

SWORD & SORCERY

Dungeons and Dragons® Campaign Setting

Ravenloft



Core Rulebook



Ravenloft®

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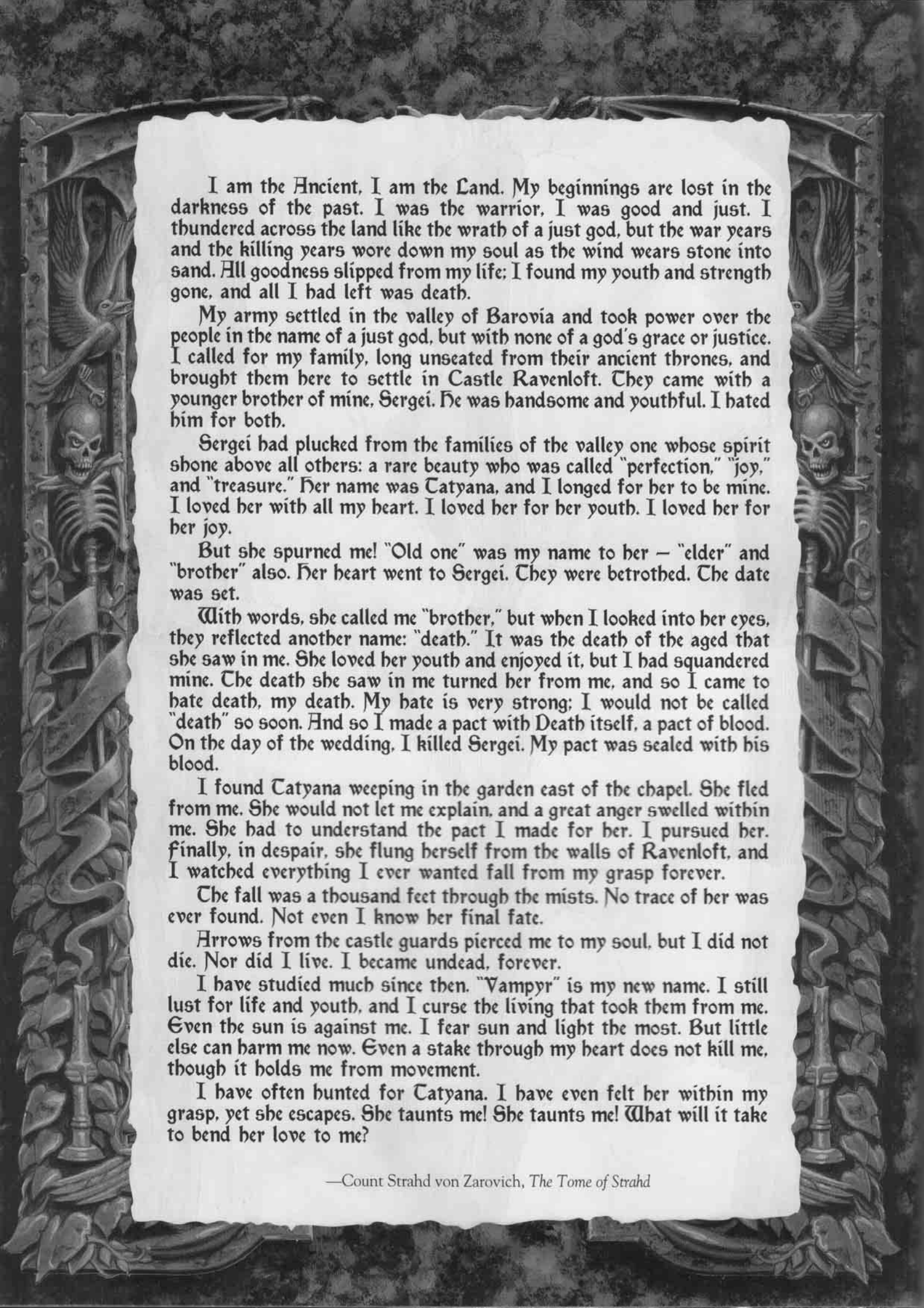
Ravenloft®

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Chapter One:
The World of
Ravenloft



I am the Ancient, I am the Land. My beginnings are lost in the darkness of the past. I was the warrior, I was good and just. I thundered across the land like the wrath of a just god, but the war years and the killing years wore down my soul as the wind wears stone into sand. All goodness slipped from my life; I found my youth and strength gone, and all I had left was death.

My army settled in the valley of Barovia and took power over the people in the name of a just god, but with none of a god's grace or justice. I called for my family, long unseated from their ancient thrones, and brought them here to settle in Castle Ravenloft. They came with a younger brother of mine, Sergei. He was handsome and youthful. I hated him for both.

Sergei had plucked from the families of the valley one whose spirit shone above all others: a rare beauty who was called "perfection," "joy," and "treasure." Her name was Catyana, and I longed for her to be mine. I loved her with all my heart. I loved her for her youth. I loved her for her joy.

But she spurned me! "Old one" was my name to her — "elder" and "brother" also. Her heart went to Sergei. They were betrothed. The date was set.

With words, she called me "brother," but when I looked into her eyes, they reflected another name: "death." It was the death of the aged that she saw in me. She loved her youth and enjoyed it, but I had squandered mine. The death she saw in me turned her from me, and so I came to hate death, my death. My hate is very strong; I would not be called "death" so soon. And so I made a pact with Death itself, a pact of blood. On the day of the wedding, I killed Sergei. My pact was sealed with his blood.

I found Catyana weeping in the garden east of the chapel. She fled from me. She would not let me explain, and a great anger swelled within me. She had to understand the pact I made for her. I pursued her. Finally, in despair, she flung herself from the walls of Ravenloft, and I watched everything I ever wanted fall from my grasp forever.

The fall was a thousand feet through the mists. No trace of her was ever found. Not even I know her final fate.

Arrows from the castle guards pierced me to my soul, but I did not die. Nor did I live. I became undead, forever.

I have studied much since then. "Vampyr" is my new name. I still lust for life and youth, and I curse the living that took them from me. Even the sun is against me. I fear sun and light the most. But little else can harm me now. Even a stake through my heart does not kill me, though it holds me from movement.

I have often hunted for Catyana. I have even felt her within my grasp, yet she escapes. She taunts me! She taunts me! What will it take to bend her love to me?



If this was forgot in contemplating the glorious and awful scenery before him — light struggling with darkness — and dark-ness menacing a light still more terrible, and announcing its menace in the blue and livid mass of cloud that hovered like a destroying angel in the air, its arrows aimed, but their direction awfully indefinite.

— Charles Maturin, *Melmoth the Wanderer*

Beyond mortal senses, beyond your reality, there lurks a boundless plane. It permeates your world and fills the void between worlds. It is the border between the lands of the living and of the dead. There, mind and matter become one; thought and passion, fear and yearning can become more tangible than iron. It is the Ethereal Plane.

Somewhere, lurking deep within those ethereal mists, a dark and nameless dimension is ruled by dark and nameless powers. Some say it is a prison for the damned; some say it is a crucible to test the virtuous. Others simply call it home. It is a land of mist and shadow, love and death, sacrifice and seduction, beauty and horror. It is a land of whispered fears made manifest. It is the Realm of Dread.

Perhaps you have sensed its touch. At the bidding of the Dark Powers, tendrils of the ethereal Mists that bind this land reach out to caress the Material Plane. They stroke the skin at the back of your neck when a creaking floorboard warns that you are not alone in the dark. Their invisible fingers crawl down your spine when inhuman shadows rustle at the edges of your vision.

The Mists do more than merely caress. The Dark Powers are drawn to innocence and villainy, to loathing and desire, to obsession, and to despair. They seek out squandered dreams and inner demons. They savor the decay of the spirit. Their Mists snatch up fiends at the moment of their ruin and steal upon heroes in times of doubt.

To what end do the Dark Powers add these souls to their tarnished collection? To torment them? To purify them? None can say, for few souls drawn into the Realm of Dread ever leave to tell the tale. Yet perhaps you will soon learn for yourself, for tonight, the Mists have come for *you*.

Welcome to the Land of Mists. Welcome to the crucible of virtue and the spoils of damnation. Welcome to the Realm of Dread.

Welcome to Ravenloft.

How to Use This Book

You now hold the core book for the D20 Ravenloft setting. It contains all the guidelines you need to play in a Ravenloft campaign or to apply its Gothic atmosphere to any setting of your own creation. You will need the *Player's Handbook*, *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and *Monster Manual* to make full use of these new rules.

If you plan to run a Ravenloft campaign, you may find the next two Ravenloft releases useful: *Secrets of the Dread Realms* is filled with forbidden lore for the DM, including the identities and powers of Ravenloft's infamous darklords. *Denizens of Darkness* is a compendium of the most chilling and lethal creatures known to lurk in Ravenloft's misty realms.

Chapter by Chapter

This chapter introduces the Ravenloft setting, including a lexicon of common terms used in Ravenloft campaigns.

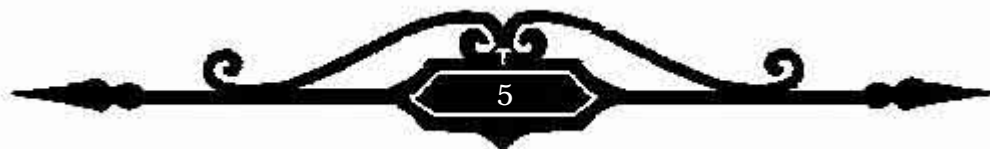
Next, Chapter Two: *Player Characters* provides all the changes needed to reshape heroes for Gothic adventures. This chapter also introduces a new race, the *giogoto*, and new skills, feats, religions, and equipment.

Chapter Three: *Ways of the World* offers the game rules that form the foundation of Gothic adventure campaigns. These include new rules for fear, horror, and madness; laying curses of vengeance; powers checks; and the changes imposed on spells and magic items.

Chapter Four: *The Dread Realms* provides a player's guide to more than forty of the domains that compose the world of Ravenloft.

Chapter Five: *Horrors of the Night* offers expanded rules for the most infamous creatures known to haunt the Realm of Dread, from vampires to lycanthropes to hags. A DM can use these rules to ensure that her players will never know exactly what to expect from their foes. This chapter also details Ravenloft's mysterious gypsies, the Vistani.

Finally, Chapter Six: *The Ravenloft Campaign* offers advice to players and DMs on how to explore the themes and concepts inherent to Gothic adventures.





Chapter One

Changes Wrought

With this edition of Ravenloft, you will note the obvious systemic changes to the *Dungeons & Dragons, 3rd Edition* rules.

Also, it is our intent with this presentation of the Ravenloft setting that whole campaigns be played herein. While the Realm of Dread is still as suitable for a "weekend in hell" for outlanders, the setting has been made more internally consistent and suitable for extended games. It is, by nature, a darker world this time around, but still evocative of the fantasy environment. While we have no intention of introducing the introspection and sometimes florid horror of some of White Wolf Game Studio's other settings, we still want you to gather around the table to play and occasionally jump or cringe at Ravenloft's terrors. It is a world of Gothic adventure, ready for your heroes to brave its dangers. Much less emphasis is placed on getting in and "going home"; this edition presumes that your exploits in Ravenloft will occur on a much longer-term scale. To that end, we've emphasized cohesion and scaled back on the camp.

The Gothic Mystique



It might be said that the Gothic novel is a primitive detective story in which God or Fate is the detective.

