

# Ravenloft®

Official Game Adventure

## Circle of Darkness



# CIRCLE OF DARKNESS

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# INTRODUCTION



*What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow*

*Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,  
You cannot say, or guess,  
for you know only  
A heap of broken images,  
where the sun beats  
And the dead tree gives  
no shelter, the cricket  
no relief,  
And the dry stone no  
sound of water. Only  
There is shadow under  
this red rock,*

*Come in under the shadow of this red rock, and  
I will show you something different from either  
Your shadow at morning, striding behind you  
Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;  
I will show you fear in a handful of dust.*

— T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*

Huddled on the blasted outlands, forsaken mongrelmen howl their anguish into the devouring wind, while in the desperate city the zealous worshippers of the beast-god Zhakata starve and die willingly. Yet, hidden in whispers and shadows is a flickering flame of hope, a dark circle of conspirators plots to overthrow the wicked high priest by using a secret from his past. What the rebels of the Circle of Darkness fail to recognize is that sometimes the evil one knows is far, far better than an evil one only suspects.

Strangers in this grim and starving land, the heroes must decide which of two evils they should support. Or is there yet another solution hidden within the folds of this tapestry of deceit? How does one survive when starvation is a virtue, raising food is heresy, betrayal to the Inquisition is a part of daily life, and one is unsure of whether Yagno Petrovna, is really a friend or a foe?

## For the Dungeon Master

**C**ircle of Darkness is an adventure for four to six heroes of levels 6 to 8. This party may contain any combination of character classes, though spellcasters—especially priests able to

cast spells such as *create food and water*—will prove invaluable.

The Dungeon Master (DM) will find these other products useful in developing further adventures in the land of G'Henna: *RAVENLOFT® Campaign Setting* presents information on the special rules for the Demiplane of Dread. The *Monstrous Manual™* and the *RAVENLOFT and PLANESCAPE™* appendices of the *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM®* provide further details on the monsters encountered in this adventure.

*Circle of Darkness* relies in part on information presented in *Van Richten's Guide to Fiends*. While this product is not necessary to play this adventure, the DM will find useful information and ideas on how to handle fiends.

## Fear and Horror Checks

**F**ear and horror checks are devices used to encourage a hero's role playing response to a frightening or horrifying situation. While the *RAVENLOFT Campaign Setting* presents guidelines for using these devices, it is often better to run an adventure without their use—as long as the players role play their heroes' reactions to horror. If either check is required the player must make a Save vs Paralysis or suffer the effects of Fear or Horror.

**Fear** is the reaction to a physical threat, something that will cause harm to the character. Failure results in the victim dropping items, trying to flee the danger or suffering a -2 penalty if unable to flee.

**Horror** is a revulsion or mental anguish upon encountering horrid secrets, gruesome scenes or dreadfilled obstacles. A Horror check is a Save vs Paralysis. Failure results in a being stunned for 1 round and then reacting randomly — 1: Aversion/avoidance, 2: Revulsion/sickened, 3: Obsession/lost concentration, 4: Senseless rage/violence, 5: Mental shock/stunned, 6: Fearstruck/new phobia.

## Story Background

**E**veryone always thought that Yagno Petrovna was *different*—and they didn't mean it kindly. This spindly, awkward child was born to a

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Barovian family who fled the depredations of Count Strahd von Zarovich. Though intelligent and imaginative, Yagno was a weak and sickly boy from a family proud of their vitality and strength. Despised by his brothers, Yagno turned to his imagination for companionship. His clever mind peopled the woods with hordes of things, fantastic and terrible.

Yagno's descent into madness began one night when his older brother Yoshtoi locked him out of the house, taunting him to "find comfort among the night-monsters" which Yagno claimed lurked in the woods. Hysterical with fear, Yagno found a small cave, where he spent the night shivering in wide-eyed terror, until he fell into an exhausted sleep.

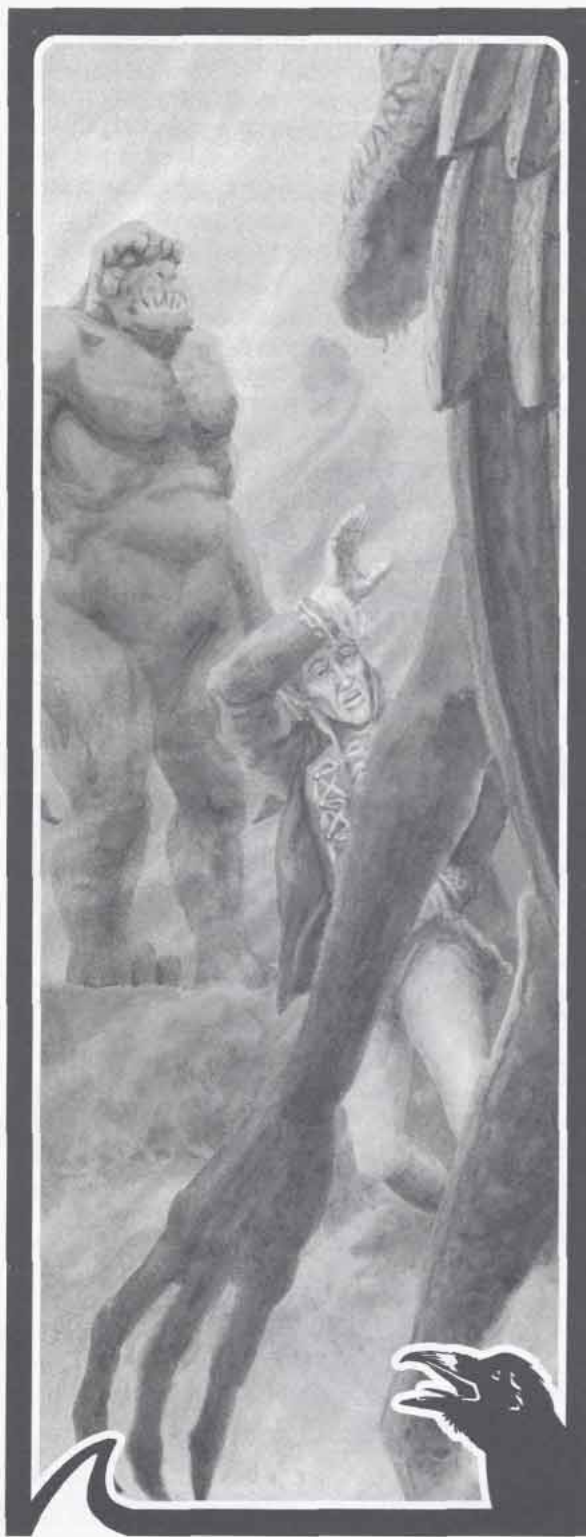
In the morning, he awoke to find the word "Zhakata" scrawled on one wall. He took this as a sign that an arcane power named Zhakata had watched and protected him through the long night. (In truth, it was but a nonsensical code-word between two Vistani brothers.)

To withstand the powers of darkness which haunted the woods, Yagno reasoned, Zhakata must be a great god deserving of Yagno's worship. He had found his calling. He made that cave his first shrine. He was 22 years old.

Yagno's family noticed a change in him at once. He was less fearful and more self-confident, taking long walks alone in the woods, and eagerly discussing some "great god Zhakata" who he had discovered. Although the changes seemed positive at first, his family perceived a frightening coldness to Yagno, and a fanaticism in discussing Zhakata, which created a growing uneasiness over the next five years whenever they were in his presence.

They could never prove that Yagno caused the growing misfortunes of the family, but they suspected Yagno when Yoshtoi was murdered, perhaps as a sacrifice . . . or that there was foul play when the family's oldest retainer, Wladimir vanished . . . or when the shepherd twins, Elessi and Evanda, supposedly committed suicide.

But Yagno went too far when he attempted to sacrifice his sister's son. His family discovered Yagno with ceremonial dagger in his hands. Saving the boy's life by moments, they chased the murderous priest through the woods. Yagno



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ran until he came to the mists at the edges of Barovia and plunged onward . . . to find himself in a new desolate land, decorated with horrific statues raised to Zhakata. The Mists made G'Henna for Yagno.

Yagno is tormented by doubts since seizing rulership. His false faith gnaws at him, making his triumphs meaningless. He knows priests commune with their gods, but Zhakata has never spoken to him, leaving Yagno feeling unworthy. He has spent many nights in fervent prayer, beseeching his god for guidance. He has been met with silence.

Decades ago, this desperation drove him to employ a wizard who claimed that, by using a fragment of Zhakata's high altar, he could call Zhakata to G'Henna. Zhakata's arrival, most believe, would herald an age of prosperity, transforming Zhakata from The Devourer to The Provider. While Yagno eagerly wished the wizard's claim was true, he would not stake his safety upon it. So the summoning could not occur in Zhukar.

In a remote sanctum, the wizard and Yagno strove to contact Zhakata. Only the oldest priests of the temple remember that Yagno returned alone, weary and depressed. Immediately afterwards, Yagno declared that Zhakata had but one aspect, that of the Devourer. Priests assured that worshippers only received enough food to survive, and no more. Preaching that Zhakata would one day return as the Provider became heresy, punishable by death.

In truth, Yagno's wizard succeeded, he summoned a nalfeshnee, a fiend named Malistroi. Mocking Yagno, Malistroi claimed that Zhakata was false and had *never* existed. Yagno fell into a rage. Killing the wizard, he left Malistroi bound in a magical circle. Now the wizard's guardians ward their masters tomb, driving out or slaying intruders.

An other dark secret is hidden by Yagno. The High Altar is the center of his power and is necessary for him to use his most spectacular special powers to awe his troubled worshippers.

The recent isolation of G'Henna from the Core of Ravenloft to one of the floating Islands of Terror has exacerbated Yagno's religious doubts. He fears that Malistroi's taunts are true, that there is no Zhakata. As a result, he is filled with terrible doubts, making him ever more fanatical and

desperate in clinging to his misguided faith. Worst of all, he fears that his own uncertain faith has brought his land to its current precarious state.

Yagno relies on keeping his subjects off balance and uncertain about their future. While his reign brings terror of the Inquisition and charges of heresy, he often disguises his role in the affairs so that he appears to be a beneficent ruler struggling with overwhelming corruption in the priesthood.

In running his temple, Yagno relies on personal ambition and ruthlessness to keep his underlings in check, endlessly setting them against each other with the skill of a chess player. He does not closely supervise the activities of the priests, allowing corruption, greed, and vice to create a balance.

The Inquisition, the arm of the temple responsible for enforcing Zhakata's dogma, is crime-ridden and vicious. The soldiery are faithful to their duties and corrupt only in acting on orders. The resourceful captain tries to temper the priest's corruption with mercy by interpreting intent of commands.

In conjunction with the temple's soldiers, the priests of the Inquisition also supervise the Taking and Dole of Zhakata. The higher level priests and magistrates will withhold food from those who displease them, while extorting money and goods from merchants and oppressing others.

Among those who seek to overthrow the cruel Yagno, they say his inattention to corruption may prove to be his downfall. His chief aid, Rega, angry with the abuse of Zhakata's people and personal graft, has spent years laying the groundwork for Yagno's destruction. Never seen, but said to be hideous, Rega has created a movement to further these goals. This movement, the Circle of Darkness, supports the heresy of Zhakata as possessing a hidden second face, that of the Provider. Armed with this promise of new providence, the agents of the Circle hope to win control of G'Henna and all its people. Of course, first they must assure the return of Zhakata. . . .

## The Domain of G'Henna

**W**renched from the demiplane's core lands during the Grand Conjunction, G'Henna has become an isolated island of terror.

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Due to this isolation, strangers are uncommon. Even the Vistani are rare.

G'Henna forms a rough trapezoid, running 470 miles north to south, 400 miles across its northern border and 275 miles across the southern border. The land is crossed by two major rivers and numerous smaller rivers and creeks which flood in the spring, dry to a thin muddy trickle in the summer, and freeze solid in the winter. These streams provide just enough water for the people to scratch a poor living from the land's rocky soil. The climate is dry and chilly.

The principal city of G'Henna is Zhukar, home to 10,000 people. It is filled with statues of Zhakata. Few are identical, but all depict a large, snarling, half-beast creature atop a pile of bones. Brutality and insatiable hunger appear to be Zhakata's primary qualities.

Zhukar rests on a stony outcropping in the foothills at the heart of G'Henna. Buildings of worship tower above the squallor of the teaming city, and public plazas are the center of devotions

to Zhakata, as well as public stocks and punishment for petty criminals. Rising in the center of the old city is the Great Temple of Zhakata, home to Yagno Petrovna, highpriest and ruler of this land.

North of Zhukar are marginally arable plains, supporting modest crops and small herds of cattle and goats. Farms in this area produce just barely enough to feed the people after Zhakata's Taking.

Linked via the western highroad is the second city of G'Henna. Dervich, is smaller than Zhukar (7,000 citizens), but well populated with Zhakata's priests and merchants who ply their trade with other realms across the Sea of Sorrows in the northwest corner.

To the east of Dervich lies most of the arable land, the Fertile Valley. Farms and private estates dot the windy steppes and industries struggle along the muddy banks of the northern Eel's Flow River and the turgid southern Drogach River. Although little more than a blot of green on the dusty G'Hennan landscape, this



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area provides a singular resource, the grapes for G'Hennan red wine. Those Dervich families who raise the grapes may run their business as they see fit, as long as the temple receives generous donations.

East of the windy steppes the land climbs to the cave-riddled Hotath Mountain Range and the high desert beyond called The Frying Pan. South of the Frying Pan the land falls away to mud flats of the Laughing Terror bounded by River Ichor and Drogach. The western border of G'Henna is guarded by the mountain range of The Blade.

West and south of Zhukar lie the Outlands and Famine's Fastness, inhospitable and mostly empty wastelands where hordes of mongrelmen gather.

There are few natural hazards in G'Henna other than the cruel land itself. Changelings, giant insects and a wolf pack or two are the most formidable predators, confining their hunting primarily to the Outlands. Ghouls and ghosts are not unknown in these regions, lurking in the ruins of long-fallen temples and villages.

Even without dangerous predators and monsters, G'Henna is a difficult place to survive. Starvation aside, the domain is swept by severe windstorms. Travelers must take shelter against these gales, though it is rumored that the mongrelmen seek them out. Further, the harsh sun and lack of trees make sunburn and windburn a perpetual hazard.

In winter, the cold is so harsh that rivers freeze solid and entire herds of cattle die of exposure. Spring brings the worse—floods and mudslides from the mountain thaws, and famine and pestilence as the winter stores come to an end. The people call it the "Season of Zhakata's Banquet." Yagno preaches during this season that the blessed dead feast eternally at Zhakata's side and so will the faithful.

The people are numb and cautious. They have seen so much death that they are hardened to it. They do not name children until they reach the age of six, as many do not survive infancy. Few carry on friendly conversations. No one knows if the Inquisition's agents are about looking for signs of heresy. And strangers are not greeted warmly, for they are but one more mouth to feed.

## Faith

Everything in G'Henna centers around the worship of Zhakata. Religious ceremony dominates even the smallest social functions, from running a household to making wine (once G'Henna's major export). Dominant in this society is sacrifice to Zhakata and fasting or starving to honor the Great One.

Traditionally, a family member volunteers to fast for up to two weeks as a sacrifice to Zhakata; if great favor or honor is desired, this family member will starve to death. Dying of starvation is thought to bring great blessings to the dead person's family. The skulls of those who starve to death are made into *guesting cups*, while finger bones and vertebrae are worked into intricate designs above doors and beds. These decorations are quite becoming—until one notices the material used. The deceased are remembered in prayers as "the thrice-blessed dead."

In daily worship, peasants surrender their food to the priests, who "serve" it to the Beast-God at sunrise in a private ceremony. This ritual is known as **Zhakata's Taking**.

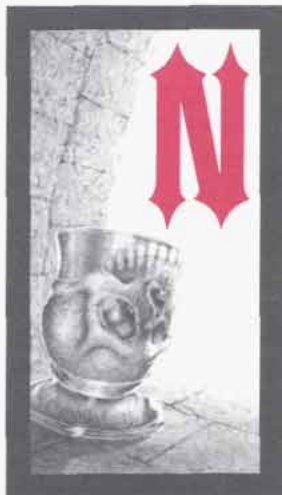
In reality, the priests sacrifice only a meager portion at Zhakata's altar, dividing the rest amongst themselves and the soldiers. Whatever Zhakata does not require before day's end is then given back to the populace, in the sunset ceremony known as **Zhakata's Dole**.

All crimes are blasphemies against Zhakata. The worst and most quickly punished crime is the heresy of believing in Zhakata's two aspects, that of the Devourer and the Provider. The second worst crime is buying or selling food. The worst criminals are stripped of their dignity and transformed into grotesque mongrelmen. Citizens scorn and abuse these wretches, and any who offer shelter or food to these mongrels shares in their abuse.

It is obscene and blasphemy to be overweight. Fat strangers suffer Reaction penalties (-1 to -3) in addition to a -2 suffered by all foreigners.

It is illegal to buy or sell food in G'Henna. This is punishable by a severe fine, imprisonment, and heavy labor on minimal rations. Prisoners often die from this treatment before their sentences are over.

# DIRE PORTENTS



No matter whether the heroes are already within the Domain of Dread or elsewhere, this adventure begins with the rising of the ubiquitous Mists of Ravenloft. If the heroes are in Ravenloft, the DM should start this adventure when they travel through the mists from one domain to another; if the heroes do not begin in Ravenloft, they must encounter a

lure into the mists on some journey, and be given the choice to pursue an adventure or seek refuge within this realm. One possible path into the Realm of Mists is presented here as the heroes journey along a desolate road or cross bleak lands:

## A Sad Invitation

The day has been cold and damp. A drizzle all morning, drenched your clothes, chilling you to the bone. Now, though the rain has ceased, a pale mist hugs the gullies and hollows, veiling the skeletal trees and hiding the ground as you slough through the slippery mud. Suddenly, a shriek tears the veil and a dark form lunges at you out of the fog.

A haggard woman, Callian, her clothes and hair a hideous, matted ruin will lunge at the heroes. If the heroes counter with an attack, they will strike a fatal blow. If the heroes are mounted, their horses will rear and the hooves of one will trample the woman. If there are no mounts, the woman will slip in the mud and tumble down a gully, breaking her back. In all instances her injuries will prove fatal, and having lost the will to live she will die shortly and nothing the heroes can do will save her.

In her death throes, Callian will plead with the heroes for aid. Beneath the mud is a handsome, but aging woman, wearing once brightly colored clothes. She knows she is dying, but is at peace

with her fate. Her only concerns are that someone help her sons (she will look back the way she came). One needs only a small favor, but the other, who is a priest, is a prisoner in that foul place.

Callian gives them a small brooch, shaped like a wreath missing something in its center. She tells them, "Seek Mard'. Mard' will know what to do. Mard' can be found toward the sun's rising. Look for the arch. Death's hand will guide you."

Her death is final, a smile gracing her tired features. Her spirit departs quickly and will not return. Back the way she came, beneath a tree rests a bundle wrapped in swaddling cloths. A wolf is sniffing the bundle and can be chased away. Within the bundle are the skeletal remains of a child, though bones are missing.

A pack of wolves will watch from the safety of the misty woods. If the heroes bury the remains, a ray of sunlight will break through the clouds and slip across the land towards the east. If the bodies are left unburied, the wolves will tear them to shreds. When the heroes depart the wolves follow.

Whatever direction the heroes take, if their interest wanes, their attention will be caught by a piece of ivory on a gray stone. It is a single finger bone of a child pointing east.

As the day passes, the chill grows and the blanket of mist thickens, till the wolves are mere silhouettes pacing the heroes. As a false dusk approaches a howling sounds in the distance. The wolves stop, then answer the cry and bound off to the east.

Ahead lies tumbled stonework, two broken teeth jutting skyward. This is the remains of an old arch stained and overgrown with moss. Investigation shows the carvings to resemble skulls. Suddenly, in the distance echoes a crack of a whip, a creak of wheels and the baying of wolves.

If the heroes investigate, they will discover a solitary journey wagon pursued by the wolf pack. If the heroes do not act, the wagon will come bouncing out of the mist at them. The wolves lunges drives the panicked nag across stony ground and the wagon throws a wheel and spills over on its side.



## Marda

7th Level Vistani Seer, Chaotic Neutral

Armor Class	10	Str	7
Movement	6	Dex	11
Level/Hit Dice	7	Con	11
Hit Points	33	Int	13
THACO	14	Wis	17
No. of Attacks	1	Cha	15
Damage/Attack	1d4-1		
Special Attacks	Evil Eye		
Special Defenses	Curse		

**Personality:** mysterious, talkative

**Equipment:** vardo wagon, tarokka cards, fortune-telling paraphernalia (no value beyond the candlesticks -20 sp), 211 sp, old nag

Marda is an old woman, half-sister to Callian. When her tribe fled G'Henna, she remained to help the Circle struggle for change. Eventually she was betrayed, and now she flees hoping to rejoin her kin. Unfortunately, she is suffering from starvation.

Marda will not tell the heroes that she and her kin are fleeing G'Henna. She has foreseen that Yagno Petrovna will face his greatest challenge and this may destroy the land.

**Combat:** Marda fights with a whip (1d2) and a dagger (1d4), but is a poor warrior.

Marda may also cast the *evil eye* three times a day. Targets must make a successful Save vs Paralysis at -3, or suffer one of these effects, selected by the DM: *paralysis, fear, charm or suggestion* for 1d4+1 rounds.

If the heroes harm Marda she will lay a *vengeance curse* on them: "May you hunger for adventure until the Devourer accepts his own, even as I hunger for vengeance."

The effect of the curse is that all the heroes will suffer a -2 penalty on all action unless they consume four times the necessary food a day. This curse can be dispelled by a remove curse cast by a 12th level spellcaster on each hero, or by reuniting Yagno and Malistroi.

## A Grim Meeting

With a cry of dismay, the driver of the toppled wagon rolls off the seat to stand with his back to the wagon, whip in hand. The ravening beasts circle the driver and the nag, snarling and snapping.

There are 13 wolves here, the leader (hp 23, THACO 17) is a large black beast with a white blaze across his chest. The pack leader will direct a large group to make a feint from the right, so that the rest can attack with surprise from the left.

If the heroes help, the nag and driver will survive. If they hesitate, the nag will be killed and the driver will hide in the wagon behind a barricaded door.

The nag is as gaunt and withered as the driver. The driver, nondescript with a cracking voice, is the Vistani seer, Marda. She is faint from starvation, and will at first be brusque, but if given some aid or something to drink, a spark will rekindle in her eye.

The driver is an impossible mannikin, far too gaunt to be human. But two thin hands, like withered leaves, sieze yours in thanks, and a cracking voice rasps out a welcome.

"All blessings upon you, travelers. And more beside, if you can assist me with my vardo and have food to trade. I have precious little to offer, but will do you honest service for any assistance you can spare."

Righting Marda's wagon will require the three strongest heroes in the party pushing on its one side, while at least two of the horses are used to pull it on the other. (If the heroes don't have the rope needed to secure their horses, Marda can supply it. Should one or more of the heroes fail to make a strength check, the wagon will teeter and threaten to fall on them. If another hero rushes forward and lends additional support, they will successfully right the old woman's conveyance. Should this additional character not come forward, the vardo topples again, and the three heroes must make Dexterity checks or be crushed

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for 4d6 points of damage under the heavy wagon.

If the heroes give Marda food or drink, she desperately consumes a portion, and then hides the rest. If the heroes have horses, and her nag lives, Marda begs some feed for her beast, Ivan.

Once Marda has introduced herself, the heroes will undoubtedly recognize her name. If they mention the favors her dying half-sister requested, she will say that she was going to offer each hero a telling of their fortunes, but now it is clear to her than she must offer a far more powerful aide than that. While the favors requested by Callian are but trifles to such experienced warriors, she warns the city to which they must travel holds much treachery. She declares that she must cast the Tarokka circle for the heroes. This particular configuration of the Tarokka is unique to Marda, who devised it herself while advising the Circle of Darkness in Zhukar.

Assuming the heroes allow her to cast the Tarokka Circle, Marda invites them into her vardo and sits before a little table covered with a ragged-edged black cloth. If the heroes absolutely refuse the fortune-telling, Marda will try to persuade them, but will give up easily. If the Circle is not cast, she will warn the heroes that they are walking blindly to a collision with their destiny, as she clambers back onto the vardo's clapboard. "This was not a chance encounter," she will call out, as her wagon is obscured by the drizzle and the haze. "The forces of Fate have touched us all this day, and you have a destiny before you that cannot be denied."

What happens next, is detailed following the Tarokka reading.

Assuming the heroes accept Marda's offer, she hobbles into the vardo, inviting four of the heroes out of the drizzle and into the jumbled mess of the wagon's interior. She rights a table, and gathers various items from around the room.

"The Tarokka is an ancient tool, and a delicate one," explains Marda. "Everything must come into balance first."

Marda arranges candles, then a cheap pewter medallion and many other seemingly worthless totems and icons upon the little table. With one bony finger, she draws an invisible circle over her heart. "We begin."

The first five cards and the bottom card are not random, the DM should sort the deck so the cards fall in this order: Darklord, Necromancer, Donjon, Horseman, The Mists and on bottom, The Traitor.

Once ready, lay the cards one-by-one in a circular pattern with the sixth card in the center. As each card is revealed, Marda interprets its meaning for the heroes. If questioned, she supplies any extra information found below each interpretation. If pressed for more, she restates her commentary or asks the heroes how *they* believe the cards relate to their present circumstances.

Consult the RAVENLOFT boxed set for more ideas on how to enhance the reading and use the Tarokka.

Her withered hands lift the cards tenderly and deal a circle of five. It begins.

"Let us turn to the future. Open our eyes to that which awaits, so that by seeing our path more clearly, we will not stumble on it!

"The path you tread is a circle of life, of death, of deceit and hope. The one you seek resides in despair, in the land called G'Henna."

Her calloused hand reveals the first card.

### Card 1: The Darklord

"This is the focus of your struggles. Ahh, the Darklord. This card depicts a great evil, a powerful figure. It can be only one in G'Henna: Yagno Petrovna, High Priest of Zhakata."

Marda believes the heroes are fated to enter this land, for it was once home to Callian and her tribe.

The DM may use any background information from the introduction to answer any questions. Marda hopes the heroes are the ones who will make a difference in that bleak land's fate.

If asked if the card could represent another power, Marda admits that it is possible. "But it would be a hidden power, for the High Priest is the most powerful man in G'Henna. No one disobeys the high priest of Zhakata more than once."

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### Card 2: The Necromancer

"This card represents the past. Hmm? The Necromancer. Dire magic! Perhaps one has trafficked with sorcerous powers."

Magic is forbidden in G'Henna, except that practiced by Zhakata's priests. This card could mean that Yagno has dealings with forbidden magic, or that he will face such magic soon.

### Card 3: The Donjon

"This card is the present. The Donjon! T'is unclear: Does the Priest have a prisoner? Or will he become one? Woe to his captives!"

Marda cautions the heroes not to cross Petrovna. Those who offend Yagno disappear.

### Card 4: The Horseman

"Here is a window on the future. The Horseman. He brings destruction. It could be Darklord's destruction, or another's."

For months Marda has sensed an impending crisis. She fears it shall bring worse, not better.

### Card 5: The Mists

"This card is the season of Fate, the influence on events. See? The circle closes with the Mists. Everything you see will be obscured. You have the power to shape your own destiny, if only you can perceive the truth."

The Mists is the most ambiguous of cards. It convinces her that the heroes will be pivotal in the future of G'Henna. All this revolves around a circle, the circle has many meanings.

### Card 6: Random Draw

Marda directs a hero to draw a card, placing it in the center of the circle. The DM should choose the player who has been the most quiet thus far.

This time, only the card suit is important. This card determines the key to unraveling the game of fate, and winning victory from defeat.

## DIME PORTENTS

"Here is the key to the future, hidden by smoke and mirrors, hope is a tiny flame."

*(Read only the section appropriate to the card suit.)*

<Coins> "Only the most clever will succeed by seizing the power of change for their own, however briefly it is theirs to command."

<Glyphs> "There is something which must be healed, which you must make whole again. Only through this can victory be yours."

<Stars> "All is illusion, all is smoke and mirrors. Only by waking the dreamer to the dream can the evil at last be dispelled."

<Swords> "Here is a mighty struggle for freedom, for the mighty will only be brought low by his own great power."

<Crowns> "Fate controls the future, chance alone will bring low the wicked when all else is grim and despair has enveloped you."

Each of these prophecies determines the power of Malistroi's talisman when it is reunited with the High Altar at the climax. Be sure to record this.

As Marda concludes, she again makes the gesture of the circle over her heart. Let the bottom card of the deck slip free to fall on the circle. This is **The Traitor**. When the card is revealed, Marda will gasp and eye each of the heroes suspiciously. If asked what this means, she says the implications are obvious: at some point, the heroes will be betrayed.

If asked about her gesture, she says it is a sign of those who oppose the High Priest and his theocracy.

Any hero who observes Marda's reaction to the reading, and who makes a successful Wisdom check, realizes that the woman is frightened.

Once the reading is finished, Marda is pale and shaken. A drink will help her recover.

She will waste no time leaving. Thanking the heroes for their generosity, she will usher them from her wagon. Marda will tell them they must be on their way, time and the Mists wait for no one.

If asked for directions to G'Henna, a puzzled look will steal across her face. She will tell them to find the archway, it is the gate to G'Henna. If the heroes note that the only arch they have found so far is ruined, Marda will smile and tell them that the arch they seek is further down and further in.

If Ivan lives, she will harness him and drive away. If he does not, a lonely mule will wander from the mists and she will harness him to the leads. Should the heroes attempt to follow or climb into her wagon, the mists quickly grow so thick as to obscure even magical light sources. After a few moments of blind uncertainty, the heroes find themselves alone in the mists, the vardo, Marda, and Ivan have melted away.

*If the heroes ever attack Marda, she screams at the first blow, her clothing and veil falling to the ground . . . empty. The wagon and Ivan melt away into the mists, as if they had been nothing but illusions. Then Marda's disembodied voice curses the heroes.*

### A. Zhakata's Door

Once alone in the twilight, the heroes' path will inevitably lead to a standing archway. Any who make an Intelligence check -4, will believe that this arch stands where once the broken one did. Upon reaching the arch, the dying light of a setting sun will slowly thin the mists and the heroes will find themselves standing in rocky foothills with the lights of a city on the horizon. Welcome to G'Henna.

Investigation of the archway will invoke a horror check, for what at first appears to be skulls and bones carved into the stone, proves to be actual human bones set into a mortar.

The land is bleak and rugged. Dying grasslands and coarse scrub cloak the dusty hills. To their back rears a stony mountain ridge, cold and formidable, certainly the heroes could not have crossed such cliffs and been unaware of them.

Ahead lies a walled city. Amid its squat stone buildings reigns a towering temple painted blood red by the setting sun. Even at this distance, its beauty and grandeur dwarfs the other structures.

The heroes' rations are especially important in this adventure. The DM *must* keep track of how much food and water they have. The threat of starvation and dehydration are very real in G'Henna.

The city of Zhukar lies only a mile away. Though the sun is quickly setting, there is enough time to reach the gates before darkness. There is a simple, worn dirt path to the city.

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If the heroes choose to avoid the city and strike out into the wilderness, proceed to "The Outlands." But, if they want information and a place to spend the night. The DM may describe the distant lights of the city as a much more appealing choice to the dark, wind-scoured lands.

There are two guards at each of the city gates leading into Zhukar, the City of Hunger.

Rising above the barren land are massive walls, eroded and worn frames for the cracked and weathered wooden beams of the gates.

Guards light lanterns at your approach. The glow reveals red arm bands, red hoods, and red ribbons tied to the hafts of the guards' pikes.

Two guards step forth and raise hands in a command to halt. Four more stand by the gate.

"Welcome, in the name of the great Yagno Petrovna, high priest and First Servant of great Zhakata. State your names and purpose in Zhukar," He looks surprised to see you.

The guards at the gate take their duties seriously and are surprised at the arrival of strangers. Outlanders are rare. The guards are courteous to the heroes, but wary, especially of those wearing armor or carrying weapons. The heroes promise to be the most interesting thing to happen in many days.

Any hero who makes a successful Intelligence check will overhear one guard mutter, "Rega will want to hear of this." If asked, the guard denies saying anything.

After the heroes give their names and business, the guards are willing to exchange (and, in fact, delight in) gossip and information. The only pay they require is that the heroes tell them something of themselves and the world beyond G'Henna in return for each piece of information about the city. The guards will be ignorant of

other lands. Here is some of the information they are willing to share.

- ❖ The faith of Zhakata requires that visitors share in the ritual of fasting. Visitors must fast for two days each week, while residents fast for three. Visitors may receive sustenance from the Dole of Zhakata as long as they stay in the city. The Dole is not offered today, but it is offered every other day.
- ❖ Magic is forbidden. Violations of this law result in imprisonment or confiscation of all property. A dispensation from the Temple is required to waive this restriction. These are hard to obtain. The guards direct the heroes to the Inquisition, the ultimate authorities of order in the city. They hint that the heroes should be prepared to offer a bribe of at least 1,000 gp to the presiding Inquisitor.
- ❖ Preaching any other faith is forbidden, absolutely. This restriction is never waived. Casting clerical spells is considered preaching. The guards will warn the heroes to be wary visiting the Avenue of the Gods. The Inquisition frowns upon visitations to the abandoned temples to the "false" aspects of Zhakata.
- ❖ Yagno preaches to the crowds three times each week. At least once each week, he transforms a criminal into a mongrelman at the High Altar.
- ❖ The Inquisition has a list of suspicious persons. Foreigners are automatically on this list. The heroes should expect to be followed or watched.
- ❖ Trading in food is highly illegal and harshly punished by the Inquisition, but many do it. A black market exists, but the heroes must offer valuable merchandise to trade for food.

