

Ravenloft®: Mist Hunters

# BACK TO THE FRONT



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*By Travis Woodall*

① AN ADVENTURE FOR 3RD LEVEL CHARACTERS ②

# BACK TO THE FRONT

## *A Ravenloft: Mist Hunters Adventure*

The missing scholar Radaga has been located, meaning that returning her to Alanik Ray is just a matter of getting to her. Unfortunately, a never-ending horde of zombies stands between Radaga and you—and she's not willing to return until her work in Falkovnia is done.

The third in the *Ravenloft: Mist Hunters* series of adventures. An adventure for 3rd-level characters.



**CONTENT WARNING:** Violent despotism, execution by impaling, traumas of war, involuntary servitude, child soldiers, children in peril, grotesque body modification, gore, violence

Reference the [Mist Hunters' Safety Kit](#) article and *Van Richten's Guide to Ravenloft* for tips and tools on running a safe and fun game.

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# ADVENTURE PRIMER

*Now that their long war was over, they could get on with the proper concern of all civilized nations, which is to prepare for the next one.*

—Terry Pratchett, *Eric*

**T**his adventure is designed for **three to five 3rd-level characters** and is optimized for **four 3rd-level characters**.

*Back to the Front* occurs in Falkovnia—specifically within the city of Lekar, the ruined farming village of Morfenzi, and the sprawling, desolate, and zombie-infested countryside in between those settlements.

## BACKGROUND

**ALANIK RAY**, an investigator hired by the **ORDER OF THE GUARDIANS**, is searching for a scholar named **RADAGA** whose scholarly pursuits into taboo subjects appear to have led her astray. After sending the characters to the village of **EMHERST** in **KARTAKASS** in search of her, Alanik's agent **KABE WHIPPOORWILL** returns to them to report that recent rumors place the missing scholar in **FALKOVNIA**. In that domain of apocalyptic horror, dwindling resources and martial law threaten those unable or unwilling to hold back never-ending undead hordes.

Venturing forth from the city of **LEKAR**, the characters must travel to the ruined village of **MORFENZI** controlled by arcanist and scientist **VJORN HORSTMAN**, whom Radaga has been serving as an aide-de-camp. Once in contact with Radaga, they can easily convince her to leave Falkovnia. However, Radaga understands that the dark experiments Vjorn Horstman engages in might well be successful in stemming the tide of the undead assault in the domain, and she won't leave until her work is done.

## OVERVIEW

The adventure's story is spread over **three parts** and takes approximately **3 hours** to play. The adventure begins with a Call to Action scene. "Extending Play" sidebars in the adventure provide guidance on how to expand the adventure to occupy a roughly four-hour time slot. These estimations don't include time spent in pregame and postgame discussion:

**Call to Action: Parting the Mists.** The characters arrive in Lekar, the single surviving city in Falkovnia. There, they are conscripted into the domain's standing army, the Talons, and quickly receive their first assignment.

**Part 1: The Road to Morfenzi.** The characters must escort arms and ammunition to the ruined village of Morfenzi. But the lands beyond Lekar are crawling with zombies—and with the new moon coming, more are coming.

**Part 2: A Point of Lesser Darkness.** The characters arrive in Morfenzi and catch the attention of Vjorn Horstman, who wants them to join the ranks of his

experimental primal guardians. At the same time, the characters can convince Radaga to accompany them—but must help her finish her work for Horstman before the assault.

**Part 3: The Siege.** Morfenzi is besieged by hordes of the undead, and the characters must stand with the enclave's defenders throughout an exhausting night of battle. But when day breaks and they attempt to leave with Radaga, Vjorn Horstman has other ideas. The characters must make for the Mists if they and Radaga are to escape Horstman's clutches!



## STORY AWARDS

At certain points in the adventure, you may see this glyph along with an entry that describes how the specified story award is earned or impacted by the story. Ignore the entry if it refers to a story award none of the characters have. If it refers to a story award the characters have just earned, the entry instead provides information for you and the players.

## CHARACTER HOOKS

At the conclusion of the previous adventure, the characters were transported via the Mists to Falkovnia. (For characters who didn't take part in RMH-01 *The Performance of a Lifetime*, Kabe Whippoorwill picked up additional agents and brought them along to Kartakass before bringing the party to Falkovnia.) Here, they must seek out Radaga.

Characters who didn't participate in the previous adventure are being vetted by Alanik for potential long-term membership in his employ, and this investigation is a test of their abilities.

## FOLK HERO AND SOLDIER BACKGROUNDS

Any characters with the folk hero background might find camaraderie with the citizens of Falkovnia, while characters with the soldier background are equally at home among members of the domain's military. Consider granting characters advantage on Charisma checks made when interacting favorably with their associated group, and disadvantage on such checks made with the other.

## FALKOVNIAN CHARACTERS

Characters with a connection to the domain know of Lieutenant Corxenia Vant and the reputation she has in the city of Lekar—specifically her penchant for impaling those who refuse to fight. Such a character might already have established membership—or even high rank—in the Talons. If so, Lieutenant Vant might know the character as well.

# CALL TO ACTION: PARTING THE MISTS

**Estimated Duration:** 30 minutes

In the previous adventure's wrap-up, Kabe Whippoorwill transports the characters to the outskirts of Lekar, the last surviving city in Falkovnia. This is a domain of ever-dwindling resources and oppression rising in the face of impending, inevitable doom, as the land is overrun by zombies ever hungry for the living. When they arrive in Lekar, the characters are immediately conscripted into the domain's standing army, in the midst of preparations for the next in an endless procession of zombie invasions.

Not knowing where in Falkovnia the characters' mission might take them, Kabe is unable to return for them, and so has provided them with a **Mist talisman**. These nonmagical objects, akin to a dowsing rod or a lodestone, resonate with the unique nature of a domain and allow characters to find a path through the Mists to that domain. The talisman—a mask made of frayed silk set with glass baubles—is tied to Dementlieu and is instrumental to the characters' success. They have little hope of escaping Falkovnia without it and should be reminded of its importance to their investigation if necessary.

**Themes:** Oppression, desperation, stresses of war

## FALKOVNIA

**Darklord:** Vladeska Drakov

**Hallmarks:** Dwindling resources, fickle hero worship, impending disaster, suspicion, totalitarianism, zombies

The days of the living are numbered in Falkovnia. The people would flee if they could, taking their chances in the Mists, but they aren't allowed that choice. The military has turned against the people, making them prisoners within their own country. With cudgel and pike, the soldiers of Falkovnia force every commoner into grueling labor, rushing them to raise fortifications and scrape scrawny roots from the dirt. Every lash strike, every day of meager rations is necessary—or so the soldiers claim—because time is short and the dead are coming.

## CHARACTER INTRODUCTIONS

Allow each player a minute or so to introduce their character, describe their appearance and mannerisms, and establish the reason why they're working with Alanik and Kabe. Be sure to give everyone equal time in the spotlight and be prepared to gently stop players if they run on. Character introductions are crucially important for the players to understand who the other characters are, to build a basis for roleplaying opportunities, and for you as DM to learn more about the characters so you can create story elements that really speak to them.

Award **inspiration** (explaining what inspiration is and how it works) once everyone's had a turn.

## OUTFITTING FOR THE INVESTIGATION

Before proceeding on this leg of their investigation, the characters decide what they brought with them on their journey:

**Mundane Equipment.** The Order of the Guardians has offered the characters access to its substantial resources to aid in their investigation. Each character has access to any mounts and nonmagical equipment from the *Player's Handbook*, as well as the material components for any spell they have prepared (or known for casters who don't prepare spells). Following the characters' promotion, the gp limit on these acquisitions has been removed. The characters are still bound to the normal rules regarding carrying capacity and, at your discretion, may find themselves in a situation that precludes being able to haul around too much—while their resources are great, the Order discourages frivolous requests.

**Magical Equipment.** As they adventure, the characters “unlock” magic items for later use. The group begins this adventure with one copy of each of these unlocked items and then decides who'll use them. At the end of the adventure, each item is returned to the character who brought it with them. Magic items that are destroyed or that lose their magic, such as a quaffed *potion of healing* or an exploded *horn of blasting*, however, are removed from the character's investigation journal and are no longer unlocked; the character must find another one if they want to use it in a later adventure. The character who brought an unlocked item to the table has ultimate discretion in who gets to use it. They should, however, note that their investigations require teamwork and cooperation.

## EXAMPLE: OUTFITTING FOR INVESTIGATION

Peter's character, Gregov the Fighter, is preparing for their next adventure. He requisitions a greatsword, a longbow and some arrows, and a suit of plate armor. He's also heard rumors of werewolves, so he asks for a silvered dagger . . . just in case. In his previous adventures, Gregov unlocked a *horn of blasting* and a *potion of healing*. The group decides who should carry the horn and the potion. At the end of the adventure, both items are returned to Gregov. However, if a character uses the potion, or if the *horn of blasting* explodes during the adventure, Peter crosses it off the investigation journal where it was unlocked.

## ORDER OF THE GUARDIANS RING

Characters with this magical ring (more information can be found in the [Mist Hunters Safety Kit](#) article) can obtain another dose of the anti-charm tonic from Alanik—provided the last dose they obtained has been used.

## ARRIVAL IN LEKAR

As the characters traverse the Mists, roll on or choose from the Misty Visions table in appendix A to bring that journey to life with visions and minor mechanical effects.

Then read or paraphrase the following to set the scene for the characters' arrival.

The Mists and the terrible visions they spawn slowly fade as you stumble onto a rough, timber-covered road winding through rolling, woody hills. The smell of rain, smoke, and rot hangs thick in the air. Upright wooden poles are set into the ground along the road, upon many of which people have been impaled. Each of the bodies has a plank of wood hung around its neck, the closest bearing a word in dark paint: "TRAITOR."

The stone walls of a city are visible in the near distance, surrounded by abatis—felled trees with their outward-facing branches sharpened to a deadly point.

### AREA INFORMATION

The area the characters arrive in has the following features.

**Terrain.** The road that leads toward Lekar is paved with rough logs to keep it navigable when muddy. It is lined with wooden stakes that hold dozens of impaled bodies. The large city appears to have been repeatedly rebuilt overtop of its previous ruins. It's divided into a number of districts, each separated by walls and fortifications as thick and as tall as those that separate the city from the surrounding countryside. Streets are paved with stone, and buildings are built of stone or brick with wood-shingle roofs.

**Light.** The characters arrive in the morning. Though the sun is bright, clouds drift overhead, threatening rain. Only the deepest alleys in the city hedge out the sun's light during the day.

**Weather.** Regardless of the time of day, the air is humid—mild during the day, but cool and clammy at night.

**Smells and Sounds.** Traveling along the road is eerily silent, with few sounds of birds or animals heard. Once the characters arrive in Lekar, the city is alive with shouted orders, the banging of smith's hammers on steel, and distant crying. The air in the city is pungent with the scent of unwashed bodies and excrement.

**Road.** The road is well maintained near Lekar, but a lack of upkeep makes travel more difficult the farther the characters are from the city.

**Impaled Bodies.** Most of the bodies bear signs that identify the wrongs an executed victim committed in life. Any survey of the signs suggests that most of the victims were executed for treason, cowardice, and other charges related to military service.

### EXTENDING PLAY

If you wish to extend the play experience of this adventure, six **Strahd zombies** emerge from the forest and attack as the characters approach Lekar. You can also adjust the encounter as follows, referring to "Appendix D: Dungeon Master Tips" for guidance on determining the party's strength.

**Weak:** Remove three **Strahd zombies**.

**Strong:** Replace three **Strahd zombies** with an **ogre zombie**.

## APPROACHING THE CITY

As the characters approach the gates of Lekar, read or paraphrase the following.

