoman still begins early, but generally with a bit more substantial repast — strips of bacon, cheese, more fruit, and so on, as well as mixed wine or pure water. Those who own estates in the country then often spend their morning either overseeing work in the field or leading the servants in the upkeep of the house, as appropriate. Compared to nobles of other lands, Mordentish nobles typically work a great deal more (though this contrast is generally unknown to the common folk under them), a fact that is the cause for some hilarity and ridicule at the hands of foreign nobles. Those of a more urbane disposition either oversee the running of their businesses or amuse themselves at small social gatherings during the day, though once again not to the decadent excess of many other lands. There simply is not enough wealth in Mordent to support such lavish lifestyles as exist in other lands, though this should not be confused with these folk living poorly by any means.

Mordent's nobles take pride in not distancing themselves too far from their fellow men. The only concessions to their noble status during the day are the slightly elevated quality of food they eat during meal times and the inclusion of an additional meal,

which comes at midmorning and is referred to as such. This meal most often features a light refreshment of tea, cold drinks, and toast. Many common folk find this idea rather laughable and refer to it as "wig's breakfast," in reference to the fact that only the stuffiest and most well off nobles generally indulge in it. Naturally enough, they also tend to take slightly longer meals than their common associates, most particularly the ladies, who frequently stay at tea for most of the afternoon.

One activity both noble and commoner enjoy, however, is that after sundown has come and the last of the day's chores are handled, Mordentish folk frequently congregate at the local tavern again, this time as a highly social gathering. A hot meal of stew or roasted meat is served, as well as ale, warmed wine, or strong liquor, and conversation heads to the areas of gossip, folktales, and current events. Although they remain somewhat prideful and reserved in the presence of strangers, Mordentish folk enjoy few such inhibitions with each other and have made a fine art of holding ordinary-sounding conversations that nevertheless manage to convey the most scurrilous and speculative details about their neighbors.

Another rather startling quality is the fact that the Mordentish, who are very fond of their dogs in general and of fox-hunting in particular, allow these animals in their taverns without a second thought. Upon entering a busy tavern, not only does one encounter a din of conversation but also the sound of barking and howling dogs, which frequently chase each other or errant food scraps, giving one pause at any attempt to cross the already crowded, dimly-lit rooms. I might also note that while dogs are allowed in taverns, especially prized hunting dogs, one's children are not, leaving one parent — most commonly, but not always, the mother — to stay at home and care for the children while their spouse enjoys a night spent socializing with the neighbors. "Dogs can be trained to behave in public," so the Mordentish saying goes, "but children are another matter."

Mordentish children thus spend a great deal of their time at home, which is hardly surprising considering that many parents still prefer to educate their children themselves whenever possible. Lessons begin early in the morning and are interrupted only for the performance of necessary chores and the observance of meal times, with many older children burning a candle late into the night as they study the day's lessons. Teaching is usually





considered a wife's duty, though certain wealthy merchants or educated noblemen prefer to handle this matter themselves, particularly when the children grow older, leaving their wives to run their affairs in the meantime. Reading, writing, arithmetic, local history, geography, and religious practices are subjects with which children are expected to be at least conversant, and those who show promise and have the means to pursue their studies will often study philosophy, theology, and the sciences as well. Some larger villages have built schoolhouses where the local children can gather and be taught in a group by a single teacher. This innovation still has a long way to go in Mordent, as most common folk school their children at home not only out of pride but also by necessity. If the children must travel into town for lessons, they are not handy to help in the fields or mind the shop when they are needed. Mordent offers no institutes of higher education as such in Mordent; those who wish to pursue their studies to such a degree must either head for nearby Dementlieu or find a private tutor.

Courtship and marriage in Mordent are, as with many things, a very practical affair. While the role of the heart is not denied, both sexes are encouraged to seek spouses who can also provide a solid foundation for a future family as well as continue the family business when possible. When Mordentish young men and women come of age to begin considering such choices, they are allowed to socialize with the rest of the town at the local tavern at night, though never without the watchful eye of a chaperone. Those who fancy each other often begin writing letters and dropping by during tea or other breaks, and those who have proven their devotion to each other through a proposal of marriage are also allowed to take walks together, with their chaperone following out of earshot. Should the marriage be deemed especially impractical or ill-considered, however, the parents of either child have the right to refuse permission to marry. The church is expected to honor this decision. Short of eloping, which virtually ensures that the couple will never be welcome at home again, there is little the two young people can do in such a situation. The families cannot really force a marriage on a young couple, though they are of course free to apply whatever pressure they can muster in order to "persuade" a couple if they desire. This course of action is most common when an illicit tryst has produced a child, though this is

by no means the only time. Once married, the couple is expected to stay together unto death; divorce is equally unheard of, and thus most Mordentish folk choose their mates very carefully.

I should also note that the Mordentish people place a great deal of value on respect for one's elders, to such a degree that such respect sometimes even supersedes other social considerations, often to the surprise of foreigners used to more rigid hierarchies. An elderly but wise tanner, for example, is more likely to have his opinion hold weight in a dispute than a headstrong young nobleman; likewise, the word of the eldest noble in an area is often an unofficial form of law, should he care to exercise such authority. While the nobility can choose to enforce their birthright more officially to overrule a resident worthy in such matters, most are loathe to do so. The local population views such an action as quite crass and uncouth — not to mention that few of the common folk will heed a noble's word after this kind of behavior. Elders are always referred to by their full title, even by family members, until they give one leave to do otherwise, and those who strike or otherwise harm or harass an elder without dire cause can expect a swift and violent reaction from the local populace.

## Attitudes Toward Magic

Mordentish folk have a curious attitude toward magic, especially arcane magic. While they do not deny that it can have beneficial effects, they take care to hold practitioners at arm's length, as though always afraid that at any moment they will unleash some kind of dark energy or terrible curse. "Don't visit evil, and it won't visit you" is the common response natives give when questioned about this particular attitude. While they do not assume that all arcane spellcasters are in league with nefarious forces, that arcane magic stems from otherworldly forces beyond mortal ken is an accepted premise. Therefore, those who seek to command such powers are at best open to corruption by these same forces, no matter how powerful or disciplined they seem.

Those who show a talent for arcane studies are all potentially dangerous, no matter what their motives might be. Sorcerers are even more distrusted, due to the innate nature of their gift, and are commonly referred to as "fey-touched" (not to be confused with half-elves, who often receive the same appellation) or "spirit-touched." Bearing a child with magical potential is not cause for great





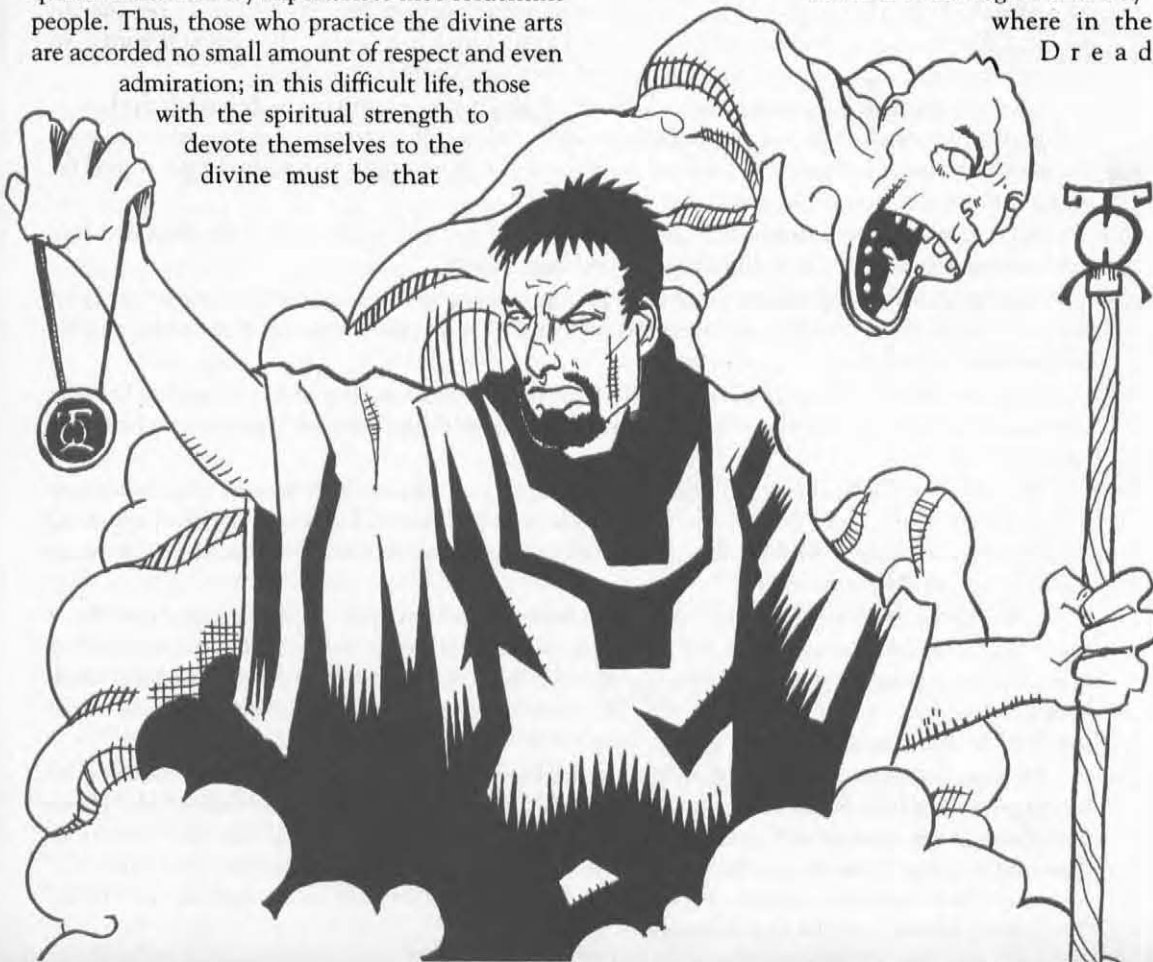
scandal, but it is not something to celebrate either, and those who delve into the arcane arts quickly find themselves distanced from their neighbors, often even their close friends and family members. Of course, given the natural inclination toward isolation exhibited by many practitioners of the craft, this situation is sometimes an advantage in pursuing one's studies in peace and quiet, but the social consequences should never be overlooked, especially in such a small and tightly knit land.

## The Church of Ezra

On the other hand, divine magic is considered a relatively normal and even accepted part of daily life. Naturally, no small part of this attitude is due to the extensive presence of the church of Ezra, which is covered in more detail later, and the aid it provides in laying to rest the many unquiet spirits that haunt Mordent's restless soil. In many ways, divine arts are considered one of the only sure paths to spiritual protection and a quiet afterlife, two qualities that are very important to the Mordentish people. Thus, those who practice the divine arts are accorded no small amount of respect and even admiration; in this difficult life, those with the spiritual strength to devote themselves to the divine must be that

much more possessed of inner strength and devotion. I should perhaps note that in referring to the divine practices of Mordent, I am referring almost exclusively to the followers of Ezra; other faiths are represented so rarely and so far between that they are essentially irrelevant. Indeed, the respect given to those of faith is at times entirely reversed if it is revealed that the person in question follows a different deity. Most Mordentish folk take the very traditional view of Ezra's teachings and believe that followers of other faiths should be converted to the truth of Ezra for their own good. The only other faith to establish any kind of foothold in the land is that of the witches of Hala. As usual, their presence remains secretive and isolated, confined to covens in remote reaches and the occasional wise woman who aids her community with worldly affairs and minor magical remedies.

Naturally, given the prevalence with which the Mists creep throughout this land, it is also no surprise that Mordent is home to perhaps the most devoted following of Ezra anywhere in the  
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Realms. Mordentshire itself is the proud home of the sect of Ezrans most openly dedicated to doing good in their entire faith, without the “forced conversions” of their sister faith in Nevuchar Springs. From their regional home at the Church of Pure Hearts in Mordentshire, anchorites of Ezra travel forth on missions of mercy across the land, healing the sick, ministering to the faithful, and at times leading efforts to exorcise or destroy malignant evil spirits plaguing a community. Like most Mordentish affairs, the faith of Ezra is not an overtly joyous observation, but rather more of a quiet celebration of the power of life to resist evil and for the light of faith to pierce the impenetrable depths of the Mists. Of late, there have been signs

of unrest within the church as well, though whether as the result of some internal struggle or due to some larger plan being set in motion, I cannot say for certain.

Although this matter falls outside the realm of official church business, I feel that I should also mention that all settlements of any size have an anchorite of Ezra, who ministers to the spiritual needs of the populace and often acts as an advisor to the town’s appointed officials. These anchorites frequently wield a great deal more influence than one would first suspect, given their backgrounds as humble ecclesiastics. A well-liked anchorite can even reverse a magistrate’s decision or a mayoral edict, though those that do had best be prepared to

### Common Mordentish Funeral Customs

Here are the most common customs observed around the time of a Mordentish person’s death, wake, and burial. I urge readers to remember that this list is far, *far* from exhaustive and, if in doubt, always to inquire quietly regarding any additional local customs that require observance as well.

Any clocks in a house should be stopped the moment a person dies, to give him or her time to depart. Likewise, these clocks should be restarted again immediately after the person is buried, in order to show the deceased that his or her loved ones are carrying on with life.

All doors and windows must be unlocked and left slightly open until the body has left the house, so that the spirit can find its way out. Some legends also suggest that after the corpse is removed from the house, the outside windows and doorknobs should be closed tight and rubbed with animal fat to make them slippery, so the spirit cannot come back in.

All mirrors in a house in which a corpse lies should be covered, so the spirit of the deceased does not become confused at the sight of himself and linger there.

Visitors should always knock twice to be let into a house with a corpse inside; one knock is for the undertaker, three knocks is for death himself, and more knocks mean spirits are trying to play tricks on those within.

Dogs should be put outside a house with a body in it, so they can help their master find his way; cats should be kept inside, where they can protect the newly dead from evil spirits until he or she can move on.

All dead, especially the newly dead, desire company. A corpse’s eyes must be closed, because if they are left open, he will try to take someone he sees with him. Likewise, if the dead appear to those they know on the road or in a dream and ask for that person to come with them, one must always refuse or one will die soon after.

Only the deceased’s own possessions must be buried with him or her, but the deceased must have the items he or she most valued in life (or in the case of large items, some piece or representation of it). Placing a personal possession of your own with the corpse means that the deceased will come back to haunt you, if only to return the item. Failure to include an item the deceased loved may cause the dead to delay their journey to go searching for it.

Hearing its full name draws a spirit back to the world. One should never speak the name of the recently dead, or they might come and take revenge for keeping them from the Other Side. Those who speak of the dead should always use a nickname or a title to avoid attracting their attention. This tradition holds true for especially nasty spirits as well, no matter how long they have been dead — hence the Mordentish custom of referring to fearful old ghosts with names such as “Old Jack,” “Mad Mary Bones,” or “the Devil Douglas.”



back their actions with church doctrine or solid popular reasoning if they hope to be successful. Most importantly to some, the position of anchorite is also where women can wield the most overt power in a Mordentish community. Many towns consider the other posts of magistrate and sheriff too base for the fairer sex, and few women are chosen as mayors given that the office passes down through the males of the line. I must confess that I found these opinions somewhat shocking, given the rather egalitarian outlook that the Mordentish take on other matters, but while some of the larger and more well-traveled towns are slowly shedding these old traditions, they remain alive and well elsewhere in the realm. I have included a primer of sorts on Ezra in my Attached Notes for those who desire to know more of the sect's origins.

## The Worship of Hala

I feel that one should also recognize the impact of the worship of Hala on these beliefs. Quite a few remote communities secretly rely on the aid of one of Hala's cunning witches — knowingly or not — to provide minor potions and remedies for daily aches. The witches' particular combination of divine and arcane magic is considered marginally acceptable (if not actually encouraged) by the populace as long as they do no harm with it. One should not mistake this for open acceptance, however, and for each hamlet that relies on a wise woman's quiet skills for aid, another sees it as a sign of dark magic and will seek to drive the practitioners from the area. As a rule, worship of Hala is far from an open affair — so long as followers keep their faith to themselves. Quite often, the witches will take pains to disguise their work as simple herbalism.

I should also note at this time that while the Mordentish folk pride themselves on their faith, one area I observed as notably deficient of this sensibility was their attitude toward folk superstition, most notably superstitions related to the restless dead. Many Mordentish folk live in dreadful fear of the restless dead, believing them capable of inflicting all manner of suffering on the living, yet at the same time the Mordentish do not automatically assume that *all* spirits hold malevolent intentions toward the living. Some are merely lost, eternally seeking a way home, while other sad souls do not even realize the fact of their death and try to continue on with a deathly imitation of their former existence. Thus, despite the fact that they

will certainly not go out of their way to attract the attention of the dead, Mordentish folk do not automatically consider them worthy of destruction either. Yet no one ever knows what changes may have been wrought in even the most pleasant spirits during the trauma of journeying to the Other Side. Most of their superstitions reflect this wary mixture of attitudes, and are simply aimed at seeing to it that spirits are allowed to Cross Over as quickly and easily as possible.

Of additional special note is the celebration known as Nocturne, which embodies both aspects of the Mordentish beliefs regarding the spirit world. The Mordentish believe the border between the living world and the Other Side grows thin on the night of the first new moon in October, and spirits may be drawn home to visit their families — or to try and escape the punishment of the afterlife. Lonely folk who actually desire a visit from their dead loved ones leave their front door unlocked and a glass of wine on the stoop. They are cautioned, however, that once such an invitation is given, they had best be prepared to wait for their intended guest. Spirits who come home to a welcoming sign only to find their host asleep or gone are often said to fly into a terrible rage at such a display of disrespect. By contrast, those who do not want the dead coming home to visit hang ornate tin lanterns patterned after leering, ghastly faces on their front doors, in hopes of scaring off the spirits. While most Mordentish natives, regardless of social standing, give this holiday grim adherence, certain jaded nobles are known to hold balls on Nocturne night. Attendees are expected to come masked "so the spirits will not recognize them" or even dressed as famous ghosts, depending on the tastes of the individuals in question. While such parties are considered quite scandalous by polite society, their forbidden appeal has made them quite popular with more than a few younger nobles; the tales of such parties actually being visited by spirits only makes them more mysterious and alluring.

## The Realm



ime itself has seemingly conspired to wear down the once-mighty noble families that ruled this shrouded land; as outlined previously, of the greater families, only the Weathermays remain, and even their numbers are small in the extreme. This situation does not mean that the family's rule is on



## The Mordentish Hero

**Races:** Given the overwhelming racial makeup of the domain, one should perhaps not be surprised that most Mordentish heroes are human. The majority are drawn from fairly common stock, driven by wanderlust or tragedy to take up the adventurer's path, although a fair number of nobles looking for a diversion or to regain their family's glory can be found in this profession as well. Most foreign heroes in Mordent are sailors who arrive in the realm either at Arden Bay or through the Arden River traffic, though these points of access are by no means the only way for them to arrive. Of all the other races, only half-elves are represented often enough to count as any significant minority, and even they are few and far-between. Most other races avoid dwelling in Mordent for any length of time; or if they do, they form such a small number of the realm's adventuring population as to be essentially irrelevant.

**Classes:** Although one might consider it unlikely given their dour reputation, the Mordentish folk value bards highly as keepers of stories and traditions. The ability of a bard to entertain can help alleviate much of the tedium and depression that can wrack communities during the long winters spent around tavern fires.

With their strong devotion to Ezra, clerics are highly valued in Mordent as well, especially those who make a habit of laying to rest wandering spirits and other restless dead. Few druids are found here. Those that do exist associate themselves with the faith of Hala, keeping the true extent of their knowledge secret from their neighbors.

Many fighters come from the ranks of the common folk to help defend their towns against attacks by wildlife, brigands, and the occasional monstrous enemy. Rangers are slightly less common; those of Mordentish stock have few equals when dealing with their bogs, marshes, and other lowland areas. Paladins are extremely rare, given the somewhat fatalistic outlook of Mordentish folk as a whole, although those few that do emerge are accorded great respect by those who know of them.

Given Mordent's small, insular nature, rogues tend to stay constantly on the move. It does not take long for tales of their past to catch up to them or for the local folk to cast suspicious glances at the stranger from out of town when items go missing. A few live as highwaymen, striking from ambush and waylaying wealthy nobles in transit.

Not many wizards learn their craft in Mordent, and those that do tend to be nobles with the means to hire a private tutor, as no known academies of magical learning exist in this superstitious land. Sorcerers emerge infrequently and are often subject to a great deal of fear and abuse from their fellow townsfolk until they learn to control their gifts.

Native barbarians and monks are so rare as to be unheard of in Mordent; the local culture and history simply do not support either lifestyle very well.

**Recommended Skills:** Alchemy, Balance, Craft (clockmaking, shipmaking, weaving), Diplomacy, Gather Information, Handle Animal, Heal, Intuit Direction, Knowledge (monster lore, religion), Profession (fisher, herbalist, herdsman, lawman, sailor, scribe), Ride (horse), Search, Spot, Swim, Use Rope.

**Recommended Feats:** Alertness, Ancestral Legacy\*\*, Blind-Fight, Brew Potion, Cold One\*, Endurance, Ethereal Empathy\*, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearms), Extra Turning, Ghostsight\*, Great Fortitude, Haunted\*, Hexbreaker\*\*, Skill Focus (monster lore), Weapon Finesse (pistol, rapier), Weapon Focus (pistol, rapier).

**Note:** \* Denotes feat described in **Ravenloft Campaign Setting**

\*\* Denotes feat described in **Van Richten's Arsenal**

**Mordentish Male Names:** Alfred, Allan, Allistair, Andrew, Arthur, Benjamin, Brian, Charles, Christopher, Cyrus, Daniel, Douglas, Edward, Elias, Elijah, Francis, George, Giles, Henry, Hugh, Ian, Irving, Isaac, James, Jeremiah, Jonathan, Joseph, Lawrence, Martin, Matthew, Nathaniel, Neville, Nicholas, Oliver, Owen, Peter, Richard, Robert, Samuel, Silas, Simon, Stephen, Thaddeus, Theodore, Thomas, William.

**Mordentish Female Names:** Abigail, Alice, Alyson, Anne, Annabeth, Beth, Bridget, Candace, Charity, Chastity, Constance, Deborah, Dorothy, Elizabeth, Emily, Esther, Faith, Gennifer, Grace, Hannah, Helen, Hope, Jane, Judith, Julianne, Katharine, Lacey, Laurie, Lillian, Lucille, Lydia, Margaret, Martha, Mary, Mercy, Meredith, Nell, Patience, Prudence, Rebecca, Ruth, Sarah, Susanna, Tabitha, Virginia.

**Mordentish Last Names (Common):** Abbot, Archer, Bennett, Brumfield, Capper, Carpenter, Chandler, Collier, Dodds, Dole, Emry, Fisher, Fletcher, Garrett, Golding, Laxon, Laydon, Lewis, Mutton, Powell, Post, Reade, Sexton, Smith, Sullivan, Sykes, Thatcher, Towtales, Unger, Ward, Weaver.

**Mordentish Last Names (Noble):** Ambrose, Bayard, Creede, Denmarsh, Doyle, Fleming, Hotspur, Houlgrave, Galloway, Livingston, Midwinter, Radcliffe, Rodes-Taving, Rowantree, Saxon, Sickelmoore, Thornedale, Throgmorton, Uffington, Ulminster, Weston-Smythe, Wellington, Wickinson, Wyffrin.



the verge of collapse, however, as it would be in so many other lands should such weakness be evident. At least as far as the public is concerned, the Weathermays continue a bold and heroic tradition, and even the ailing Lord Jules is accorded great respect for his long years of just rule. These legends may serve to stave off the inevitable for a while longer, but in the end, Mordent evidently stands at the cusp of a great change. Either the younger generation of Weathermays will accept their destiny and take hold of the reins of leadership, or else they will sacrifice their family name and the last of Mordent's ruling families in pursuit of some glory they cannot ever really hope to obtain.

As to this land's dread lord, I can hardly believe that Lord Jules fits the criteria I have established in previous ruminations. I can only surmise that the darkness stems from Gryphon Manor in some form or another. I am currently unable to investigate this matter fully but I would hazard a guess that a ghostly presence has managed to seize control of the realm and Lord Jules and his family fight even now to stave off its dread influence.

In the meantime, the daily life of the land around them continues on much as it has for hundreds of years. Farmers work hard to coax sustenance from the unforgiving and treacherous moors, and sailors ply the treacherous waves of the Sea of Sorrow. Riverboats bring trade from neighboring lands up the long and winding Arden River to the bay and back again, while enterprising merchants or visiting nobles make the long and uncomfortable overland journey on the battered Mill Road to reach the small but bustling capital of Mordentshire. Superstitious village folk gather around their hearths after a hard day's labor and swap stories of ghosts and hauntings heard thousands of times before, giving them a good chill and lifting their spirits before heading off to bed to rest, rise, and repeat the day's work the next morning. Aristocrats chase fading dreams of glory while nervously eyeing the empty estates and manor houses they pass on their way through the countryside, wondering which family might be next to leave or disappear. It has not happened in a long time now, so they say, but does that mean it has stopped altogether or simply that whatever thirsts for Mordent's nobles is simply awaiting another target worthy of its attention?

Above it all, high upon the hill overlooking the city it has watched since its infancy, sits Gryphon Manor, still unchanged and ever vigilant, gazing impassively as the people below come and go and the years wash over the area beneath, gradually wearing away everything like surf against the shore. If it has an opinion on the matters concerning the Weathermay family, the precarious state of the nation, or any other matter before it, the House has kept silent — for now.

*After all this speculation on families of the realm you attach no name to this ghostly ruler? Really, your vaunted scholarship appears to have exhausted itself in genealogy and romanticism. Or are you saying the house itself is a dread lord?*

## Government

Government in Mordent has always been a rather informal affair. In the past, the noble families that dwelled within each particular region managed that area. At present, the domain's small population and obedient disposition means that the rulership of the Weathermay family alone is quite sufficient to steer the course of the nation. The rare official affairs of state are conducted in the spacious halls of Heather House, the Weathermay ancestral estate, and visiting dignitaries often comment on how such gatherings are a welcome reprieve from the endless back-stabbing and rumor-mongering that goes on at similar affairs in Dementlieu or Richemulot.

Officially, Lord Jules has the power to tax the nation as well as call upon the population to raise an army for its defense, though in reality the first is seldom exercised and the second never at all. He may also enter into agreements with foreign powers on behalf of the realm or empower representatives to do so, though once again the need for this is often quite minimal, as Mordent generally prefers to keep to itself unless provoked by outside events. Occasionally, Lord Jules issues decrees on other subjects, but he has learned over the years that those few edicts deemed ill-founded or unnecessary by the populace are given token respect at best or simply ignored by the people who disagree with them. He has learned to make such decrees only





when he feels they will carry some weight. As might be expected, the Weathermay family also reserves the exclusive right to appoint mayors in Mordentshire; given their newfound reputation for fairness, such appointments generally are not problematic.

Although on paper the only true authority in Mordent rests with Lord Jules Weathermay himself, I was not surprised to find that these practical people have developed an unofficial but no less observed system of government over time. In most areas, the highest authority rests with the mayor, or "Lord Mayor" as the position is referred to in some of the larger settlements. Despite the additional flourish, however, such a title usually does not indicate true nobility. How one assumes this position depends on the region in general and the town in particular. Along the coast and to the southeast, the mayor is normally chosen by a majority vote of local landholders and serves until such time as another vote is called to remove her. In the north and running south through the heart of the realm, the office of mayor is a quasi-hereditary position: held by a particular family until such time as they no longer desire it, it is forcibly taken from them (quite rare, but not entirely unheard of), or the line dies out and the position is passed to another worthy family.

A mayor's powers and responsibilities vary with the size of the town and the interests of its citizens. In general, these powers include such areas as overseeing new construction, establishing the validity and enforcement of any decrees made by Lord Jules, speaking on behalf of the township to any foreign agents or business associations, and so on. The mayor also holds the privilege to appoint the two other positions of power found in a Mordentish settlement: the magistrate and the sheriff. In smaller towns, a mayor can sometimes be found performing the duties of one of these other positions as well, but never all three — wielding such absolute authority is considered too tempting an invitation to do wickedness.

The magistrate arbitrates any and all disputes that might arise between citizens of the township, from business contracts and petty civil complaints all the way up to crimes most heinous. In the case of particularly difficult issues or atrocious crimes, a tribunal of local magistrates may be summoned from neighboring towns, but this step is reserved for the rarest and most despicable circumstances. Most magistrates serve for at least ten to twenty

years, even if that time carries them through several different mayoral terms. Common Mordentish opinion holds that a magistrate's wisdom is proportionate to how long has held his position, and unseating a long-standing and popular magistrate is one sure way to stir unrest among the populace. All decisions made by a magistrate are considered binding, with appeal possible only through direct petition to Lord Jules or proving beyond a doubt that a previous decision was in error due to the absence of critical facts or some form of judicial corruption. As magistrates can levy fines on those found to have brought a frivolous or baseless complaint before the court, these practices serve to keep the number of cases seen by the magistrate rather small, not to mention reinforce the practice of settling matters privately between parties whenever possible. Foreigners are thus sometimes surprised to find themselves in some dispute with a native, only to have the offended party turn around and offer a chance to "reconcile by the fire," a reference to the place nearest the hearth where such discussions usually take place in a Mordentish home. Most magistrates are well aware of this custom and usually turn a blind eye, often even taking care to keep track of the terms of such unofficial agreements in case the parties should later decide to settle the matter in open court.

If the mayor is the head and the magistrate is the body of the local law, then the sheriff is its reach. A sheriff is responsible for maintaining order in the township, which includes tracking and arresting felons, organizing defenses against attacks by bandits or wild beasts, and investigating any suspicious or criminal activity in the vicinity. To this end, the sheriff is also empowered to appoint deputies, patrolmen, or other investigators to assist in the pursuit of his duties; most such watchmen are volunteers, although the sheriff may press others into service if the need is great. Likewise, the permanence of such positions is relative to a sheriff's needs, as most towns have no need for more than perhaps a pair of semi-regular deputies, while some find it necessary to employ several citizens full-time in such positions. There are only two unofficial but strictly observed rules for deputizations: first, that all deputizations can be canceled at any time by order of the sheriff; second, that only Mordentish natives may serve as deputies in a permanent capacity. Foreigners may offer assistance on a temporary, case-by-case basis as agents and investigators, but only natives may make a career of doing so. Interestingly enough, there are no such restrictions







on the post of sheriff itself (nor mayor nor magistrate, for that matter), although common custom and simple statistics make such foreigners the tiniest of minorities.

Thus, while the positions of mayor and magistrate enjoy some degree of consistency — in duty if not always in scope — the position of sheriff can be very different depending on where in the realm one happens to be. A sleepy hamlet on the Gray Heath might require only a solitary lawman, while the sheriff of a remote thorp on the Verbrek border in the Vale of Twilight might act more as a militia commander than anything else. Neither bears much resemblance to Mordentshire's Lamplighters, an elite force of watchmen and investigators that patrol the city's mist-shrouded streets at the behest of its sheriff, Owen Finhallen. As the sheriff is often the first local official that adventurers and other itinerant personalities come in contact with, for better or worse, bearing in mind the regional differences that can impact this position is important. Lest one forget oneself and wind up on the wrong side of the gallows, remember that even a solitary sheriff for a town of barely three dozen souls is still a local figure with a good deal of power at his disposal, should he be given reason to use it.

I also feel I should note that despite being appointed by the mayor, once in office both the magistrate and the sheriff are considered to be of equal standing with the mayor in matters pertaining to their spheres of influence. For example, the magistrate's rulings cannot be reversed at the mayor's whim, and should the mayor be such a blackguard that his capture for trial is deemed necessary, he cannot command the sheriff to leave him be. Naturally, a corrupt mayor might simply appoint others who share his disposition, but such incidents are all but unheard of even in the most remote parts of Mordent. Such wicked individuals are still but three against an entire township, and if my travels here have proven anything, it is that the Mordentish folk have a natural disposition to resist such petty tyranny, even if they are not overly ambitious folk in other political avenues.