—E. F. Bleiler, editor, *Three Gothic Novels*

Imagine a scene set in an earlier age, resembling a highly romanticized version of our own medieval era. It is a world still beholden to ancient superstitions. A meager handful of valorous young men and women explores an ancient ruin, seeking to uncover the sinister web of mystery locked within its maze of secret passageways. In these shadowed halls, our heroes face many supernatural threats — but none are so terrible as the powerful and corrupt master of the keep, who sits at the center of both the ruin and its mystery.

These images, familiar to any dungeon-crawler in modern fantasy roleplaying, first burst to literary life with the birth of the Gothic genre in the latter eighteenth century. The father of this genre was Horace Walpole, a dilettante author enraptured with his romantic vision of the Middle Ages. His novel *The Castle of Otranto* laid the thematic foundation that all early Gothic novels would closely observe.

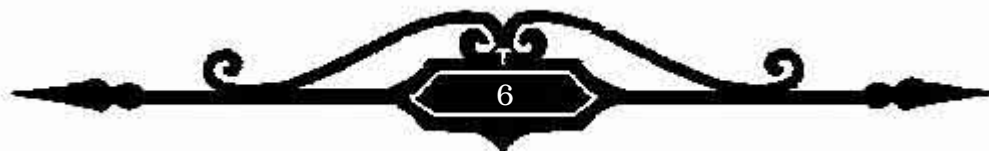
Early Gothic Tales

Early Gothic novels were tales of mystery, romance, and brooding horror. They were typically set in earlier times, though their authors were more concerned with instilling an atmosphere of decadence and decay than with achieving any sense of historical accuracy. At the heart of these early tales sat the vast and crumbling Gothic castles that gave the genre its name. These ancient citadels were more than mere scenery. Their slow descent into picturesque ruin reflected the spiritual decay of their masters, their secret passages spoke of ancient mysteries, and the specters that walked their halls decried old crimes, neither avenged nor forgotten.

The master of the castle — and villain of the tale — was a murderer and usurper who had unwittingly sacrificed all hope for happiness in a relentless, Faustian pursuit for knowledge, power, or pleasure. The protagonist paled in comparison, usually assuming the role of a lovely and innocent young maiden imperiled by the villain's desires, or a brave young man laid low by a stolen birthright.

Gothic tales were infused with an atmosphere of supernatural dread. Ancestral curses and mournful ghosts manipulated events and eroded the characters' sanity. Unnatural deformities such as scars, strange birthmarks, or hunched backs turned men into monsters, apparent punishments for the crimes of their fathers. Gothic tales evoked subtle horrors, deriving terror from foreboding, not gore — the knowledge that the coming sunset will free a vampire from its crypt, not the grisly details of a werewolf's rampage. Indeed, the supernatural was presented so subtly in early Gothic novels that it was often explained away entirely once the tale's central mystery was resolved. In the brightness of day, ghosts became tricks of the light; eerie creatures became mad hermits.

One supernatural presence could not be denied. Behind the scenes, the forces of divine Good and Evil duelled to drive the tale to its conclusion. Most early Gothic tales adhered rigidly to the same story arc. The tyrannical villain has committed a terrible crime and escaped justice, but his sins have made his existence corrupt and hollow. The innocent young protagonists arrive in the villain's realm. Incensed by their purity, or fearing that they will expose his guilt, the villain persecutes the young innocents. As the tale unfolds, twists of fate and spectral interlopers reveal the villain's crimes and the young hero's stolen birthright.





It is the villain's own foul deeds and the divine forces of justice — far more than the hapless protagonists — that drive the villain to his final ruin. In the end, all crimes are avenged, evil devours itself, and true love emerges victorious.

The Late Gothic Tradition

The Gothic genre blossomed in the early nineteenth century. New generations of authors broke through the rigid formula of the early Gothics, adding layers to Otronto's foundation. The hapless protagonists of the early tales were pushed aside, now serving as mere witnesses to the villain's downfall. The Gothic genre now belonged to the villains: sophisticated antiheroes both repellent and compelling, possessed of amazing potential squandered through painfully common mortal flaws. Such Gothic villains included Victor Frankenstein, whose hubris doomed his divine ambitions, and the caliph Vathek, who pursued his lust for power into an Arabian hell.

The nebulous curses and haunts of the early tales now became all too real. The later Gothic authors reinterpreted ancient legends to invent archetypal new horrors. Mary Shelley created the flesh golem, giving life to the dangers and responsibilities of parenthood. John Polidori modeled the world's first aristocratic and charismatic vampire on his associate, the famed poet Lord Byron.

The ghosts and ghouls of the Gothic tradition were, above all else, allegorical doppelgangers: reflections of *human* evil. When Frankenstein rejected his monster, he rejected the terrible consequences of his *own* profane actions. Those same deeds would return to haunt him in the form of his forlorn creation.

The Victorian Revival

As the nineteenth century continued, the Gothic tradition writhed beyond its roots. As the genre came to a close, Edgar Allan Poe added tales of dementia and obsession, and in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" carried the Gothic sense of unnatural dread into his new creation: the "consulting detective."

The Gothic genre once again flared to life at the century's end. New authors applied the societal fears of their day to the old staples. The burgeoning fields of evolution and psychology threatened to prove man no more than a beast wrapped in the thin veneer of civilization. From these fears of repressed passion and self-betrayal

come Dorian Gray, who hid a portrait of his true depravity; Dr. Moreau, who sought to make men of beasts and a god of himself; and Dr. Jekyll, whose struggle with suppressed savagery would form the foundation of the Gothic werewolf.

As the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth, one aspect of the early Gothic tradition started to make an unexpected comeback: the hero. The protagonists of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* pursued their immortal foe across Europe to end his evil reign. The consulting detective came home to create "occult detectives" such as Le Fanu's General Spielsdorf, Stoker's Van Helsing, Blackwood's John Silence, and Hodgson's Carnacki. These characters studied the occult not in the pursuit of personal power, but to combat its evil — these virtuous scholars plunged their Faustian counterparts deeper into darkness.

With his tales of the Puritan witch-hunter Solomon Kane, Robert E. Howard even carried the Gothic staples into the fantastic worlds of pulp adventure, the same genres of swords and sorcery that would one day spawn fantasy roleplaying.

To the Grave and Back

As the twentieth century dawned, the horror genre moved on. The Gothic tradition gave way to the weird tales of authors like H. P. Lovecraft, who retained a Gothic aura of decay while creating fearsome alien entities, reflecting a society humbled by scientific discovery and the inhumanity of the Great War. Vampires, ghosts, and werewolves were soon dismissed as threadbare clichés.

But they always come back. A few decades passed, and then the Gothic tradition burst back into the world, like Mr. Hyde too long repressed. With each Gothic revival, new writers twisted the old archetypes, applying the anxieties of their age. Every era has a disease that can walk in a vampire's shoes; every generation has seen the cautionary tales of Frankenstein and Moreau come one step closer to reality.

The Gothic genre refuses to lie quiet in the grave. Its horrors — vampires, madmen, ghosts — continue to resonate within us because they *are* us.

We invite you now into a world of Gothic adventure: where innocence battles corruption, where love destroys and redeems, where magic cannot overcome morality, and where divine justice comes to all.





The Realm of Dread



vil is ... a moral entity and not a created one, an eternal and not a perishable entity: it existed before the world; it constituted the monstrous, the execrable being who was also to fashion such a hideous world. It will hence exist after the creatures which people this world.

—Marquis De Sade, *L'Histoire de Juliette, ou les Prosperites du Vice*

Ravenloft is a world unlike other worlds. It is a construct, an artificial pocket realm endlessly prowling the trackless Ethereal Plane. The implacable Dark Powers crafted their realm from the hidden fears of the innumerable worlds of the Material Plane, and shape reality to reflect their sinister sensibilities.

This section introduces the core concepts of the Ravenloft setting; further details can be found in chapter 3.

Tenets of Terror

On the surface, the Realm of Dread seems much like any low-magic setting (see chapter 6 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*) found on the Material Plane. Spellcasters are rare, and common folk seldom witness the supernatural, understanding it only through folklore (though that folklore is fright-eningly prevalent). However, few of Ravenloft's denizens know that the natural laws of their world have been insidiously rewritten.

Good and Evil

Spell effects that detect ethical alignment (alignment on the law-chaos axis) perform normally, but no magic can directly detect moral alignment (alignment on the good-evil axis). By shielding evil, the Dark Powers force mortals to rely on their own judgment. Although some people in Ravenloft come to dismiss the concept of absolute morality as an antiquated myth, Good and Evil remain vital and omnipresent, locked in eternal struggle. Characters who preserve their innocence are subtly protected from the forces of darkness, while those who commit evil acts risk falling to these eldritch powers, their minds and bodies slowly warping to reflect their inner corruption. People who wholly embrace the lures of evil may eventually find themselves trapped in prisons of their own making.

Necromancy and the Undead

Forces that tap into the corrupting power of the Negative Energy Plane are potent and perilous in Ravenloft. The vile undead — creatures trapped in a twisted mockery of life — become more powerful and are often shielded from magic that would reveal their true nature. Those who dare command the undead must take care, for with increased power comes increased resistance to control.

Necromantic spells are similarly enhanced, but few forces carry greater risks of tainting the caster's soul than those that disrupt the natural cycle of life and death or deny the spirits of the dead their final reward.

Divination

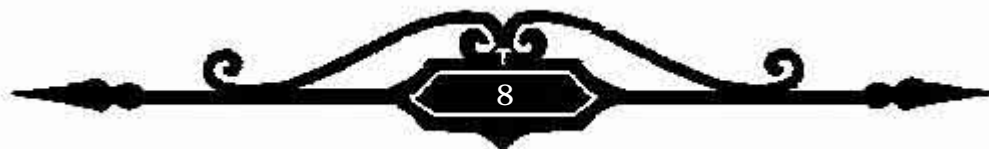
The Realm of Dread does not easily surrender its mysteries. Divination is untrustworthy in Ravenloft. Magic that would reveal a creature's true nature, portend future events, or reveal the desires of the gods often produces skewed results or even fails entirely. Only the Vistani, a nomadic, gypsylike race, can reliably reveal the future's secrets.

Travel

The Ravenloft Mists often cause travelers to lose their way, or abandon them in strange lands. Even magical forms of transportation must contend with the Mists' misdirection. Only powerful magic can transport subjects from one domain to another, and not even the most powerful of spells can grant escape from a closed domain. (See "Domains," below.) The Mists even restrict planar travel: unless the Mists allow it, no force short of a major artifact or the direct intervention of a deity can provide passage to other planes.

The Near Ethereal

Although characters in Ravenloft cannot readily travel to other planes, they can reach the Ethereal. Even then, these travelers can access only the Near Ethereal — the border between the Deep Ethereal and other planes — like waders on the shores of a vast and bottomless ocean. Ravenloft's Near Ethereal is a realm of restless spirits, its landscape shaped by the lingering passions of the living.





Domains

The Realm of Dread is composed of scores of small pocket "nations" not too far removed from planes themselves, like the cells of a honeycomb — or the cells of a prison. Each of these artificially constructed countries, called domains, is the prison of a singular evil entity: its darklord. A domain may stand alone, an "Island of Terror" surrounded by the Mists of Ravenloft, or it may join seamlessly with other domains in "clusters" to form a continuous landscape.