A voice calls out, breaking the eerie silence of the road as you approach the walls of the city. "The living! The living! Open the gates to the living!" A heartbeat later, the immense oaken gates grind open.

A dozen armored soldiers emerge, each brandishing spear and shield as they form a defensive wall around you, hedging you through the gate and into the safety of the city. As the gates close, one soldier pulls off their helm, revealing a middle-aged half-elf woman with a missing arm and a blood-red falcon tattooed onto her forehead.

"Are you fools?" she says with a smirk. "Or are you simply lost?"



### TALON LIEUTENANT CORXENYA VANT

*Half-elf soldier*

Corxenia (core-SHEN-yuh) is brutally no-nonsense and suffers neither questions nor disobedience. She lost her left arm below the elbow ten years ago, and fights now with a specially fitted blade. Though just shy of thirty years of age, her hair has gone to gray from the horrors she has witnessed.

**What They Want.** Corxenia considers her position of safeguarding her people as a high honor, and views anyone without the same conviction as a coward.

**My Way or the Highway.** Corxenia doesn't tolerate cowardice. Those unwilling to defend Lekar are taken outside the city and impaled upon one of the wooden stakes that line the road.

## NPC INFORMATION

A half-elf **knight** named Corxenia Vant leads a squad of eleven human **guards**, with dozens of other guards and veterans visible around them—hauling wood and stone for fortifications, inspecting equipment, or stealing a moment's rest wherever they can. One soldier whispers words of comfort and gently tends to grievous claw wounds on the back of a second, who is stripped to the waist and sobbing while striking their forehead against a nearby wall.

## SOLDIERS OF THE TALONS

Lieutenant Vant orders an aide to provide each character with food and drink—cold barley stew and warm barley wine. Then, once she's sure that the characters' immediate needs have been fulfilled, she immediately conscripts them into the service of the Talons—Falkovnia's standing army.

"You have partaken of our barley, and thus pledge your weapons, your magic, and your lives to Falkovnia and General Vladeska Drakov, the Crimson Falcon," Lieutenant Vant recites coldly. "As Talons, you live under her protection. But if she commands it, you shall die in her defense."

Assuming the characters accept their charge (and see the "Suffer Not a Deserter" sidebar if they don't), Vant wastes no time in directing them to the armory, ordering them to submit their arms and armor for inspection by the smiths. She assigns the character with the highest passive Charisma (Intimidation) score the rank of Talon corporal. (In the case of a tie, pick one character randomly.) The others are given the rank of private. After a brief ceremony inducting the characters (an oddly dour event, mostly consisting of threats of horrible punishment in the event of cowardice or treason), she grants them access to the Talons' stores (see "Treasure" below).

### FALKOVNIANS: BELEAGUERED AND OPPRESSED

The people of Falkovnia live under constant fear and oppression. Each month, hordes of undead swarm across the domain, drawn to centers of population like moths to a flame. Were it not for the protection of the Talons, everyone in the domain would be long dead. At the same time, the standing army of Falkovnia turned against the people of Lekar long ago, conscripting them and forcing them into labor in order to feed, house, and arm the soldiers.

For more information about Falkovnia and the people who reside there, refer to *Van Richten's Guide to Ravenloft*.

## TO MORFENZI WITH YOU!

Once the characters are outfitted, Lieutenant Vant commands them to take a wagon bearing arms and ammunition to Morfenzi, a destroyed village southeast of Lekar whose strangely fertile fields make it an important farming site—and whose ruins conceal a hidden Talons outpost. She instructs the characters to depart within the hour.

## SEARCHING FOR RADAGA

If the characters ask about Radaga, a surprised Vant says she knows of "the witch"—and tells the characters their inquiry is a remarkable coincidence. Radaga is presently in Morfenzi, and in the service of Vjorn Horstman—a name Vant utters with venom. If asked who Horstman is, she says that he is no less dedicated than she to the survival of Falkovnia's people, but that his means are "contemptible." She refuses to speak any more of him.

(If the characters ask about Radaga before being conscripted, that connection can be what inspires Vant to assign them this particular mission.)

### SUFFER NOT A DESERTER

Lieutenant Vant isn't asking the characters to undertake the mission to Morfenzi. She's telling them. If any of the characters refuse to swear fealty to the Talons, she whistles sharply, and two dozen soldiers (**guards** and **veterans**) approach with swords and shields drawn. The characters are offered another opportunity to acquiesce before Vant opts to have them subdued and executed.

**Escaping Punishment.** If all the characters provoke Lieutenant Vant's anger, feel free to work a dramatic escape into the adventure as they're escorted to the stakes for execution. Before they're impaled, the characters can make a break for freedom, either on their own or with the assistance of a small band of deserters who have been watching the procession from afar.

Operating outside of the Talons' jurisdiction makes the characters' mission more difficult, but not impossible. The hardest part will be infiltrating Morfenzi, but the "Suffer Not a Deserter" sidebar in part 2 offers some guidance.

## TREASURE

Before the characters depart, the smiths in Lekar freely provide arms and armor to those who need it. While the equipment is functional, it bears the scars of battle—weapons chipped and gouged, and armor and helmets bloodstained or bearing ominous (but mended) bite and claw marks.

Any weapon worth 100 gp or less or ammunition found in the *Player's Handbook* is available to the characters, as are shields and suits of leather armor, scale mail, and chain mail. Though the smiths don't charge for the equipment, they don't allow any character to take more than one suit of armor and a weapon or two (or a quiver or case of ammunition).

In addition to these mundane items, the party is given a magic item called *doomseer's lenses*. These lenses function as *goggles of night* but are set into a mask fashioned from tanned and stitched humanoid flesh. See "Handout 1: Character Rewards" for more information.

# PART 1: THE ROAD TO MORFENZI

**Estimated Duration:** 60 minutes

The characters have until the evening to travel to Morfenzi and convince Radaga to leave with them. Corxenia Vant estimates that the journey of some fifteen and a half miles will take just over half a day at a normal pace (see the Overland Travel table). The characters are welcome to travel faster or slower, but this triggers certain effects in this section's encounters (see below). There's little time to waste if the characters are to make it to the ruined village, then convince Radaga to leave Falkovnia with them before nightfall when the new moon rises—and with it, the dead.

**Themes:** Eerie silence, foreboding, gloom

## GETTING UNDERWAY

With the supplies secured on the cart, you're ushered out of the city and onto the eastern road. As the oaken gates slam shut behind you, the silence of the surrounding wilderness envelops you once more.

A row of soldiers stand sentinel atop the city wall. Only one of them—a youngster of no more than fifteen years, wearing an ill-fitting helmet—raises their hand in a farewell gesture.

### MULE AND CART

The cart isn't in the best condition, but it's serviceable. It has AC 12, 35 hit points, a damage threshold of 5, and immunity to poison and psychic damage. The cart is pulled by an unimpressive—and unimpressed—gray mule.

### OVERLAND TRAVEL

Pace	Distance per Hour	Effect
Fast	4 miles	-5 penalty to passive Wisdom (Perception) scores
Normal	3 miles	—
Slow	2 miles	Able to use stealth

### AREA INFORMATION

The route the characters follow to Morfenzi has the following features.

**Terrain.** The roads between Lekar and Morfenzi are paved with rough logs to keep them navigable when muddy. This part of the domain is filled with rolling, forested hills as far as the eye can see. Unfortunately, those same hills are crawling with undead—specifically, zombies.

**Road.** The road is well maintained near Lekar, but a lack of upkeep makes travel more difficult the farther the characters are from the city.

**Weather.** Regardless of the time of day, the air is humid—mild during the day, but cool and clammy at night.

**Smells and Sounds.** The characters' journey is marked by the scent of freshly turned earth, fresh rain, rot, and wood smoke. During the day, light breezes drift through the trees—as do the sounds of distant screams. At night, unseen creatures shuffle through the woods snapping twigs underfoot.

**Undead.** Great herds of zombies roam the countryside outside of Lekar. These undead are usually easy to spot and avoid. However, once a month on the eve of the new moon, countless undead enter through the Mists and lay siege to Lekar. That night is tonight.

## CROSS-COUNTRY CARTING

The characters' half-day trek takes them east and south to Morfenzi, along Watcher's Road and the Hunting Way. As they travel, they should be able to participate in **two** of the following encounters, either selected as you choose or rolled for on the table below.

### d4 Encounter

1	Dead Ahead!
2	Rotten Talons
3	Dastardly Deserters
4	Missing Child

### EXTENDING PLAY

If you wish to extend the play experience of this adventure, consider running a third or even a fourth encounter.

Combat is **not** an absolute necessity in this part of the adventure. Though each of the encounters here focuses on what happens if combat occurs, each also provides plenty of options for characters to experience the game in other ways. Dramatic and exciting narrative always presents unique opportunities to turn combat encounters into exploration or even social encounters.

These encounters are intentionally lacking in certain mechanics (including DCs). This is to emphasize the importance of roleplaying and to allow flexibility in how an encounter is resolved. Allow immersive action to determine success, rather than a roll of a die.

The characters discover some manner of treasure as they complete encounters, as noted at "Treasure" below. If your group likes to play on a grid, you can use the maps in appendix B and appendix C to help bring these encounters to life.

### COMBINING ENCOUNTERS

For a more difficult or immersive experience, you can combine any two of the encounters in this section into a single longer encounter. Just choose a primary encounter, then add the details of a second encounter using the information in that encounter's "Combining Encounters" sidebar. Be aware, though, that this will likely make an encounter longer to play and might result in a marked increase in difficulty.

## DEAD AHEAD!

Six **zombies** are attracted to the sound of the cart as it rattles along the log road. The characters hear the undead approach and have 2 rounds to hide or otherwise prepare. To complicate matters, the mule pulling the cart is startled by the smell of the undead and begins braying loudly. This attracts one of the zombies unless the mule is calmed with a successful Wisdom (Animal Handling) check.

If the characters set a fast pace for the journey (see the Overland Travel table above), any check made during this encounter is made with disadvantage. The zombie attacks if it discovers the characters or the mule. Unless this zombie is destroyed by the end of the first round of combat, the other zombies join the fray.

At the end of every other round of combat after the first, three more **zombies** arrive. The characters should quickly realize that they'll become overwhelmed by this intentionally difficult encounter unless they take flight. The zombies pursue (albeit slowly) for a short while before giving up. If the characters successfully hide (and keep the mule quiet), the zombies pass them by.

### COMBINING ENCOUNTERS

You can combine this encounter with another encounter as follows.

**Rotten Talons:** Two of the wandering zombies are **Talon zombies**, as is one of the zombies that arrive each subsequent round. In addition to being attracted to the braying of the mule, lingering memories of life draw the Talon zombies to the cart, where they tear open crates and dump cargo onto the ground.

**Dastardly Deserters:** Once the zombies shuffle off or are defeated, the characters are confronted by a band of deserters (four **thugs** led by a **spy**), who are intent on relieving the characters of the contents of their cart and packs. The deserters attempt to subdue the characters and return with them to their hideout in a nearby cave. They can be talked down, but doing so is likely to involve the characters relinquishing something valuable—such as the contents of their cart. If the thugs are slain, the spy flees.

**Missing Child:** A shrill scream in the distance causes the zombies to turn and move in that direction. If the characters investigate, they spot a young child in a filthy tunic standing atop a rock—and surrounded by six **zombies**. To save the child, the characters must fight their way through the pack and deal with the three additional **zombies** that arrive at the end of every other round after the first. If kept safe, the child reveals that they're trying to reach Morfenzi in search of their father, who was forcibly conscripted to farm the fields around the ruined village. They're keen on continuing their journey to find their "da."