The guards can offer more information, triggered by questions asked by the heroes; the DM should refer to the color mapsheet and the following sections for additional information the guards might provide.

## Zhukar: The City of Hunger

City encounters make up some of the richest and most exciting elements of adventures. The heroes sojourn in Zhukar is no

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exception. Keyed to the color mapsheet, this section offers some details about the city that are intended to aid the DM in developing mini-adventures for the heroes that underscore and draw them to the main plot of "Circle of Darkness." Themes that are emphasized are the duality of the city — for every good that may be found within its walls, there is an evil that equals or exceed it.

Few details have been provided about individual buildings, but the DM is encouraged to develop these as needed. The city is divided into the following neighborhoods (separated by different colors on the color mapsheet), and listed in the order from most to least chance that the heroes will get themselves in trouble.

**Military District.** The barracks of the Swords of Zhakata and Yagno's personal bodyguard are essentially a city unto itself, complete with entertainment and marketplaces. When off-duty, many soldiers do not like to mingle with the common folk, and strangers will be arrested on site. The only way the heroes may safely travel here, is if they've befriended a guard or soldier to escort.

**Private Estates.** Wealthy merchants and high-ranking members of the Inquisition live in these sprawling manors. Any Outlander seen prowling about, will be assumed to be a thief.

**City of Bridges.** Part tenderloin district, part urban cesspit, this is one of the worse neighborhoods of Zhukar. Built in several tiers with bridges and stairways connecting buildings that stand above one another down the steep slope of the bluff. In this part of town, the heroes may find themselves entertained by scrawny dancers at a cheap bar, embroiled with the black market, or simply robbed of everything they are carrying.

**Old City.** One small step up from the City of Bridges, this quarter contains several inns ("*guesting houses*") where the heroes may find lodging.

**University and Temple District.** See the following chapter for information.

**Government and Business Districts.** Rife with petty officials and messengers, only heroes who choose to disrupt the constant bustle can find

conflict in this part of the city. However, any disruption may cause the characters to be set upon by town guardsmen and priests of the Inquisition.

**High Town & Low Town.** These neighborhoods contain the modest homes of workers and low-level templeworkers. Outside the temple and university areas, the most devout followers of Zhakata can be found here. Guesting houses and taverns are also scattered throughout these portions of the city.

**Residential District.** Unless the heroes engage in burglaries or blatant blasphemies, they will most likely be able to travel unbothered through these streets that are lined with the low, windowless and mosaic-covered homes of Zhakata's menial laborers.

**Merchant District.** This is an area of warehouses, marketplaces, and small mansions, many of which have stood vacant since G'Henna was wrenched from Ravenloft's core, and many G'Hennan merchants were left stranded in other domains. The merchants who still remain are much less xenophobic than other Zhukar residents, and will, much like the guards at the gates, delight in speaking with the heroes about their homelands and how things are beyond the lands of G'Henna.

The merchants can give the heroes all the information the guards could provide, plus:

- ❖ Every merchant knows a place that welcomes travelers, charging 6 sp per person per night for accommodations. However, landlords are now charging double that previous rate for decent accommodations. The merchants aren't lying; they just aren't aware of the current prices for foreigners.
- ❖ Rega is the chief assistant of Yagno Petrovna and one of the heads of the Inquisition. He never makes public appearances, and none can say what he looks like. He is said to be hideously ugly.

Zhukar is laid out in a rough oval-shape, built spilling off a rocky knoll and steep bluff that drops down to the Drogach River. The Temple of Zhakata, looms over the city at its heart. (Refer to the fold-out map for a general layout of the city.)

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Most of the buildings are of rough-dressed stone and appear functional rather than decorative. The buildings rise to a maximum height of four stories; only the temple may stand taller. For decoration, the G'Hennans use an unusual sort of ivory in elaborately-patterned mosaics. The "ivory" is actually human bone.

The DM should reinforce the overwhelming feeling of age that clings to Zhukar. Everything is worn and in need of some repair. The city is in terminal decay, but a decay that is never complete.

The city's citizens are pale and thin, with sparse black hair. Most married men wear beards, waxed into a single thin braid, while married women wear scarves over their heads. Priests and soldiers are the only G'Hennans who appear healthy and well-fed. Priests wear red and orange robes, while soldiers wear red or orange arm bands and hoods. Peasants are clothed in drab tatters.

Within a few hours of the heroes' arrival, both the Circle of Darkness and the priesthood of Zhakata are alerted to their presence. Rega is already working out how to make use of their arrival.

The Inquisition maintains a low-profile surveillance of the heroes through their network of spies and informants, while the Circle does much the same. These spies are not obvious to the heroes, nor are they inimical to their interests (thus, they do are not detectable as enemies).

### Keyed Encounter Areas

**1. Avenue of the False Gods:** This street is lined with low ornate buildings in various states of disrepair, some of which have been gutted by fire.

The less dilapidated buildings contain bronze statues of Zhakata the Beast-God. No two are alike, but all feature powerful, bestial figures with conspicuous teeth and claws. These buildings were once shrines devoted to the various aspects of Zhakata, but after Yagno declared there was only *one* aspect to the god, the citizens have stayed away.

The older, much more decayed structures, are devoted to gods worshipped before Yagno assumed the mantle of darklord. No citizen will admit to remembering the names of any of these

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old, gods, but the heroes may recognize one or two entities.

Although these temples appear to be abandoned, there are several that are home to secret cults. Even some of the more fanatical Circle cultists come here to worship Zhakata the Provider. The heroes may befriend a member of one of these cults while wandering the Avenue of False Gods, only to see this character fall victim to the Inquisition.

**2. Public Plazas:** Each of these promenades, where cobblestones form Zhakata's bestial face, are used for parades, celebrating minor holidays, and staging military drills. The citizens of Zhukar pack into the square to witness these events. The plazas are also preferred spots for beggars to plead for the mercy of the citizens as they cross the plaza. It is in one of these plazas that the heroes will encounter the missing son of Marda. (See "Petchko's Plight")

Each plaza is equipped with 1d6 stocks, generally found at the western edge of the yard. If the heroes should be caught for a minor crime while in Zhukar, they will likely be sentenced to the stocks . . . where they may be "rescued" by the Circle.

**3. City of Bridges:** A wonder in architectural achievement, this district is built on the steep bluffs of the river. It has no streets, but all buildings are connected by bridges at different levels. This area is home to derelicts and wretches, many of whom are on the payroll of the Inquisition as spies and informants. Heroes who ask questions here will receive more questions in return.

The area is patrolled by bands of thugs (use Guard stats) who approach the heroes soon after they arrive, demanding a "toll" of 10 gp per hero. Six will confront the heroes directly, while six more creep up from behind. The thugs are not especially skilled fighters, but they know how to use stealth and ambush to maximum advantage. Each has a Hide in Shadows skill of 20% while in this quarter. If the heroes refuse to pay, the thugs will attempt to throw them off the bridge. (If a thug strikes a hero, the character must make a successful Dexterity check to not fall over the railing and take 3d6 points of damage when he hits the bluff).

They can be bought off for as little as 1 gp per hero, and they can provide the same information as the gate guards, if the heroes offer to pay more in exchange for information. In addition, the thugs have contacts with the Black Market, and will put the heroes in touch with one of the ringleaders for a minimum of 100 gp. When the heroes meet the leader, they find him living in dazzling opulence, despite the squalor all around him.

**4. The Courts:** Members of the Inquisition pass judgment on all manner of crimes and all manner of criminals in austere, marbled chambers. Those who are found guilty are either condemned to a period in the stocks (minor crimes, such as theft of personal property or killing a beggar) or are sent to the dungeons under the Temple of Zhakata (major crimes, such as preaching false religions, stealing food, or speaking out against Yagno or the Inquisition). This is also where heroes must go if they wish to secure a license to cast spells.

✦ While at the Court, the heroes may encounter a "criminal" recently arrested and slated to be transformed into a mongrelman. He is released back into the streets, unharmed. He tells everyone who will listen of the kindness and generosity of Yagno Petrovna, swearing through tear-filled eyes that the high priest set him free when it became clear that no serious crime was committed. (The DM is free to decide the veracity of this tale.)

**5. Public Works:** Some effort is being made to halt the steady crumbling of Zhukar. As they walk the streets the heroes will see chain-gangs working on repairing buildings and streets. These are condemned prisoners who are being turned to productive use for society while they wait sentence.

**6. Hospitals/Orphanages:** Many young children can be seen around these buildings, studying religion, listening to instruction in the way of the Devourer, or performing organized exercise led by a priest. On the porches of the building, crippled and ill people can be seen sitting in the sun, their needs tended to by concerned priests.

Should the heroes speak with one of the railthin children, the youngster will expound upon the generosity of Yagno Petrovna, and how he would have been just another orphan living on the streets.



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In a second building attached to the orphanages, the children must earn their keep by sewing the robes worn by the clergy, as well as creating other materials needed by Yagno's beauracracy and clergy. The children work 12 hours each day, study and exercise for five hour, and are left with seven hours in which to eat (on Dole Days) and sleep.

**7. The Marketplaces:** Once a showplace of wares from every corner of Ravenloft, the markets are now shadows of their former glory. In better times, the largest marketplace included four to six acres of booths. At present, they are severely diminished, as there are no foreign merchants present.

Nonetheless, there is a surprising variety of merchandise available, from jewelry of gold and silver to scrolls and maps of distant lands (other domains of Ravenloft). The costs given in the *Player's Handbook* generally hold for the marketplaces, except that food is *never* for sale (but spices and an assortment of beverages are). All prices include a 10% tithe for the priesthood. The priests themselves roam the bazaar at all hours, mostly quiet and watchful.

However, when the heroes visit a marketplace, perhaps chatting with a friendly merchant, a group of priests move through the marketplace, bullying merchants into handing over a substantial cut of their profits (sarcastically referred to as "taxes"). The merchants grumble, but they know better than to cross the powerful priests. The merchant with whom the heroes were speaking, grumbles a bit *too* much, and the next time they come to visit his stall, they hear he has "disappeared most mysteriously."

**8. Academies:** Located near marketplaces, these institutions prepare the young men and women of Zhukar to enter the service of Zhakata. If a hero asks a question too difficult for a citizen to answer, he will be referred to one of the Academies, the centers of knowledge, wisdom and learning.

Heroes will quickly discover that merchants are more informed about practical matters, and more interested in assisting the heroes. Students at the Academies have no interest in discussing anything but theology and Zhakata dogma. The instructors will treat the heroes like vermin until a

bribe of at least 1,000 gp is paid. Once paid, the instructor will provide the heroes with any information already presented, as well as discuss the current strife between the church and the Circle of Darkness. He will cast the Circle in a most unfavorable light.

**9. Parks:** Immaculately tended by chain gangs supervised by priests, these serve as green spots in the otherwise bleak city. Each park features a statue of Zhakata and two Walls of Devotion (slabs of stone 10' x 30' covered with the names of those who have starved to death to honor Zhakata).

Due to increasing vandalism by the Circle, the parks are patrolled at irregular intervals by a squad of six soldiers and one junior priest. One has a horn to summon reinforcements. Twelve soldiers will answer alarms in 3 rounds, with six more 6 rounds.

**10. Brewery:** At one time, G'Hennans imported grain from Falkovnia and used it to brew some of the best beers and ales in all of Ravenloft. With the domain's isolation, many of the breweries lay idle. Only those controlled by members of the Inquisition manage to get enough grain from northern G'Henna to remain in operation. Other brewers have turned to serving as waystations for the black marketeers. (The aqueducts serve as avenues of transportation. When the water is low, much can be carried along them, high above the heads of the city guards.)

If the heroes have made contact with the black marketeers, they may be caught in the middle of a "bust," when four Inquisitors follow a young boy to a brewery-turned-black-market. As the lad is buying fruit, the priests burst in. The merchant escapes, but the boy is caught and immediately begins to scream and blubber with fear. The heroes can flee as well or step in to speak (or fight) on his behalf. If the heroes intervene, the boy will accuse them of putting him up to the "crime." He hopes to spark hostilities between the two groups and escape in the confusion.

**11. Barracks:** There are several city streets outside the Military District devoted to housing soldiers and low-level priests. While these neighborhoods are not off-limits to visitors, idle visits are discouraged by residents' hostile stares.

It is difficult to walk this street and not be

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noticed. Nonetheless, a guard may direct the heroes to a house on one of these streets. The ranks of the city guard holds many amateur scholars who may have information to assist the heroes.

**12. Stockyards:** These are mostly abandoned. Those still in operation are heavily guarded by priests and soldiers. The streets around the stockyards are haunted by a new type of undead.

Late at night, dark figures creep around the edges of torchlight in the back alleys. They leave native G'Hennans alone — and the natives are wise enough to leave them in peace. The first time the heroes investigate these areas at night, they encounter some of these “lost spirits.” No further encounters with these spirits occur after the heroes have slain at least one of them, although there is a way to deal with them without killing them. (See Lost Spirits on the color mapsheet and the “G'Hennan Bestiary.”)

**13. Private Residences:** If the heroes befriend a merchant, they may be invited to sample some wines and other beverages at his opulent home. Merchants live better than the common squalor. In exchange for stories, the merchant will provide each hero with one piece of standard equipment for free.

The flip-side of this encounter occurs when a peasant mistakes the heroes for black marketeers and brings them to his house. There he petitions them for a supply of fresh water. Although he can't pay, the peasant offers to trade members of his family as slaves or to perform some demeaning tasks.

**14. Stables/Warehouses:** The heroes can stable their horses here for 4 sp per day per horse. However, there is a 20% (non-cumulative) chance each day that they will return to find the stable empty, and their horses and the proprietor gone; their mounts have become black market meat.

**15. Guesting Houses:** Several of the larger homes along this street have signs indicating rooms for rent. Many of these are *guesting houses*, the G'Hennan equivalent of inns. A landlord must approve of those seeking to rent a room. This approval consists of a ritual of drinking wine, discussing family, and swearing Oaths of Hospitality by Zhakata (though “unbelievers”

may swear by their own Power). The houses closest to the Temple insist on this formality, requiring a full hour-long interview. Cheaper houses closer to the Bazaar, shorten the ritual to a drink and handshake, uttering “Zhakata's Teeth!” as hands are clasped. Lodgings most willing to host strangers are of the latter.

Find lodgings should not be impossible; but with present attitudes toward foreigners, it won't necessarily be easy. A DM should bear in mind that natives are not overly welcoming.

As noted, 12 sp is the minimum rate per person for adequate accommodations (clean, relatively few vermin, no amenities). In more luxurious accommodations, closer to the temple, landlords send servants to collect the Dole of Zhakata for the entire household. For accommodations of this quality, heroes pay upwards of 6 gp per night, plus donations to the priesthood to thank them for their generosity. These “donations” ensure that the priests turn a blind eye to these households. If heroes are miserly in donations, the Inquisition causes them trouble with their landlord, who will confiscate possessions or throw them out in the street.

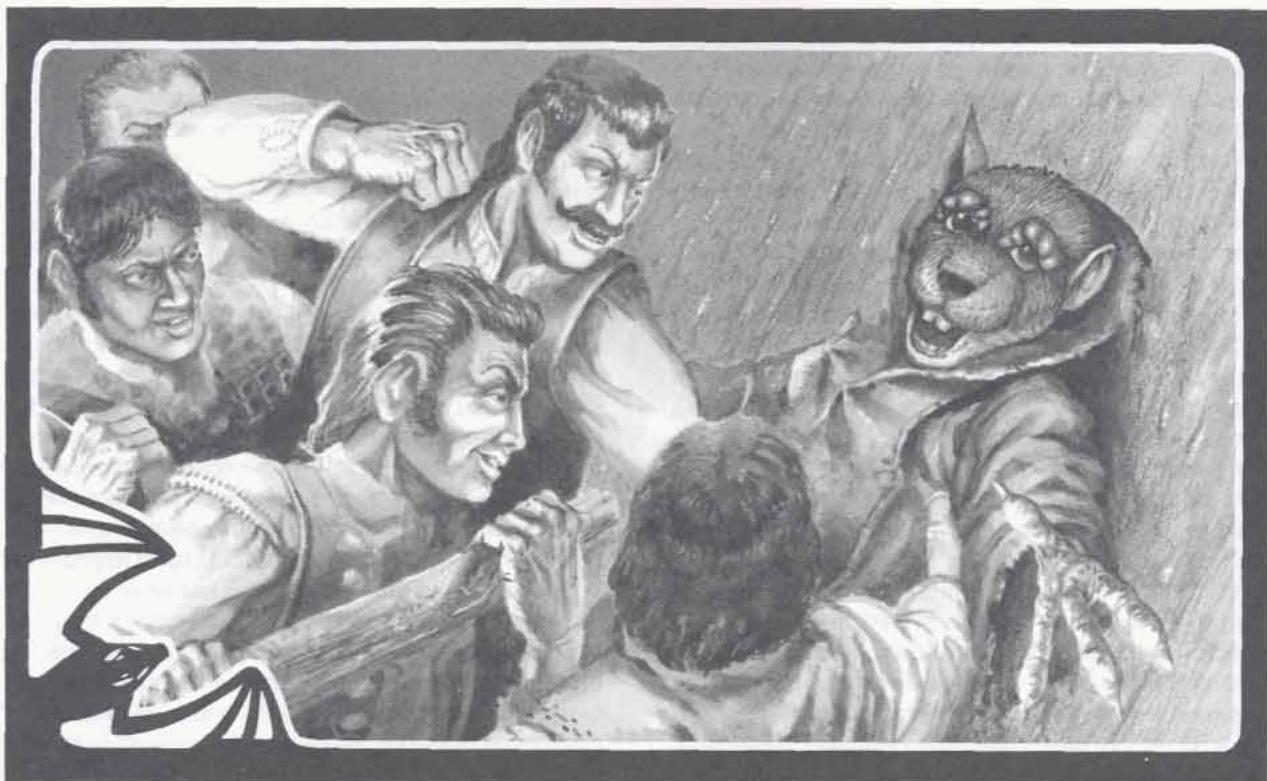
Many guesting houses are taverns and bawdy houses. Here, a wide variety of entertainments can be enjoyed, though it is invariably shabbier than what heroes are accustomed to, and always preceded with a preamble about Zhakata's greatness.

### The Inquisition

To dramatize the power of the Inquisition, the DM should present one or more of these encounters (or create his own, using these as models). They may take place anywhere in Zhukar, and they serve to make the heroes aware that the priests of the Inquisition are parasites feeding off the city.

Statistics for a typical Inquisitor appear on the “Master Monster Matrix” on the color mapsheet. The DM may customize the information for each individual priest. As the heroes are outsiders, the Inquisition may harass them, but will ultimately let them go, albeit with dire warnings against crossing the Inquisition. However, once Rega becomes aware of the heroes presence, they will become involved with the Circle of Darkness.

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If the heroes choose to fight members of the Inquisition, the priests will try to subdue the heroes and take them to the temple for interrogation and punishment. Under no circumstances will any citizens rally to the heroes' aid. Instead, the frightened residents scurry away as fast as they can. What's more, a group of  $1d4+2$  Inquisitors arrives every third round to join the battle.

- ❖ If the DM wishes, he can deem that the day on which the heroes arrive in Zhukar is a day of fasting for *everyone*, not just citizens. Any heroes who eat any food or drink are then subject to threats, violence, or imprisonment from the Inquisitors. Frightened peasants who observe the "heretical" behavior of the strangers will be only too eager to point the heroes out to the priests.
- ❖ An old man who began to starve himself for Zhakata has changed his mind as his suffering grew worse and worse. He stumbles onto the street, begging passersby for a scrap of food. The man's family, however, intends to let him

starve, sure that his "noble sacrifice" will bring blessings on their household. They try to restrain him and force him back into the house. The heroes must choose whether to let the old man starve or flaunt the law (and the family's wishes) by giving him food.

- ❖ A peasant riddled with some dread disease begs for assistance. Should any spellcaster use magic to aid or cure the victim, Inquisitors arrive to question and arrest the offender. A wizard may be able to bribe himself out of trouble (with 1,000+ gp, due on the "severity" of the aid provided); clerical magic is blasphemy and offenders face imprisonment.
- ❖ A young mother is dying of starvation in the street as her children beg passersby for help. Through her pain, however, the woman praises the wisdom of Zhakata. If the heroes offer her food, she refuses it. They must choose whether to force-feed the woman or permit her to starve.
- ❖ A trio of Inquisitors moves from street corner to street corner, reading aloud the names of

currently-imprisoned “criminals” who are to be transformed into mongrelmen at the next such ceremony. Instead of expressing sorrow, most citizens seem to respond with righteous bloodlust, eager to watch the heretics be stripped of their humanity.

## Petchko’s Plight

**T**his encounter occurs one day after the heroes arrive, at the edge of a plaza near their lodgings. The heroes meet Petchko, a hapless mongrelman, who is, in fact, the nephew of Marda they initially came in search of. If they help him, they gain goodwill that could prove valuable later.

During your walks around the city you find a hunched, hooded figure begging.

“Your mercy, I beg, faithful of Zhakata,” his thin voice calls. “Please, a mere crumb, a moldy crust! Anything, for the love of the Beast-God who sees over all!” People ignore him, muttering “filthy animal” or “vulgar cur.”

He calls out, “Zhakata bless you” to all, no matter how poorly he is treated. He then calls out to you, asking for a bite of food.

This mongrelman wears shreds of red cloth. He was once a priest, now he is a thing of derision. If the heroes help or speak with the mongrelman, he is overly grateful for any aid. He introduces himself as Petchko. If asked, he will admit he was a priest. He doesn’t discuss his “crimes,” though (in truth, he was simply too popular for Yagno). He serves Zhakata as faithfully as he can, believing that Zhakata approves of his steadfastness in the face of adversity. Petchko’s statistics are found on page 62.

If the adventurers help Petchko, they acquire a – 4 Reaction from other Zhukarans (prices for lodging and wine are suddenly doubled).

If the heroes ignore the mongrelman, the sounds of a scuffle are heard behind them, as Petchko is assaulted by a gang of young goat-drovers.

The twelve youths are equal to Men, Townsfolk listed on the “Master Monster Matrix.” They intend

to pummel Petchko to death. Though there are bystanders, including two Inquisitors, none help Petchko. Nor does anyone stop the heroes from helping, as long as they do not seriously injure the drovers. If the heroes use deadly force, one priest runs to summon soldiers while the other attempts to use *hold person* on the heroes. Fortunately for the heroes, Petchko can guide them to safety before the soldiers arrive. If any drovers are killed, the soldiers continue to search for the heroes for 1-2 days, but lose interest eventually.

Helping Petchko wins his friendship as well as the loyalty of other mongrelmen. Petchko manages to escape if the heroes do not intervene.

## Entrapment

**D**oubt about his beloved Zhakata’s purpose has plagued Yagno lately, and the heretical whispers increasingly being spread by cultists haven’t helped. To reinforce his position as omnipotent ruler, Yagno has ordered Rega to step up arrests of “criminals” for transformation. Such a demonstration of his power never fails to inspire fear and obedience. But Yagno has one further, charging Rega to capture *outsiders* too. Yagno knows that he can’t transform outsiders; the victims will simply be killed in secret. But the fearful public will see only a manifestation of the power of their lord and god.

Two or so days after the heroes arrive Rega will send priests to attempt to trick the heroes into committing a punishable crime. The DM may have disguised Inquisitors offer to sell the heroes a bit of food, goad a cleric into casting a spell, or simply try to trap the heroes into expressing blasphemous beliefs. Use any of the encounters presented above as a basis for the Inquisition’s trap.

Once the heroes have committed a “crime,” the Inquisitors make the arrest, hoping to take the group alive for use in Yagno’s transformation ceremony. If the heroes surrender or are overpowered, the Inquisition takes them to a temple holding cell. There they will meet agents of the Circle of Darkness (see “The Circle Closes”). Any heroes who run are hounded throughout the city until captured or killed; those who flee into the Outlands temporarily escape the wrath of the priests.

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If *all* of the heroes flee the city, the DM must modify “The Circle Closes” to reflect the new situation. One possibility is to have the agents of the Circle meet the group at the mongrelman camp. The agents threaten to turn the heroes back over to the Inquisition if they refuse to help. Even if the heroes are reluctant, they should believe that Yagno and the Inquisition are the greater evil — an evil that needs to be overcome, one way or the other.

## The Circle Closes

**A**s both leader of the Inquisition and *secret* leader of the Circle, Rega is in a unique position. Yagno believes that Rega’s allegiance remains him. But, the darklord has honed Rega’s skills too well, for Rega takes every opportunity to exploit both the Circle and the Inquisition, playing one off the other in games designed to help him gain ultimate control.

Rega had a lucky find one day, Yagno’s journals. From the journals Rega learned that a terrible fiend was imprisoned in the House of Bones, and that the key to control it was a crystal talisman secured in the temple. Rega wants that talisman, hoping to force the fiend into granting him power. So as not to attract suspicion upon himself or any members of his cult, he plans to use outsiders for the “dirty work.”

After the arrest and detainment of the heroes, Rega sends agents of the Circle to free the heroes from their prison. The cultists believe they’re acting to foil the evil plans of the Inquisition, not realizing that they, too, are pawns in a greater game. Spells like *detect lie* or *charm person* reveal only that the cultists are telling the truth (as they know it).

Disguised in the robes of the Inquisition, the cultists arrive a few hours after the heroes are jailed and offer to free them in exchange for help in crushing both Yagno and the Inquisition. If the heroes agree, the cultists escort them out of the temple. Rega’s has made sure that they’ll have no trouble escaping. Of course, once the heroes have made it into the city, they are wanted fugitives. If they later refuse to help the Circle of Darkness, the cultists simply threaten to turn the escaped heroes back over to the Inquisition, warning that their jail-break carries a punishment of certain death. If, on

the other hand, the heroes help the Circle, the cultists promise them safety and even escape from G’Henna (they believe their unseen leader can grant this escape, though they are wrong).

If the heroes ask why the cultists can’t simply steal the talisman themselves, the agents explain that it is sacrilege for a believer to infiltrate the Temple of Zhakata. As outsiders and (the agents presume) non-believers, the heroes have no such problem.

## If the Heroes Agree To Help

The agents of the Circle reveal the basics of the plan as they know it: The heroes must steal the talisman from the temple and use it to rescue Zhakata the Provider from his prison in the House of Bones. Then Zhakata will come to Zhukar in his new aspect, restoring prosperity to the land. (The agents don’t realize that Rega plans to exploit the trapped being for his own ends.)

The agents provide the heroes with a crude map showing a portion of the interior of the Temple. The DM should sketch it for the players. Proceed to the next chapter, “Temple of the Beast-God.”

## If Heroes Refuse To Help

The DM should give the heroes every opportunity to help the Circle of Darkness. If the threat of death from the Inquisition and the lure of a passage out of Ravenloft aren’t enough, the cultists can offer a baser reward: wealth. The cultists may haggle on a price in good faith, but Rega secretly plans to have the heroes abandoned or killed once their part in the mission is over. Therefore, it doesn’t really matter what bargain the heroes drive.

If nothing seems able to persuade the heroes to help the Circle, the cultists retreat into the shadows of the city. Within hours, Rega directs the Inquisition to the location of the “escaped prisoners.” The heroes must fight for their lives. Even if they escape, they have nowhere to go, trapped within the boundaries of G’Henna. The DM can work them back into the adventure or allow them to have different experiences entirely, using the information provided about Zhukar in this chapter, or the descriptions of G’Henna in general found on the color mapsheet.

# TEMPLE OF THE BEAST GOD



nce the heroes agree to help the Circle of Darkness, their next step is to infiltrate the Temple of Zhakata and recover the talisman hidden within.

As leader of the Inquisition, Rega secretly does what he can to ensure the heroes are successful. Once the heroes escape the temple with the talisman, the Circle will lead them to the safety of a

mongrelman camp outside the city.

Neither Rega nor Yagno, however, realize that the talisman has a much more powerful guardian: a common animator, sent by the dark powers of Ravenloft to serve Yagno as if it were an emissary from the imaginary Zhakata. This heighten not only his cruel treatment of the natives of G'Henna, but also the torturous self-doubt that eats away at him. In order to recover the crystal, the heroes must overcome the animator, which inhabits a large statue of Zhakata inside the Temple.

## Infiltration

**F**inding the Temple of Zhakata isn't a problem; in fact, the heroes may already have been imprisoned there by the Inquisition and freed by the Circle of Darkness. Once the heroes near the massive structure, read the following:

From the outside, the Temple is an impressive, if unattractive hulk. Extensively decorated with carved gargoyles, bas-relief faces, and angry spires, all sides pierced with dozens of stained glass windows that glow from the torchlight within. But those lights seem dim compared to the smoky braziers on the hightower. Amid them, rests a massive altar, exposed to the night sky.

The Temple frowns at your approach, as though aware of your intentions.

## The Temple Complex

Although the Temple of Zhakata dominates the temple hill, it is actually a complex of buildings that consists of several institutions. Each building, and the temple in particular, is a maze of hallways and rooms. The Endless Corridors floorplan-morphs provided on the color mapsheet can be used to randomly generate the interior of any building in the complex (or, for that matter, any building in Zhukar.) The buildings are as follows:

**Bakery:** Each morning, smoke pours out of the large chimney on this building, and the smell of fresh sweetrolls and onion bread wafts alluringly over the temple grounds and the nearby neighborhoods, as the bakers here prepare the morning meals for all in the temple complex. On non-fastdays, each priest and student receives a sweetroll and small loaf of bread for breakfast and midday meals; on fastdays, they only get the bread.

**Dormitories:** Novice priests and students from the University of Blessed Zhakata dwell here. During the day, these buidlings are mostly empty, except for a few guards posted to discourage vandalism by the Circle of Darkness.

**The Gatehouse:** Five Warders of Zhakata, elite soldiers, are on duty here at all time.

**Hospice of Zhakata the Provider:** Of all the hospices in Zhukar, this was, at one time, the most efficient and caring. Now, it is merely a cobweb-filled hulk. When Yagno declared that Zhakata only had one aspect, he ordered all doors and windows to the hospice sealed; the patients were left inside to die. Some nights, the agonized cries and pleas of their undead spirits can be heard clearly across the temple complex. If the heroes decide to enter the abandoned hospice with the intent to free those being tortured within, they will be facing a veritable horde of lost spirits.

**Kitchen:** Like the bakery, the amount of food prepared here each day is mind-boggling by Zhukaran standards; each non-fastday, some of the finest meals in G'Henna are prepared here, and on fastdays, it is closed.

**University of Blessed Zhakata:** Once a student graduates from an Academy, he comes here,

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where he spends two years training as a priest and learns to be completely insufferable. Any theological questions someone might have about Zhakata and his many faces (or lack thereof), can be answered here with great precision and delight.

**Zhukar Library of Enlightenment:** This building holds the largest collection of books and scripture about Zhakata, including verse supposedly penned in the blood of the false gods that once dwelt in G'Henna, before Zhakata arrived: Zhakata himself wrote the verses. Many other books on a myriad of subjects scholarly and gentile can also be found here. Scribes diligently copy books for distribution to wealthy patrons and other temples.

## Entrance & Exploration

During the day, the public is allowed in through the Temple's main entrance, which leads to a hall dedicated to the glory of Zhakata; four guards (all 4th-level fighters) prevent further access into the building. At night, the main entrance, too, is guarded. However, the heroes can gain access to the Temple day or night in any of the following ways:

*Disguise:* If the heroes don't think to ask, the cultists suggest that the heroes dress themselves in the red robes of the Inquisition and simply walk into the Temple. The Circle can easily provide the group with the appropriate clothing (especially if the cultists previously dressed as Inquisitors to free the heroes from imprisonment). The cultists can also provide the heroes with whatever standard greetings, gestures, or passwords the DM wishes to make necessary. Of course, if the heroes reveal themselves or are discovered, any guards in the area attack, with 2d4 more arriving every three rounds (see "If the heroes Are Captured" on page 23).

*The Dole:* The heroes may wish to wait for the next Dole of Zhakata (which takes place every other day). The Dole is always held at sunset, when mobs of peasants clamor around the main entrance to receive scraps of food left over from that morning's Taking. A hero who makes a successful Dexterity check (or succeeds at hiding

in shadows) may slip past the nine harried priests (all 1st-level initiates) in charge of handing out food to the clattering masses. A hero who fails the attempt is thrown back by a Temple guard and warned to stay within the bounds of the Dole line. Any additional distraction arranged by the heroes gives each a +2 bonus on the Dexterity check or +10% bonus on the hiding.

*Other:* The heroes can confront the guards directly, attempting to overcome them by magic, subterfuge, or physical force. In general, however, fighting is not the best solution; any battle brings 2d4 more guards every other round until the heroes are captured or killed (see "If the heroes Are Captured" on page 23).

Heroes who can *fly*, *levitate*, or climb walls might be able to enter the Temple from another location: one of the stairways that winds around the outside of the highest tower, a window left open in one of the walls, etc.

The heroes could purposely break a law of Zhukar and get themselves imprisoned deep inside the Temple, planning to escape.

The heroes might even try using food to bribe peasants into storming the main entrance, hoping to slip through in the confusion. In the end, though, the DM must decide whether or not the heroes are successful (keeping in mind that Rega may secretly plot to help the heroes get in, since he *wants* them to get the talisman).