Every aspect of a domain, from its climate to the creatures that call it home, is a subtle reflection of its darklord, offering painful reminders of the transgressions that forged the darklord's doom. The size of a domain may range from a single room, to a lonesome manor and its grounds, to an expansive dominion containing numerous towns and a thriving culture. Some occult sages believe that a domain's size may be a measure of the darklord's force of personality, his squandered potential, or even of the tragedy of his tale. However, the Dark Powers may grant a less compelling darklord a vast but sparsely populated domain, furthering his isolation, or they may trap a powerful darklord in a smaller domain, concentrating his evil.

Domain Borders

In regions made up of more than one domain, the edges of a domain may be recognized as political boundaries, or they may be indicated only by physical landmarks — a brook, perhaps, or the edge of a forest. In some cases, however, a traveler may have no way to tell that she has crossed into a new den of evil.

Even worse, that traveler may find escape impossible, even if freedom is just a few paces away. Almost all darklords can "close" the borders of their domains at will; if a darklord cannot close his domain, the cause often lies in the nature of the curse that binds him to the land. When a darklord closes his domain, immensely powerful supernatural effects manifest at the borders to prevent passage. As an example, many travelers in Ravenloft have heard tales of the poisonous vapors that sometimes surround Barovia, choking anyone who attempts to leave. No mortal magic can overcome the effects of a closed domain border, nor can a dice throw.

The Mists of Ravenloft

Thick fog blankets the melancholy moor of a Gothic tale, confounding travelers and washing away the world. A film of vapor seeps along the headstones of a graveyard, concealing hidden dangers.





In Ravenloft, these Mists assume a life of their own. The Ravenloft Mists act as the claws of the Dark Powers. Every child in Ravenloft knows of the Misty Border, the churning walls of Mist that surround and isolate domains and clusters.

A traveler who enters the Misty Border hoping to reach another domain quickly finds herself engulfed by a netherworld of obscuring white fog. Even the ground beneath her feet fades away. Direction and distance become meaningless; unless a traveler uses a Mistway (a "current" in the flow of the Mists) or is escorted by the Vistani or a powerful anchorite (a cleric of a goddess said to have merged with the Mists), she has no control over where the Mists will deposit her.

The Mists can even rob time of its meaning. Within the Misty Border, night blends featurelessly into day, and no turning of the moon occurs. Legends are even told of travelers who emerged from the Mists weeks or years after — or even *before* — they entered.

The Mists are not limited to the netherworld between domains. They can appear anywhere and at any time in Ravenloft, boiling up from the earth to snatch up creatures and place them where they will. Rumors also speak of more insidious appearances by the Mists. Whispered tales tell of folk who wandered lost for days in a small grove of trees, or of back alleys that became twisting labyrinths, or of a house that contained more rooms than it physically could. People who encounter this phenomenon are said to be "Mist-led." Opinions differ on whether the Mists disorient these folk by fogging their senses or by imposing true, ephemeral changes to reality.

Regardless of how the Mists manifest, when they come, no force can stop them.

The Mists appear as a bogeyman in countless legends. Ravenloft's folk blame any bad luck on the meddling of the Mists and often refer to the Misty Border as the World's-End Mists or the Mists of Death. The Misty Border is the legendary home of countless unfathomable horrors.

At the best guess of sages and scholars, the Mists are a manifestation of the Near Ethereal, strands of the cobweb that binds that Realm of Dread — but the Mists are indistinguishable from normal banks of fog, even under magical scrutiny. The Mists may also take other subtle forms. For example, in deserts they often appear as clouds of dust or rippling waves of heat; in lands cloaked by winter, they may appear as blinding snowstorms. Even the merest ripple in a calm sea may indicate a parting — or closing — of the Mists.

Outlanders

Ravenloft's insular folk have many equivalent terms for "outlanders," travelers who hail from foreign domains beyond the Misty Border. On rare occasion, these stragglers may even claim to have come from lands beyond the Realm of Dread.

The Mists can stretch their tendrils into any world with ties to the Ethereal Plane. In game terms, an outlander is any creature that has been drawn into Ravenloft from one of these worlds. The Mists usually reach into other worlds to snatch up evildoers; indeed, many darklords are rumored to be outlanders. The domains of these outlander darklords are often reminiscent of other worlds on the Material Plane.

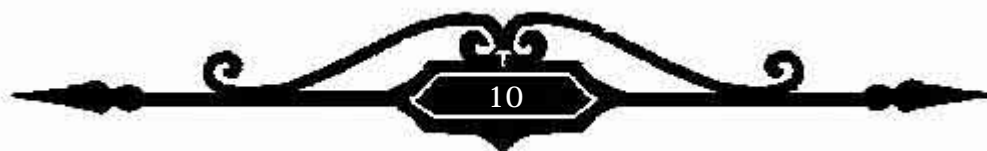
Although no one truly knows why, the Mists sometimes draw other folk into Ravenloft as well, be they hapless bystanders or mighty heroes. If the DM approves, players can create outlander player characters. Outlanders are rare, but they have no special advantages or penalties in relation to native characters.

Darklords

Darklords are the seed of evil at the heart of every domain, but few of Ravenloft's denizens are aware that they exist. Heroes have no infallible means of detecting who or what is the darklord of any given domain. Some darklords control their domains openly, acting as political rulers, while others skulk in the shadows, their very existence a secret. Indeed, the very concept of a "darklord" isn't one that the average citizen of Ravenloft is aware of.

Most domains are inhabited by a single darklord, though on rare occasion the Dark Powers may grant a single domain to a small group of evildoers. These darklords are usually linked both by blood relation and their crimes.

Mindless, slaving beasts do not become darklords. Mere evil is not enough to earn a domain. Despite their corruption, darklords share the same motivations as countless other folk: they hope for love, crave respect, or even yearn for mere acceptance. Yet darklords are not poor, misunderstood souls damned through no fault of their own.





Their selfish natures pervert simple wants into obsessive lusts, and they earn their domains through horrid crimes. Darklords are all the more monstrous for the empathy one might feel for them, not in spite of it. Even when forced to face their transgressions, most darklords remain obstinately blind to their own failings, lashing out at the world for perceived wrongs.

A darklord is both the warden and the ultimate prisoner of his domain. A darklord can trap others in his domain by closing the borders, but he can never leave. Some of Ravenloft's darklords have spent centuries striving to escape from their Mist-veiled prisons, to no avail. The curse that binds them to the land offers them little rest; not unlike Tantalus in the underworld, they are tormented by their greatest desires.

Should a darklord be destroyed, his domain ceases to serve a purpose. If another evil creature in the domain has earned damnation, the Dark Powers may appoint it the domain's new darklord. A domain in a cluster may be absorbed by its neighbors, expanding the prisons of other darklords. If neither of these events occurs, the domain dissolves back into the Mists from whence it came.

The Dark Powers

The Dark Powers are the ultimate masters of the Realm of Dread, and its ultimate mystery. They have created an entire world in their own image, but not even the most powerful divinatory magic can unveil their true nature. Few of Ravenloft's denizens are even aware that the Dark Powers exist, blaming sinister events on the Mists or their gods. Occult scholars who try to pry open the Dark Powers' secrets typically end up pursuing the phantoms of their own minds.

What are the Dark Powers? Are they true entities or something more akin to an elemental force? Mystics have proposed that they may be a banished pantheon of gods, or strange and ancient toes of the gods, or even some dark aspect of the divine subconscious. Some philosophers have even claimed that the Dark Powers do not exist, that they are actually a sentient manifestation of human sin. None of these theories is anything more than idle speculation, however.

Are the Dark Powers many or few? This book refers to them in the plural, but this is a mere convenience. If the Dark Powers include multiple entities, then do they act as a unified whole, or are they fractious? Does the same force both punish

and empower evil, or are the Dark Powers locked in an internal struggle between light and darkness?

This in turn leads to the greatest mystery surrounding the Dark Powers: are they good or evil? Some sages point to the outlander darklords. The Dark Powers have forever imprisoned these foul villains in realms of eternal perdition. The Dark Powers never actively seduce the righteous into evil; they merely react to those who have already succumbed to inner wickedness. The Dark Powers do not behave like demons; they do not corrupt souls through malicious trickery. In this sense, the Dark Powers are a force of austere justice, reserving their cruelty for the cruel.

Other sages, however, claim that the torment the Dark Powers inflict on darklords merely drives those villains into an agonized frenzy, inflaming their corruption. Perhaps the Dark Powers seek to raise an army of darkness to one night unleash on the Material Plane. In this context, the Dark Powers are a sadistic engine of suffering.

And what of the innocents caught in the Dark Powers' clutches? What of the villagers who fall prey to the horrors of the night, or the heroes who must do battle with the forces of evil? Do the Dark Powers delight in watching the destruction of innocence, or do they flaunt these pure souls in the faces of the darklords as reminders of the path not taken?

Are the Dark Powers good or evil? Are they gods or monsters? What is the ultimate goal of their grand and awful experiment? The truth may transcend mortal comprehension.

History



*istory has many cunning passages, con-
trived corridors*

*And issues, deceives with whispering
ambitions,*

Guides us by vanities.

—T. S. Eliot, "Gerontion"

The study of Ravenloft's past can prove a maddening exercise. When a new domain forms in the Mists, its denizens appear with complete memories of full lives, and their culture may record a history that stretches back centuries before the domain's actual creation. Whether these "false histories" are real and drawn from other worlds or entirely fabricated by the Dark Powers is a matter best left to the philosophers.





Through long tradition, most lands of the Realm of Dread have adopted the Barovian calendar (BC) to mark the passing of the years. This book does the same. Isolated domains, such as those found in clusters or Islands of Terror, may still track time through their own reckoning.

Pre-351: The Time Before

The true origins of the Realm of Dread remain a mystery. Through the veil of allegory, the creation myths of numerous traditions, including the legends of the Vistani, hint that the Dark Powers and their sinister realm may be as ancient as dread itself. Sifting a common theme from these often contradictory tales, the Realm of Dread may have crept through innumerable eons, forever ebbing and flowing in an eternal cycle of expansion and decay. If so, then the creation of the domain of Barovia merely marked the birth of a new cycle of torment — and the death of whatever came before.

However, the few sages who delve into Ravenloft's arcane origins note that no reliable record of a domain predating the creation of Barovia has ever been found. In their learned opinion, the creation of the Realm of Dread can be traced back some four hundred years to a single world on the Material Plane. Little is now known about this world beyond the name of one of its kingdoms: Barovia.

According to Barovian records, Strahd von Zarovich was born in the year 299 BC. As the eldest son in an aristocratic line, he obeyed tradition and entered the military as a child, rising steadily in the ranks.

In the same year Strahd became a general, a horde of pillaging barbarians, the Tergs, invaded Barovia and drove Strahd's family from their ancestral lands. Strahd rallied the tattered Barovian forces, driving the Tergs back in a grueling and bloody conflict that would last decades. Strahd's youth had long since been spent by the time his weary army defeated the last of the Terg warlords. As the noble houses of Barovia struggled to rebuild from their losses, Strahd claimed sovereignty over the lands he had liberated from the Tergs as his reward and settled into the mountain fortress of the last Terg, dubbing it Castle Ravenloft.

Count Strahd's new subjects hailed him as a conquering hero, but the decades of war and the endless parade of death had hardened Strahd's heart. His reign, like his war-torn life, held no room for compassion.

Strahd called for his scattered relatives to join him at Castle Ravenloft and reestablish the proud von Zarovich lineage. It was then that Strahd first met his youngest brother, Sergei, a handsome and charming cleric a full quarter-century his junior. In Sergei, Strahd saw himself before the coming of the Tergs, and for the first time, he began to ponder his lost vitality.