## ROTTEN TALONS

The smell of rot hangs in the air as the characters come across the carnage of a slain Talon patrol. The ruins of a cart (disturbingly similar to the one the characters are escorting) and the remains of a slain mule are strewn around the area. If the characters investigate further, they discover the contents of the cart unharmed, but four dead soldiers rise as **Talon zombies**.

### ADJUSTING THE SCENE

Consider the following suggestions for adjusting this scene depending on the relative combat strength of the party (see “Appendix D: Dungeon Master Tips”).

**Weak:** Remove one **Talon zombie**.

**Strong:** Each **Talon zombie** wields a shield, increasing its AC to 18.

If the characters defeat the Talon zombies, they are able to search the contents of the destroyed cart. Any real valuables have been ruined (including a few shattered potion vials found in a shallow, straw-packed crate). But characters who wish to do so can grab the mundane arms and gear on the cart and transfer it to their own cart for delivery to Morfenzi. (Doing so helps bring the characters to the attention of Vjorn Horstman in the next part of the adventure.)

### TREASURE

Among the gear being brought to Morfenzi, the characters find a few coins and valuables on the ruined cart that can be claimed.

### COMBINING ENCOUNTERS

You can combine this encounter with another encounter as follows.

**Dead Ahead!** If combat occurs, a group of three **zombies** are attracted by the noise. If the characters manage to evade the zombies, three more **zombies** arrive from the other direction.

**Dastardly Deserters:** A group of deserters (two **thugs** led by a **spy**) stumble upon the ruined wagon at the same time the characters do, and lay claim to the dead soldiers’ gear. If the characters acquiesce, the deserters take them for soft touches and immediately demand that the characters relinquish something valuable—such as the contents of their cart. The deserters retreat and attack from range if the **Talon zombies** animate. The spy flees if the thugs are slain.

**Missing Child:** As the characters fight the Talon zombies, they hear whimpering cries coming from the cart, where a young child in a filthy tunic is in hiding with a notched dagger clutched in their hands. If kept safe, the child reveals that they stowed away in the cart bound for Morfenzi in search of their father, who was forcibly conscripted to farm the fields around the ruined village. They’re keen on continuing their journey to find their “da.”

## DASTARDLY DESERTERS

Around a bend in the road, the characters hear the sound of voices and the crackling of a fire. As they approach, they see a group of humans in Talon livery (four **thugs** led by a **spy**), roasting a scrawny rabbit over a campfire. If the characters set a slow pace for the journey (see the Overland Travel table above), they can approach quietly enough to listen in on the conversation before being detected, but if they chose to travel at a fast pace, the deserters hear them coming well enough in advance to find hiding places from which to ambush the characters. In this scenario, the characters find the still-warm camp, but it’s unoccupied. Any character with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 16 or higher isn’t surprised as the deserters leap from hiding to attack.

### ADJUSTING THE SCENE

Consider the following suggestions for adjusting this scene depending on the relative combat strength of the party (see “Appendix D: Dungeon Master Tips”).

**Weak:** Remove two **thugs**.

**Strong:** Add one **spy**.

These deserters from Lekar are inherently hostile toward the characters, for fear that they’ve come to capture them and return them to the city for punishment. The deserters can be talked down, but doing so is likely to involve the characters relinquishing something valuable—such as the contents of their cart. If the thugs are slain, the spy flees.

(If the characters refused conscription and are on the lam, these deserters are instead loyal Talons, hunting for the characters as traitors to Falkovnia. They attack the characters at once, but can be persuaded to accept a bribe to stand down and pretend they didn’t see them.)

### COMBINING ENCOUNTERS

You can combine this encounter with another encounter as follows.

**Dead Ahead!** The hostilities are put on pause when a group of three **zombies** shamble into the area and attack. At the end of every other round thereafter, two more **zombies** enter combat. The deserters are quick to flee, leaving the characters to defend themselves—only to track the characters down and ambush them later.

**Rotten Talons:** During their interaction with the deserters, the characters hear a weak cry for help somewhere farther off the road. Investigating reveals a dead Talon soldier, their body still warm, who appears to have crawled from someplace to the west. Following the trail, the characters and the deserters find the rest of the soldier’s patrol, all dead. As both groups investigate the scene, two **Talon zombies** rise and attack. The deserters immediately flee from combat but engage the characters from range.

**Missing Child:** The deserters have a small child in a filthy tunic in their group. Any character watching the child can easily deduce that they are terrified. It’s the deserters’ hopes that they can seek a pardon by returning the “rescued” child to Lekar. They initially refuse to turn the child over to the characters but might be convinced to do so if the characters relinquish something valuable—such as the contents of their cart. During any negotiations, two **swarms of zombie limbs** wander into the area and attack.

## MISSING CHILD

The characters hear the cry of what sounds like a child from ahead. Drawing near, they see the burned-out husk of a farmstead, behind which is a large barn. The door to the upper-story hayloft is open, and inside, a young child in a filthy tunic screams in terror as three **swarms of zombie limbs** clamber up the wall toward them.

### ADJUSTING THE SCENE

Consider the following suggestions for adjusting this scene depending on the relative combat strength of the party (see “Appendix D: Dungeon Master Tips”).

**Weak:** Remove a **swarm of zombie limbs**.

**Strong:** Add a **swarm of zombie limbs**.

If rescued, the child tells the characters that they stowed away in a cart bound for Morfenzi to search for their father, who was forcibly conscripted to farm the fields around the village. When they were discovered, the soldiers escorting the cart left them behind. After an hour of traversing the forest and avoiding undead, the child found the barn. They’re keen on continuing their journey to Morfenzi to find their “da.”

## TREASURE

Place a *potion of fire breath* in one of the encounters the characters undertake, and a *spell scroll of daylight* in the second encounter. If the characters undertake additional encounters, they find a few scattered coins but no additional magic.

## DEVELOPMENT

After completing two encounters, the characters arrive in Morfenzi and are ready for the next part of the adventure.

### COMBINING ENCOUNTERS

You can combine this encounter with another encounter as follows.

**Dead Ahead!** A group of three **zombies** are attracted by the child’s screams. At the end of every other round thereafter, two more **zombies** arrive and enter combat. If the zombies detect the characters, they turn their attention from the child to the party. At the end of each third round thereafter, three more **zombies** shamble into the area. The characters should quickly realize that they’ll become overwhelmed by this intentionally difficult encounter unless they take flight. The zombies pursue (albeit slowly) for a short while before giving up.

**Rotten Talons:** Two **Talon zombies** arrive, attracted by the noise of combat.

**Dastardly Deserters:** Three deserters (two **thugs** led by a **spy**) hide a few hundred feet away from the barn, watching the characters deal with the zombie limbs. When the fight is done and the characters are speaking with the child, the deserters approach with weapons drawn. They aim to relieve the characters of their wagon and the child, who they hope to use to gain a pardon for their desertion. If the thugs are slain, the spy flees.



## PART 2:

# A POINT OF LESSER DARKNESS

**Estimated Duration:** 60 minutes

In this part of the adventure, the characters arrive at the ruined village of Morfenzi and are introduced to Vjorn Horstman and his aide—who happens to be the missing scholar, Radaga. The characters can convince Radaga to leave Morfenzi with them, but her dedication to aiding the people of Falkovnia means she won't do so until her work is completed.

**Themes:** Edges of society, frenzied preparations

## ARRIVAL AT MORFENZI

As the characters' journey comes to an end, read or paraphrase the following to set the scene.

The scent of woodsmoke and tilled earth hangs on the air as the road abruptly ends in a circular palisade consisting of row upon row of sharpened wooden poles. Beyond the palisade, a number of field tents have been set up over the remains of a ruined village, whose cultivated fields are filled with laborers harvesting vegetables at a hurried pace.

As your cart passes through the palisade gate, you find yourself mobbed by soldiers, who quickly unload the supplies you've brought. Many press notes and tokens to loved ones into your hands, asking you to pass them on when you return to Lekar. And more than one furtively pleads for you to take them with you when you go.

### SUFFER NOT A DESERTER

If the characters refused to be pressed into service during the adventure's Call to Action and subsequently escaped, they must find a way into the outpost. This can be done in a number of ways, such as using stolen Talon uniforms (acquired through force or guile), smuggling themselves in via supply deliveries, or plain, old-fashioned breaking and entering.

Allow the players' creativity and the characters' talents to shine in this scenario. Assign ability checks, attack rolls, or saving throws where appropriate, but focus on the characters' individual narratives to describe their successes or failures along the way. In the end, they risks they've taken to get this far should pay off.

## AREA INFORMATION

Morfenzi has the following features.

**Dimensions and Terrain.** Morfenzi is spread out over a large area, surrounded by multiple concentric barriers of wooden poles 15 feet tall. The village's farmhouses were leveled by earlier undead attacks, leaving the muddy ground strewn with rubble—with the exception of the

strangely fertile fields. The inner area of the village is 100 feet across, housing the field tents of the soldiers stationed here and access to the hidden base beneath the village.

**Fields.** Turnips and other root vegetables are the staples grown here, with the fields worked by farmers forcibly dispatched from Lekar.

**Light.** The characters arrive at midafternoon. Though the sun is bright, clouds drift overhead, threatening rain. Aside from patches of bright and dim light shed by torches, the village is dark by night, with the moon having faded to new.

**Weather.** Regardless of the time of day, the air is humid—mild during the day, but cool and clammy at night.

**Smells and Sounds.** Shouted orders can be heard throughout the village, as can the clanging of tools.

Woodsmoke and the scent of tilled earth and mud hang on the air.

## A BRIEF RESPITE

Shortly after the characters arrive, six human **veterans** wearing full helms take notice of them. All are Horstman's primal guardians (see the sidebar). One of them grabs a character by the arm and growls, "Horstman wants a word. Find a bunk and report to him within the hour."

The guard directs the characters to a nearby tent filled with rough and uncomfortable bunks. Any character who wishes to can take a **short rest**.

### HORSTMAN'S PRIMAL GUARDIANS

Vjorn Horstman has conducted extensive experiments upon members of his personal guard using what he calls primal serum—a vile concoction of magic, lycanthrope blood, and other foul reagents. Those he injects with the serum to appoint as his primal guardians are afflicted with a mild form of lycanthropy, gaining supernatural resistances and abilities, and modifying their NPC stat blocks as follows:

**Primal Shift (3/Day).** As a bonus action, the guardian assumes a more bestial appearance. This transformation lasts for 1 minute, until the guardian dies, or until they revert to their normal appearance as a bonus action. While they have this bestial appearance, the guardian gains resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks that aren't silvered. They also gain one of the following benefits of their choice, which ends when the transformation does:

- The guardian gains 14 (4d6) temporary hit points and has a +1 bonus to Armor Class.
- The guardian grows long fangs, allowing them to use a bonus action to make an unarmed strike that deals piercing damage equal to 1d6 + their Strength modifier.
- The guardian's speed increases by 10 feet. Additionally, when a creature ends its turn within 5 feet of the guardian, the guardian can use a reaction to move up to 10 feet. This movement doesn't provoke opportunity attacks.
- The guardian sprouts a pair of black-feathered wings that grant them a flying speed of 30 feet.

## THE GOOD DOCTOR

When the characters are ready to meet Vjorn Horstman, any of the soldiers in the camp can escort them to a field tent set up alongside a ruined farmstead. Within the tent, a sentry opens a trapdoor, then escorts them down a ladder into what appears to be a root cellar. However, rather than a cramped, earthen chamber, the characters find themselves in a timber-walled room from which numerous corridors branch off, each set with a thick, iron-banded wooden door. The sentry escorts them through numerous underground rooms filled with supplies, soldiers, and the bustle of magical research activity.