However the heroes choose to enter the Temple, the agents of the Circle agree to meet them at one of several possible locations in Zhukar once they've escaped with the talisman. The agents refuse to select a single location; the threat of roaming Inquisitors precludes them from knowing in advance which place might end up being the safest. The DM should select a few interesting sites from the large city map and secretly decide where the Circle will be waiting. In addition to giving the DM flexibility, this tactic also increases tension. Will the heroes find the Circle before the Inquisition finds *them*?

## Inside the Temple

**N**o matter when the heroes make their way through the Temple of Zhakata, they find the building humming with activity. Yagno's

# TEMPLE OF THE BEAST GOD

thoughts of late have been heavy with fundamental questions as to the nature of Zhakata. He remains awake and busy during most of the day and night, and the rest of the Temple has followed suit.

The following descriptions of the temple are not of static locations, but rather of events which can occur anywhere within the building. As the heroes make their way through the building, the DM should chart their progress on the accompanying map of the temple. Based on the party's method of approach (disguise, assault, etc.), the DM can choose where and when the group runs into each event.

The heroes will probably begin at the main entrance to the temple (although a clever method of entry may place them in a different starting location). The fiend's talisman is housed in a room in the Sanctuary (the DM should determine in which tower of building wing and mark it on the map of the temple. When the heroes reach that room, the DM should proceed to "Stealing the Talisman," on page 25. Until then, the DM is free to create his own miniadventure, customizing challenges to the heroic party or using the Random Encounter charts to supplement the schedule of "Events and Encounters," beginning this page.

## The Look of the Temple

As the heroes explore the Temple, the DM should keep in mind a few general guidelines for describing surroundings. Most of the floors are covered with mosaics made of teeth and bone chips from those who have starved to death in the name of Zhakata. Because the pieces are so diligently shaped and polished, a hero recognizes them for what they are only upon making a successful Intelligence check. Statues and icons of Zhakata the Devourer, a fiendish-looking monster, line and adorn every hallway to the point that the heroes should grow weary of seeing the beast-god everywhere they look. Likewise, major hallways also feature framed portraits depicting various events from the life of Yagno Petrovna, including: his birth; the first time Zhakata "appeared" to him in a cave in his homeland; his attempt to sacrifice his sister's

child to Zhakata; and the "successful" summoning of Zhakata the Devourer in the House of Bones. (This latter portrait is little more than propaganda; in truth, the spell brought forth only the blasphemous nalfeshnee Malistroi.)'

## If the Heroes Are Captured

Presumably, the heroes proceed carefully through the temple, especially if they are not disguised in the robes of the Inquisition (the DM may wish to allow undisguised heroes a chance to subdue passing Inquisitors and steal their robes). Even if the heroes are stopped, a solid story will deflect most questions. If a fight breaks out, however, the Temple holds enough guards and priests to easily put down any party. The DM should let the heroes fight if they wish, but prolonged battle can only result in death or incarceration. The temple's inhabitants try to take the heroes alive, if possible, for interrogation, sacrifice, or slavery.

## Events and Encounters

The DM can assume that the following events take place within the Temple even if the heroes don't get involved. These scenes comprise a framework from which the DM can weave a narrative crafted to the particulars of the party's methods, strengths, and weaknesses. Above all else, these events are designed to put the heroes in situations that require skilled role-playing, rather than skilled fighting.

- ❖ Troubled over the question of Zhakata's true aspect, Yagno Petrovna impatiently paces the hallways of the Temple, surrounded at all times by a dozen high priests (P8) of the Inquisition. Lost in his own thoughts, Yagno keeps up a steady, muttering argument with himself, asking and answering his own questions at a fevered pace. Yagno's "argument" is intended to reinforce his belief that Zhakata the Devourer is indeed the one, true face of the beast-god. As Yagno raves, his entourage nods and offers only assent. They've accompanied their lord on many such a walk. When Yagno and the priests cross paths with the heroes, he stops to question them.



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A large group of red-robed priests follows an elaborately adorned man as he walks quickly through the halls. Most of the followers nod constantly, saying, "Yes, Lord Petrovna. Absolutely, my lord." For his part, Petrovna seems to speak mainly to himself.

Suddenly, Petrovna stops, bringing his followers up short. "And you, you there," he shakes a finger at you. "Tell me—what face of Zhakata do you see?"

If the heroes answer "the Devourer" (or something similar), Yagno murmurs agreement and continues on his way. If the heroes answer "the Provider" (or some other), the twelve priests react with horror. Yagno, however, merely draws the heroes deeper into a debate about the origins and nature of the great god, Zhakata.

The heroes are in no real danger so long as at least one of them can bluff a conversation about Zhakata for a few minutes. Contrary to his reputation, Yagno is more interested in resolving the questions in his mind than in obsequious agreement.

✦ Because Yagno publicly transforms criminals into mongrelmen only a few times each week, the temple's cells are often overflowing with the condemned awaiting their fate. Instead of letting the criminals sit for days and grow "complacent," the priests put them to work in the temple in rotating shifts. After all, it takes a lot of work to keep the floor mosaics free of bootmarks and bloodstains.

Currently, a crew of six prisoners polishes the tiny teeth and bone chips set into the floor of a large prayer room, their arms and legs still shackled but allowed just enough movement for the assigned tasks. If the heroes stumble across the scene, the workers ignore them. A prisoner may be able to show the heroes the general direction to the Sanctuary, only if a hero first makes a convincing argument *and* a successful Charisma check.

✦ Several guards (F2) lounge in a hallway, taking a quick break from their patrol duties. The hot topic of the moment is the Circle of Darkness.

Rumors have been circulated about a secret cult dedicated to the overthrow of Petrovna and his Inquisition. Thinking that no one is around to hear them, the guards openly discuss what they've heard and what they *really* think about the cult.

Should the heroes approach quietly, or if they surprise the guards, they may listen in on the conversation.

"No such thing!" argues one voice. You can see guardsmen up ahead, lounging against the walls and chatting. "The priests are just paranoid."

"Or maybe they're creating the rumors themselves," responds another man, crossing his muscular arms across his armored chest. "'Circle of Darkness' indeed! It's just a trick to play on the hopes of fools. Heh!"

"But it's true," puts in a third guard. "I heard them confess. They mean to overthrow Yagno himself, the blaspheming dogs!"

"Who cares?" The first guard leans back upon the polished bone wall. "As long as we control the food, none of these so-called rebels will have the strength to give us trouble."

✦ As secret leader of the Circle of Darkness, Rega doesn't always keep the ranks of the cult informed about his plans. As for the plan to overthrow Yagno, for example, most cultists know only that Rega wants to restore the face of Zhakata the Provider, not that he cares little for Zhakata and only wants to seize power for *himself*. Thus, while a few cultists who have burrowed into the temple know of the scheme to steal the talisman, others don't. One of these latter cultists, disguised as a priest of the Inquisition, is currently striking a blow for religious freedom. He's smearing a portrait of Yagno Petrovna with a bloody symbol of the Circle of Darkness (a circle containing an eclipsed sun). If the heroes don't catch him in the act, he'll simply leave the fresh symbol (which the heroes may find later) and disappear back into the temple. However, a DM may want to have the heroes stumble across the cultist in order to take advantage of the opportunities for intriguing role-playing. If

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discovered, the cultist assumes that the heroes are guards or members of the Inquisition and pleads for his life and freedom. The heroes must decide what to do. The DM may even wish to have a band of *real* Inquisitors appear on the scene to investigate the commotion. The heroes might be able to avoid suspicion by condemning the cultist to the evil priests; however, first they must decide which is more important: their honor or their mission.

- ❖ To distract as many guards and priests as possible from the heroes' intended theft, Rega's arranged for a disguised cultist to free a number of imprisoned mongrelmen. Nearly berserk at the thought of having been stripped of their humanity, the mongrelmen tear through the Temple area around their cell, attacking any priests they can find. The mongrelmen realize that such a violent uprising can only end in their deaths, but they feel they have nothing to lose.

Although the revolt takes place far away from the heroes, the heroes should definitely realize that *something* is going on when guards and priests run and shout back and forth, feral growls mix with human screams, etc. The heroes can follow the guards and join either side of the battle.

- ❖ A lone guard (a 3rd-level fighter) walks the halls, more intent on the piece of paper he seems to be deeply absorbed with than on paying attention to where he's going. As part of a promotion examination, he's been given the task of calculating the amount of food confiscated (during the Taking of Zhakata) and then redistributed (during the Dole of Zhakata) for the prior week.

The guard is puzzling over the problem as he walks his rounds. If the heroes bump into the man and don't provoke a fight with him, he'll show them his progress in solving the problem and ask for their advice. If nothing else, this encounter can demonstrate the incredible disparity between the Taking and the Dole—the guard's figures should show an enormous amount of food flowing into the Temple, but little actually returning to the peasants.

- ❖ Rega's sources in the Circle of Darkness informed him exactly when the heroes entered the temple to steal the talisman. In order to ensure that he himself couldn't possibly come under any suspicion, Rega had planned to stay out of the hallways for the entire evening. However, Yagno Petrovna summons Rega for yet another long-winded discussion on the true nature of Zhakata, and the right-hand man must answer his lord's call.

If the heroes don't get involved, Rega simply visits Yagno, patiently reassures him that Zhakata is, indeed, the Devourer, and returns to his quarters. However, the heroes may meet Rega as Madar as he heads toward Yagno's chambers. Rega has observed the heroes beforehand and recognizes them instantly. However, the heroes will simply think he's just another priest of the Inquisition.

Caught off-guard, Rega will spend an anxious moment working out what to do while the heroes get a chance to react. Under no circumstances will he reveal his association with the Circle of Darkness. He *may* try to give the heroes some quick and indirect advice about reaching the Sanctuary before scurrying away. This encounter should be played mysteriously, leaving the heroes to wonder why the Inquisitor seemed so surprised to see them and acted so strangely.

- ❖ An escaped mongrelman has scrambled off into the Temple. After a short time of panicked wandering, the mongrelman crosses paths with the heroes. His fear blinds him; the mongrelman simply assumes that the heroes are guards, and attacks. The heroes may choose to fight back (although the noise might draw guards or priests), or they might try to calm the mongrelman and perhaps even invite him to temporarily join the party.

## Stealing the Talisman

The object of the heroes' quest, the talisman used to summon and control "Zhakata", is found within the Sanctuary, the five-floor building topped by the exposed High Altar. The DM can choose to place the Talisman Room anywhere within the

# TEMPLE OF THE BEAST GOD

Sanctuary (see the map of the Temple). The large room is dedicated to the worship of Zhakata; parallel rows of benches can hold a hundred faithful priests, and the walls are covered with tapestries, icons, and plaques honoring Zhakata (as well as numerous martyrs to the faith).

At one end of the chamber is a huge dias, on top of which hunches a 12-foot-tall bronze statue of Zhakata the Devourer. This statue's head is mounted on a squat dwarvish body. Its wide open mouth surrounded by a fence of two foot long teeth, is locked in a permanent howl of rage. Around the base of the statue are the charred remains of numerous offerings of food. The basin of this bizarre statue's mouth is filled with hot ash. The talisman is buried within that ash, protected from thieves by two ash crawlers and hot coals, and a bigger surprise, a common animator.

Two Warders of Zhakata, two senior priests watch this room. They occupy quarters near the Sanctuary Room and spend much of their time in the room (conducting services, deciphering texts, and protecting the talisman). When the heroes enter, the two Warders are collecting prayer sheets that were scattered throughout the benches during the last worship service; the DM should roll to see if the Warders are surprised. If the heroes are disguised as Inquisitors, the Warders treat them cordially. Otherwise, the Warders demand to know the heroes' purpose and sponsor.

No matter what the circumstance, the Warders refuse to answer questions about the talisman or allow the group to approach the statue. To get near the statue, the heroes must first overcome the Warders by physical or magical means.

Under normal circumstances, the heroes would also have to deal with patrolling guards who check this room every few rounds. Rega managed to temporarily reassign the patrol, but he couldn't get rid of the Warders without arousing suspicion.)

## In the Ashes

Once the heroes are able to approach the statue, they'll find that it's mouth forms a basin, hollow and full of ash. The priests of the Temple seem to burn food in the mouth. The heroes can spend

time searching elsewhere in the room, but they'll find nothing of use; sooner or later, they should consider that the talisman might be buried in the ash.

The open jaws of the statue are about 15' in diameter. The ash is about three feet deep. The ashes are cool enough and form a buffer from the heat of the basin for someone to wade through. However, within the ashes live two ash crawlers. These ratlike creatures bite anyone who reaches into the deep ash and use their long, prehensile tails to snare unlikely victims and pull them under the ash. (See the bestiary for details.)

If the heroes observe the ash for five rounds before reaching into the statue's mouth, they notice that the surface of the ash seems to bubble and shift occasionally. The talisman is beneath the ash in the center of the basin held down by a bolt.

## The Animator

The last danger here is that a common animator possesses the brazen statue. It will not move unless someone crawls into the mouth and touches the talisman. Then it's hinged jaws will close, trapping any in its mouth that climbed in. It requires a successful Bend Bars roll to pry the jaws apart. However, should anyone try to free the captured victim, the Animator will move the entire statue as if a giant automaton (HD 10 (60); AC 1; MV 6; THACO 11; Dmg 1d6/1d6; SA Gong, SD Undead immunities). In the form of this brass statue, the common animator can sound a gonging that deafens those failing a Con check, and causing a -2 penalty for 1d4 rounds. The gonging will also sound the alarm and 1d6 Swords of Zhakata will come running in 4 rounds.

If the heroes manage to remove the talisman from the statue, or if the heroes try to destroy the statue, the animator abandons its waiting game and brings the statue fully to life. It attacks the heroes with its fists and spews hot ash in their faces (save vs. paralyzation or be blinded for 1d4 rounds). What's more, while inhabiting the statue the animator can simulate the effects of the 4th-level wizard spell *contagion*, causing painful lesions and sores to break out on the heroes' bodies (reducing Strength, Dexterity, Charisma, and attack rolls by 2). When the animator uses

## TEMPLE OF THE BEAST GOD

this power, the statue seems to wheeze the word “Zhakata,” a special ability granted to the animator by the dark powers of Ravenloft.

If the heroes battle the statue for more than four rounds, the commotion brings a squad of  $1d6+2$  guards. However, upon seeing the statue of their god come to life, the guards either drop to the ground in fear and awe (10% chance) or flee altogether (90% chance).

If the heroes flee the room, the statue tries to pursue them as long as they are in sight or until it reaches a door it is too big to pass through. (This should be one or two doors from the room in which it is discovered.) When this occurs, it will smash its bulk against the wall of the temple until the statue breaks, and follows the escaping heroes in spirit form, waiting for a chance to inhabit a new shape and ambush the thieves. In any event, the destruction of the statue does not harm the animator in any way. (For more information on the animator, refer to the sidebar on page 28 and to Animator Wars, page 29).

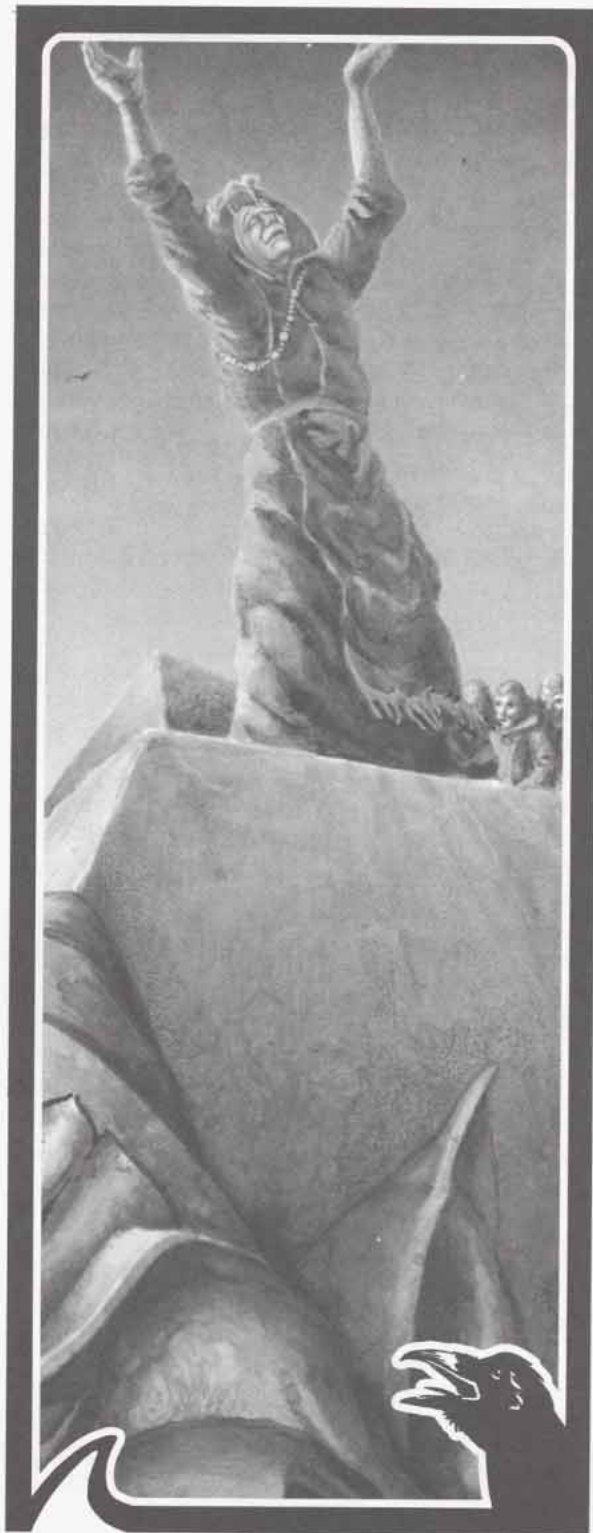
### Escape from the Temple

If the heroes are being pursued by guards, priests, or the animated statue, they may wish to use magic (for example, a teleport spell) to relocate themselves outside of the Temple as quickly as possible. They could also burst into a resident’s quarters and leap through a window in an outer wall, or climb up to the open rooftop of the High Altar and jump, rappel, or fly. On the other hand, the heroes may be able to reach the main entrance (possibly fighting all the way) and simply walk out of the temple.

The DM is free to have a disguised member of the Circle of Darkness appear at an opportune moment to help the heroes get out of a particularly sticky situation.

### Escape from the City

Even if they make it out of the temple, the heroes won’t be safe until they leave the city of Zhukar itself. They know that they have to meet agents of the Circle of Darkness at one of the agreed-upon locations, but which one? The DM can set the cultists at one location and wait for the heroes to



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show up, or he can simply assume that the heroes got “lucky” and found the cultists at the first location they tried.

In either case, the heroes’ flight through the city should be played in the most dramatic manner possible. After all, it won’t take long for Yagno and the Inquisition to become aware of the talisman’s theft, and they’ll set priests and guards on the heroes’ trail right away. However, the Nimbus of Evil that cloaks the talisman prevents Yagno and his troops from divining its precise location. And with his only means of controlling the trapped *nalfeshnee* *Malistroi* stolen, Yagno fears for his life and refuses to leave the Temple, preferring to stay as close as possible to his source of power—the High Altar.

Manic to recover the talisman, Yagno instructs Rega to sweep the city and find it at all costs. Unfortunately for the dark lord, Rega’s secretly more interested in helping the heroes (and the cultists) *escape* with the talisman, and he misdirects the Inquisition as much as possible to give the Circle time to flee the city.

Once the heroes meet the Circle at the chosen location, the cultists warn the heroes that their lives are in grave danger and that they must all hurry to a “safer place” outside of Zhukar. Ideally, the heroes accompany the cultists (the DM should proceed to the next chapter, “The Outlands”). However, if the heroes turn over the talisman and remain in the city, they forfeit all claim to any promised rewards. And, of course, they face imminent capture, interrogation, torture, and death at the hands of the Inquisition.

### The Animator

Like all animators, the one sent to Yagno is an evil, violent spirit capable of inhabiting objects and bringing them to life. It feeds on powerful, dark emotions, and the widespread corruption of the temple (to say nothing of the torture and executions) keeps the animator very sated indeed.

The common animator can inhabit any large object about four to 12 feet tall (such as a carriage, a statue, a piano, a stove, etc.). The animator can also imbue its host object with an unusual power—one that mirrors the effects of a harmful wizard or priest spell of 4th level or less. No matter what its form, the animator is immune to mind- or biology-affecting spells and attacks. The nature of the object in which the animator resides dictates its vulnerability to other forms of attack.

Most common animators can only operate all moving parts of the object it inhabits; they cannot, for example, cause an iron statue to walk. However, the animator granted to Yagno has a few special abilities. While in the Temple, it can bring life to inanimate objects; thus, a statue can walk, a staircase railing can slither, etc. It can also animate up to 12 dead bodies in its vicinity. Furthermore, no matter what its form or location, the animator can utter single-word communications. It mostly just says: “Zhakata.”

It takes the animator 1d4 hours to inhabit an object. If the object is moved during that time, the attempt fails, although it can be tried again. The animator can’t inhabit a magical object or one that’s under a magical spell.

The common animator in the temple seeks out and destroys that which causes mental distress to its master, Yagno. Thus, when the heroes steal the talisman, the animator pursues them with a vengeance, seeking its return at all costs. One habit of this animator is to utter a high-pitched giggle after uttering its one word, a habit it curbed while playing the role of Zhakata, but once it is outside the temple, the sound of its laughter should be a sound the heroes will grow to rue.

# TEMPLE OF THE BEAST GOD

## Animator Wars

As the heroes make their way across G'Henna, the animator from the temple will be dogging their every step, aided by the Dark Powers.

To complicate matters, however, the heroes have attracted the attention of a *second* animator.

This malign spirit is but a lesser animator, with the ability to inhabit objects no larger than a long sword. However, when two animators come in contact with each other, they will attempt to destroy each other and everyone who is the way of their combat. Since animators are virtually indestructible — only the physical shell they wear can be harmed. These two will be battling in the vicinity of the heroes for some time.

The lesser animator will possess a hero's dagger as the heroes sleep at their guesting house one night. It's preference is to select a person who is a rogue as its ward.

Then, as the heroes travel throughout G'Henna, one or the other animator (and often both!) will spice up their lives with murder attempts and violent accidents. Suggested usages of the animators follows (one thing to remember is that the hero who is carrying the talisman will always be the common animator's primary target):

- ❖ When the heroes reach the mongrelman camp in the next chapter, the animator can inhabit a tent in which the heroes rest. It will try to smother them. But the lesser animator will use its *telekinesis* ability to slash the tent and save them. The common animator will use the ropes of the tent to fling the dagger against a rock and break the blade and to strangle the heroes. The heroes must burn the tent, or take some other action.
- ❖ Scattered across G'Henna are thousands of statues of Zhakata; the common animator could manipulate anyone of those and come at the heroes with statistics similar to those of a stone golem. (The lesser animator would not be a factor here, unless one of the heroes is in the habit of carrying wooden juggling balls; in

this case, the lesser animator has inhabited one of those, and rolls under the statue's feet, causing it to fall and shatter, or to topple off a cliff just as it is about to deal a fatal blow to the hero carrying the talisman.

- ❖ While in a village or town, the common animator will inhabit a stove at the inn the characters are staying at. It will attempt to burn a hero by causing the stove to belch fire (the hero may save vs. dragon breath for half damage), but then lesser animator will have possessed one of the hero's cloaks and will cause the cloak to stuff the chimney and cause the stove to explode.
- ❖ Likewise, the common animator may inhabit a carriage or cart and attempt to run over the heroes with it. The lesser animator will cause a coil of rope a character is carrying to fly around one of the cart's wheels, as the rope's other end wraps around some firmly rooted object; this will cause the cart's axle to break and the wheels to fly off.
- ❖ During the climactic battle between Yagno and the fiend in the final chapter, the DM may choose to throw the common animator at the heroes; in fact, it may even be the animator that causes the heroes to exercise the initiative it will take to destroy both Yagno and Malistroi.  
The animator may inhabit one of the stone gargoyles that are carved around the edges of the temple's roof where the High Alter stands. It will tear loose and will either attack the hero who is carrying the talisman, or will try to seize it after it has fallen to the ground. (See "The Lord of G'Henna" for more details about staging this dramatic moment.)
- ❖ After the heroes think they have seen the last of the evils of G'Henna, one of them feels an amulet around his neck twitch slightly. When he investigates, it seems as though a faint eyeball has manifested itself on it... and then they hear the sound of a distant, maniacal giggle, and a voice that sounds like it's saying, "Zhakata!"

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outside the walls of Zhukar, the heroes initially find little more than a hostile wasteland. If the heroes have chosen not to travel to the city, this chapter can serve as a resource for the DM who wishes to let the heroes experience some wilderness adventures before returning to the main plot of the adventure. Eventually, such heroes should encounter the

Mongrelmen from the section labeled "Watching Eyes," and thus have the option to pursue this adventure's primary storyline. If the heroes are heading for the rendezvous along with their promised guides, and thus leaving the city behind, the DM may go directly to "Watchful Eyes" or use the following sections to flesh out the trek across the wastes of G'Henna.

## Traveling in G'Henna

Heroes in an arid setting like G'Henna need one gallon of clean water per day to remain healthy. If the hero is especially busy, fighting or constantly traveling, this requirement rises to two gallons; if the hero is inactive or resting, the requirement is halved.

Doing without water for a prolonged period produces dehydration. Dehydration results in a temporary loss of Constitution, regained by drinking liquids.

If the hero has between a full and half the water requirement, he loses 1d4 points of Constitution; if less than half the daily requirement is received, the loss rises to 1d6 points.

When the hero's Constitution drops, all related characteristics also decrease—hit points, system shock rolls, resurrection survival, etc.

Receiving a full daily requirement of water returns 1d8 points of Constitution to the hero; hit points are regained normally.

If the heroes have mounts, they require four gallons per day to survive without losing their own

Constitution. An animal that does not get enough water has a 10% chance (cumulative) per day of dying. Rehydrating the animal with a day's allotment of water negates this chance.

A successful check against a hero's desert survival proficiency allows that hero to find water, even in the most inhospitable-looking terrain; a success allows the hero to find one gallon of water (though it may be only marginally drinkable).

Also, barring any *bags of holding* or other magical devices, the heroes will need to stop in villages to replenish their supply of water. Below, a typical village is described, and it is assumed that the heroes will visit Keshka at some point during their travels in G'Henna; it is located on the route between Zhukar and the House of Bones where Malistroi is imprisoned.

## Village of Keshka

Keshka is a minor village of some 100 men, women and children. A deep well provides the settlement with ample water, and a low earthen wall protects it from raiders. A small herd of boney cattle wander near the palisade.

The village is led by Tvoshe, a 3rd-level priest who is essentially a good-hearted man, but he is fanatically loyal to Zhakata and Yagno, and is blind to the high priest's evil; he will report the hero's presence in the village the first chance he gets, knowing that Yagno wishes to know whenever strange foreigners are wandering the Outlands. He will report the direction in which the heroes are traveling, and Yagno will be aware that trouble is about to emerge from the House of Bones if a report reaches him from Keshka that foreigners are heading into the Outlands.

The villagers, with Tvoshe serving as their spokesperson, are friendly toward the heroes, offering them the food and water they need. If the heroes abuse this hospitality in some way, the villagers will become hostile, however.

If the heroes are traveling with mongrelmen, these "cursed animals" will not be tolerated by the villagers.

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## Adventures in G'Henna

The map of G'Henna included with this adventure features 20 numbered locations, which are described briefly on the color mapsheet, and serve as adventure seeds for DM development.

However, there are many elements on the map of G'Henna that are not touched upon, and each one of those can serve as an exciting location or side-adventure for the heroes to experience, either during the course of "Circle of Darkness" or during further adventures in G'Henna. Some examples follow, taken from the map's key; in almost all cases, the DM can use the random encounter generator from the mapsheet to decide the disposition of the creatures encountered, and even what creatures the heroes encounter:

**Camps:** Depending on the adventure needs, this can be an encampment of mongrelmen, a division of the Swords of Zhakata on maneuvers, or a band of werecreatures waiting for victims.

**Caves:** Once again, the mongrelmen dwell in

caves, and the heroes may stumble upon a hidden settlement of these unfortunates. Of course, the heroes may be up for some spelunking, in which case they run the risks of caveins, flashfloods, and the presence of deep-dwelling terrors.

**Fort:** Mentioned on the mapsheet, this fort can be used at any point in the adventure when the heroes are being pursued by forces of either Yagno or Malistroi; the reason the Jackal is so successful and not even an entire stronghold of troops can't stop her raids, is because the detachment's captain is, in fact, the Jackal. With her werejaguar companion as her second-in-command, she can be a friend or a foe of the heroes.

**Manors:** These can range from abandoned structures, to the isolated study of a xenophobic necromancer, to the domain of a minor darklord. The Ravenloft accessories *Darklords* and *Islands of Terror* both present several excellent short scenarios that can be incorporated into one of these locations.





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**Ruins:** Depending on the point of the adventure, these ruins may either be remnants of the shapeshifter society that preceded the current human culture (in which case, they present the heroes with the opportunity for a dungeon crawl that may start out in the tradition vain, but soon turns into an underground nightmare as they break the wards on a room holding an ancient evil in check) or, toward the end of *Circle of Darkness*, it could be a village that has been overrun by the evil army of Malistroi (in which case, it's a charnel house).

**Shrine/Tomb:** These locations, once again, offer DM's an opportunity to create slightly more traditional adventures in the Ravenloft setting, or he may want to, once again, use material presented either in *Darklords* or *Islands of Terror*. The shrines can be either devoted to Zhakata, or to some other deity that came before the Beast-Lord. The tomb can be the enshrined body of a holy man, or it may be the undead mummy of a werejaguar that will hunt the heroes for disturbing its rest.

**Statuary:** As they cross the wastes, the heroes will see literally hundreds of Zhakata statues, no two of which are alike. However, every so often, they will come across a statue of someone or something else. Generally, these have been toppled or defaced. Occasionally, one of the toppled statues will seem familiar to the heroes, and those with the religion or ancient history non-weapon proficiencies will discover that they are ancient representations of gods from their homeworld, if they make successful proficiency checks.

**Zhakata's Door:** This is, in fact, the point at which the heroes enter G'Henna. At the DM's option, this portal may activate at different times or under different set circumstances, taking heroes to other domains or Prime Material plane worlds.

## B. Watching Eyes

**A**s the heroes move toward the mongrelman camp, they are watched from the moment they leave Zhukar. The mongrels are experts at camouflage and hidden movement, remaining unseen until they are ready to meet the heroes.

It is late afternoon, and the sun and the sun as begun to fade when, just ahead on the trail, four shapes appear, as if by magic. Three are hooded and robed.

The fourth is more monster than man, standing seven feet tall, with a ghastly face that is part lizard and part dog, and massive muscles bulging under his crudely stitched vest.

"What do you here, where mongrelmen be?" the first demands.

After the heroes and the guides have identified and explained their mission to free Zhakata, the mongrelmen confer among themselves in a strange language of grunts, growls and low hoots. From the heated exchange, the heroes can tell that there is a problem of some kind.

One of the mongrelmen eventually turns to look at you, his small eyes lingering on the strongest of your group. "Wahrg says you not so tough. Why we need you to free Lord Zhakata? You fight Wahrg—show you strength in combat."

The mongrelmen take care to make sure the heroes understand that this is an unarmed fight, and that once one opponent is either pinned to the ground by the other or has been struck unconscious, the combat is over; this is not a fight to the death. The DM should use the unarmed combat rules in the *Player's Handbook* to run the fight with the mongrelman champion. (Wahrg's statistics can be found on the "Master Monster Matrix" on the color mapsheet.)

If all the fighter-heroes wish to avoid combat, the mention of Petchko can dissuade the mongrelmen—or Petchko suddenly arrives, condemning Wahrg for his rudeness and demanding an end to this nonsense before a potential friendship is ruined.

Wahrg, for his part, doesn't want to hurt the hero, a mongrelmen quietly explains. He simply wants to be sure that "the outsiders" are experienced fighters and can contribute to their crusade. However, the heroes catch a gleam in Wahrg's that may indicate otherwise, as does the

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way his lip curls into a snarl when looking at one of the heroes.

If the heroes make a favorable impression, the mongrelmen take them to their camp. If the heroes act rude or boorish, the mongrelmen lead them away from the camp and then hide, letting the heroes wander awhile and rethink their attitude. In this case, Petchko approaches the heroes a day later, imploring them to help the mongrels, then leading them to their camp himself.

## C. Plea for Aid

As the heroes cross the broken wasteland they will sight a lonely tent on their path. As they approach a faint sobbing plea, "Help me, help me!" will sound from the tent. However, when the heroes enter they will find the tent's contents ransacked and no one present. Then a deep voice will echo, "Give me the Talisman!" followed by a high pitched giggle as the tent collapses and tries to suffocate them. It is the Common Animator lying in wait. If the Lesser Animator is present, it has animated a dagger.

## D. Zhakata's Howl

On the trip to the Mongrel Gather the heroes will encounter a Windstorm (see Random Events). Heroes must take shelter from the storm or suffer the damage noted. However, the mongrelmen will cavort in the scouring storm unharmed chasing after the tiny silver flecks. If questioned about this afterwards, the mongrelmen will tell the sad tale of their lost dignity blowing in the winds.

## E. Mongrel Gather

The Mongrelman camp is a sprawling collection of tents made from cast-off cloth and splinters of wood scavenged from Zhukar and outlying villages. The mongrels here are weary and undernourished, and many are ill.

After your hard travel, you see a great number of campfires ahead of you. Misshapen, cloth-wrapped figures huddle near the fire. A few of the wretches rise from their fires, coming

closer as you enter the camp.

A scene of desolate misery lies under the chill night skies of G'Henna.