Mordentish watchmen are renowned locally for their courage and tenacity in pursuit of all manner of thugs and villains. They are notoriously hard to bribe or otherwise coerce, since most are lifetime residents of their towns and thus their own family and friends would suffer from criminal activity. The high esteem the watchmen receive is due in no small part to their willingness, night after

## Law Enforcement

Most Mordentish watchmen are suspicious by nature and keen to investigate anything out of the ordinary; however, they are typically extremely superstitious as well, and evidence of supernatural activity will prompt them to seek help immediately. They are extremely wary of strangers and foreigners out after dark and will often arrest them for the slightest of causes in order to ascertain their true intentions. They are not abusive or ignorant by nature, but the product of a fairly insular culture with a heavy amount of superstition; those who approach them politely, especially with a good command of Mordentish, will often find them as helpful and polite in return as one could hope.

**Mordentish Watchman:** Human War1; CR 1/2; Size M humanoid (human); HD 1d8+2; hp 6; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 11 (touch 11, flatfooted 10); Atk +4 melee (1d6+2, crit 18–20/x2, rapier); Face/Reach 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.; AL NG; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

**Skills and Feats:** Intimidate +1, Listen +4, Ride (horse) +2, Sense Motive +2, Spot +4; Alertness, Weapon Focus (rapier).

**Possessions:** Lantern, rapier, horn for sounding alert.

night, to brave the treacherous mists that sweep this land in order to protect their fellow citizens.

One can still find a number of differences region to region and town to town, but following a recent series of sensational exploits involving the famed lawmen, it has become increasingly popular for watchmen across the realm to emulate the dress of Mordentshire's Lamplighters. Thorps may even send a request for one of the actual lawmen to visit and aid local authorities in capturing some villain who has been plaguing them. One can recognize a watchman on duty by his long black coat — always buttoned to the top — and matching tri-corner hat, as well as a snow white scarf worn open during the day and wrapped around the lower half of the face at night to ward off the chill. True inducted members of the Lamplighters wear a silver and black pin fashioned in the shape of a lantern, worn





on the lapel, to complete the outfit — a bold addition given the typical Mordentish view of jewelry described earlier. Most also carry a signature black iron “bullseye” lantern as a badge of office and generally arm themselves with a rapier. Some more well-off or adventurous souls even go so far as to carry a pair of pistols in emulation of Sir Samuel Cosse, co-founder of the Lamplighters and still its highest-ranking investigator, second only to Owen Finhallen himself. However, the suspicion borne towards these sometimes unreliable weapons has reserved this flourish for only the wealthiest and most daring of the lawmen.

## Economy

Mordent prides itself on self-sufficiency in economic matters. While a profitable trade arrangement has been made possible by the Treaty of Four Towers with Dementlieu, Richemulot, and Borca, Mordent does all it can to ensure that it is not overly reliant on any foreign power for essential goods and services. Fortunately for this rather standoffish land, the small population and remote nature of settlements naturally aid this goal. Most common farmers and artisans have no interest in items from far beyond their village and cannot wait the weeks required to obtain items by river trade when the harvest is ready today. Add in the pride that Mordentish folk take in living life on their own terms, and you have an independent streak that is hard to deny.

Mordent’s most significant trade comes from the sea, as fresh seafood sells at a premium in Dementlieu and generates a great deal of Mordent’s annual income. Another traditional source of profit is the sale of ships. While the size of Arden Bay and the scattered other moorings in the realm mean that only a few ships are built a year, the quality of the product and the rarity of numbers has produced a small but very lucrative market for Mordentish ships sold abroad. While not the largest or fastest ships on the waves, they are known for their excellent durability in rough weather as well as their uniquely designed keels, which allow them to navigate much shallower waters than other vessels of comparable size. Another coastal export is chalk, which is readily available from the high cliffs along the coast, as this unique substance is much sought after by universities, theatre companies, and even the occasional alchemist. While mining the chalk can be dangerous work, as most miners simply work the cliff faces directly through an elaborate system

of pulleys and harnesses, it is quite profitable as well, ensuring that for every tragic accident several more workers are willing to take the risk.

While most of the farming done in Mordent goes directly to sustain the native populace, a certain amount of it is exported every year to fetch a respectable price abroad. Though Mordentish beef is generally considered rather tough for most foreign palates (the reason local folk mostly prefer it in stews, as I quickly learned), the grains and flour grown here are actually quite excellent, especially considering the difficult soil from which they are coaxed. Naturally enough, where excellent barley and hops are available, one will soon find ale as well, and if Mordent has another notable export it is its alcohol. Not especially known for their drinking ways (though certainly no strangers to taverns), the Mordentish people have nevertheless perfected an excellent ale. Somewhat on the bitter side, it has a thick, rich flavor and a welcome if somewhat unsettling tendency to taste cold for quite some time, even if it left out on a warm day. Another popular recipe is to serve this ale warmed and mixed with sugar or spices, especially during the colder months and on holidays; heavily diluted versions of this sugared ale are even served to children at such times, though always under careful supervision. Mordentish ale is a particular favorite of sailors who frequent cold climates and has earned a small but loyal market outside the realm’s borders, again fueled in part by the fact that relatively little ale is exported each year, with the majority being consumed within Mordent herself.

Last of Mordent’s significant economic assets is wool. While once again a large volume of the wool produced each year is used to clothe the populace of this bitter land, the demand for the material is especially high in Dementlieu and other northern territories, where it fetches an excellent price for its warmth and durability.

## Diplomacy

As a general rule, Mordent has as little as possible to do with the lands beyond its misty borders as it can afford. The sole exception is the Treaty of Four Towers, which aligned Mordent with Dementlieu, Richemulot, and Borca. While not especially isolationist, Lord Jules is still more than a little wary of the neighbors all around his small domain and keeps them at arm’s length to discourage any of them from getting too many ideas about how easy it might be to try to take his small





protectorate. Even those Mordentish folk who desire greater contact with foreign nations acknowledge that their domain's lonely landscape and less than welcoming inhabitants pose a substantial barrier to increasing contact and trade with other realms.

**Borca:** Relations with Borca remain surprisingly good considering the land's reputation for treachery and backstabbing. It is in the best interests of both lands to remain united against the constant threat of invasion from Falkovnia, and so the Mordentish folk seldom see much of the oily nature for which this domain is known. Indeed, quite a few consider the Borcan people to be suffering under an unjust reputation, though this is quickly cured for those diplomats who actually travel to Borca in the course of their duties. Still, as the nearer of the two to their mutual enemy, Borca is more likely to need direct aid from Mordent than the other way around. The Borcans take great pains to orchestrate matters to present the best possible face to their ally, so the Mordentish never guess the extent of the trouble in this oppressed land.

**Dementlieu:** As unlike as they seem on the surface, Mordent and Dementlieu are tied by a number of old alliances and common ancestors between many of their lesser noble families, and both have been quick to exploit this connection when in need of aid from the other. Thus, they enjoy a rather disjointed and somewhat deceptive partnership. During times of peace, they may exchange jibes at each other's expense, but come a time of true need, Mordent provides a firm backbone and steady hand to support Dementlieu's somewhat less than valiant forces. The partnership is more functional than it appears on the surface — one that has taken enemies by surprise on several occasions. While neither would care to share much in the way of culture with each other, both stand ready to defend their cousin should she call for help.

**Falkovnia:** As the clearest and most direct external threat to Mordent's sovereignty, this brutal land receives not even the slightest official consideration, and despite the relative lack of any direct aggression against Mordentish folk, the bad blood against Falkovnia runs deep throughout the realm. For its part, Falkovnia does not consider Mordent a worthy target for its attention, which is probably the only reason Drakov has not mounted a full invasion in the past — opulent Dementlieu or resource-wealthy Borca make much better tar-

gets to the hungry Falkovnians, not to mention its ancestral enemy Darkon. Mordentish strategists thus know that they had best take care not to pull the dragon's tail. While their allies would certainly help even the odds, Falkovnia's military might could do a devastating amount of damage to the land if Drakov was truly determined to try and take Mordent, a situation the Mordentish would rather not provoke.

**Richemulot:** They may not have blood ties as they do to Dementlieu or the eager partnership of Borca, but the Mordentish are still fond of Richemulot in their own fashion. While the former of their allies often treats them like a backward cousin and the latter sometimes seems a bit *too* eager to remain in their good graces, the Richemulot are generally straightforward with them, and the Mordentish gladly return the favor. While they are candid, however, they are still careful to give exactly the information requested, and no more — what the Richemulot can do with even the smallest bit of gossip is legendary in Mordent, and so while very forthright, official communication between the two nations is always just that, official. Those diplomats who find themselves stationed in Richemulot often realize not long into their stay that they must be extremely cautious in what they say around their hosts. While not generally a problem for the taciturn Mordentish, it can still land the unwary in a great deal of trouble very quickly.

**Valachan:** Officially, the only relationship that exists between Mordent and Valachan is one of trade agreements and mutual border patrols. Unofficially, Valachan occasionally makes overtures of trying to deepen political ties to its neighbor, but Mordent has no intention of furthering their relationship with this "uncivilized" land any more than absolutely necessary. Fortunately for both sides, such attempts are sporadic at best, punctuated by long periods of proud independence on the part of Valachan. This situation suits the Mordentish people just fine. The only persistent complaint rests in the abduction or slaying of travelers near the border, which occurs several times a year. The authorities in Valachan have proven unable or unwilling to put a stop to this, which only serves to heighten Mordentish perceptions of the Valachani as "savages" who do not truly understand the rule of law.

**Verbrek:** If Valachan is considered uncivilized by the Mordentish, then Verbrek is downright wild. A sliver of common border forces Mordent to





accept a small amount of trade and travel from this unsettling realm each year. Even so, the Mordentish are eager to keep all contact as minimal as possible. Natives of this land are greeted with suspicion bordering on outright paranoia when they choose to visit. Many grim legends circulate through Mordentish taverns concerning the barbaric customs of these people, and the periodic reports from border towns of wild howling in the night and of great beasts stalking the forest do little to assuage their fears. Proximity may force the Mordentish to allow a certain amount of contact, but great care is taken to ensure that such contact remains as isolated and well-contained as possible.

**The Sea of Sorrows:** This body of water forms Mordent's other great border. From its access point at sheltered Arden Bay to the half-dozen mooring points along the coast where smaller ships may dock, the sea is one of the great trading routes of Mordent. It provides a steady if not spectacular source of income for many natives in the form of fishing and other maritime pursuits. Like all sailors, Mordentish crews are highly superstitious regarding the fog-enshrouded waters, and tales of ghost ships and other horrors abound in the taverns along the coast. There are some small communities comprised of folk of Mordentish descent who dwell on the islands scattered in the fog, but aside from their ancestry they care little for their mainland cousins, preferring an even more isolated life than most Mordentish folk. This attitude is returned in kind, so long as occasional assistance in rooting out pirates is provided when requested.

## Sites of Interest



While there are many small hamlets and tiny villages with interesting stories and local legends throughout this land, only a few locations of sufficient size and distinction compel me to note their characteristics here. As for the rest of the land, I advise travelers to keep their ears open and remember that each village here has its own traditions and superstitions, which can offer a wealth of interesting information to the attentive as well as provide clues to hidden local dangers.

## Mordentshire

Situated on levees above the natural sheltered harbor of Arden Bay but below the high cliffs that mark either side of the harbor, from a distance Mordentshire appears to be at once as weathered

and timeless as the waves themselves, like so many other port towns. Shore Lane runs along the waterfront in a long path of dark wooden timbers, with numerous stairways rising from the docks to join the main promenade, where a shipping house, several small taverns, and some dusty warehouses wait to receive the ocean traffic and the sailors who work it. One can then venture deeper into the town proper, where the general marketplace is found and much daily business is conducted. Mordentshire's few formal streets are rambling cobblestone affairs that wander between homes and businesses with no particular direction, creating many blind alleys and forgotten corners that travelers had best beware after dark. Construction in the town is done mostly with the same dark timbers from which much of the dock area was constructed. The wood absorbs a great deal of the weather as the years go by, giving all of Mordentshire a perpetual smell of the salty ocean air, even on calm days. It is also perpetually chilly, as Arden Bay seems both to cool the winds and draw up the fog that washes over the city on a nightly basis, and seeing residents wearing heavy coats and thick scarves year-round, particularly after dark, is not uncommon.

Most of the activity in Mordentshire that can be observed is the ordinary practice of tradesmen and common folk related to the sea trade, either receiving goods and getting them ready for market or packing items for the long voyage to distant ports. One also finds the usual number of necessary businesses such as blacksmiths, millers, and tanners, and together with the often rough lot that crew the merchant ships, the downtown area by the bay can get quite rowdy at night, though always behind closed tavern doors.

The housing in this area is quite small but still tidy, with narrow houses sharing long blocks and children playing in the numerous alleyways and few natural patches that remain. It is an odd and uniquely Mordentish touch that even in the supposedly rough-and-tumble neighborhood by the docks, most folk are still quite civil with each other as they pass on the street. While strangers receive their share of cold glares and long silences, fear of common street crime remains relatively quiet. Indeed, one is in more danger of getting lost in the fog-shrouded streets and having trouble finding a resident to ask for directions than in being robbed or assaulted on most nights. What crimes are conducted in this supposedly "notorious" area are the





sort committed behind closed doors or in secret back-alley conferences, although apparently that is enough to keep sheriff Owen Finhallen and his men quite busy.

In contrast to the dark neighborhoods closer to the bay, as one heads uphill nearer the edge of the cliffs that rise above Mordentshire inland, the businesses and residences get increasingly more expensive, until one at last arrives at the mayor's house, which has its back to the cliff itself. This district is the heart of Mordentshire's small but highly active upper class and features the fine Harbor Light restaurant as well as a small theatre and a fashionable clothing boutique. Both Lord Jules and Mayor Foxgrove often host their official receptions in this district, and the sight of carriages winding through the foggy streets to a late dinner has become fairly common. I should note that Van Richten's herbalist shop, now maintained by his nieces, is found on the outskirts of this district. Likewise, the family home of Sir Samuel Cosse, Finhallen's right-hand man and de facto leader of the Lamplighters, can be found here as well. Seeing the officers of that elite order coming and going at all hours of the day to keep Sir Samuel up to date on their various investigations is not uncommon.

Another site of interest is the Chapel of Pure Hearts, where the faithful of Mordentshire gather to pay homage to Ezra, the guardian in the Mists. A beautiful white chapel, especially in contrast to the dark wood and dull stone buildings of Mordentshire proper, it stands at the edge of town on a slight overlook, where just the sight of it can offer some measure of hope and solace to the local residents. Also prominent is the Weathermay family manor, Heather House, which has a sweeping view of the bay and the town below even as it rises on the forbidding cliffs by the sea. Unlike the deserted manor houses that dot the countryside, this stately old residence still retains its vitality, although the weather has definitely made its mark on the house over the years. Indeed, the impression one gets of Mordentshire as a whole is one of a certain stoic, weathered dignity, which the residents embody almost to a one.

The only exception to this atmosphere — and it is a great exception indeed — is the infamous House on Gryphon Hill, which sits on an inland bluff and watches over the town like a silent, brooding sentinel. I made my own expedition to this forbidding landmark, which I shall detail presently. Suffice it to say that one glimpse of that

cursed residence, especially on a night when the moon is high and the howls from the moors carry on the wind, is enough to send even the most cosmopolitan and fearless residents of Mordentshire scurrying for the safety of their homes.

## Where to Stay in Mordentshire

Although several small taverns cater exclusively to the sailors that work the port, and a few boarding houses cater to the farm hands who come to port to sell their goods, Mordentshire has three truly notable inns, particularly for those of the adventuring class. The Old Blackard Inn (good quality food, good quality rooms) sits off the marketplace and has been open for centuries, with a rather haughty attitude to match. Still, the lodgings and food are both excellent and well worth the price in coin and aloof service. For those who wish for a slightly quieter place of lodging than the rest of the boisterous dockside inns, the Beached Mermaid (common quality food, common quality rooms) is a welcome relief. While the rooms and repast are passing fair, the stout walls and taciturn innkeeper ensure that one can get a decent night's rest after a long voyage. Lastly, an elderly matron named Lady Prudence Jennings operates a very exclusive inn, the Blue Rose (good quality food, good quality rooms), out of a converted mansion in the wealthier district of town. Prices are outrageous and reservations often required months in advance for the best rooms, but the service is nothing less than palatial. Part of the reason reservations can take so long is that Lady Jennings goes to great effort to secure any particular needs her guests might have, not to mention the fact that she has her ear to all the best town rumors and society gossip. Those who can afford a place there had best mind their manners and keep their gear clean, but can learn a year's worth of local information in no time if they pay attention and ask the right questions.

## The House on Gryphon Hill

Although it sits little more than a mile from Mordentshire proper, this accursed property might as well be in another world as far as the local population is concerned, as they are about as likely to visit it in their lifetime. All manner of evil and horrifying stories are attributed to it, with each breaking down to a fairly simple tale: unsuspecting visitors or residents move into the house, only to be subjected to all manner of horrors until they flee in terror, swearing never to return. It is thus surprising





to note that only a small number of actual deaths are supposed to have occurred on the grounds, beginning with the tragic death of Lord Wilfred Godefroy's wife and daughter and then his own suicide a year later. One would think that in such a superstitious land as Mordent, the natives would blame such an ominous structure for everything from bad weather to deaths in the family, but such is not the case at all. While they may have invented far more luckless inhabitants in tales than the real house has ever seen, even the wildest tales stop short of crossing into the truly lurid and grotesque. It is almost as though the local residents are afraid of going too far and... and what? Angering the house? Absurd as it sounds, that is the closest I could come to explaining the outlook of the citizenry regarding this forbidding landmark.

Over time, the House itself has become nigh inaccessible in local lore. With a great deal of coaxing and no small amount of bribery, I was finally able to convince one of the older residents to show me the beginning of what was once the great road up to the manor. The entrance is now so

overgrown as to be almost indistinguishable from the forest around it, and the road itself has fallen into such disrepair it is nigh impossible to navigate any other way but on foot. This path can be found branching off from the local Farmer's Walk road by the ruins of the old Soddenter farm. Even with such direction, I can assure you that it may take several attempts to locate this hidden track, as it is so heavily forested that only those with the keenest senses will be able to recognize it without extensive searching.

Let me assure the reader that even once the path has been located, the journey is by no means for certain. The road meanders through the dense, silent forest in a highly elliptical path toward the House, skirting the edge of the moor at all times. I soon learned why the original builders had taken such great pains to avoid the moor when I attempted to cut across it to head directly for the House itself. Almost immediately, I became mired in the ooze and muck, and the fog that perpetually hangs over this blighted patch of land intensified so greatly that I can only suspect some supernatural





influence was at work, though no overt magic could be detected. After several abortive attempts at crossing the open land, I returned to the road to complete the journey to the House.

One arrives at the gates of the House on Gryphon Hill and realizes the intent of the original builder in constructing it on this precise spot: when the fog is low, one can stand at the top of the hill and gaze out over all of Mordentshire below. I can only imagine that the view from the upper floors or the great tower that rises from the house must be quite spectacular under the right circumstances. I might assume at this point that the reader is wondering whether, having made the rest of the journey, I actually entered the House. I must report that I did not. Just as striking as is the view from the House and its grounds, an palpable sense of evil emanates from this structure. From the time I walked past the rusting iron gates, my heart became a thudding drum beat in my ears and the fine hairs on the back of my neck bristled at the unseen threats I could almost see lurking behind the dark windows. Indeed, I am nearly ashamed to admit to such irrational fears — nearly, but not entirely. Regardless of the credence one gives to any of the stories that have circulated about this house in the past, surely not even the most oblivious peasant or hardened adventurer could stand on these infamous grounds and fail to feel the overwhelming malevolence that dwells within. While I mourn the passing of some of my objectivity due to the effects of this place, I feel that it may be equally valuable to note the many danger signs that did this to me. I hope that others who are not equipped to deal with the evil this place represents will perhaps turn back rather than march to certain doom.

I will therefore report all that could be ascertained from an exterior survey of the House and its grounds. The front of the house most prominently features massive oaken double doors, with the Godefroy coat of arms carved in massive relief. According to the inscription on the weathered brass plate found next to them, these doors are an addition originally placed there by Lord Wilfred Godefroy himself, which makes the dedication engraved on it even more ironic: "Pass Through These Doors and Into History." Fine lace curtains, drawn carefully shut, can be seen in every window, even those on the upper floors; if what I was told in Mordentshire was correct, each window had "day curtains" and "storm curtains" of heavier fabric for

ill weather. I'm not sure whether it is more ominous that the day curtains remain, or that the windows themselves remain intact after all this time. The other salient feature on the ground floor is the wide cellar entrance, most likely designed for wagon deliveries, with a sloping dirt path downward that ends in massive ironbound doors. Though abandoned for centuries, there are no marks of any kind of attempted break-in on either set of doors, be it by mortal vandals, curious animals, or anything else. Looking upward, the most noticeable feature is the four cylindrical towers that rise from each corner of the House, though even these impressive flourishes pale in comparison to the magnificent chapel tower that rises from the center of the House. As one gazes up at that spire, there is the indelible impression that the House has not just been dormant but watching somehow, a feeling that does not fade until long after that House and its tower have faded out of sight.

I also feel that it is noteworthy that a small and sadly neglected family cemetery rests on the grounds just south of the House, its gravestones worn smooth, its monuments cracked and broken. Only two graves were still legible, those of Lord Wilfred Godefroy's wife Estelle Weathermay and their daughter Lilia; they appear relatively intact, especially compared to the rest of the land. I did not linger long in the graveyard. I had a most disturbing vision of the long grass beginning to writhe and whisper in the wind, as well as peculiar images from a different time and place, as though I was re-living the life of another, and I fled before these dangers could overpower me. Other than the remnants of its ancestors watching in silent anticipation, however, the House on Gryphon Hill rests atop its perch alone, and whatever dread creatures may linger within, do so apart from living company.

I cannot say that I was entirely satisfied with my inspection of the House. Yet given the circumstances and the powerful aura of evil that resonates from the very walls of the House itself, I feel it was all that I could perform without incurring undue risk. I shall leave it to adventurers more numerous and well prepared than myself to risk further exploration of this accursed property; such brave souls are advised to use the utmost caution, however. If records are anything to go by, they will not have been the first group to attempt to purge that house of its corruption — and they may not be the last.





**Mordentshire (large town):** Conventional; AL LG; 3,500 gp limit; Assets 94,690 gp; Population 2,600; Mixed (human 94%, half-elven 4%, other 2%).

*Authority Figures:* Mayor Daniel Foxgrove, male human Ari6; Sheriff Own Finhallen, male human Ftr9/Lpl6\*.

*Important Characters:* Lord Jules Weathermay Ari10 (see the Attached Notes); Sir Samuel Cosse, male human Ftr6/Rog2/Lpl9\*. See also the entries for George Weathermay and Gennifer and Laurie Weathermay-Foxgrove in **Van Richten's Arsenal Volume 1**.

\* See the Attached Notes for details on the Lamplighter (Lpl) prestige class.

nally, they each worked alone, corresponding as peers regarding their various experiments, until they both realized they had common complaints regarding a lack of readily available supplies of the necessary alchemical quality. Putting their combined intellects together, they came up with a solution that would allow them to acquire the materials they needed as well as continue earning the necessary income to provide for future experimentation. They traveled to the present site of Blackburn's Crossing, then a nameless village of two-dozen souls, and proceeded to build up a trading center rivaled only by Mordentshire itself. The only thing left to chance was the naming of the town itself — to avoid harsh feelings, the two alchemists decided to settle it with a coin toss, and Blackburn's Crossing was officially born. When the town began to prosper, they had the foresight to bring their families to town in order to solidify the deal for future generations, and before long the town accepted their governance in return for the prosperity they fostered. Eventually, the two families became linked by marriage as well as business acumen, and as time passed they became one.

Although the family that once governed Blackburn's Crossing has long since passed into history, the town has kept alive its original tradition of welcoming all businesses equally, both foreign and local, and is second only to Mordentshire in the amount of trade done each year. Visitors to the town these days are often quite surprised by the amount of bustling activity they see, as well as the members of a number of different races who make their home there — a true rarity in this land. Even more out of place is the open atmosphere that accompanies most business and social interactions here, as opposed to the reserved and taciturn manners of the average Mordentish folk. While certainly not gregarious by the standards of many other lands, it is a dramatic shift from other settlements in this realm and a rather welcome one for foreigners who have become accustomed to the somewhat chilly and often downright suspicious reception common throughout Mordent. I must also note that this town is active at nearly all times of the day and night. Lately, the locals have been consumed with rumors that there is talk of stationing a permanent garrison of Lamplighters here to combat some of the illegal elements that flourish in any such trade center. Though I saw no widespread incidence of vice, the natives commonly accept that a

## Blackburn's Crossing

Acting as a center for the river trade as well as local government for much of the southern region of Mordent is the village of Blackburn's Crossing, located on the spot where the two branches of the Arden River run together on their way to the sea. A bustling and somewhat cosmopolitan town, especially for its size, it lacks the certain air of sophistication and history that Mordentshire possesses, but strives to make up for it in energy and no small sense of adventure. For the normally sedate Mordentish folk, that is saying something indeed. The only element out of place is the shell of the Blackburn-Bruce family manor. It literally sits astride the river, with a huge two-story flying walkway of polished red stones connecting the now silent halls on either side, once symbolic of the two great families coming together, now merely testament to a fortune long since lost and a bloodline vanished. The Crossing prides itself on being the first stop of note for many visitors from outside the realm and thus is somewhat more relaxed than many other Mordentish towns regarding the treatment of strangers and the aloofness of its people.

According to the local populace, the Crossing was founded several centuries ago by two master alchemists, Brian Blackburn and Ian Bruce, who had retired after lucrative careers as adventurers to explore the limits of their esoteric science. Orig-







good deal of black market trading goes on behind closed doors — a Mordentish affection for crime if there ever was one.

As well, I might note that while the village itself may be hospitable to those of all races and occupations, having the Crossing as one's place of origin is not necessarily well regarded elsewhere in the land, particularly in the more rural reaches. While Mordentshire has a certain dignity and historical regard to it, the Crossing is seen by more than a few natives as a dangerous place, where ethics are lax and currency is the guiding factor in all interactions. This perception is perhaps unsurprising, given the natural distrust of a more sedate population toward a more active one, but one to consider carefully when traveling throughout Mordent, especially as a foreigner.

### Where to Stay in Blackburn's Crossing

Blackburn's Crossing has almost too many fine taverns, a legacy of its role as a center of commerce and river traffic. The Dancing Lady (good quality food, good quality rooms) is a fine old place near the abandoned manor house and supposedly the original inn where Blackburn and Bruce planned the village's transformation. Both food and service remain excellent there, and the lodgings, while expensive, are commensurate to their price. It is also where the recently elected mayor, Lily Vidicus, a half-elf wizard with a keen eye for business and a (very quiet) interest in alchemy, sometimes hires adventurers to guard important shipments or otherwise assist the town. While widely supported by the local populace, her election has only further cemented the rest of the land's perception that the Crossing is a strange and untrustworthy place. Across town, the Gilded Ladle (common quality food, common quality rooms) remains a popular place for travelers and merchants who do not wish to tax their purse and features traditional storytelling contests on each full and new moon. The Willow's Heart (good quality food, good quality rooms) is the smallest inn in town and actively discourages rowdy traffic with its small bar and cozy rooms; it has become popular with those seeking privacy for one reason or another. Lastly, the Roaring Rapids (common quality food, poor quality rooms) serves the sailors of the river trade, and remains the most rough and tumble of all the places in town, staying loud and bawdy nearly until dawn

**Blackburn's Crossing (village):** Conventional; AL NG; 550 gp limit; Assets 52,720 gp; Population 472; Mixed (human 90%, half-elf 4%, dwarf 2%, halfling 2%, elf 1%, other 1%).

**Authority Figures:** Mayor Lily Vidicus, female half-elf Wiz<sup>9</sup>/Alp<sup>4</sup> (For more information on the Alchemical Philosopher prestige class, see **Van Richten's Arsenal**).

**Important Characters:** Sheriff Jonathan Abrahams, human Ftr<sup>4</sup>/Rog<sup>3</sup>. Magistrate Cold Cerulean, elven Aris<sup>5</sup>. Captain Desmond Bryant, Ftr<sup>3</sup>.

### Tumbledown

By all accounts, Tumbledown is considered a place better avoided by polite society, a refuge for those who would prefer to be forgotten by the world at large. Nestled in the crumbling stone ruins of an older town whose name has long since been forgotten, deep in the heart of the Lightless Wood, Tumbledown is perhaps the only place to re-supply once you have trekked into the heart of this particular wilderness. Travelers are advised to beware the multitude of evil rumors and vicious gossip that surround the place like flies on a carcass. Many say that much can be learned about topics too terrible to be discussed elsewhere, but I feel it only fair to remind those eager to investigate these stores of forbidden knowledge that such lore seldom comes cheap, especially in the rough-and-ready place that is Tumbledown. Nevertheless, during my journey through the Lightless Wood, I stopped in at this disreputable den in order to ascertain whether such rumors were true or not.

Upon first arriving in Tumbledown, one is immediately impressed by the smell of the place — a combination of the natural odors of the swamp as well as greasy cooking fires, bitter ale, and the tanning businesses that ostensibly support this town. It is curiously quiet, though, especially considering its reputation. The only noises that mar the buzzing of the swamp are the raucous sounds that spill out from behind the closed doors of the taverns and the sounds of tradesmen at work. Strangers pass with appraising glances or hardened stares. Neither do anything to set the traveler at ease. It was a while before I realized what else was





missing as I walked the muddy streets: while Mordentish children are never what one would call ever-present, in Tumbledown they are like ghosts, seldom glimpsed except in fleeting moments when their parents require their presence in town on some errand. Given the nature of the business conducted in town, this is perhaps for the best.

Determining exactly what that business was occupied a great deal of my attention in the first nights I stayed there. While the ramshackle houses surrounding the center of town seem to blend into the swamp itself, commerce is apparent once one knows where to look. A blacksmith, three tanners, a boutique of "exotic" items, and a moneychanger are the most apparent businesses, as well as a number of smaller inns and bawdy houses. Only after spending a substantial amount of time in these establishments did I find out what the business of the town might be. Apparently, while a mayor is nominally required, the true powers in town are the business owners, who meet in a council to make any important decisions on behalf of the town before passing such decisions down to the mayor to be made "official." While not outright oppressive, residents hesitantly expressed a certain amount of fear connected to disobeying this unofficial council and cited previous businesses or residents who were driven from the area or even "disappeared" in the swamps one night.

After seeing the mayor myself, a drunken wreck of a man who performs his duties with disconsolate fatalism, I understood some of these concerns. I admit to a certain curiosity as to why a group of merchants would express such a vested interest in a miserable, out-of-the-way location as this, when surely those of such drive could easily establish themselves elsewhere. Indeed, the only inkling I had of a greater purpose to this town's existence was several passing references, heard as whispers and nothing more. They spoke of how these merchants believed that some great store of riches was hidden in the swamp, perhaps left over from the blighted family that used to hold this foul territory. Treasure... and maybe something greater. What that might be, I never heard, and not long after hearing even that I was informed very discretely but no less firmly that my welcome in town

was at an end. While I certainly did not fear what the simple folk of this place could do to me, it did mark the end of any willingness to speak with me, and so I felt moving on was best. Still, perhaps one day I shall return and learn exactly what has made this town so resilient for so little apparent reason.

## Where to Stay in Tumbledown

Tumbledown houses several inns ranging from the suspect to the downright squalid. The Leering Jester (common quality food, common quality rooms) and the Weeping Lady (common quality food, common quality rooms) are the most luxurious, if that can be the term for them, seeing as how they are dirty and of moderate quality at best compared to the tidy inns elsewhere in the land. One is advised to keep guard, especially for the first couple of nights, as thieves are reputed to make attempts at valuables until suitably discouraged. The other tavern of any note is the Happy Devil (poor quality food, poor quality rooms), which doubles as a house of ill repute and is also the supposed gathering place of this secret town council. My one attempt to get close enough to determine the accuracy of this account was rebuked by several thuggish individuals who blocked my path, and not wanting to bring too much attention to myself, I quietly passed through rather than give them as much argument as I would have liked.

**Tumbledown (hamlet):** Nonstandard; ALN; 120 gp limit; Assets 13,720 gp; Population 294; Isolated (human 98%, half-elf 1%, other 1%).

**Authority Figures:** Mayor Alfred Montrose, male human Ari3.

**Important Characters:** William Tanner, male human Rog6; Langley Westmoore, male half-elf Brd5; Simon Abbot, male human Clr2/Rog4; Francis Mutton, male human Ftr6/Rog2.