In the end, the characters are led to a large laboratory filled with tables packed with beakers, vials, and other equipment. A number of soldiers are hard at work here—as is Vjorn Horstman and his assistant, Radaga.



### VJORN HORSTMAN

*Human arcanist and scientist*

Vjorn Horstman (vuh-YORN HORST-man) commands the outpost at Morfenzi, and the intense pace of the work he directs here—added to the traumas inflicted by Falkovnia's war against the undead—has begun to show. He is cruel, paranoid, wholly obsessed with perfecting the ultimate weapon against the undead—and so close to accomplishing his goal. His focus on work has him teetering on the edge of starvation, combining with his sparse gray hair to lend him a harrowing appearance.

**What They Want.** Horstman is close to perfecting his primal serum and won't stop until he is done. Anyone who would stand in his way is an enemy to the people of Falkovnia—and everyone knows what happens to enemies of Falkovnia.

**Lost Humanity.** Horstman ran out of eager subjects for his experiments some time ago. While those who volunteer now typically consent to the treatment, this is largely due to Horstman's willingness to lie about its potential risks. It makes no difference, to him. The ends more than justify the means.

## AREA INFORMATION

Horstman's lab has the following features.

**Dimensions and Terrain.** The lab is some 40 feet on a side and has a 20-foot-high ceiling. The floors, walls, and ceiling are hewn stone brick, pitted and stained from thousands of experiments. A dozen tables packed with equipment stand throughout the room.

**Light.** A half dozen magic devices called *glowglobes* are set into iron sconces throughout the room, shedding light like a torch. If removed from the lab, a *glowglobe's* magic fades within 24 hours. That light is augmented by burners and glowing substances in the various beakers, vials, and flasks on the tables.

**Smells and Sounds.** The air is stiflingly warm and acrid, filled with the scent of chemicals, herbs, and rot. The sound of bubbling, the tinkling of glass vials, groans of pain, and hushed conversations can all be heard.



### RADAGA

*Human scholar of the Dark Powers*

The object of the Order of the Guardians' search, Radaga (ruh-DAH-guh) is a scholar and arcanist who has delved far into the nature of the Dark Powers—some say a bit too far. She is brilliant but obsessive in her desire to catalogue all things sinister—and more than a bit possessive of her knowledge. Radaga has olive skin and dark hair.

Though there's no means by which the characters are able to discern it, Radaga is possessed by an unknown entity during this adventure.

**What They Want.** Horstman has provided ample resources to assist in Radaga's research into the borders of the various domains of Ravenloft—and she plans on taking advantage of his generosity.

**Yearning for Freedom.** Though she won't admit it, Radaga yearns for freedom—not only from the domain of Falkovnia, but from Ravenloft. This serves as the primary motivation for her research.

## NPC INFORMATION

**Vjorn Horstman** stands at one of the tables in a leather apron, rapping a knuckle on a retort flask and dictating notes to a human woman with dark red hair who stands beside him, writing on a clipboard. The characters recognize Radaga, a **mage**, from Kabe Whippoorwill's description of her. Four **veterans** with the additional features noted in the "Horstman's Primal Guardians" sidebar stand guard around the room.

A halfling **guard** lies on a table on the far side of the room behind Horstman, groaning in pain and straining against thick leather restraints. A steel syringe with an empty vial rests on a table beside them. Thick green fluid has pooled beneath the tip of the needle.

When the characters enter, Horstman looks up.

"Ah, supplies from Lekar, I presume?" The doctor smiles.

"An unnecessary expenditure, I assure you. But let us speak."

## A DARK INVITATION

Vjorn Horstman asks the newly arrived characters about news from Lekar and appears keen for them to report back about how well his work at Morfenzi is going. But the character with the highest passive Wisdom (Insight) score can tell that the scientist has an ulterior motive, and appears to be assessing all the characters' strength, fortitude, and bravery.

Horstman talks proudly of his work on something called the primal serum (see the sidebar) that will finally win Falkovnia's war against the undead. That isn't to say that his work is done, though, and there's precious little time to produce as much of the serum as he needs to before nightfall brings a new incursion of undead. He speaks of his assistant Radaga as being instrumental in accomplishing this, and of the halfling suffering on the table as "the newest member of Falkovnia's future ... and perhaps there is a place at their side for you."

It's not intended that the characters become part of Horstman's experiments in this adventure. But the scientist's interest in having the characters brought to him is about him trying to convince them to do so. He is unconcerned if the characters have been branded as deserters, as long as they appear interested in helping.

In an effort to impress the characters, Horstman asks Radaga to ensure that they are well taken care of after their journey.

"My goodness, where are my manners," Horstman says.

"You must all be on the verge of starvation. Radaga, please show our guests the extent of Morfenzi's hospitality."

The characters have no chance to approach Radaga privately during this initial meeting. If they try to talk about taking Radaga away with them, Horstman assumes they are joking, and talks again of her importance to his work.

## PRIMAL SERUM

This substance represents the culmination of Horstman's life's work. Using less-than-ethical practices, the arcanist and scientist has succeeded in harnessing the curse of lycanthropy in a form that can be instilled into a creature quickly—and that can be managed by its host. It's his hope that this discovery will enable him to create an army of soldiers capable of surviving and repelling the zombie siege.

Unfortunately, though the serum provides its intended benefits, it has significant drawbacks. Though they remain humanoid, those who take the serum begin to harbor traits not unlike wild beasts. Some gain an affinity for raw meat or the moon. Their limbs, vocal cords, and other physiology might change, or they could develop a fear of fire. One thing all have in common is how quick to anger they are—and their anger is terrible to behold. All that aside, those who take the serum and become known as Horstman's primal guardians are well respected among the other troops of Morfenzi. For all know that they may very well be Falkovnia's saving grace.

## HOSPITALITY INDEED

Radaga accompanies the characters to another chamber where a questionable meal has been set out. She answers any questions they might have over greasy horsemeat, thin ale, and stale bread (quite possibly the finest food to be had in Falkovnia).

When the characters talk to Radaga about their true mission, she is quick to agree to leave with them. The time she's spent in Falkovnia has her on edge, and she welcomes the opportunity to return to Dementlieu and see Alanik Ray. However, if the characters talk about leaving at once, she tells them she won't go until her work at Morfenzi is done.

"The undead will pour from the mists under the light of tonight's new moon. If these people are to survive, I must prepare and administer as much of the primal serum as I can."

"I've seen the ugliness of Horstman's experiments, and as foul as they may be, they will undoubtedly give some of these soldiers the strength to hold back the undead horde. If I leave before this work is complete, everyone here will die."

Additionally, if they try to talk to Radaga about the evidence uncovered in RMH-EP01 *The Grand Masquerade* (including the mysterious research she was engaged in while in Dementlieu, or the notes found in her apartment), she grows short with them, insists that this is neither the time nor place for such conversations, and refuses to say more. Any character with a passive Wisdom (Insight) score of 13 or higher can tell that Radaga appears unexpectedly angry in response to the questions.



## LET'S GIVE HER A HAND!

Characters who earned this story award during RMH-EP01 *The Grand Masquerade* might have brought something that belongs to Radaga with them—the scholar's crawling

claw familiar. Radaga is oddly unresponsive to the creature as it affectionately clammers all over her, but admits that it might be helpful in her work.

## WHAT GOOD ASSISTANTS YOU ARE

Getting Radaga safely away from Morfenzi requires that she is able to complete her work—and that that work is successful enough that Morfenzi survives the imminent undead assault. By helping the mage, the characters can help ensure her willingness to accompany them and can help the soldiers of Morfenzi prepare for what's coming.

### WORKING WITH THE SERUM

The production and administration of the primal serum is a three-stage process, and Radaga asks the characters to split into three groups of one or two characters each. Each group must assist with a specific stage of the serum's production.

**Stage One: Gathering Ingredients.** The characters must scour the lab for specific ingredients and prepare them for use. Use your imagination to come up with a suitably horrible ingredients list for the serum, such as werewolf spleens, zombie eyes, and similarly horrific things.

**Stage Two: Brewing the Serum.** The characters must boil, distill, and brew the gathered ingredients to create the serum.

**Stage Three: Administering the Serum.** The characters must package the serum into syringes and inject it into Horstman's soldiers. Be cognizant of your players' comfort levels with this last stage. Though Horstman is not above using unwilling subjects for his experiments, those who accept the risk often yield the best results, so willing subjects could be the rule if that makes things easier.

Allow each character to describe what they're doing to assist. Once they've done so, each group makes a DC 11 group ability check (lone characters make their own check), with the type of check determined for each character based on what they're doing to assist. For example, a character retrieving heavy boxes of supplies might be asked to make a Strength (Athletics) check, while a character trying to quickly load multiple syringes with the serum might be asked to make a Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check.



### LET'S GIVE HER A HAND!

Radaga's crawling claw is, in fact, helpful. Characters with this story award have advantage on ability checks made during this part of the adventure as the familiar provides a "helping hand."

### ADJUDICATING SUCCESS OR FAILURE

A stage of the process is successful if the characters working on that stage succeed on their group check (or if a lone character succeeds on their single check). If all the characters in a group succeed on a group check, the characters working the next stage have advantage on ability checks. If all the characters in a group fail a

group check, the characters working the next stage have disadvantage on ability checks.

If two or more stages of the process are completed successfully, the overall enterprise is successful and Radaga expresses her gratitude to the characters.

If two or more stages of the process are unsuccessful, Horstman witnesses the failure. His paranoid nature makes him accuse the characters of being sent to sabotage him, and he orders them seized by four **veterans** with the additional features noted in the "Horstman's Primal Guardians" sidebar. In addition to the overwhelming odds, signals from Radaga make it clear to the characters that they should go along with the guards for now—and that she will join them when she can.

The "Successful Assistance" and "Failed Assistance" sections in part 3 of the adventure take the outcome of this section into account as they set the characters up for the undead assault to come.

### JUST A LITTLE TASTE

It's possible that one or more of the characters might be tempted to steal a dose of the serum for their own use. Doing so is extremely foolish. If caught, impalement would be the least of the character's concerns—and even if successfully stolen, the serum is dangerous to use. After being injected with the serum, the creature is incapacitated with agonizing pain over the course of the next hour. At the end of 1 hour, the creature must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw, dying on a failed save, or gaining a level of exhaustion on a successful one.

If the subject survives, they permanently gain a random flaw from the table below, and the following benefit that can be used once during this adventure.

**Primal Shift.** As a bonus action, you assume a more bestial appearance. This transformation lasts for 1 minute, until you die, or until you revert to your normal appearance as a bonus action. When you shift, your speed increases by 10 feet, and you grow long fangs that remain until the transformation ends. Your fangs allow you to use a bonus action to make an unarmed strike that deals piercing damage equal to 1d6 + your Strength modifier.

The character also gains a permanent flaw, rolled for on the Primal Serum Symptoms table.

### PRIMAL SERUM SYMPTOMS

#### d6 Flaw

- 1 *I constantly hunger for raw flesh. Bloodier is better.*
- 2 *I fear fire and flee from it when it's brandished.*
- 3 *My speech is heavily accented with growls, grunts, and other animalistic sounds.*
- 4 *I have abandoned the practice of grooming. It's a pointless construct of society.*
- 5 *I don't sleep on the night of a full moon. I spend the evening howling at its presence in exultation.*
- 6 *I feel special kindred with wild things and alienate myself from other humanoids.*

## PART 3: THE SIEGE

**Estimated Duration:** 60 minutes

In this final part of the adventure, the new moon rises over the domain of Falkovnia, and the Mists unleash their horrors. The characters must survive the night if they're to make it to the Mists and escape with Radaga.