You find hordes of mongrels bowing and scraping before you, pressing against you with whispered pleas for help, for mercy, for release. They do not beg for food—they are begging for scraps of cloth that can be used to make hoods and clothes to hide their twisted and disfigured bodies. Their shame is obvious and intense.

Toward the center of the camp is a ruined stone building. This is where the leaders are guiding you.

The mongrelman camp is a gathering over three hundred strong. The heroes are made welcome by the Elders, Those Who Survive, but others are not so eager to see "unbelievers" in their midst. Their protests are silenced by the leaders. Word has reached the camp that the Circle was sending powerful agents to free Zhakata the Provider, and the Elders want to be sure the heroes retain their inclination to help. Also, the Elders explain, additional agents of the Circle are expected this evening or tomorrow morning, and it would bring shame to the Elders if the heroes were to report that the mongrelmen had been bad hosts.

The heroes are invited to share the meager scraps of food the mongrels have available, as the evening meal has just gotten underway.

Later, you are shown to a place on the edges of the camp. The stone building, you are told, is reserved for infants and the sick.

As you establish your campsite, the mongrels sing long laments of anguish, sorrow—and hope, for they believe they will be redeemed. Their faith in Zhakata has not faltered, despite the torments they endure. The ugliness of their faces belies the piteous beauty of their songs.

Just after midnight, your corner of the camp is roused by a sudden disturbance. The stench of decaying flesh and turned earth hits you first. Then you see the attackers: a loping pack of clawed, gray-skinned humans. Their sunken yellow eyes and wicked teeth glow bright in the dying firelight.

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There are a total of 15 ghouls and two ghosts. The ghouls attack for feasting, but any hero bearing the nalfeshnee's talisman is soon the focus of the attack.

If the heroes do not have the talisman, then it becomes clear after a few rounds of combat that the monsters have begun to gravitate to the far side of the camp, where the heroes see four Zhukarans (one wearing the robes of a low-level priest—this is Rega, in his guise as Madar) attempting to fend off the attacking ghouls. These are the agents of the Circle, who have arrived just before the attack. The mongrelmen will defend the agents as best they can, but cry for the heroes to help.

The ghouls can sense the talisman, and they seek to obtain it. The undead monsters fight until destroyed, those not facing heroes each slaying one mongrelman per round. For their part, the mongrelmen as a group destroy one ghoul each round. Although Rega, if present, can easily turn several of the ghouls, he does not do so, wanting to keep his masquerade intact.

After the attack, whether the cultists have just arrived on the scene or were the object of ghoulish attention, "Malar" embraces the heroes as if they were long-lost companions and delivers a stirring speech about how they together shall release Zhakata the Provider from bondage.

If the cultists were the object of the attack, they make no mention that they are carrying the talisman; in fact, Malar speculates the ghouls were sent by Yagno to slay them all. On the other hand, if the heroes kept the talisman and were the ghouls' primary target, then the cultists warn that only they, priests of Zhakata, may safely handle it.

Malar begins helping the mongrelmen gather their dead and to prepare them for burial; with looks and gestures and offhand comments, he gently encourages the heroes—clerics in particular—to do the same. The other cultists claim to be too fatigued to help and retire to tents offered to them by the mongrelmen. With an expression that is a mixture of irritation and disappointment, Malar watches them go.

If the heroes find Malar likeable, then Malar/Rega has accomplished his goal: he hopes to gain the trust of the heroes, so they'll be offguard when the time comes to betray them.



Rega is with the cultists, posing as "Madar," a junior member of the Circle. His purpose is to keep an eye on events, free the fiend, and obtain the talisman needed to control the creature.

The next morning, the camp bustles with expectation. Some mongrels even smile.

The ghouls' bodies have been hauled away and burned, far from the camp. The signs of their

attack are gone, except for the mourning for those slain by the ghouls.

The leaders of the mongrelmen invite the heroes to meet with the Circle cultists. Petchko adds that this is the day they have been waiting for . . . the beginning of the end of their exile. Once The Provider is freed, they will regain their dignity and their rightful place in G'Henna. Their sorrow, and that of their families, will be gone forever.

When met, the Circle cultists are suspicious and arrogant. This is their quest. Only under their guidance is there a chance for success. The mongrels are necessary (the cultists are hard pressed to set their loathing aside). The heroes are seen as mercenaries, not equal to the devout cultists.

All six of the cultists are here to supervise the quest to freeing the Provider. Their names are Bolsh, Yart, Gimgraw, Madar, Palosti and Olvoro.

A group of 20 mongrelmen is also selected, Petchko among them. These Outcasts insist on accompanying the cultists, for only they know the way to the "lost shrine."

The heroes are encouraged to join the expedition, especially if they have the talisman. Both the cultists and the mongrels confide in secret that they do not entirely trust the other side, and hope the heroes will be a neutral third party or ally.

The cultists will not carry their own equipment, except for their money and weapons, expecting the lowly mongrels to bear their burdens.

The Circle members are openly demanding, but condescending, while secretly ruthless and manipulative. They see their "allies" as useful tools, nothing more. Bolsh, as spokesman of the group, does most of the talking; anytime the heroes seek an "official response" from the Circle, they are referred to Bolsh, who is a pretentious, pompous fool.

During the expedition, the cultists do little more than eat, drink, and complain of the hardships of the land. They do not interact with the mongrelmen except to give orders, though they will talk with the heroes, sharing their complaints more often than their real hope of freeing Zhakata.

Rega is careful not to draw attention, allowing Bolsh to act as the Circle's spokesman. He studies the heroes, so he will not be surprised by them.

DM's can should develop the obstacles of the trek to the House of Bones using the rules for Wilderness Encounters in The Outlands section.

When their path finally leads the heroes deep into the southern badlands and safely through the dangerous gauntlet of beast and raw elements, they will at last discover the grim House of Bones.

## F. House of Bones

**M**alistroi, the fiend is imprisoned in this dead wizard's hidden sanctum. It is filled with abandoned arcana and a legacy of evil. The house was built within the skeleton of a monstrous beast.

A strong breeze blows you southward into the cold wastes, scouring you with sand and grit. Ahead lies frustration, you have wandered into a canyon from which there appears to be no exit.

As you squint at the darkening cliffs, you detect something ivory white huddle at their base like an ancient tomb. The structure is squat and broken, rising from the stony floor of the plain. Cracked 8' tall shard remains form a toothy fence, barring strangers from this ruin, though several lie toppled and shattered on the rocky soil.

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An archway pierces the wall, and a yellowed path leads through it to the building's only visible entrance—a gargantuan, monstrous skull. The tips of its menacing canines have sunk into the ground like a fangs into soft flesh. They form the sides of another archway leading into the dark interior of the structure. A faint moaning sounds rising and falling as the sand scrapes your flesh.

The gateway is composed of human skulls and exudes an aura of malice. The building is pitted, weathered, and partially collapsed. It appears long abandoned. Closer to the house the moaning grows louder and a chilling wail of wind through the bones adds to the eerie chorus.

At the edge of the fence, the heroes will feel the ground crunch beneath their feet. Those in soft-soled footwear feel sharp shards cutting into their feet. The ground is covered with the skeletons of thousands of small creatures, and those who do not tread the cobbled path will suffer 1 point of damage per turn. *For years, the fiend has lured what life it could and drained the lizards and desert rodents for the psychic nourishment it requires to survive. The simple minded, hapless animals could not resist the fiend's call and succumbed to its evil needs without a struggle.*

**Entering the House of Bones:** A path made from the weather-beaten crowns of human skulls leads to the house's entrance. If the heroes walk anywhere but along this path, each step will be accompanied by a sickening crunch and painful stabs to thinly protected feet and exposed flesh, as the bones of the fiend's victims explode sending a spray of bony shards in every direction (5' radius).

The House of Bone is filled with a dreadful and menacing aura. Once the heroes pass the Portal (Area 1), the DM should convey this feeling by describing deep shadows even where the magical, blue light shines, or faint cracking sounds each time the heroes stop moving. Strange echoes and odd chemical or charnal smells (particularly in the laboratory areas) reinforces this site's strangeness.

Entering the House will eventually result in the heroes encountering the fiend. If they are unable to discover the summoning chamber, then the crystal talsiman begins to throb warmly whenever its bearer moves away from the fiend's location, ceasing when the bearer moves closer.

## 1. Portal

The entrance to this building is a gigantic skull, 15' tall, with huge fangs above and below. When the heroes reach the portal, they discover a rag-clad, sandblasted human skeleton impaled on one of the tremendous canines which forms the arch — some sort of trap to deter wouldbe invaders. The trap was triggered by a pressure plate. When it functioned, any who tried to enter caused the jaws to snap shut, crushing the intruder. Over the years, the trap has become jammed by grit and dirt. The last native to explore this ruin was impaled by the jaws and spent the last hour in agony.

If the heroes investigate, read the following:

A wailing rises above the moaning of the house. From the impaled skeleton rises the ghostly image of a young woman. A dark stream gushes from her mouth, and her dusty clothes are quickly soaked. She reaches for you, her eyes wide with pain and madness. "Help me!" the apparition cries. "Help meee!"

This horrifying sight will invoke a Fear check (a Horror check in those with a Wisdom of 9 or less). If present, several mongrelmen flee in terror at the sight. The heroes may believe they are facing a haunt, spectre or other. If any fail a Fear check, the DM should call for Dexterity checks for any fleeing across the bone-strewn ground. Failure indicates the hero has fallen on the shards (Dmg: 1d6 points).

The phantasm is terrifying, but harmless. It is a geist, the spirit of one who died a horrible death. Geists are not harmed by physical attacks or magic. It can be laid to rest only through the use of *dismissal*, *banishment*, *wish*, *abjure*, or *holy word*.

This geist will not be seen to follow the heroes from the entrance. But, if its bones are not laid to

rest, the characters will hear her shrieks wherever they go. After an hour, this prove unnerving causing a penalty of -2 on all actions and saving throws.

Attempts to communicate with the geist will fail. The woman was driven insane by the pain and terror of her final minutes. **Characters immune to mental attacks can neither hear nor see the geist.**

The geist's treasure still lies beside her: a rusty dagger in a decayed sheath, a long split waterskin, and the frayed remnants of a 100' coil of rope.

The hallway beyond stretches into darkness. It is filled with the odor of the crypt. The floor is carpeted with animal bones, and each step causes loud crunching noises to echo off the walls.

Beyond this hallway, all rooms with a dim blue radiance. Here and there skull-shaped sconces glow with a pallid blue-white light. (The skull lights can be *dispelled*, but the blue radiance is a permanent effect of these ancient bones.)

## 2. Calciate Gallery

This chamber is bathed in an eerie blue glow emanating from the very walls. Spaced along the length of the room are colossal leg bones supporting the ceiling like columns. Beside each door huge, one-eyed skeletons tower. They wear ornate armor bristling with nasty hooks and barbs. Their pose is erect, their mailed fists resting on the hilts of massive swords.

These cyclopskin skeletons are not animated. The heroes may batter the skeletons to pieces if they wish. If they do not, they will find these guardians more dangerous when the heroes leave the House of Bones. (See "Escape from the House of Bones").

In niches throughout the room stand ivory figurines of exceptional workmanship (total worth 375 gp). Hailing from the domain of Sri Raji, they are quite fragile and can sustain only 4 points of damage before being destroyed. The explosive force of a *fireball*, for example, is likely to shatter them.

## 3. Chamber of Contemplation

This room was once a study, with armchair and fireplace. Now, however, the armchair has stuffing pushing through its rotted covering. The walls are lined with shelves, many holding bizarre little items. The mantelpiece and fireplace are carved with ornate, abstract designs.

This chamber served as a meditation chamber for the conjurer who built this place. Whenever there was a problem he needed to ponder, or a magical equation that didn't bring about the result he had expected, he would retreat to this room and contemplate his answer, surrounded by memories of past endeavors.

Searching this room reveals a number of texts on esoteric subjects, including copied fragments of the first volume of *The Madrigorian*, (an autobiography penned by a fiend trapped in Ravenloft), the *Sri Rajian Manual of Ivory Figurines*, as well as initial notes for the wizard's own works about "the Worlds Beyond," mostly erroneous theories about the Outer Planes. Also, a slim volume relates the history of the House. Originally, this House was an ancient beast from some arcane netherrealm.

Scholars of the supernatural, such as Dr. Rudolph Van Richten and many faculty members of the University of Il Aluk, would pay up to 1,000 gp for these texts. Among the many knick-knacks on the shelves (which include daggers with strange symbols carved on the blade, shrunken heads, nails bent into the shapes of runes, a golden cirlet, and other oddities) are a matched set of *ivory goats*, a variety of *figurines of wondrous power*. Each goat has one use left, although using a *goat of terror* will cause a Dark Powers check.

If the heroes investigate the fireplace, they find the charred corpse of a tiny creature in the midst of the ashes. This is the corpse of a flameling (an elemental creature from the Plane of Fire) that the wizard had trapped with a *binding* spell in the fireplace to serve as a constant heat source. Without regular feeding, however, the creature has long since starved to death.

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Heroes with the spellcraft proficiency will recognize the carvings on the fireplace and mantle as glyphs for some type of enchantment magic.

## 4. Evil Door

Unlike most rooms in this house, the door to this room is locked. Not only is it *wizard locked* as if by an 18th level wizard, but the door is further secured with a complex mechanical lock that may be picked only at -25% to a thief's normal penalty.

This door is made of brass and onyx, with black metal fittings. It is decorated with strange, angular runes. It reeks strongly of death and decay.

Beyond the door lurks one of the greatest mistakes committed by the wizard who built this structure. During his early experiments with conjuring, rather than *summoning* a single creature, he conjured hundreds of larvae from the Grey Waste. With much effort, he successfully transferred them to this room, sacrificing his audience hall to the foul worms.

If the heroes listen at the door, they will hear a weird crooning from within, underscored by something that sounds like hissing, whispering voices. No distinct words can be discerned, but the very sound chills a listener's marrow with its alien, inhuman quality.

If the door is forced open, read the following:

As the door opens, the crooning erupts to near-deafening intensity. A viscous, foul-smelling fluid gushes out. Gagging at the stench of filth and rot, you recoil from the writhing mass of immense, slime-covered worms pressing into the hall. As big as a man, each worm has a twisted, humanoid face.

From the toothless maws of these maggots issues the haunting, unnatural song. Their crawling bodies writhing across each other create the incessant whispers and murmuring.

The hundreds of larvae, though disgusting, are harmless if left alone. The heroes may slaughter the pathetic beings if they wish, for without a fiend to command them they will not band together. However, once Malistroi has been freed,

it will seize command of this mass of evil and send it against its enemies.

Larvae have a bite that *wounds*, causing the loss of 1 hit point per bite per round, unless the wound is bandaged. The bite of larvae may also infect their victim with a rotting disease in three weeks (*Save vs Poison*). If the disease is contracted, the victim will lose 4 hit points a day until he dies.

## 5. Master's Quarters.

This bedroom contains a large, unmade bed, with various articles of clothing, books, and curious trinkets heaped underneath. Several charts and sheets bearing cryptic runes are tacked to the walls. On one bureau in the room are numerous mementos, trinkets with no monetary value.

A small, flattened pouch under the mattress contains three small emeralds worth 200 gp each.

## 6. Apprentices' Quarters

The door to these rooms has been barricaded from within. The heroes may force it open with a combined Strength of at least 26.

Beyond is a room where two bunkbeds have been overturned, as if in an attempt to create an additional line of defense. In the most distant room from the entrance, writing tables and chairs have been stacked haphazardly in the doorway.

In the most distant corner of this room, there is the mummified body of a young man. He is dressed in a black robe with a red hem. His knees are drawn up to his chest and he is clutching a dagger in a deathgrip. Fear etches deeply his dried features.

This unfortunate lad was the only resident of this house to survive the summoning of the fiend. He was driven insane by what he saw and fled to this, the quarters he shared with his fellow apprentices. Here, he too, eventually died from his own terror.

The only item of apparent value is the dagger the body clutches. The blade is engraved with many sigils. It was one of the items used in conjuration.

The dagger is, in fact, cursed. It will cause it's wielder a penalty of -1 to all attack and damage rolls, as well as make him a target for fiendish

*transposition* the next time he fails a Dark Powers check. Rather than the dark powers responding to the weilder's evil, a fiend from the Lower Planes will begin to possess the character, eventually replacing him entirely if the process is not reversed. (DMs may use the Path of Corruption process outlined in the RAVENLOFT Campaign Setting, or they may consult the accessory *Van Richten's Guide to Fiends* for details about transposition.)

This room also contains a couple of primers on conjuration magic, but they are too battered and decayed to be of any use or value.

## 7. Anodynamic Sanctum

At first glance, this room appears to be some type of laboratory or medical surgery. At the center of the room is a 7-foot long table with leather restraining straps. Around the table are four benches, each large enough for a human-sized figure to lie down upon. Like several other rooms, a faint smell of rot hangs in the air, and along one wall are cages with the carcasses of long-dead animals.

This room features a powerful enchantment. It was built by the wizard to serve as a source of healing when he or his apprentices were injured in the course of experiments. Any creature that is placed on the central table is gradually drained of its life force, which then heals any persons lying on the benches. The drain on the hapless creature is one hit point per round per character on a bench, and the drain continues till the host reaches -10 hit points. Each point drained heals one character on one of the benches for 1 point.

This room's powers will not cure disease or magical afflictions. A character's hit point total cannot exceed his original total. Should the heroes discover the purpose and operation of this room, its use requires a Dark Powers check from all involved.

## 8. Library

Bookcases line every inch of wall space in this room. Each shelf is laden with scrolls, books, tomes, and more. This is a treasure trove for book-lovers. In addition to the books there is a jumble of bones piled in one corner.

Most of these volumes are obscure references

on multiplanes and necromancy (the wizard's specialties, some written by him). The planar information is mostly incorrect.

The 125 tomes are worth 1d4+1 x100 gp each to the right collector or sage, but it would take a wagon to move them all. Beneath a stack of books beside one table is a spell book containing *chill touch*, *detect undead*, *unseen servant*; *spectral hand*, *feign death*; *hold undead*, *phantom steed*, *vampiric touch*; *animate dead*, and *magic jar*. This book is protected by *explosive runes* cast as if by a 12th level wizard. The book has been coated with a contact poison that inflicts 4d6 points of damage 1d6 turns after being read (Save vs Poison for half).

However, the most powerful guardian of the spellbook and these other tomes animates within 2d4 rounds after the heroes touch the first book. The pile of bones will assemble into an automaton, a **bone golem** which will act to destroy intruders. However, the golem will not harm books.

A bone golem is immune to most spells, though a powerful *shatter* spell can destroy it. Bone golems can only be damaged by +2 or better weapons and possess undead immunities. They suffer only half damage from edged or piercing weapons.

A bone golem attacks with a powerful toothy, barbed limb for 3d8 points of damage. Once every three rounds it can issue a hideous laugh which cause all who hear it to make both a Fear and a Horror check. Those failing one check are paralyzed for 2d6 rounds. Failing both results in death!

Finally, some of the books in this library are tainted with a rare kind of fungoid blight that affects only paper. There is a 10% chance that any given article found in this room is blighted, releasing a cloud spores if opened. These spores will turn a scroll to dust in two days, destroying a spell book within a week. *Cure disease* removes the blight from two objects for each level of the Priest.

## 9. Guest Chambers

These were once sumptuously appointed bed chambers, but the wood panels that covered the bone walls have decayed and dropped away. The



rugs on the floor are spotted with rot. The sheets on the beds are yellowed and stained.

There is nothing of value or interest in any of these rooms, unless the DM chooses to place encounters of his own design in here, or possibly provide leads or foreshadowings of further adventures in G'Henna or other Ravenloft domains once the heroes have completed this adventure.

### 10. Kitchen and Dining Chamber

This kitchen contains a stove, and is crowded with pots on iron hooks, several tables. A door leads off to a pantry with a meat locker. Dishes, crusted with almost petrified food-remains, rest on the central table. Once, the pantry's shelves were loaded with flour, sugar, salt, and other staples. Over the years, however, various animals have devoured the foods that were once here, only leaving the remains of bags, barrels and other containers. The meat in the locker has long since spoiled and then dried. Nothing is suitable for human consumption.

The dining area contains a sturdy table and four chairs. There is nothing of value here.

### 11. Dissection Chambers

While the master of the House of Bones had a keen interest in other planes, he was also fascinated by life and death. He spent long hours here dissecting both animals and sentient beings, mixing their limbs and then reviving them.

A faint smell of decay permeates these chambers. They are furnished with cages (many of which still hold the decayed, partially mummified bodies of unidentifiable beasts) and tables with strong leather straps to tie creatures down. Along one wall are several cabinets holding surgical tools.

Charts and diagrams of the internal organs of a variety of species cover the other walls. (These diagrams are worth 200 gp to an interested scholar or physician.) Blood gutters and drains are cut into the floor.

### 12. Foot Bridge

The hallway ends in a foot bridge stretching across a pit. It is too dark and deep to see the bottom, even with infravision. (The bottom is, in fact, 60 feet down, but is concealed by a continual darkness.)

The bridge is made of stout bones held together by sinews. It is not very strong, supporting only 1,000 lbs. before breaking. If the bones break, the victim must make a Dexterity check or fall into the pit, which contains a monstrous dun pudding.

This variety of dun pudding is adapted to living in arid climates, like G'Henna. Further, its lack of psychic angst makes it safe from the fiend's energy draining ability.

Beyond the bridge lies that which the Circle of Darkness has been seeking, the creature they believe embodies the power of Zhakata the Provider.

If the heroes balk at crossing the foot bridge, the DM can have several mongrelmen hurry forward, convinced that the end of their crusade is at hand. This should motivate the heroes to continue or to let the outcasts face danger unprotected.

### 13. Summoning Chamber

Here is a chamber unlike anything you've ever seen. Although spacious, it feels small and cramped, because it is cluttered with tables and shelves. Surprisingly, it is lit by two small braziers at the far end of the chamber, smoke rising lazily. Shadows gather in the corners of the room and cling to the boney beams overhead.

Between the doorway and the braziers stands a podium, upon which rests a massive book. A body is slumped at the foot of the podium. Two more lay near the center of the room, and a fourth is crumpled at the far end. Here and there you can also see the remains of small animals, in varying states of mummification.

As the heroes explore the room, have the players make Intelligence checks to see if they notice the circle carved into the stone floor at the far end of the room, at the center of which slumps the third body. If any of the mongrelmen remain, besides Petchko and Warg, the mongrelmen mill about the chamber, chanting and praying to Zhakata the Provider. Somewhere in this room they believe their goal has been reached. The agents of the Circle are more cautious, carefully surveying the room.

If anyone tries to approach the area of the warding circle there will be an electric sparkle and they must Save vs Paralysis or find themselves frozen for 1d10 rounds. Only the heroes and the Circle cultists are paralyzed; the mongrelmen and the talisman's holder are merely dazed.

Atop the podium is a book bound in black leather, its pages covered with cryptic runes. This volume contains the rituals and arcana used to conjure and imprison Malistroi written in a magical script. A loose page contains a diagram of the warding circle, with a sketch of the talisman and a note where it needs to be placed "to awaken the Provider."

The body near the podium is that of a hunch-backed man in black robes, a look of horror on his mummified face. If the body is examined, it is clear that he was stabbed in the back. The cause of the death of the other two men is less easily discerned. Their faces are blank and withered.

These two were apprentices of the wizard. When Malistroi appeared, the wizard proclaimed that the the apprentices were its to devour. It was the sight of watching his comrades being drained that drove the third apprentice, insane with fear. He fled before the fiend had a chance slay him too. The other two apprentices, reduced to empty husks, died quietly as Yagno slew their master and left Malistroi trapped.

The hunched body within the circle is Malistroi. The nalfeshnee's body has been disfigured as a result of starvation and failed attempts to tap the Dark Powers for strength to escape from the circle. It needs the hatred and despair from mortals to sustain its own lifeforce. Starvation has caused the fiend to slip into a coma-like torpor, and it now appears withered and skeletal, its 20 foot height shrunken to little over 8 feet.

## Zhakata's Liberation

**T**his next part should be played for tension and theatrics. The players should feel that they are not merely silent witnesses, but have an active part in the drama that unfolds.

The members of the Circle believe that this is the eve of a momentous event. Somewhere here, they believe the wicked Yagno bound up the second aspect of Zhakata, the Provider, and denied



his blessings to his worshipers. They counsel caution, but their restrained fervor is obvious.

Any who try to approach the engraved circle will encounter the barrier. This should puzzle all.

The first priest to try to read the tome will discover the loose page. It shows where the crystal fits in the pattern. While those present debate the use of the talisman, the priest will turn back to the book and begin to recite the arcane words. It takes five rounds to complete the ritual and gestures, and the character can be interrupted forcibly. He will seem dazed and unaware of what he did.

Once the ritual begins, Malistroi stirs:

The body inside the circle suddenly jerks into standing position. The haggard form stares around the room, its eyes glowing eerily within a fanged face that is disturbingly like that on the Zhakata statues you have seen throughout G'Henna. Its skin is stretched tightly over its naked body, showing every joint and bone. Can this, truly, be a god?

Hideously inhuman, there is something forlorn about this husk. Malistroi will use *ESP* and *telepathy* to communicate. There is something horrid and wicked about its face, and yet so weary. Malistroi will try to strike a sympathetic chord with these intruders, telling them it has been too long since it was imprisoned, it is too late. "Go, quickly" it will tell them, it weakens and the force can barely be held back. All feel their strength begin to ebb.

The mongrelmen will be filled with rapture and demand the Provider be freed. The Circle is excited, but hesitant. Malistroi's prison can be unlocked by completing the ritual, placing the talisman or the spilling devout blood. If the heroes are wise enough to resist the serpent's lies, Malistroi will yet win free. A cultist could complete the ritual or place the talisman. Or a mongrelman might run forward or Wahrg stamp forward. The fool will stumble and crack his head open, spilling blood across the floor.

"I hunger," it hisses, an ancient smile on its lips.

Malistroi reaches out and grabs the unfortunate with his boney hands, and swiftly drains all energy from that mortal shell in a flash of blue energy and a feeble cry from the victim. Malistroi then drops the husk and inhales in ecstasy. Crooking a finger in the direction of the other mongrelmen, they stumble toward him as his eyes fill with a golden glow.

One by one, a dozen more withered forms fall like cordwood to the floor. With a roar like a hurricane, the creature's body distorts and grows to a towering height the blink of an eye.

With a moan, the remaining mongrelmen and several cultists fall to their knees chanting, "Provider, Provider, Provider!"

The creature surveys the room with its glowing eyes. Its form shivers, and it appears stronger. Feathered wings unfold from its back.

"O, mighty one," says Yart. "We have come to free you and crave your help against the vile Yagno Petrovna . . ."

The creature bellows, "*Yagno!*" shaking the rafters. His wings thrash. "Gladly will I aid any who battle him! With you, my blind servants, we will *defeat* him! We will gain our revenge!"

One of the creature's beefy hands closes on Yart, and yanks him into the air. The creature's gaze sweeps the room, and his body growing fuller. "You shall serve the Devourer and we shall wage war on Yagno and his false god!"

Yart's anguished scream falls silent as the creature crushes his body. The mongrelmen stare blankly at it, unaware of the gore that splatters them, until their flesh begins to melt and reform beneath its molten gaze.

The heroes, Circle members and Petchko are the only ones in the summoning chamber who retain their own minds. Madar is nowhere to be found.

Should the heroes fail to realize that now is the time to flee, Petchko will yell with dismay, "Zhakata will strike you down for your blasphemy, creature!" But then, his face goes blank, as Malistroi feeds, and remolds him into one of the Shapeless.

At this point, Malistroi no longer needs the talisman to break free of the Circle; the vast influx

## DARK CRUSADE

of energies gives him all the power he will need. It is caught up in a feeding frenzy, attacking easier targets first. If the heroes don't flee, they will be attacked when all the cultists have been slain.

The heroes may try to fight the fiend, but Malistroi will merely laugh at their feeble attempts. If someone tries to use the talisman to command Malistroi, the fiend will be daunted and will take an oath not to harm them, but as it teleports away it will send the Altered mongrelmen to attack for him.

### Rega and the Talisman

**P**ossession of Malistroi's talisman is pivotal to the remaining events of this adventure. It should be the DM's goal to have the talisman fall into Rega's hand through some guile or deceit. This will drive the adventure to a more frenetic climax.

The climactic encounter provides ample opportunity for the heroes to be distracted so that Rega may steal the crystal. Then, using his *potion of polymorph* he will transform into something strong and tiny and quietly escape.

If the heroes somehow prevent this theft, the rest of the adventure still works, but the DM will have to adjust some of the later encounters. Additional notes for how to deal with such changes are included with those encounters.

Barring extraordinary effort by the heroes, Rega should capture the talisman and escape. If the heroes are too cautious, Rega waits for the most opportune moment to steal the crystal from them.

### Escape from the House

If the heroes still possess the talisman when they flee, they will encounter a frightened Madar (Rega) by **12. The Foot Bridge**. He will flee with the heroes, looking for an opportunity to seize the crystal for himself and then escape.

If the heroes didn't slay the larvae from Area 4, they will be attacked by 2d10 of these worms when they try to climb the stairs. In the hallway at the top of the stairs there will be a brief respite and then 1d10 larvae will come slithering down the walls.

When the heroes reach Area 2 read:

"Leaving? Hmmm??" That familiar, deep voice filled with menace echoes through the hall, and the high-pitched giggle that follows rips through the air. There is the clatter of bone on bone on metal and the walls of the hall rustle.

If the heroes did not smash all of the inanimate giant skeletons earlier, one detaches itself from the wall beside the exit in front of them. Then, without warning, the blue radiance shifts to furnace white and all the intact skeletons or the walls, jerk to life.

If all the skeleton's were destroyed, the Common Animator will have possessed the room and will animate the bones in the wall and the door. (See Animation Wars on page 29.)

In this encounter, the Common Animator can use an *animate dead* ability to manipulate the skeletons or the bones of the wall. It can fling boney missiles (Dmg 1d4) or attack with boney weapons (Dmg 1d12) until its host form is destroyed.

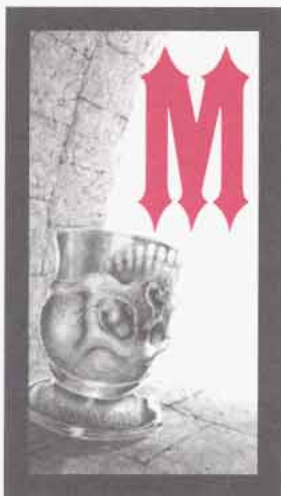
*The Lesser Animator will have possessed some blunt object in the possession of its ward — a hammer or club which it will animate to attack the Common Animator's boney form after five rounds of combat.*

As the heroes once again face their unkillable pursuer, they hear crashes and shrieks behind in the House. Malistroi has begun transforming his drained victims into Altered.

During either of these battles, Madar may attempt to steal the crystal and flee. Once he has the talisman, he will use his *potion of polymorph* to transform into a beetle and make good his escape.

When Rega has the talisman, the Animator won't be able to sense his presence and will fly into a rage, bellowing "Where?!" Its swings will become wild, possibly destroying its own animated skeletons, and reducing its Armor Class to 2.

Once the Animator has been defeated again, the heroes may discover that "Madar" and the crystal are both missing. Increasing rumblings from inside the House should encourage the heroes to flee.



Malistroi's release has plunged the realm of G'Henna into an ever-expanding maelstrom of chaos. Reality in the islands of Terror is always a fluid thing, and with the intrusion of a new, vast evil that rivals this land's Dark Lord, G'Henna begins to twist and alter to reflect the uncertain balance between two great evils: the wicked Yagno Petrovna, and the

infernal nalfeshnee, Malistroi.

The heroes have already encountered some or all of the locations in this section. If they encounter one for the first time, refer to The Outlands section for more details.

After leaving the House of Bones, the heroes should begin to realize the effects of releasing Malistroi from his circle.

You have been in G'Henna long enough to sense something is wrong, even in this bleak domain. The air presses hard upon your eyes and ears. You smell the threat of a storm.

Unless the heroes choose to return to Zhukar at once, they have four other likely destinations: the village of Keshka, the borders of the domain, northern G'Henna, or the mongrel camp. However, heroes being heroes, they may just head into the wilderness and hope for the best.

The DM should use the random encounter charts and The Outlands descriptions as a guide for adventures in the wilderness. The land will change shape before the heroes' eyes, with things more dramatic by the hour. These encounters, and any the DM may devise for the wilderness, should lead the heroes back to the City of Hunger, and the events leading to the ultimate fate of G'Henna.

*If the heroes go to the village of Keshka, they will find the place largely unchanged — at first.*

The release of Malistroi has created a terrible storm, which even now it approaches the village.

You see Keshka before you, after a wearying journey across the darkened plains of G'Henna. The villagers seem glad at your return, but they cringe at the dark clouds seething on the southern horizon behind you. "What is happening?" asks Tvoshe. "That is no natural storm. What have you done in the Outlands?!"

The villagers do not accuse the heroes of wrongdoing, but they persist in their questions as the clouds grow during the day, stretching overhead by the next morning. The heroes are welcome to share the village's water and, on Dole-Days, food.

If the heroes remain more than a day, by noon of the second day, the clouds block the sun. Soon after the dark shadow rolls across the village, a band of Altered (8 Bloated and 20 Imps) attacks the village. The heroes have only one round of warning before the attack. For more information on the Altered see the large map sheet and under Malistroi's character description for details. The Bloated and Imps will first pelt the villages with stones. Then the Bloated will lead a charge as 12 of the Imps climb to the rooftops and dive down into melees.

Eight Imps and four Bloated attack the heroes. The villagers must fight the rest with pitchforks and staves (1d6 damage). The villagers fight the Altered effectively, because their weapon points are made of cold iron (to which the Altered are vulnerable).