While living at Castle Ravenloft, Sergei met a local villager named Tatyana, a young woman as full of life and beauty as himself. Their love was immediate and pure. Sergei brought Tatyana to Strahd, announced their plans to wed, and asked for his eldest brother's blessing.

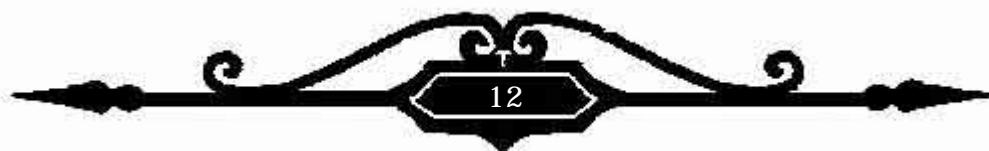
Sergei's words struck Strahd a more crippling blow than that inflicted by any Terg warrior. Strahd was immediately enraptured with the simple girl, but she loved only Sergei, treating Strahd like a father. Tatyana's grace confronted Strahd with all the pleasures of life that war had denied him, and her love for Sergei tormented Strahd with his squandered youth. A desperate hatred for Sergei flared to life in Strahd's heart.

This was when Strahd made his pact with death, as recorded in *The Tome of Strahd*. Strahd's account of the doomed wedding is largely accurate, but it neglects a few vital facts. One of the many guests invited to Castle Ravenloft was Leo Dilisnya, patriarch of a mercantile family still struggling to rebuild after the war. His entourage came to the wedding concealing crossbows, plotting to eradicate the rival von Zarovich line.

The moment Strahd murdered Sergei with an assassin's blade, strange mists descended on Castle Ravenloft and flowed across the land, forming the domain of Barovia. When Strahd expressed his love to Tatyana, confessing his crime, she fled from him in horror, throwing herself from the castle walls. As Strahd watched her fall, Leo's assassins launched their attack — but Strahd's bloody pact had forever freed him from the indignity of death. As the poison-tipped bolts pierced his body, his heart ceased to beat and he became a vampire. All his hopes destroyed, Strahd had nothing left but fury. He rampaged through the castle, slaughtering guests and assassins alike. By dawn, not a single soul was left alive within the castle walls. The Realm of Dread was born.

351-469: A Private Hell

The domain of Barovia originally existed as an Island of Terror, alone in the Mists. Few records survive from this time.





Strahd retreated from public life, and many Barovian villagers came to believe that he too had died. The few survivors of the massacre scattered throughout the domain, settling into new lives. Strahd spent the century learning the limits of his Mist-bound prison and adapting to undeath.

Strahd also spent these years hunting down the traitorous Leo Dilisnya, who had excused himself early from the wedding, claiming illness. According to some tales, Strahd finally found the wizened Leo hiding in a remote monastery, nearly five decades after the ill-fated wedding. Most accounts agree that, wherever Leo Dilisnya is now, his torment has never ended. Leo's family survived, however. To this day, the Dilisnya name is renowned for cunning and infamous for duplicity.

470-546: Outlanders Arrive

As the decades wore on, the insular Barovians took note of the occasional appearance of "outlanders," strangers from beyond the Mists. Most of these stragglers were simple, lost wanderers. Some of these folk adapted to their new home, but others struggled to return to their own worlds. The latter usually disappeared. Perhaps they found their way home, but most Barovians believe they simply fell prey to the unnatural predators that lurk in the Barovian night. One group of powerful outlander heroes assaulted Castle Ravenloft, believing they could destroy the evil within. They were never seen again, their fates all too clear.

A few of these outlanders retain historical significance. The first of these new arrivals were the enigmatic tribes of the Vistani. According to legend, they first appeared at the stroke of midnight separating the years 469 and 470. The Vistani were soon feared and respected for their sixth sense and command over the Mists. The Vistani's leader, the wizened Madame Eva, soon forged an alliance with Count Strahd — a pact based on mutual need, not respect.

A few years after the arrival of the Vistani, a young boy named Martyn Pelkar emerged from the Svalich woods, claiming that a luminous, sylvan being had rescued him from the beasts that had slaughtered his parents. Though often dismissed as a madman, Pelkar would spend the rest of his life establishing what is today known as the Cult of the Morninglord.

The last of these significant outlanders is Azalin, a powerful wizard who emerged from the Mists in the sixth century.

As with many outlanders before him, Azalin was obsessed with the goal of escaping Barovia. Strahd and Azalin formed a cautious alliance, and for the next four decades, Azalin — who now rules the kingdom of Darkon — dwelled in a remote tower overlooking Lake Zarovich, scrutinizing the planar fabric of the Land of Mists.

547-587: The Expanding Stain

After suffering nearly two centuries of isolation, Barovia was finally joined by new domains. Forlorn was the first to appear, melding with Barovia's southern border to form the first cluster. Curious Barovian explorers ventured into this new land, only to retreat from its twisted, inhuman inhabitants. Three decades later, the domain of Arak materialized to the northeast. Unlike monstrous Forlorn, Arak was home to several human towns, where the denizens told tales of dark elves and evil fey. The Barovians took their first, faltering steps toward trade, and the Barovian cluster began to grow into what would soon be called the Core.

In the autumn of 579, Mordent appeared to the west of Barovia, and the Core now had a coastline. Legends claim that Mordent's sudden appearance was somehow connected to Azalin and Strahd, who were attempting to open a portal to another world. Mordentish folklore does claim that both men visited their lands, where they became embroiled with the fate of a human alchemist and his Apparatus, a terrible artifact said to be able to rend and exchange mortal souls. Whether or not these tales contain any truth, Azalin and Strahd did finally end their fractious alliance soon after. Azalin entered the Mists and claimed a new domain, Darkon. The appearance of this vast land doubled the size of the Core.

Late in the sixth century, a blasted wasteland — the domain of Bluetspur — joined the Core near Forlorn. Half-mad human refugees fled into Barovia, doubling the population of Immol, and claimed their homes had been destroyed by a race of alien, brain-stealing entities. The southern lands of the Core became notorious as the realm of monsters.

Deeper in the Mists, new Islands of Terror appeared, including the desert realms of Har'Akir and Sebua and the foggy city of Paridon. The folk of most of these domains would go decades before learning that other lands lay beyond their Misty Border.





568-699: Scourge and Expansion

The fourth Century closed with an event of horrendous devastation that would be unmatched until the Requiem. In the spring of 588, a massive and violent sandstorm suddenly roiled to life in Arak's mountain passes. By the time the storm died out, all surface life in Arak had been destroyed. The storm even altered Arak's landscape, transplanting Mount Lament miles to the west to form the domain of Keening. Both of these desolate regions were deemed cursed and have been shunned by sensible travelers ever since.

The Century following the Scourge of Arak was marked by explosive growth. A dozen new domains joined the Core, sprouting like tumors, and were matched by just as many Islands of Terror. The Mists withdrew to reveal the Sea of Sorrows, leading to the steady trade of goods and ideas between Mordent, Lamordia, and Darkon and ushering the northwestern Core into a new age of enlightenment.

After having been scattered to the winds, the Dilisnya family gathered in the new domain of Borca and reestablished their economic might. One of their number, Yakov Dilisnya, claimed to be the messenger of a divine guardian and founded the Church of Ezra. By the end of the fifth Century the first clerics of the Lawgiver, Ezra's most powerful rival faith, would establish their church as the state religion of Nova Vaasa.

In the dying decade of the fifth Century, an outlander named Vlad Drakov appeared in western Darkon, massacring several villages before Azalin's forces drove his mercenaries into the Mists. The new domain of Falkovnia appeared, and the next era of Ravenloft's history would begin.

700-734: Dead Man's Campaign

The Realm of Dread continued to expand during this era. Half a dozen new domains joined the Core, including Dementlieu, which would rapidly become the hub of northwestern culture, and Sithicus, ruled by a skulking black knight rumored to possess terrible powers. Political unrest flared in several regions, as the rulers of both Borca and Invidia met their ends at the hands of assassins, and Nova Vaasa's Prince Othmar seized illegal control of his realm.

Yet none of these events defined the era like the Dead Man's Campaign. Until Drakov appeared, open warfare had been unknown in the Land of Mists. As the sixth Century began, however, Drakov drove his armies into Darkon no fewer than four times.

Every invasion ended in crushing failure, as Azalin's undead minions effortlessly decimated the Falkovnian ranks. Each defeat only intensified Drakov's rage. Again and again he marched his citizens to the slaughter. By the end of the fourth invasion, Falkovnia had lost thousands of its sons, but Drakov still had yet to claim a single foot of Darkonian soil. Darkonians and Falkovnians alike came to call Drakov's failed conquests the Dead Man's Campaign — for only the dead had added to their holdings.

Although no history book records it, another event of quiet significance occurred in this era. After a scheming Vistani clan and a sadistic vampire destroyed his family, a humble Darkonian doctor, Rudolph van Richten, dedicated his life to combating the monstrous horrors of the night. During the decades of his work, Dr. van Richten would expose the weaknesses of Ravenloft's horrors and create a legacy of knowledge and wisdom.

735-740: The Grand Conjunction

According to most accounts, the Vistani seer Hyskosa first recorded his prophecy predicting a cataclysmic "Grand Conjunction" in the year 735. However, the Vistani do not seem to flow through time as others do, and copies of "Hyskosa's Hexad" have been found dating back at least a Century. More certain is that Azalin learned of Hyskosa's omens in this year and in them saw an opportunity. Still driven by his outlander desire to escape to his own world, Azalin manipulated events over the next five years to fulfill the prophecies and bring the Grand Conjunction to premature fruition.

Vistani call Hyskosa a Dukkar: a male Vistani born with the Sight and fated to bring destruction to his people. When the Grand Conjunction was triggered in the summer of 740, it threatened to turn Ravenloft inside out. As the Land of Mists was wracked by tremors and entire domains dissolved into vapor, the Mists of Ravenloft spread throughout the Material Plane to doom countless outlander worlds.

Fortunately, Azalin's manipulation of the natural order of events weakened the Grand Conjunction enough to allow a band of adventurers to cause its collapse. The Material Plane was saved, but the Realm of Dread did not escape unscathed. Core domains were wrenched into new positions; rivers altered their courses; the stars even changed their pattern.





Several Core domains were absorbed by their neighbors: Darkon consumed Arak, Borca merged with Dorvinia, Verbrek absorbed Arkandale, and Gundarak was divided between Invidia and Barovia. Several domains broke off from the Core to become Islands of Terror or vice versa. The most startling effect, however, was the creation of the Shadow Rift, a vast and bottomless chasm that now lies where the Core domains of G'Henna and Markovia once lay.

Even years later, most denizens of the Realm of Dread still know nothing about the true events behind the Grand Conjunction. Having seen only the chaos it wrought, most people call it the Great Upheaval and speculate wildly as to its cause.

741-749: The Land Congeals

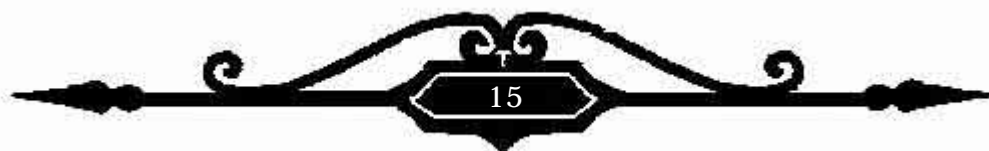
Most sages agree that the aftershocks of the Grand Conjunction may still be subtly reshaping the Land of Mists. This era was marked by the Great Upheaval's most visible aftereffects: the formation of new clusters. The domains of Sri Raji, Saragoss, and the Wildlands were first, merging to form the Verdurous Lands. In following years, other domains would meld to create the Amber Wastes, the Shadowlands, Zherisia, and the Frozen Reaches.