## Parting Thoughts



As I depart this chilly, fog-enshrouded land, I cannot help but think that it has some greater role in the scheme of things than is immediately apparent when first laying eyes upon its blighted, forlorn terrain. Its tiny population still clings to its foolish superstitions such as islands in the ever-present mists; its rolling miles remain full of nothing but empty, decaying manor houses and haunted, wind-swept moors. Surely, this half-forgotten land cannot once have been host to the kind of powers and personages hinted at in the depths of its history? And yet the evidence is too pervasive and intriguing to be so easily dismissed. I know that the natives speak lies when they claim with confidence to know what transpired here or where the great noble houses have gone, yet the truth beneath their lies is more fantastic by far. If nothing else, the

fact that Van Richten saw fit to scurry back here after his many exploits must say something about this place — for, though he was many things in life, not one of them was foolish. Perhaps he saw this land and its spirits lurking behind every corner and saw something I could not quite place... but then again, perhaps Mordent simply suited his own fevered imagination, always jumping at shadows of things from the past.

With a Weathermay once again off on a foolish crusade and two more young ones waiting in the wings to assume their family's hopeless mantle, if nothing else the personages that emerge from this land merit attention. For humble as it may appear to the eye and miniscule as it may seem compared to the nations that surround it, Mordent has surprised the powerful once before — and may yet do it again.





# Report Three: Richemulot

*Below me, there, is the village, and look how quiet and small!*

*And yet bubbles o'er like a city, with gossip, scandal, and spite;*

*And Jack on his ale-house bench has as many lies as a Czar;  
And here on the landward side, by a red rock, glimmers the Hall;*

*And up in the high Hall-garden I see her pass like a light;  
But sorrow seize me if ever that light be my leading star!*

*— Alfred, Lord Tennyson, Maud, Part I*



s the dreary moors of Mordent faded from view and I crossed the border into Richemulot, I initially found few signs of the bustling realm about which I had heard so much. Instead, I encountered

only tranquil, sun-dappled woodlands and fields of swaying wheat. At times, I passed farmers' wagons laden with apples or jugs of milk, and the driver would offer me a polite but guarded nod. The roiling cauldron of urban vigor and aristocratic intrigue that I envisioned seemed a thousand miles away.

As I traveled closer to Pont-a-Museau, however, it soon became apparent that the true frontiers of Richemulot lie not in her pastoral countryside, but at the edges of her cities. The clues that I approached a thriving city included not only a surge of traffic on the roads and the unmistakable odor of unwashed humanity, but a curious din as well. As I drew nearer, this sound escalated until I could tease it apart into its components. There was the creaking and sighing of wood and stone, the harsh racket of men going about their trade, and the ceaseless murmur of thousands of voices. All of these sounds echoed off the wide boulevards and towering facades, which amplified the commotion and whipped it into a dull, throbbing moan. It was, I surmised, the sound of a city breathing.

As I walked the city's streets and alleys, though, I became aware of yet another sound far beneath this drone. Initially, it was quite faint, as if emanating from behind a thick wall. As the din of the city receded with dusk, however, this other noise rose up to take its place. It had a soft, skittering quality to it that was somehow disturbing, like a wicked schoolgirl tittering. When I queried a troop of watchmen on the matter, they identified this sound with grim certainty: the city's rats, squealing and scabbling about in the sewers beneath the streets. The Richemuloise drift asleep every night to the sound of this writhing horde, inescapably dwelling on the dread secrets that lie buried in their ancient cities.

## Landscape



Richemulot boasts an idyllic countryside — a mosaic of lush virgin forests, gently rolling river valleys, and open farmland and pastures. The rural areas of the realm remain relatively uninhabited

when compared to the bustling urban centers,

## Richemulot at a Glance

**Cultural Level:** Chivalric (8)

**Ecology:** Full

**Climate/Terrain:** Temperate forest, hill, and plains

**Year of Formation:** 694 BC

**Population:** 45,330; 4,390 wererats

**Races:** Humans 93%, Halflings 5%, Half-Vistani 1%, Other 1%

**Human Ethnic Groups:** Richemuloise 78%, Borcans 9%, Falkovnians 7%, Nova Vaasans 3%, Darkonians 2%, other 1%

**Languages:** Mordentish\*, Balok, Falkovnian, Halfling, Vaasi, Darkonese

**Religions:** Ezra\*, Hala

**Government:** Hereditary aristocracy

**Ruler:** Jacqueline Renier

**Darklord:** Jacqueline Renier

lending the countryside a sleepy, almost lonely air. By day, traveling through rural Richemulot can be a pleasant affair, but at night the atmosphere turns harrowing. Though few city folk know it, sightings of ghosts are not unusual in the country, where distant, mysterious wailing and laughter fills the nocturnal air. While camped in the countryside by moonlight, I often saw ephemeral figures creeping through the trees or lingering along the banks of the Musarde River.

The mighty Musarde is the defining landmark of the realm, the backbone and lifeblood of commerce here. The river is broad through Richemulot, and its current is strong and steady. The ubiquitous river barges and occasional steam-powered paddleboat carry a constant stream of goods both in and out of the realm. Besides serving as a trade artery for the cities, the river also splits Richemulot into east and west, a significant division in what is otherwise a tedious, patchwork landscape of woodlands, meadows, and farmsteads.

Folk refer to the region west of the Musarde River as *les Champs Silencieux* (the Silent Fields). This is Richemulot's farming heartland, where vineyards, pastures, and fields of rustling grain break up a wooded floodplain. In contrast to the menacing forests of Verbrek, the woodlands of the



Silent Fields are pleasant havens, full of sunbeams and fragrant herbs. The trees are ancient and towering, but not so dense as to swath the forest floor in perpetual shadow. Aromatic, flowering shrubs and vines thrive in the rich, brown soil of the region, which lends a distinctive sweetness to the local red wines. As one travels west, the moors of eastern Mordent gradually swallow the landscape of the Silent Fields, the earth becoming loamy and black and the trees sparser and more twisted.

Hundreds of shallow, overgrown ponds dot the Silent Fields, often accompanied by windmills built of smooth river stones. *Le Lac Halètements* (the Gaspung Lake) lies in the heart of the region, its murky waters concealing bountiful schools of darting fish. The lake has no significant inlets or outlets, and thus the shape of its shoreline is strongly dependent on seasonal variation in the rains. During droughts, the waters recede dramatically, revealing stranded frogs and reeds that choke wide mudflats. Conversely, heavy rains can nearly double the lake's area, drowning nearby farms and transforming the surrounding woodlands into eerie bog forests.

For all their pastoral quaintness, the Silent Fields have a growing reputation as brigand country. The proximity to the Musarde, sparse supernatural threats, and lack of any strong law enforcement have created an ideal environment for criminals. Several notorious mercenary companies, including the Bitter Flame and the Serpents of Doom, are thought to hole up in the Silent Fields when not occupied abroad. Even more troubling to some Richemuloise nobles are the rumors of a complex network of Nova Vaasan chattel slavery running throughout the western Core, a network with a supposed nexus in the Silent Fields. If they exist, these alleged slavers have not yet turned to victimizing the local Richemuloise peasantry, which may be the only factor keeping Renier soldiers out of the region.

East of the Musarde River lies a densely forested region set on a limestone plateau, slightly higher in elevation than the Silent Fields. The locals call this region *la Maison des Savants* (House of the Sages). Though it could hardly be called hill country, this area is much more rugged than the western lands. Isolated farms and cottages break the ancient forests only occasionally; instead, there are clearings strewn with lichen-encrusted cobbles, hermits' caves set into low hillsides, and the crum-

bling ruins of castles, abbeys, and towers. Here, one can find, for example, the remnants of Tinctnoire Manor, where the hourly tolling of the tower bell fell silent one fateful night, releasing vengeful ancestral shades. The legendary Castle with No Gate purportedly lies in this region, as well, where a beauteous and nameless Maiden waits to be delivered from her enchanted imprisonment. The calm, crystalline waters of the River of Sacrifices drain the House of the Sages, joining the Musarde near Pont-a-Museau.

The House of the Sages has been steeped in esoteric strangeness since Richemulot first appeared in 694 BC. While common criminals may find sanctuary in the Silent Fields, the House of the Sages instead harbors those whose creeds and deeds are distasteful to the world beyond. Unorthodox religious groups, including cloistered orders, mystery cults, and outright heresies surface in the House of the Sages with curious frequency. Though arcane spellcasters are uncommon in Richemuloise society at large, many sorcerers and wizards dwell in seclusion in this region, gathering arcane power and honing their skills. Indeed, some Richemuloise say that the whole region is itself rife with magical power. The nobles whose lands fall within the House of the Sages are regarded slightly askance, as they are thought to sponsor secretly much of the unsavory activity in the region.

In a testament to the primacy of urban life here, the only true highway in the realm is *la Route des Chuchotements* (Road of Whispers). This wide flagstone road runs south from Silbervas in Falkovnia through all three of Richemulot's major cities. Merchants, mercenaries, and pilgrims perpetually crowd its length. Farmers, herders, and the odd traveler in the rustic countryside make do with narrow but well maintained dirt roads.

Though I detail the individual characteristics of Richemulot's cities below, I can make some generalizations about the realm's urban landscape. The single feature visitors notice first is the emptiness, and they usually notice it by the sounds. The echoes of one's footsteps ring sharply off the towering, vacant buildings. When flocks of shabby pigeons take wing in a narrow alleyway, the sound is thunderous; the cacophony of chattering voices in a vast plaza is dizzying. Judging strictly by the number of vacant homes and shops, Richemuloise cities could easily support three times their current population. The vexing mystery of the original builders of these marvelous cities — and of their



ultimate fate — lies at the heart of Richemulot's false history, which I explore in detail below. The peculiarity of the fact aside, it does present a distinct safety issue. After a wrong turn, one can easily become lost and separated from allies amid the endless boulevards and side streets. Those who wander alone into vacant blocks of the cities have a tendency to vanish.

Regardless, the legacy that the ancient urban architects have left is a stunning one. The flagstone streets are narrow; on either side of pedestrians, buildings of cream-colored stone tower two to four stories tall. The original masons were masterful craftsmen, but time and the elements have taken their toll. The facades of many structures are chipped and worn and often encrusted with woody ivies and scaly lichens. The natives give a fresh coat of whitewash to the door and window frames of occupied buildings every year. Rooftops are conical or steeply gabled, and typically finished in thin, square wooden shingles the color of charcoal. Narrow, soaring spires pepper the skyline. Ancient walls, bridges, and aqueducts are common sights, though public gardens and other green spaces are a rarity.

Of course, no discussion of Richemuloise cities would be complete if I did not mention their remarkable sewer systems. In scale and design, they surpass anything in the Core, even in more technologically advanced realms. Ingeniously constructed to support both storm and waste water, the sewers are accessible at grates in the city streets and at water closets and kitchen drains in even the humblest homes. Wide brick conduits transport the waste and water deep beneath the cities, spiraling down through a labyrinth of access tunnels and subterranean reservoirs.

Since the Richemuloise claim that they are not the original builders, they can only speculate as to the fate of the sewage. Locals with fanciful architectural or engineering inclinations posit that a colossal rift beneath the whole realm may permit the waste to drain away to the very center of the world. Those of a more reasonable nature suggest that a simpler explanation would be that the Musarde River washes out the waste as it flows through the sewers and sends it downstream. Regardless, the benefits of the system are observable. The refuse and filth that rot in the streets of large



settlements elsewhere do not blight Richemuloise cities. Nonetheless, if the subterranean space available for the waste of Richemulot is finite, the natives are sitting on a fetid nightmare that will no doubt ooze up into their lives one day. During my explorations of Pont-a-Museau's sewers, described below, I had the displeasure of witnessing the genius of their engineering and its resulting products from a rat's-eye view. The subterranean world I encountered is far more ghastly than most minds could comprehend.

Richemulot's climate is temperate but exceedingly mild in character. Temperatures are always agreeable or at least tolerable, though they can swing erratically in a matter of days. Snows heavier than light flurries are unheard of in wintertime. Rains showers are brief and pleasant for most of the year, but late summer brings violent thunderstorms. Though these storms feature spectacular displays of lightning and thunder, the accompanying rains are rarely substantial.

## flora

During the warmer months, Richemulot's countryside is the very definition of pastoral beauty. The woodlands of the Silent Fields feature abundant alder, ash, black oak, chestnut, and royal ferns, while the underbrush and meadows are awash in broomrape, flax, glasswort, milkwort, and vetch. The native orchids exhibit a striking array of color and forms, normally a rarity in such temperate lands. The wild forests of the House of the Sages are home to an even wider array of trees and shrubs, including pine, poplar, evergreen oak, white oak, and spruce. The fragrances of wild almond, apricot, plum, and cherry assault the senses when the woods are in bloom. Lavender is ubiquitous in the rocky meadows, where one also finds scattered box, juniper, shadberry, and wild thyme.

## fauna

Richemulot boasts the usual complement of temperate wildlife common throughout much of the Core. Significant game and fur animals include badgers, beavers, boars, fallow deer, roe deer, ermines, hares, polecats, and otters. Badgers, brown bears, wild cats, foxes, and wolves are counted among the predators. Local scholars have often pointed out that many prominent species of wildlife—particularly wolves—are much less common in Richemulot than in neighboring realms. Hunting is, if anything, less significant in Richemulot

than elsewhere, so the reason behind the marginal populations remains a mystery. Naturalist Inard Milhavet suggests in his most recent controversial work, *Struggle and Victory in the Animal Kingdom*, that the common black rat occupies the loftiest place in the Tree of Life. He cites the creature's abundance and the paucity of other high order predators in Richemulot as evidence.

As I have already mentioned, rural Richemulot is rife with ghosts and other spectral undead, but seems remarkably free of other supernatural terrors. Wandering vampires, lycanthropes, and other creatures from neighboring domains may occasionally terrorize the rural peasantry. The cities, however, are the true spawning ground of the supernatural in Richemulot. With much urban property lying vacant, there are ample nooks and crannies where unnatural predators can conceal themselves. Creatures that can pass for human obviously have an advantage in the urban landscape; lycanthropes, doppelgangers, vampires, cat people, and similar horrors are numerous, at least according to local folklorists. Furthermore, the realm's famous sewer systems serve as breeding grounds for vile plants, fungi, oozes, and stranger things.

Of course, I would be remiss if I did not mention the undisputed masters of the Richemuloise cityscape: the wererats. Sages who consider themselves authorities on lycanthropy have long held that Richemuloise cities are the

## Local Animals and Native Horrors

**Wildlife:** CR 1/10 — bat; toad; CR 1/8 — rat; CR 1/6 — lizard; raven; CR 1/4 — cat; owl; weasel; CR 1/3 — hawk; snake, Tiny viper; CR 1/2 — badger; eagle; CR 1 — wolf; CR 2 — boar; CR 4 — bear, brown.

**Monsters:** CR 1/3 — *dire rat*, gremishka\*; CR 1/2 — *geist*\*; CR 1 — fungus, shrieker; CR 2 — carrion stalker\*, lycanthrope, wererat; CR 3 — allip; cat, midnight\*; doppelganger, dread\*; fungus, violet; impersonator\*; plant, bloodroot\*, shadow; CR 4 — gargoyle; ooze, gray; vampire spawn; vampyre\*; CR 5 — ooze, ochre jelly; paka\*; wraith; CR 6 — corpse candle\*; red widow\*; vampire, vrykolaka; CR 7 — ghost; ooze, black pudding; spectre; vampire; vampire, nosferatu\*; CR 9 — tenebris\*; CR 10 — dhampir\*; golem, gargoyle.



largest breeding grounds for wererats in the Core and perhaps in the known world. I delve into Richemuloise attitudes concerning these vermin, as well as the society of the creatures themselves, in greater detail below. For now, suffice to say that travelers in Richemulot should stay off the streets at night, sleep in the company of trusted allies whenever possible, and refrain from ever entering the sewer systems unless armed with potent weaponry and magic.

## History



he false history of Richemulot presents a perplexing problem. To put it bluntly, the realm does not appear to have any false history at all. The Richemuloise know nothing of their land's history prior to its emergence from the Mists. This is not to say that they are simpletons walking about in a fugue. Rather, much like the selective amnesiacs that alienists have documented, the Richemuloise people are mentally functional in most every respect, but lack historical knowledge. Based on my interviews with elderly Richemuloise who remember the realm's appearance, they apparently emerged from the Mists with full knowledge of their own identities and the social customs of their realm. The actual events preceding that fateful day, however, remain a mystery.

Richemulot's missing history is not only absent from the minds of its natives, but from all written records as well. A vast corpus of knowledge fills Richemuloise libraries, but on no shelf can one find a single text describing historical events before 694 BC. Even oblique historical evidence is strangely lacking or corrupted. Books scribed before Richemulot's appearance do not reference dates, and the years engraved on cornerstones are always eroded beyond legibility.

Apparently, the only knowledge concerning the realm's origins is that when the land first appeared, its cities lay empty and abandoned. Personal histories do not go back more than a few generations. Immigrants poured in looking for a fresh start, and the rise of the aristocracy came about due to a land rush as the first to come were the first to rule.

Although this phenomenon eliminates the irksome task of sifting through false historical records, it raises disconcerting questions. If the laws of our world have been written with malign purpose, as I have come to believe with growing

## Probing the Mists of Time

No character may use the Knowledge (history) skill, bardic knowledge, or any other ability to determine facts about pre-694 Richemulot. In theory, PCs of even moderate level might attempt to use magic to delve into Richemulot's false history. Generally speaking, all such attempts will fail. Divinations always fail if an attempt is made to discern information about Richemulot before 694. No effect, not even a *miracle* or *wish*, can restore anything native to Richemulot to a pre-694 state. For example, using *mending* on a ring that has been broken since Richemulot's appearance would remove the corrosion that has occurred in the past six decades but would not repair the ring. Any creature that perished in Richemulot before 694 cannot be resurrected. The DM is encouraged to mitigate the tedium of repeated spell failures by arranging for such spells to backfire in truly spectacular ways.

Rather than frustrating players, the results should instead mystify and horrify them. For example, if a character casts *speak with dead* on remains unearthed from a centuries-old grave, the deceased might respond normally at first. When the character asks a question about the details of pre-694 Richemulot, however, dozens of live, squealing rats might burst forth from the ground, scattering the remains.

certainty, what is the reason for Richemulot's lost history? My initial thoughts were that the realm's past, like so much in Richemulot, might merely be buried under layers of secrecy, perhaps awaiting discovery in some lost and treasured tome.

As my weeks in this realm passed, however, such a rosy explanation began to ring hollow. Richemulot's history, if any exists, is now clearly utterly inaccessible in the modern day. I suspect that Richemulot, much like Lamordia, is a land that is fated to look forward rather than backward. Indeed, Richemulot's expanding population, growing wealth, and liberated society suggest that the realm's most prosperous days still lie ahead; the political and social burdens of the past do not fetter



the Richemuloise. Perhaps, as a nation on the cusp of a new age, Richemulot has little use for what has gone before.

*Uncharacteristically optimistic and short-sighted. Careful analysis of your own data suggests a far bleaker hypothesis, my little scholar. If Richemulot is on the cusp of a new age, then that new age will no doubt begin with the demise of humanity.*

Given the *tabula rasa* of Richemuloise history, pinpointing the seminal event that heralded the realm's appearance becomes all the more vital. Unfortunately, precisely because of the dearth of historical information, this event has proven elusive in the extreme to identify. To unearth a potential seminal event, one must instead turn to the surrounding realms extant in 694 BC.

The most likely candidate is a mere footnote in the history of the Falkovnian city of Silbervas. The fragmentary records of the garrison indicate that in the early 690's, the city experienced an alarming upsurge in wererat sightings and attacks. These came to a head in 694, when one of the lycanthropes mauled a Talon officer; the man was later executed when the dread disease took hold of him. The Talons responded with characteristic ruthlessness, hunting down the wererat population in their warrens beneath the city. Later wererat sightings in surrounding domains suggest a mass exodus of the lycanthropes in the wake of the Falkovnian pogroms.

Given the prevalence of both rats and wererats in Richemuloise cities, it stands to reason that some of the lycanthropes may have fled into the Misty Border south of Falkovnia and thus provided the impetus for Richemulot's emergence. Of course, this leads to the unsettling conclusion that Richemulot rightfully belongs to the wererats rather than to humanity.

Since 694, the tumultuous politics of the aristocracy have been the driving force behind daily life in Richemulot. However, given the slippery nature of such power struggles, their overall effect on the broad course of Richemuloise events has been minimal. Richemulot has never gone to war with a neighboring realm, nor has revolution or drastic social upheaval ever gripped it. The Church of Ezra expanded peacefully into Richemulot within

a few years of the realm's appearance, and the Home Faith has since become widespread here.

The most notable event in the past six decades or so has been the death — some would say murder — in 726 BC of Richemulot's *de facto* monarch, Claude Renier. When Richemulot appeared, Claude ruled the realm through the fear he instilled in other nobles. Without a false history, however, there is no way to determine how long the Reniers have occupied this position of supremacy.

Regardless, Claude's successor, Jacqueline Renier, dominates the Richemuloise aristocracy today as firmly as her grandfather ever did, although with a subtler touch and a good deal more charisma. Despite the suspicions surrounding Claude's bizarre death — his body fell from a high window of Chateau Delanuit, crashed through the roof of the estate's kennel, and was partially devoured by the family hounds, all apparently *after* the elder Renier had already died from an acute allergic reaction — the legitimacy of Jacqueline's position has never been publicly questioned.

*This implies it has been privately questioned... any survivors of that?*

In 729 BC, Jacqueline cemented Richemulot's position as a power in the Core when she approved the realm's joining with Borca, Dementlieu, and Mordent in the famous Treaty of Four Towers. Richemuloise nobles suspect that Jacqueline's craving for prestige and national legitimacy motivated her far more than protectionist concern.

## Populace

**L**ike Darkon, Richemulot boasts a large proportion of foreign expatriates more than most other realms in the Core. The land possesses many characteristics that make it attractive to refugees, fugitives, and ordinary folk seeking a better life. The nobility freely grant vacant homes and shops to homesteaders that wish to take up residence in the cities. Jacqueline Renier only requires that new Richemuloise citizens swear fealty to the realm itself and pledge themselves to its defense. Richemuloise society is fairly unstratified, and there is ample opportunity for an unskilled pauper to learn an honest trade. Conversely, the lonely wilderness and city streets alike provide plenty of





## Former Darklord: Claude Renier

Born a natural wererat like many of his kin, Claude Renier was a hateful, sadistic monster to the core. For decades, he viciously dominated his wererat family through a delicate dance of fear and hollow promises. Hailing from the same outlander world that spawned Mordent, where the Renier family had once been a clan of noble heroes, Claude and his family entered Ravenloft in 691 BC. Cornered in the sewers by hunters, they fled blindly into a misty portal. They emerged in the Falkovnian city of Silverbas, where they settled among others of their kind. Within a few years, however, the Silverbas wererat population became too numerous and brazen, and the Talons doggedly hunted the lycanthropes down. Claude fled into the Misty Border with his family in 694. Stirred by the black heart that beat in Claude's breast, the Mists revealed Richemulot and branded the wererat patriarch its master.

Claude retained his position of power for over three decades, until the shrewdest of his wererat grandchildren, Jacqueline, finally had enough of his spiteful games. Jacqueline bided her time for months until she discerned her grandfather's chemical vulnerability: common lye. Though a servant brought Claude his poisoned brandy, Jacqueline ensured that she was present to see the old rat's expression. As Claude began to convulse from the fatal sip, Jacqueline whispered thanks for years of valuable lessons in treachery, stabbed him in the heart with a silver dagger, and pushed the elder Renier out the tower window. When the lordship of Richemulot passed to Jacqueline, the only outward sign was a twitter of excitement that passed through every rat in the domain.

hiding places for those on the run. The Reniers and other nobles publicly deny that they give asylum to fugitives from Borca, Falkovnia, and Invidia, though the commoners insist that the cities are crawling with such exiles.

Nonhuman races are a rarity in Richemulot, with the exception of the halfling ghettos that skulk in the heart of each city. Numbering several hundred in a city, the halflings maintain an unobtrusive presence. Their population is constantly shifting, as newcomers settle in the cities for a few years and other residents return to the road when wanderlust seizes them. Other nonhuman Richemuloise are almost always refugees fleeing enslavement in Falkovnia or the wrath of the Kargat in Darkon. Driven from Invidia by Malocchio Aderre's manhunters, a handful of half-Vistani have begun to settle in Richemulot in recent years.

## Appearance

Native Richemuloise are short, wiry folk with athletic builds. They have a propensity toward fine, angular facial features and slim, knotty fingers. Skin tones among the Richemuloise are fair, ranging from milky pale to light tan. Blue is by far the most common eye color, though shades of green and gray are also seen among the natives. Richemuloise hair is always sleek and straight,

running from honey blonde to dark brown in color. The rare child born with lustrous black hair always belongs to one of the noble families.

Long hair is traditional for both genders, and outsiders who wear their hair shorter are treated with a touch of civilized disdain. Male Richemuloise always keep their hair in a single, neat ponytail or braid; many believe that the longer the hair, the more vigorous and virile the man. The locals consider excessive facial hair to be barbaric, but many men wear thin, neatly groomed mustaches. Commoner women wear their hair loose and wild, but ladies of station keep it styled in flamboyant curls and sweeps.

## fashion

Nearly all Richemuloise have the means to keep themselves in clean, comfortable clothing, regardless of their actual social status. Richemuloise garb tends to be functional while maintaining a stylish flair. Men and women alike wear loose, blousy shirts that lace in the front. For men to go about in the warmer months with the front of their shirt open is not considered immodest. Men wear snug trousers and women loose, pleated skirts that come up to the knee. City dwellers of both genders wear high, black boots with hard soles, while country folk prefer simple, buckled shoes of soft leather. During more temperate weather, both men and





women don a short coat that fastens tightly up to the throat. Voluminous, hoodless black cloaks are considered standard attire for Richemuloise who must go about at night, particularly the city watchmen. Male aristocrats, soldiers, magistrates, and other important figures in civic life frequently wear tall bicorn hats accented with a single pin or feather.

Daily clothing among the Richemuloise is rarely patterned or ornamented, and colors tend to be drab neutral tones such as white, black, gray, and beige. During festivals, weddings, masquerades, and other celebrations, however, the locals bring out their gaudiest outfits. Garish colors and luxurious materials predominate during such occasions. Men of all classes don elegant waistcoats and sashes, while the women wear sinuous gowns that Dementlieuse clothiers consider scandalously revealing. The Richemuloise rarely wear jewelry, and even the most affluent nobles prefer simple gold earrings, necklaces, and rings to more ostentatious finery.

## Richemuloise Primer

### Mordentish Dialects

English	Low	High
city	<i>burg</i>	<i>ville</i>
sewer	<i>âdelsçath</i>	<i>égout</i>
rat	<i>ræt</i>	<i>salaud</i>
wererat	<i>werræt</i>	
trespasser	<i>forgægend</i>	<i>intruse</i>
noble (n.)	<i>ætheling</i>	<i>savant</i>
scholar	<i>bôkere, scôlere</i>	<i>savant</i>
traitor	<i>læwend</i>	<i>chapradeur</i>
affluent	<i>byrde, welig</i>	<i>malin</i>
astute	<i>searocræftig</i>	<i>malin</i>
get below!	<i>begietan dun!</i>	<i>decendre!</i>
(a common curse)		



## Language

The Richemuloise speak a High Mordentish dialect similar to that spoken in Dementlieu. To the horror of the Dementlieuse nobility, however, Richemuloise speech is sprinkled with bastardized Balok and Falkovnian words, as well as the occasional Halfling expression. Many Richemuloise speak more than one language. City dwellers are often functionally literate in at least one alternate tongue and can communicate rudimentarily in a few others.

## Lifestyle & Education

Befitting a realm with a predominately urban population, the Richemuloise primarily make their living through craftsmanship. Local farmers remain a necessity; Jacqueline Renier has insisted that the Richemuloise not assume a steady stream of Falkovnian grain will always be available. In terms of numbers of workers, however, Richemulot is foremost a realm of smithies and workshops rather than farms and pastures. Owing to the unusual nature of the Richemuloise aristocracy, which I will address below, both destitute poverty and decadent opulence are rare sights in the realm. The vast majority of the Richemuloise lead modest, comfortable lives. I have never witnessed so many folk who exhibit both highborn taste and lowborn character, the sort of boorish indulgence that characterizes the merchant class in other realms.

Immigration to Richemulot swells every year, and though fugitives and heretics may receive most of the attention, the vast majority of these foreigners are simple commoners seeking opportunity. To many, a Richemuloise city seems like a fantastic metropolis, where the streets are littered with jewels just waiting to be picked up. True, Richemulot promises a roof over one's head and a second chance, but those who would accept such gifts must have the cunning to use them. Despite the enticing veil of success that hangs over the cities, many Richemuloise are drowning in debt, run into the ground by the vicious competition and ruthless business practices of their neighbors. Though she has no true serfs, Richemulot indeed has a hidden lower class in the form of indentured servants. They wear the same clothes as their neighbors, but these debtors have little hope of ever recovering their self-sufficiency, save through selling their children into servitude — an all-too-common practice, and one of the realm's dirty little secrets.

Richemuloise marry young, often after a whirlwind courtship that lasts less than a month. A Richemuloise maiden must present a suitor to her father, who formally and vigorously quizzes the youth on family facts over a sumptuous feast. This tradition, called *l'Essai des Révélations Exquis* (Trial of Sweet Revelations), is intended to test the suitor's character by discerning how much familial lore he has ferreted out of the bride-to-be. Truly savvy suitors will smugly reveal their knowledge of the most shameful family secrets by the time the table is cleared.

The Richemuloise see marriage as a rite of passage. Choosing one's mate, much like taking up a profession, confirms one's readiness to enter the community and contribute to its productivity. Couples are also expected to produce as many children as possible, a custom reinforced by the progressive tax edicts of many nobles, which actually reduce a household's taxes for each child it supports. Unmarried or childless adults are rare in the extreme here. Divorce is forbidden in Richemuloise culture, more by the threat of ostracism than by any formal law. I suspect that this taboo is why adultery, drunkenness, and suicide also seem common here, though hard statistics on such matters are obviously difficult to attain.

Though Richemuloise cities are nowhere near as plague-ridden as their counterparts in other realms, mortality rates due to disease remain shockingly high among newborns. Even more alarming to the Richemuloise parents is the scourge of "snatchings," cases of infants vanishing during the night from securely locked homes. Though hysterical parents typically blame the wererats for these incidents, the local authorities have never arrived at a conclusive explanation.

The Richemuloise value intelligence, wits, and initiative and raise their children accordingly. While nobles typically retain private tutors for their children, most Richemuloise parents give their young ones elementary lessons in reading, writing, and arithmetic. Obviously, in a realm so strongly tied to the craft traditions, apprenticeships for even young children are vital. With the number and diversity of urban workshops expanding every year, those youth who do not wish to follow in their parent's profession can freely choose their own path.

Much like folk elsewhere in the Core, the Richemuloise travel the countryside on foot or horseback, relying chiefly on oxen and horses as



beasts of burden. Folk usually walk when going about their business in the cities, though there are a host of services available for the urban explorer. Cab services, from humble carts to magnificent carriages, carry passengers to their destinations, and porters and lantern-bearers can be found on any busy street corner. For a modest fee, local city guides will gladly dispense helpful advice and orient newcomers regarding the sites of interest. Visitors are urged to beware, however. Though charlatans are rare, more than one foreigner has naively followed a guide into an abandoned city district and never emerged again.

Though it is not widely appreciated in other lands, Richemuloise food is distinctive and always prepared with pride. Though influenced by Dementlieuse cuisine, Richemuloise fare is full of potent, savory flavors, and cares not one whit for presentation or subtlety. Since most locals can afford to eat meat on a regular basis, one finds dishes brimming with pork, lamb, venison, goose, duck, and pheasant. Soft cheeses, wild mushrooms, and light vegetables are all ubiquitous. In general, Richemuloise foods make liberal use of olive oil, vinegar, garlic, and the rich local butter, as well as a host of herbs, particularly rosemary, sage, basil, and thyme. Simple dishes common at every family table and inn include vegetable omelets, *ratatouille* (vegetable soup), and *millas* (cornmeal and butter with honey). Controversy swirls around *cassoulet*, a traditional Richemuloise dish with white beans, spices, and meats, as each city insists that its signature preparation is the definitive recipe. In addition to the local red and white wines, which are excellent but not widely known, the natives are fond of *pastis*, an herbal cordial with a heady aroma of anise.