Tvoshe, a 3rd level priest, casts spells to assist, protect, and defend the villagers. His available spells include: 1: *bless, command, cure light wounds, entangle*; 2: *hold person*.

After the battle, the villagers will pack their possessions to flee northward. Tvoshe, seeking added safety for the villages, urges the heroes to accompany them. The village is deserted less than an hour later.

*If the heroes decide to leave the domain entirely, they will find their way blocked by Yagno Petrovna's wall of skulls . . . or by Malistroi's new*

# CATHERINE GLOOM

version of the domain's boundary, a teleportal that randomly teleports those who enter the mists into a random location in G'Henna. The longer the heroes wait before returning to Zhukar, the more power the fiend manifests. Within a few days, G'Henna effectively has two Darklords.

As you approach the mist-shrouded border of G'Henna, a low rumbling trembles the earth beneath your feet. The ground shakes, then yawns open in a gargantuan grimace, dust streaming into the dark maw before you.

A pale barrier leaps up beyond the crevasse. It is a wall of skulls, human and bestial, stretching into the distance to either side and far up into the dark skies overhead. Tongueless mouths cackle and jeer at you, bare jawbones clacking on dry teeth.

The wall is not affected by any physical or magical force the heroes can summon.

If the heroes journey to the border after three days, possibly after visiting and defending Keshka, they are still blocked, but this time by a maze of skulls rather than a mere wall. Those wandering in this maze will be teleported to a random location in G'Henna. The skulls comprising this maze are dusty black, with yellow flames dancing in their eye sockets. They do not jeer, but rather hiss and rattle deafeningly, refusing to grant the heroes an escape route. This is Malistroi's wall.

After the heroes encounter either version of this wall, any later attempts to leave the domain meet with either Yagno's or Malistroi's wall (50/50% chance). Only with the destruction of one or both of the villains may the heroes escape.

*If the heroes choose to join the exodus to the north*, they may travel with refugees from Keshka or even Zhukar to the city of Dervich. The DM should describe fantastic sights as they travel, such as a mountain shaped like a face with a mouth gaping in a scream of pain rising from the ground and falling away just as quickly; or statues of Zhakata that have been turned from stone into quivering mounds of flesh; or streams flowing uphill; and attacks by carnivorous cattle.

Throughout it all, black stormclouds race across the sky, crackling with lightning and releasing torrential downpours, that last less than a minute or two, upon the heroes and refugees without warning.

A few days after leaving the House of Bones, you sight buildings on the arid plain. With the skies darkened by storm clouds, it is strange that there are no lights or fires burning ahead, and no sounds of habitation.

In fact, the silence is very ominous.

If the heroes head north toward Dervich and the Fertile Valley, avoiding Zhukar on the way, they find a village in their path. The houses and fields are similar to those of Keshka.

This village has been decimated. Not a single living thing remains. Houses that appear whole from a distance are gutted, with blood stains visible in, and on, most of the buildings.

At first, the only sound in the deserted village is a distant wailing of the winds. But there . . . there it is again . . . a high squealing sound, stopped as suddenly as it began. Even the wind is quiet now, though it still blows the dust in restless eddies.

What was that movement? Between the hollow buildings, shadows move as if lifted with the dust in the wind.

The squealing sound returns at odd intervals. Investigation proves it to be nothing more than a broken shutter on a squeaky hinge, moved by the wind. The shadows are harmless, caused by nothing more threatening than clouds and errant curtains.

From this village, the heroes find that routes further north are blocked off by almost sheer cliffs of soft black stone that almost seems organic to the touch. Scaling these cliffs is extremely difficult (-20% to Climb Walls rolls, -4 to Mountaineering or related proficiencies, or Dexterity checks).

Scouting for 1d6 hours reveals a passage through the newly risen cliffs, but 2d6 Bloated

Altered are atop the passage's walls, armed with stones (1d4 +1 damage, throwing 2 per round). Beyond this gauntlet, the heroes will go directly into the encounter with Petchko (below).

*Should the heroes attempt to return to the mongrelmen camp, they find the way without any real difficulty. The journey may be hard for those with short supplies. The DM should continue to keep track of each hero's supplies of food and water. Also, the DM should not forget to emphasize the harsh environment.*

As the skies to the south grow increasingly dark and angry, you encounter a group of mongrelmen traveling in the opposite direction to yours. They must be making their own pilgrimage toward the House of Bones.

"Friends!" they greet you, surprised at seeing you. "We go to serve the freed Zhakata. What of you? Will you not serve him also?"

These nine mongrelmen are filled with religious fervor at the thought of serving Zhakata directly. Persuading them that the creature in the House of Bones is not Zhakata is difficult. A successful Charisma check at a -4 penalty allows a hero to persuade the mongrels to turn back. If allowed to continue, they will arrive at the House of Bones, only to be slaughtered by the growing army of Altered there.

If persuaded to return, the mongrelmen guide the heroes to the camp, which has moved since the expedition set out. The camp now holds scarcely a few dozen mongrelmen. The heroes are told that the camp was attacked by the Swords of Zhakata shortly after the expedition set out. Hundreds were slain, hundreds more scattered and lost.

The elders listen to the heroes' tale, heartbroken, but not violent. They suggest that the only possible solution to defeating Malistroi lies in Zhukar.

## 6. Following Footsteps

Perhaps fortune at last smiles upon you. Ahead on the blasted tundra rests a carriage. A bit battered and weathered, but serviceable. The traces have broken and the horses have long since fled. Perhaps there is some way to use this conveyance to speed your travel.

The heroes may try a variety of methods to get the carriage mobile if they desire. On these windy plains, sails is probably the best answer. Permit the heroes to find a way to use the carriage if they like. Then, at an opportune time, the Common Animator will take over control of the carriage and try to send it and its passengers crashing into a cliff or a gorge.

The Lesser Animator has used the intervening time to possess a scarf or rope of its ward. When the Common Animator attacks, the Lesser Animator will wait till the right moment to tangle and jam one of the wheels, causing the carriage to flip.

## Fiendish Threat (Two Days Later)

The wind rises, whipping up a stinging whirlwind. A wicked dagger of lightning jabs the ground ten feet away, its flash blinding you as the wave of thunder crashes all about.

As vision returns you see a hazy, gargoylish image, the desolate landscape visible through the form. It is the creature from the House!

"Mortals!" he snarls in contempt. "At first I thought *you* had stolen the crystal and considered amusing ways to destroy each one. But, I found that the item I seek was taken by a priestling, called Rega. I want it back!

"You had a hand in freeing me. That was worth a reward, so you still live. Now, I will offer you one boon within my power if you recover that stone. Fail, and I will ensure your life is long and exquisitely agonizing."

Malistroi will remain ethereal throughout this exchange, and if attacked will teleport beside his attacker and drain some energy. But he does not want to kill them, just to terrify and invoke blind

obedience. Whatever the heroes' decisions, Malistroi will leave with a threat and an explosion of sand and grit (Dmg 2d8, 20'R).

If the heroes travel anywhere, but to Zhukar, their nights will be filled with prophetic dreams of fiendish rule — dreams in which they are hunted down and slain horribly.

## Petchko's Return

Whatever course the heroes choose after leaving the House of Bones, this encounter occurs on the second day. The encounter's location is not important, though it is best that it not occur in a village or the mongrelman camp.

Unearthly howls and horrid screams alert you to violence not far away. The source is not hard to find. A group of Altered is tormenting one of their own, tearing at the outnumbered creature with their claws and fangs. The hapless victim spots you, crying out for help in a piteous and somehow familiar voice.

Any mongrelmen or villagers with the heroes refuse to approach the Altered, terrified for their own lives and not interested in saving a monster for any reason. If the heroes decide to help, they must defeat 2 Imps and 3 Bloated Altered. The one being battered is a malformed Altered with a misshapen skull, distorted features and constantly shifting, claylike flesh. This is Petchko, once more singled out because of his gentle nature. Any hero looking carefully at this Altered may make an Intelligence check to recognize the fallen priest's tattered robe.

Petchko, is badly wounded, his doughy flesh blackened and oozing a slimy gray ichor. If the heroes defeat the other Altered within ten rounds, they have time to save Petchko through healing proficiencies and spells. Once revived, Petchko has some insights as to why Madar disappeared or tried to steal the talisman at the House of Bones.

"I remember him now . . . his name is not Madar. That didn't seem right. When first I knew him he had a more horrible name and

reputation. He was Rega, Yagno's chief aid! He is much changed, but I recall his voice and manner from when we were both novices.

"He was ambitious even then," chokes the creature in Petchko's ragged clothes. "He has betrayed us all. The Circle . . . everything must have been some kind of trick to benefit himself or Yagno. . . ."

He looks up at the sliver of crescent moon in the sky, his catlike eyes glazing over.

A successful herbalism or healing proficiency check shows that Petchko has been poisoned by an Altered's venomous weapon. A *neutralize poison* spell, successful herbalism/healing proficiency check, or similar treatment can save the poor wretch's life.

He knows no more than he has told. Even if he is saved, Petchko will prove little help to the heroes. Despite his own heroic effort to retain his mind, Malistroi's transformation threatens to sweep away the last vestiges of goodness in him, replacing them with a fiendish obsession with violence.

Not even the mongrelmen will accept Petchko in his current form. The heroes must either take him with them or find a place for him to hide from both the Altered and the native G'Hennans; both would kill him now. If the heroes do not help Petchko, he dies of his poisoned wounds.

## Return to Zhukar

When the heroes return to Zhukar, they find the city has changed dramatically since they were last here. The streets are deserted, as most of the citizens have fled in the face of the ominous wave of darkness approaching from the south. Those that remain are huddled in their homes, barricading their doors and hiding from the horrors which move inexorably closer. Not even the soldiers will stand to fight against the monstrous horde that approaches.

You see Zhukar once more in the distance, but the city seems far too quiet, even from so far away. No smoke rises from the chimneys, no candles glow in the windows. Indeed, under the





darkening skies, the land is darker still.

Then you see bundles of clothes and small personal possessions discarded along the roadside, mute witness to a mighty exodus.

Zhukar has been left to her fate.

Finding Rega and the talisman is most likely the heroes' first goal. Rega has already reached the city, and is in the Temple, preparing to perform the ritual that he hopes will bind Malistroi to his will. The events at the House of Bones have given him cause for concern. He has no desire to end up as part of Malistroi's army of Altered. He is presently reviewing Yagno's purloined journals for any information he can glean on Malistroi. But, he is beginning to believe that he is not equal to the task of controlling this terrible creature.

If the heroes seek Yagno first, go to Full Circle. Yagno is spending his time in prayer. He is keenly aware that most of the soldiers and priests have joined the exodus. He realizes the scope of this threat to his rule, but not how to stop it.

The heroes are not the only searchers in the city. First, bands of looters roam the streets, and shortly after entering the city gates, the heroes encounter a group of 6. Each has a sack of plunder, including jewelry, small religious icons and coins (300 gp total value each). They have just started ransacking the bazaar. They will assume the heroes are mercenaries hired by Yagno to keep order. They have faith in their superior numbers and do not check morale until four of them are defeated.

Use statistics for Men, Thieves for the Looters.

More importantly, an Apeman, one of the Altered sent by Malistroi, searches the city for Rega. The Altered will kill Rega unless the heroes intervene.

## The Master Exposed

Through quiet, empty streets, shadows flit from alley to corner almost faster than the eye can catch them. An occasional clatter of falling stonework echoes as you walk past guesting houses with gaping doors and wine shops left broken and gutted by looters.

The Temple stands ahead, its blunt facade resembling the prow of a beached galleon. The windows are dark, and the usual bustle of junior priests and clerks is absent. The missing millings of humanity cause an uneasy feeling to well up inside you.

The main doors are ajar, their frames black and gaping. One door creaks loudly as it shifts on its hinges.

Like the rest of the city, the Temple is nearly empty. The heroes may proceed unchallenged through the Grand Hallway to the Sanctuary and up any of the four staircases. As they reach the Sanctuary, however, they hear loud but distant cursing echoing from the Northern Stair. Investigating, they will find the cursing gets louder as they approach the third floor, where the Library stores "blasphemous" texts and papers by heretics.

Reaching the landing at the third floor, you hear the sounds of fluttering paper and heavy objects being flung about.

"Useless!" A voice bellows, followed by a string of curses. "All useless trash!"

Rounding a corner, you find yourselves facing one of the cultists you met earlier, the man you know as Madar. He stands among toppled shelves from which books and scrolls have been pulled. They now lie scattered and torn across every inch of the floor.

Wild-eyed and obviously on the edge of exhaustion, Madar clutches the crystal in one hand. Cradling it to his chest, he stares at you accusingly.

"You," he growls. "Outlanders! Always turning up like birds of ill omen. What does it take to be rid of you?!"

If the heroes move to attack Rega, they must roll initiative normally. Rega's first action is to topple a bookcase between him and the heroes. Then he casts *produce flame*, and flings the small magical flame on the heap of paper setting them on fire (Damage 1d4+1 to anyone crossing the flame). The following round, he bolts for a door

and the stairs beyond. Once he has barred the door, he throws a second gout of flame at the curtains hanging beside the door and then turns and runs down the South Stair.

Once in the stairway, Rega casts *resist fire* on himself, and continues to flee.

If the heroes chase him, or if they attempt to speak with him in the library before attacking, he turns to face them with a sneer.

"You certainly are persistent, aren't you? You want this chunk of rock? It's worthless. Yes, its part and parcel of that monster we released, but there is no way to use it! I thought I could use that thing as a weapon against Yagno — I was wrong!"

He backs away from you, reaching for something inside his robe. "It was a great plan! But now G'Henna is changing. Black skies, cold winds, and what next? Why should I want to become the lord of this miserable place now?"

Rega pulls a *wand of fear* (with 5 charges left) from within his robe and fires one charge at the hero. But, as he does, the Altered Apeman separates from the shadows behind him. If the heroes call out a warning, Rega mocks them, "I'm not so dull as to fall for that old..." Then the apeman wraps its long, taloned fingers around his head and yanks him off his feet. Rega's wand clatters to the floor and he lets out a shriek.

If the heroes take no action, the apeman rips Rega's throat out with its sharp fangs, seizes the talisman, and attempts to escape. If it manages to get away from the heroes, Malistroi will claim the talisman when he and his army reach the city.

If the heroes chase the creature and attack or capture it before it has a chance to flee, the Altered will fight to the death, bounding from target to target and climbing the baroque ornamentation of the surrounding buildings looking for a way to escape with the talisman.



t last, the heroes encounter Yagno Petrovna, high priest of the Beast-God Zhakata. They may seek either to gain his advice and aid, or to confront and defeat him. In either event, they will find him struggling to cope with his inner turmoil and the external crisis. If the heroes do not attack him, then after discussing ways to overcome the fiend — as well as potential rewards

for their help — Yagno gives them a task that will help him achieve equal footing with the fiend: calling the remaining citizens of Zhukar to worship at the Temple.

The skies are now black, full of scudding clouds, while flashes of lightning claw the ground savagely. From outside, you could see a dim light flickering in the Temple's uppermost floor—the living quarters of Yagno Petrovna.

The staircase leading to the high priest's chambers are empty and unguarded. You find a simple wooden door, unlocked, which opens into a small suite of rooms lit by a few candles.

At a devotional at the far end of the room a man in a red robe kneels. His head bent in thought. A hood lays on the floor nearby.

The heroes have found Yagno, deep in prayer. If they attack him, they find he is protected by a *sanctuary* spell cast by junior priests. If the heroes persist in trying to attack, he reacts as described below. Unless the heroes speak or attack him, Yagno notices the heroes two rounds after they enter. He stands slowly, carefully putting on his ornate hat and adjusting it before speaking.

"I have heard much about you," Yagno says, his voice cultured and refined, with only a trace of an unfamiliar accent. "You have brought misery to my land. Did you honestly believe you could help anything by freeiing a creature you could not control?"

He holds up a hand, gesturing silence even before you have begun to speak. "Do not bother to answer. Just consider what I say. Zhakata has brought you here for his purposes. I merely seek to do his will." He turns to look out through a window.

"The city is about to be invaded. Malistroi has gathered quite an army around himself. Even at their greatest strength, I do not believe the Swords of Zhakata could withstand the monsters — and the Swords are far from strong now, scattered between Dervich and Zhukar or fled into the Outlands.

"I am at a loss. It would be one thing if I had the fiend's talisman, for then I could destroy it and him with it, but his foul army would still be plaguing my land and my people. If only there was a way to undo what has been done. If only the High Altar . . ."

Yagno's eyes become distant. "Yes, it just might be. I must call upon the faith of the people. Their belief will defend G'Henna against this horror. The strength of their trust in Zhakata will save this land. Yes! It can be done! But how to gather the worshippers?"

The heroes may choose to help Yagno gain an even footing with the fiend, or they may deny his request for help, or they may even attack him.

If the heroes give Yagno the talisman and/or offer to go out into the city and gather the citizens, Yagno promises them great rewards of wealth and power. (By G'Hennan standards, that is.) If the heroes ask that he return them to their homeworld or domain, the darklord promises that there are means at his disposal to fulfill those wishes. (This is not true, but the DM can use this promise to create further adventures in G'Henna, as touched upon in "Concluding the Adventure.")

If the heroes wish to consult Yagno, they will find him well-informed on matters of G'Henna, but lacking in knowledge arcane, he is not a wizard.

In addition to answering any reasonable questions about his own history, Yagno shares the following information, some of it not exactly the truth:

- ❖ Malistroi was summoned over thirty years ago, when Yagno was new to G'Henna. He hoped to get closer to his god, but was tricked by a necromancer.
- ❖ The domain of G'Henna is in peril, as the *real* Zhakata seems to be turning away from the land. Yagno believes the domain's recent isolation from its previous neighbors is the result of a crisis of faith in his people. They have not worshiped well enough, and Zhakata is punishing them.
- ❖ The new moon is considered a very powerful help to evil magic and dark purposes. If Malistroi has designs on G'Henna, that is the ideal time to act. And the new moon rises this very night — less than six hours from now. Its effects on the struggle between Malistroi and Yagno can be offset by gathering a larger number of worshipers to support Yagno during the final battle (see below).

Throughout any conversation, Yagno should be portrayed as a man at odds with his reputation. The heroes should find him reasonable, maybe even likeable, and surely not the monster legend portrays.

He *is* bad, and worse, but he is far too wise to show that face to potential allies. Once the heroes have agreed to help in rounding up the worshippers left in Zhukar, Yagno bids them to start their task and sends three of his personal guards with them as an escort.

Should the heroes not offer to assist him, or, worse, refuse to help, Yagno first attempts to sway them by generating sympathy for the people of G'Henna. He would prefer not to fight the heroes, but he will threaten them as a last resort, ordering them to leave if they will not be of help, but promising to punish them for their refusal, after he has dealt with Malistroi. Without the heroes' help, however, Yagno is doomed. But then the heroes must, eventually and by themselves, confront a much fouler evil.

If the heroes attack Yagno, either before or after

listening to him, he uses his spells and abilities to defend himself and buy time to escape. He casts *flame strike*, then a *wall of fire* between the heroes and himself so that he can flee and regroup at the High Altar. He will also transform into a jaguar, if need be, for both speed and combat ability. If pressed by the heroes, he will flee into the Outlands, and Malistroi will take G'Henna uncontested. See "Concluding the Adventure" for more on this eventuality.

## Gathering the Flocks

**Y**agno expects the heroes to devise a way to alert the majority of the remaining citizens in Zhukar before the moon rises in five to six hours. How this is accomplished is left up to the ingenuity of the heroes, who must cover the vast city in that time. (If they are at a loss, one of the guards suggests pressing some townsfolk into service as criers, and mustering more guards, splitting up the party to escort them through the streets to spread word of Yagno's sermon.

The DM is encouraged to devise encounters as the heroes race against the clock. Among these, however, should be at least one encounter with more looters, as well as a band of 1d6 bloated Altered, an advanced scouting party of Malistroi's army.

For even as the heroes attempt to gather the citizens left in Zhukar, Malistroi is mustering his forces less than a dozen miles from the city. There are hundreds of Altered of all nightmarish shapes and sizes.

Meanwhile, the environment in G'Henna becomes more harsh with each passing hour. The air is frigid (roughly 35° F, dropping 5° per hour), while the sky is completely black, webbed with lightning. The ground grows even stonier and more barren.

## Yagno's Sermon

Wicked teeth of freezing wind tear through your clothing as you ascend the steps toward the High Altar. Yagno and a group of seven lesser priests are chanting, swinging smoking censors as they walk around the altar's edges.

Close-up, the High Altar is a block of dark gray stone shot through with black veins, sharp-etched runes cut into its sides even as blood-gutters are carved into its top. Worn leather straps are located at the four corners, fastened to iron stakes driven into the stone.

As the people arrive, beginning to fill the plaza before the temple, the altar begins to glimmer, as though some kind of luminescence were building somewhere inside.

Yagno invites the heroes to attend the sermon atop the Temple if they helped gather worshipers for the service. If not, the heroes may still sneak up to the top, each making a Dexterity check to avoid slipping on the narrow, frost-rimmed stairs.

Six elite soldiers from Yagno's bodyguard stand at the top of the stairs to the High Altar; six more stand guard on the platform below the High Altar. There are six senior priests assisting Yagno.

**Spells:** 1: *cure light wound, light, sanctuary*; 2: *aid, chant, hold person*; 3: *call lightning, continual light*.

One of Yagno's assistant priests (all of whom have cast *sanctuary* on themselves) begins a *chant* spell, including the heroes if they are invited guests. In the coming battle, they will first defend Yagno, then assist any heroes who help their leader.

Yagno first draws a circle around the altar that essentially functions as a *forbiddance* spell. This mystical ring will prevent Malistroi from *teleporting* away once he has reached the top of the temple. The only way the fiend will depart is by seizing his talisman or through the *abjure* spell Yagno has readied.

Next, Yagno turns to face the gathering crowd, gesturing to the heroes to stand at his side.

## Army of Darkness

Far below the altar, the faithful of Zhakata gather around the temple. Surrounding them are scarcely two hundred of the remaining Swords of Zhakata, bravely facing the encroaching darkness. As it draws nearer, you see that the shadow is not simply the result of

a new moon, it is a seething mass of terrible shapes, wailing more horribly than the wind ever could. In the darkness, pale fangs and talons flash like tiny strokes of lightning as the horde closes.

The heroes see the scope of the enemy, and some may wish to help the defenders below. The guards and priests upon the temple urge them to stay, saying it is more important to guard Yagno than to try to save the city.

If the heroes wish to fight the Altered in the streets of Zhukar, they find themselves vastly outnumbered and without reinforcements. This is not the way to save G'Henna. The best course is for the heroes to remain near the altar and wait for Malistroi to come to them.

The heroes' opportunity to act comes when 16 shapeless reach the rooftop from the stairs. The soldiers keep ten of them busy, leaving six for the heroes to battle. The soldiers kill one Altered each round, while they slay two soldiers.

If the heroes cannot overcome the shapeless within six rounds, the Altered are driven away as Yagno begins preaching to the masses.

Yagno spreads his arms wide, his robe flapping in the freezing winds that scour the temple's roof.

"Hear me, ye faithful!" he shouts, his voice carrying over the howling winds. "This is the hour of testing! Zhakata will judge us by how we stand against the dark. Are we not worthy?"

The crowd screams, "We are worthy!"

"Then believe, with all your hearts! Pour your faith into me, defender of G'Henna, the chosen champion of Zhakata. Lend me your strength for Zhakata!"

As he continues, the High Altar begins to glow more brightly, though it retains a sickly gray taint at its center. Near-tangible beams of light stream forth, blasting the Altered from the roof like powerful streams of cold water. Screaming in pain and frustration, the Altered plunge over the roof's edge to fall spinning toward the crowd below.

If Yagno already has the talisman, the heroes can see the crystal begin to glow an eerie, sickly green. The priest grimaces, as if the thing is hurting him, but he does nothing else with the talisman before using his *abjure* spell to banish Malistroi.

If the heroes do have the talisman, the one holding it feels a sharp, sudden pain, even if the talisman is kept in a pouch or backpack. The object glows, radiating painful cold. The hero feels an urge to leave the rooftop and flee the altar, but may resist. The talisman is reacting to the power of Yagno's altar.

If the heroes possess the talisman and have allied themselves with Yagno, the priest turns to them during his sermon:

"In our hour of need, Zhakata has provided aid! These outlanders have recovered the very life-essence of our enemy! Give that talisman into my hand, that the fiend may be expunged from our land!"

The heroes have listened to the sermon long enough to be affected by Yagno's vocal *charm person* ability. As foreigners to the domain, they gain a +2 bonus to their saving throws; when Yagno reaches for the talisman, the pain inflicted by the object gives the talisman holder an additional saving throw at +4.

Unless they are already cooperating with his defense, Yagno orders any charmed heroes to help the soldiers protect him and the other priests from Malistroi's imminent arrival, and then continues his sermon for another 10-15 minutes, shouting to overcome the wild winds.

## The Lord of G'Henna

Even over the wind, you hear the snap of leathery wings. A piece of the black night sky drops to the rooftop to face Yagno across the altar — Malistroi!

"Fool of a priest! You remember me, I think," the fiend sneers, a terrible grin spreading across its monstrous features.

"Indeed," rasps Yagno, hoarse with preaching. As one, the adversaries raise their arms to attack.

Malistroi is on the attack even as Yagno starts the service. The *forbiddance* foiled its first plan (teleporting to the altar), but the ground campaign is going well. Despite the risk, Malistroi has decided it is time to bring the conflict to a close. Malistroi knows that as long as Yagno or the heroes have the talisman, which essentially functions as a phylactery for the fiend, there is the risk of destruction or enslavement.

The battle between Yagno and Malistroi is set against the wildly flashing altar, which sends bright beams into the sky and shadows dance wildly across the assemblage. The sounds of screams, clashing weapons, and voices raised in religious hymns can be heard faintly over the whine of the icy wind.

Details on the battle between the villainous foes have not been provided, as the heroes will be too busy to observe the conflict. One round after Yagno and Malistroi lock horns mortal combat, an additional contingent reaches the top of the temple. Since Yagno now has to focus all his energies on the fiend, each hero will be face off against three bloated and one imp. In addition, four shapeless have returned to the High Altar.

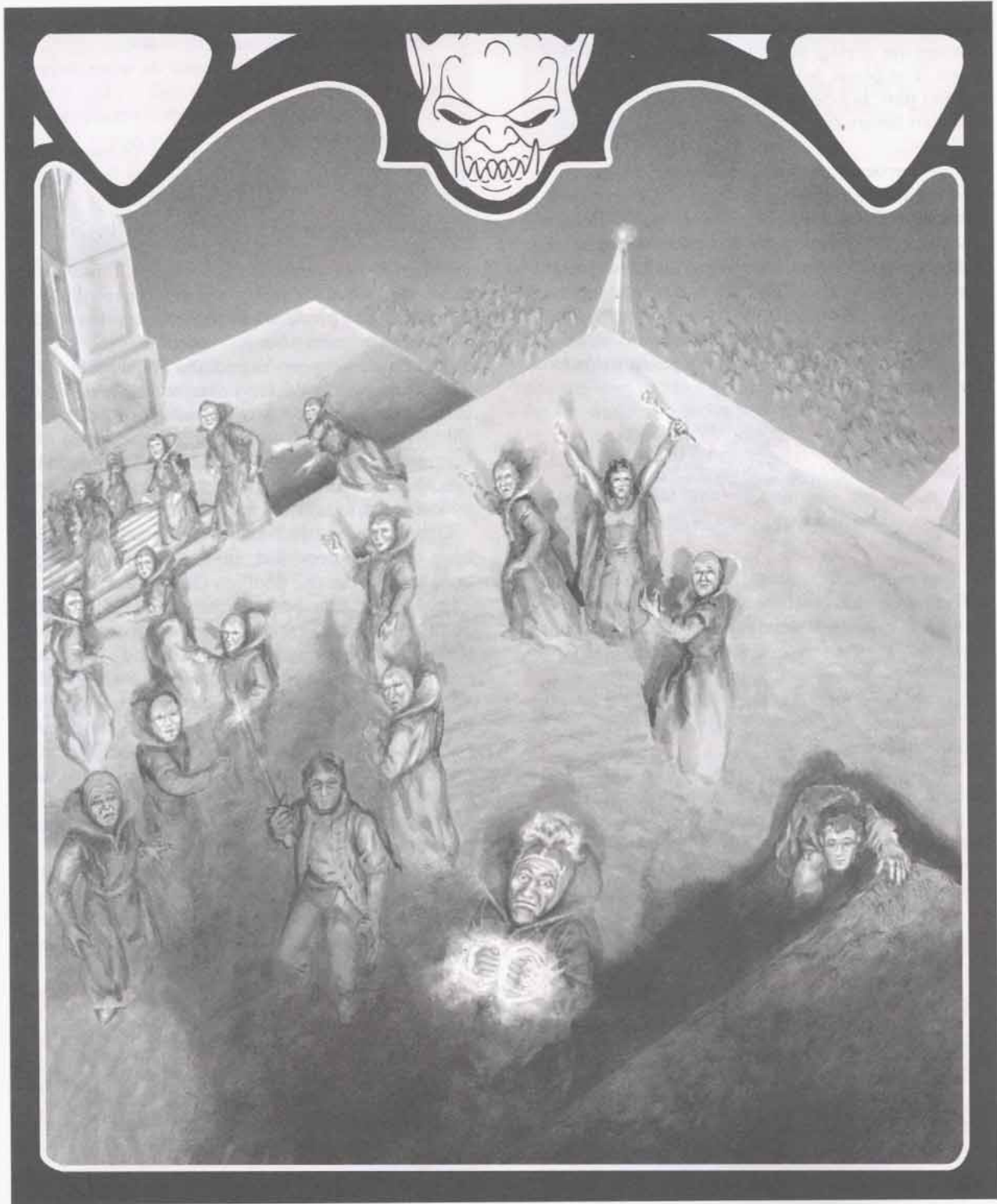
As the heroes fight, they hear and feel the exchange of powerful magics between Yagno and Malistroi. By the time they have defeated the Altered, the battle between the darklord and the pretender has been decided. The DM should choose between one of the following options as the resolution:

### Yagno Victorious

As your final enemy falls, you turn to the struggle between the high priest and Malistroi. Yagno is on the ground, blood staining his vestment. The fiend looms over him.

"G'Henna is mine!" the horrid creature bellows, raising his taloned hands to strike the final blow.

# FULL CIRCLE



"All you own is mist," Yagno replies, almost inaudibly, swiftly tracing mystical symbols in the air with his hands. As he does, the talisman (if it is in his possession) falls to the ground and rolls to your feet.

Malistroi lets out a roar that shakes your very bones and lunges toward the fallen priest, but his claws pass harmlessly through him. "You will not cheat me of my revenge!"

But then the crystal on the ground starts to glow like the altar, and a pillar of mist shoots from the overcast sky. It engulfs Malistroi, who utters a shriek that is a sound both of boundless pain and abject terror. As quickly as it descended, the pillar retracts into the storm clouds. The bodies of the Altered dissolve into wisps of mist and are torn away in the wind.

The storm clouds dissipate within mere moments and the temperature increases notably. After healing himself with a *cure serious wounds*, Yagno rises to his feet and strides to the edge of the platform, where the surviving citizens of Zhukar greet him with cheers and praises to Zhakata.

"Through the grace of the Devourer," Yagno exclaims, "Our homes have been saved and a great evil taken from our land!"

"Concluding" offers suggestions for what might happen next.

## Malistroi Victorious

As your weapon sends the final creature tumbling to its bloody death, you turn toward the battle of mighty magic that is waging between Malistroi and Yagno . . . only to see the orange-robed priest firmly in the grasp of Malistroi's hands. Yagno barely has time to scream before the wicked tusks rip open his belly and break open his ribcage. The fiend's talisman drops from Yagno's lifeless hand (if it was in his possession) and rolls until it comes to rest before your feet.

"There is *no* Zhakata!" Malistroi roars, as he throws Yagno's mutilated body from the rooftop. It sails through the air like a ragdoll,

trailing a cloud of blood, and spatters on the ground where the last citizens are meeting death at the hands of the Altered. "There is only I, Malistroi, the Devourer of Souls!"

The only chance the heroes have for survival is to flee the temple immediately. If they remain, they will either fall victim to Malistroi's gaze or to the claws of an overwhelming number of Altered.

"Concluding the Adventure" details what further events the heroes might experience in G'Henna now that the land is under the control of a fiend.

## Heroes Victorious

In this case, good triumphs unquestionably over evil, and the heroes accomplish the rarest of feats in Ravenloft: they, through their actions, manage to free a land from the grip of the Dark Powers — at least for a time.

In the two previous options, Yagno drops the talisman and it becomes easy for a hero to seize it. It has been stated outright that Malistroi's lifeforce is tied to the talisman, and observant heroes might come to the same conclusion about Yagno and the High Altar.

Both the fiend and the darklord will be destroyed if a hero crushes the talisman against the altar; this can be done either while Yagno is banishing Malistroi, or while the fiend is gutting the priest and flinging his body from the temple.

Unseen, you seize the talisman and rush to the brightly pulsating altar, intent on shattering the crystal against it. The crystal talisman grows so cold that it burns your hands, and you are filled with an urge to flee from this place, to carry the talisman as far away from here as you can possibly get . . .

If the hero chooses to resist the urges, he succeeds automatically. It takes two blows to shatter the talisman against the Altar, but the second blow causes both to explode in an 8d6 damage fireball. The hero smashing the talisman suffers full damage automatically. Everyone else on the roof may save for half damage, but Yagno



and Malistroi are both apparently destroyed in the explosion.