The way this part of the adventure begins is dependent on the characters' success in helping Radaga create and administer the last batches of primal serum. See "Successful Assistance" and "Failed Assistance" below.

**Themes:** Fatal decisions, overwhelming odds, despair

### THE SIEGE BEGINS

The undead that are disgorged by the Mists are drawn toward the largest centers of population in Falkovnia. The large number of soldiers Vjorn Horstman has assembled in Morfenzi thus make the enclave a prime target—even as the number of those soldiers that have gained the benefit of Horstman's primal serum has the arcanist convinced that Morfenzi will survive the onslaught.

### AREA INFORMATION

**Dimensions and Terrain.** Morfenzi is spread out over a large area, surrounded by multiple concentric barriers of wooden poles 15 feet tall. The village's farmhouses were leveled by earlier undead attacks, leaving the muddy ground strewn with rubble. The inner area of the village is 100 feet across, housing the field tents of the soldiers stationed here and access to the hidden base beneath the village.

**Light.** Aside from patches of bright and dim light shed by torches, the village is dark by night; with the moon having faded to new.

### THE ADVANCING DEAD

As the day fades, read or paraphrase the following:

A line of spear-wielding soldiers is silhouetted against the sun's dying rays as night falls over Morfenzi. Over the next half hour, darkness slowly envelops the village, so deep that even torches appear to burn less brightly. Overhead, the moon is gone. In its place is nothing but a dark, circular void of starless sky.

Then you hear it. The snapping of distant trees. Wailing screams followed by silence. And the growling of hundreds upon hundreds of the ravenous dead.

The siege of Morfenzi has begun. Over the next eight hours, the characters see the true horrors of Falkovnia.

### SUCCESSFUL ASSISTANCE

If the characters successfully aided Radaga in part two of the adventure, they have been given free run of the village and are asked to help fortify its defenses. Give each character inspiration.

### FAILED ASSISTANCE

If the characters were unsuccessful in aiding Radaga in part two of the adventure, they have been imprisoned in a rough-timber cage in the center of the village. During the battle, the characters are freed—whether by their own skills (picking or destroying the lock), Radaga's magic, or happenstance (for example, a mob of zombies trying to reach the characters might tear the cage apart from one side to let the characters flee out the other side).

### UNDEAD ASSAULT

During the first stage of the utter chaos within Morfenzi, the characters are attacked by three **skeletons** draped by three **boneless**. As the undead arrive, read the following:

A handful of odd-looking zombies shamble toward you among the chaos as undead pour into Morfenzi. But with a sickening tearing sound, the zombies' flesh peels away, revealing skeletons beneath. That flesh then slithers toward you as undulating masses of meat and gristle, as the skeletons draw bows.

### ADJUSTING THE SCENE

Consider the following suggestions for adjusting this scene depending on the relative combat strength of the party (see "Appendix D: Dungeon Master Tips").

**Weak:** Remove one **skeleton** and one **boneless**.

**Strong:** Add one **skeleton** and one **boneless**.

### MORFENZI'S STAND

Even as the characters deal with their personal undead assault, wave after wave of zombies attack the village, roiling over the stockade walls and battering down the gate like a tempestuous sea. Describe the soldiers' heroism in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds, and invite the players to describe the characters' own actions (whether heroic or dedicated solely to self-preservation) during the pitched battle.

Have Radaga appear from time to time as well, lending spellcasting assistance in the fight. (If it isn't obvious to the characters that trying to cross Falkovnia on the night of the new moon is a bad idea, Radaga makes it clear that she'll flee with them at dawn, but not before.)

Unfortunately, the fear of the rank-and-file soldiers combines with the bestial bravado of Horstman's primal guardians, so that the siege is rife with foolish decisions and tactical errors. Roll a few times on the Only Bad Decisions table and sprinkle some results into the description of the battle.

## ONLY BAD DECISIONS

### d6 Tactical Failure

- 1 Shouts of panic can be heard from the front gate. "Let us in!" A young officer bites their lip in contemplation before finally ordering the gate open. Two bloody soldiers push their way through the gate into the village—followed by a dozen zombies.
- 2 An archer draws back a flaming arrow but is bumped from behind by another. The arrow flies astray into a nearby building, setting the thatched roof ablaze.
- 3 A sergeant overseeing a lull in the fighting on the east side of the village orders troops to reinforce the western flank. But only moments after those troops leave, a surge of zombies slams against the wall—splitting it open and spilling undead into the area.
- 4 Two young children acting as couriers run through the fighting with a barrel full of arrows. One of them trips on the body of a slain soldier and falls—sending the barrel to the ground and the arrows all over the place.
- 5 A group of soldiers look to an officer for orders as they fight, but the officer is paralyzed with fear. One by one, the soldiers fall, waiting for orders that never come.
- 6 A ranking sergeant—obviously drunk—stumbles out of a nearby tent singing a song about heroic deaths as their terrified subordinates stare.

### EXTENDING PLAY

To leave Falkovnia and return Radaga to Dementlieu, the characters must have the Mist talisman given to them by Kabe Whippoorwill in their possession. If you wish to extend the play experience of this adventure, Horstman might try to relieve the characters of the mask, either by force (if they're imprisoned) or subterfuge. (For example, he might offer them a "secure" place to leave their belongings while the characters are assisting Radaga in part 2 of the adventure). The characters might be forced to find and reclaim the talisman from Horstman's clutches in the midst of the siege!

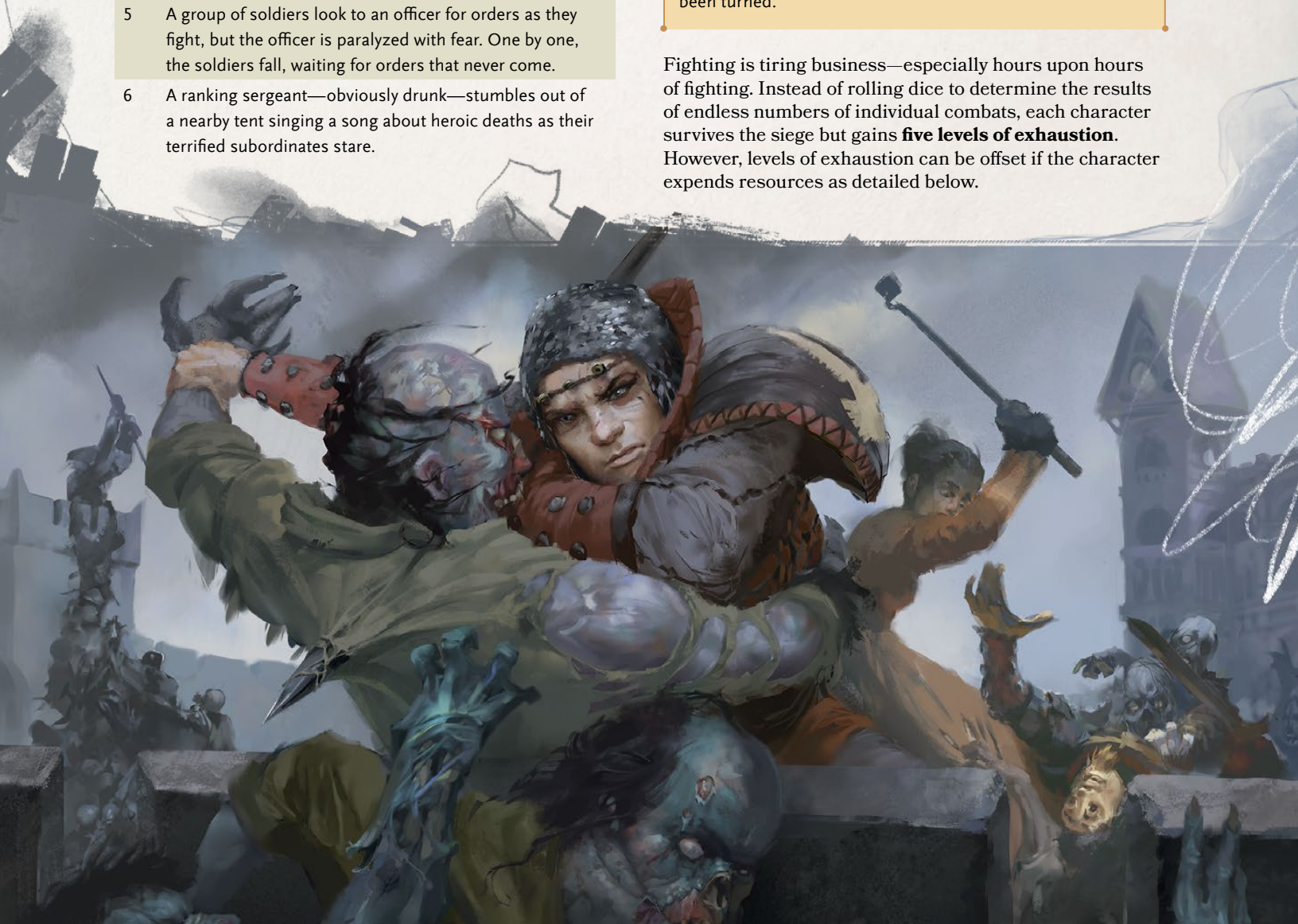
## A LONG BATTLE

After eight hours of pitched fighting, the siege breaks with the rising of the sun.

The sun's rays creep over the tips of the trees as the last of the zombies fall. Many of the weary soldiers and laborers of Morfenzi are barely able to raise their swords and shields in triumph before collapsing to the ground, giving in finally to exhaustion.

Dead Falkovnians and gutted zombies are scattered far and wide. Morfenzi's fortifications lay in tatters. But thanks to the power of Horstman's primal serum, the tide has been turned.

Fighting is tiring business—especially hours upon hours of fighting. Instead of rolling dice to determine the results of endless numbers of individual combats, each character survives the siege but gains **five levels of exhaustion**. However, levels of exhaustion can be offset if the character expends resources as detailed below.





Make sure the players understand that there may be more challenges coming in the adventure, so that they can decide how best to balance the effects of exhaustion with the loss of resources. Unless otherwise specified, each option can be used only once by each character.

**Damage.** A character can take damage equal to one roll of their largest hit die. This damage can't be reduced.

**Hit Dice.** A character can spend one of their largest hit dice, gaining no benefit from it.

**Inspiration.** A character can expend inspiration.

**Spell Slots.** A character can expend a spell slot, reducing the number of levels of exhaustion gained by an amount equal to the level of the expended spell slot.

**Racial Traits or Class Features.** A character can expend all uses of a trait or class feature whose uses are regained after a long or short rest. The trait or feature can't be used again until the character regains its full use as normal. (This option can be used more than once, but not for the same trait or feature.)

#### EXAMPLE: ABSTRACTING THE SIEGE

Grig the Sorcerer has spent all night fighting and now risks gaining five levels of exhaustion. Instead, she chooses to spend her unused inspiration, expends a 2nd-level spell slot, and all of her sorcery points. Instead of five levels of exhaustion, though, she gains only one, avoiding one level for the inspiration, two more for the 2nd-level spell slot, and a fourth for her Sorcery Points class feature. If she had also chosen to take damage or spend a hit die, she would have gained no levels of exhaustion.

## HORSTMAN'S THANKS

When the players have decided how their characters dealt with the ordeal, the characters can seek out Radaga and prepare to quietly leave. However, before they have a chance to get out of Morfenzi, read or paraphrase the following:

Vjorn Horstman emerges from a nearby field tent, flanked by four hulking guards. His attention is fixed on his assistant—as if he's guessed at her plans.

"Surely, you're not leaving so soon, Radaga? There's still much work to be done," Horstman says. "And as for your friends, the fighting skill I observed during the siege will make them instrumental to rebuilding Morfenzi. Seize them!"