Though they take their responsibilities seriously, the Richemuloise are lovers of life at heart. Food, drink, music, and dance are the fourfold passions of the Richemuloise, though their tastes are often scavenged from neighboring realms, particularly Dementlieu. While the nobility are fond of bucolic pastimes such as autumn dove hunting and equestrian games, most city dwellers abide by their makeshift urban sports such as wrestling, dog racing, cockfighting, capture-the-flag, and violent kick-the-ball games played in the streets. The sun's movements relative to skyline landmarks note the local city festivals. These festivals frequently feature enormous dance competitions in the plazas, drawing thousands of participants. The

Richemuloise elite, meanwhile, attend the traditional masquerades and galas thrown annually by noteworthy families.

The Dementlieuse tradition of the café has caught on strongly in Richemulot, meshing neatly with the Richemuloise affection for social life. The Richemuloise are generally a boisterous, animated people who prefer crowds to solitude and conversation to silence. Simply put, the Richemuloise love to talk, especially about one another. Unfortunately, a subtle atmosphere of paranoia colors all aspects of Richemuloise social life. Though they might seem open and at ease, folk are careful about what they say and to whom they speak. Even among devoted friends and beloved family members, the Richemuloise never speak entirely freely.

This may be in part because the Richemuloise thrive on gossip and scandal. Men and women, young and old alike, seem to require a daily ration of their neighbors' alleged misdeeds as much as they need food and water. Indeed, as I will detail below, public rumor and private secrets — not land, gold, or even hereditary title — form the foundation of the Richemuloise nobility. There is an undercurrent of hypocrisy to local rumor mongering that few Richemuloise recognize, however. Many natives protest when vicious rumors upset their lives, only to turn about and slander their neighbors the moment the opportunity presents itself.

## Attitudes Toward Magic

The Richemuloise are wary of spellcasters, but they do not harbor the reactionary fear and hatred that characterizes certain other realms. Indeed, the Richemuloise seem to recognize that magic is merely a tool, albeit a powerful one that can be disastrous in the hands of the power-hungry, the unbalanced, or the incompetent. Locals scrutinize the motives of divine spellcasters — particularly clerics of accepted gods — far less than those of arcane spellcasters. Richemuloise wizards and sorcerers keep a low profile when in the cities; nobles treat any arcane spellcaster as a potential rival. Most wizards and sorcerers dwell in seclusion in the House of the Sages, where they can pursue their studies without the interference of the fearful or the jealous.

## Religion

Religion occupies an awkward place in Richemuloise life. On the one hand, both the



Home Faith and the Mordentish sect of the Church of Ezra have found a strong footing in her cities, while the witches of Hala minister here without fear of reprisal from other religious zealots. On the other hand, one gets the distinct feeling that the Richemuloise do not take matters of faith too seriously. Many natives count themselves as laity devoted to Ezra or Hala, but they rarely allow theology to intrude on their daily routine. Simple prayers and a few coppers in the poor box are all that the majority of Richemuloise contribute to their church. There is no clear vision of universal order in Richemulot; most locals halfheartedly accept whatever cosmology their faith espouses.

**Ezra:** The Church of Ezra successfully insinuated itself into Richemulot shortly after the realm first appeared, and the faith has been entrenched ever since. If sheer numbers of laity are any indication, the Richemulot See is the most powerful stronghold of the Home Faith outside of Borca. The Mordentish sect also has a significant presence here, although the temples of the Home Faith still vastly outnumber theirs. Much like their Borcan counterparts, Richemuloise nobles have a close, symbiotic relationship with the Church, viewing it as an ideal vehicle for their own schemes. Dona-

tions to the Church allow the aristocracy to maintain a public façade of generosity, while providing inroads for the manipulation of Church authorities and resources.

As I have already mentioned, the House of the Sages has acquired a reputation as a haven for heretical religious movements in the past few decades. Many of these fugitive sects are splinters from the Church of Ezra, subtly excluded by the orthodox sects or outright declared anathema by the Praesidius. For example, the *Danseurs Divin* (Divine Dancers), a mystery cult offshoot of the Dementlieu sect, believe that mystical communion with the Goddess is possible for the faithful who ritually emulate her words and deeds. *L'Abbaye de Fléau Luisant* (the Abbey of the Bright Scourge) near Mortigny houses a cloistered order of anchorites who have taken a strict vow of poverty, as they believe material wealth to be a tool of the Legions of the Night. La Balise (the so-called "Avatar Heresy") is rumored to coordinate its search for the lost mortal Goddess from an ancient shrine somewhere deep in the forests.

Because of their notoriety in Richemulot and beyond, the *Échansons* (Cupbearers) deserve special mention. According to some records, they

## Secret Society: The Échansons Heresy

The Cupbearers believe that the dogma of the Church's orthodox sects is based on fallacies and myth. They insist that though the vast majority of laity and clergy are unaware of it, the Praesidius, Bastions, and their cronies have deliberately perpetuated these falsehoods to protect their power. Like the Dementlieu sect, the Cupbearers believe that Ezra was a Goddess who descended to the Mists to offer succor to humanity. Unlike the Dementlieu sect, however, they hold that Ezra did not join with the Mists, but was born in the Realm of Dread as an infant child. The Cupbearers claim that by sacrificing herself to mortality, the Guardian gave the gift of her divine bloodline to the faithful.

The Cupbearers believe that the mortal Ezra grew up, married, had several children, and died peacefully in seclusion. The purpose of her sacrifice was to provide a divine lineage that could directly protect humanity from the Legions of the Night. The sect's holy text, *The Vessels of Mercy*, is a single, fragmentary parchment riddled with encrypted meanings. In it, Ezra's descendents are prophesized to unite all the kingdoms of the Realm of Dread under a glorious theocracy and lead them to a bright future. According to the Cupbearers, the *Books of Ezra* originally contained many of these revelations, but were altered by jealous anchorites who felt that the truth would threaten the Church.

The Cupbearers search tirelessly for Ezra's descendents, called the Prodigals, many of whom have been lost since the ancient days when Ezra walked the world. Disciples scour *The Vessels of Mercy*, other obscure documents, and numerological and symbolic landmarks scattered throughout the House of the Sages. The presence of the Cupbearers in this region is no accident; evidence indicates that many Prodigals settled there and that many Richemuloise noble families may in fact be holy bloodlines. If the Cupbearers have a leader at all, it is surely Fabian Périgneux (*male human Ari3/Ftr3/Wiz4, LN*), a local noble who believes that his own infant son is destined to topple Jacqueline Renier and become a messiah king.





originated as a secret society among the Borcan laity of the Home Faith well before Richemulot's appearance. Supposedly, their beliefs were so alarming to the Praesidius that he offered them a choice: prove their validity by submitting to the Rite of Revelation or be forcibly disbanded. The Cupbearers apparently had no interest in becoming a formal sect and instead retreated into the shadows, finding sanctuary in the House of the Sages when Richemulot emerged from the Mists. Today, the Cupbearers have no single, secret stronghold, but the local nobility are thought to harbor them in the castles, churches, and hamlets of the region. The actual tenets of the Cupbearers remain ambiguous to outsiders; most rumors paint them as blasphemous heathens who practice evil rites. This may only be the slander of jealous hearts, however. Through the years, rumors have leaked out that the sect possesses a fabulous treasure of some kind.

**Hala:** The witches of Hala enjoy a relatively peaceful ministry in Richemulot, where they are seen as benign, if eccentric, guardian angels. Though the common folk are thankful for the presence of Halan hospices in their cities, the Richemuloise nobility has never given the church its formal

blessing. The Reniers are known to be deeply mistrustful of the witches, and this attitude alone may prevent the church from ever achieving widespread acceptance. For their part, the witches are unconcerned with aggressive proselytizing, preferring to demonstrate their Goddess' power and mercy through their own benevolence.

## The Wererats

In a sense, the trivia surrounding the human population of Richemulot comprises only half the tale. Beneath the city streets is another world, one infested and ruled by the wererats. To the people of Richemulot, the wererats — or *les intruses* in High Mordentish — are vague bogeymen, fell creatures that dwell somewhere below, licking their teeth at the thought of human flesh. The wererats are blamed for nearly every unexplained misfortune and disaster, and folk live in fear of a squealing pack of the beasts coming for them one night. The people have good reason to remain wary: anyone left alone during the night, the young in particular, are prone to vanish without a trace. Families spend a significant sum of wealth and time securing their homes against lycanthropic intruders. One can





## The Richemuloise Hero

**Races:** Humans predominate in Richemulot, though halflings and half-Vistani also dwell in the domain in small numbers. Other races are almost always refugees or their descendents. The Richemuloise tend to accept nonhumans into their society more readily than other folk, though they feel that this openness gives them *carte blanche* to treat such outsiders with persistent, “good-natured” cruelty.

**Classes:** Bards, clerics, fighters, rogues, and wizards are the most common classes in Richemulot. All are regarded with esteem in at least some circles of Richemuloise society, though rogues and wizards must be wary of the jealous, vindictive nobility. Druids and rangers are rare in a land with such an urban character, though occasionally a brave ranger devotes himself to the urban wilderness of back alleys and labyrinthine sewers. Paladins are equally scarce, often beginning their lives as mad street corner prophets. Sorcerers are much rarer in Richemulot than in neighboring realms, and those who do exist seem to prefer solitude. Barbarians and monks are practically unknown.

**Recommended Skills:** Appraise, Bluff, Craft (blacksmithing, carpentry, cobbling, gunsmithing, leatherworking, locksmithing, weaponsmithing, weaving), Diplomacy, Disguise, Forgery, Gather Information, Hide, Innuendo, Intimidate, Knowledge (nobility and royalty, shapechanger lore), Listen, Move Silently, Profession (apothecary, bookkeeper, guide, innkeeper, porter, scribe, stablehand, tanner, teamster), Sense Motive, Spot.

**Recommended Feats:** Alertness, Ancestral Legacy\*, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearms), Expertise (plus derivatives), Iron Will, Point Blank Shot, Silent Spell, Skill Focus (Bluff, Gather Information, Sense Motive), Spell Focus (Divination), Still Spell, Unseen\*, Voice of Wrath, Weapon Focus (dagger, guisarme, hand crossbow, heavy crossbow, light crossbow, musket, ranseur, rapier, sap, short sword).

\*Denotes feat described in **Van Richten’s Arsenal**.

**Richemuloise Male Names:** Arnaud, Bernart, Crespin, Esteve, Folcaut, Gauderic, Jaufres, Lambert, Michels, Peirol, Raimond, Sicart, Thibaud, Vicenc, Xavier.

**Richemuloise Female Names:** Aidelina, Beatritz, Cecile, Danielle, Elianor, Felise, Garsenda, Heloise, Isolina, Lillianne, Margalida, Nicole, Reina, Sibille, Verinne.

easily discern inhabited buildings from vacant ones in that the former always feature new doors and window shutters, all equipped with heavy locks. Even daylight brings no guarantee of protection, however, particularly for those that foolishly wander alone into a city’s less frequented areas. Though the Richemuloise rarely agree on what the wererats *do* with those they abduct — eat them, torture them, sacrifice them to foul gods — it is always an unpleasant fate.

Of course, I found this limited view, filtered as it is through the fears and speculations of the Richemuloise, to be unsatisfactory. A serious study of the wererats themselves would require a sewer-level investigation of the city, a journey that I was reluctant to take without a guide who knew the subterranean landscape well. Pont-a-Museau seemed the most promising city in which to seek out wererats, as its sewer system is the most extensive in Richemulot. My search for an experienced

and reliable guide led inevitably to Narcis deVeyrines, a mercenary who has made a living of stalking the wererats of Pont-a-Museau on their home ground. Her reputation was flawless, even if her manner was a touch unseemly, and I apparently had few options at any rate. She questioned my sanity in desiring a first-hand encounter with the lycanthropes, but she seemed to accept both my gold and my conviction.

DeVeyrines led me on a walking tour of the Pont-a-Museau sewers that entailed an equal measure of wading, clambering, and sliding. I certainly hope my patron appreciates my dedication in this matter. My search led me through some of the most horrendous pits of squalor I have ever encountered, accompanied by odors I could have happily perished without experiencing firsthand. The sewers are positively swarming with rats, some chambers piled several feet deep with writhing masses of the



creatures, and only by some miracle did I escape the sewers without some debilitating fever.

Though she did not know the location of any true wererat *warrens* — colonies where the creatures feed, breed, and lair — deVeyrines insisted that her skill as a tracker would lead us inevitably to the lycanthropes. While we negotiated the endless twists and turns of the sewer tunnels, deVeyrines explained what she knew of the Richemuloise wererats and their ways. The details that I relate below should therefore be tempered with the knowledge that it is second-hand information from a source of undetermined reliability.

Though many Richemuloise paint the wererats as filthy, ravenous beasts lacking any glimmer of civilization, the creatures actually possess a complex culture that even deVeyrines has only begun to grasp. Far from being a featureless horde, the wererats are evidently divisible into *castes*, groupings that define their role in the warren. DeVeyrines has encountered what she believes to be three distinct castes.

The *scout* caste comprises those creatures chosen to explore unfamiliar areas of the sewers and carry out unfathomable missions among the humans who dwell above. Though they move about in loose packs, scouts are often encountered alone. Those folk who stumble upon a lone wererat in the city streets or in the upper levels of the sewers have usually encountered a scout. While scouts typically flee at the first sign of humans, they often return with fellow scouts or warriors in tow.

The *warrior* caste includes the elite wererat soldiers who protect warrens and carry out violent raids. Disciplined fighters trained in human weapons and subterranean tactics, they are the most dangerous wererats one is likely to encounter, and their kin evidently hold them in high esteem. DeVeyrines has, on several occasions, witnessed other wererats bowing humbly before their warriors.

Finally, deVeyrines has encountered the occasional wererat who can only be described as belonging to a *priest* caste. These creatures are dressed in obscene regalia and wield divine magic. They also seem to hold a special place among other wererats, for scouts and warriors alike follow their commands without question. Concerning what dark deity such creatures may worship, deVeyrines has found no evidence and seemed loathe to speculate on the matter further.

Wererat warrens are remarkably cooperative and unified within their own ranks. The organization and efficiency that deVeyrines has witnessed among the creatures is nothing short of astounding. They act as if they were different organs of the same creature, executing complex pack tactics and using little verbal communication in battle. Relations between warrens, however, are another matter. Warrens compete viciously for territory and other resources that are significant only to their bestial minds. DeVeyrines has witnessed entire packs lose interest in pursuing her upon the appearance of a pack from a rival warren. I should note that, in general, wererats are first and foremost survivalists in battle. They always flee if outmatched or outnumbered, use any dirty tricks they can muster, and rarely risk their own lives for petty human concepts such as vengeance or honor.

The practice of abducting humans from the world above is among the wererats' more perplexing behaviors. DeVeyrines has rescued a score of individuals from the clutches of the creatures, though rarely have their experiences illuminated the purpose of the abductions. Several of these individuals were deliberately infected with lycanthropy, necessitating their treatment or destruction, while others emerged from the experience without so much as a scratch. DeVeyrines theorizes that most of the younger humans who are abducted are infected with lycanthropy to burgeon the wererats' population, while older individuals may be utilized in whatever evil rituals or sacrifices the creatures perform. She also notes, incidentally, that many Richemuloise foolishly forget to secure the most vulnerable point of entry in their homes at night: their water closet.

After a time, deVeyrines picked up the trail of a lone wererat, most likely a scout, and stalked the creature to a blind tunnel where it was crouched in hybrid form, gathering fungi into a burlap sack. When I expressed my desire to examine the creature closely, deVeyrines was reluctant, but eventually consented. The creature was taken by surprise, but easily evaded the tanglefoot bag I hurled in its direction. Fortunately, a silver quarrel from deVeyrines' crossbow slowed the creature and a turn of arcane trickery from myself stopped it in tracks. We carefully restrained the beast, and I knocked it cold with a swift crack from my rapier hilt.

The detail I first noted was that the creature was clothed in a black, hooded cloak, tattered at



## The Rats in the Walls

Each city in Richemulot is home to multiple warrens, colonies of related wererats numbering from several dozen to nearly a thousand lycanthropes. The territory of a given warren may extend deep into the surrounding tunnels, but the warren proper includes a nest and the adjoining waste pits. The nest is typically a cavernous chamber where the whole warren can gather to feed, breed, or hold court. The waste pits are underground reservoirs of filth, sacred places used in wererat ceremonies. Warrens are always patrolled and fortified with lethal, devious traps.

Warrens compete violently with one another for territory, which represents not only the privilege to hunt and gather in the area below ground, but also rights on the human prey above. Mortigny and Ste. Ronges each have several powerful warrens locked in a power struggle, as well as a smattering of lesser warrens. Pont-a-Museau is the exception: Jacqueline Renier's warren dominates the city, and no serious challengers to its supremacy have emerged.

Wererat society is divided into castes. After a wererat's first transformation, mundane divination determines its caste. Common methods include reading patterns of mold, the movements of rats, or pieces of garbage plucked from the waste pits. Wererats cannot change their caste, though plague kings and queens can theoretically rise from any caste.

*Tunnel Stalkers* are the scouts and survivors among the lycanthropes. They are skilled at subterranean exploration and reconnaissance, valuing stealth and cunning above all else. More than any other wererats, they understand the ways of the sewers. They are also adept at moving about at street level, where they spy and commit thievery, though they are generally not comfortable around humans. Tunnel Stalkers are more at ease with normal rats than with their wererat kin and may even prefer the company of beetles, centipedes, and other vermin. Tunnel Stalkers with character classes are usually ranger/rogues and sometimes assassins or shadow dancers.

*Daggernails* are the soldiers, sadists that delight in slaughter and who perpetually twitch with the anticipation of conflict. They train diligently to master techniques of close-quarters fighting and pack tactics, and wield discarded human junk that is reworked into gruesome, lethal weapons. Misanthropic and a touch psychotic, Daggernails despise humans and would like nothing better than to rise up and butcher them all. In battle, they often display a berserker rage, tempered only by their wererat survival instincts. Other wererats respect them

but also regard them as mad dogs, best kept on a firm tether and unleashed on the enemy. Daggernails are usually barbarians or fighters, sometimes with a level or two of rogue.

*Filth Breeders* are the holy men, deranged wererats obsessed with disease and rot. Feared but also held in awe by their kin, the Filth Breeders delight in suffering and entropy, revering all that humanity reviles. Their magic — both divine and arcane — taps into the power of decay, vermin, and disease. They prefer maggots and mold to rats and conduct strange experiments in the warrens' waste pits. Despite their unbalanced temperament, Filth Breeders are held in great esteem for their wisdom; often, their judgments guide the fate of the whole warren. Their more unseemly practices, however, disturb even their fellow wererats. Filth Breeders are usually cleric/wizards. Their domains are Animal, Destruction, Earth, Evil, and Water.

*Skin Twisters* are the infiltrators, the only wererats who most often venture above among the humans. They are the nobles of wererat society, hated and feared by the other castes but obeyed without question. They alone have mastered the nuances of human society, and compared to their kin, they are regal and composed in their bearing. Relentless plotters, the Skin Twisters are constantly alert for opportunities and resources that may advance their warren's standing. Few Richemuloise are aware of how deeply the Skin Twisters have entrenched themselves in the human halls of power. Anywhere from one in ten to one in two nobles in a Richemuloise city is a Skin Twister, and aristocratic politics often have more to do with events below than above. The great wererat families are locked in covert as well as overt struggles for power in both the marketplace and in the government, both among themselves and with the few humans who attempt to compete. The character class a Skin Twister pursues depends on the particular human persona it has assumed, though most are aristocrats, experts, or fighters.

*Plague Kings* and *Queens* are the masters of whole warrens. In smaller warrens, they may simply be strong wererats who bullied their way to dominance. In the greatest warrens, wererats revere their Plague Kings and Queens as godlings who command uncharacteristic sacrifice and devotion in their subjects. Weak Plague Kings and Queens are quickly replaced through assassination, while successful rulers often serve for life atop thrones of human bone and refuse. Most Plague Kings and Queens are Skin Twisters, though any wererat with the strength and will to dominate its kin might rise to the position.



the edges and patched repeatedly. DeVeyrines noted that many wererats, particularly scouts, wear such cloaks in hybrid form, evidently using them as a rudimentary disguise in the event that they stumble upon humans. Cloaked and hooded, at a distance and in poor lighting, a wererat in hybrid form might be mistaken for a human. The pockets sewn into the garment were filled with all manner of trinkets, including tiny tools, tindertwigs, vials of mysterious liquids, dead animals and insects, and colorful stones.

The creature was remarkably clean given its surroundings, its fur free of detritus, mud, or lice. DeVeyrines explained that this was typical; she has repeatedly witnessed wererats vigorously grooming themselves. The exception is the priest caste, its members wearing caked filth as if it were ritual pigment. Other than its cloak, this creature wore only a sheathed short sword and a few small ornaments constructed of rodent bones, sinew, and wire.

This being my first examination of a wererat at such proximity, I was struck by how truly ratlike the creature's form was. While the hybrid forms of other lycanthropes typically have some human features, this creature's only had the slightest whisper of humanity. It resembled nothing so much as a huge black rat blessed with a generally humanoid frame and articulate digits. Its eyes were cold and black, and even in slumber they seemed to regard me as the enemy. This, I surmised, was not a parasite, not an aberration of the human race, but a race apart, a terrible new tribe whose hour was yet to come. I have included some sketches of the beast in the Attached Notes.

Though I entertained thoughts of torturing the creature for additional information, DeVeyrines was becoming unnerved. I allowed her to slay the captive beast quickly to quell her protests. She urged us to return hastily to the surface, before the dead wererat was found and its kin began to descend on the area. Our return was a long and miserable trek, but uneventful, and DeVeyrines related several tales of her more harrowing hunts.

## The Realm



vast and powerful hereditary aristocracy rules Richemulot, and a single noblewoman ruthlessly dominates this aristocracy: Jacqueline Renier. Though she lacks any legal or religious mandate to rule, Jacqueline has sat as *de facto* queen of

Richemulot for over three decades. She has achieved this feat through a tested balance of treachery, reciprocity, intimidation, temptation, and cold blooded violence. The Attached Notes contain a more extensive biography of Jacqueline.

Nobles whom I interrogated on the topic could provide no satisfactory explanation for Jacqueline's unique place of power. Indeed, many blanched when I broached the topic, indicating that their loyalty to *la Grande Dame* (the euphemistic name for Jacqueline) was unwavering. I suspect that Jacqueline retains much of her power in the form of blackmail, holding her knowledge of terrible secrets and scandals over the heads of her fellow aristocrats. Yet she may hold subtler, supernatural power as well. If Jacqueline, referred to as "Herself" by her own family, is not the dread lord of this land, then a suitable alternate candidate fails to seize my attention.

Although Jacqueline is by all accounts an arrogant tyrant, in one respect she differs wildly from her counterparts in other realms I have visited. Jacqueline Renier is widely revered by the common people under her dominion. The Richemuloise look upon Jacqueline with pride, considering her a patriot, a maternal figure, and a cunning ruler. Apart from her beauty and personal charisma, the factor most responsible for Jacqueline's popularity among the masses is undoubtedly the nationalistic bent her rule has taken in the last five years. She speaks of the Richemuloise as a unified people with a common culture and heritage and of the necessity for Richemulot as a whole to defend itself against aggressors. She encourages immigration, promotes trade between and beyond Richemulot's cities, and generally advocates the notion of Richemulot as a sovereign kingdom.

For the commoners, who for decades were powerless under the oblivious heel of local noble intrigue, the concept of a unified, powerful Richemulot is attractive. Cultural pride is a new phenomenon here. Still, there are lingering doubts among the nobility, who know all too well that Jacqueline Renier never sets out on any endeavor without an ulterior motive.

## Government

Richemulot is a true aristocracy, where the whims of the nobility rule. Yet casual observation reveals that the Richemuloise masses do not suffer in any horrible fashion under this system. Though





the common folk are utterly excluded from the halls of power, the events that occur behind gilded doors rarely cause them any misery. Commoners spend their lives following the details of the aristocratic world through the veil of public gossip, but seldom does that world touch their lives.

This situation can be attributed in part to the strange nature of power within the Rlichemuloise aristocracy. Noble titles are generally hereditary, but the strength of any particular family is defined not by its wealth or holdings but by the secrets it knows. The most powerful family in Rlichemulot, the Reniers, has managed to retain its position both by holding its own secrets tightly to its breast and by ferreting out the skeletons of other aristocrats. If one examines any prominent noble lineage carefully, one uncovers a similar balance of obfuscation and blackmail.

Owing to this unusual system, power can be an extremely fleeting thing in Rlichemulot. A nobleman who is the maverick of the realm can be reduced to a powerless pretender in a matter of months, weeks, or even days by a well-placed tidbit of gossip or carefully exploited secret. Conversely, despite the traditionally hereditary nature of nobility, a commoner who happens upon a valuable nugget of knowledge can find himself suddenly titled at the behest of newfound noble "benefactors."

The intrigues of the Rlichemuloise aristocracy proceed at a dizzying pace; those who cannot keep up are gleefully chewed up and spit out by more ruthless dilettantes. During the most illustrious galas, such as *la Mascarade Argenté* thrown annually by the Reniers, the fortunes of whole families can shift in a matter of hours. The wagging tongues of *les harpies*, an unkind sobriquet applied to particularly vicious Rlichemuloise noblewomen, drive most of this social warfare. Nobles learn to relish the pleasures of their positions while they still hold them; only the naïve take for granted that their lifestyle will be unchanged in six months' time.

The degree to which the nobles are engaged in the realm's day-to-day matters varies from house to house. Most nobles adhere to their responsibilities in a marginally diligent fashion, as appearing either too interested in or too oblivious to the welfare of the commoners is socially lethal. Rather than sullying his hands by addressing the matter personally, the typical noble's solution to any problem is to throw coin at it until it goes away. Thus, a legion of bureaucrats is retained to oversee banal matters

## Law Enforcement

A Rlichemuloise watchman can be used to represent any rank-and-file law enforcement figure in the employ of a noble household.

**Rlichemuloise Watchman:** Human War1; CR 1/2; Size M humanoid (human); HD 1d8+1; hp 5; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 17 (touch 12, flatfooted 15); Atk +3 melee (1d6+2, rapier) or +3 melee (2d4+3, ranseur) or +3 ranged (1d12, musket); Face/Reach 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft. (10 ft. with ranseur); AL LE; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

**Skills and Feats:** Handle Animal +2, Intimidate +2, Intuit Direction +1, Listen +3, Sense Motive +1, Spot +3; Alertness, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearms).

**Possessions:** Rapier, ranseur, silver dagger, musket, 20 bullets, breastplate, bullseye lantern, mastiff.

such as public infrastructure and civil disputes. Corruption is widespread, yet the locals have come to accept it with remarkable aplomb. The Rlichemuloise understand implicitly that money and favors must change hands if one wishes to have one's grievances heard or needs attended to.

Criminal law is loose in both letter and practice in Rlichemulot. Though many nobles use the law as a tool to needle their rivals, its potency does not outmatch that of public opinion, and the two are often best applied in concert. A criminal might find that he is only caught and punished when it suits the momentary needs of a random noble he has never personally wronged. That the peace is maintained in Rlichemulot not by a public militia but by the private soldiers of the noble houses is no coincidence. Nearly all aristocrats retain at least a cadre of personal enforcers, and some families have what could only be described as small private armies.

The city watch is one of the few concessions to public welfare made by the nobility. Each of the families with urban holdings contributes seasoned warriors to serve as watchmen for the city. The watch companies — such as the Casques Safran,



Soleils Craimoisi, Lions de la Rue, and la Serrure et Clé — are traditional organizations with a strong sense of honor, duty, and pomp. Each company's ultimate allegiance to a particular noble house ensures that there is always some tension between companies. The constant threat of wererat attacks keeps relations on the watch frosty but generally cooperative. Nonetheless, when threatened on the streets at night, canny citizens always keep in mind the allegiance of the company they seek for help.

## Economy

As I have noted, Richemulot depends on crafted goods to sustain its prosperity. The realm, however, continues to expand its agricultural production steadily in an effort to free itself from dependence on its neighbors. Particularly in the Silent Fields, the Richemuloise are clearing the forests to make way for the vast fields of grain that the realm needs to support its swelling population. Wheat, barley, oats, and corn are all bedrock crops of the region, supplemented by potatoes, millet, and buckwheat. Orchards of apples, cherries, and chestnuts are a common sight, as well as renowned local vineyards and plots of a smelly, native pipeweed known as *herbediable*. The rockier soil of the House of Sages serves as better pastureland than farmland. Milk from Richemuloise dairy cattle produces some of the richest cheeses and butters to be found anywhere, while the locals raise Mordentish breeds of sheep for their meat, milk, and especially their wool. Apiaries in the region produce rich honey, and the forests hide a plethora of wild mushrooms and truffles eagerly sought by the natives.

The true soul of Richemulot, however, dwells in her workshops, thick with the heat, dust, and clamor of productive men at work. Though Richemulot boasts timber and modest supplies of iron, tin, and ochre, many raw materials must be imported from other lands. Guilds tightly control the craft traditions, protecting the Richemuloise reputation for excellence as much as regulating production and prices. Folk throughout the Core regard Richemuloise crafts as among the best, possessing aesthetic beauty and durability unmatched by those of other realms. Many workshops jealously guard their secret techniques, and rivalries between individual master craftsmen can become heated. Prominent local products include textiles, furniture, leather goods, ceramics, glassware, ships,

carriages and carts, weapons, armor, and all manner of decorative and utilitarian items of iron and tin.

Nearly every noble house of any standing mints modest numbers of Richemuloise coins. Each is stamped with the family's coat-of-arms on one side, while the other side bears the figure of a prominent ancestor or of *Prospérité*, a Richemuloise maiden who is the personification of wealth. Since the prestige of houses continually ebbs and flows in Richemulot, examining a handful of local coins is akin to looking back through the past few decades of aristocratic politics. The masses give all Richemuloise coins the same monikers, regardless of their origins: the *rumor* is the copper piece, the *secret* is the silver piece, and the *scandal* is the gold piece. Some Richemuloise merchants are receptive to haggling, but one should not assume that all are so flexible.

## Diplomacy

Richemulot's dealings with other realms primarily occur through the diplomatic gestures of Jacqueline Renier. Her carefully orchestrated moves strike a balance between tactful deference and ruthless bullying. Other nobles do not typically imitate the Grande Dame's overt efforts at advancing Richemulot's standing abroad. Occasionally, however, one of Jacqueline's rivals may attempt to subvert her authority in the eyes of foreign rulers. Take, for example, the unwise gambit that Girard Cavaillon took in 743, when he attempted to broker a secret deal with the Falkovnian army. Upon learning of the impending coup, Jacqueline countered with an unidentified proposition to Vlad Drakov himself, then offered Cavaillon's favorite mistress for Drakov's evening entertainment as an afterthought.

**Borca:** Borca occupies a strange place in the minds of the Richemuloise, who see it as both a worthy twin and an object lesson. On the one hand, Borca is a strong, cultured realm, albeit one a touch too colored by the harsh character of its neighbor Barovia. At the same time, poverty and oppression, the likes of which the Richemuloise have never experienced, are squeezing the life out of the Borcans. Much of this misery is laid at the feet of the Black Widow, Ivana Boritsi, and her mad cousin Ivan Dilisnya. Rivals of Jacqueline Renier are fond of publicly pointing out that if one noble were to attain absolute power in Richemulot,





the result might look something like Borca. This may be the sole factor that tempers Jacqueline's rise to prominence in the eyes of the Richemuloise masses.

**Dementlieu:** The Richemuloise regard Dementlieu as a wellspring of culture and innovation. Dementlieu epitomizes the civilized beacon that Richemulot strives to be. The Richemuloise latch onto Dementlieuse trends, often a touch too late to be fashionable in the eyes of the Dementlieuse. Thus the saying: "Pont-a-Museum this fall, Port-a-Lucine last spring." Ultimately, however, even the Richemuloise chafe at Dementlieuse haughtiness, which is seen as undeserved and unwise. One anonymous noble suggested to me that Dementlieu would be just as potent a cultural lodestone if it were a Richemuloise possession.

**Falkovnia:** Naturally, the Treaty of Four Towers colors Richemulot's relationship with Falkovnia. Some wagging tongues have hinted that Jacqueline is less fearful of Vlad Drakov than her participation in this pact might suggest. According to such thinking, Jacqueline is most interested in forging future alliances and enhancing Richemulot's prestige. Perhaps the Grande Dame knows something her fellow rulers do not. Regardless, she seems surprisingly comfortable approaching Drakov and his minions for diplomatic purposes, despite their open enmity. The Richemuloise masses, for their part, live in constant fear of Falkovnian aggression.