What follows next is detailed in “Concluding the Adventure.”

Instead of smashing the talisman, the heroes might also act to fulfill the prophesy given by the Marda, the vistani seer in *Dire Portents*.

When the hero moves to smash the talisman, a spot on the altar begins to glow even brighter—a spot that is the exact shape and size as the crystal. If the hero places the talisman onto that spot (an act that requires him to roll a *Save vs Death Magic* or suffer 2d10 points of damage), the effect that was determined by the tarroka deck will occur.

**If the card drawn was Coins:** Power suddenly surges through the hero, and suddenly it’s as though his mind has expanded to envelope every living and undead thing in G’Henna; he can feel the worms burrowing through the earth, he can feel the distorting effect Malistroi is having on the land, but more importantly, he can feel power being pulled from Yagno and into him. The hero has, temporarily, gained the powers of the darklord.

The hero has, and knows, the full array of Yagno’s powers. The effect will last for 2d4 rounds, during which the hero will hopefully think fast enough to destroy Malistroi, Yagno, or both and change the *Altered* back to men. The end-result will still be the one described under the appropriate section in “Concluding the Adventure,” as if the villains had fought their battle to the end.

**If the card drawn was Glyphs:** When the talisman touches the altar, Malistroi lets out a scream. Suddenly, he is drawn into Yagno’s body and vanishes. If Yagno was dead, he suddenly jerks back to life, looking around, confused. “I have caused much suffering in my madness,” he mutters, levitating off the ground, and floating through the air away from the temple. “I now understand that I must absorb all the evil I have wrought so that others can be free.” Mists suddenly rush toward him, and he fades from sight. The story proceeds as described under “Concluding the Adventure,” as if Yagno and Malistroi had been destroyed, for the High Altar had turned all that was evil in both Yagno and

Malistroi to good, and Yagno in turn sacrificed himself for the good of all in G’Henna.

**If the card drawn was Swords:** Yagno turns his eyes toward the hero who placed the talisman on the altar, his eyes wide with fear. “What have you done?” he cries. “My powers—”

His voice is cut off when Malistroi rams his clawed hand right through his chest cavity. The adventure proceeds as described under “Malistroi Victorious” and the appropriate “Concluding the Adventure” paragraphs. When the hero put the talisman on the High Altar, Yagno’s connection with the land and his abilities as a darklord were disrupted.

**If the card drawn was Crowns:** Proceed as described under “Yagno Victorious,” and the appropriate “Concluding the Adventure” paragraphs.

**If the card drawn was Stars:** As soon as the talisman touches the altar, it vanishes and whatever Malistroi’s next attack on Yagno is has no effect. The high priest looks at the fiend, who keeps slicing at him with no effect, and then looks at the heroes, a glazed look entering his eyes. “None of this is real, is it? I’ve been living a fantasy... no, a *nightmare* for the last 30 years. Or has it been my whole life? Am even *I* real?”

When the hero placed the talisman on the altar, Yagno saw what no one — mortal or god — has ever seen before: for a brief moment he saw that which is known as the Dark Powers, and he saw the purpose behind that which is known as Ravenloft.

“The dream must end,” he mutters, as Malistroi vanishes, dissolving into mist as his roar fades away. “For only if the dream ends can I truly discover reality, if there is such a thing, and only in reality can I face Zhakata . . . .”

The city, the sky, the temple, even Yagno himself, dissolves into mists, and soon the heroes are left with nothing but the High Altar and swirling whiteness. When the mists lift, the heroes may be back on their homeworld, or in another Ravenloft domain, depending on the DM’s whim. If this is the result of the prophesy, there is no need to continue with “Concluding the Adventure,” for at least one portion of the dream is over, and the dreamscape that was G’Henna is no more.

## Concluding the Adventure

If Malistroi is defeated and Yagno yet lives, the high priest basks in his victory.

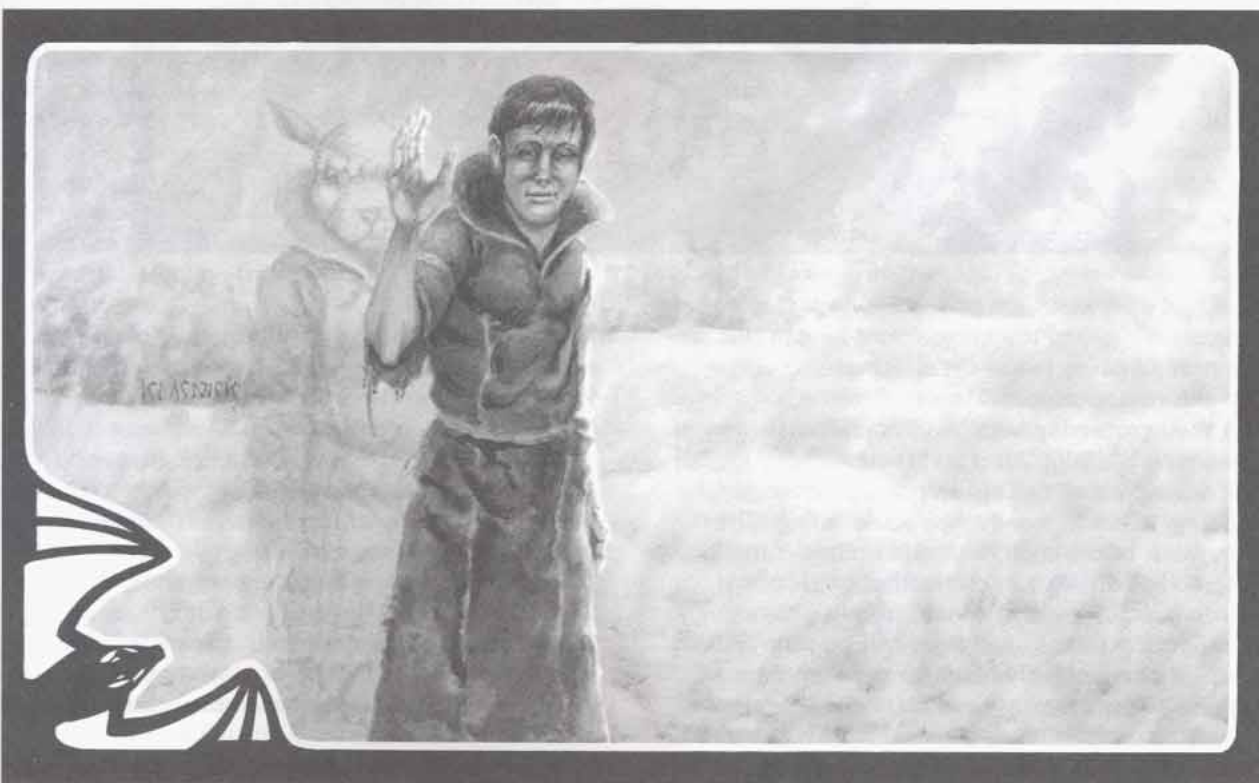
In the days and weeks that follow, Yagno launches a war of retaliation against the mongrelmen, as he mistakenly blames them for the release of Malistroi from the House of Bones. Meanwhile, his Inquisition roots out all the cultists belonging to the Circle of Darkness. If the heroes have proven helpful, they have Yagno's nominal gratitude and perhaps even a small measure of his trust — which they may use to deflect his anger from the mongrelmen.

If Yagno promised to provide the heroes with a way back to their original lands, he will attempt to assist them by directing them to the various mystical and religious sites in G'Henna, promising that they will find the way home there. The DM can devise further adventures as he sees fit, perhaps even providing a gate out of the Demiplane of Dread, but if the heroes have not left G'Henna after one or two trips to the holy

sites, Yagno will lose interest in helping them.

His triumph has resolved his crisis of faith. Yagno believes his victory is the direct result of Zhakata's support and approval. By extension, he comes to believe that the heroes' failure to achieve is a result of Zhakata's *disapproval*. The darklord will cast the heroes out of Zhukar, to suffer whatever fate they choose to make for themselves.

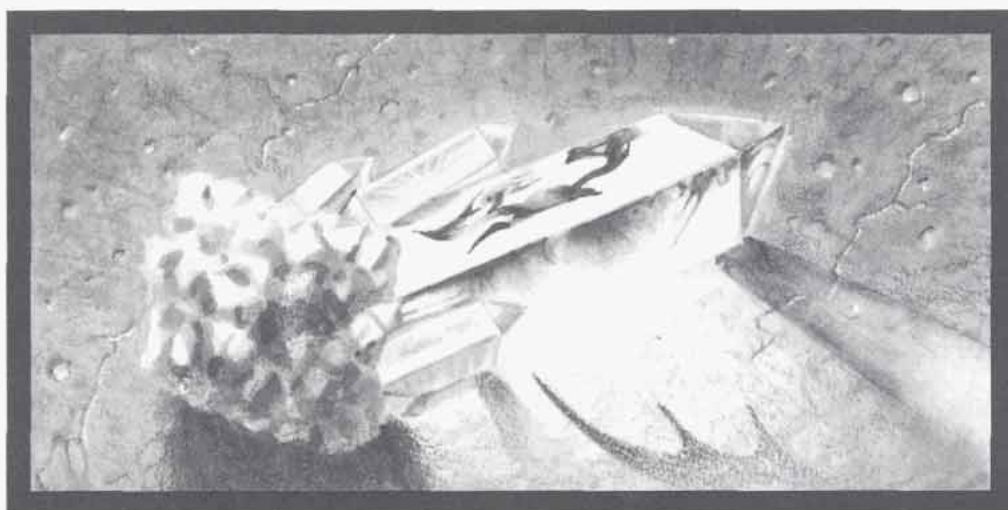
If Malistroi survives, the heroes will find the land all around them springing to life with plants of the greatest beauty, and fruit trees with the ripest of fruit forming out of mist and thin air (this is assuming they flee Zhukar, because if they don't, they join the ever-growing number of Altered). G'Henna takes on the look of a paradisaical garden, as the domain reshapes itself to fit the inclinations of its new master, Malistroi. However, all the fruit is poisonous (all who consume it must make a Save vs Poison at -2 or die) and the other plants burn like acid if touched (1d4 points of damage). It is Malistroi's desire to torment all who dwell in the domain



with great beauty they cannot benefit from, so that their rage and frustration may grow to nourish him greatly when he turns them into Altered. Unless the heroes escape into Mists, they will find themselves facing ever-growing hordes of Altered, and will find food even scarcer than before. The original foodstuffs of G'Henna will still exist, but will now be hidden among Malistroi's poisonous vegetation. A non-player character such as Jackal may become an ally of the heroes in a campaign against the fiend and his force . . . and even Yagno, if the heroes drove him off before Malistroi arrived in Zhukar, may

"Thank you my friends, for freeing my land and my people," says the mist-phantom of a handsome man. You recognize the voice as Petchko's. "I, and the others whose souls have been freed, go to a much happier place... and so will those of you who are still living. Know that today you have performed as saviors for generations of G'Hennans, past and present."

The Mists dissipate, and as they do, the storm clouds overhead break as well, revealing the familiar constellations of the heroes' homeland!



become an ally of the heroes until he can reclaim his rightful place in the Great Temple. The adventure opportunities are endless.

If the heroes slay both Yagno and Malistroi by shattering the High Altar and the talisman, a hush will fall across all of Zhukar, not unlike the quieting effect that snow has while falling. The fragments of the High Altar and bodies of the Altered will dissolve into mist that swirls about, forming and dissolving to and from a wide number of humans of all ages. Among the shifting shapes, one suddenly holds longer than the others, and the heroes hear a voice.

With the destruction of not one, but two great evils through an act of great heroism, the Dark Powers have returned G'Henna to the Prime Material plane, and the presence of the heroes caused the land to appear on their homeland. G'Henna is now an island in a sea off the coast of the continent from which the heroes came; how near or far it is, is up to the DM.

The heroes' adventures may continue, first in an effort to escape the survivors in Zhukar, who will want to slay the heroes to avenge their dead leader, and then to build a boat and head for home: an extended sea-borne adventure could lie ahead for the heroes.

# CAST OF CHARACTERS

## Yagno Petrovna

11th Level Human Priest, Lawful Evil

Armor Class	10	Str	13
Movement	12	Dex	11
Level/Hit Dice	11	Con	14
Hit Points	45	Int	12
THACO	14	Wis	15
No. of Attacks	1	Cha	18

Damage/Attack By weapon  
Special Attacks Polymorph touch  
Special Defenses Spells (7,6,4,3,2,1)

1: cause light wounds, command, combine, curse, purify food & drink, cause fear, shillelagh; 2: fire trap, flame blade, heat metal, hold person, produce flame, spiritual hammer; 3: flame walk, meld into stone, protect vs fire, pyrotechnics; 4: abjure, cloak of bravery, cause serious wounds; 5: cause critical wound, flame strike or wall of fire; 6: fire seeds or harm

Yagno is tall and gaunt, with a long, pale face. His features are so nondescript they seem sketched on his pale face. His bloodshot eyes are rarely more than half open. Yagno wears a hooded priestly robe, usually red and orange. He wears a cap topped with a stiff folded crest. Across his chest is draped a beaded cord; the smallest beads are human teeth.

In combat, Yagno uses a dagger and flail. His spells are from the spheres of All, Charm, Combat, Elemental, Healing (reversed only) and Summoning.

His special abilities as a Dark Lord are derived from the great Altar atop his temple. In order to use these abilities he must be within 100 yards of the Altar or a piece of it. To use these powers upon an unwilling subject, Yagno must perform before a flock of worshipers. Otherwise, these abilities will only affect himself and his faithfilled minions.

Yagno's can charm the masses. Anyone listening to his sermon for more than one turn must Save vs Spells or suffer the effects of a *charm person* spell. For natives, the duration is doubled, for non-natives the duration is reduced: months become weeks, weeks = days, days = hours.

Three times a day, he can transform any who believe in Zhakata. He punishes criminals through a



ceremony upon the Altar changing them into a mongrelman. He rakes his fingers across the victim. No saving throw allowed. This transformation can be reversed only by a *polymorph other* spell or by casting *remove curse* during a G'Hennan windstorm. This power cannot transform anyone who does not believe in Zhakata. Yagno is careful to hide this fact, transforming disguised G'Hennans and killing the real outlanders in secret.

Yagno may also use this power as a *polymorph* spell upon any of his loyal followers or himself, but he cannot transform people into nonliving items or magical creatures. This effect last only 2 turns.

Lastly, Yagno gains a +3 bonus to his Armor Class and all saving throws when within range of the High Altar. The Altar will regenerate Yagno at the rate of 1 point per turn, no matter his state.

Yagno seals his borders with a wall of skulls that reaches into the heavens. Magic cannot affect it.

Yagno is a charming fanatic. He believes in Zhakata, though He *does not exist* (the Mists provide his spells). Over time his faith has waned and doubts arisen. These are his greatest weakness.

## Malistroi the Nalfeshnee

Greater Tanar'ri, Chaotic Evil

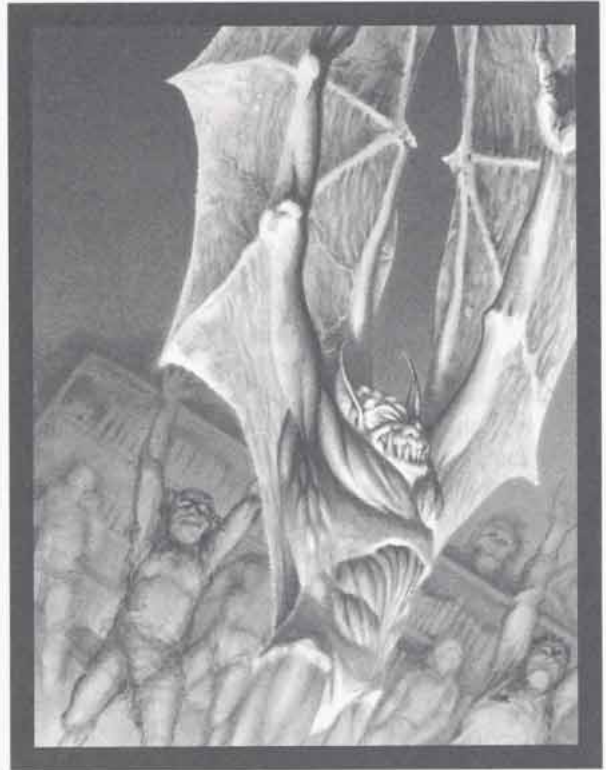
Int/Str	21/21
Armor Class	-8
Movement	12, fly 15
Level/Hit Dice	9
Hit Points	63
THACO	11
No. of Attacks	3
Damage/Attack	1d4/1d4/2d4
Special Attacks	Nightmare Spray
Special Defenses	Not surprised cold iron or +2 wps to hit
Magic Resistance	70%
Size	H (8'-20' tall)
Morale	17
XP Value	17,000

Malistroi is a Nalfeshnee, one of the most powerful fiends native to the multi-planed Abyss. It appears almost gargoyle-like, combining the body, arms and form of a giant ape and the tusks, snout, ears, legs, fat and stench of a giant boar, plus a pair of small condor wings. Its red, glowing eyes seem to pierce the mind and drain energy with just a glance. Malistroi can communicate with any being using a powerful form of telepathy.

Normally 20' tall, Malistroi's imprisonment and starvation for 30 years in the warding ring has withered its once mighty frame till it stands a mere 8' tall, emaciated and weak (STR 9). Upon its release it will feast on those present growing 1' taller and heavier and recovering 1 point of Strength for every two men consumed. Malistroi will be unable to use the *nightmare spray* or these magical abilities (*call lightning*, *distance distortion*, *feblemind*, *giant insect*, *raise dead* and *teleport without error*) until it has regained its full strength.

Malistroi is never surprised, except by its talisman's holder. It is only hurt by cold iron or weapons of +2 enchantment or better. It is immune to damage from electricity (lightning), nonmagical fire and poison, and suffers only half damage from cold, gas, magical fire, and silver.

While Malistroi can attack with claws and fangs, it prefers to use *animated bolas* and magical abilities to fight. It attacks with the bolas as if using a flail



(+4 to hit, Dmg d6+10) or may fling them into the air where they animate, attacking wherever directed.

Malistroi may use one of the following magical abilities each round: *alter self*, *bind*, *call lightning*, *chill touch*, *darkness 15' radius*, *distance distortion*, *feblemind*, *forget*, *giant insect*, *invisibility*, *mirror image*, *raise dead*, *slow*, *teleport without error* and *web*. In addition, the following powers are always active: *detect invisibility*, *ESP*, *infravision 120'*, *know alignment*, and *protection from good*. While in Ravenloft, it can not *gate* in other fiends.

Three times a day Malistroi can cast a *nightmare spray*. It must concentrate for one round (damage will not interrupt this effort) and then sprays a ring of rainbow beams causing 15 points of damage to all within 60' (Save vs Spell for half). Then a second Save at -2 must be made or the victim will wander in a trance for 1d10 rounds believing he is confronting his greatest fear.

Nalfeshnee feed on despair and hatred, sapping the minds of those they bite, draining Intelligence and Wisdom totalling the points of damage inflicted and shrivelling the body. Malistroi can *alter* the

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

form of any worshiper of Zhakata drained to 0 Int and Wis into something resembling a lesser fiend, by tapping into the High Altar's power through the talisman. This *alteration* is painful and takes 1 round per HD of victim. It costs Malistroi 1' of height and 1 point of Strength per creature *altered*. (See the Altered for details on these creatures.)

Finally, all fiends have an ability known as the *nimbus of evil*, an aura which makes a fiend invisible to a Darklord's natural ability to scry anything in his domain. Their talisman also possesses this *nimbus*; thus, any who hold the talisman also gains a measure of safety from the darklord's and Malistroi's detection.

The spell that brought Malistroi to Ravenloft trapped it here. Its essence was bound up in a crystal from Yagno's High Altar. Within that smoky depth an ebony flame flickers. This serves as Malistroi's talisman and the key to dispelling the warding circle.

This talisman gives the holder power to compel obedience from Malistroi. But, the fiend will seek to twist and pervert those commands, to thwart the holder's will. Malistroi may not attack the talisman holder, but the crystal confers no physical protection from Malistroi's minions. Any who would use the talisman is certain to make an enemy for life.

**Goals:** Malistroi desires vengeance on Yagno, but fears enslavement through the talisman. While working to find a way to escape, it plots to regain the talisman and use it as a key to seize control of the High Altar, the focus of G'Henna. Perhaps with this power Malistroi may find a way home.

Nevertheless, the temptations of corrupting thousands in this new land are great. If the efforts to escape this prison fail, then perhaps rulership of this land will satisfy. G'Henna, under Malistroi's rule, will become more idyllic and pleasant, for it feeds on despair. Malistroi would seek to corrupt individuals through their actions. A corrupted spirit's despair is much greater if they are constantly reminded of what they have lost.

### The Altered

In the Abyss, nalfeshnee are the lords of woe. They judge the spirits brought before them and feed on the hatred and despair. They transform the husks left, through arcane rituals and the power of the Abyss, into lesser fiends to fuel the Blood Wars.

Yet here, in the Domain of Dread, Malistroi can not tap the corrupting influences of the Abyss and thus cannot complete the proper rituals. However, it has discovered that through the talisman's link to the High Altar, it can use Yagno's *alteration* ability and can alter the form of Zhakata worshipers to resemble these fiends. These Altered do not possess all of the abilities of true fiends, but they are able to duplicate most of the physical ones.

Below is a list of these Altered, and the fiend they resemble. Their stats are listed on the mapsheet.

**Altered, apeman:** This hulking brute looks like a bar-Igura, a misshapened orangutan. He walks with a shambling gait or climbs and swings through trees with his long arms. Their fur is reddish-brown, their skin gray. They have wicked claws and fangs. Apemen can change their coloration to that of their surroundings (as if Hide in Shadows 95%). They can leap up to 40' with powerful legs.

**Altered, bloated:** This bulbous wretch looks like a dretch. Short, squat and rubbery, this altered has a bloated torso and gangly arms and legs. His mouth is slack and slobbery with small fangs. Petty and vicious, the bloated can belch an obnoxious *stinking cloud* and can *telekinese* up to 25 pounds once a day. Working in tandem heavier weights can be moved by their small minds. They can also spit stones as far as 30 yards (Dmg 1d4).

**Altered, imp:** This horrid midget looks like a mane. Bloated belly, spindly arms and rotting flesh make them repugnant. They have cruel claws and fangs. Imps are cruel and nearly mindless, immune to all mental attacks. A dying imp explodes into a 10' acid cloud.

**Altered, rejected:** This awful creature doesn't resemble any known fiend. It has pale, oozing flesh, a horrid stench and open sores, but is immune to all weapons not +1 or better to hit. There appears to be a rotting cloaker attached to his back. The rejected can attack with a paralyzing sting from its ray-like tail (Dur: 1d4rd).

**Altered, shapeless:** These malformed creatures resemble rutterkin, oddly misshapen humans with pointed skulls, distorted features and claylike flesh. The shapeless excrete a toxin that causes *fear* in those hit by it, who fail a Save vs Poison. Three times a day they can *telekinese* up to 50 pounds.

# CAST OF CHARACTERS

## Rega

7th Level Priest/ 3rd Level Thief, Neutral Evil

Armor Class	6	Str	11
Movement	12	Dex	17
Level/Hit Dice	7	Con	15
Hit Points	42	Int	15
THACO	14	Wis	13
No. of Attacks	1	Cha	8
Damage/Attack	by weapon		
Special Attacks	Spells (4,3,2,1)		
Special Defenses	Spells		

1: cure light wounds, invisibility to undead, protect: good, remove fear; 2: produce flame, resist fire, silence 15'R; 3: animate dead, call lightning or negative plane protection; 4: cure serious wounds or giant insect

### Thieving Skills:

PP 25, OL 30, F/RT 30, MS 40, HS 25, HN 25, CW 65, RL 30

**Magical Equipment:** *Ring of protection +4, potion of polymorph self, wand of fear*

Rega is of average height and weight, his hair and eyes are brown, and his features are eminently forgettable. Clad in red robes and hood, he appears as any other priest of Zhakata.

**Background:** Rega is a vicious and clever man, cunning and ambitious. His aim, since his first day as a novice, has been the conquest of G'Henna. He has never believed in Zhakata. He believes only that his miracles are granted by the great power of the land. Rega became a priest and fought to excel solely because it was the only avenue to power in this domain. During his early years he got lucky, stumbling on Yagno's own secret journals, he learned more about what motivates Yagno than any predecessor. Armed with this information, Rega was ready to begin his plotting in earnest.

After reaching the upper echelon of priests, Rega went to Yagno with a plan. He would become Yagno's preferred weapon of terror, to keep the other priests in line. Rega became known as the Scourge of the Temple, ruling over the priesthood's fearsome Inquisition. From this position of authority, he began making plans to destroy Yagno.

Over time, he created the legend of the hideously ugly Rega. At the same time, he had his face al-



tered through magic, so that he could become "Madar," a relatively obscure and unknown priest/scribe. As Madar, he spreads rumors of Rega's cruelty, until city folk quail at the mention of his name. Only Yagno knows that Rega hides among the priesthood to monitor their private plots.

Recently, Yagno hatched a new plot, Rega's alter ego would pretend to be a dissident so as to gather other dissident's for later disposal. During this time, Rega took note of which priests were least-satisfied and most ambitious; these were the ones he recruited into his fledgling "conspiracy," called the Circle of Darkness, after a cryptic allusion in one of Yagno's journals—a hidden reference to the circle that holds Malistroi, Yagno's bane.

Rega's manipulations and actions should never be clear to anyone. To the masses, as Rega, he is feared. As Madar, he is one of a elite group of rebels. Since he must play both roles, he may have the heroes arrested by the Inquisition, only to rescue them as Madar. And to Yagno, he is a double agent. In reality, Rega serves no one but himself.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

### Petchko (Mongrelman)

7th Level Shaman, Lawful Neutral (Good)

Armor Class	5	Str	9
Movement	9	Dex	10
Level/Hit Dice	7	Con	13
Hit Points	28	Int	14
THACO	16	Wis	16
No. of Attacks	1	Cha	15
Damage/Attack	1d6 or by weapon		
Special Attacks	Spells (5,5,2,1)		
Special Defenses	Spells		

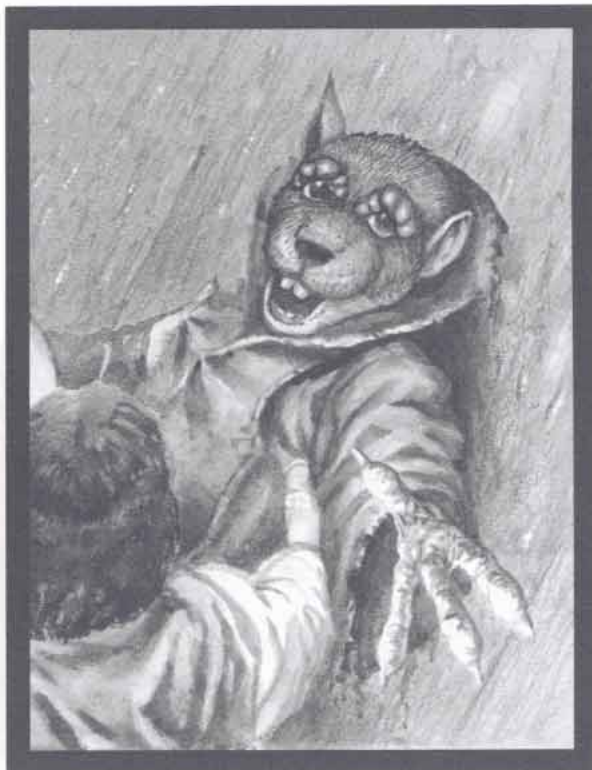
1: cure light wounds, detect snares, endure heat/cold, locate animals/plants, sanctuary;  
2: barkskin, find traps, resist cold, slow poison, speak w/animals; 3: locate object, negative protection or protect:fire; 4: cure serious wound or neutralize poison

Once a priest popular with the masses for his devotion and caring, Petchko fell into disfavor with Yagno. Now he is a mockery of a man, part rabbit, lizard and crow, Petchko stands 5'3" and weighs 120 pounds. He is a pitiable sight, even concealed by his tattered red robe. In town, he goes hooded and winds bandages around his gnarled hands. These coverings do not hide his true nature as a mongrelman from any but the most naive, but they preserve the shreds of dignity remaining. At least he need not unexpectedly confront his own reflection.

**Background:** Petchko's crimes were ambition and competence. He was too good a priest for Yagno's liking. His popularity threatened Yagno, so charges were invented, and Petchko was altered.

Petchko refused to surrender to despair, forging ahead to become a spiritual leader to the Outcasts. Over time, he acquired the traditional strengths of the mongrelmen (patience and survival), yet he fosters hopes of one day redeeming himself. This quiet, but fervent ambition leads Petchko to ill conceived acts meant to recover his lost dignity.

One such decision was his choice to support the Circle of Darkness. He knows many of the priests leading the Circle from his days among them, and he ignores their ill-concealed contempt for his current state. He is canny enough to realize that the Outcasts are useful to the Circle only till the day of Yagno's overthrow. Still, Petchko is a realist and the



most he hopes for is that the Outcasts may be given better treatment under the new regime than they have received from Yagno's rule.

The same strength of character that made Petchko a danger to the priesthood also helps him endure the indignity of his transformations — first into a wretched mongrelman, then into a despised, shapeless Altered. Of all the transformed mongrels, only Petchko retains his humanity in any form.

**Plot Developments:** Petchko is Callian's missing son. Born to a vistani mother and a giorgio father, Petchko turned from his mother's people who care only for their own, to embrace a nobler purpose.

Petchko at first befriends the heroes to gain a source of information and food. When he is aided by the heroes, his friendship becomes more real, but he will not trust them with the truth of his heritage.

When the heroes need to be rescued he will return the favor. Then, Petchko will draw his new friends into the Circle's quest. Eventually, when he is betrayed he will be the only one to resist mindless obedience and strive to determine his own destiny.



# A G'HENNAI BESIARY

Here is a synopsis of the creatures most commonly encountered during adventures in G'Henna. These notes are designed to provide a DM with crucial information only. Please see the various **MONSTROUS MANUAL™** books for more details. Monster statistics have been listed on the Master Monster Matrix on the enclosed map.

**Animators:** Animators are malign spirits that possess objects. Though their object may be destroyed, an animator needs only change objects to continue. Animators are obsessed with someone or some task. Minor animators can animate only small objects, telekinetically that object. Common animators can animate objects the size of a carriage, moving working parts and manifesting a special ability based on the item animated (a stove could belch flame for example).

**Ash Crawler:** This aggressive, ugly rodent lairs beneath ash near hot coals as it is able to resist heat. Burrowing through the ash, it uses its prehensile tail to snag and drag prey beneath the ash and over to the hot coals (Dmg 2d6 fire). Those who fall suffer a -4 penalty. An ash crawler locks its jaws when it bites and then attacks with claws at +4 for 1d4/1d4.

**Beetle, Tiger:** The tiger beetle is a swift and efficient hunter, making a killing blow on a natural 20. Its larva builds a stone and mud tube to hide in, dragging unsuspecting prey within to consume.

**Bone Golem:** Assembled from a variety of skeletons, a bone golem attacks with teeth and strong limbs. Immune to most spells, but vulnerable to *shatter*. Once every 3 rounds can issue a paralyzing laugh (fear & horror checks required or paralyzed 2d6 rounds).

**Cattle, meat-eating:** Difficult to discern from starving cattle, these bulls have learned to wait patiently until potential prey approaches in range to be gored by a sudden charge. These cattle have sharpened teeth and are able to rend their food.

**Cattle, starving:** These sad beasts mill aimlessly eating any bit of vegetation or insect they can find. Skittish, they easily stampede.

**Catoblepas:** This hideous snaky-necked, death cow bludgeons with its tail. It can kill creatures within 60' that meet its death ray gaze. It is not aggressive however, feeding on mollusks and algae.

**Centipede, megal:** Over 5' long, this centipede burrows or lurks in shadows waiting for prey. Its acid venom burns for +2d4 points.

**Doppelganger, Ravenloft:** These insidious shapechangers may assume any guise almost perfectly. From this guise they kill and consume their victims. They reproduce by budding.

**Dun Pudding:** A deadly pudding that feeds on animal, mineral and vegetable. Immune to acid, cold and poison. Lightning and cutting blows divide in two. It can sense heat 90' and can cling to walls and ceilings. It dissolves leather in 1 round, chain in 2 and plate armor in 4.

**Fael:** Fael are starved undead who eat all they can. Their strong jaws can bite through flesh and bone. If the attack causes 6+ points there is a 25% chance of biting off a mouthful and requiring a System Shock roll or death. If 12+ points are caused in one bite, there is a 25% chance that the bite is fatal. Undead immunities.

**Flocks:** Bats and birds flock with their own kind forming a gestalt mind and acting as one. Flocks may batter (causing things to be dropped) and obscure sight. Each species has its own special attacks, but all caught in a flock suffer 1d2 points of damage per round.

**Bats fly by sonar, their screeching causing panic.**  
**Ravens** form parliaments to watch the death throes of injured creatures, prepared to feast on the dead body. They are also drawn to watch battles against wicked spirits and undead.

**Geist:** Geists are echoes of the death throes of a spirit which left some deed undone in life and must reenact its task again and again. Geists can become invisible and imperceptible at will. The sight of a geist may cause fear and panic in the living.

**Ghoul/Ghasts:** Ghouls are undead who are devourers of carrion. They have undead immunities. Their claws paralyze for d6+2 rounds. Ghasts are greater ghouls with a foul stench like a *stinking cloud*. Their paralysis lasts d6+4 rounds.