The guards flanking Horstman draw weapons and move toward you, but Radaga interposes herself—spreading her arms wide and uttering a word of dark power. In response, a wall of purple-and-black smoke erupts before her, obscuring the guards who shout out in alarm and anger.

"The gates are still down," she says between clenched teeth. "Run, and I will follow!"

Any character with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 13 or higher notices that Radaga's eyes flare with a red light as she weaves her magic.

## FLIGHT FROM MORFENZI

The characters must flee Morfenzi with Vjorn Horstman's primal guardians close on their heels. This final part of the adventure is a chase scene. See chapter 8 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for rules on running a chase.

### NPC INFORMATION

After a few moments, Radaga appears among the fleeing characters in a cloud of purple-and-black smoke. She uses the **mage** stat block and has a number of special features on display during this adventure. Three human **veterans** with the additional features from the "Horstman's Primal Guardians" sidebar are in close pursuit. If they are slain, another two human **veterans** with the same additional features join the chase at the start of the following round.

### BEGINNING THE CHASE

Radaga's diversion gives the characters a 1-round head start. The chase begins as the veterans, Radaga, and the characters each roll initiative. During the chase, keep the following things in mind.

**Dash.** Considering the exhausting fight that the characters are still recovering from, their use of the Dash action should be considered carefully. Make sure the characters know that they'll gain further levels of exhaustion if they use Dash extensively to double their speed.

**Seeking Cover.** The forest around Morfenzi is lightly wooded, but the veterans spread out as they pursue the characters, making it difficult for everyone to find effective cover. To make matters worse, the forest is eerily silent. Every snap of a twig or clatter of upset stone is shockingly loud.

**Radaga.** Once per round on her turn, Radaga can teleport one willing creature 30 feet. She can use this action only three times, so she reserves it to assist characters who have fallen or whose speed is impeded by exhaustion.

### ADJUSTING THE SCENE

Consider the following suggestions for adjusting this scene depending on the relative combat strength of the party (see "Appendix D: Dungeon Master Tips").

**Weak:** Replace all the **veterans** with **thugs**. If the thugs are slain, more thugs pick up the chase.

**Strong:** Add one **veteran**.

### CHASE COMPLICATIONS

Each participant in the chase rolls a d20 at the end of their turn and consults the table below. If a complication occurs, it affects the next participant in the chase—not the participant who rolled the die. Either the participant who rolled the die or the participant affected by the complication can expend their inspiration to negate the complication. At your discretion, characters can create their own complications to shake off pursuers.

## FALKOVNIAN CHASE COMPLICATIONS

d20	Complication
1	The character's path takes them through a rough patch of brush, forcing them to make a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check (the character's choice) to get past. On a failed check, the brush counts as 5 feet of difficult terrain.
2	Uneven ground threatens to slow the character's progress, requiring a DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to navigate the area. On a failed check, the ground counts as 10 feet of difficult terrain.
3	The character runs through a swarm of insects (see the <i>Monster Manual</i> ; you choose the type of insects). The swarm makes an attack against the character: +3 to hit; 4d4 piercing damage on a hit.
4	A stream, ravine, or rock bed blocks the character's path, requiring a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check (the character's choice) to cross. On a failed check, the impediment counts as 10 feet of difficult terrain.
5	A zombie stumbles out from behind a copse of trees. It slams the character (+3 to hit; 4 bludgeoning damage on a hit), then joins the chase.
6	The character blunders into a hunter's snare and must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw to avoid it. On a failed save, the character is caught in a net and restrained. See the <i>Player's Handbook</i> for rules on escaping a net.
7	A sudden drop catches the character by surprise, requiring a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw to safely jump it. On a failed save, the character falls 1d4 × 5 feet, takes 1d6 bludgeoning damage per 10 feet fallen, and lands prone.
8	The character is caught in a stampede of spooked animals and must make a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw to move through them. On a failed save, the character is knocked about and takes 1d4 bludgeoning damage and 1d4 piercing damage.
9	One of the pursuing soldiers fires a heavy crossbow at the character: +3 to hit; 6 piercing damage on a hit.
10–20	No complication.

## ENDING THE CHASE

The chase ends if all the characters manage to hide from the veterans, if all the characters are more than 120 feet away from the veterans at the end of a round, or if they all enter the Mists—which are just over a mile away. It's unlikely that the chase will span the distance between Morfenzi and the Mists, but it's absolutely an option for narrating the characters' escape if things look particularly dire. Fearing undead, the guards refuse to venture within the Mists.

Characters who drop to 0 hit points and are left behind by their comrades are returned to Morfenzi, where they are stripped of any valuables and impaled upon the stakes that line the road to Lekar. Vjorn won't suffer them the opportunity to escape a second time.

## WRAP-UP

Provided that Radaga, one of the characters, and the Mist talisman make it into the Mists, surviving characters are able to successfully use the talisman to return the scholar to Alanik Ray in Dementlieu.

Alanik and Kabe are both grateful that the characters have succeeded in their mission. The characters are invited to enjoy the full extent of Alanik's hospitality while they rest up and recover from their ordeal.

## INVESTIGATION JOURNAL

Provide each player with a copy of the Investigation Journal (handout 1). Before the session is over, each player must choose which of the items found during the adventure they'd like to keep, and line out others.



# DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The following NPCs feature prominently in this adventure.

## RADAGA

*Human scholar of the Dark Powers*

The object of the Order of the Guardians' search, Radaga (ruh-DAH-guh) is a scholar and arcanist who has delved far into the nature of the Dark Powers—some say a bit too far. She is brilliant but obsessive in her desire to catalogue all things sinister—and more than a bit possessive of her knowledge. Radaga has olive skin and dark hair.

Though there's no means by which the characters are able to discern it, Radaga is possessed by an unknown entity during this adventure.

**What They Want.** Horstman has provided ample resources to assist in Radaga's research into the borders of the various domains of Ravenloft—and she plans on taking advantage of his generosity.

**Yearning for Freedom.** Though she won't admit it, Radaga yearns for freedom—not only from the domain of Falkovnia, but from Ravenloft. This serves as the primary motivation for her research.

## TALON LIEUTENANT CORXENYA VANT

*Half-elf soldier*

Corxenia (core-SHEN-yuh) is brutally no-nonsense, and suffers neither questioning nor disobeying of her orders. She lost her left arm below the elbow ten years ago, and fights now with a specially fitted blade. Though just shy of thirty years of age, her hair has gone to gray from the horrors she has witnessed.

**What They Want.** Corxenia considers her position as one of safe-guarding her people, and she treats that position as a high honor. Anyone who lacks the same devotion to Lekar is a coward in her view.

**My Way or the Highway.** Corxenia doesn't tolerate cowardice. Those unwilling to defend Lekar are taken outside the city and impaled upon one of the wooden stakes that line the road.

## VJORN HORSTMAN

*Human arcanist and scientist*

Vjorn Horstman (vuh-YORN HORST-man) commands the outpost at Morfenzi, and the intense pace of the work he directs here—added to the traumas inflicted by Falkovnia's war against the undead—has begun to show. He is cruel, paranoid, wholly obsessed with perfecting the ultimate weapon against the undead—and so close to accomplishing his goal. His focus on work has him teetering on the edge of starvation, combining with his sparse gray hair to lend him a harrowing appearance.

**What They Want.** Horstman is close to perfecting his primal serum, and won't stop until he is done. Anyone who would stand in his way is an enemy to the people of Falkovnia—and everyone knows what happens to enemies of Falkovnia.

**Lost Humanity.** Horstman ran out of eager subjects for his experiments some time ago. While those who volunteer now typically consent to the treatment, this is largely due to Horstman's willingness to lie about its potential risks. It makes no difference, to him. The ends more than justify the means.



# CREATURE STATISTICS

## BONELESS

Medium undead

**Armor Class** 12

**Hit Points** 26 (4d8 + 8)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	1 (-5)	10 (+0)	1 (-5)

**Skills** Stealth +4

**Damage Vulnerabilities** bludgeoning, poison

**Condition Immunities** charmed, exhaustion, frightened

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

**Languages** understands all languages it knew in life but can't speak

**Challenge** 1 (100 XP)

**Proficiency Bonus** +2

**Compression.** The boneless can move through any opening at least 1 inch wide without squeezing. It can also squeeze to fit into a space that a Tiny creature could fit in.

**Unusual Nature.** The boneless doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The boneless makes two Slam attacks. If both attacks hit a Large or smaller creature, the creature is grappled (escape DC 13), and the boneless can use Crushing Embrace.

**Slam.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

**Crushing Embrace.** The boneless wraps its body around a Large or smaller creature grappled by it. While the boneless is attached, the target is blinded and is unable to breathe. The target must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw at the start of each of the boneless' turns or take 5 (1d4 + 3) bludgeoning damage. If something moves the target, the boneless moves with it. The boneless can detach itself by spending 5 feet of its movement. A creature, including the target, can use its action to try to detach the boneless and force it to move into the nearest unoccupied space, doing so with a successful DC 13 Strength check. When the boneless dies, it detaches from any creature it is attached to.

## GUARD

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

**Armor Class** 16 (chain shirt, shield)

**Hit Points** 11 (2d8 + 2)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

**Skills** Perception +2

**Senses** passive Perception 12

**Languages** any one language (usually Common)

**Challenge** 1/8 (25 XP)

### ACTIONS

**Spearm.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) piercing damage.

## KNIGHT

Medium humanoid (any race)

**Armor Class** 18 (plate)

**Hit Points** 52 (8d8 + 16)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	11 (+0)	15 (+2)

**Saving Throws** Con +4, Wis +2

**Senses** passive Perception 10

**Languages** any one language (usually Common)

**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

**Proficiency Bonus** +2

**Brave.** The knight has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The knight makes two melee attacks.

**Greatsword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage.

**Heavy Crossbow.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d10) piercing damage.

**Leadership (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest).** For 1 minute, the knight can utter a special command or warning whenever a nonhostile creature that it can see within 30 feet of it makes an attack roll or a saving throw. The creature can add a d4 to its roll provided it can hear and understand the knight. A creature can benefit from only one Leadership die at a time. This effect ends if the knight is incapacitated.

### REACTIONS

**Parry.** The knight adds 2 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the knight must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

## OGRE ZOMBIE

Large undead, neutral evil

**Armor Class** 8

**Hit Points** 85 (9d10+36)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	6 (-2)	18 (+4)	3 (-4)	6 (-2)	5 (-3)

**Saving Throws** Wis +0

**Damage Immunities** poison

**Condition Immunities** poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

**Languages** understands Giant and Common but can't speak

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

### ACTIONS

**Morningstar.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

## SKELETON

Medium undead

**Armor Class** 13 (armor scraps)

**Hit Points** 13 (2d8 + 4)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	6 (-2)	8 (-1)	5 (-3)

**Damage Vulnerabilities** bludgeoning

**Damage Immunities** poison

**Condition Immunities** exhaustion, poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

**Languages** understands all languages it knew in life but can't speak

**Challenge** 1/4 (50 XP)

**Proficiency Bonus** +2

### ACTIONS

**Shortsword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

**Shortbow.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

## STRAHD ZOMBIE

Medium undead

**Armor Class** 8

**Hit Points** 30 (4d8 + 12)

**Speed** 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	6 (-2)	16 (+3)	3 (-4)	6 (-2)	5 (-3)

**Saving Throws** Wis +0

**Damage Immunities** poison

**Condition Immunities** poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

**Languages** understands Common but can't speak

**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)

**Proficiency Bonus** +2

**Loathsome Limbs** Whenever the zombie takes at least 5 bludgeoning or slashing damage at one time, roll a d20 to determine what else happens to it:

**1 – 8:** One leg is severed from the zombie if it has any legs left.

**9 – 16:** One arm is severed from the zombie if it has any arms left.

**17 – 20:** The zombie is decapitated.

If the zombie is reduced to 0 hit points, all parts of it die. Until then, a severed part acts on the zombie's initiative and has its own action and movement. A severed part has AC 8. Any damage it takes is subtracted from the zombie's hit points.