**Mordent:** The Richemuloise dismiss Mordent as a sleepy coastal land with little to offer the larger world save overwrought tales of the restless dead. Merchants have profited from trade with the quiet little realm, however. Some Richemuloise are a tad resentful of Mordent's participation in the Treaty of Four Towers. As a realm with a sparse population and no significant standing military, Mordent is viewed as the kingdom with the most to gain from its allies' protection.

**Verbrek:** Like most realms that border Verbrek's wilds, Richemulot is less concerned with establishing ties with the human population than in defending itself against rampaging werewolves. Since the Richemuloise who have the most to fear are the scattered farmers and herders of the countryside, protection is not often forthcoming from the nobility.

## Sites of Interest



began my journey through Richemulot in the west, trekking arduously from the moors of Mordent into the pastoral countryside of the Silent Fields. After satisfying my curiosity about this lonely region, I pushed northeast toward Pont-a-Museum, where I secured passage up the Musarde River aboard *le Mulet de Villet*, a famous local ferry that runs between the Richemuloise cities. My objective was to follow the Musarde's course south, stopping at each of the realm's cities along the way.

### Pont-a-Museum

It is often said that Pont-a-Museum was not built along the banks of the Musarde so much as it was built heedless of them. Nestled at a slight bend in the river, just north of where the Musarde swallows the River of Sacrifices, Pont-a-Museum sprawls across both shores. Towering levees, up to fifty feet high, stand on both riverbanks, protecting the city from flooding. Massive stone bridges connect either shore to an aggregation of man-made islands, each also supported on a freestanding levee. Cunning design is evident in all aspects of this intricate marriage of water and city. Though the docks are at water level, a network of ramps, switchback stairs, and pulley-driven platforms allows cargo and passengers to reach street level easily. Drawbridges on the major causeways permit vessels on the Musarde to navigate freely past the city.

Pont-a-Museum is arguably the most vital river port for the entire western Core. The city is a gathering place for wealthy buyers and sellers from Kartakass to Darkon, all seeking opportunity and the best wholesale prices. Besides the business of trade — and attendant commerce such as warehousing, usury, smuggling, and protection — Pont-a-Museum also features fine blacksmiths, tin-smiths, shipwrights, apothecaries, and workshops where distinctive cheeses, sweetmeats, and confections are made. Pont-a-Museum's streets are narrow and labyrinthine, especially in the southern districts of the city, which seem to be much older than the rest. *Le Grande Théâtre de Musarde* looks out over *la Place d'Etoiles* (the Plaza of Stars), a thronging market where Vistani can often be found tarrying. *L'Académie de Richemulot* offers university degrees to the Richemuloise elite, who receive a classical training in philosophy, litera-





ture, linguistics, and natural science. Sentire Carelia Douzains, oversees the activities of the Church of Ezra in Richemulot from *la Cathédrale de Destiné Peste* (the Cathedral of the Ordained Plague), built from the remnants of an ancient bathhouse.

At the literal center of the city, crouching on a large island in the middle of the Musarde, is Chateau Delanuit, the ancestral manor of the Reniers and the home of the Grande Dame herself. Pont-a-Museau is strongly colored by Jacqueline's proximity. The city belongs to her in spirit, if not by law, and the other nobles who dwell here are either pitifully weak or ruthlessly cunning. Jacqueline has recently devoted her underlings to a series of ambitious projects in Pont-a-Museau, including the construction of an enormous city wall, complete with locks to control river traffic, and the restoration of several decrepit blocks of tenements to accommodate Richemulot's influx of refugees.

### Where to stay in Pont-a-Museau

Visitors to Pont-a-Museau have an array of lodgings from which to choose, but the standout is undoubtedly the Fat Black Rat (good to common quality rooms, good quality food). The inn's cleanliness, the attentiveness of the staff, and its fine local cuisine attract wealthy foreign merchants, though even modest room rates are available. Savvy guests will take the time to sample the goose liver, a house specialty that is perhaps the best in the Core. Vacancies are difficult to come by, so travelers may need to seek out reasonable alternatives, such as the Smoking Tallow (common quality rooms, common quality food), and *Dérivant de Pétales* on *Isle Traîtrise* (good quality rooms, good quality food) which caters to outsiders with its private city guides and lantern boys.

### Ste. Ronges

Ste. Ronges lacks the urbane atmosphere of Pont-a-Museau, but makes up for it in underworld unseemliness. Much as the local nobles are loathe to admit it, the criminal element in Ste. Ronges is one step removed from out of control. There are no organized underworld guilds here. Instead, legions of street gangs run short-term rackets in pick pocketing, robbery, burglary, and gambling. The watch companies have stretched themselves to exhaustion trying to keep up with the mercurial culture of the streets. Perennial rumors of an elaborate slavery ring frighten honest citizens and street rabble alike. Perhaps, as one observant noble suggested to me, Ste. Ronges is close enough to Pont-a-Museau to feed off its social refuse, but lacks the tempering effect of Jacqueline Renier's presence.

Unlike other Richemuloise cities, Ste. Ronges is walled. The ramparts of dun stone and six fortified gates appear even older than the city itself. Ste. Ronges sprawls in a somewhat haphazard fashion along the western shore of the Musarde, spilling out of the walls and into the surrounding idyllic countryside. Crafted goods generate most of the city's wealth, though a robust trade in river fishing thrives on the docks, and several ferries that service the length of the Musarde are based here. Fine leather goods, quality tools for farmers and laborers, and perfumed soaps are all signature local products. Ste. Ronges' most famed craftsmen, however, are her swordsmiths, who produce blades of exceptional balance and keenness from Rongaise steel. Most of Ste. Ronges' swordsmiths are devoutly religious folk, and anchorites weave their prayers over the final days of a Rongaise sword's creation. Legend says that whoever strikes another man down with such a blade without mercy in his heart will suffer Ezra's wrath.


**Pont-a-Museau (large city):** Conventional/Monstrous; AL CE; 40,000 gp limit; Assets 33,100,000 gp; Population 16,550; Isolated (human 91%, halflings 7%, half-Vistani 1%, other 1%).

**Authority Figures:** Jacqueline Renier, female human natural wererat Ari6/Rog5; Jules Audrix, male human Ari2/Ftr6 (commander of the Casques Safran watch company).

**Important Characters:** Carelia Douzains, female human Clr10 (Sentire of Richemulot); Narcis de Veyrines, female human Rgr8/Rog4 (wererat hunter); Tecin "the Pebble," male halfling natural wererat Exp3/Rog3 (confidence man and smuggler)







## Rongaise Steel and Bladewights

If a magic sword of Rongaise steel is created with the Craft Magic Arms and Armor feat by a cleric of Ezra, the sword will automatically carry a terrible curse. If the wielder of such a blade slays an intelligent creature without provocation, the character becomes fascinated with the sword (as the failed Horror effect; see the **Ravenloft Campaign Setting**) and will refuse to ever give it up. The fascination does not end unless the character receives an *atonement* spell from a cleric of Ezra, who will typically require a quest to prove the character's repentance.

If the character does not receive atonement and dies before his Wisdom or Charisma drop below 3, he rises in 1d4 days as a *bladewight*, a fearsome undead creature that exists solely for battle. Bladewights have the same traits as normal wights (see the *Monster Manual*), with the following exceptions. A bladewight has the same number of Hit Dice as did the living character. The bladewight is proficient with the magic sword to which it is bonded and is destroyed if its sword is ever destroyed. If it does not already have them, the creature gains the following feats, regardless of whether it meets the normal requirements: Combat Reflexes, Expertise, Improved Critical (applicable sword), Improved Disarm, Power Attack, Quick Draw, Weapon Specialization (applicable sword). Bladewights also possess the following special abilities:

**Challenge (Sp):** Three times per day, as a standard action, the bladewight can issue a *command* to a single living creature, daring the foe to face it in single combat. This ability functions as the spell cast by a 9th-level sorcerer, save that the duration is equal to the bladewight's HD. The save DC is 10 + 1/2 the bladewight's HD + the bladewight's Charisma modifier.

**Haste (Sp):** Once per day, as a standard action, the bladewight can use *haste* on itself, as the spell cast by a 9th-level sorcerer.

**Rusting Grasp (Sp):** Once per day, as a standard action, the bladewight can use *rusting grasp*, as the spell cast by a 9th-level sorcerer.

These powers raises a bladewight's CR by +2 from a standard wight's CR as listed in the *Monster Manual* (after any advancement).

The identity of the eponymous Ste. Ronges is a mystery, presumably lost along with the realm's false history. Certainly, neither the Church of Ezra nor any faith known in the Core recognizes such a saint. Walls throughout the city feature faded paintings of a strange, haloed figure with the head of a hound, clutching curious relics. Other noteworthy

## Secret Society: The Cult of Simon Hudaire

The Renier catacombs conceal more than the remains of deceased nobles. They are also the sanctuary of a perverse conspiracy against Jacqueline Renier and her wererat kin. In 735 BC, Pierre and Gerard Renier, human nephews to Jacqueline, had grown to despise the way human members of their family — particularly men — were used for breeding and then destroyed by their wererat wives, mothers, and sisters. They journeyed to Ste. Ronges to unearth the remains of Jacqueline's father, Simon Hudaire, whom the brothers regarded as the archetypal martyr to the wererats' ambition. Making a pact with a blasphemous god-thing called the Withered Rat, the brothers raised their uncle as one of the ancient dead, with the goal of toppling the Renier wererats from power.

In the years since, Pierre (*male human Rgr4/Rog4, NE*) and Gerard (*male human Ari2/Chr5, LE*) have gathered about them a circle of disaffected human males from the Renier family. They revere Simon (*rank three human ancient dead Ari7/Ftr5, LE*) as their avenging angel, carefully setting him upon powerful wererat enemies. Pierre and Gerard alone know the ritual necessary to awaken and retire their ancient uncle. The sullen Pierre has uncovered a pair of powerful artifacts in the catacombs, forged for the explicit purpose of slaying wererats. *Dogstooth* is a +2 *shapechanger bane rapier* that can shed *daylight* on command, while *Catsclaw* is a +2 *defending animal bane dagger* that emits *darkness* on command. When brought together, the two blades can *control winds* and use *locate creature* to find any wererat. The outgoing Gerard, for his part, has become a fanatical worshipper of the Withered Rat, who speaks to him in feverish dreams. Gerard's cleric domains are Death and Protection.



sights include the ancient, monumental archways that dot the city and *Les Jardins Vieux* (the Old Gardens), much of which lie brown, withered, and choked by thistles. Recent efforts from natural scientists at the adjoining *l'Herbier*, recently restored, are slowly returning the gardens to their former glory. Ste. Ronges is also home to the spectacular ancestral catacombs of the Renier family, where the family's dead from Pont-a-Museau are shipped, preserved, and interred.

### Where to stay in Ste Ronges

The most vital element for one's lodging in Ste. Ronges is security, and the Inn of the Last Breath (common quality rooms, common quality food) satisfies this requirement nicely. With its policies of checking weapons and locking the doors after sunset, one can feel marginally safer within its walls than without. The stripe of patron that frequents the inn is rough around the edges, but the buckwheat bread is baked fresh daily and the beds are comfortable. The tavern downstairs has a reputation as a recruitment ground for desperate patrons and down-on-their-luck adventurers.

**Ste Ronges (small city):** Conventional/Monstrous; AL CN; 15,000 gp limit; Assets 4,897,500 gp; Population 6,530; Isolated (human 91%, halfings 7%, half-Vistani 1%, other 1%).

**Authority Figures:** Emili Traidou, female human natural wererat Ari8 (powerful noblewoman).

**Important Characters:** Bethilie Bresson, female human Exp4/Ftr3 (master swordsmith); Quinault Sumène, male human Exp10 (botanist and visiting researcher); Valeray the Meek, male human Rog3 (urchin king).

### Mortigny

Mortigny sprawls along the northeastern shore of the Musarde, where the river bends sharply before joining the Luna River of Borca. Fragmentary frescoes suggest that a succession of barbarians and militant conquerors swept through Mortigny in the past, but the dating and details remain ambiguous. Like its sister cities to the north, Mortigny has a reputation as a thriving trading hub, though the crafts it produces are also renowned. Workshops produce woolen textiles, fine

wooden furniture, delicate porcelain, and the local, powder blue *mélancolie* glassware prized by aristocrats throughout the Core.

### Secret Society: La Serrure et Clé

Since Richemulot's appearance, the Lock and Key has remained cloaked in mystery, its members' names, faces, and traditions hidden from public scrutiny. The masks that the watchmen wear, which resemble grotesque animals and clowns, conceal a significant secret: all of the watchmen in the Lock and Key are calibans. By hiding their twisted visages and adhering to a strict code of honor and justice, the members have forged a peerless reputation among the citizens of Mortigny. In truth, the Lock and Key does follow esoteric traditions, from eerie rituals to dabbling in alchemical philosophy (see **Van Richten's Arsenal**). All of these practices point toward an ethic of perfection of and respect for the self. Though the Lavigny family ostensibly sponsors the company, the Lock and Key is generally autonomous and may be the closest thing in Richemulot to an uncorrupted force of law. The caliban watchmen have an Outcast Rating of 0 for as long as their identities remain secret. The company commander is Arguis Groissiat, *male caliban Ftr4/Wiz6/Alp2*, (for more information on the Alchemical Philosopher prestige class, see **Van Richten's Arsenal**.) LG, known to the public only as *la Tour* (the Rook), owing to his black, beaked mask.

Unfortunately, unbeknownst to Groissiat and the rest of the leadership, the tendrils of the Abyss have indeed wormed their way into the company. Watchman Rogier Le Cauchet (*male caliban Ftr5, CE*) has been secretly supplicating a fiend named Baphomet, under the delusion that the demon lord can heal his deformities. Le Cauchet has carefully built a cabal of fellow disciples around him and crafted a terrible idol in the shape of Baphomet's visage. Recently, the head has begun to speak to Le Cauchet. It may only be a matter of time before the dread process of fiendish transposition begins to claim the desperate caliban.





Relatively far from the glowering shadow of Jacqueline Renier, Mortigny has the feel of a city thrumming with potential. The aristocracy here is strong, vibrant, and cutthroat, obsessed with out-doing one another with dazzling galas. The court life of the Mortigny nobility is the most byzantine in Richemulot, though it only rarely has the lethal character that taints the intrigues in Pont-a-Museau. The amusements demanded by the nobles here have drawn a host of artists, actors, dancers, and — in particular — talented troubadours from Kartakass and beyond. The Church of Ezra is strong here, though many of the heresies that lurk in the House of the Sages are thought to have a toehold in Mortigny as well. The illustrious Serrure et Clé (Lock and Key) watch company — whose members hide behind grotesque masks — has been defending itself in the past year from charges of blasphemy. Some zealous anchorites have latched onto rumors that the company's secretive traditions conceal diabolic pacts.

Notable features of the city include *l'Estimé Capitale*, an elegant structure built by the Mortigny nobility in the late 700s to serve as a town hall. The accompanying attempts to make Mortigny more republican fell apart when Claude Renier had the instigators sealed inside metal casks and buried in the muck at the bottom of the Musarde. Today, *l'Estimé Capitale* is divided into several barracks for the various city watch companies. *La Maison des Cent Papillons* (House of a Hundred Moths) is ostensibly a private astronomical observatory, though most locals know it is actually a "secret" arcane college, the only one of its kind in Richemulot. The Mortigny nobles sponsor the observatory to keep it close at hand and remain watchful for the rise of ambitious wizards.

### Where to stay in Mortigny

The Sorrows of the Maiden (good quality rooms, common quality meals) is debatably the best lodging to be had in Mortigny, though without question it is the most distinctive. Housed in the restored cathedral of an unknown faith, the Sorrows offers a kind of sanctuary to its guests, as its armed sentries are instructed to keep out all unwanted intruders, be they wererats or city watchmen. The modest but comfortable guest quarters are housed in what was once the rectory. Meals of savory grain mashes and vegetable soups are served in the cavernous nave, where spirited performances by local minstrels are customary.

**Mortigny (small city):** Conventional/Monstrous; AL N; 15,000 gp limit; Assets 6,210,000 gp; Population 8,280; Isolated (human 92%, halflings 6%, half-Vistani 1%, other 1%).

**Authority Figures:** Evrard Lavigny, male human Ari7 (powerful nobleman).

**Important Characters:** Isodard Yvoire, male human Div5 (astrologer and wizard); Mabile the Crimson, female half-Vistani Brd8 (master troubadour).

## The Sanctuary of the forgotten Lady

Though I could have easily continued east into Borca from Mortigny, I instead elected to take a detour on foot into the House of the Sages, whose mysteries proved far too enticing to pass by.

Just shy of the Borcan border, at the southern edge of the House of the Sages, stands a ruined chapel at the center of a stony meadow. Known as *la Sanctuaire de la Dame Oubliée* (the Sanctuary of the Forgotten Lady), the ivy-clad chapel is dedicated to Hala, a rarity in a faith that seems to prefer humble shrines and pristine forest groves for its places of worship. The thirteen serpents of the goddess' holy symbol appear, eroded but unmistakable, above the chapel door. The structure has stood in its current state since Richemulot's appearance. The roof has all but collapsed into rubble, leaving only a crumbling procession of gothic arches to yearn toward the sky.

As I entered the meadow in which the Sanctuary stands, the songbirds of the surrounding woodlands seemed to fall silent, and an anxious stillness settled over me. This development raised my hackles to danger, but the chapel's caretaker quickly put me at ease. The benevolent cleric named Balihnda, a blind, comely matron with threadbare robes and wild hair, received me with warmth. Intrigued by my endeavors, she asked many questions about her fellow witches elsewhere in Richemulot and beyond. Though she seemed to know little of the chapel's history, she prattled ceaselessly about her goddess' strength. Eventually, her amiable demeanor grew tiresome, and I began to wonder if her infirmity had not addled her a touch. When she offered to shelter me for the night within the chapel's fallen walls, I felt it prudent to decline.



### Dread Possibility: The Corrupted Sanctuary

Though the Sanctuary of the Forgotten Lady may have been dedicated to Hala at one time, it has since been utterly corrupted by Balihnda, who is not a human cleric at all but an annis of terrible power. Native to Richemulot since its appearance, Balihnda had an unexpected encounter with the late Rudolph van Richten in 736 BC, which prompted her to flee the home she had kept for centuries. She stumbled upon the Sanctuary in her flight and gleefully made the site her new lair, tainting it with her very presence. In ancient scrolls sealed in the chapel altar, Balihnda uncovered many of the unfamiliar faith's doctrines, including its professed enmity toward all hags. Since then, Balihnda (*rank six annis Bbn4/Clr4, CE*) has become keenly interested in unearthing lore concerning Hala's church. She poses as a cleric caretaker of the chapel, receiving pilgrims, witches, and random travelers and questioning them at length. Her new obsession has tempered her bloodthirsty nature somewhat, and visitors not affiliated with Hala's faith may be hosted courteously if they tickle Balihnda's fancy. Both clerics and layfolk who profess their faith in the goddess are viciously tortured and devoured, however. The unnatural calm of the meadow is a product of the annis' corruptive aura (see "Hags" in Chapter Six of *Van Richten's Arsenal*). Balihnda's cleric domains are Destruction and Trickery.

### Tinctnoire Manor

One of the most notorious accursed sites in Richemulot, Tinctnoire Manor suffered under a dread curse for what must have been centuries, though its exact origins are lost to the hollows of Richemuloise history. When they passed on, each Tinctnoire joined the ranks of the restless dead, rising as a vengeful ghost and filled with spiteful urges to destroy its mortal kin. In the tower of the manor hung an enormous, enchanted bell that, if struck, would drag the ancestral spirits down into



the womb of the earth, entrapping them. Though the Tinctnoire bell functioned but once every hour, it was sounded punctually every hour for untold generations, thus staying the curse. Fate finally caught up with the Tinctnoires in 721 BC, when an illicit rendezvous supposedly delayed the tolling of the bell. The ancestral shades, of course, descended on the manor and its mortal inhabitants.

Today, Tinctnoire Manor lies in a sorry state, just north of the River of Sacrifices in the central House of the Sages. Prickly shrubs and wildflowers have overgrown the grounds, and the walls of the manor itself have begun to crumble. Though the curse has come to fruition, its legacy still hangs heavily over the estate, and the locals avoid the area at all costs.

The Tinctnoires were an eccentric lineage of nobles when they still lived and breathed. They were strangely consumed with the color black, draping every room and hall in the manor in the hue, and their court produced some of the most illustrious dirgists in the southern Core. Now the locals whisper that the Tinctnoires are the epitome of jealous undead, harboring hate for all life. Needless to say, I did not tarry here after sunset.

### Tinctnoire Manor

Tinctnoire Manor is a rank three sinkhole of evil, stemming from the atmosphere of despair and raw hatred that burns in its undead inhabitants. Most of the Tinctnoires rose from the dead as wraiths, though many who perished in 721 became ghosts. Tinctnoire ghosts are usually aristocrats, though some have levels as bards, illusionists, necromancers, or even shadowdancers. Common salient abilities of Tinctnoire ghosts include aura of despair, ebon shroud, and frightful moan. Over the years, the manor has drawn other creatures of darkness, including allips, shadows, and shadow cloakers.

The Tinctnoire *bell of warding* (see **Van Richten's Arsenal**) still hangs in the high tower of the estate, silent now but functional. Surviving the manor's perils long enough to remove the *bell*, which weighs 2,000 pounds, would prove a formidable challenge.

## Final Thoughts



fter my journey through the House of the Sages, I returned to Mortigny to procure passage on a vessel heading east and into Borca. After some exasperating negotiations, I secured a place aboard the barge of a local merchant who was heading up the Luna River that evening in search of premium marble.

Richemulot should be watched closely. Though Jacqueline Renier does not seem to have expansionist inclinations, she is nothing if not ambitious, and Richemulot's fate seems to hinge on her ambition. Though it lacks an organized central government and military, Richemulot has many assets, chief among them population, wealth, and a cunning and resourceful character. One might achieve control of Richemulot by forging an alliance with the Grande Dame and using the realm's resources against other enemies. Barring this, a decisive removal of Jacqueline and her kin would be a necessary first step before sweeping in to claim Richemulot.

Having traversed these three realms, I thought it prudent to send my patron what I had found of each before proceeding on into the Black Widow's realm. Needless to say, I am less than delighted to be returning to the shadow of the Balinok Mountains, which seem so thick with ancient sins. Yet a formal study of that realm also is required. Perhaps you will see fit to confide fully in me the nature of that which you seek in the coming days, my dear patron. Until then, you have my

Regards,





# Attached Notes

The following information is for the Dungeon Master (DM). If you intend to play in this setting and do not wish to spoil any surprises included here, you should stop reading now.



## The Church of Ezra



he Church of Ezra is one of the most influential and widespread religions in Ravenloft, having a significant presence in both Mordent and Dementlieu (in this gazetteer) as well as in neighboring Borca, which will be covered in **Ravenloft Gazetteer Volume IV**. Thus, game material is compiled here for ease of reference. This section expands upon the information presented in the **Ravenloft Campaign Setting**. Additional details on the lawful evil Nevuchar Springs sect are found in **Ravenloft Gazetteer Volume II**.

### Origin Myth

*In the time before, in a land cloaked in Mists, there was a woman, and She was Ezra.*

*Ezra was a healer of the sick and protector of the weak. Such was her lot in life. Such was her role in the grand scheme.*

*Ezra took pride in the role Fate had given her. Her duty was Her joy.*

*For many years, Ezra healed the lame and watched over Her people. Yet as time went on, Ezra began to see the Hollow.*

*From the Mists of Death came horrors of the night. They were the drinker of blood and the stealer of breath and the beast that rends. Many were their legions. Many were the roles played by darkness in the Grand Scheme.*

*Ezra knew that Death would come for her, as it comes to all in time. When Ezra entered the Gray Land, there would be no guardian to fill Her role. There would be no one to stand between Her people and the Legions of the Night.*

*Ezra set forth on a quest to find a guardian for Her people. She sought the One Pure Heart who would assume Her role.*

*Ezra sought for the One Pure Heart in many lands, but ever did She seek in vain.*

*In time, Her quest brought Ezra to the end of all things. Behind Ezra stretched all the lands of the world. Before Ezra rose only the Mists of Death.*

*Ezra spoke to the Mists. Asked She, "The world is yours. You set its shape. Why do you allow its people to wander, lost and afraid?"*

*Yet the Mists did not answer.*

*Again Ezra spoke. "Why have you filled your world with the Legions of the Night?"*

*Yet the Mists would not answer.*

*A third time did Ezra speak. "All things have their role in the Grand Scheme. The Legions of the Night*

*have their place, but Guardians and Guides have their roles in turn."*

*Still the Mists offered no reply.*

*Ezra spoke once more. "I have searched all the vastness of your lands, but I have found no Guardians for My people. I have found no Guides for the lost."*

*Again the Mists were silent.*

*For the last time did Ezra speak. "You have failed the Grand Scheme. You have created a Hollow that must be filled. If you will not watch over your people, then that task falls to me."*

*Upon the fifth entreaty did the Mists of Death reply. From the Mists came a Voice, and the Voice spoke, saying, "Turn back, Mortal. You know nothing of the Grand Scheme. You know nothing of the Mists. You have reached the end of Your world. Continue and You shall find only Your destruction, nothing more."*

*Yet Ezra held fast against the Mists, saying, "You cannot bid Me enter, yet I cannot turn away. I offer Myself to you so that you may know the suffering of My people. If I must be destroyed for them, then that is what must be."*

*The Mists of Death fell silent. Then the Voice spoke once more. "Enter the Mists if You must, Mortal, but not as You are. Your kind has no place here. To enter the Mists, You must become as one with the Mists. Never again shall you leave them. Will You forever sacrifice Yourself to watch over these few mortals?"*

*Spoke Ezra, "Such is My role in the Grand Scheme. So must it be."*

*And with these words did Ezra become Our Guardian in the Mists.*

— *The Books of Ezra*, Book I. i.–xix.

### Hierarchy and Terminology

The Church of Ezra follows a basic hierarchy that emphasizes personal and communal responsibility. Young anchorites are encouraged to travel, spreading Ezra's teachings to distant lands. Improving one's ecclesiastical rank, however, depends on setting down roots and supporting a dedicated congregation.

Anchorite is a general term for Ezra's clergy, regardless of their class or position. Wardens are wandering, evangelical clerics who sacrifice ecclesiastical power to spread Ezra's word. Toretts are anchorites who establish or staff small temples, while Sentires are the leaders of significant congregations. A single Bastion leads each major sect. Bastions are generally autonomous, but must ulti-





mately defer to the Church's single *Praesidius* (if male) or *Praesidia* (if female). These titles can overlap: for instance, Praesidius Levin Postoya is also the Bastion of the Home Faith and the Sentire of Levkarest. To qualify for the post of Praesidius, a prospective candidate must be a member of the Home Faith and demonstrate that Ezra will guide her safely through the Mists. In game terms, the anchorite must have a Mistwalking ability such as the 6th-level spell in the Mists cleric domain or the Mists Stride ability gained by a 5th-level anchorite of the Mists (see **Van Richten's Arsenal**).

Numerous individuals have come forward over the years, claiming to have been visited by Ezra and demanding that their claims be recognized as church canon. After the First Schism of 698, the Church developed a ceremony called the Rite of Revelation to separate the visionaries from the madmen.

To be recognized as a new bastion, a petitioner must complete several tasks. First, and most simply, the supplicant must personally pen her new *Book of Ezra* and deliver a copy to the Great Cathedral for review. The Great Cathedral has a full library of these texts, most filled with deranged heresies.

Second, the petitioner must manifest a new variety of the *shield of Ezra* (available only to clerics with the Mists domain), demonstrating that the goddess has revealed a new aspect of her protection.

Lastly, the supplicant must present five anchorites, usually her followers, who manifest the same, new variety of the *shield of Ezra*, demonstrating that the goddess wishes this new chapter of her teachings to spread. Should the supplicant pass all three tests, she is recognized as the leader of a new sect. All but three such petitions have been discounted in the past, sometimes revealed as purposeful attempts to subvert the faith. Many anchorites, however, believe that a fifth sect *will* someday appear. This, the Final Sect, will at last reveal the final aspects of Ezra's Grand Scheme and will herald that it is at last coming to its ultimate fruition.

## Worshippers

### Ezra (EZ-ra)

**Symbol:** A silver longsword superimposed on an alabaster kite shield and adorned with a sprig of belladonna. Religious icons depict Ezra herself as a lovely, dark-haired woman bearing these accoutrements.

**Alignment:** LN. The Church's four sects are divided along philosophical lines shaped by their

differing interpretations of Ezra's teachings. Each of these sects roughly corresponds to one of the four alignments available to clerics of Ezra. The Home Faith in Borca is lawful neutral, the Mordentish sect is lawful good, and the Dementlieuse sect is true neutral. Anchorites need not adhere to the prevailing ethos of their sect, however.

**Domains:** Destruction, Healing, Law, Mists, Protection. The Mists domain is unique to anchorites; see Chapter Two of the **Ravenloft Campaign Setting** for details. Anchorites typically select the Mists domain, then choose a second cleric domain based on their sect. Borcan anchorites often select Law, Mordentish anchorites favor Healing, while Dementlieuse anchorites prefer Protection. These are merely tendencies, however, not requirements.

**Favored Weapon:** Ezra's blade (longsword).

Anchorites pray for their spells at sunrise. Worship services consisting of hymns and sermons are held once every fifth day, always at noon to renew Ezra's vows of protection over her congregation. Lay folk who do not attend services for longer than five days risk stepping beyond Ezra's spiritual reach until they return. When attending services, lay worshippers are expected to dress entirely in white, while clergy don ceremonial robes of green with white trim; the wider the visible trim, the higher the anchorite's position within the church.

Ezra's clerics act as guardians and healers, serving as personal emissaries of their goddess. Due to their religion's history of spiritual epiphanies, anchorites place great stock in predestination (the "Grand Scheme") and divination. Others focus on the unusual preponderance of the number five throughout Ezra's religious writs and so study numerology. Ezra's clerics thus occasionally multiclass as diviners, fighters, or rogues. The broader clergy includes commoners, experts, and warriors.

## New feats



The following feats are particularly appropriate for the Ravenloft setting. Players should consult with their DM to see if she allows these feats before taking them, however. DMs should not automatically allow the use of these feats in other settings unless they feel they are truly appropriate.

### Improved Supernatural Resilience

**Prerequisites:** One of Courage, Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Jaded, Lightning Reflexes, or Open Minded — whichever is appropriate to the type of







saving throw normally required to resist the type of power, ability, or condition in question (see below).

Whether due to an ancient boon, long hours of study, a natural condition, or even a conflicting curse of some kind, you are exceptionally resistant to one *specific* supernatural or spell-like ability, curse, or effect generated by a monster. Supernatural powers include abilities such as a vampire's charm ability, rising as undead, contracting afflicted lycanthropy, or suffering mummy rot. The specific condition to which you are resistant must be named when this feat is taken and cannot be changed thereafter. In addition, the supernatural power must be one that normally allows a saving throw to avoid its effects — thus, it cannot be something such as “being attacked by a vampire's claws,” though you could choose to be resilient to the Charisma drain associated with the vampire's slam attack. This feat does not protect against actual spells cast by monsters, though spell-like abilities are fair game.

You receive a +3 divine bonus on all saves made against this power or ability, regardless of the circumstances surrounding the saving throw; however, you can never choose to waive your saving throw against this condition, if some reason you desired to do so. Many great hunters of a specific type of creature exhibit some level of this resilience, although characters who become known for it may find themselves targeted for destruction by the creatures because of the grave threat they represent.

This feat is generally available only during character creation, though it is also possible to develop a particular resilience later in response to a brush with and/or successful recovery from the power or ability in question. Some heroes do not even realize they are resilient to a given condition until later on in their career when they are confronted with it firsthand (i.e., choose this feat later on in the campaign). Players should note that depending on the nature of the resilience, their characters may not even be aware of their hardy condition; thus, players should role-play their characters' reactions accordingly unless the characters are somehow aware of their resistance.

**Special:** This feat may be taken more than once. Each additional time it is selected, a different resistant power or condition must be chosen.

## Greater Supernatural Immunity

**Prerequisites:** Con 15+ (physical conditions) or Wis 15+ (mental powers); Spiritual Resilience;

survive a serious, life-threatening confrontation involving a creature capable of generating the power or ability to which you are resistant.