**Glyptar:** The spirit of a male medusa trapped in a crystal, glyptars can animate the stone they are attached to. They can turn *stone to flesh* once every three turns. They can *pass through stone* at will and are +1/+2 with a weapon. Immune to medusa venom and petrifying.

**Goats, scavenging:** These goats are able to digest anything their powerful teeth can chew. They are immune to poison and disease.

**Golden Dogs:** Wolf-sized canines with black-tipped golden hair, this species can alter its appearance and shape to any inanimate object of relatively the same size.

**Kobolds:** While the diminutive kobold seems too small to be a danger, they are clever trap makers and use natural hazards, creatures (such as scorpions, spiders, and bees) and ambushes. Kobolds may capture stragglers for slaves, or they may torture and eat them.

**Larvae:** These human-headed, man-sized grubs from the outer planes attack in unison. Their bite bleeds 1 point of damage till bound. Those bitten must save vs Poison or develop a rotting disease.

**Lizards:** Lizards are nearly as common in the wastes of G'Henna as birds. Most are 1-2' long.

**Giant lizards** are 15' long. They are slow and torpid in cool regions; swift and aggressive in warm locales. On a hit roll of 20 they bite for 2d8 points.

**Tuatara** are 8' long, aggressive, nocturnal hunters, able to see 90' in the dark. They have a sixth sense and are not surprised.

**Men:** The inhabitants of G'Henna are mostly devout worshipers of Zhakata,

trying to follow the strict laws of starvation and penance to gain what happiness they can. Those in the city are more fearful of the Inquisition and the priesthood, and more likely to be rebellious. Those in the country are more tolerant, willing to bend the rules, caring and likely to follow a divergent form of Zhakata worship.

**Mongrelmen:** Once common men and women, the power of Yagno's High Altar stripped them of their dignity and made them grotesque amalgams of beasts and men. They are ashamed of their form, and seek desperately to become human again. They can mimic any natural sound they have heard. They can camouflage themselves to be 80% undetectable. And they can pickpocket at 70%.

**Odem:** This misty horror attacks but once a week and is immune to all spells except those which affect spirits.

**Osquip:** A six-legged, giant rodent with teeth like chisels. It can burrow through stone and is fearless.

**Praying Mantis:** Tall and willowy, brown carapace; a swarm may be mistaken for bare trees. Hunts small animals and insects.

**Pride Eater:** An undead crimson mist which feeds on pride, each hit also draining 2d4 Charisma. Lost Chr recovered at 1 point per day. If Charisma falls to 0, becomes a mongrelman.

**Pyre Elemental:** Summoned from a fiery pyre, their writhing tendrils reduce armor class as well as burn. Immune to flame and less than +2 weapons.

**Radiant Spirit:** This gleaming spirit's light blinds those who fail a Save vs Spell for 1d4 rd. Their attack scars the eye if fail a Save vs Paralysis. Undead immunities.

**Rock Dancer:** These legless Galeb Duhr move by rolling. They can animate up to two other boulders (THACO 11, Dmg 4d6). Dancers can reshape stone at will. They suffer double damage from cold, but are immune to lightning and fire.

**Sand Weirlding:** Sandlings are the same temperature as their surrounding. They will envelop anyone who steps on them, crushing prey and causing a -2 penalty. They have undead immunities.

**Skeleton, giant:** These 12' terrors have a magical fire burning in their chests which they can throw once an hour causing 8d6 points. They have undead immunities and suffer only half damage from edged or piercing weapons and cold.

**Snake, poisonous:** These great hooded snakes range from 1' to 8' long. They sense prey by heat and movement. Their venom is virulent and inflicts an extra 1d4 points for 1d6 rounds.

**Spider, wolf:** A swift hunter, wolf spiders lie in wait and then race out to seize prey. Their venom renders prey unconscious.

**Spirits, lost:** Rumored to be the spirits of starvation victims, their touch drains 1 level, causes 1d6 points of damage and instills hunger pangs. Offering them magical food will dispel them.

**Stag, skeletal:** This bizarre, emaciated breed survives on blood. They gore or trample their prey and then lap up the blood.

**Swarms:** As with much of the life in G'Henna, swarms seek food. Swarms can be scattered by smoke or fire. They can be washed off by water or mud, slowed by cold and turned by major obstacles.

**Ants** are voracious eating machines stripping the land of vegetation and anything edible in their path. Ant stings cause excruciating pain for 2d4 turns (-2 penalty).

**Beetles** are strictly meat-eaters, attracted to blood and offal and pursuing prey on wing. Beetles can rip through leather and 2" of wood in 1 turn.

**Locusts** consume vegetation and paper. They cause confusion and obscure vision and may knock things over.

**Undead:** Undead are immune to cold, poison, sleep, charm, hold, mental attacks, and death magic. Holy water causes 2d4 damage.

**Wasps, large:** These 2' long insects build hives of scales of mud and paper on overhangs and sunny cliffs. The entrance is usually a hidden tunnel 20 yards distant. They can smell food 1 mile away, but rarely attack man-sized creatures, unless intruders harm the hive. Their poison causes 2d6 extra damage and paralysis.

**Werebat:** Werebats favor caves and dark cool lairs. They are mostly active at twilight, night and dawn. Not cruel creatures, they view humans and demihumans as prey. If a wererat hits with both claws it will latch on and bite for another 2d4 points.

**Werebear:** Werebears are solitary creatures, avoiding civilization and humanity. While they are good creatures, they will not aid others unless the evil threatens their territory. When a werebear attacks, if it hits with both paws it will hug its target for an additional 2d8 points.

**Werejaguar:** These shapechangers are silent, deadly hunters, their camouflaged pelt adds +3 to Surprise. They are immune to silver weapons, but are harmed by ebony wood and suffer +1/die of fire damage. Werejaguars only help others if it helps their community.

**Wereraven:** Wereravens gather in parliaments, strangely aloof from the world. It is rumored they have come to the aid of vistani tribes in the past. A wereraven in humanoid form fights with javelins and lassos. In its bird form its beak is dangerous. There is a 10% chance of blinding a foe with a peck (Dmg 1-2).

**Wereweasels:** These vicious little shapechangers hunt in pairs. Their lithe forms can contort and it is amazing what they can squeeze through.

Wereweasels hunt by scent. Once they bite they hang on draining blood automatically each round, shaking their prey to disorient it (-2 penalty).

**Wolves, starving:** Even the countryside is barren and ravenous packs of wolves hunt with cunning, panicking mounts and herding their prey into cul-de-sacs where they are easily slain.

## MASTER MONSTER MATRIX

Creature	AL	Int(ML)	MV	SZ	AC	HD(hp)	THACO	#AT	Dmg	SA	SD	XP
Altered, apeman	CN	9(14)	9 @15	M	0	6+6(42)	15	3	1d6 x2/2d6	Surprise leap	Camouflage	2000
Altered, bloated	CN	7(11)	9	S	4	2(13)	19	3	1d4 x2/1d4+1	Telekinesis	Stinking cloud	120
Altered, imp	CN	3(20)	6	S	8	1(5)	20	3	1d2 x2/1d4	1d6 acid vapor	No mental	65
Altered, rejected	CE	8(12)	9 fl15	M	2	5(30)	15	2	1d6/1d8	Paralytic sting	+1 wpn to hit	420
Altered, shapeless	CN	10(12)	12	M	0	4(19)	17	2	1d6+1 x2	Telekinesis	Fear	270
Animator, common	CE	15(9)	AC	L	V	_10(60)	11	1	1d8	Varies	Varies	4000
Animator, minor	CE	16(10)	6+AC	S	V	_2(16)	19	1	1d4	Varies	Varies	420
Ash Crawler	N	2(10)	6 Br6	S	6	3+1(17)	17	1	1d2	Tail/rend	Resist fire	270
Beetle, Tiger, gt	N	1(16)	9/3	L	3	5(27)	15	1	3d6	Wing bash	Burrow	175
Bone Golem	N	0(20)	12	M	0	14(70)	7	1	3d8	Fearful laugh	Immune spells	18000
Carion Stalker	N	0(9)	9	T	2	4(19)	17	1/8	1d6/1d4 x8	Paralysis	Nil	650
Catoblepas	N	2(12)	6	L	7	6+2(33)	15	1	1d6+stun	Death gaze	Nil	975
Cattle, starving	N	2(3)	15	L	7	3(13)	17	1	1d4	Trample	Nil	20
Centipede, megalol	N	0(5)	15	M	5	3(15)	17	1	1d3+poison	Poison 2d4	Nil	175
Doppelganger	NE	13(13)	12	M	5	5(26)	15	1	1d12	Surprise	Saves F10	650
Dun Pudding	N	0(18)	12	L	7	8+1(59)	13	1	4d6	Splits	Immune acid,cold	1400
Fael	CE	11(16)	9	M	6	6+3(39)	15	3	1d3 x2/2d6	Bite	+1 wpn to hit	975
Flocks	N	4(8)	1 fl36	S	7	4-32(x3)	20	1@	1d2	Batter	Blind	100
Geist	CN	12(19)	fl12	M	10	Nil	—	—	—	Panic	Invulnerable	0
Ghoul/Ghast	CE	7/12(14)	9/15	M	6/4	2(9)/x2	19/17	3	1d3 x2/1d6	Paralyze	Undead	175/650
Glyptar(medusa)	LE	11(13)	fl9	T	5	1/2(4)	15	1	1d8+2	Stone to flesh	Nil	65
Goats, scavenging	N	2(9)	15	M	7	1+2(7)	19	1	1d3	+2 charge	Nil	35
Kobolds	LE	8(8)	6	S	7	1/2(3)	20	1	1d4	Nil	Nil	15
Larvae	-E	2(2)	3	M	7	1-1(5)	20	1	1d4+1	Wound 1hp/rd	Rot disease	35
Lizards	N	1(10)	15	H	5	3+1(15)	17	1	1d8	Swallow	Camouflage	175
Men, Farmers	N	11(8)	12	M	10	1(5)	20	1	1d6	Nil	Nil	7
Men, Guards	LN	9(15)	12	M	5	2(12)	19	1	1d8	Nil	Nil	35
Men, Inquisitors	NE	12(14)	12	M	7	3(15)	18	1	2d4	Branding	Nil	65
Men, Merchants	N	13(9)	12	M	6	2(9)	19	1	1d6	Nil	Nil	15
Men, Pilgrims	L-	10(13)	12	M	10	1(4)	20	1	1d4	Nil	Nil	15
Men, Priests-Junior	LE	13(12)	12	M	10	1(5)	20	1	1d4+1	Spells	Nil	35
Men, Priests-Senior	LE	14(18)	12	M	8	6(29)	18	1	1d6	Spells	Nil	650
Men, Soldiers	L-	9(14)	12	M	6	4(20)	17	1	1d8	Nil	Nil	120
Men, Soldiers-elite	L-	12(16)	12	M	4	6(30)	15	1	1d8+1	Nil	Nil	270
Men, Thieves	CN	10(15)	12	M	8	3(12)	19	1	1d4+1	Nil	Nil	65
Men, Townsfolk	Varies	8(9)	12	M	10	1(4)	20	1	1d3	Nil	Nil	7
Men, Urchins	-N	7(11)	12	M	8	1(3)	20	1	1d2	Nil	Nil	15
Men, Vistani	N-	12(15)	12	M	10	3(13)	19	1	1d6+1	Nil	Nil	35
Myconids	LN	10(12)	9	M	10	1-6(5@)	17	1	1d4/HD	Spores	Poison skin	200
Mongrelmen	LN	9(12)	9	M	7	2(8)	19	1	1d6	Mimicry	Camoflage	35
Mongrelmen, champ	CN	7(13)	12	L	5	8(43)	13	1	1d10	Nil	Camoflage	650
Mongrelmen, leader	LN	10(12)	9	M	6	4(23)	16	1	1d6+1	Mimicry	Camoflage	175
Odem	CE	13(20)	9	T	na	na(na)	na	1	—	Domination	Immune damage	1000
Osquip	N	1(7)	12 Br6	S	7	3+1(13)	16	1	2d6	Nil	Nil	120
Praying Mantis, gt	N	3(19)	15	L	5	10(49)	11	3	1d6 x2/1d10	Grabs	Leaps	975
Pride Eater	CE	18(15)	12	L	0	13(59)	7	1	1d10	2d4 Chr	+1 wpns/MR:95%	6000
Pyre Elemental	N	5(17)	12	H	5	16(90)	5	1	3d8	Reduces AC-1	+2 wpn to hit	11000
Radiant Spirit	LE	18(20)	9	M	8	10(49)	11	1	1d10	Blind 1d4 rd	half silver/+1 wpn	1000
Rock Dancer	N	12(17)	6	L	-2	9(63)	11	2	3d6 x2	Shape stone	Stone walk	9000
Sand Weirdling	N-	11(13)	12 Br6	L	3	4(20)	17	1	2d8 +stun 4rd	Enwrap	Immune mental	420
Skeleton, giant	N	0(20)	12	L	0	4+4(32)	15	1	1d12	Nil	Skeleton	975
Snake, poisonous	N	1(8)	15	M	6	2+1(10)	19	1	1d2	Poison d4/d6rd	Nil	270
Spider, wolf, gt	N	1(12)	18	M	6	2+2(11)	19	1	1d6	Sleep poison	Nil	270
Spirits, Lost	LE	14(15)	12	M	4	5+3(18)	15	2	1d6 x2	Energy drain	Silver/+1 wpns	2000
Stag, skeletal	N	3(15)	24	L	6	3(13)	17	3	1d4 x2/2d6	Gore 1d8	Nil	65
Swarm	N	1(6)	6 Fl18	T	8	1(1/20)	—	1@	1d4 (80%)	Atk all in area	Blinds	975
Wasps, large	N	1(8)	6 Fl21	S	4	2(9)	19	2	1d2/1d4	Paralyze 2d6	Fast	175
Werebats (+Thf)	NE	9(11)	9 Fl15	M	5	4+2(21)	17	2	1d4 x2	Bite 2d4	Silver/+1 wpns	420
Werebear (+Sldr-E)	CG	12(14)	9	L	2	7+3(38)	13	3	1d3 x2/2d4	Hug 2d8	Silver/+1 wpns	1400
Werejaguar (+Sldr)	CE	11(13)	18	M	4	5+2(27)	15	3	1d4 x2/1d8	Nil	Ebony/+1 wpns	2000
Wereraven (+Pr-Jr)	NG	17(13)	1 Fl27	M	6	4+2(23)	17	1	2d6	Dive +2	Silver/+2 wpns	420
Wereweasel (+Guard)	LE	11(11)	15	M	6	3+2(19)	17	3	1 x2/1d4	Blood drain	Silver/+1 wpns	270
Wolves	N	7(10)	18	M	7	3(17)	18	1	1d4+1	Nil	+1 vs charm	120

The realm of G'Henna is a dying land, but it is not dead. The traveler across this bleak land is offered more adventure to fill his meager life. Every game day, the DM should check once per hex crossed for events by rolling 1d20 and comparing the result for that type of terrain on the Event Chart below. Then roll the die indicated, add any modifier and check the subcharts.

Most events occur anywhere. Alternate events are listed in parentheses "( )" for civilized terrain (dwellings & roads).

Terrain	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	Die
City	1	2-5	—	6-7	8-12	13-15	16	17	18-19	20	d6*
Fort	1	2	—	3-4	5-9	10	11	12-14	15-18	19-20	d6*
Manor	1	2-4	—	5	6-10	11	12	13-16	17-18	19-20	d4+2*
Road	1-5	2-3	4	5	6-8	9	—	10-13	14-18	19-20	d6*
Village	—	1-2	3	4-7	8-12	13-14	15	16	17-19	20	d6*
Broken	1	2-4	5-6	7-8	—	9-13	14	15	16	17-20	d4+4
Badland	1-2	3-5	6	7	8	9-10	11	—	12-15	16-20	d4-3
Flat	1-4	5	—	6-7	8-10	11-12	13	14-18	19	20	d4-1
Mesa	1	2	3-6	7-8	—	9-10	11	12-14	15-19	20	d4+3
Mtn	—	1-4	5	6	7	8-9	10	11-15	16-17	18-20	d4-2
Ruins	—	1-3	4	5	6-10	11-12	13-14	15	16-19	20	d4-3
Shrine	1-5	—	6	7	8-9	10	11-12	13-16	17-19	20	d4
Sink	1	2	3-4	5-6	—	7-11	12	13-15	16-19	20	d6+1
Steppe	—	1	2	3-7	8-11	12-14	15-16	17-18	19	20	d6+1
Swamp	1	2-4	5-6	7-11	12	13-16	17-18	19	—	20	d4
Tundra	1-5	6	—	7	8	9-10	11	12-14	15-16	17-20	d6+1
Waste	1	2-6	7-8	—	9	10-11	12	13	14-17	18-20	d4-2
Water	1	2	—	3-4	5-6	7	8	9-12	13-17	18-20	d4+1
Wood	—	1-2	3	4-8	9	10-12	13-16	17	18	19-20	d4-2

\*Once Malistroi is released add +2 to the die.

**A. Foreshadow** either a fixed or wandering encounter.

**B. Haunting Cries** may draw heroes to invented encounter.

Die

1. A Creaking (Groaning) echoes in the wind
2. Rustling & Crackling (Whipcracks) startle the heroes
3. Sounds of something or someone in distress
4. Whimpers of something in pain or fear
5. Moans (Crying) fill the air with sadness
6. Bleating (Laughing) sparkles gaily in the wind
7. Shouts of gladness or anger erupt
8. Sounds of battle and cries of pain ring out

Creatures have a variety of goals and motivations as listed numerically in parentheses. Check the Motivation chart for details.

**C. Giant Insects**

1. (1) Locust swarm — see Swarm (15,16,20)
2. (1) Tiger beetle (4,5,7,11,20)
3. (2d6) Wasps (1,2,13,16,20)
4. (1d4) Wolf Spider (5,7,15,16,20)
5. (2d4) Praying Mantis (2,5,7,11,16,20)
6. (100) Army ants — see Swarm (20)
7. (1d4) Centipede (2,4,16,17)
8. (1d3) Altered, rejected (17)

**D. Herbivores**

1. (d4+1) Lizards, gt (2,15,16)
2. (1d6) Osquip (2,5,12,16)
3. (3d6) Cattle, starving (2,16)
4. (3d4) Goats, scavenging (2,16)
5. (10d10) Ravens/Bats — see Flock (2,11,16,19)
6. (1) Stag, skeletal (2,3,10,11,14)
7. (1d3) Tuatara lizard — use Tiger Beetle (20)
8. (1d2) Rock Dancer (2,3,4,5,6,10)

**E. Men**

1. (2d6) Pilgrims (1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,21,22,23))
2. (2d10) Merchants (1,3,4,6,7,8,9,14,18,21,22,24)
3. (1d10) Townsfolk (1,2,3,4,5,6,7,10,12,21,22)
4. (2d4) Farmers (1,2,3,7,21,22,23,24)
5. (2d6) Guards (1,3,4,8,10,11,18,21,22,24)
6. (2d6) Priests (3,4,6,9,10,11,22,24)
7. (4d6) Soldiers (3,8,9,10,11,13,18,21,22,24)
8. (2d10) Altered (2,5,11,13,14,17,19,24)

**F. Predators**

1. (1) Catoblepas (Mongrelmen) (2,5,7,11)
2. (2d8) Wolves (Dogs — use Wolves) (16)
3. (3d6) Kobolds (Thugs — use Guards) (1,2,13)
4. (d4+1) Snakes (Thieves) (10,11,18)
5. (2d10) Bandits (Black Market — use Merchants) (3)
6. (2d8) Ghouls/Ghosts (Lost Spirit) (11)
7. (1d4) Meat-eating Bulls — use Cattle; Dmg 2d6 (20)
8. (1) Pride Eater (16)

**G. Shapeshifters**

1. (d4+1) Doppelgangers (1,2,4,6,7,12,20)
2. (1d3) Werebears (1,3,4,6,7,9,13,21,22,23,24)
3. (4d6) Wereravens (1,2,3,21,22)
4. (1d8) Wereweasels (4,11,14,15,17)
5. (2d8) Golden Dogs — use Wolves, change to any Thing (2,4,11,14,17)
6. (3d8) Werebats (2,7,11,12,14,16)
7. (1d6) Werejaguars (1,4,7,11,16,20)
8. (1) Sand Weirdling (5,14,17,19)

**H. Sightings** are DM devices to lead heroes to encounters

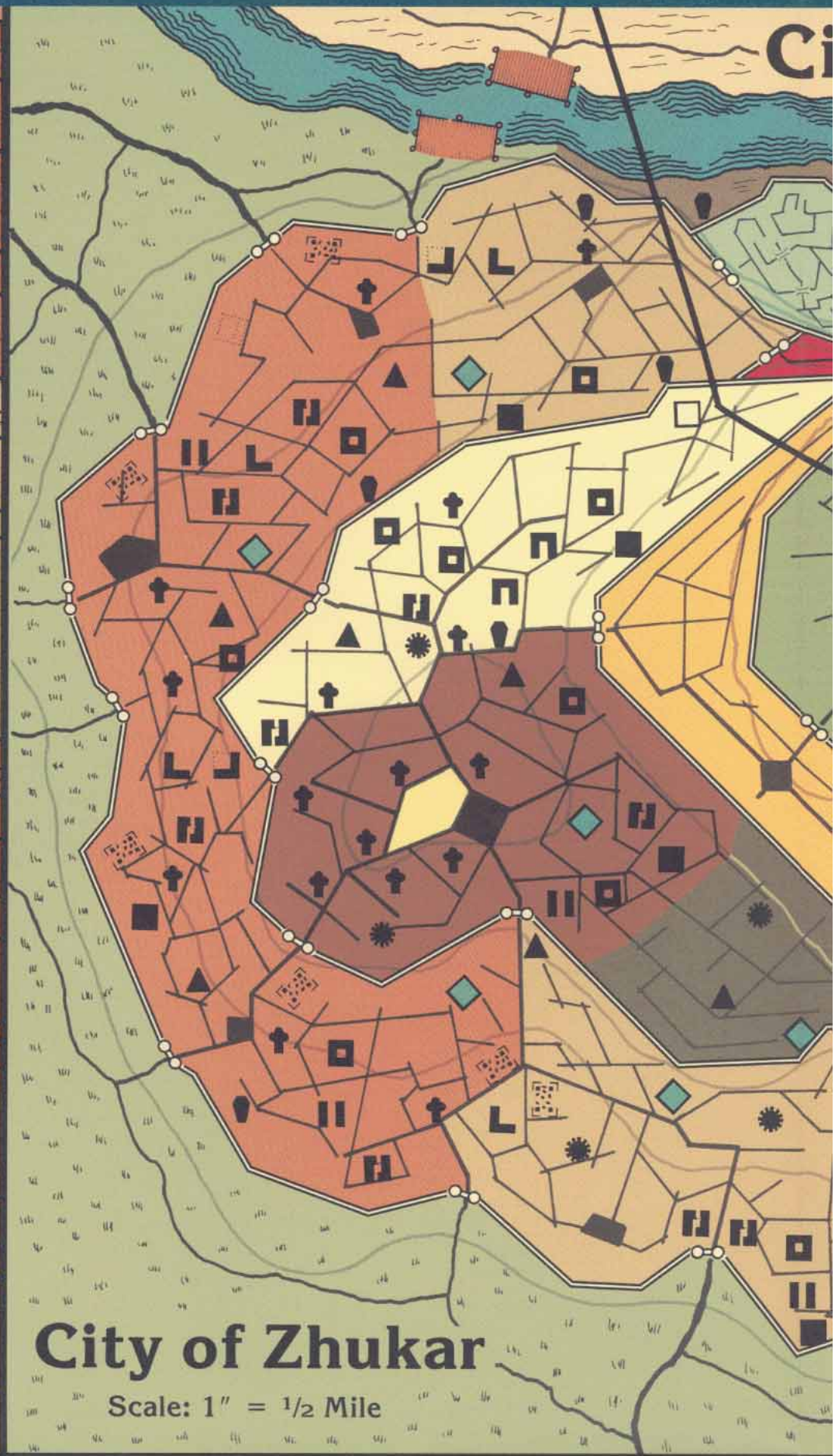
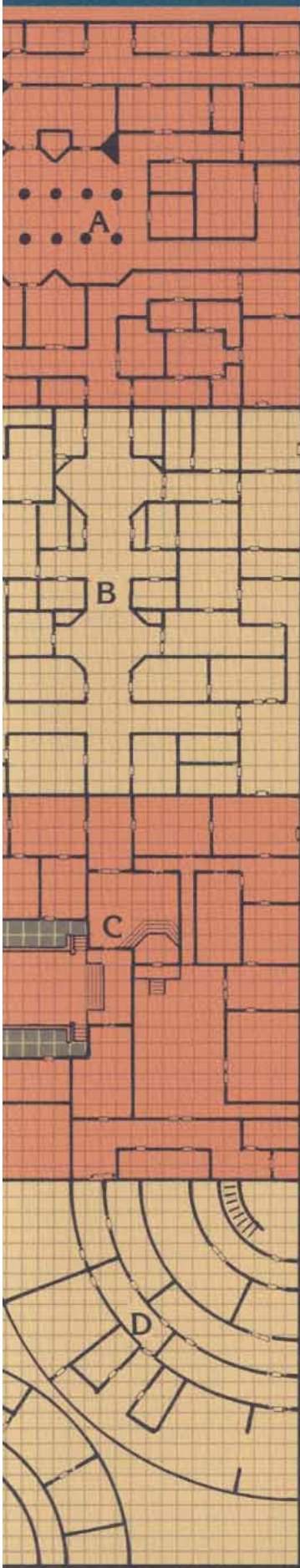
1. A scene of injustice is played out before the heroes
2. Something odd draws attention: smoke, cloud, sparkle
3. The heroes discover a distinctive landmark
4. Here are tracks of some encounter crossing your path
5. The heroes discover an obstacle in their path
6. The heroes come upon a scene of destruction
7. In the distant an odd sight manifests (It is a mirage)
8. The land shudders (crevice opens, avalanche, fire, eruption)

**I. Uneventful Journey**

1. Clear and bright (travel is +25% faster)
2. Fair, unimpeded travel
3. Dreary & windy weather (travel is slowed -25%)
4. Tiring, difficult journey (travel slowed -50%)
5. Delays, minor obstacle must be overcome
6. Detour, major obstacle, must go around
7. Dangerous hazard (fire, flood, mudslide, sandstorm, etc.)
8. Frenzied, mob fleeing causes damage and losses

**J. Weather**

1. Hail & icestorm, THACO 15, Dmg 1d4 per turn
2. Lightning storm, THACO 20, Dmg 2d8 per turn
3. Fog makes it slick and dangerous, vision 60' max
4. Rain & flashflood, ground is muddy — Dex check or washed away and Con check per round or Dmg 2d6
5. Windstorm, all without shelter suffer Dmg 1d8
6. Earthquake, threat of falls 4d6 and crushing 6d8
7. Steam eruption, blinding veil scalds for 2d6
8. Ash Rain ignites flammables that fail save vs Fire

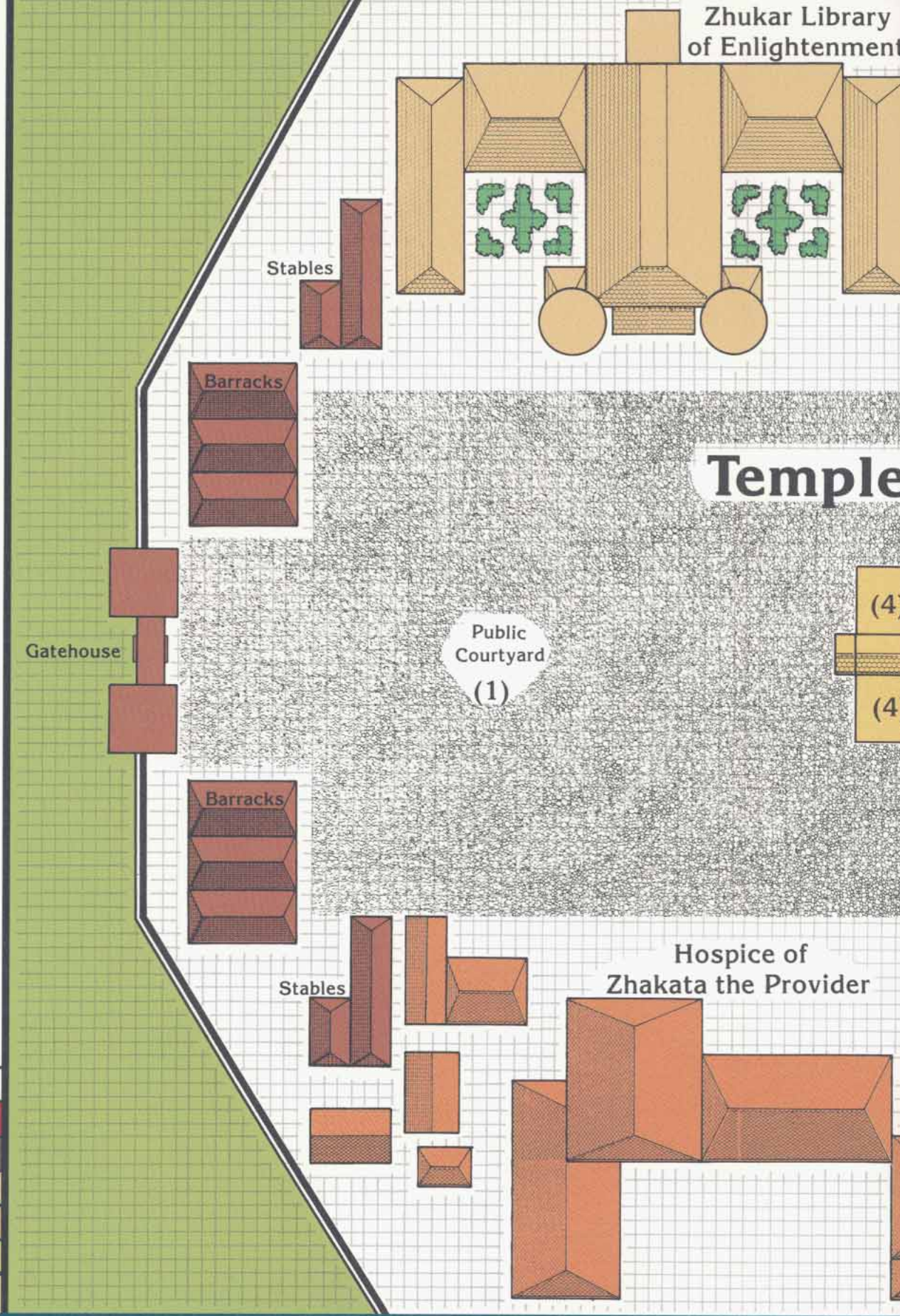


# City of Zhukar

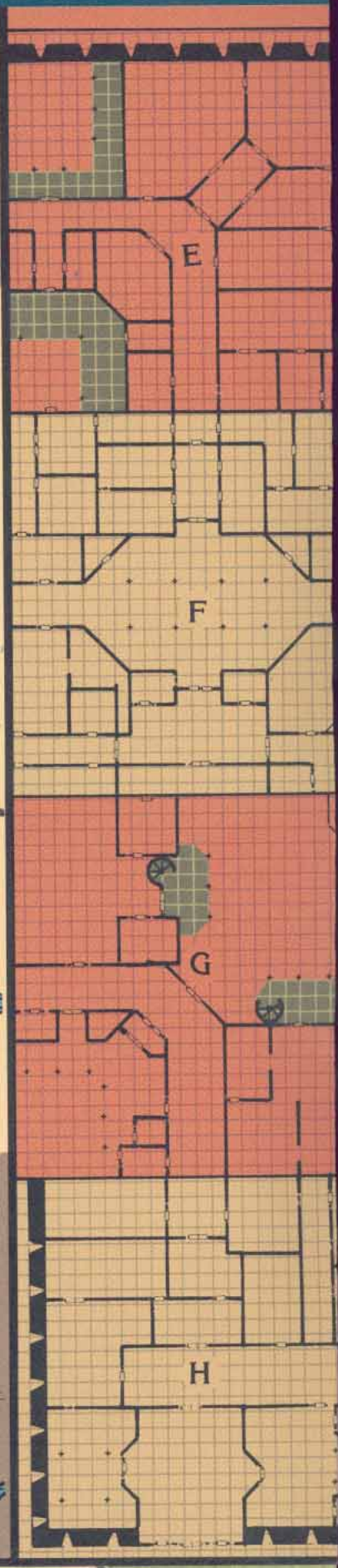
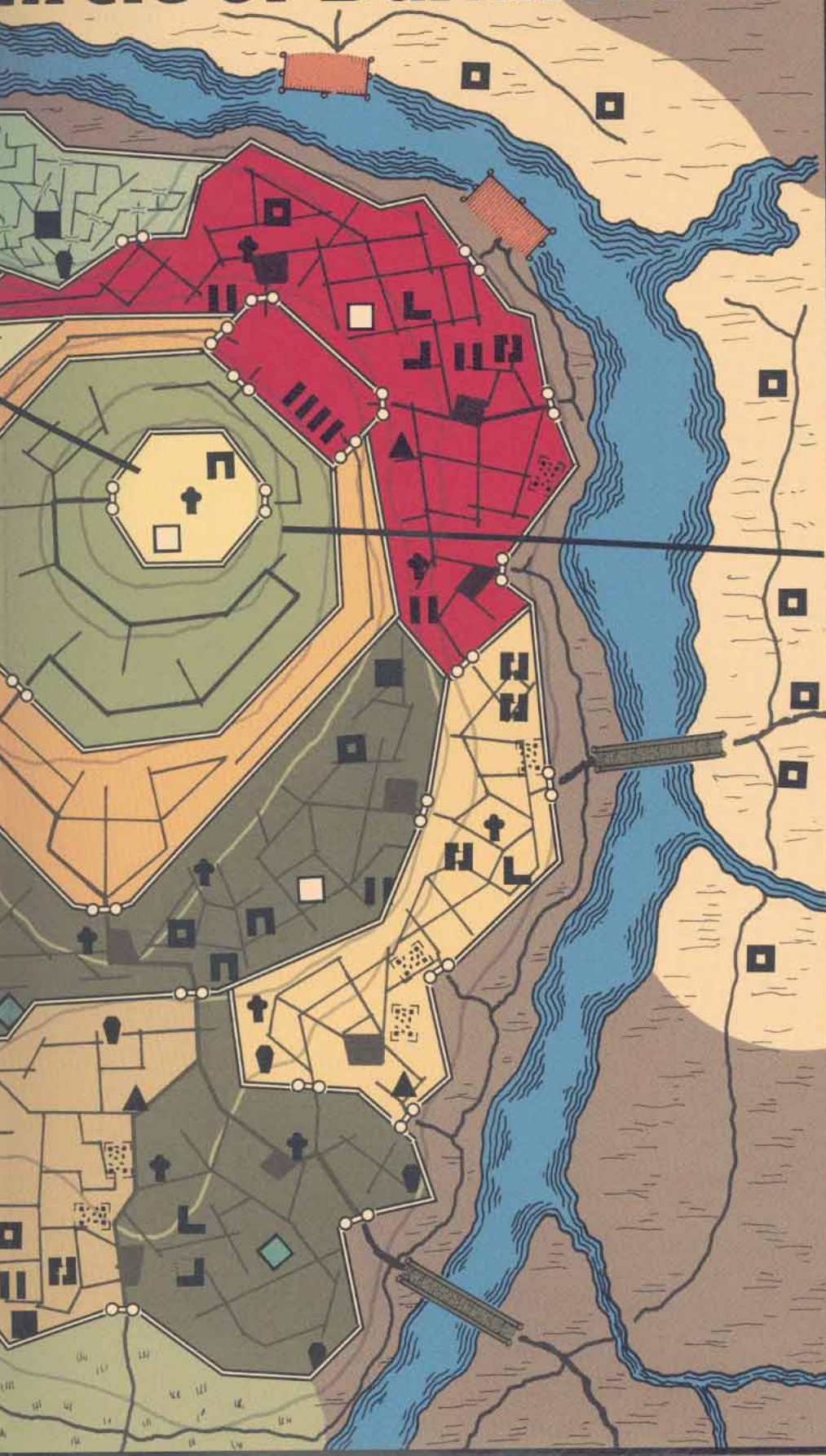
Scale: 1" = 1/2 Mile