- A severed leg is unable to attack and has a speed of 5 feet.
- A severed arm has a speed of 5 feet and can make one claw attack on its turn, with disadvantage on the attack roll. Each time the zombie loses an arm, it loses a claw attack.
- If the head is severed, the zombie loses its bite attack and its body is blinded unless the head can see it. The severed head has a speed of 0 feet. It can make a bite attack, but only against a target in its space.
- The zombie's speed is halved if it's missing a leg. If it loses both legs, it falls prone. If it has both arms, it can crawl. With only one arm, it can still crawl, but its speed is halved. With no arms or legs, its speed is 0 feet, and can't benefit from bonuses to speed.

### ACTIONS

**Multiaction.** The zombie makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) piercing damage.

**Claw.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) bludgeoning damage.

## SWARM OF ZOMBIE LIMBS

Large swarm of Medium undead

**Armor Class** 10

**Hit Points** 22 (5d8)

**Speed** 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	3 (-4)	8 (-1)	5 (-3)

**Damage Resistances** bludgeoning, piercing, slashing

**Damage Immunities** poison

**Condition Immunities** charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, stunned

**Senses** blindsight 30 ft., passive Perception 9

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)

**Proficiency Bonus** +2

**Swarm.** The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a tiny limb. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

**Unusual Nature.** The swarm doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The swarm makes one Undead Mass attack and one Grasping limbs attack.

**Undead Mass.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 0 ft., one target in the swarm's space. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage, or 4 (1d4 + 2) bludgeoning damage if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer.

**Grasping Limbs.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 0 ft., one creature in the swarm's space. *Hit:* 7 (2d6) necrotic damage, and the creature must succeed on a DC 12 Strength saving throw or be restrained. The creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, taking 7 (2d6) necrotic damage on a failed save. The creature is freed if it succeeds on this saving throw, the swarm moves out of the creature's space, or the swarm dies.

## SPY

Medium humanoid (any race)

**Armor Class** 12

**Hit Points** 27 (6d8)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)

**Skills** Deception +5, Insight +4, Investigation +5, Perception +6, Persuasion +5, Sleight of Hand +4, Stealth +4

**Senses** passive Perception 16

**Languages** any two languages

**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)

**Proficiency Bonus** +2

**Cunning Action.** On each of its turns, the spy can use a bonus action to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

**Sneak Attack (1/Turn).** The spy deals an extra 7 (2d6) damage when it hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of the spy that isn't incapacitated and the spy doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The spy makes two melee attacks.

**Shortsword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

**Hand Crossbow.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

## THUG

Medium humanoid (any race)

**Armor Class** 11 (leather armor)

**Hit Points** 32 (5d8 + 10)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)

**Skills** Intimidation +2

**Senses** passive Perception 10

**Languages** any one language (usually Common)

**Challenge** 1/2 (100 XP)

**Pack Tactics.** The thug has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the thug's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The thug makes two melee attacks.

**Mace.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

**Heavy Crossbow.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d10) piercing damage.

## VETERAN

Medium humanoid (any race)

**Armor Class** 17 (splint)  
**Hit Points** 58 (9d8 + 18)  
**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

**Skills** Athletics +5, Perception +2  
**Senses** passive Perception 12  
**Languages** any one language (usually Common)  
**Challenge** 3 (700 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The veteran makes two longsword attacks. If it has a shortsword drawn, it can also make a shortsword attack.

**Longsword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage, or 8 (1d10 + 3) slashing damage if used with two hands.

**Shortsword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

**Heavy Crossbow.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d10) piercing damage.

## VJORN HORSTMAN

Medium humanoid (human)

**Armor Class** 10  
**Hit Points** 49 (9d8 + 9)  
**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)

**Saving Throws** Int +5, Wis +3  
**Skills** Arcana +5, Deception +4, History +5, Medicine +5  
**Senses** passive Perception 10  
**Languages** Common, Draconic  
**Challenge** 4 (1,100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

**Spellcasting.** Vjorn is a 9th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spells). He has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *acid splash*,\* *minor illusion*, *shocking grasp*\*

1st level (4 slots): *detect magic*, *disguise self*, *magic missile*\*

2nd level (3 slots): *invisibility*, *levitate*, *phantasmal force*

3rd level (3 slots): *fireball*, *sending*, *slow*

4th level (3 slots): *arcane eye*, *confusion*

5th level (1 slot): *animate objects*

\*See "Actions" below.

### ACTIONS

**Shocking Grasp (Cantrip).** *Melee Spell Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature (the attack roll has advantage if the target is wearing armor made of metal). *Hit:* 9 (2d8) lightning damage, and the target can't take reactions until the start of his next turn.

**Acid Splash (Cantrip).** Vjorn hurls a bubble of acid at one creature he can see within 60 feet of it, or at two such creatures that are within 5 feet of each other. A target must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or take 7 (2d6) acid damage.

**Magic Missile (1st-Level Spell; Requires a Spell Slot).** Vjorn creates three darts of magical force. Each dart unerringly strikes one creature Vjorn can see within 120 feet of it, dealing 3 (1d4 + 1) force damage. If Vjorn casts this spell using a 2nd-level spell slot, he creates one more dart.

## ZOMBIE

Medium undead

**Armor Class** 8

**Hit Points** 22 (3d8 + 9)

**Speed** 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	6 (-2)	16 (+3)	3 (-4)	6 (-2)	5 (-3)

**Saving Throws** Wis +0

**Damage Immunities** poison

**Condition Immunities** poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

**Languages** understands the languages it knew in life but can't speak

**Challenge** 1/4 (50 XP)

**Proficiency Bonus** +2

**Undead Fortitude.** If damage reduces the zombie to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, the zombie drops to 1 hit point instead.

### ACTIONS

**Slam.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

*Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) bludgeoning damage.

### TALON ZOMBIES

These undead soldiers still wear their uniforms and chain mail armor, increasing their AC to 16. A Talon zombie is stronger than a regular zombie with a Strength of 16 (+3), improving its longsword attack: +5 to hit; 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage on a hit. A Talon Zombie is CR 1.



# HANDOUT 1: INVESTIGATION JOURNAL

What a tremendously exciting journey! Faced with threat of impalement, you nevertheless summoned the grit to brave the zombie infested wilds of the Falkovnian countryside in pursuit of the only lead we had on the missing scholar, Radaga. Kudos to you!

At the outpost of Morfenzi, I understand that you encountered the foul arcanist, Vjorn Horstman. While I would spare you the trauma of having to relive the finer details of the horrors that unfolded that evening, the outpost was swarmed by the undead—as it is on the eve of every new moon.

With Radaga in tow, you escaped to the misty borders, with Horstman's foul experiments in pursuit!

There are no words that can express the gratitude that Kabe and I feel.

Yours in reason,

Alanik Ray

PS: As usual, the item that you found along the way is safe and sound at my chateau. Radaga has taken an interest in it and will let you know if she learns anything...unforward...about it.

Choose one item from the list below by checking the box next to it.

- Potion of fire breath
- Spell scroll of daylight
- Doomseers lenses\*

\*Doomseers lenses function as *goggles of night* which are found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. These lenses are set into a mask fashioned of various pieces of tanned humanoid flesh, stitched together with coarse twine. If you are frightened at the start of your turn, you must succeed on a DC 11 Wisdom saving throw or be incapacitated until the start of your next turn as visions of countless undead creatures swarm around you.

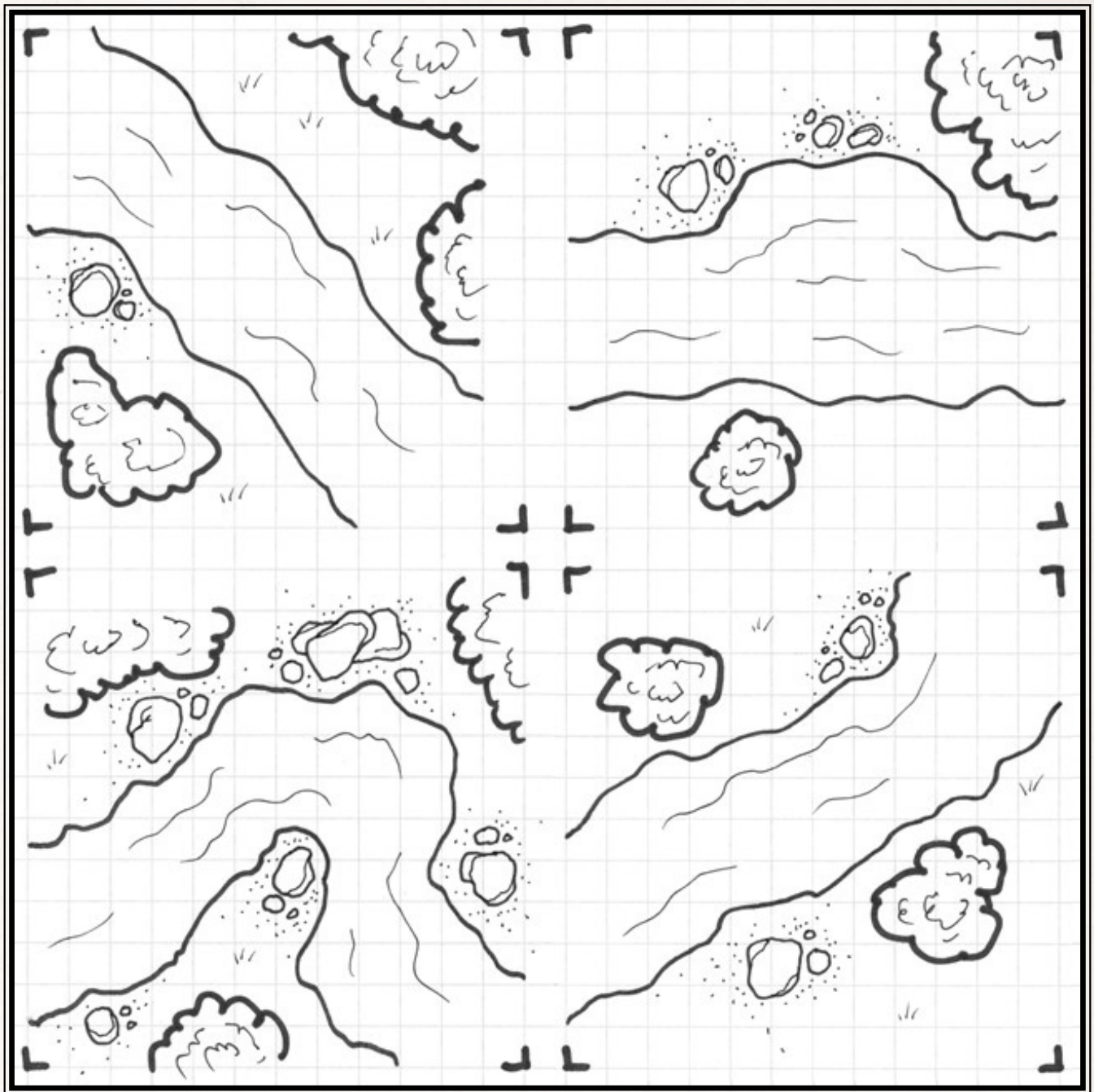
# APPENDIX A. MISTY VISIONS

This adventure begins with the characters traversing the horrors of the misty borders of the various Domains of Dread. When instructed, roll on the table. If time permits, roll once for each character. Otherwise, roll once for the entire group. These effects end when the character leaves the domain.