Same as Spiritual Resilience, except that the divine bonus increases to +6, and now you receive a saving throw against the chosen condition or ability even if a creature's age or power level normally would not allow you to make one. At this level of resilience, you have the potential to represent a powerful enemy of creatures that normally rely on such abilities. The drawback is that you can rest assured that creatures will go to great lengths to ensure that one so resistant to their powers is dealt with as soon as possible.

**Special:** This feat may be taken more than once. Each additional time it is selected, a different power or condition must be selected, and the prerequisites must be met for each separate selection.

## Voice of the Spirits

**Prerequisites:** Ethereal Empathy, Cha 17+

You have a natural affinity for calling spirits. By calling out the name of a particular spirit and making a standard turning check, as though you were a cleric of two levels higher, you may compel a spirit in the area to come to your location and make its presence known. (If you are a cleric, simply add this benefit to your normal turning check.) If affected, the spirit travels to your location by the most direct means possible and manifests or performs some other non-offensive action to indicate that it has arrived. Note that the spirit is under no compunction to obey you after it arrives, and indeed many of the more powerful spirits will be highly aggressive toward those who compel them in such a direct fashion. It should be noted that the spirit will not pass through areas or other effects that can harm it in its efforts to reach you. It will go around such obstacles as quickly as possible, or if it is not able to get to the location without incurring harm on itself, it will arrive at the nearest spot and make its presence known there.

## New Prestige Classes



Each realm's unique properties and difficulties call for expertise devoted to handling its situations or personifying its most common traits. Below are three new prestige classes designed for use with the realms presented in this book.





## Grimtrekker

Though a sewer system enhances the quality of life for city residents, it also provides ample shelter for the most loathsome creatures of the night. Those hunters who are willing to venture below to root out these evils earn praise for their courage. Hunters who spend too much time in the lightless tunnels, however, tend to acquire an unsavory reputation. Pale skin, ragged garments, and a revolting odor easily distinguish these haunted souls, colloquially termed *grimtrekkers*. Ultimately, grimtrekkers are more comfortable below than above, and few folk notice when they vanish for weeks at a time into the wilderness beneath the city.

Nearly all grimtrekkers begin their careers as rangers with an atypical knack for urban or subterranean tracking. Fighters and rogues have also been known to turn to the path of the grimtrekker when provoked by vengeance against sewer denizens. Though they are rare, caliban barbarian/grimtrekkers are not unprecedented. City folk often tell tales of malformed people living beneath their streets, surviving on the refuse of civilization. Many grimtrekkers cut their teeth in the sewers of Richemulot, though others hail from Dementlieu, Darkon, or the fabled twilight city of Nosos.

**Hit Dice:** d10.

### Requirements

To qualify to become a grimtrekker (GrT), a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

**Base Attack Bonus:** +6.

**Skills:** Climb 4 ranks, Knowledge (architecture and/or engineering) 4 ranks, Swim 4 ranks, Wilderness Lore 2 ranks.

**Feats:** Back to the Wall, Blind-Fight, Great Fortitude, Track.

**Special:** The character must survive a solitary ordeal that lasts at least 72 hours in the sewers beneath a city. Typically, this trial entails the character being lost or trapped in the sewers while separated from his companions. Alternately, the character may have been born and

raised in the sewers; this is the case with most caliban grimtrekkers.

### Class Skills

The grimtrekker's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Disable Device (Int), Escape Artist (Dex), Hide (Dex), Intuit Direction (Wis), Jump (Str), Knowledge (architecture) (Int), Knowledge (engineering) (Int), Knowledge (nature) (Int), Knowledge (ooze lore) (Int), Knowledge (shapechanger lore) (Int), Knowledge (vermin lore) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Profession (Wis), Search (Int), Spot (Wis), Swim (Str), Wilderness Lore (Wis).

**Skill Points at Each Level:** 4 + Int modifier.





## Class Features

All of the following are features of the grimetrekker prestige class:

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** A grimetrekker does not gain any additional proficiency in any weapon or armor.

**Vile Adversaries (Ex):** At 1st level, a grimetrekker receives +1 bonus to Bluff, Listen, Sense Motive, Spot, and Wilderness Lore checks when using these skills against certain sewer creatures. Likewise, she receives the same bonus to weapon damage rolls against these creatures. This ability is in all other respects similar to the ranger's favored enemy bonus and does not stack with the favored enemy bonus. The creatures to which the grimetrekker's bonus applies are carrion crawlers, carrion stalkers, cloaklers, dire rats, gibbering mouthers, impersonators, marikith, otyughs, giant crocodiles, wererats, and any plants, oozes, or vermin that occur in the underground climate/terrain. This bonus increases to +2 at 5th level and +3 at 10th level.

**Sewer Stalker (Ex):** At 1st level, a grimetrekker receives a +2 competence bonus to his Wilderness Lore checks when using the Track feat in a sewer. This bonus increases by +2 every other level thereafter.

**Hale and Hearty (Ex):** At 2nd level, a grimetrekker receives a +1 resistance bonus to his

Fortitude saving throws against diseases, poisons, and the special abilities of monstrous oozes (such as a gelatinous cube; see the *Monster Manual*) and mundane slimes, molds, and fungi (such as yellow mold; see the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). This bonus increases to +2 at 5th level and +3 at 7th level. At 9th level, a grimetrekker becomes immune to disease and poison.

**Darkvision (Ex):** At 2nd level, a grimetrekker permanently gains darkvision up to a range of 60 feet. If the grimetrekker already possesses darkvision, his range increases by 60 feet.

**Deep Breath (Ex):** At 3rd level, a grimetrekker gains the ability to hold her breath for a number of rounds equal to three times her Constitution score instead of the normal twice her Constitution score. (See "The Drowning Rule" sidebar in Chapter Three of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). At 6th level, she can hold her breath for a number of rounds equal to four times her Constitution score.

**Sewer Legs (Ex):** At 4th level, a grimetrekker can move without penalty through water (or other fluid) that is up to waist deep. Normally, wading through water counts as either a moderate or heavy obstruction (see Table 9-4: Hampered Movement in Chapter 9 of the *Player's Handbook*).

**Blindsight (Ex):** At 8th level, a grimetrekker gains the blindsight special quality to a range of 60 feet.

**Table 4-1: The Grimetrekker**

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+2	+2	+0	Vile adversaries +1, sewer stalker +2
2nd	+2	+3	+3	+0	Darkvision 60 ft., deep breath (Con x 3)
3rd	+3	+3	+3	+1	Hale and hearty +1, sewer stalker +4
4th	+4	+4	+4	+1	Sewer legs
5th	+5	+4	+4	+1	Vile adversaries +2, sewer stalker +6, hale and hearty +2
6th	+6	+5	+5	+2	Deep breath (Con x 4)
7th	+7	+5	+5	+2	Hale and hearty +3
8th	+8	+6	+6	+2	Sewer stalker +8, blindsight 60 ft.
9th	+9	+6	+6	+3	Hale and hearty (immune)
10th	+10	+7	+7	+3	Vile adversaries +3, sewer stalker +10



## The Lamplighter

Some foreigners mistake the sedate lifestyle and small population of Mordent as indicative of slow-wittedness or backward education; those that see the Lamplighters in action seldom make this mistake again. This elite order of investigators arose after Mordentshire's sheriff, Owen Finhallen, had a long talk with Sir Samuel Cosse, a noble who had entered service as one of Mordentshire's watchmen and served for a number of years. Some years back, the two realized that while Mordentshire's criminal activity was relatively minimal compared to many other cities its size, a sizable percentage of crime still went unsolved. This was due to the relative inexperience or lack of professional training on the part of the city's watchmen, which were an entirely volunteer organization. Sir Samuel suggested that they employ the most talented of these volunteers as full-time investigators, where he could also personally train the best of them in more advanced investigative techniques and other tricks of the trade that he had learned during his years patrolling Mordentshire's streets.

Since then, the Lamplighters have grown from a small force of full-time watchmen to an elite order of investigators whose talents are called upon by towns large and small all across Mordent. As Finhallen's duties often occupy him in other respects, Sir Samuel has become the *de facto* leader of the Lamplighters and keeps a close eye even on those agents who are posted in distant locales. Indeed, while most of their efforts remain centered around Mordentshire, the order has recently begun to spread beyond its home city, with Lamplighters receiving permanent duty watching over other towns or regions. Their reputation has increased dramatically as well, particularly in the wake of a series of sensational crimes they solved. These crimes involved grifters posing as members of a lost noble family attempting to fleece several towns of their treasuries. Respect for the Lamplighters is nearly universal — no small feat in this often reserved and suspicious land.

Today, for Mordentish youths to apply for a position in the ranks of these intrepid investigators is considered a noble ambition. While both noble and common folk are eligible for membership, candidates must still pass the rigorous physical tests and mental examinations administered by Sir Samuel, which ensure that only a small number of applicants are inducted each year. As well, members of both sexes are welcome to apply. While

female Lamplighters may raise eyebrows (in more rural areas in particular), they are no less capable than their male counterparts, a fact Sir Samuel is quick to point out.

Most Lamplighters are fighters or rangers, given the dangerous nature of their work and the skills those classes offer them in tracking criminals or battling monsters. A fair number are rogues or bards as well, however, following the principle of "it takes a thief to catch a thief"; so long as they use their skills on the right side of the law, this kind of background is tolerated, even encouraged. (Sir Samuel is practical, not foolish.) A small number of Lamplighters are clerics, sorcerers, or wizards. Most of them, however, obtain at least some martial training in order to deal with the job's less pleasant aspects. Monks prove invaluable as Lamplighters, but given their rarity in this land, there are but a couple in the ranks. No druids and barbarians are Lamplighters — their ways are simply unsuited to the patient investigative habits the Lamplighters' duties often require.

**Hit Die:** d10.

### Requirements

To qualify for service in the Lamplighters (Lpl), a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

**Alignment:** Lawful good or neutral good.

**Base Attack Bonus:** +6.

**Skills:** Gather Information 4 ranks, Knowledge (local) 4 ranks, Listen 4 ranks, Search 4 ranks, Sense Motive 4 ranks, Spot 4 ranks.

**Feats:** Alertness, Courage, Open Mind.

**Special:** Only law-abiding Mordentish natives who have ably and loyally served as a watchman in Mordentshire or a similar official law enforcement role for no less than two years are eligible to become Lamplighters. Candidates must be inducted into the Lamplighters by Owen Finhallen, Samuel Cosse, or another ranking Lamplighter officer and must obey orders and perform investigations when told to do so by their superiors. Should they ever disobey such orders without good cause, be found guilty of criminal activity, or leave the service for any reason, they may no longer gain levels as a Lamplighter.

### Class Skills

The Lamplighter's class skills (and the key ability of each skill) are Appraise (Int), Climb (Str), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Diplo-



macy (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Forgery (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Hide (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Intuit Direction (Wis), Knowledge (geography) (Int), Knowledge (history) (Int), Knowledge (local) (Int), Knowledge (nobility) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Open Lock (Dex), Profession (Wis), Ride (Dex), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Spot (Wis), Swim (Str).

**Skill Points at each level:** 3  
+ Int modifier.

**Class features**

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Lamplighters gain proficiency with all simple and martial weapons and light armor. In addition, they are proficient in the use of an iron lantern as a weapon

the remotest regions of Mordent. As such, their word of assurance that someone is trustworthy or their slightest suspicion that someone might be guilty of nefarious deeds can have a powerful impact on a community's acceptance of an individual. Simply by publicly making their opinion of an individual or group known, Lamplighters may immediately raise or lower the OR of said persons by 1 in the local community. This effect lasts until changed by other circumstances and is cumulative with other methods of raising or



(1d4, crit x2, bludgeoning). Note that armor check penalties for armor heavier than leather apply to the skills Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, and Move Silently.

**Good Word (Ex):** Lamplighters command a great deal of respect in even



lowering an OR. This modifier increases to  $+/-2$  at 5th level and  $+/-3$  at 9th level. This ability is of no use outside Mordent, unless the DM specifically rules otherwise (typically, only if a Lamplighter has somehow been invited to assist another community due to her expertise). A Lamplighter may not use this ability on herself, though she may extend it to her companions if necessary.

**Solid Citizen (Ex):** Upon becoming a Lamplighter, a character's OR rating in Mordent is permanently reduced by 3, no matter what race she is or where she might be within the domain. Individual factors may still play a role in determining OR in a particular situation, but such is the respect given to the order that even the most remote and suspicious villages recognize the level of training and dedication needed to join. In addition, a Lamplighter can ask for — and reasonably expect to receive — basic food and lodging in Mordent at no cost while on official business. She may also expect the cooperation of local law enforcement officials during an investigation (though she has no ability to give them orders beyond the extent of their willingness to obey her). In addition, most businesses will take her word as credit for purchase of goods or services in a tight spot, though failure to repay fairly promptly can result in an unpleasant meeting with one's superior officers. This ability has no effect outside of Mordent.

**Night Eyes (Ex):** Given that their patrols take place mostly at night and often in thick fog or thundering storms as well, Lamplighters not surprisingly learn quickly how to read the slightest sounds, shadows, and movements in order to navigate normally under such conditions. Beginning at 2nd level, Lamplighters effectively reduce an opponent's existing concealment due to fog or other weather conditions by  $1/4$  and receive low-light vision to a range of 30 feet (if they already have low-light vision, this distance is added onto their existing range). For example, the  $3/4$  concealment that a foe normally gets for thick fog only counts as  $1/2$  against the Lamplighter (the foe receives  $3/4$  concealments to all other opponents, however). At 6th level, an opponent's concealment due to fog or weather is reduced by  $1/2$ , and a Lamplighter receives another 30 feet in range for her low-light vision. At 10th level, a Lamplighter may ignore total concealment due to fog or weather and receives an additional 60 feet in range for her low-light vision (for a total of 120 feet) as well as darkvision to a range of 30 feet. Note that range

penalties and other modifiers may still apply. This vision is considered an extraordinary ability.

**Savvy:** Veteran investigators, Lamplighters have an excellent, almost intuitive ability to solve crimes; moreover, their constant vigilance and renowned intellects allow them to develop their particular specialties to a keen edge. They also become adept at fighting under the unique conditions they work under, allowing them to even the odds in a sometimes startling fashion. Each time this benefit is acquired, the Lamplighter may choose one of the qualities from the following list; unless otherwise noted, an individual quality may only be chosen once:

+4 competence bonus to any one class skill. This quality may be chosen more than once, provided that a different skill is selected each time.

+2 competence bonus to attack rolls made while fighting in light or no armor.

+2 dodge bonus to AC while fighting alone. This bonus stacks with the AC benefit from the Dodge feat, if applicable.

+2 competence bonus to Fear, Horror, or Madness (choose one only) saves while on duty or conducting an investigation. This benefit may be chosen more than once, provided that a different type of save is chosen each time. These benefits stack with the Courage, Jaded, and Open Mind feats.

Bonus Feat chosen from among the following list: Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Ethereal Empathy, Expertise, Ghostsight, Improved Initiative, Indomitable, Iron Will, Logical Mind, Mobility, Run, Track, or Warding Gesture.

**Mist Defense (Ex):** Often patrolling with only light or no armor, Lamplighters soon learn how to employ their lanterns and even the slightest of inclement conditions to help protect them from attack. Once per day, they may use a standard action to perform a combination of quick maneuvers and flashes from their lantern to disorient their enemies, effectively gaining  $1/2$  concealment until the end of the next round. (If some level of concealment already exists, this benefit is added to the total level of concealment present.) At 7th level, the Lamplighter receives a free attack with his lantern while employing his Mist Defense; opponents are considered *flat-footed* for the purposes of this attack due to the distraction and disorientation involved in the maneuver. In addition, if his opponent fails a Reflex save (DC = Lamplighter's attack roll), they are momentarily





blinded and suffer appropriate penalties until the end of the following round. At 10th level, the Lamplighter can actually use the cover of fog or darkness to step into the Near Ethereal and remain there for up to a turn, though he may return sooner if he desires. If his foes do not have some means of tracking him in the Near Ethereal, returning during combat allows a Lamplighter to attack them as if they were flat-footed (thus making a sneak attack if a rogue).

Needless to say, this ability can only be used at night, in inclement weather, or similar conditions where the lantern can be used to good effect, such as underground.

**Hunch (Ex):** Savvy investigators can often draw on their past experience and compare it with current conditions to make intuitive leaps that leave lesser analysts scratching their heads in wonder. Likewise, every so often, recalling a bit of previously learned information can keep a character from making a critical mistake, turning what might otherwise have been a failure into a success. At 4th level, the Lamplighter may reroll any one skill check made with one of her class skills, once per session. The more favorable result stands. At 8th level, this ability may be used twice per session, though no single roll may be re-rolled more than once using this ability.

**Table 4-2: The Lamplighter**

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+1	+2	+2	+0	Good word I, solid citizen
2	+2	+3	+3	+0	Night eyes I, savvy
3	+3	+3	+3	+1	Mist defense 1/day
4	+4	+4	+4	+1	Savvy, hunch 1/session
5	+5	+4	+4	+1	Good word II
6	+6	+5	+5	+2	Night eyes II, Savvy
7	+7	+5	+5	+2	Mist defense 2/day
8	+8	+6	+6	+2	Savvy, hunch 2/session
9	+9	+6	+6	+3	Good word III
10	+10	+7	+7	+3	Night eyes III, mist defense 3/day

## Stage Magician

In Dementlieu, arcane magic most commonly finds its home as entertainment for the masses. Conjurers, illusionists and enchanters grace the stages of Port-a-Lucine, performing seemingly petty tricks for enraptured audiences that have little interest in magic beyond its ability to keep them entertained for an evening.

The majority of these entertainers know only a little of true arcane magic, supplementing their act with adept sleight-of-hand or rigged props. A handful of magicians, however, learn to disguise their growing arcane powers cleverly behind their stagecraft, allowing them to exercise their abilities without attracting undue attention from fearful peasants or threatened authorities.

Within Dementlieu, where magic is regarded with more disdain than fear, these talents serve primarily to enhance the quality of a performance. Outside of this domain, however, where arcane magic is sometimes regarded with suspicion, these abilities can assist a powerful arcane spellcaster to use her abilities without alerting locals to the true nature of her particular talents.

**Hit Die:** d4.

### Requirements

To qualify to become a stage magician (SgM), a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

**Skills:** Bluff 4 ranks, Perform (stage magician) 4 ranks, Spellcraft 8 ranks.

**Feats:** Spell Focus (Conjuration, Enchantment, or Illusion).

**Spellcasting:** Ability to cast 2nd-level arcane spells.

### Class Skills

The stage magician's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Alchemy (Int), Bluff (Cha), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Diplo-

macy (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Knowledge (all skills) (Int), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), Scry (Int), and Spellcraft (Int).

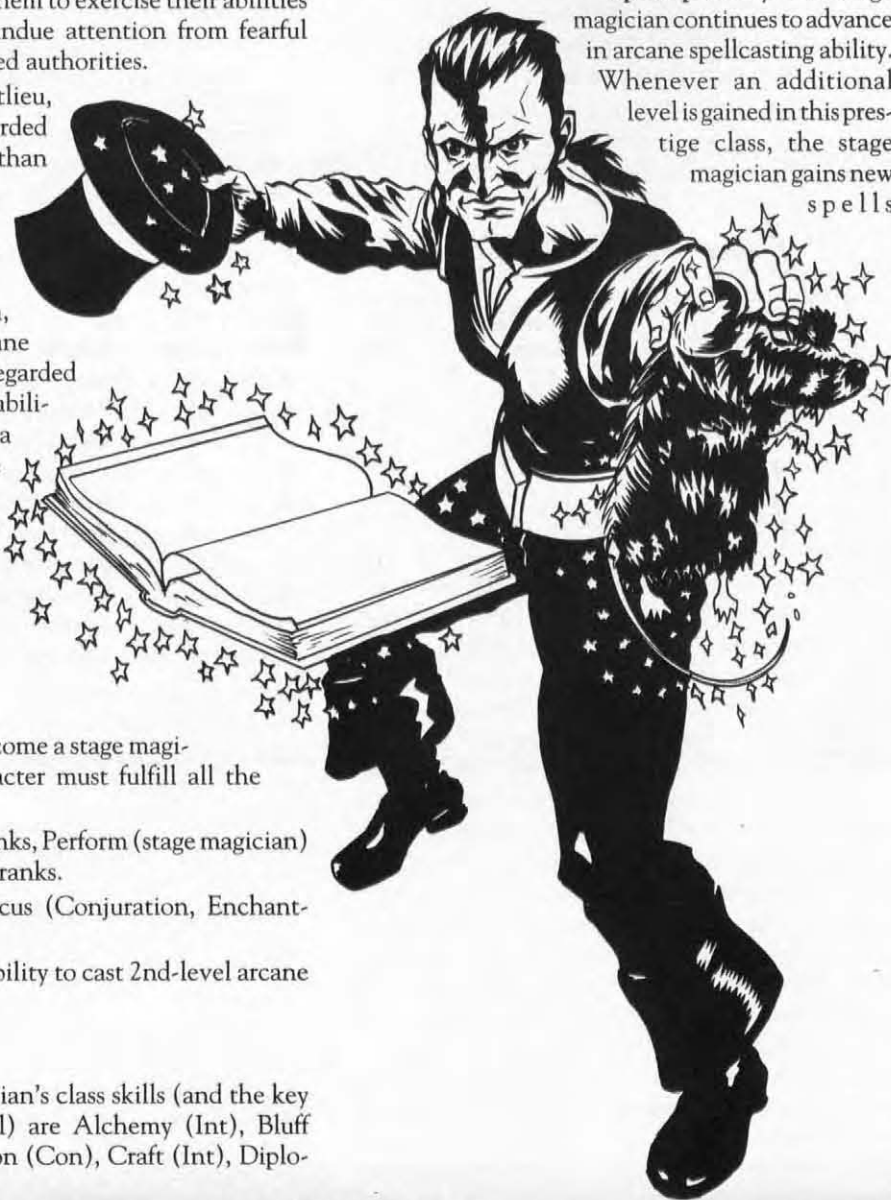
**Skill Points at Each Level:** 4 + Int modifier.

### Class features

All of the following are features of the stage magician prestige class.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** A stage magician has proficiency in all simple weapons, the dagger being most commonly used. A stage magician gains no additional proficiency with any type of armor or shield.

**Spells per Day:** The stage magician continues to advance in arcane spellcasting ability. Whenever an additional level is gained in this prestige class, the stage magician gains new spells







per day as if an additional level had been attained in whatever spellcasting class she belonged to before she added the prestige class. She does not gain any other benefits that would normally be obtained from gaining a level in the previous class.

**Elaborate Prop (Ex):** At each level, the stage magician can lower the effective spell level of one spell in her repertoire by building an Elaborate Prop. The stage magician can use any applicable Craft skill to create the prop, which must cost at least 500 gp per spell level. The DM must approve proposed props; they should be impressive pieces of equipment worthy of an entertaining stage show, which may in turn make them heavy, awkward to move, or easily broken. Once built, the prop lowers the effective spell level of that spell by one whenever used as an arcane focus in the casting of the spell. Characters who multiclass from wizard can choose to prepare the spell either at its full or lowered level when preparing spells for the day. The effects of elaborate props do not stack.

*Example:* Gaston wishes to create an Elaborate Prop for the 2nd-level spell *invisibility*. He decides to use his Craft (carpentry) skill to build a human-sized upright box (suitably adorned with elaborate decorations) in which the target of the spell must enter for the spell to take effect. After spending 1,000 gp and a suitable amount of time building the

box, Gaston can use the prop as an arcane focus to cast *invisibility* as a 1st-level spell.

**Mutable Spell Appearance (Ex):** At 2nd level, the stage magician can alter visible aspects of spells in order either to disguise the fact that she is casting a spell or to enhance the visual impact as part of her act. These alterations are glamers; they cannot change the actual game effects of any spell, merely how individuals observing the casting of the spell perceive it. The magician could, for example, have a *flame arrow's* fiery bolt appear as a shard of ice or as an everyday arrow. To disguise the fact that she is using arcane magic, the stage magician must make a successful Perform (stage magician) check (DC 10 + spell level). Even if this Perform check succeeds, an observer skilled in Spellcraft can still attempt to identify the spell. If a spell's appearance has been changed, however, observers receive a –2 circumstance penalty to any Spellcraft checks.

**Flexible Components (Ex):** At 4th level, the stage magician can alter the type of components required to cast spells in her repertoire. If both verbal and somatic components are required to cast a spell, the magician may choose to drop one of these requirements. Where a verbal (but no somatic) component is required, the magician may choose to use a somatic component instead (and vice versa). This ability can never be used to alter any material, focus, or XP cost components.

**Table 4–3: The Stage Magician**

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	Elaborate prop	+1 level of existing class
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	Elaborate prop, mutable spell appearance	+1 level of existing class
3rd	+1	+1	+1	+3	Elaborate prop	+1 level of existing class
4th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Elaborate prop, flexible components	+1 level of existing class
5th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Elaborate prop	+1 level of existing class

## New Monsters

### Lycanthrope, Wererat

If the DM deems it appropriate for her campaign, wererats can possess the following special qualities in addition to those listed in the *Monster Manual* and Chapter Five of the *Ravenloft Campaign Setting* (see “Lycanthropes”).

**Chemical Bane (Ex):** Like most lycanthropes, wererats have a chemical bane, but the exact nature of this bane varies with each wererat. These vulnerabilities tend to exhibit a more exotic range than those of other lycanthropes, comprising animal and mineral substances as well as botanicals. Chemical banes are rarely linked to a wererat’s

bloodline and can be  
prosaic or  
utterly



random. Many wererats go their whole lives without ascertaining their own chemical bane.

**Immunities (Ex):** Regardless of form, wererats are immune to disease and poison, with the exception of their chemical vulnerability.

**Squeeze (Ex):** Wererats, like their animal kin, are capable of squirming through the tiniest holes. A wererat in hybrid form can squeeze through any opening large enough to accommodate a creature one size category smaller than itself. Thus, a Medium-size wererat can squeeze through any opening through which a Small creature could fit.

**Tunnel Rat (Ex):** Regardless of form, wererats can always take 20 on Intuit Direction rolls, and all of their Intuit Direction checks require only a free action. Furthermore, by making an Intuit Direction check (DC 25), a wererat can determine which passageway it must take at a junction to find its way out of any kind of labyrinth, whether natural or constructed.

### Lycanthrope, Aberrant Wererat

At the DM’s option, some wererats encountered in Richemulot may exhibit abilities beyond those of “typical” native lycanthropes. Most of these mutants, called Blessed Ones by the wererats themselves, are the random product of matings between natural wererats in the Richemuloise population. Some, however, arise when newborn natural wererats are ritually baptized in the waste pits. Regardless, normal wererats regard their aberrant kin with fear and awe. An aberrant wererat’s body, however, including its humanoid form, gradually becomes twisted in cosmetic but grotesque ways. This change, as well as an aberrant wererat’s susceptibility to madness, limits the creature’s potential and prevents it from ever becoming a Plague King or Queen. Aberrant wererats often, but not always, pass on their abilities to their infected progeny.

Aberrant wererats possess one salient ability selected from those listed below and the Energy Resistance, Fast Healing, Jump, or Spider Climb abilities detailed in Chapter Five of the *Ravenloft Campaign Setting* (see “Lycanthropes”). An aberrant wererat receives one additional salient ability for every four Hit Dice it possesses. The OR modifier of an aberrant wererat in humanoid form among non-wererats increases by +1 for each salient ability it possesses. When using Charisma-based skills

among non-aberrant wererats, aberrant wererats receive a cumulative +1 competence bonus to such skill checks for each salient ability they possess. Aberrant wererats suffer one permanent moderate Madness save effect for every two salient abilities they possess. The DM should increase an aberrant wererat's CR by 1 for roughly every three salient abilities it possesses.

Unless otherwise noted, the DC to resist any of an aberrant wererat's salient abilities is equal to 10 + one half the aberrant wererat's Hit Dice + the aberrant wererat's Constitution modifier.

**Bilious Breath (Ex):** Three times per day, as a standard action in hybrid form that does not provoke and attack of opportunity, the aberrant wererat can breathe forth a

miasma with the properties of a *stinking cloud* spell in a 15-foot radius sphere. The cloud is centered on the aberrant wererat itself, which is immune to the cloud's effects, and persists for a number of rounds equal to half the aberrant wererat's Hit Dice plus its Constitution modifier.

**Garbage Gorging (Ex):** The aberrant wererat can consume the unsavory refuse of human civilization instead of raw meat to satisfy the hunger special quality. The wererat can consume any organic garbage without ill effect, including raw sewage, but cannot consume metal or stone. Regardless, each pound of refuse eaten only counts as half a pound of raw meat.

**Greasy Secretions (Ex):** As a full-round action in hybrid form that provokes an attack of opportunity, the wererat can exude a greasy substance from its flesh, coating a 10-foot by 10-foot area of ground or an object that it touches. The object is affected as if by a *grease* spell, save that the slimy coating persists for 2d6 hours (though it can be washed off with alcohol in about 10 minutes). This ability is usable a number of times per day equal to half the wererat's Constitution score.

**Ooze Host (Ex):** The wererat's digestive tract serves as a host for a gray ooze. The wererat itself is immune to the ooze's attacks, but can, as a standard action in hybrid form that does not provoke an attack of opportunity, vomit the ooze up into any adjacent space. If an opponent currently occupies that space, she must succeed at a Reflex save (DC 10 + half the aberrant wererat's HD) or be automatically grappled by the ooze. If the save is successful, the opponent is moved to an adjacent, unoccupied space. Once unleashed, the ooze does not follow the aberrant wererat's commands. The aberrant wererat can lap the ooze back up as a full-round action that provokes an attack of opportunity; the ooze accepts this action peacefully. If the ooze is destroyed, the aberrant wererat's gut will spawn a new one in 3d4 weeks.





**Quill Fur (Ex):** The aberrant wererat's fur in hybrid form resembles barbed quills rather than normal hair. The aberrant wererat's natural armor bonus is increased by +4. Opponents who are grappling with the aberrant wererat must succeed at a Reflex save (DC 10 + half the aberrant wererat's HD) every round at the beginning of their action or suffer 1d4 points of piercing damage. Furthermore, the aberrant wererat can use its quills to deal 1d6 points of piercing damage with a successful grapple attack.

**Searing Boils (Ex):** In all of its forms, the aberrant wererat is covered in horrible boils filled with corrosive pus. Adjacent opponents who successfully attack the aberrant wererat must succeed at a Reflex save (DC 10 + half the aberrant wererat's HD) for each attack or suffer 1d6 points of acid damage from the bursting boils. Opponents who are grappling with the aberrant wererat must make this Reflex save with a -4 penalty every round at the beginning of their action or suffer 1d6 points of acid damage.

**Typhoid Rat (Ex):** The aberrant wererat is a carrier for a disease selected from Table 3-14 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. Though it is immune to this affliction, the aberrant wererat is capable of passing the infection on to those it bites. Any creatures bitten by the wererat in animal or hybrid form, including another wererat, must succeed at a Fortitude save (disease's normal DC + the aberrant wererat's Constitution modifier) or contract the disease. This is in addition to the Fortitude save to avoid contracting lycanthropy.

**Venomous Bite (Ex):** The aberrant wererat's bite is poisonous. Creatures bitten by the aberrant wererat in animal or hybrid form must succeed at a Fortitude save or suffer 1d4 points of initial temporary ability score damage and 2d4 secondary ability score damage. The affected ability scores can vary, depending on appropriateness. Poison tends to affect the weakest part of a person's body. Some may lose Dexterity, others Strength or Constitution. This is in addition to the Fortitude save to avoid contracting lycanthropy.

## Who's Doomed

### Dominic d'Honaire, Darklord of Dementlieu

**Male Human Ari10:** CR 9; SZ M Humanoid (5 ft. 7 in. tall); HD 10d8; hp 57; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.;

AC 14 (touch 10, flat-footed 14); Atk: +8/+3 melee (1d6-1, masterwork rapier) or +8/+3 ranged (1d10, masterwork pistol); SA Domination, suggestion; SQ Immunities, repulsive; AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +8; Str 9, Dex 11, Con 10, Int 17, Wis 12, Cha 18.

**Skills and Feats:** Bluff +12, Diplomacy +14, Gather Information +12, Handle Animal +11, Innuendo +8, Intimidate +11, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Knowledge (local) +10, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +10, Listen +10, Ride (horse) +7, Sense Motive +9, Spot +10; Alertness, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearms), Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Weapon Focus (rapier).