- Aqueducts
- Avenue of Gods
- Barracks
- Black Market
- Bridge
- Catacombs
- City Walls
- Courts / Gaols
- Hospital / Hospice
- Inn / Tavern
- Manors / Estates
- Marketplace
- Park
- Plaza
- Stables
- Stockyard
- Temple
- Tower
- Town Gate
- University
- Warehouses
- Water / River
- Flats
- Steppes
- Roads

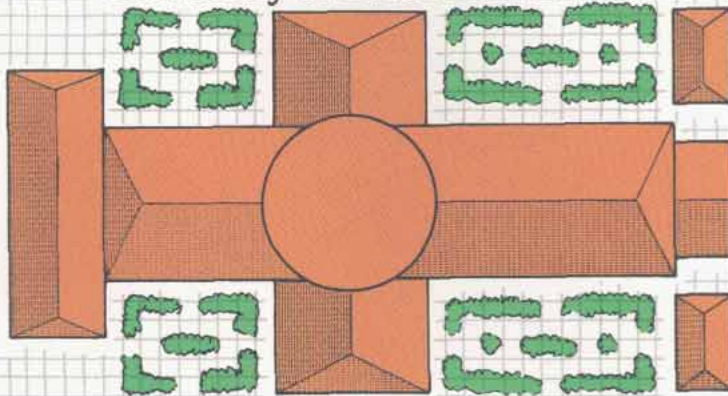
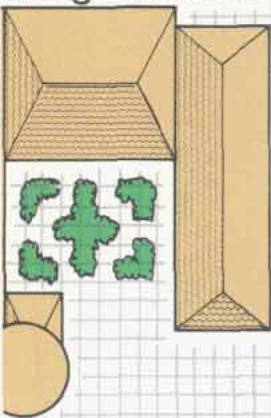
Neighborhoods	
Business	Military
Bridges	Old City
Government	Private Estates
Town	Residential
Town	Temple District
Worshippers	University



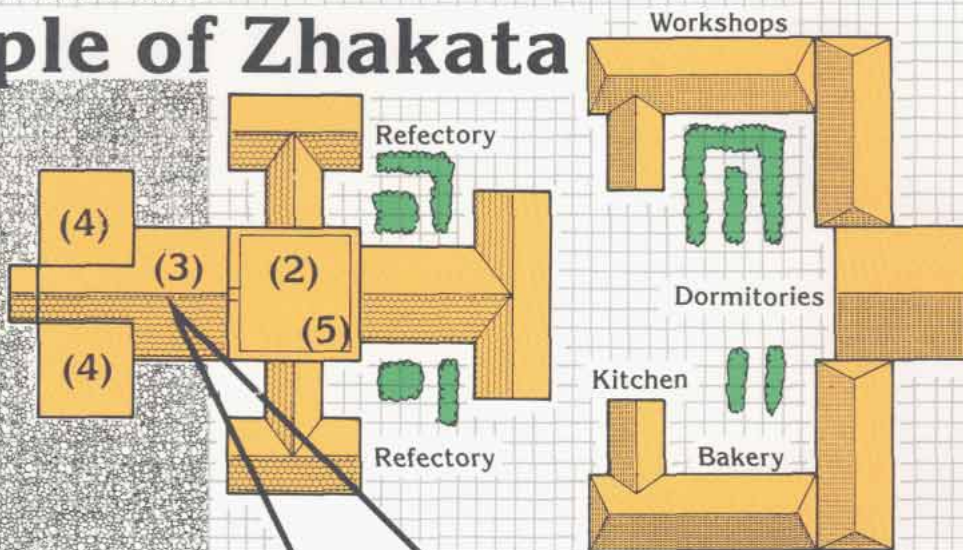
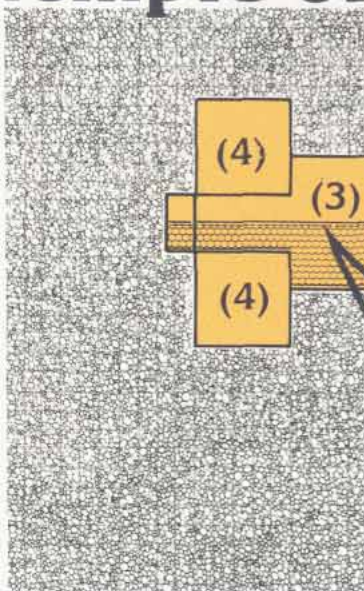
# Circle of Darkness



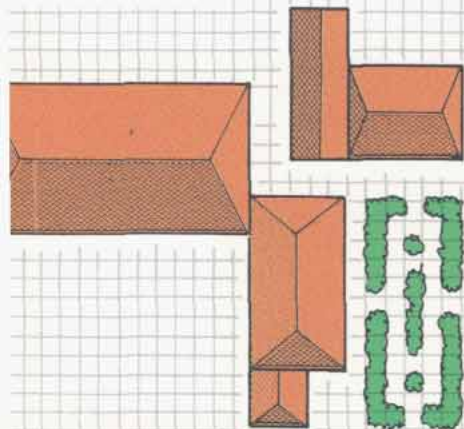
University of Blessed Zhakata



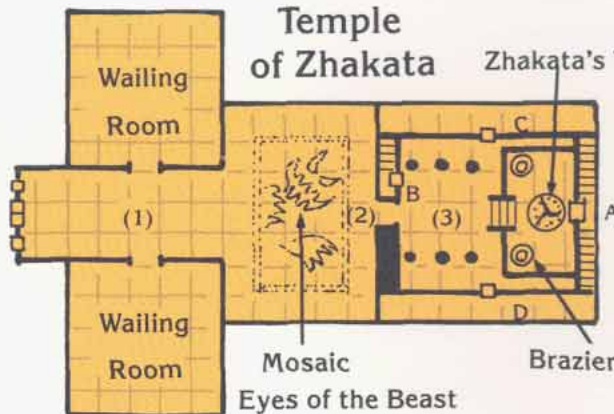
Temple of Zhakata



apice of the Provider



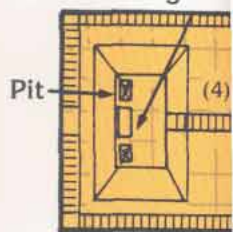
Temple of Zhakata



Scale: □ = 10' squ

Zhakata's Tribute

The High Al



Grand Stair

## Wilderness Encounters

On the map of G'Henna several locations have been identified by name and number. Details for each of these special locales is provided below to provide the DM with assistance in fleshing out other adventures anywhere throughout G'Henna.

- 1. Pilgrims:** These rag clad men, women and children are devotees of one of the many cults of Zhakata on a pilgrimage to or from an holy site. These pilgrims are either 1: Trying to complete an ancient prophecy, 2: On a funeral march, 3: On a starvation trek, 4: Searching for a sacrifice.
- 2. Blood River:** This valley is named for the dry riverbed down its middle. Once a raging river, now it is merely a ravine. The soil is damp and anyone who walks this land leaves footprints that fill with red water (colored by minerals). Locals believe that this is actually the blood of those wrongfully slain, and that the spirits of the murdered will hunt those whose footprints their blood filled. For a week after walking here, whenever a character is involved in a battle, bloody omens (footprints, handprints and oozing red sap) will be found at the scene afterwards.
- 3. Broken Heart:** Ages ago a powerful cleric from Nova Vaasa journeyed here with a group of warriors to bring down the cruel Yagno and his false god through the power of the sword and the word. The holy war failed and all the followers were slain. The cleric made a last stand in this valley and now haunts the land as a Radiant Spirit. His final quest is to bring down Yagno and have his worshipers cast Yagno out.
- 4. Cave of Blood:** Here, pilgrims have recreated the cave where Zhakata supposedly first revealed himself to Yagno. It was once just a shrine, but recently a gem containing a Glyptar spirit was set into one of the eyes of Zhakata's bestial statue by a well-meaning priest. Now, when the creature can, it alters or manipulates the stone about it or animates the statue to slay lone worshipers.
- 5. Claws of the Beast:** These jagged spurs of rock form a gauntlet of wickedly curving claws of stone rising out of the earth. Travelers through this vale will feel they are being watched. A tribe of kobolds dwell in a cave system beneath these spurs and use a series of trapdoored pits, rock falls and snares to capture lone travelers and drag them down into their lair to an unknown fate.
- 6. Eye of the World:** On one evening of every year the setting sun lines up with a great cleft in the mountain peak. It is said that any man or woman who stares into that light will have a prophetic vision of some earth-shattering event during the coming year. Of course, that person will also be struck blind (Save vs Death; a *cure blindness* will not restore vision). Some likely prophecies include 1: Zhakata's Harvest — a virulent plague which will devastate the lower class, 2: The Prophet of Dignity — a savior who will lead the mongrelmen in a cleansing war to recover their old forms, 3: The Land's Bounty — the bloom of an abundance of gigantic vegetables which are not only nourishing, but also mad-denyingly addictive, 4: Yagno's Blessing — a forgiveness of transgressions and the heralding of a golden age (which is but a ploy to make the peasants more beholden to Yagno).
- 7. Famine's Fastness:** This barren wasteland contains some of the more spectacular array of Zhakata statues in all of his thousand aspects. Travelers through this region have died of starvation and some have been reanimated by the land as Faels, undead creatures (found in the DARK SUN® Monstrous Manual) who eat and eat but are never satiated. In combat, if a Fael inflicts 6 or more points of damage there is a 25% chance of biting off a mouthful of their foe's flesh, and if it inflicts 12 points there is a 25% the damage is fatal.
- 12. Land of Visions:** Toxic gases released by the waters of this swamp are said to grant visions of the present and future, a supposed Gift of Zhakata. Characters who breathe the pungent gases for 1d3 hours must Save vs Poison or become 1: beset by horrific visions causing a madness check, 2: be driven to violent, loco actions, 3: gain faerie sight for 1d6 days revealing the ghostly and invisible, 4: experience delusional hallucinations which lead them on an adventure of madness against imagined foes for 1d6 days.
- 13. Laughing Terror:** A noncorporeal spirit prowls these lands. It is recognized only by its wild laughter. The laughing terror is a unique Odem which seeks to possess a powerful being and then seemingly drive him or her to madness. Actually the Odem controls the possessed person, suppressing the resident personality. The Odem's purpose seems to be to cause fear, a sense of foreboding, paranoia and mayhem.
- 14. Lonely Tower:** This tower is suitable for development by the DM into a more traditional dungeon crawl, or one of these adventure ideas may be developed. 1: Ghostly Stand — once the site of a failed battle, the heroes may find shelter here from pursuing forces, and when the final battle becomes truly desperate, the ghosts of that lost battle will rally to their side to defeat their foe. 2: Murder Again — the tortured spirits of a vicious series of murders and their murderer subtly possess intruders and make them reenact the murders. 3: Playing With Madness — a lonely hermit offers shelter, but every full moon a strange guest comes visiting to play a grim card game with the characters; win and you win a part of your heart's desire, lose and embrace the stranger's madness. 4: Ghostly Refuge — on a dark and forbidding evening, the owner of this tower comes to the party's rescue and offers them refuge; thus follows a romance with one of the characters and then the host (ess) vanishes, all that remains is a lonely grave bearing the host's name.
- 15. Raven's Roost:** A parliament of wereravens make their home in this unscalable aerie. They worship the beneficent face of Zhakata, the Provider, and will offer refuge to the oppressed. However, if their trust is betrayed, or their precious treasure of gems is purloined their vengeance is to slay most of the party and blind those they let flee.
- 16. Scarred Cliffs:** This mountainside was once carved with great reliefs of a graceful and beautiful jackal-headed people in the midst of a feast presided over by a jackal lord. Over the years, countless pilgrims of Zhakata have defaced the works of this once glorious race, until only cruel mockeries remain. Lycanthropes (werebats, werejaguars and wereweasels) revere this past monument and will seek to hunt down and horribly scar any who add to the defacing.
- 17. Vale of the Blest:** This is the favored site of many a pilgrimage, for it is rumored to be the site of a prosperous gathering of Zhakata's chosen. The fact that none return who find this place only reinforces the rumors. The truth is that the valley is home to an ever-growing pack of ghouls and ghosts, presided over by a fiend altered necromancer (9th level priest) who seems a quiet hermit, but who feeds on cannibals and thus delights on luring pilgrims into partaking in the pleasures of eating carrion and "gaining strength from the dead."
- 18. Valley of Dust:** The Pride Eater dwells in this land where the air is heavy with the silvery dust of the lost mongrelmen's pride. It



mouthful of their foe's flesh, and if it intilcts 12 points there is a 25% the damage is fatal.

- 8. Frying Pan:** The only relief from the beating sun in this desert is Valuan's Windmill. It is also the only source of water in the region. Valuan is an 8th level elven mage who was trapped in G'Henna years ago. He hates this land and all the humans who dwell within. He has a peaceful coexistence with a tribe of kobolds who live in a warren beneath the desert sands and may help lure lone characters into the desert wastes to be captured by the kobolds.
- 9. Hunted Grounds:** Here there dwells a being so hideous, that none may gaze upon his form long (Save vs Death or faint if 1-3 level, or flee if 3+ level). Once a mongrelman altered by Malistroi, this Rejected creature stalks all who enter this dismal land, taking out his anger on those who appear normal in comparison. Part humanoid with mighty ray-like wings and a stinger-tipped tail and oozing mucous.
- 10. Jackal's Run:** This narrow pass is home to a mixed band of bandits (humans, kobolds and mongrelmen) led by a 6th level warrior woman called Jackal. They are so successful and elusive in their forays that Yagno had a fort built and garrisoned to protect travelers on this road.
- 11. Lairs:** These locations are significant lairs for featured creatures of the DM's choice. Select from the random encounter tables or create your own to coincide with the terrain they are set in. Lairs are not only the repository of the beasts' treasures, but also their strongholds and possess extra defenses, companion beasts and traps, tricks or curses.

### Encounter Motivations:

Here are some ideas for motivations for random encounters. The DM should select motivations that logically fit the creature encountered.

1. Injured, returning from a fight.
2. Fearful, flee the party.
3. Weary, cautions and advises party.
4. Disguised, actually a different encounter.
5. Hides when sights the party.
6. Spies, seeking information.
7. In lair, camp, hut or outpost.
8. Guarding or escorting someone or some valuable.
9. On a secret mission.
10. Bully, tries to intimidate party and demands a bribe.
11. Causes fear, attacks the weakest party member.
12. Wants to steal from party.
13. Seeks to capture party.
14. Lures or misdirects party into danger.
15. Recovering from injury, a meal or sleep.
16. Hunting for food.
17. Stalking party to ambush when the party is weak.
18. Bandits waylay party and try to plunder.
19. Destroys things.
20. Kills, wants to eat or sacrifice victims.
21. Aid, helps the party in trouble or offers refuge.
22. Guide, offers directions or to guide to a site.
23. Feeds, shares their meager supplies with the party.
24. Attacks the party with fury.

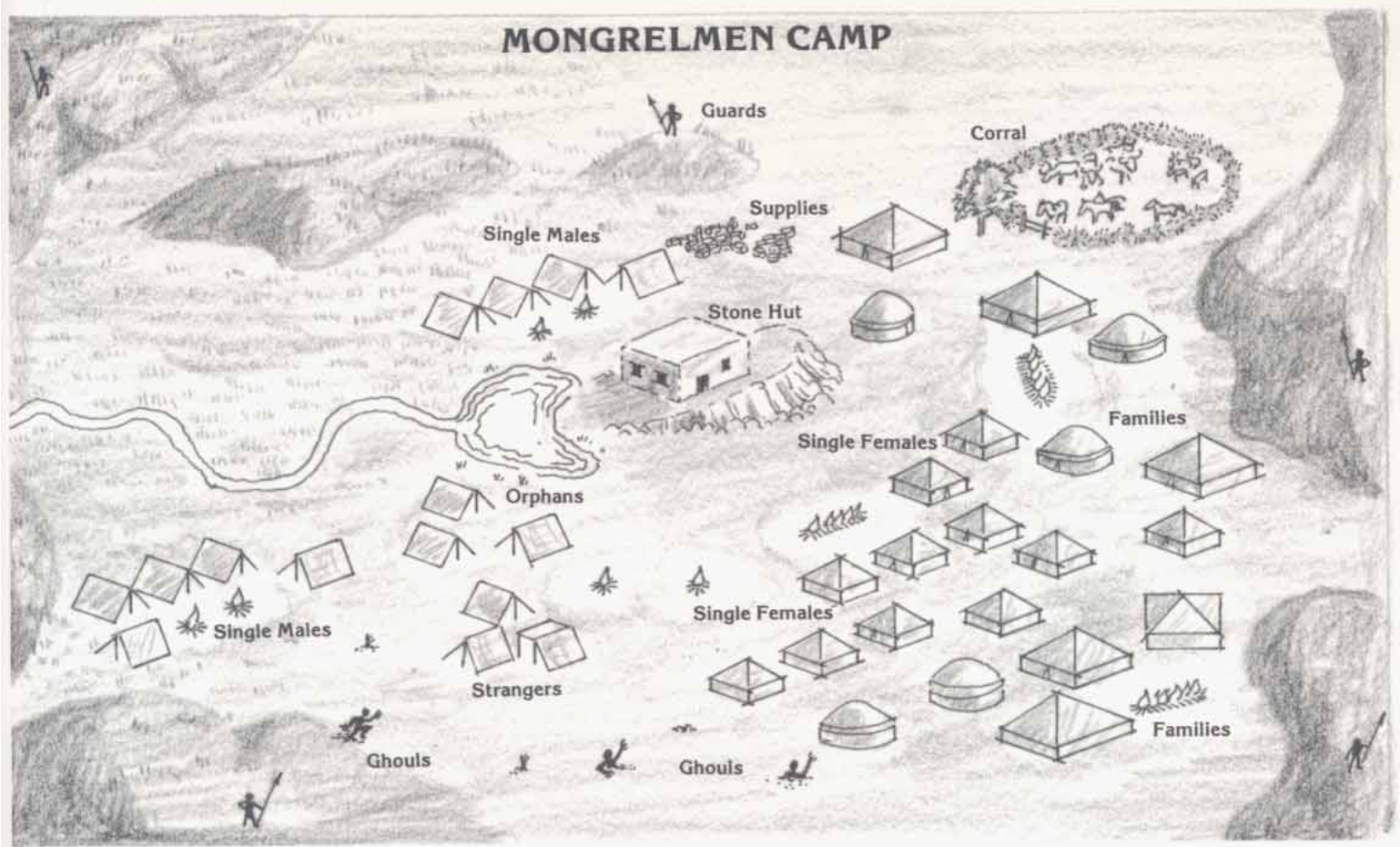
**10. Valley of Dust.** The five Lari dwells in this land where the air is heavy with the silvery dust of the lost mongrelmen's pride. It stirs and sends the dust whirling in blinding storms so that it may more easily slip up on prey.

- 19. Zhakata's Larder:** Here there is nature's manna, an edible fungus that can sate a person's hunger for a day. However, a steady diet of this fungus will lead to skin lesions and bloating, a draining of color from the flesh and an aversion to light. In addition, the presence of a small colony of Myconid gardeners, rarely seen, may lead one to believe that consuming the manna will transform one into a myconid.
- 20. Zhakata's Tears:** Legend states that once this was a mighty waterfall, but now it has dwindled to a seeping trickle across the cliff-face. The faithful debate its meaning, either Zhakata no longer laments for its lost people, or it no longer has any tears to cry. As the season changes, different colored algae bloom, and gathering the colored waters by the dark of the moon may grant a mystical power for 1d6 turns. 1: Black — walking in shadow unseen, 2: Red — the power to regenerate 1 point per round, 3: Green — the power to invigorate plant growth to one round equals one week of growth, 4: Purple — casts the user into a coma, but frees the mind from the body to wander swiftly to investigate things from the ethereal plane. However, any who imbibe must Save vs Poison or they will suffer a curse the opposite of the intended power 1: Shines with a bright light, 2: Loses 1 point per round, 3: Wilts plants and rots vegetation, 4: Insomniac for 1d6 days suffering -2 cumulative penalties each day without sleep.

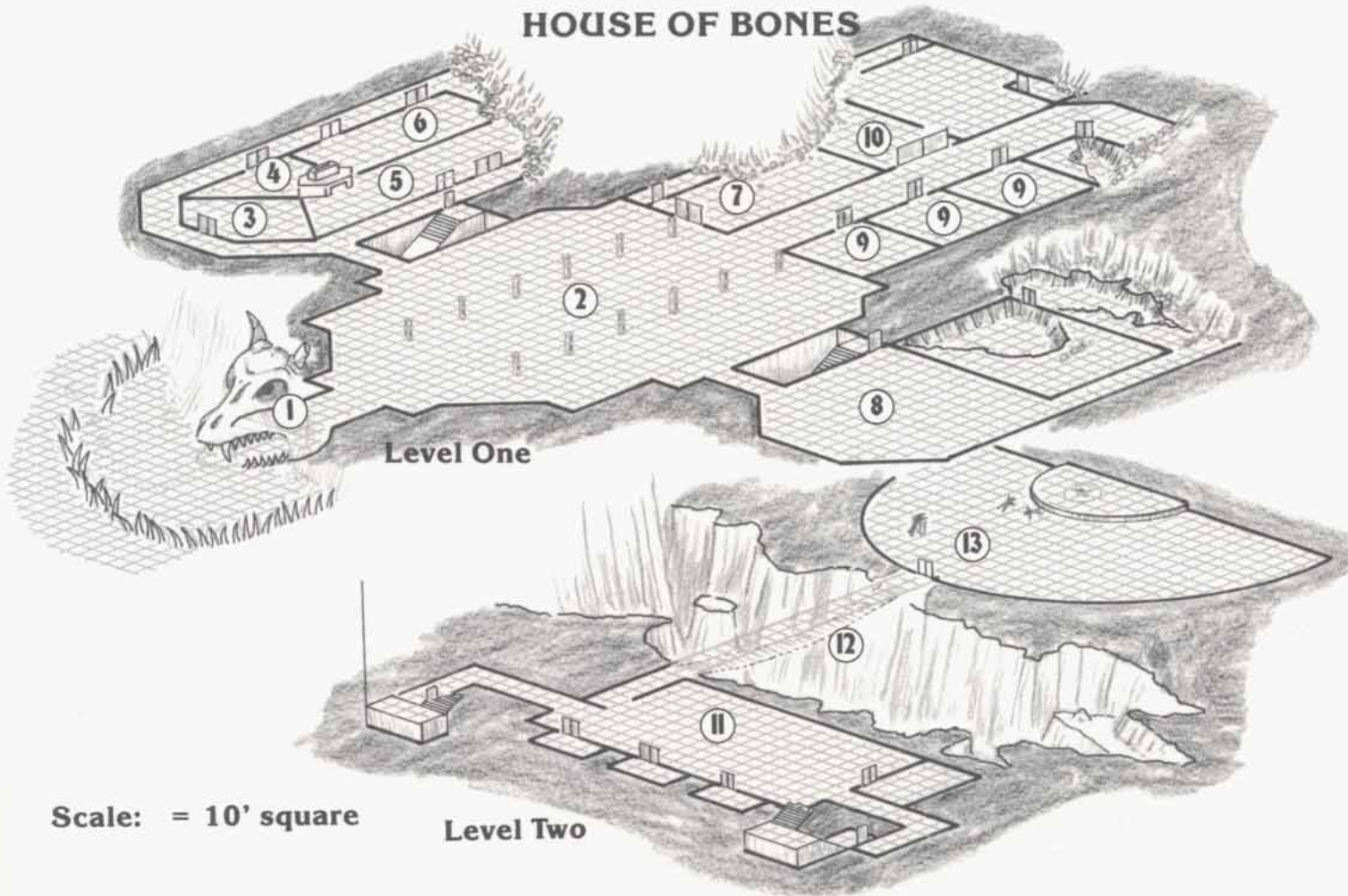
### Adventure Plots

- 1. Safe Haven** — what appears to be a refuge from the night's terrors and seems safe for a short time, turns out to be a trap to capture unsuspecting prey.
- 2. Living Land** — ahead the land is dark and appears to shift and shiver as if alive! It is a carpet of living creatures that will hunt the heroes into a corner from which they must somehow survive. Possibilities include army ants, locusts and sand weirdlings.
- 3. The Lovers Lost** — two young lovers have strayed from safety into the dangers of the wilds. At first they belittle the danger, saying that love conquers all. Then a horror of the land claims the life of one, and the ghostly spirit will then follow invisibly until reunited with the spirit of its love or until it can save its love's life.
- 4. Lighting Hope's Beacon** — a quest to create a refuge from the grim worship of Zhakata unearths a gigantic quartz crystal which must be mounted on the highest mountain peak. Then the life of an innocent given willingly will ignite a beacon that no evil may approach. However, Yagno will do all in his power to prevent the completion of this quest.
- 5. The Pit & the Pendulum** — one of the heroes becomes enamoured with a non-player character who is then caught by the Inquisition and hauled off to be tortured. The heroes must infiltrate the bowels of the Temple and rescue their love. Yet, it will be a bittersweet victory, for the NPC will be horribly scarred though very devoted.
- 6. Silence Unleashed** — an arcane seal bars an ancient tomb. Within lies the devourer of song, who eats sound and instills madness. Slow to move, once the seal is broken it will slowly consume the land. The heroes must find a *Chime of Interruption* and drive the Silence back into its tomb and restore the seal before it is too late.

# MONGRELMEN CAMP

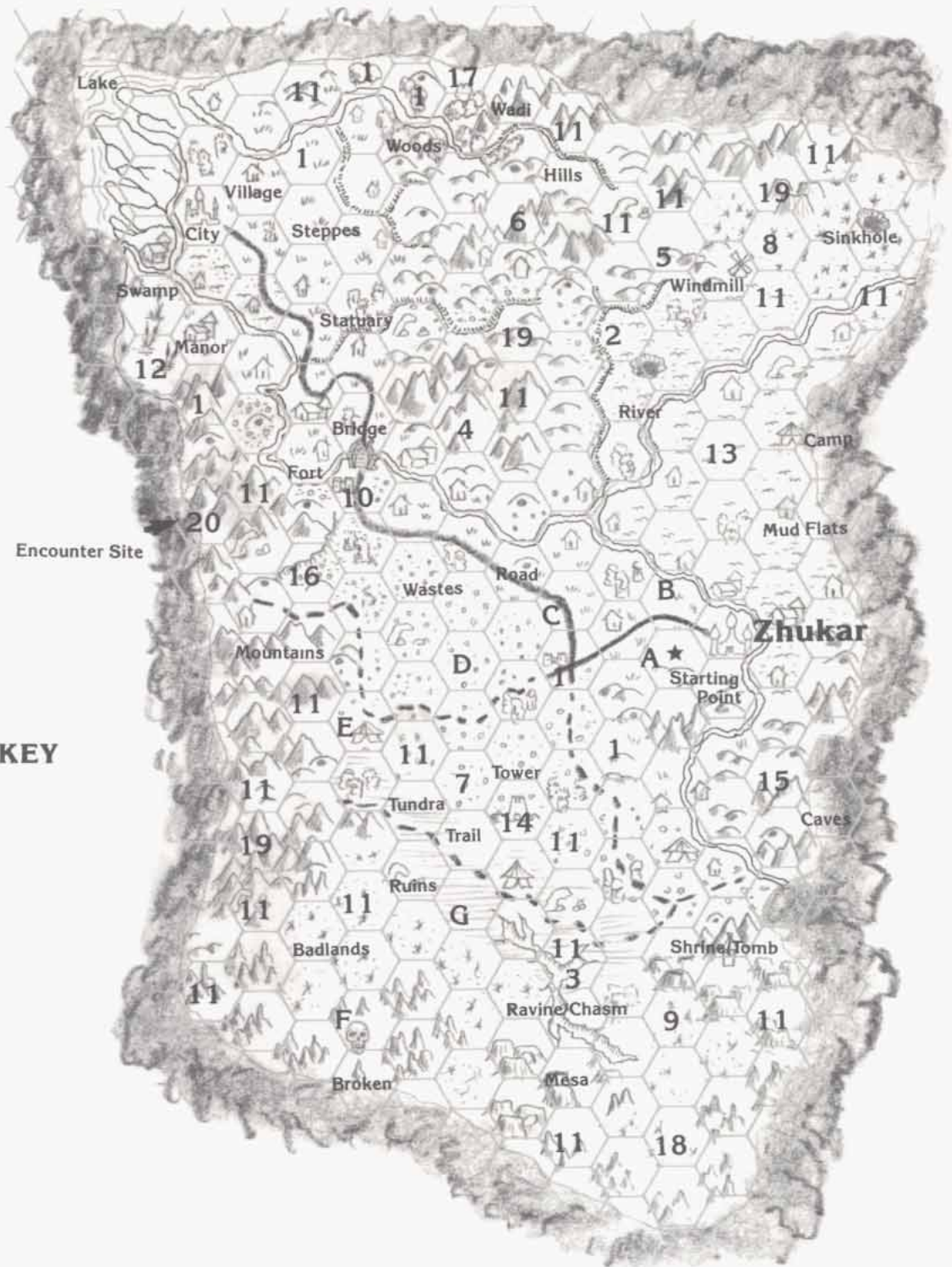


# HOUSE OF BONES



Scale: = 10' square

Level Two



## ENCOUNTER KEY

1. Pilgrims
2. Blood River
3. Broken Heart
4. Cave of Blood
5. Claws of the Beast
6. Eye of the World
7. Famine's Fastness
8. Frying Pan
9. Hunted Grounds
10. Jackal's Run
11. Lair
12. Land of Visions
13. Laughing Terror
14. Lonely Tower
15. Raven's Roost
16. Scarred Cliffs
17. Vale of the Blest
18. Valley of Dust
19. Zhakata's Larder
20. Zhakata's Tears
- A. Zhakata's Door
- B. Watching Eyes
- C. Plea for Aid
- D. Zhakata's Hand
- E. Mongrel Gather
- F. House of Bones
- G. Following Footsteps

1 Hex = 25 miles

Advanced  
**Dungeons & Dragons®**

# Ravenloft®

Official Game Adventure

## Circle of Darkness

by Drew Bittner

**T**he Mists of Ravenloft lead to G'Henna, land of famine and zealous devotion to Yagno Petrovna, high priest of the Beast-God, Zhakata. In the cities of G'Henna, worshipers starve themselves to prove their faith; in the Outlands, twisted mongrelmen struggle to survive in a land of unforgiving windstorms and bleak plains.

No domain in the Demiplane of Dread has been in greater need of change—and the subtle agents of the *Circle of Darkness* wish for nothing less than the overthrow of their oppressive leader and create a new order lead by Zhakata himself.

They should be careful what they wish for.

*Circle of Darkness* is a dangerous adventure for heroes willing to face not only the Dark Lord of G'Henna, but also the greater evil which threatens to overcome him. The fate of an entire domain is in the heroes' hands!

For 4 to 6 characters of levels 5 to 7.

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