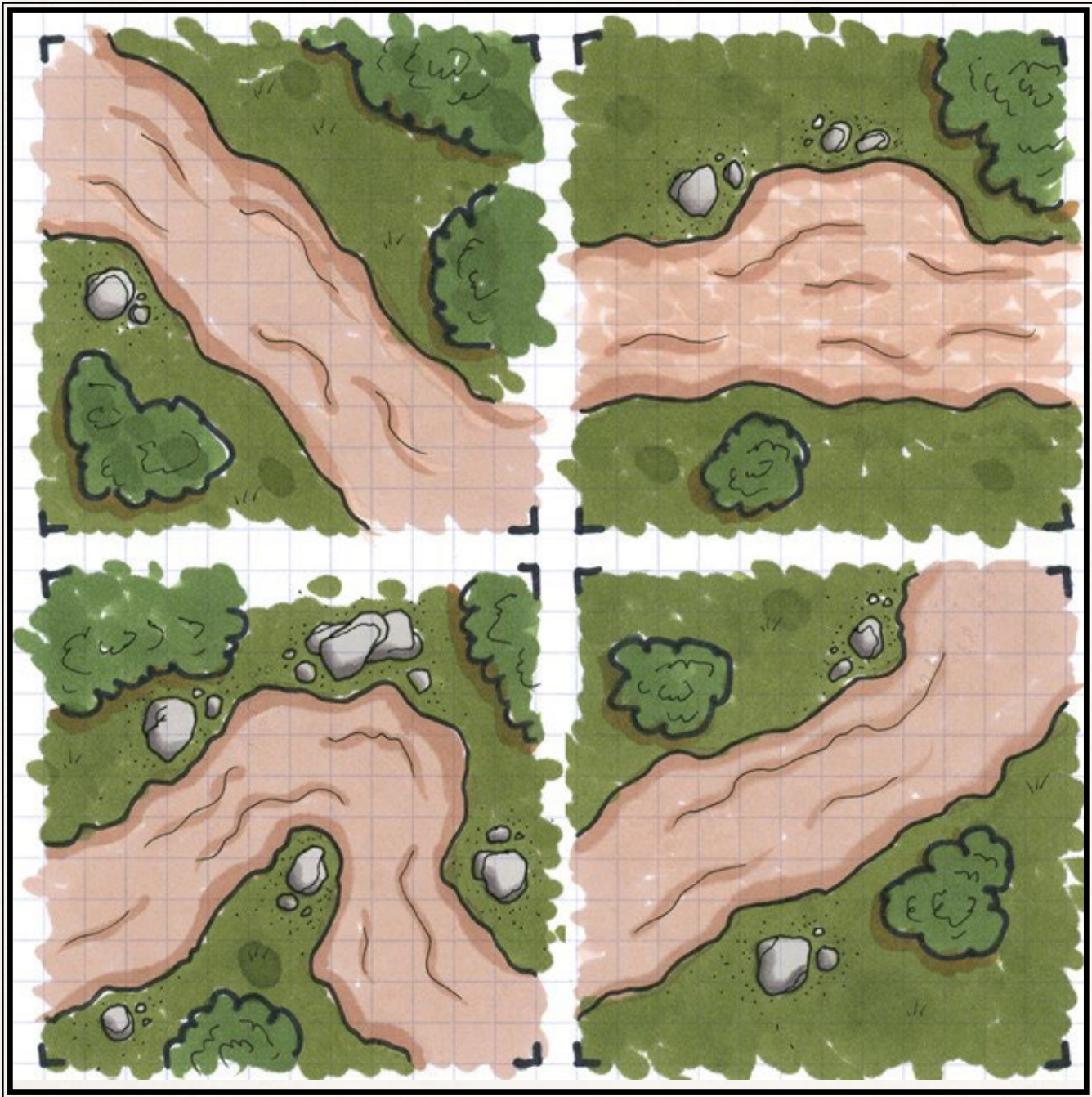
## MISTY VISIONS

d20	Vision	Effect
1	Dark, malevolent shadows flit around you, moving within the mists just beyond your sight.	You have disadvantage on initiative checks.
2	Thick, thorny vines erupt from the ground and grasp at your limbs—threatening to pull you into the clammy ground.	You have disadvantage on checks made to escape a grapple or end the restrained condition.
3	You hear the screams of friends and family crying out in fear and agony, but can't find them, despite your best efforts.	You have disadvantage on saving throws against being frightened.
4	The ground becomes wet with black, sticky mud (or is it blood?)—at first ankle-deep, then up to the knees . . .	You must spend an extra foot of movement for each foot spent moving through difficult terrain.
5	Countless clawed skeletons swarm you, clawing at your flesh and clothing.	You gain vulnerability to slashing damage.
6	You bump into a stone grave marker. Examining it closer, you see your own name engraved in its surface.	You have disadvantage on death saving throws.
7	The stench of rotting flesh fills your nostrils. Glancing at yourself, you see dark spots of decay covering your flesh.	You gain vulnerability to necrotic damage.
8	After a moment's distraction, and looking back, you find yourself in the Mists alone until you arrive at your destination.	You have disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks made to notice hidden creatures and objects.
9	You see a small child in the Mists ahead of you—coaxing you deeper into the mists. After finally catching up with them, you find nothing but a cornhusk doll.	You have disadvantage on Wisdom (Insight) checks.
10	The Mists turn into a thick, noxious miasma that burns your eyes and throat—threatening to suffocate you.	You have disadvantage on saving throws against poison.
11	Your deepest fear manifests before your eyes.	If you fail a saving throw against being frightened, you're also blinded until the end of your next turn.
12	A bone-chilling wind fills the area—driving the warmth from you and sending your body into tremors.	You have disadvantage on Dexterity checks made to accomplish tasks that require fine motor skills.
13	The Mists coalesce into a tall, dense hedge maze that seems to go on forever, and you pass the same landmarks repeatedly.	You have disadvantage on Wisdom (Survival) checks made to navigate or to discern your location.
14	You encounter a group of terrified adventurers who attack you with a rusted dagger before fleeing back into the Mists.	You take slashing damage equal to a roll of your largest Hit Die.
15	An incorporeal undead creature manifests in front of you and passes through you—driving your strength away.	You have disadvantage on Strength (Athletics) checks.
16	One of your teeth loosens and falls out. One by one, more fall out and crumble away into fine, white powder.	Your anxiety imposes disadvantage on Charisma (Persuasion) checks made to positively influence people.
17	You run from beastly shadows in the night. Your heart pounds at every snarl, hiss, and howl, feeling their breath on your heels as they catch up.	Your nervous memories of the vision give you disadvantage on Wisdom (Animal Handling) checks made to positively influence animals.
18	Everything around you withers and decays before your eyes.	If you roll a natural 1 on an attack roll made with a nonmagical weapon, the weapon breaks and becomes unusable.
19	You find yourself in a library behind your closest loved ones as they turn to you, all faceless. You open nearby books to find the answers to help them, but all their pages are blank.	You have disadvantage on Intelligence (History) checks involving the recollection of lore.
20	You breathe and your lungs fill with the Mists. It flows through your body, weighing you down and weakening you.	You have disadvantage on Constitution saving throws to maintain concentration on spells.

# APPENDIX B: FALKOVNIAN COUNTRYSIDE MAPS (B&W)



# APPENDIX C: FALKOVNIAN COUNTRYSIDE MAPS (COLOR)



# APPENDIX D: DUNGEON MASTER TIPS

To run this adventure as a DM, you must have three, four, or five players, each with their own character within the adventure's level range (see the "Adventure Primer" section at the start of the adventure).

## NEW TO D&D ADVENTURERS LEAGUE?

Information about the Adventurers League, including finding places to play, organizing events, and a list of supporting resources and documents, can be found here: [https://dnd.wizards.com/ddal\\_general](https://dnd.wizards.com/ddal_general)

## PREPARING THE ADVENTURE

Before you start play, consider the following:

- Read through the adventure, taking notes of anything you'd like to highlight or remind yourself of while running it, such as a way you'd like to portray an NPC or a tactic you'd like to use during combat. Familiarize yourself with the adventure's appendixes and handouts.
- Gather any resources you'd like to use to aid you in running the adventure, such as notecards, a DM screen, miniatures, and battle maps.
- Ask the players to provide you with relevant character information, such as name, race, class, and level; passive Wisdom (Perception) score; and anything the adventure specifies as notable (such as backgrounds and story awards).

Players can play an adventure they previously played as a player or ran as a DM, but they can do so only once with a specific character. Ensure each player has their character's adventure logsheet (if not, get one from the organizer) with their starting values for level, magic items, gold, and downtime days. These values are updated at the conclusion of the session. The adventure information and your information are also added at the end of the session—whether the character completed the adventure or not.

Each player is responsible for maintaining an accurate logsheet. If you have time, you can do a quick scan of a player's character sheet to ensure nothing looks out of order. If you see magic items of very high rarities or strange arrays of ability scores, you can ask players to provide documentation for the irregularities. If they can't, feel free to restrict item use or ask them to use a standard ability score array.

Point players to the *D&D Adventurers League Players Guide* for reference. If players wish to spend downtime days and it's the beginning of an adventure or episode, they can declare their activity and spend the days immediately, or they can do so at the end of the adventure or episode. Players should select their characters' spells and other daily options prior to the start of the adventure unless the adventure specifies otherwise. Feel free to reread the adventure description to help give the players hints about what they might face.

## NEW PLAYERS? NO PROBLEM!

With starter adventures like this one, it's possible you might have players new to D&D, or new to fifth edition D&D. As the DM, it's up to you to ensure these players have fun with the game, and that they learn the basics of how to play. At this level, having fun is more important than learning every rule exactly right. Be gentle with new players who make mistakes.

Make sure to keep your players smiling and rolling dice. Be positive and enthusiastic when describing the action, and you'll notice the players will quickly follow suit.

If you're a new DM, then welcome—and thank you! New DMs are the lifeblood of the D&D community. To help you run your game, some adventures include sidebars like this one that provide an explanation of the game's rules as they're used in the adventure.

## ADJUSTING THIS ADVENTURE

To determine whether you should consider adjusting the adventure, assess the **party strength** by consulting the table below.

### DETERMINING PARTY STRENGTH

Party Composition	Party Strength
Three characters	Weak
Four characters	Average
Five characters	Strong

## SAFETY TOOLS

Safety tools help ensure players aren't pushed beyond their comfort levels. These tools let your players know you want them to have a positive experience. Some common safety tools are provided below, each with a summary of how they work. An [article about one such safety kit](#) is provided to help with further information. Ensure that you discuss these tools with your players before the game:

- **Code of Conduct.** This is a group agreement for play. It outlines desired and prohibited behaviors, confidential reporting, and possible consequences.
- **Pregame and Postgame Discussions.** Use time before the game to explain content warnings, set boundaries, and collaborate on a safety plan. Then decompress and discuss improvements at the end of the game.
- **Be Welcoming.** Welcome and encourage respectful and open conversations about issues as they arise. Show that you're listening by avoiding defensive responses.
- **Confidentiality.** Provide contact information for private and confidential conversations between players and DM. Only disclose another player's name if that player gave unpressured permission for you to do so.
- **Safety Tools.** Learn about the safety tools that TTRPG community members have created and compiled. A broad range of such safety tools are available for you and your players online, or you can get more information by reaching out to your event organizer or [community@dndadventurersleague.org](mailto:community@dndadventurersleague.org).