Boatmen even claimed that a new sea was forming in the Mists to the east of the Core.

Many folk began to warily reexamine their roles in the world. Clerics in Tepest declared an Inquisition to wipe out the fey, blaming those spirits for the apparent destruction of G'Henna and Markovia. Clerics of Ezra in Darkon warned against a prophesied Time of Unparalleled Darkness, when all but the faithful would be destroyed in a flood of evil. After having persecuted the use of arcane magic in his realm for decades, the lord of Hazlan suddenly reversed his position, establishing a school of wizardry. The black knight of Sithicus is said to have fallen into despair, never leaving his ruined keep.

Political unrest emerged in the southern Core again as Malocchio Aderre, decried by the Vistani as a new Dukkar, suddenly appeared and seized control of Invidia. Forging a military alliance with Falkovnia, Aderre has since been sending his mercenaries into neighboring domains to hunt the Vistani, even when those neighbors threatened armed reprisals.

Unseen by most, a secret society spread throughout the northern Core, working toward the terrible event that would end the era.





This cabal, the Ebon Fold, used enchanted daggers to steal the souls of unwitting victims, then smuggled the accumulated life force to its master, Azalin, still pursuing his dreams of escape. The Grim Harvest would claim hundreds of lives before its conclusion.

750-755: The Fall of Kings

After a decade of experimentation, Azalin completed a magical artifact that would empower him with the energy of thousands of stolen souls, allowing him to finally burst free from the Realm of Dread. At the stroke of midnight on the night of the winter solstice in the year 750, during a religious ceremony called the Requiem, Azalin activated the artifact in the heart of Darkon's largest city.

A wave of negative energy burst from the artifact and expanded across all of Darkon. Every living creature within a mile of Il Aluk was instantly slain and animated into undeath, and a spiritual shroud settled over the kingdom. Azalin vanished and was presumed slain. His throne remained empty for years as local nobles squabbled for control, and a spectral entity claiming to be Death itself laid claim to Il Aluk.

Azalin was not the only public figure to fall. The aged Rudolph van Richten had already vanished without a trace in the spring of 750, after enjoying eight years of peaceful retirement. In the autumn of 752, a mass of living, shrieking shadows smashed into the keep of Sithicus's ruler, destroying him. The knight's seneschal, a brutal dwarf named Azrael, quickly seized control of his master's holdings. Lastly, in recent months, mystics and seers have even claimed that a remote cluster, a land said to have been locked in endless warfare, had been utterly destroyed by forces unknown.

As each crown fell, the fear of the populace grew. More and more people gave credence to doomsayers and the prophecy of the coming Ultimate Darkness.

A few arcane sages have even speculated that the planar cycle that started with the creation of Barovia may have ended its period of expansion and that the future will bring nothing but continual decay.

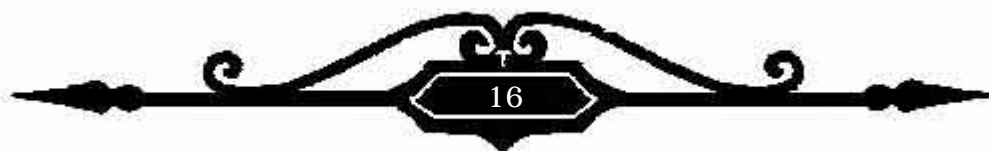
The Land of Mists is not yet doomed, however. Not all omens point toward destruction. Van Richten's legacy has not been forgotten, and not all kings are equally slain. Shortly after Azalin's apparent demise, Vlad Drakov invaded Darkon for the first time in decades. The undead still rose to defeat his armies, and legends emerged to claim that Azalin was not truly gone. As the years passed, more and more Darkonians received irregular visions of their fallen leader as he struggled to return from beyond. Death also seemed to sense Azalin's presence and dispatched undead minions to stop the wizard's return — to no avail.

Late in the summer of this year, Azalin triumphantly returned to the world. He now claims that his attempt to stop the Requiem — supposedly an invasion of the dead into the world of the living — physically trapped him in the Gray Realm, the land of the dead, until he could find his way home. Azalin has returned to find his kingdom in shambles and has publicly sworn to restore Darkon to its former glory.

755: The Present

These are uncertain times for the Realm of Dread. A growing sentiment among its people holds that the world is steadily creeping toward some inexorable fate, but no one knows what that fate will be. Doom prophets speak of the Time of Unparalleled Darkness, predicted to arrive in a scant twenty years, but clerics of the Morninglord proclaim that the long night that fell on Barovia in 351 will finally reach a glorious dawn.

One thing is certain. Whether Ravenloft's fate lies in darkness or light, it will be mortals — be they heroes or villains — who choose its destiny.





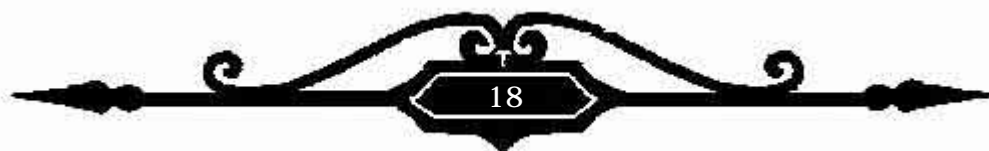
Timeline of Events

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| <p>1 The ancestors of Strahd von Zarovich found the Nation of Barovia.</p> <p>320 The Tergs invade Barovia, conquering the von Zarovich ancestral lands.</p> <p>321 Strahd von Zarovich leads the armies of Barovia in battle against the Tergs.</p> <p>347 Strahd drives the last of the Terg warlords from Barovia, claiming the throne as his reward.</p> <p>351 The wedding of Sergei von Zarovich and Tatyana turns into a massacre through Strahd's murderous rampage and the treachery of Leo Dilisnya. Barovia becomes a domain.</p> <p>398 Strahd hunts down the traitorous Leo Dilisnya and condemns him to eternal torment.</p> <p>400 Strahd encounters Tatyana's first reincarnation.</p> <p>470 The Vistani appear in Ravenloft. Their leader, Madame Eva, forges an alliance with Count Strahd.</p> <p>475 Earliest records of the Cult of the Morninglord.</p> <p>528 Powerful heroes assault Castle Ravenloft and are killed.</p> <p>542 Azalin enters Ravenloft, forming an uneasy alliance with Strahd.</p> <p>547 Forlorn is drawn into the Mists.</p> <p>551 The domains of Har'Akir and Paridon appear.</p> <p>564 Sebuia is formed.</p> <p>575 Araak appears.</p> <p>579 Mordent enters Ravenloft. Darkon appears.</p> <p>581 Illithids spawn the domain of Bluetspur.</p> <p>586 "Bloody Jack" strikes Paridon for the first time.</p> <p>588 Keening appears. All surface life in Arak is scoured away.</p> <p>590 Pharazia is formed.</p> <p>593 Gundarak is formed.</p> <p>600 Vechor appears.</p> <p>603 Invidia takes shape under the rule of Bakholis.</p> <p>607 Sanguinia is formed.</p> <p>611 Shadowborn Manor enters Ravenloft.</p> <p>613 Kartakass appears.</p> <p>615 Nidala is formed.</p> <p>620 Timor appears.</p> | <p>625 Valachan takes shape.</p> <p>630 The Sea of Sorrows appears.</p> <p>635 Souragne is formed. Graben appears.</p> <p>646 Avonleigh appears in the Phantasmal Forest.</p> <p>650 The Faith of the Overseer is founded in Darkon.</p> <p>658 The Wildlands takes shape.</p> <p>666 Yakov Dilisnya scribes the First Boole of <i>Ezra</i>.</p> <p>670 Sri Raji is formed.</p> <p>682 Nova Vaasa appears.</p> <p>683 Lamordia is formed.</p> <p>684 Borca appears.</p> <p>688 The Crimson Death, a lethal plague, spreads across Darkon.</p> <p>689 Vlad Drakov enters Ravenloft in Darkon.</p> <p>690 Falkovnia appears.</p> <p>691 Tepest takes shape.</p> <p>694 Richemulot appears.</p> <p>698 Markovia is formed. Camille Boritsi poisons most of her family.</p> <p>699 Felix Wachter pens the Second Book of <i>Ezra</i>.</p> <p>700 Drakov invades Darkon and is repelled.</p> <p>702 G'Henna appears.</p> <p>704 Drakov invades Darkon again and is repelled.</p> <p>706 Dr. Rudolph van Richten vows to battle the forces of evil.</p> <p>707 Dementlieu appears.</p> <p>708 Arkandale appears.</p> <p>709 Joan Secousse pens the <i>Third Book of Ezra</i>.</p> <p>711 Camille Boritsi is murdered; her daughter Ivana inherits control of Borca. Drakov invades Darkon a third time and is repelled.</p> <p>713 A shadowy crime lord known only as "the Brain" surfaces in Port-a-Lucine.</p> <p>714 Hazlan takes shape.</p> <p>715 Dorvinia appears.</p> <p>720 Sithicus joins the Core.</p> <p>722 Drakov invades Darkon once more and is repelled.</p> <p>728 Saragoss is formed.</p> <p>729 Othmar Bolshnik assumes the title of Prince of Nova Vaasa. Bakholis is killed by one of his captives, Gabrielle Aderre. A peasant uprising topples his regime.</p> <p>730 Verbrek takes shape.</p> <p>731 Vorostokov is formed.</p> <p>734 Prince Othmar refuses to relinquish his title.</p> |
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- 735** The Vistani seer Hyskosa records his Dire Prophecy predicting the Grand Conjunction. Van Richten publishes the first of his texts, the *Guide to Vampires*.
- 736** The first verse of Hyskosa's Hexad comes to pass. Duke Gundar, the lord of Gundarak, falls victim to clever heroes and a traitorous servant.
- 737** The second verse of Hyskosa's Hexad comes to pass.
- 738** Odiare enters Ravenloft. The third verse of Hyskosa's Hexad comes to pass.
- 739** The fourth verse of Hyskosa's Hexad comes to pass.
- 740** The Grand Conjunction rocks the Land of Mists to its foundations, reshaping the domains.
- 740** Rokushima Taiyoo appears. Saragoss, Sri Raji, and the Wildlands join together to form the Verdurous Lands. Tepestanis organize an inquisition against the fey in response to the formation of the Shadow Rift.
- 741** Hazlik builds the village of Ramulai to house a school of wizardry. Gennifer Weathermay Foxgrove is mauled by a wolf. Her uncle George shoulders the blame and leaves Mordent.
- 742** Dr. van Richten publishes the *Guide to the Vistani* and retires. "Bloody Jack" resurfaces in Paridon for his thirteenth killing spree.
- 743** The popular bard Harkon Lukas is elected Meistersinger of Skald. Thought destroyed in the Grand Conjunction, Markovia is rediscovered in the Sea of Sorrows.
- 744** Paridon and Timor merge to form the Zherisia cluster.
- 745** The demon Malistroi attempts to conquer G'Henna with a fiendish army.
- 746** Har'Akir, Pharazia, and Sebuia join together to form the Amber Wastes cluster.
- 747** Malocchio Aderre, born to Gabrielle Aderre and a mysterious father, is revealed to be a Dukkar and seizes control of Invidia. Avonleigh, Nidala, and Shadowborn Manor form the Shadowlands cluster.
- 748** A Lamordian colony on Markovia vanishes without a trace.
- 749** The Grim Harvest begins as Azalin sends the Ebon Fold into surrounding lands to collect souls for a massive magical experiment. Sanguinia joins with Vorostokov to form the Frozen Reaches cluster.
- 750** Dr. Rudolph van Richten vanishes. Gennifer and Laurie Weathermay-Foxgrove vow to continue his work. A massive burst of negative energy now known as the Requiem transforms II Aluk into a city of the undead. Azalin is thought destroyed. The Mists reveal the Nocturnal Sea.
- 751** Teodorus Raines pens the *Fourth Book of Ezra*. Drakov invades Darkon once again, but the dead still rise to repel his forces. A prince of the shadow fey attempts to reopen a portal to the Plane of Shadow, nearly freeing a monstrous entity of immense power.
- 752** Azrael usurps control of Sithicus after his former master disappears in the Hour of Screaming Shadows.
- 753** The Weathermay-Foxgrove sisters print new editions of the *Van Richten Guides*. The former servants of Azalin begin to receive visions instructing them to aid in his return.
- 754** Gregor Zolnik kills his wife and mother in a mad rage. His sisters disappear.
- 755** Heroes restore Azalin to power, foiling a traitorous attempt to enslave his spirit. "Bloody Jack" expected to strike Paridon again.