**Languages:** Mordentish\*, Balok, Falkovnian, Lamordian.

**Signature Possessions:** Masterwork rapier, masterwork pistol, *amulet of natural armor* +2, *bracelets of armor* +2 (as *bracers*), *cloak of Charisma* +2.

Though he tends to portliness, Dominic d'Honaire exudes an attractiveness that is difficult to pinpoint. In his mid-50s, apparently, Dominic's features exhibit a softness of character that is in no way remarkable. His once striking red hair that was so striking in his youth has begun to recede and is streaked with gray throughout. His vivid, compelling blue eyes and expressive face, however, undergo an astonishing transformation when he smiles, rendering him surprisingly handsome. He prefers to wear his hair in a short ponytail and boasts a carefully trimmed beard and moustache.

## Background

Born in Mordentshire to the well-respected d'Honaire family, Dominic lost his mother at birth due to a long and exhausting labor. An intelligent and precociously perceptive child, Dominic's astute observations of people around him taught him much about human relations and interaction. Only his mischievous nature matched his unquestioned intelligence and he did not hesitate to use his talent for manipulating people to malicious ends. Using only the subtlety of words, Dominic could turn friends and even lovers against each other, taking great delight in every ruined relationship. His youthfully innocent appearance protected him from suspicion as he grew more devious and skilled at subterfuge with every passing year. While he was still a child, Dominic could manipulate almost anyone at will, using simple words and innuendoes to direct the actions of his victims, convincing them that they were acting completely on their





own. Dominic took great delight in the chaos that resulted from his “childplay.”

When he was seven years old, Dominic’s manipulations turned fatal. Finding his new nanny overly strict and inflexible, the young Dominic used his talents to affect his nanny’s mind and destroy her relationships with her employers, friends and her fiancé. The woman became distraught and succumbed to a deep despair. Only a slight suggestion from Dominic was necessary to cause her to take her own life, plunging off one of Mordent’s high cliffs into the Sea of Sorrows. Though the constabulary investigated the nanny’s disappearance, they never found her body and never suspected the young Dominic as the perpetrator of the crime. Nevertheless, Dominic was disturbed by the attention caused by his latest stunt.

As a result, the young lad implanted a suggestion in his father’s mind that the land of Mordent was no longer a suitable home and that he should find a new home for his family. Despite the fact that the d’Honaire had lived in Mordent for many generations, Dominic’s father readily acquiesced. Not only did Dominic assuage his fear of eventual discovery for the murder of his nanny, he also satisfied a feeling that he had a destiny yet to be revealed. The Mists led Dominic and his family to the domain of Dementlieu.

Once settled in his new home, Dominic refined his dominance games, taking them to new levels and entering the realm of politics while still a child. Using his adult family members, Dominic entered the political arena of Dementlieu, gaining influence and power vicariously through his well-trained and receptive relatives. His network of money and power grew quickly. Soon he had manipulated affairs so that his father Claude became a member of the Council of Brilliance and his uncle Maurice attained the position of prononcer in Port-a-Lucine.

When he reached adulthood, Dominic discovered that his power over others’ minds had become a supernatural gift. He realized that he was the most powerful entity in Dementlieu, bar none. Before he attained the age of thirty, Dominic removed his father from the Council of Brilliance (again through the subtlest of means) and set himself up as chief advisor to the Lord-Governor of Dementlieu, a position he has held ever since. From this position behind the throne, Dominic rules Dementlieu.



### Current Sketch

Dominic controls the realm of Dementlieu with gestures, suggestions, whispers and the occasional raised eyebrow. Most citizens consider him a respected member of the government whose influence is vast and his personal charisma unmistakable. Only those who have completely fallen under his control, however, realize the true extent of Dominic’s power. These unfortunates are the Obedients and, for them, the realization comes too late. Unsurprisingly, the Lord-Governor of Dementlieu is himself an Obedient; every significant decision he makes comes at Dominic’s behest.

Dominic’s *raison d’être* is the manipulation of others. His power over others intoxicates him, propelling him to spin elaborate webs of deceit and manipulation for the simple enjoyment of seeing others dance to his tune. He seems to possess everything his could possible want and now uses his talents as a form of self-indulgence to divert himself and stave off boredom at having attained the pinnacle of power. Only the foolhardy dare to thwart his schemes; few survive their attempts without joining the ranks of the Obedient.

Deprived of his mother at birth, Dominic has an insatiable need for female affection and atten-



tion. The women in his early life (with one exception noted above) spoiled him relentlessly. Dominic still needs this constant devotion. Unfortunately, his eternal curse as dread lord has doomed his chances for success. Since assuming his place as dark ruler of Dementlieu, Dominic has lost his ability to attract women. Any woman he seeks out finds him repellent; her distaste grows in proportion to Dominic's attempts to seek her attention. Not even his vaunted mental abilities can overcome this curse. Dominic finds this situation frustrating in the extreme. Because of it, he strangled the first woman to reject him, the only murder he has ever directly committed.

Many years ago, Dominic entered a marriage of convenience with Louise Girod to save her family's business from collapse. Not only has this marriage, though loveless, placed the Girod family solidly in Dominic's debt, it has also produced an heir, a 9-year-old son named Germain.

## Combat

Dominic does not enjoy fighting nor is he skilled at combat. He prefers to avoid making enemies openly but uses those he controls to act as his swordhands. His Obedient bodyguards, who remain always nearby, protect him from direct attack, while he uses other people under his control to remove more remote threats.

**Special Attacks:** *Domination (Su)*: This ability is similar to a gaze attack, except that Dominic must take a standard action, and those merely looking at him are not affected. Anyone Dominic targets must succeed at a Will save (DC 19) or fall instantly under Dominic's influence as though affected by a *dominate person* spell cast by a 10th-level sorcerer. The ability has a range of 30 feet. Creatures that fail three consecutive Will saves against this ability acquire the Obedient special quality (see sidebar in Report One).

**Suggestion (Ex)**: Dominic can use *suggestion*, as the spell cast by a 10th-level sorcerer, merely by speaking to a creature. The target must succeed at a Will save (DC 19) to resist the suggestion. This is a mind-affecting, language-dependent compulsion.

**Special Qualities:** *Immunities (Ex)*: Dominic is immune to mind-influencing effects.

**Repulsive (Ex)**: Any female that Dominic finds attractive will perceive him to be hideous and despicable. With such women, Dominic is consid-

ered to have an Outcast Rating of 8, which can never be reduced.

## Cair

Dominic resides in an elegant and mansion among the many estates that line the shores of Sable Bay. This mansion exhibits the work of the finest architects and artists of the realm. Within the mansion, selectively placed mirrors create deceptively large rooms. The mansion contains many secret passageways, listening tubes, two-way mirrors, and peepholes. These devices allow Dominic to spy on his guests during the many balls he holds for the aristocracy. It is guarded by many of Dominic's Obedients, who do not hesitate to risk their own lives in the defense of their master. The mansion is a rank 1 sinkhole of evil.

## Closing the Borders

When Dominic wishes to close his domain, a powerful mirage appears at the borders. This illusion reflects the domain so that any traveler at the border sees Dementlieu stretching out in both directions, both in front of and behind her. Traveling into the mirage results in forcing the journeyer back into Dementlieu. This power affects vessels sailing the Sea of Sorrows close to Dementlieu's shore as well.

## The Living Brain (Rudolph von Hubrecker)

**Male aberration Psi9 (Telepath)**: CR 9; SZ Diminutive aberration (8 in. wide); HD 9d4-36; hp 9; Init +0; Spd 0 ft.; AC 14 (touch 10, flat-footed 14); Atk nil; SA Psionic abilities (43 PP/day); AL NE; SV Fort -1, Ref —, Will +8; Str —, Dex —, Con 2, Int 20, Wis 15, Cha 17. OR 5.

**Skills and Feats**: Bluff +17, Concentration +8, Diplomacy +17, Gather Information +15, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (local) +11, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +11, Knowledge (psionics) +17, Listen +7, Sense Motive +14, Spot +7; Enlarge Power, Extend Power, Psychic Interrogator, Psychoanalyst.

**Languages**: Lamordian\*, Balok, Darkonese, Falkovnian, Mordentish, Vaasi.

**Psionic combat modes**: *ego whip, empty mind, id insinuation, intellect fortress, mental barrier, mind blast, mind thrust, thought shield, tower of iron will.*

**Psionic powers**: 0 — *daze, detect psionics, distract, inking, missive, telepathic projection*; 1st —





*charm person, demoralize, empathy, sense link; 2nd — detect thoughts, inflict pain, suggestion; 3rd — crisis of breath, lesser domination, nondetection; 4th — domination, wall of ectoplasm.*

Rudolph von Aubrecker was once the spoiled young son of a nobleman. After becoming the victim of ungodly scientific experiments, Rudolph has been transformed into an evil, plotting, disembodied human brain.

The Living Brain now resides in a 3-foot tall glass bottle. From the top of the bottle, two glass nozzles connect via hoses to a heavy, enclosed black box that makes a constant steady hum. Within the glass prison, a green-tinged saline liquid that must be kept at a carefully balanced temperature circulates constantly through the hoses. What powers the black box is unknown, but it appears to be perpetual — the box has not once been opened since the Living Brain's escape from Dr. Mordenheim.

Suspended in the liquid is the Living Brain: a gray piece of flesh with a slightly enlarged frontal lobe and a network of brown scale-like cells that cap off the brain stem. Several wires connect to the brain and lead back through the apertures to the external black box. The Living Brain itself has no means of verbal communication; instead, it relies on its extensive psionic powers to make itself understood.

## Background

Rudolph von Aubrecker was the son of the political ruler of Lamordia, Baron Vilhelm von Aubrecker. Generally regarded by the population as a selfish brat, Rudolph had little time for anyone lower on the social ladder than himself. On his eighteenth birthday, Rudolph organized a celebration upon the caravel *Haifisch*. When one of Lamordia's legendary storms blew in, Rudolph and his revelers had already spent many hours with steins full of ale and were hopelessly unable to bring the ship safely back into harbor. The boat was destroyed, and all of the revelers lost their lives.

Rudolph was the one exception, washed ashore on the rocky northern coast of Lamordia. His body was found by Alexis Wilhaven, a young man working as an assistant to Victor Mordenheim. Alexis took the shattered body back to Schloss Mordenheim in the hope of saving the young man. Mordenheim, however, declared the body to be too damaged. Noting a lack of head injuries, however, Mordenheim did see an opportunity to study and

maintain the brain of the boy outside of his wrecked shell.

Alexis Wilhaven was shocked at the suggestion, not having seen the true nature of many of the doctor's experiments. He argued vehemently against the idea, but Mordenheim wore him down with cold logic and scientific curiosity. Together, the two performed the delicate operation and removed Rudolph's brain from his shattered physical form. It was placed inside a glass jar with wires carefully attached to particular lobes in order to maintain function and filled with a saline solution constantly exchanged by a simple pump.

Mordenheim spent the following weeks studying the brain, noting additional growth occurring in the frontal lobe and brain stem. Wilhaven became wrought with guilt and repeatedly threatened to leave and tell the Baron of the experiment — but each time, Mordenheim reminded him that he was also implicated in this work. Time and time again, Alexis found himself without the moral fortitude to reveal the truth to the Baron and continued working on Mordenheim's experiments.

Eventually, it became apparent that the brain was actually aware. Mordenheim tried a multitude of ways to communicate with the brain, but knowing little about the nature of psionics, was unsuccessful. Eventually, Mordenheim became frustrated and then bored by his experiment, deciding there was nothing more to gain. When both he and Alexis tried to disconnect the brain from its pump, however, they found that no amount of conviction allowed them to complete the task. The brain was seemingly controlling their very actions, saving itself from death.

Mordenheim soon found himself compelled to work on a new pump and equipment to house the brain, and after many months' work the new habitat was finished. Within days of its completion, Mordenheim found that Alexis, along with the brain's jar and pump, had disappeared.

From Ludendorf, the Living Brain and Alexis boarded a ship to Dementlieu. By their arrival, the crew of the ship was completely controlled by the brain, and they began setting up premises in the Quartier Marchand for the creature. The brain of Rudolph had become increasingly bitter while subjected to Mordenheim's experiments, frustrated at the human's inability to understand what it had become. Now, in the city of Port-a-Lucine, it would be able to demonstrate its superiority by controlling the entire city.





The Living Brain encountered its first setback when it began to extend its mental tendrils further out into the city. It was not long before it encountered individuals who already seemed to have someone in control of their mind. Incensed that another force had already laid claim to much of the city, the Brain vowed to conquer them. It soon found out that its foe was Dominic d'Honaire. Since then, the Living Brain has been in constant battle with the Darklord of Dementlieu, fighting — quite literally — for the minds of the people of Port-a-Lucine.

### Current Sketch

The Living Brain now operates an underground network of resistance against Dominic d'Honaire, out of the Quartier Marchand. His controlling powers have slowly infiltrated a wide cross-section of the Port-a-Lucine population, forming an intricate network of unwitting spies. As Dominic maintains a strong hold over much of the aristocracy, the Brain's minions are weighted toward the more common folk such as merchants, servants, and craftsmen. Although many know that they work for "The Brain," most see this as simply a moniker used to maintain anonymity and have little idea of their master's true nature.

Dominic is aware that another entity in the city of Port-a-Lucine is controlling his people, but even after years of conflict he is yet to learn its true nature.

Alexis Wilhaven ceased to be useful to the Brain some time ago — years of mental domination compounded with guilt at his own complicity led to a complete mental breakdown. He was eventually found by the *gendarme* on the city docks and now resides in the sanitarium of Dr. Villhelm Mikki, where he has not uttered a word other than "Rudolph" for years. Pauline Jenout is currently the Brain's most trusted minion. A peasant girl who lost her family when a tenement house collapsed, she sees the Brain as a means eventually to overthrow the corrupt and exploitative government of Dementlieu.

The Living Brain uses its minions to fuel the growing unrest between the lower and upper classes, which it sees as the most likely way of destroying Dominic. A number of aristocratic families (and particularly those who have been harmed or ignored by the current government) are also under its control, ready to make a grab for power when an opportunity presents itself.

### Combat

The Living Brain is obviously incapable of defending itself physically. Instead, it uses psionic powers to disable and control those that threaten it, and maintains a large retinue of enslaved lackeys to defend its location with their lives.

Although the Living Brain's jar and mechanical box have never required any attention since leaving Lamordia, the solution within the jar does require regular replacement. Once a day, one of the nozzles must be disconnected from the hose to let a third of the solution out of the jar, which is replaced with clean water. During this time, the Living Brain is helpless and cannot exert its mental powers. Any player character under the influence of the Living Brain may be allowed an additional saving throw to overcome the effect at that time.

**Special Qualities:** *Empathic Field (Su):* The Living Brain emits a continuous empathic field that allows it to sense the surface thoughts and intentions of any being within 50 feet. Because this ability allows it to sense aggressive intent, the Brain cannot be surprised from within this distance. In addition, this field provides the Brain with enough information to estimate accurately the class and level of each being within the area of





effect, helping it to target its attacks at the individual it regards as the greatest threat.

## A Non-Psionic Brain

If you do not have the *Psionics Handbook*, simply replace the Living Brain's ability to use psionic powers with the following special attacks and qualities.

**Special Attacks:** *Spell-like abilities (Sp):* 3/day — *charm person, command, sleep*; 2/day — *hold person, suggestion*; 1/day — *dominate person, emotion, mass suggestion*. Any language requirement of these effects is waived for the Living Brain, and all take effect as if cast by a 9th-level sorcerer.

**Mental Blast (Sp):** The Brain is able to inflict mental damage on any living creature, causing a heavy, painful throbbing in its head. This attack deals 3d8 points of damage and is negated by a successful Will save (DC 15). This ability has a range of up to 50 feet and may be used at will.

**Special Qualities:** *Protective Shell (Sp):* Two times per day, the Living Brain can create a psychic barrier in a 10-foot radius around itself that combines the effects of a *globe of invulnerability* and a *wall of force*. This effect has a duration of 10 minutes.

## Cair

The Living Brain is normally housed in deep underground cellars of certain warehouses in the area around the city docks. Here, the busy streets during the day provide sufficient anonymity for the Living Brain's activities, while the deserted streets at night easily allow for secret rendezvous with his minions. The exact location changes on a regular basis, in order to keep most of the Brain's minions unaware of its exact whereabouts. The set-up will usually consist of a small house attached to a larger warehouse. The Living Brain's most trusted allies live in the house, while the warehouse appears to carry on normal trading activities. All of the laborers are completely controlled by the Brain and are the first line of defense should anyone attack. Underneath the warehouse, a tunnel leads to the Living Brain's secret cellar and laboratory.

## Alanik Ray

**Male elf Dtc6\*/Rog4:** CR 10; SZ M Humanoid (5 ft. 7 in. tall); HD 10d6-10; hp 43; Init +3; Spd 30; AC 13 (touch 13, flat-footed 13); Atk +10/+5 melee (1d4+3, *Goldenfang*) or +10/+5 ranged (1d8, masterwork pistol); SA Sneak attack +2d6, target bonus +2; SQ Chemistry, elven traits, evasion, scene of the crime, uncanny dodge, traps; AL LN; SV Fort +2, Ref +12, Will +8; Str 8, Dex 17, Con 9, Int 17, Wis 17, Cha 13.

**Skills and Feats:** Alchemy +9, Climb +5, Decipher Script +12, Diplomacy +9, Disable Device +5, Disguise +8, Gather Information +14, Hide +10, Intimidate +4, Knowledge (arcana) +5, Knowledge (law: Darkon, Dementlieu, Mordent) +12, Listen +12, Move Silently +13, Open Lock +9, Pick Pocket +8, Search +18, Sense Motive +16, Spot +18, Wilderness Lore +5; Alertness, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearms), Iron Will, Skill Focus (Sense Motive), Track.

**Languages:** Darkonese\*, Mordentish, Elven, Lamordian, Balok

**Signature Possessions:** *Eyes of the eagle, hat of disguise, Goldenfang (+4 dagger), masterwork pistol.*

\* The detective prestige class is detailed in **Heroes of Light**, but all necessary rules for Alanik Ray are presented here.

Alanik Ray is tall for an elf and particularly slim. His facial features are pointed and sharp and accentuated by a strong widow's peak. Alanik wears his golden, shoulder-length hair pulled back into a ponytail, which accentuates his high forehead. This combination can give Alanik an intimidating or stern appearance at first glance, but this impression soon disappears when Alanik begins to speak with his soothing voice.

Alanik grew up among the wealthy and still enjoys things of finery and quality. His taste in high quality clothes allows him to fit easily into Dementlieu high society, preferring brightly colored silks and satins, often with elaborate embroidery surrounding the neck and cuffs.

Deep within the folds of his garments, carefully hidden pockets hold all of the equipment used in his work. A magnifying glass, a golden pocket watch, lockpicks, a pair of eyeglasses (actually *eyes of the eagle*), small bottles to store evidence, a number of powders and tinctures, and a small book in which he takes extensive notes of his cases all reside within these hidden pockets.





## Background

Alanik was born in the Darkon town of Neblus into one of the wealthiest merchant families in the district. Ray spent his early childhood wanting for nothing and respecting his father's business prowess. As he grew into adulthood, however, Ray found himself wanting to escape the luxurious clutches of his manor and discover more about how the rest of the residents of Neblus lived. The more time Alanik spent in the macabre town, the more dismayed he found himself at how different this world was from his own. Crime was rife, the poor were left to suffer at the hands of the powerful, and it seemed that no one cared.

Young Alanik's world was then destroyed when his father, Ardal Ray, was charged by the Baron of Neblus with trading in illicit drugs and avoiding taxes. Further rumors that the Baron was in fact involved in his father's schemes left Alanik re-evaluating his level of trust in everyone he knew. In time, he found some members of the guard that he trusted and began working with them to solve some of the many crimes he saw being committed.

By the time the affairs of Ardal Ray's estate had been resolved, Alanik was keen to escape his past. He moved to Mordentshire and began to practice professionally as a detective. The residents

of Mordent were initially resistant to a demihuman in the community, but Alanik's great skill in solving mysteries and murders soon earned him the respect of the Mordentish.

Alanik befriended Arthur Sedgewick in Mordentshire, a young doctor recently returned from his studies at the University of Dementlieu. The two soon became great friends, and Arthur was a constant traveling companion. Alanik has found the relationship extremely beneficial, with Sedgewick's medical knowledge frequently proving useful in solving cases and on more than one occasion saving Ray's own life.

Having built up a reputation as "The Great Detective," Alanik was asked to move to Matira Bay to take charge of the constabulary there. Alanik last saw his friend Rudolph Van Richten here before the doctor disappeared. Not long after the Requiem, however, high-level Kargat agents began to see Alanik's strong investigative capability as a threat. Through his wits and intelligence, however, Alanik was able to outwit them, just managing to escape with his life. From here, Alanik traveled to Port-a-Lucine, where Arthur Sedgewick rejoined him.

## Current Sketch

Alanik currently works as a consulting detective to anyone whose case sparks his interest. He has a strong interest in providing justice to all who need it and so charges for his services on an "ability to pay" basis. If a case sparks his interest, Alanik will even work for nothing if the person in need cannot afford it — inflated charges to the nobles are more than sufficient to cover such activities. The *gendarmarie* of Dementlieu occasionally makes use of his assistance, for which Alanik receives a basic stipend from the Lord-Governor.

The cases that most interest Alanik are those with an aspect of the supernatural or in which the killer is especially cunning. During a case, he wears a particularly intense expression, furrowing his brow and glaring at any piece of evidence that presents itself. His deductive reasoning and talent for lateral thinking make him superior to almost any *gendarme*, but his lack of condescension results in few being offended by his ability to succeed where they cannot.

Arthur Sedgewick has compiled many tales of Alanik's investigative expertise into several published books, such as *The Life of Alanik Ray* and *The Casebook of Alanik Ray*. These books have made



Alanik somewhat of a celebrity in Port-a-Lucine, and he is frequently invited to galas and balls throughout the city. Having been raised among the wealthy, he is very comfortable in such surroundings, although Arthur Sedgewick rarely enjoys attending such events.

## Combat

*Goldenfang*, a very slender +4 dagger, is Alanik's favorite weapon. Received from a Mordentish noble upon solving the mystery of his wife's murder, it appears to be made of solid gold. Alanik often carries a masterwork pistol on more dangerous investigations. Alanik prefers to avoid physical confrontations, favoring stealth and guile to overcome his foes.

**Special Attacks:** *Target Bonus (Ex):* Alanik understands his quarry so well that he gains a +2 competence bonus to attack rolls against one individual, if he spies on the target for one day. This same bonus applies to Bluff, Listen, Search, Sense Motive, and Spot checks made against the chosen target.

**Special Qualities:** *Chemistry (Ex):* Alanik gains a +4 insight bonus to Alchemy checks that do not involve making items. He is a master of analyzing alchemical substances.

*Scene of the Crime (Ex):* By analyzing the scene of a crime and studying minute clues, Alanik can assess the motives or background of a single criminal. A Search check at the crime scene allows Alanik to determine the motive (DC 15), race and gender (DC 20), or primary class (DC 25).

## Lair

Alanik Ray maintains a comfortable but not outlandish terrace house in the Quartier Savant of Port-a-Lucine. He is frequently away from the city, however, conducting his latest investigation.

## Lord Wilfred Godefroy, Darklord of Mordent

**Male human rank four ghost Ari12:** CR 16; SZ M Undead (incorporeal) (5 ft. 6 in. tall); HD 12d12; hp 94; Init +4; Spd fly 30 ft. (perfect); AC 16 (17 on Ethereal Plane) (touch 16 [12 on Ethereal Plane], flat-footed 16 [17 on Ethereal Plane]); Atk +9 (+8 on Ethereal Plane) melee (1d4 [1d4-1 on Ethereal Plane], touch) or +9/+4 melee (1d6 and Charisma damage, +1 club) or +10/+5 ranged (1d12, masterwork musket; Ethereal Plane only); SA Charisma drain, corrupting touch, horrific

appearance, malevolence, manifestation, phantom shift; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., incorporeal, rejuvenation, turn immunity, undead; AL CE; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +9; Str 8, Dex 11, Con —, Int 15, Wis 13, Cha 25.

*Skills and Feats:* Bluff +16, Diplomacy +16, Handle Animal +15, Hide +8, Intimidate +18, Knowledge (history) +12, Knowledge (local) +12, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +11, Listen +20, Ride (horse) +8, Search +20, Sense Motive +12, Spot +20; Alertness, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearms), Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Intimidate), Skill Focus (Sense Motive).

*Languages:* Mordentish\*.

*Signature Possessions:* +1 walking stick (club), masterwork musket, amulet of natural armor +2, bracelets of armor +3 (as bracers), ring of protection +2, scarf of Charisma +2 (as cloak).

Lord Wilfred Godefroy appears as a ghostly figure clad in Mordentish fashions now over 200 years old, a stocky, stooped older gentleman in his 70s. He wears a high-necked, ruffled shirt and a long black coat with tails, often with pince-nez glasses, and is never without his walking stick, an ebony cane topped with a silver griffon's head. Godefroy has a stern, authoritarian demeanor and a habit of frowning and squinting at those to whom he is speaking, which transforms his already elderly visage into a map of deep wrinkles. His hair is long, gray, and tied back in an elaborate knot at the back of his head. His voice is deep and gruff and always carries a note of either condescension, anger, or thinly-veiled contempt; on the rare occasions when he decides flattery will suit his means, however, his voice becomes a charming baritone. No matter what manner he adopts, his eyes never really change, remaining hard and emotionless save for when one of his frequent bouts of rage grips him, at which point they positively burn with hatred for all things living and dead. His entire manner constantly seethes of impatience at the incompetence and impudence of those around him, and his anger is matched only by his arrogance.

## Background

The story of Lord Godefroy's wretched existence actually begins nearly 600 years ago, with the construction of the House on Gryphon Hill. Built by the explorer Jacques Renier, the original founder of Mordentshire, it was intended as a suitably magnificent home for his descendents, overlooking the town and the bay beyond. Yet from the very



beginning, something was wrong with Gryphon Manor... as though the house was born bad. Within a year after moving in, Renier and his family fled the house and never returned. Thus began what came to be the fate of a long succession of noble families who would ignore the warnings of the local populace and move into the house, only to flee before a year was out. Gryphon Manor acquired a reputation as a "bad house," a place of madness and evil where the residents would slide into paranoia and fits of delusions and the dead were the most unquiet inhabitants of all. None could stand the oppressive atmosphere of the house, and so it stood quietly atop its magnificent hill, awaiting the next family to dare its depths.

When Lord Godefroy inherited Gryphon Manor a little over 200 years ago, at first it appeared the cycle would begin again; he openly disparaged the tales surrounding the house, calling them "idle-minded nonsense" and "superstitious foolery", and took great pride in moving in. To the shock of all Mordentshire, he found the house to his liking and lived there quietly until he married young Estelle Weathermay in 566 BC. A baby girl, Lilia, followed two years later, yet the inability of Estelle to provide him with a male heir further hardened his already callous heart. As the years went by, creeping doubts and suspicions filtered into his mind, accusing Estelle of betraying him for her failure to give him the son he wanted. One day in 578, he finally snapped and killed Estelle with his walking stick in a fit of rage. When his daughter tried to save her mother, he battered her to death as well. Cunning to the last, Godefroy was able to avoid mortal justice by claiming they had been trampled to death, even shooting his favorite stallion to back up his account... but the house had seen everything. In all of its tortured history, never before had any of the residents taken a life, and the murders seemed to awaken the manor in a way that has never quieted since. It began with the return of Estelle and Lilia, who appeared to Godefroy the night after their burial on the grounds and tormented him for their murders. Night after night the ghosts returned, until finally Godefroy could take no more and committed suicide on New Year's Day in 579 BC. As his last act, he wrote into his will an attempt to find shelter from their persecuting spirits by requesting his body be interred in the Weathermay mausoleum by Heather House, far away from Gryphon Manor.

Although Godefroy soon found himself haunting the mausoleum, he seemed to be free of his wife and child at last, and the next few months passed without major incident.

During this time, however, the Alchemist came to Mordentshire and moved into the House on Gryphon Hill — again despite the warnings of the local populace. In October of that year, he activated his Apparatus at the same moment Azalin and Strahd opened a portal into material Mordentshire. A period of chaos and confusion followed, and at last the region was wrenched from the outlander world to which it had belonged and into Ravenloft. After the Alchemist was apparently slain and Strahd and Azalin retreated to their own domains, the Dark Powers chose Godefroy as Mordent's new master. It was a promotion whose powers and freedom he enjoyed for precisely one day, when at that first nightfall his wife and child returned to torment him once more.

Though Godefroy still considers himself the only true master of Mordent, in the beginning he largely ignored the living inhabitants of his land unless given particular cause to intervene; those who did attract his attention found that he often expressed his malevolence and rage through extremely creative and evil plots. Destroying the object of his ire was not enough; first, they had to be completely ruined, everything of value in their life destroyed and every dream shattered beyond hope of repair before he would finally finish them off. He delighted in the multitude of trapped spirits at his disposal in the manor and still enjoys venting his rage and frustration on them over the slightest mistakes they make, be they real or imagined. These wretched creatures dwell in eternal servitude, existing only to serve Godefroy's dark desires and hope in vain to avoid incurring his wrath. By now, Gryphon Manor has accumulated enough of these pathetic souls that each room and every staircase contains a number of cringing spirits ready to serve Godefroy's slightest whim. And so it was for over a century, as Godefroy grew comfortable and complacent in his position as lord of Mordent.

### Current Sketch

Although his existence as darklord of Mordent has been a predominantly passive one in the past, recent events have awakened some remnant of the ambition in Lord Godefroy's spirit and spurred him to take an even more active role in the



daily affairs of his domain. Still shaken by a decade-old attack on the manor that nearly spelled his doom, he has since paid a great deal more attention to the comings and goings in his territory. This attentiveness is not only out of self-preservation but also out of a growing desire to put in motion ever-greater plans to increase his influence.

To this end, Godefroy has been using threats against the spirit of Daniel Foxgrove's beloved wife Alice to obtain information about Mordentshire in general and the Weathermay family in particular. Poor Daniel has little choice but to keep the wicked ghost up to date on earthly affairs or watch his wife suffer unspeakable agony. Godefroy has also used his influence over the mayor to keep track of prominent businesses and individuals in town, as well as abused Daniel's authority to drive off particularly nosy or powerful adventurers he considers a threat. Keeping abreast of the affairs of the living has also provided him with another unexpected power base. By employing special invitations sent by Mordentshire's dutiful and compassionate mayor, offering free "convalescence by the sea" at Heather House to certain influential but gravely ill Mordentish luminaries, Godefroy has managed to assure the capture of the spirits of numerous wealthy and powerful individuals in the manor. Their proximity to his lair makes it near-impossible for them to escape when they expire in Mordentshire. True to his malevolent intelligence, he has been careful not to force Daniel to write too many such invitations, lest a sinister reputation scare other nobles away. Even so, in this fashion Godefroy has managed to expand greatly his knowledge of the important deals, dark secrets, and daily compromises that guide the affairs of his land. While he has yet to decide exactly what he will do with this knowledge, he keeps careful track of it so that when an opportunity does present itself, he will seize it without hesitation.

Another source of such information nearly ripe for the plucking is Lord Jules Weathermay himself. Godefroy can sense the aging noble's body weakening day by day and greedily awaits the hour when at last he can add Jules' spirit to the staff of his manor. His hunger is matched by his patience, however, as he realizes that in this instance doing anything overt to speed the inevitable would likely invite the wrath of Jules' cursed witch-hunting family and their numerous allies. He is in no hurry to endure another showdown at Gryphon Hill. Furthermore, at times it seems as though Lord Jules



is almost aware of Godefroy's existence as something more than myth. Even half-blind and growing frail, he has an unnerving tendency suddenly to stare straight at Godefroy when the ghost tries to spy on his affairs. Thus, fearful of discovery and the attention it might bring, Godefroy has relegated his spying to Daniel for the time being. In any case, he is confident that soon time will remove this obstacle from his path and transform it into yet another opportunity. Given the chaotic and scattered state of the rest of the family, most likely the next ruler and the nation will be even easier to manipulate than Daniel and his city have been. Indeed, only some of Godefroy's lingering elitism has prevented him from meddling more directly in the lives of his domain's ruling class. While he would love nothing better than to see the Weathermay usurpers come to ruin, his pride refuses to allow the land to be turned over to "common rabble", and so until another family line comes along that will be able to take the Weathermay's place, he must keep them around.

Finally, recent stirrings and unrest within the Church of Ezra have started to come to Godefroy's attention. He finds the anchorites and their righteous devotion meddlesome and contemptible, yet the idea that some kind of grand conflict may be



brewing between the various factions of the church intrigues him greatly. He has begun the attempt to learn more about it despite the wards that are often placed around the church's holy sites. Not only would an open conflict of any kind weaken one of the great spiritual foes within his domain, but given the realm's small size, it would almost certainly wind up on the defensive before long, perhaps even bringing the fight to Mordentshire itself. Godefroy is not sure what the arrival of a great number of spirits would do to his power, but he reasons that it can only aid him in the end. So he watches and waits for now, manipulating where he can and eagerly awaiting the idea of bloodshed adding to the countless servants in his ghastly employ.

## Combat

Godefroy delights in using his ghostly powers and is quick to take full advantage of them during a fight; he is especially adept at using his ability to fly and pass through solid objects to keep his opponents off-balance, frightened, and disorganized. His preferred method of attack against both the dead and the living is his walking stick, and he especially enjoys the terror it inspires in his captive spirits, who know they will never escape its sting for long. Another favorite tactic of Godefroy's is to feign that he is tied to the grounds of his house, so that opponents believe they have fled to safety, only to find Godefroy attacking them when they least expect it. One must remember that Godefroy can observe his opponents invisibly and nearly undetectably, should he desire: those who attract his attention will be watched in this fashion for some time before he confronts them, the better for him to exploit the weaknesses he can discover in advance. Above all, he is patient as only the truly dead can be. If an engagement is going poorly, he will gladly withdraw, perhaps even letting his foes believe him destroyed; after all, he can always return again later, when they are weakest.

Indeed, only two matters always ensure his immediate full attention on the battlefield: a threat to Gryphon Manor and the arrival of his wife and daughter. Should Gryphon Manor be seriously assaulted, the attackers will find themselves facing a literal horde of geists and the full, lethal extent of all the powers and allies at Godefroy's disposal. As the destruction of the manor would spell his undoing, he will stop at nothing to annihilate those who threaten it, and should anyone survive his initial response, he will close his borders and ruthlessly hunt down those who fled his wrath until the last

are destroyed. In addition, he takes great pains to avoid having anyone see him at the mercy of his wife and daughter. He flees just prior to their arrival and spares no effort to prevent others from following him or scrying his whereabouts in order to prevent this weakness from coming to light.

**Special Attacks:** The save DC against Godefroy's ghostly abilities is 23.

**Charisma Drain (Su):** Any living creature or ghost struck by Godefroy's walking stick suffers 1d4 points of permanent Charisma drain as Godefroy literally beats it into submission. A ghost drained below the minimum Charisma for its rank drops to the next rank for which it qualifies. Weakened ghosts return to their original rank if they somehow recover their Charisma. Godefroy cannot drain any victim below 1 point of Charisma, however, and thus cannot beat ghosts out of existence, regardless of how often they test his patience.

**Special Qualities:** *Rejuvenation (Su):* If destroyed, Godefroy reforms completely in 1 day. Godefroy cannot be permanently destroyed until Gryphon Manor is torn down and its stones scattered.

*Turn Immunity (Ex):* Godefroy cannot be turned, though he will occasionally feign that he has been averted in this fashion in order to surprise his enemies later on.

## Cair

Most Mordentish folk believe that Godefroy is bound by the walls of Gryphon Manor, but in truth he can freely roam his domain as he desires. He seldom leaves Mordentshire and its surrounding area, though, preferring to bring those he desires to observe to him through manipulation rather than leave his place of power. He also occasionally returns to his remains in the cemetery at Heather House in order to see that they are being maintained in proper fashion.

Gryphon Manor is considered a vortex of evil in many Mordentish legends; tales of its owners fleeing screaming into the night with little more than the clothes on their backs are plentiful in local legend. Likewise, many funeral customs deal with speeding the deceased into the afterlife, so they do not linger to cause harm in this world. As with most such folklore, however, there is a grain of truth to these wild tales. Ethereal creatures in Mordent must make a Will save or be involuntarily drawn into the manor. The DC to escape the manor's pull is 30 within the manor walls and drops



by 1 for each increment of 1,000 feet between the subject and the manor. Thus, an ethereal creature 10,000 feet away would have to make a Will save of DC 20 or be sucked in. At distances beyond 30,000 feet, the manor's pull is easily ignored, though all ethereal creatures in Mordent still feel a distant pull and hear the whispering invitations no matter where they are. Ghosts add their rank as a morale bonus to this saving throw. Ethereal creatures must make this Will save once a day. Godefroy is exempt from this effect, and he can exempt other ethereal creatures by giving them verbal permission to leave. Gryphon Manor is a rank 5 sinkhole of evil. Rank 1 geists skulk in every nook and cranny of the manor, hopelessly trying to avoid provoking Godefroy.

### Closing the Borders

When Godefroy wishes to close his domain, the Mists rise at the borders of Mordent. Travelers by land or sea who enter these roiling vapors always find themselves returning to Mordent, regardless of their bearing.

## Lord Jules Weathermay, Ruler of Mordent

**Male human Ari10:** CR 9; SZ M Humanoid (5 ft. 8 in. tall); HD 10d8–10; hp 43; Init –1; Spd 15 ft.; AC 13 (touch 13, flat-footed 13); Atk +8/+3 melee (1d6, +1 *keen rapier*) or +8/+3 ranged (1d12, masterwork musket); AL LG; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +9; Str 8, Dex 9, Con 8, Int 13, Wis 15, Cha 17.

**Skills and Feats:** Appraise +8, Bluff +10, Diplomacy +16, Gather Information +8, Handle Animal +6, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (geography) +8, Knowledge (history) +10, Knowledge (local) +14, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +12, Perform (ballad, dance) +7, Read Lips +8, Ride (horse) +6, Sense Motive +14, Spot +4; Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearms), Iron Will, Leadership, Ghostsight, Weapon Focus (rapier),

**Languages:** Mordentish\*, Falkovnian, Vaasi.

**Signature Possessions:** +1 *keen rapier*, masterwork musket, *ring of protection* +4, antique pocket watch.

Lord Jules Weathermay is a kindly, older gentleman who appears to be in his late 70s. He was clearly once quite a fit and dashing young man, though time and illness have taken a heavy toll on his body. Most days, he walks with a cane and a pronounced limp, yet his face still retains a noble

bearing that women (especially his own age) find quite appealing, and his eyes show that his mind remains as sharp as ever. Lord Jules dresses in the garb of a Mordentish noble befitting his station, with a long dark coat, tri-corner hat, plaid vest, and silver pocket watch on a long chain. His hair is nearly snow white and thinning on top, though he still maintains a short knot in the back. He coughs constantly, sometimes for minutes on end, and while he often makes some small jest afterward, it is plain to see that his health is failing. His hearing is also quite poor, leading him to ask people to repeat themselves or face him when they are speaking.

### Background

Lord Jules Weathermay was born to Lord Calvin and Lady Rebecca Weathermay, and from an early age the young noble was instilled with the family values of courage and perseverance in the face of adversity, traits that have continued to serve him well throughout his long career. As he grew older, Jules displayed an astute mind and keen perception of the world around him and became determined to try to halt the slow decline of the nobility that he was witnessing. A passionate and charismatic young man, he saw himself as being at the center of a new revival of the Mordentish aristocracy and eventually Mordent itself. While his ideals were considered naive and impractical by many of his fellow nobles, none could argue with the passion and conviction he displayed. His movement had even begun to gather some momentum — no mean feat in the dignified and reserved circles of the nobility — when tragedy struck, as it seemed to do in every generation of his family. Jules' parents were riding back to Heather House along the Farmer's Walk one night when the horses pulling their carriage mysteriously bolted for no apparent reason, sending the carriage careening out of control until it struck a tree, killing both his parents instantly.

To this day Jules still has nightmares about running down to the scene of the accident and kneeling by his parents' bodies, only to look up through one of the still-spinning carriage wheels and see Gryphon Manor off in the distance, watching with wicked candlelit eyes. He wakes from these dreams crying and drenched in a cold sweat, convinced that had he only slept a few moments longer, he might finally have reached a pivotal realization about the accident that has eluded him all these years. Despite having quietly contacted



Lord Jules Weathermay

numerous diviners and spiritualists in an effort to determine if Gryphon Manor or its legendary spectral inhabitants played any part in the death of his parents, he has yet to receive a conclusive answer, but even after so many years he has not given up.

Although he had spent his entire life to that point being groomed to take power, Jules never anticipated assuming the mantle in such a fashion, and beset by grief and doubts about his own worthiness, he lapsed into a depression for nearly a decade. During this time, the land and the noble families that oversaw much of its business continued to decline before his eyes, which only added to his misery. The death of his nascent revival took his last bit of enthusiasm with it. Jules ruled distantly when he cared to rule at all and spent many nights at his window contemplating the manor overlooking his town, thinking dark thoughts and pondering dreadful possibilities. What finally saved him was the love of a woman, his beloved Martha. They met at a society ball, where she refused to be put off by his detached demeanor and insisted on calling on him repeatedly until he eventually warmed to her grace and ready wit. Their marriage marked a rebirth of some of his youthful ideals, this time shielded by years of experience at the helm of a small but busy nation. Gradually, he began imple-

menting some of the ideas and plans he had developed in his younger years, and while Mordent was by no means radically transformed, its decline has largely abated, followed by a period of moderate growth. The noble families of old could not be resurrected, but he was content to preserve the ones that remained.

Time made him a family man himself, first with a daughter, Alice, and then with a boy, George. Though well into middle age by then, Jules was a devoted father, and when his beloved Martha passed away from a lingering illness shortly after George's eighth birthday, he resolved that the children should want for nothing he could provide. He watched in delight as Alice grew up to marry Daniel Foxgrove, a promising young nobleman, only to have his heart broken again when she died giving birth to his two wonderful granddaughters. He also looked on helplessly as George, already something of a distant young man, grew increasingly cold following the death of his sister until he took up with Rudolph Van Richten and left to roam the land battling evil. While he doted on his granddaughters and did what he could to ease Daniel's suffering, Jules found himself alone once more, and fight though he would, a quiet depression began stealing back over his disposition as the years passed behind the walls of Heather House. Eventually, his dark mood took its toll on his health, and he has become increasingly frail in recent years, requiring frequent periods of bed rest and suffering from several other chronic ailments. Jules refuses to surrender just yet, however, and those moments when he overcomes both illness and depression find him still the charismatic and insightful man he once was. His time may be growing short, but he is determined to set his affairs in order for his family and his nation before passing on.

### Current Sketch

Contrary to popular opinion, despite his illness and increasing frailty, Lord Jules is only too aware of the danger that his family is in, as well as the greater threat to the land as a whole their peril represents. He admires his stalwart kin and their efforts to battle evil wherever it may be found, but he dreads the day he finally passes, since he can see none of them taking on the mantle of leadership with any success. He is keenly aware that while Mordent's inhospitable land and reputation as something of a backward nation have sheltered it from outside attention for a long time, none of his





relatives have any of his skill at politics. With a distracted or inexperienced ruler at the helm the nation, its farmlands and its harbor may appear too tempting a target for enemies to ignore.

While Jules appreciates the work that his son and his granddaughters are doing to battle the many individual evils that plague the land, he fears that in doing so they may miss the larger and more general danger represented by an external threat. Worse, they might overlook a return of the rampant decline he was witness to earlier in his life. Jules longs to be able to find some way to convince his kin to accept the responsibility that is their birthright for the greater good of the nation, without robbing them of the righteous fire he himself once had and which they still display. It is a dilemma with which he is increasingly obsessed as he sees his end drawing near, and anyone who could possibly help him resolve it satisfactorily would earn his (and the family's) undying gratitude.

Another recent turn of events, and one he has kept very much to himself, is that Jules has developed the ability to see spirits after a particularly close brush with death during his latest bout of illness. He refuses to speak about this new talent to any of his family or staff, however, as he believes (likely correctly) it would be dismissed as the delusion of a feeble-minded and sickly old man. Naturally, this ability and some of the horrific sights he has witnessed with it have caused him to become extremely suspicious of Gryphon Manor. Combined with his keen intellect and observational habits, he is coming close to realizing some of the greater truths about that accursed house and its true master, though what he will do with this knowledge even if he does acquire it remains a matter of some uncertainty. It may come to nothing... or the Weathermay blood in his veins may find one final, heroic expression.

## Combat

Lord Jules does not enter combat directly; while in his younger days he was quite a danger with a rapier or pistol in his hand, he knows only too well that he is no longer the combatant he once was and will not fight unless the situation leaves no other choice. As it stands, those seeking to attack him would face his ever-present bodyguards first (fighters and warriors of 4th-8th level), while the rest of his staff tried to usher him to safety. Nothing nearly that exciting has happened in well over

three decades, however, although those who truly pressed the issue would find that his mind still remembers quite well how to wield a weapon, even if his body is not always able to keep up. He is an excellent leader with a shrewd tactical mind. Should the occasion present itself, he is capable of coming up with very effective battle plans, though again this skill has not seen use as far back as he can remember.

## Cair

Lord Jules lives in Heather House, the traditional Weathermay family home, although he also maintains a very respectable house in Mordentshire's wealthier district for those occasions when he is called into town overnight. In general, however, he prefers to entertain visitors and dignitaries at the home he has known since boyhood, where the comforts of old paintings and mementos of his younger days help ease the increasingly heavy burden he must bear.

## Jacqueline Renier, Darklord of Richemulot

**Female human natural wererat Ari6/Rog5:** CR 14; SZ M/S Shapechanger (5 ft. 5 in. tall as human or hybrid, 2 ft. long as rat); HD 6d8 + 5d6 + 33; hp 88; Init +7 (+10 as rat or hybrid); Spd 30 ft. (40 ft., climb 20 ft. as rat); AC 19 (touch 14, flat-footed 19) (19 as hybrid [touch 16, flat-footed 19]); 20 as rat [touch 17, flat-footed 20]); Atk +8 melee (1d6+1, +1 rapier) or +12 ranged (1d10+2, +1 pistol with +1 bullets), or +14 melee (1d6+1, +1 rapier) and +11 melee (1d4, bite) or +15 ranged (1d10+2, +1 pistol with +1 bullets) as hybrid, or +14 melee (1d4, bite) as rat; Face/Reach 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Sneak attack +3d6 plus disease, curse of lycanthropy as rat or hybrid; SQ Gaseous form, monophobia, chemical bane, the hunger, immunities, tunnel rat, evasion, uncanny dodge, gnaw, scent, rat empathy, alternate form, damage reduction 15/silver, spider climb, squeeze; AL CE; SV Fort +9, Ref +10, Will +11 (Fort +9, Ref +12 as rat or hybrid); Str 11, Dex 16 (22 as hybrid), Con 16 (18 as hybrid), Int 15, Wis 10, Cha 17.

**Skills and Feats:** Bluff +11, Climb +2 (+8 as rat or hybrid), Diplomacy +8, Disguise +6, Escape Artist +5 (+8 as rat or hybrid), Forgery +5, Gather Information +11, Hide +9 (+12 as rat or hybrid), Innuendo +8, Intimidate +8, Intuit Direction +2, Jump +2, Knowledge (local) +7, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +10, Listen +9 (+13 as rat or



hybrid), Move Silently +9 (+12 as rat or hybrid), Read Lips +5, Ride (horse) +6 (+9 as hybrid), Search +9, Sense Motive +10, Spot +9 (+13 as rat or hybrid), Swim +2, Tumble +5 (+8 as rat or hybrid); Dodge, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearms), Improved Control Shape, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Spring Attack plus Multiattack, Weapon Finesse (bite), and Weapon Finesse (rapier) as rat or hybrid.

*Languages:* Mordentish\*, Balok, Falkovnian.

*Signature Possessions:* +1 rapier, 2 silver daggers, +1 pistol, +1 bullets, love potion, bracelets or armor +3 (as bracers), brooch of shielding, gown of resistance +1 (as cloak), ring of mind shielding, ring of protection +1.

In her human form, Jacqueline appears as a stunning Richemuloise woman of uncertain age. She could pass for a maiden in her late twenties or a stunning dame of nearly fifty. In reality, she is nearly seventy years old. Jacqueline's features carry a slight feral quality that gives her a subtle, exotic allure. Her hair is jet black, touched with streaks of gray at the temples, an attribute that actually flatters her already bewitching beauty. Her green eyes are flecked with gold and seem to glitter when they catch the light just so. Jacqueline holds court in Richemuloise formal attire, elegant gowns that flaunt her slim figure. She will occasionally don more functional garb appropriate to the realm, particularly when roaming the streets or sewers at night. Her hybrid and animal forms are deceptively unremarkable in appearance, allowing her to blend unobtrusively into a horde of rats or a pack of her wererat kin. Jacqueline can also take the form of a cloud of odiferous, greenish-yellow mist.

## Background

Jacqueline Renier is a natural wererat, as are most people who are Renier by blood. The Reniers entered the Realm of Dread in 691 BC, when Jacqueline was only a child of five, pursued through a misty portal by hunters. Finding themselves in Falkovnia, they dwelled for a time in Silbervas, until the pogroms of the Talons drove out the city's wererat population. As the Reniers fled into the Misty Border, Richemulot was revealed to them, with Jacqueline's ruthless grandfather Claude chosen as its wererat darklord.

Claude mentored Jacqueline and her twin sister Louise well, and the young wererats competed ceaselessly for his attentions and approval. Though the wicked sisters were closely matched,

time and again Jacqueline proved to be superior in wit and will. Despite all her achievements, despite the twisted devotion she bestowed on him, however, Jacqueline was never able to win her grandfather's approval. Claude dominated his family by guile as much as by force and retained his position by keeping his kin slightly off balance. He never conferred his favor on any of them, preferring to keep them running in circles, striving to meet his unattainable expectations. The strategy succeeded marvelously for over three decades.

Unfortunately for the elder wererat, Jacqueline grew weary of endlessly jumping through the hoops that he placed before her. She ended Claude's petty games by murdering him brutally in 726 BC, whereupon control of Richemulot passed to her. Not one to discard Claude's valuable lessons in treachery, Jacqueline has progressively tightened her grip on Richemulot since her grandfather's death. She took another note from her mother, who murdered Jacqueline's father Simon Audaire in 710 for his human weakness. Accordingly, Jacqueline swiftly removes any Renier that she feels might someday threaten her position. Curiously, she has never moved against her principal rival, her twin sister Louise (*female human natural wererat Ari8/Sor3, NE*). Perhaps Jacqueline merely fears loneliness more than she fears her sister. Louise is physically distinguished from Jacqueline only by a torn right ear hidden under her hair or disguised by jewelry.

## Current Sketch

Conniving and cruel, Jacqueline delights in inflicting pain on others, be it emotional or physical. She has successfully manipulated, terrorized and blackmailed nearly every noble house in Richemulot into submission, including her own family. The Richemuloise masses have grown to respect and admire her leadership, but cannot shake their chilling fear of her wrath.

Jacqueline's only redeeming quality is her capacity to truly love, a trait nearly unheard of among wererats. Despite the twisted evils harbored in her black heart, Jacqueline wants nothing more than unconditional love from others and is prepared to offer it in kind. Yet her ambition ensures that the rare meaningful emotional bond she creates will dissolve into animosity. Furthermore, she is cursed always to assume her rat form in the presence of those whom she truly loves. Jacqueline has long been enamored with the human Henri DuBois, a dashing Richemuloise nobleman. DuBois vanished



some years ago following a botched attempt by Jacqueline to infect him with lycanthropy. His whereabouts remain a mystery, leaving Jacqueline mired in a heartache that only abates when she revels in the misery of others.

Her unrequited love, combined with the pack mentality of her wererat heritage, has afflicted Jacqueline with a crippling fear of being alone. She always seeks to be surrounded by others, and her public persona as a social butterfly stems in part from a perpetual attempt to stave off this creeping terror. For Jacqueline, even the company of those she hates is preferable to loneliness.

## Combat

Jacqueline only attacks when she is certain that she has the upper hand. She typically achieves the advantage by calling upon hordes of minions, be they swarms of rats or her wererat kin. She delights in cornering her foes in a secluded locale where she and her kind are comfortable, then transforming to hybrid form and attacking. Though she generally has an aura of cagey calm, Jacqueline can be gleefully sadistic in battle. She will eagerly use her foes' emotions and values to her advantage, deliberately targeting innocents, using hostages as shields, and attempting to infect as many foes as possible with lycanthropy. If she and her allies are vastly outnumbered or outclassed, Jacqueline assumes gaseous form and flees. She has grown accustomed to waiting weeks, months, or even years for the perfect moment to exact her retribution.

**Special Attacks:** *Curse of Lycanthropy (Su)*: The DC to resist lycanthropy contracted from Jacqueline's attacks is 20.

**Rat Empathy (Ex)**: All rats and dire rats in Rlichemulot are under Jacqueline's influence.

**Special Qualities:** *Gaseous Form (Su)*: Jacqueline can assume *gaseous form* as a standard action while in any form, as the spell cast by an 11th-level sorcerer. She can remain gaseous indefinitely and has a fly speed of 20 feet with perfect maneuverability.

**Gnaw (Ex)**: While in rat or hybrid form, Jacqueline's bite attacks ignore the hardness of objects.

**Spider Climb (Ex)**: While in hybrid form, Jacqueline can climb sheer surfaces as though with a *spider climb* spell.

**Monophobia (Ex)**: Jacqueline is shaken when she is alone or faces opponents without allies.

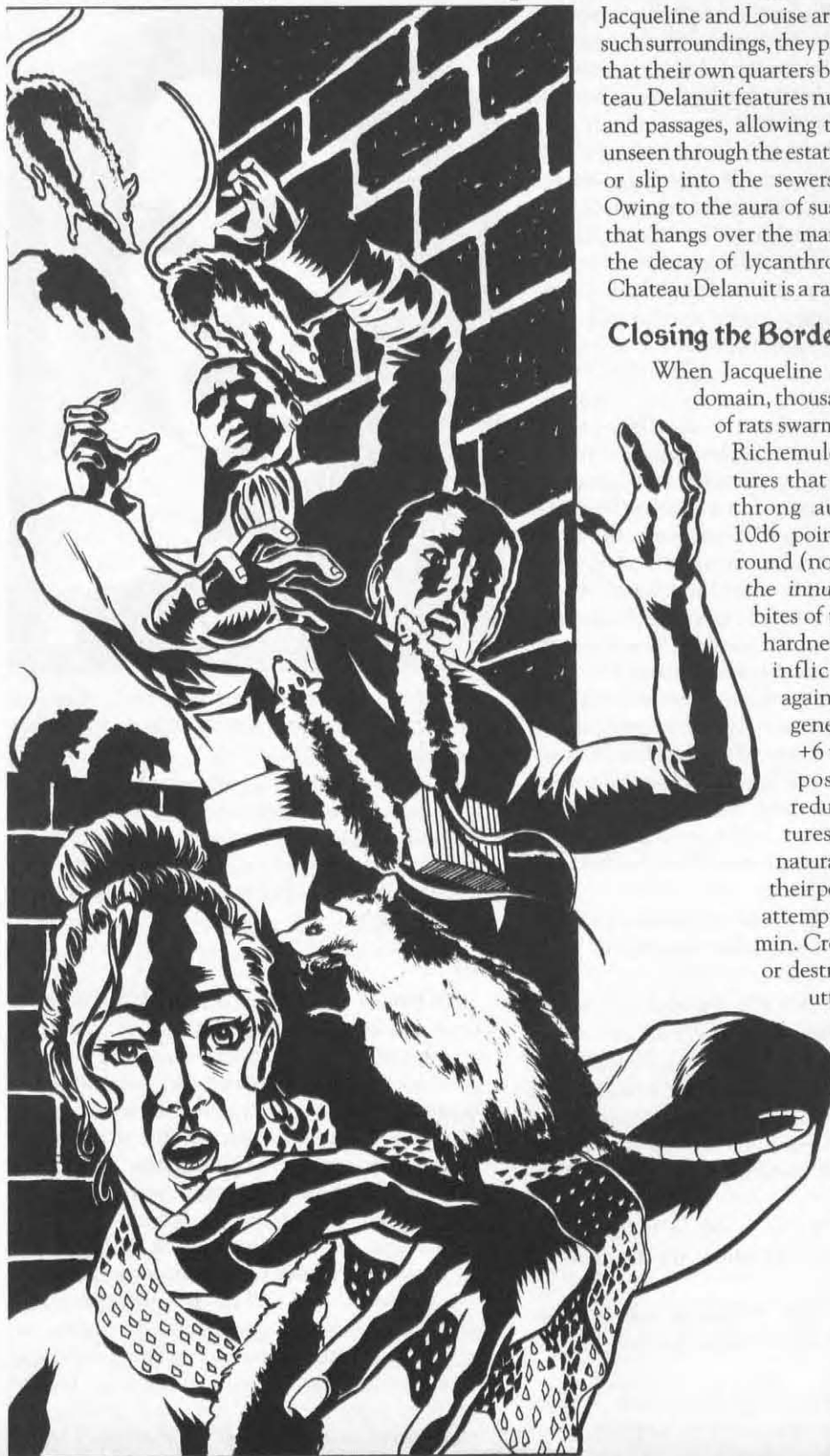


**Chemical Bane (Ex)**: Jacqueline's chemical bane is dove feathers. She remains unaware that the substance is lethal to her.

**Alternate Form (Su)**: Though she is a natural lycanthrope, and therefore possesses the Improved Control Shape feat, Jacqueline suffers under a trigger. She is cursed to transform into rat form when in the presence of anyone she truly loves (no check allowed).

## Cair

**Chateau Delanuit**: Located in the heart of Pont-a-Museau, Chateau Delanuit is an elegant example of the modest but handsome urban manors that are beloved by the Rlichemuloise elite. Jacqueline and her sister Louise have dwelled at Chateau Delanuit since they arrived in Rlichemulot with their grandfather Claude in 694. Though the rooms likely to be seen by visitors — the grand hall, parlors, guest bedrooms, and ballroom — are clean and sumptuously decorated, much of the manor appears as if it has not been tended since Claude's rule. Cobwebs, dust, and rat droppings are everywhere, and bits of gnawed human remains are stashed in unsettling places. Patches of mold and water damage stain the walls and ceilings. Brown, shriveled plants litter the halls and gardens, and cockroaches scuttle through the shadows. Though



Jacqueline and Louise are not discomfited by such surroundings, they paradoxically demand that their own quarters be kept spotless. Chateau Delanuit features numerous secret doors and passages, allowing the Reniers to move unseen through the estate, spy on their guests, or slip into the sewers beneath the city. Owing to the aura of suspicion and betrayal that hangs over the manor, not to mention the decay of lycanthropes living in filth, Chateau Delanuit is a rank 2 sinkhole of evil.

### Closing the Borders

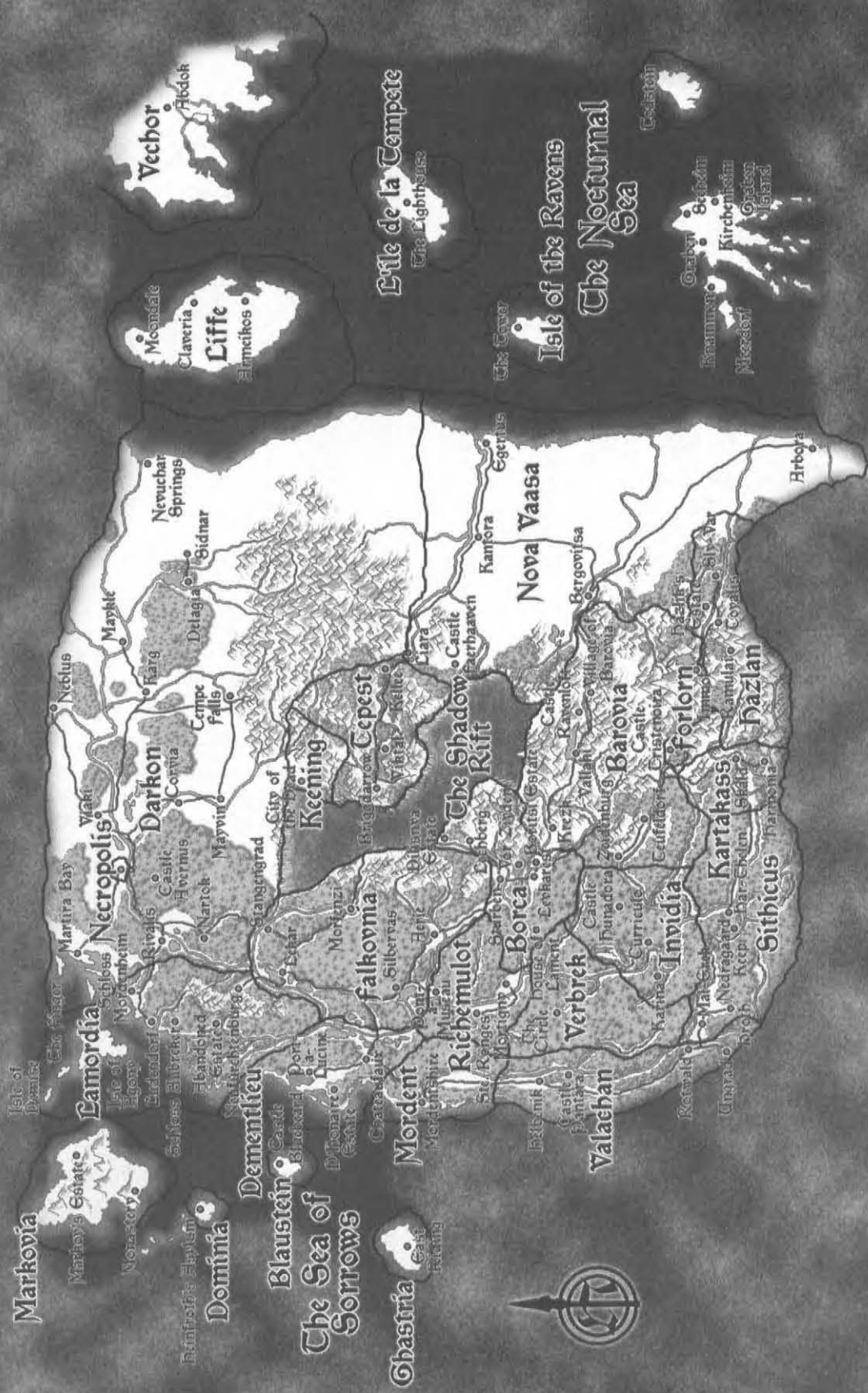
When Jacqueline wishes to close her domain, thousands upon thousands of rats swarm forth and gather at Richemulot's borders. Creatures that enter the squealing throng automatically suffer 10d6 points of damage each round (no saving throw) from the innumerable bites. The bites of these rats ignore the hardness of objects, always inflict normal damage against creatures with regeneration, and count as +6 weapons for the purpose of damage reduction. Flying creatures, even those with natural flight ability, find their powers fail them if they attempt to fly over the vermin. Creatures that are slain or destroyed by the rats are utterly consumed down to the last drop of blood and sliver of bone. Though the rats can be killed, two appear for every one that is slain.



### **Dread Possibility: The Becoming Plague**

No one but Jacqueline herself knows the full dimensions of her supreme scheme, though the Filth Breeders of Pont-a-Museau are more critical to her plans than they comprehend. For nearly five years now, Jacqueline has coerced them to develop a strain of lycanthropy that is transmissible without a lycanthropic wound, instead spreading through the bite of the common black rat. Currently, the Filth Breeders and Jacqueline are the only wererats who know about this so-called "Becoming Plague." Thus far, the efforts of the Filth Breeders have proceeded slowly and with only marginal success. Most of the strains that have emerged from their careful experimentation with the waste pits have either proven lethal to the vector rats themselves or created nightmarish aberrations from the human test subjects.

Jacqueline's plan is to tailor the release of the Becoming Plague so that the maximum number of humans is exposed in the shortest span possible. Those that escape the first round of exposure will quickly fall to the infected population. As such, she designs much of her public political maneuvering to encourage urban population density in Richemulot. If the political circumstances are such that the cities can be sealed — through martial law, quarantine, or siege — thereby entrapping all the humans within, so much the better. Jacqueline's vision is one day to transform the entire population of her domain into wererats in less than a fortnight. She will then be the true mistress of her domain, worshipped as a god-queen by her lycanthropic subjects. If the Becoming Plague proves successful, she reasons that it might be applicable even to realms beyond.



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