The Geography of Mists

Searchers after horror haunt strange, far places. For them are the catacombs of Ptolemais and the carved mausolea of the nightmare countries. They climb to the moonlit towers of ruined Rhine castles and falter down black, cobwebbed steps beneath the scat' tered stones of forgotten cities in Asia. The haunted wood and the desolate mountain are their shrines, and they linger around the sinister monoliths on uninhabited islands.

—H. P. Lovecraft, "The Picture in the House"
Ravenloft's inhabitants often call their world the "Land of Mists," and for good reason: Ravenloft has an unknown size and shape. Although Ravenloft's breadth cannot be measured, it forms a relatively small world — what some might call intimate, others claustrophobic. As new domains appear or old ones fade into the Mists, the Realm of Dread expands and contracts, like the chest of a sleeping beast. The central continent, the Core, is the largest congregation of known domains in the whole of the realm. No one truly knows how many domains lie within the Mists; theoretically, the total is limitless. More than one hundred domains have been recorded since the creation of Barovia, but the number of existing domains frequently fluctuates. Note that a domain may be as small as a single room in a forlorn house. Some domains have vanished entirely — often amid rumors of their destruction — only to emerge from the Mists unscathed years later.

The Mists can also reshape the geography within domains. This may occur slowly and subtly, as with the "Mist-led" phenomenon or the gradual revelation of the Nocturnal Sea, but unusual events can also trigger sudden and startling changes, such as those that occurred in the Scourge of Arak or the Grand Conjunction.

Scattered legends of the Realm of Dread have filtered into other worlds. These tales often depict Ravenloft as a living hell, a realm of unremitting horror and misery, a place where heroes go to die. These legends are woefully inaccurate. Ravenloft is filled with natural beauty, both in its vistas and its people. Although its inhabitants are often slow to offer their trust, many folk are kind and gentle. Ravenloft's horrors lurk just out of sight, and with simple caution many folk can live their entire life without ever encountering these supernatural menaces. Of course, heroes who look for trouble soon find it.

Most of Ravenloft's common inhabitants know nothing of other worlds; many even have trouble comprehending outsiders' tales of their distant homelands. Lacking outside references, Ravenloft's folk see nothing unusual about the Misty Border or other eerie features of their little world. In many ways, the Land of Mists behaves just like the true worlds of the Material Plane: the sun and moon turn in regular cycles, just as the years cycle through expected seasons. The domains of a given cluster all typically share the same night sky and general climate.

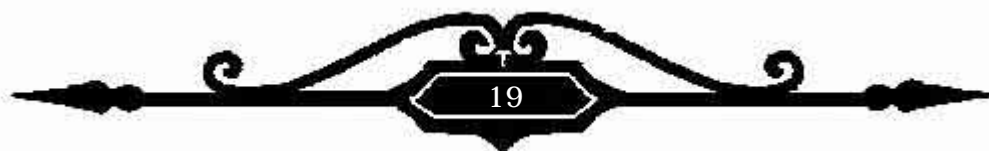
This section provides a brief overview of the best-known regions of the Land of Mists; chapter 4 offers greatly expanded detail.

The Core

The Core is the largest and oldest cluster in the Land of Mists. It currently holds at least thirty domains, though more may be hidden among the scattered islands of the Core's two seas. Just as Barovia lies at the center of the Core, the Core is traditionally held to lie at the heart of the Realm of Dread, though the presence of the Mists makes this impossible to verify. The Core is a vast, rolling landscape divided by the Balinok mountain range and bookended by stormy seas.

The northern Core is dominated by the kingdom of Darkon, which fills nearly a third of the Core's total landmass. Darkon is unusual in that arcane magic is generally trusted, and nonhumans — such as elves and dwarves — are relatively common. Nonhumans are extremely rare in most domains and are seldom welcome. In fact, two of Darkon's neighbors, Falkovnia and Tepest, are both particularly hostile toward nonhumans, though for vastly different reasons. Falkovnian soldiers imprison nonhumans, treating them as chattel, while the clerics of Tepest are in their second decade of an inquisition against the fey. The Core's most infamous landmark, the bottomless Shadow Rift, separates these two domains.

In the northwestern Core, shipping on the Sea of Sorrows and treaties forged to defend against Falkovnian aggression have both led to the free trade of goods and ideas. From stormy Lamordia and cosmopolitan Dementlieu, down through sleepy Mordent and decadent Borca and Richemulot, these lands are regaled as having entered an age of enlightenment.





The new inventions being produced here, from moveable type to primitive steam engines, may one day reshape life throughout the Core.

To the south, the lands west of the Balinoks remain thickly forested. Rustic folk here often face quiet derision from their northern neighbors. These are lands thick with superstition and mistrust. Woodsmen in Verbrek warn of monstrous wolves, while fearful villagers in Barovia shutter their windows and hide when the sun dips below the horizon. Supported by Falkovnian coffers, the despot controlling Invidia has initiated a pogrom against the Vistani, and his raids into neighboring domains have raised the specter of war. The southwestern Core is also notable for Kartakass, home to a richly musical culture, and Sithicus, a politically unstable realm of reclusive elves.

On the far side of the Balinoks, the grasslands of the southeastern Core are divided between Nova Vaasa and Hazlan, both home to byzantine governments, rampant crime, and the methodical oppression of the poor. Nova Vaasa's aristocrats vie for control of the throne, while the wizard who rules Hazlan has recently founded the Core's largest school of arcane magic.

The Sea of Sorrows stretches out to the west of the Core, mirrored by the Nocturnal Sea to the east. These seas seem to defy navigation, and sudden storms have bested many good ships, but captains who brave these waters can make a tidy fortune supplying the small, rugged settlements on the islands that dot both seas.

Clusters

More than a dozen domains have coalesced to form new clusters in the years since the Grand Conjunction. Only time will tell whether any of these clusters will ever reach the size and power of the Core. Five clusters are currently known to exist.

The Amber Wastes are a harsh desert realm where ancient gods and divine curses still protect sandworm temples and the elaborate tombs of the ancient dead.

The Frozen Reaches suffer from a winter that has not lifted in a generation. Although this cluster may nearly equal the Core in size, its population is just a tiny fraction of that of the Core. The rugged folk in these lands must contend with both the merciless elements and unnatural things that do not feel the arctic cold.

In the Shadowlands, the holy protector of the domain of Nidala ruthlessly prunes evil thoughts from her populace, hoping to stop the slow encroachment of the Phantasmal Forest, a nightmarish morass that hides monstrous foes.

Nature holds the Verdurous Lands in a jealous grip. The Rajian people must continually fend off disease and hostile wildlife while trying to appease the cult of Kali. Elsewhere, sailors endlessly struggle to free their ships from the clinging seaweed of the Saragoss Sea. In these sweltering tropics, the jungle itself is often mankind's worst enemy.

Zherisia is the smallest of the known clusters. At first glance, it appears to be nothing more than a fog-shrouded city in the Mists where folk live in mounting fear of faceless killers. Beneath the city, strange tunnels lead down into a realm of alien horrors.

Islands of Terror

This book includes a sampling of five Islands of Terror; others are almost sure to exist, hidden by the Mists.

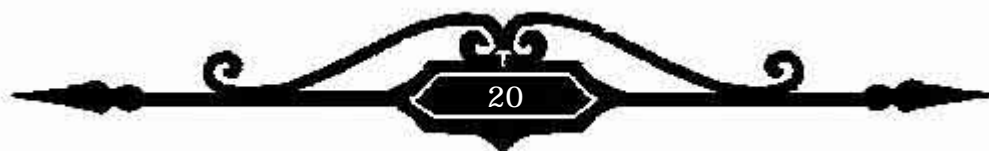
Bluetspur is a scorched and lightless realm where nothing human can survive. Monstrous, slithering creatures possessed of an alien intelligence are said to lurk beneath its blasted surface, where they conduct eldritch experiments and conspire against the stars.

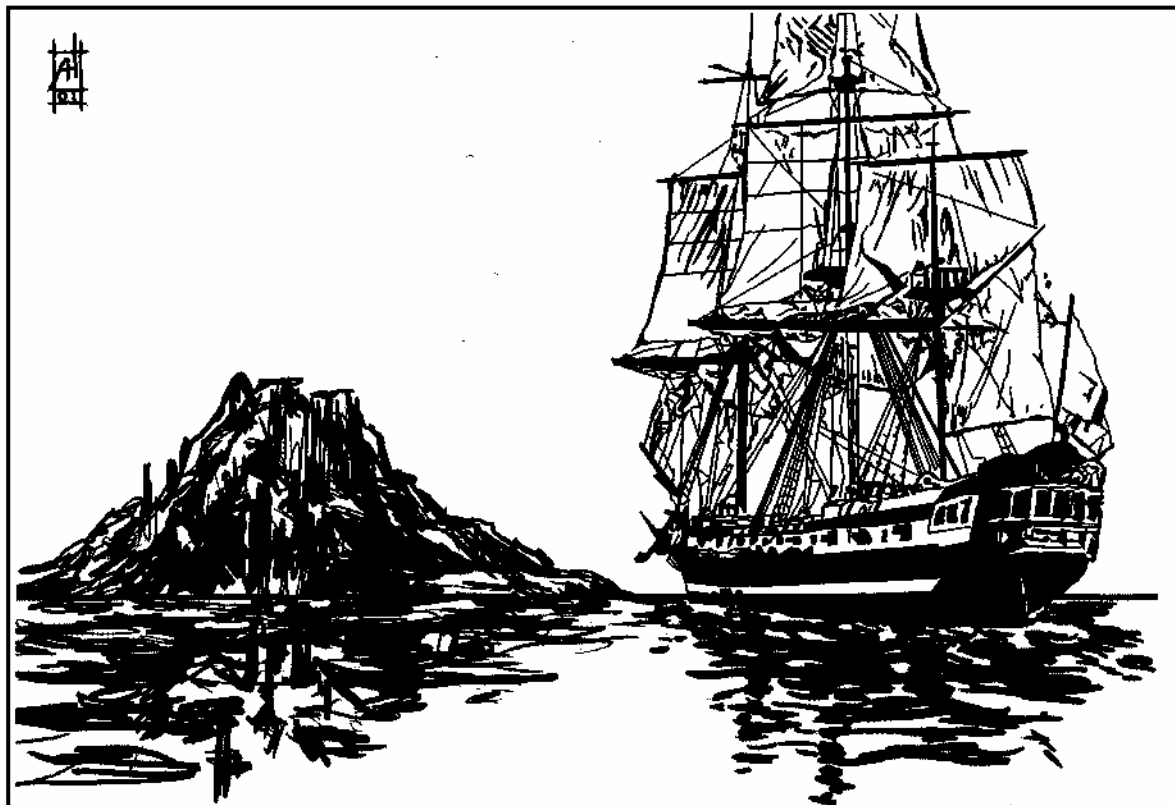
G'Henna is an arid land consumed by religious zealotry. Torn from the Core during the Grand Conjunction, its starving populace spirals into despair as it slowly succumbs to a creeping fear that its bestial god will never appear to relieve its suffering.

Like Zherisia, Odiare is nothing more than a small city surrounded by the Mists. Here, growing children struggle to support themselves and offer prayers against the day when the creature that massacred their parents returns to claim them.

Rokushima Taiyoo, a beautiful archipelago surrounded by a placid sea, is a land of ancient codes of honor, delicate philosophies, and exotic art — which are all being crushed by the conflict between the four ruthless and conniving *shujin* lords who seek to rule it.

Lastly, the folk of Souragne offer praise to the spirits of the swampland and pray that when they die the Lord of the Dead will not come to force their bodies to toil in the fields until the flesh drops from their bones.





Cultural Levels

The Land of Mists is home to dozens of distinct cultures, forming a patchwork of widely varying levels of technological advancement. Just as Jonathan Harker in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* journeys from a modern Victorian London to a Transylvania still chained by medieval fears, those who travel through the Realm of Dread can wander between lands of enlightenment and domains that progress does not touch.

As reflections of their darklord, the cultures found in each domain often resemble those of the darklord's homeland. Domains created for native evildoers expand the range of Ravenloft's native cultures and languages. Domains created for outlanders are often grim reflections of cultures found in distant worlds and may thus be unusually primitive or may draw new forms of knowledge into the Land of Mists.

In Ravenloft, these disparate degrees of technological and cultural progress are expressed as Cultural Levels (CL). Cultural Levels determine the availability of given types of equipment or learning (see "Equipment" in chapter 2), and the DM can use them as a guideline when adding detail to Ravenloft's societies.

Cultural Levels are intended to be a starting point for creating atmosphere, not a rigorously accurate depiction of Earth's past. The Dark Powers sculpt their domains from the romantic dreams and chilling nightmares of countless worlds and often warp the cultures they draw from to suit their tastes.

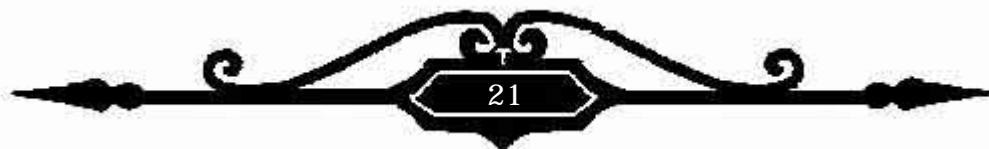
Note: The abbreviation B.C. in the following section indicates *real world*, Before Christ dates, not the Barovian Calendar, and is included for reference.

CL 0: Savage

Savage domains remain untamed wilderness completely untouched by civilization. No technology can be found in these lands, and the only law in effect is survival of the fittest. Savage domains imply a lack of sentient creatures and are extremely rare in Ravenloft.

CL 1: Stone Age (10,000 B.C. - 5000 B.C.)

Stone Age domains represent the most primitive lands that can still claim to possess true societies. Stone Age peoples have not yet learned to work metal; weapons and tools are crafted from wood, bone, or stone, such as flint and obsidian.





Chapter One

Daggers, clubs, slings, and spears are the most common weapons, with the short bow representing the most advanced weaponry to be found. Stone Age peoples tan hides to create clothing and can create leather armor.

Stone Age life is dictated by the daily demands of survival. Societies usually exist as small, seminomadic tribes, usually able to support no more than a score of people. These tribes hunt game or gather edible plants for food, though some may possess domesticated animals or limited agricultural skills. The ability to make fire is considered invaluable.

Stone Age settlements usually take the form of natural caves or collections of hide tents. Lush lands may boast small villages built from adobe bricks. Stone Age communities trade exclusively through barter; an adventurer's coins or gems would be valued only for their decorative worth.

The Stone Age mind is ruled by superstition; every natural event is given a mystical explanation. Stone Age peoples have not yet developed any concept of science or written language, nor have they mastered the arts of magic. Divine spellcasters are typically adepts or druids, while arcane magic is found only in the natural talents of sorcerers.

The goblins that roam the wilds of Ravenloft can be considered a Stone Age society. Although these creatures often wield metal weapons, very few understand metallurgy. Goblins typically steal their metal weapons and tools from the isolated farmsteads they prey on.

Stone Weapons

Stone weapons have a hardness of 8 and only half as many hit points as their metal counterparts. (See Tables 8-12 and 8-13 in the *Player's Handbook*.) Piercing and slashing stone weapons suffer a -1 penalty to attack and damage rolls.

CL 2: Bronze Age (5000 B.C. - 2500 B.C.)

With advances in agriculture, the land can now support large, permanent communities, in turn allowing true civilization to take root. Bronze Age societies are defined by the discovery of metalworking. Bronze weapons and tools begin to replace their crude stone or wood equivalents. Studded leather becomes the most advanced armor available.

As people learn to weave cloth, including cotton and silk, padded armor also appears.

Bronze Age societies possess pictographic written languages and often keep important records on clay tablets or scrolls made of crude forms of paper or inscribe them in stone. Growing seasons are recorded each year, leading to the creation of early calendars. Other new discoveries include fixed measurements and often sophisticated knowledge of mathematics, architecture, astronomy, and herbal medicine. New inventions include the potter's wheel, pulleys, levers, and the plow and may include the wheel. Gems and works of art crafted from precious metals become prized symbols of wealth and power, but most trade still relies on barter.

Organized religion appears and quickly dominates society. Bronze Age rulers are often clerics, viewed as the direct emissaries of the gods. Sages unlock sorcerers' arcane powers to become the first wizards, and spellcasters learn to enchant magic items.

Bronze Age peoples can build stone structures for their cities and temples. The size of these structures often seems to be limited only by the available workforce, and large communities may construct massive monuments capable of outlasting their builders by millennia. These architects may also protect their glorious temples and tombs with secret doors and cunning traps, including hidden pits, swinging blades, and deadfalls. Ironically, Bronze Age societies have yet to invent the lock and key.

Bronze Weapons

Bronze is a soft metal. Bronze weapons have a hardness of 9, and piercing and slashing weapons suffer a -1 penalty to damage rolls.

CL 3: Iron Age (2500 B.C. - 1 B.C.)

As society continues to advance, metalworkers eventually learn to forge iron, a metal more durable than bronze and capable of holding a finer edge. Armed with more reliable materials, Iron Age domains create new armaments, including the breastplate, the tower shield, and siege engines such as the catapult. Their armies now employ advanced military tactics.





With the Iron Age, early civilization comes into full bloom. Government has started to distinguish itself from the mandates of the gods. Laws are codified, and societies may even experiment with new forms of rule. Ships can now weather limited ocean travel, and trade becomes more common. Metal coins make their first appearance, as do simple locks.

Written language has been refined from complex hieroglyphics to a simple alphabet, spreading literacy and prompting revolutionary advances in the realms of knowledge. Libraries are built, and writers spread epic tales of adventure or debate philosophical truths. Artisans develop glassmaking. Medicine becomes standardized, often based on the theory of four "humours" regulating health. The sundial and the hourglass allow for more accurate measurement of time.

Iron Age communities are noteworthy for their ability to reshape the surrounding terrain to meet their needs. Iron Age science can create water screws, canals, sewers, and aqueducts to irrigate fields or supply running water to the palaces of the elite, and windmills are built to draw power from the sky itself.

CL 4: Classical (1 A.D. - 500 A.D.)

Classical societies represent the apex of early civilization; some have even begun to slide into decadence. Classical domains are primarily marked by advances in scientific knowledge, philosophy, and theology. Mathematicians refine algebra and geometry, and spellcasters lay the foundations of alchemy. With the invention of paper, durable bound books start to replace scrolls, though these books must still be scribed by hand. High-quality roads promote increased travel, and the invention of the stirrup and trousers aids horsemen, creating the first true cavalry.

CL 5: Dark Age (500 A.D. - 800 A.D.)

Dark Age societies often form in the wake of the slow collapse of a classical culture. The era even takes its name from the widespread belief that the "light" of civilization has been extinguished. Despite their backward reputation, Dark Age domains still produce many scientific advances. Monastic orders form, dedicated to the preservation of knowledge or contemplation of the soul. The invention of the astrolabe and advances in shipbuilding produce the first reliable ocean travel.

Large farms, kept fertile through crop rotation, can now supply grain to mechanical mills, sustaining large populations. In these communities artisans jealously guard the secret of creating porcelain, and tea is often drunk for its medicinal qualities.

Warfare also advances, most notably with the invention of the crossbow and sturdy new forms of armor, including banded mail, scale mail, and splint mail. Magic also advances as arcane spellcasters refine their theories of the elemental planes.

CL 6: Early Medieval (800 A.D. - 1200 A.D.)

Early medieval architecture is marked by the appearance of the pointed Gothic arch, an improvement over the curved arches in use since the late Iron Age. Early medieval domains are marked by the construction of motte-and-bailey castles, fortified towers, and large cathedrals decorated with masterful stained-glass windows.

The first merchant guilds appear in larger communities; a few may even go so far as to offer insurance plans against losses caused by fire or plague. Healers begin to explore surgical techniques of treatment, and bards form colleges to organize their traditions. Travelers discover the magnetic compass, and ships gain the stern rudder. Water clocks keep accurate track of time, and warriors use chain mail and the lance.

CL 7: Medieval (1200 A.D. - 1400 A.D.)

The medieval era can be considered the "default" Cultural Level presented in the *Player's Handbook*. The era is also notable for the appearance of ornate Gothic cathedrals and castles, the structures that would one day lend the Gothic genre its name. The longbow now dominates warfare, matched by mounted knights protected by half-plate armor and heavy barding.

Doctors establish the first medical schools, and surgeons dissect bodies to further their knowledge. Block printing can free scribes from the chore of copying every book by hand, but engraving the wooden blocks for printing remains a laborious process. Advances in glassblowing and the study of optics create eyeglasses and mirrors and put glass panes in the windows of every manor. The first huge mechanical clocks appear in cities, and the invention of the spinning wheel sparks new textile industries.





Chapter One

CL 8: Chivalric (1400 A.D. – 1550 A.D.)

Chivalric domains are marked by the first appearance of gunpowder, though weapons using powder are usually restricted to large, crude bombard. Warriors can now wield bastard swords and fit themselves out in full plate, but the tradition of the armored knight is coming to an end, overshadowed by the spreading use of muskets and lighter weapons such as the sabre.

Engineers refine mechanical clocks, making them small enough to appear in the homes of the wealthy. Doctors now understand medicine well enough to order quarantines to control plagues, while governments start to keep careful records of births, marriages, and deaths within their domain. Some wealthy, populous lands even experiment with limited postal services.

CL 9: Renaissance (1550 A.D. - 1700 A.D.)

Renaissance domains represent the most advanced cultures to be found within the Land of Mists, though it seems likely that future centuries will bring further eras of discovery. Firearms and fencing now dominate warfare, and heavy weapons and armor are considered antiquated. The inhabitants of these domains typically view anyone seen wearing heavy armor as a backward brute obviously looking for a fight. Castles have also fallen out of favor, and those built in earlier eras are often renovated into more comfortable palaces.

The invention of the moveable type printing press creates an immediate revolution in the realms of art and knowledge. Jaded intellectuals meet in salons, and theater witnesses the first ballets and operas. Early newspapers may even appear in a few wealthy communities — typically in the form of double-sided handbills. Caravels now ply the seas, spreading trade and hunting whales for their oil and blubber. Travelers can now ride on coach lines that make regular trips between large towns.

Renaissance domains often feature such dizzying scientific advances that their inhabitants believe that science is slowly and inexorably replacing magic in the world. Clockworks are now sophisticated enough to fit in a noble's pocket, and metal ore can be purified in blast furnaces. Cumbersome machines can now knit wool or add figures, while further discoveries in optics produce the microscope and the principles of the *camera obscura*.

The current century has also seen the appearance of the first crude steam engines. Even the most jaded denizens of Renaissance domains marvel at the handful of paddleboats that now chug along Ravenloft's rivers.

Note: A character who wears heavy armor in CL 9 communities adds a +1 circumstance modifier to her Outcast Rating (see "Outcast Ratings" on pg. 30.)

Lexicon

ancient dead: Also called "ancients"; a broader term for the undead creatures often called mummies.

bloodline: A chain of lycanthropic infection stemming from a single natural lycanthrope.

caliban: A human warped in the womb by unnatural magic.

cleric domain: A clarification to the term "domain" from the *Player's Handbook* to avoid confusion with Ravenloft's domains.

cluster: A patchwork collection of two or more domains in a single Mist-bound region.

Core, the: The largest and oldest cluster in Ravenloft, loosely resembling a microcosmic, Gothic Europe.

Cultural Level (CL): A rough measurement of a community's technological level. Affects equipment and skill availability.

darklord: The evil master — and ultimate prisoner — of a domain. A descriptive term, it is not used by characters in the setting.

Dark Powers: The faceless, godlike forces that shape the Realm of Dread. A descriptive term; their true nature and intentions remain a mystery.

domain: A pocket dimension created to imprison and torment a singular evil creature, its darklord. Domains often resemble Material Plane locations and may contain sizeable populations.

domain border: Darklords can close the borders of their domain, preventing escape. No mortal magic can overcome a closed domain border.

Dukkar: A legendary foe of the Vistani, said to be a male Vistani gifted with the Sight and fated to bring destruction to his people.

ethereal resonance: The landscape of the Near Ethereal, shaped by the echoes of emotionally charged events.

Fear save: A Will save vs. fear effects.





fiend: Any powerful, evil outsider.

giogoto: The Vistani term for half-Vistani. Both singular and plural.

giorgio: The Vistani term for non-Vistani. Both singular and plural.

Grand Conjunction, the: An arcane term for a cataclysmic event in 740 that nearly destroyed and permanently reshaped the Land of Mists. It was foreseen by the Vistani seer Hyskosa. Within the setting this event is more commonly known as the Great Upheaval.

Grim Harvest, the: A murderous conspiracy forged to collect souls to power a grand and terrible magical experiment. Lasting from 748-750, it culminated in the Requiem.

Horror save: A Will save vs. horror effects.

Hour of Screaming Shadows, the: A terrifying night in the autumn of 752 when a mass of living shadows smashed into Nedragaard Keep in Sithicus, apparently killing the black knight who ruled it.

Innocence: The total absence of evil in a mortal spirit. Evil creatures are both drawn to and threatened by Innocence, like moths to a flame.

insane: Any creature suffering from a madness effect.

Island of Terror: A single domain, surrounded on all sides by the Mists.

Madness save: A Will save vs. madness effects.

Mists, the: As the Misty Border, these banks of unnatural fog separate clusters and Islands of Terror. The Mists can also appear at any place or time within Ravenloft. They are presumed to be the agents of the Dark Powers and can twist time and space.

Mistway: A relatively reliable travel route through the Mists.

Outcast Rating (OR): A modifier to social skills, reflecting the xenophobia of Ravenloft's denizens.

outlander: Anyone who comes from "beyond the Mists," perhaps even from another world.

Near **Ethereal, the:** The borderland between Ravenloft and the Ethereal Plane.

powers check: A percentile roll to determine whether the Dark Powers respond to evil acts.

rank: A measure of the power of ghosts, ethereal resonance, and the ancient dead. Not to be confused with skill ranks.

Ravenloft: A descriptive term for the setting. To characters within the Land of Mists, Ravenloft is just a castle in Barovia.

recovery check: A Will save made to recover from horror or madness effects. Failing the check incurs no further penalties.

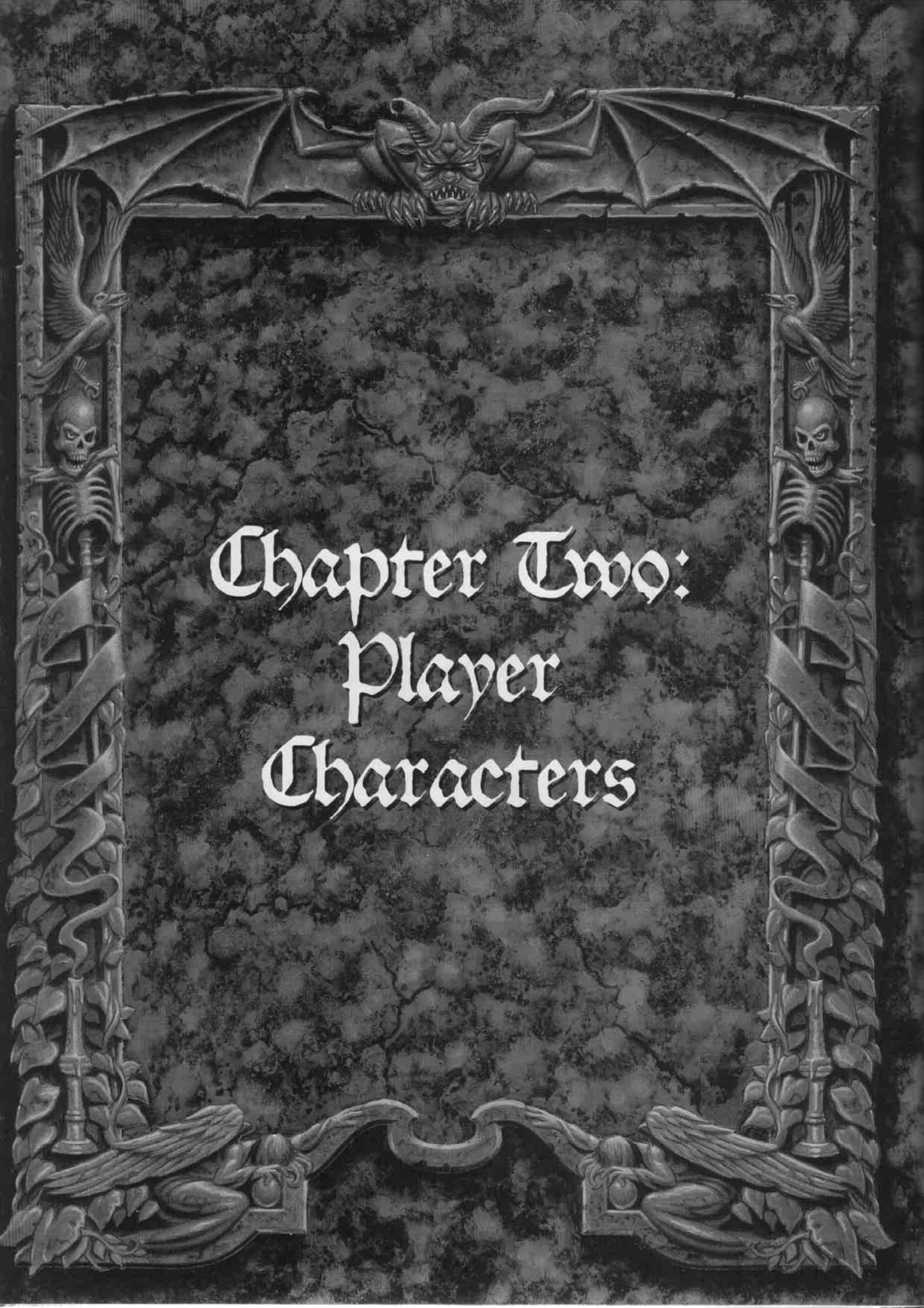
Requiem, the: A catastrophic event in 750 in which an expanding wave of negative energy slew Il Aluk. Darkon's king was thought killed in the blast but has recently reemerged.

Scourge of Arak: A massive sandstorm in 588 that wiped out all surface life in the region now known as the Mountains of Misery in Darkon.

sinkhole of evil: A spiritually unclean area that applies penalties to Will saves and turning attempts. The effect of powerful ethereal resonance spawned by acts of evil.

Vistani: A mysterious, gypsylike people who roam the Land of Mists. They are feared and respected for their evil eye and power over the Mists. Vistani is plural; the singular form is Vistana.





Chapter Two:
Player
Characters

Dearest Uncle George,

I pray this letter finds you well. Even if you again send no reply, know that you are always in our hearts. I regret to report that Grandfather's health is fading. He asks for you often; sometimes he even asks for our mother, may she rest in peace.

Laurie and I visited Uncle Rudolph's grave today. The headstone was completed while we were abroad, investigating reports of a strange creature seen outside Rotwold. Father chided us for commissioning such a "lavish" memorial for an empty grave, but then, most of our activities these recent years seem to meet with Father's displeasure. I understand that Father is merely concerned for our welfare, and perhaps for our reputation, but I do wish that he could understand the importance of our chosen calling.

But I am being selfish. Standing at van Richten's grave, I was reminded of the events that set him on his path to battle the forces of darkness. I cannot imagine the suffering he must have endured: to have his only son stolen and sold to a vampire, and then to be forced to drive a stake through that son's heart? To have that selfsame vampire brutally murder his wife as repayment? And to spend the next three decades living under a Vistani curse that tried to destroy every person whom he loved?

Yet despite this, Uncle Rudolph did not succumb to despair. He had the strength of character to dedicate his life to justice, not vengeance. And by revealing the true nature of the children of the night in his guides, he offered his experience and wisdom to all those who shared his quest.

To what in my own life can I compare such tragedy? How can I measure myself against such virtue, such willpower? Laurie and I never knew our mother. We cannot mourn for her, though we have always felt the void her passing left in the lives of those closest to us. I know what tragedy you would suggest, Uncle. Were you here, I know you would remind me of the attack, and you would again point blame at yourself. But I must say again: the anchorites healed me well. All my scars are faded, both in flesh and spirit. My blood is not on your hands, Uncle George, and I hope that someday you will accept that. The blame for that attack falls on a single creature, and someday she will pay for her deeds, in this life or the next. In exiling yourself from your family to hunt her, you merely extend the suffering she wrought.

No, there is no tragedy in my life to compare to that which Uncle Rudolph was forced to bear. Van Richten's grief has gone to his grave, but Laurie and I have dedicated our lives to ensuring that his legacy lives on.

We still get letters at Rudolph's shop, even five years after his disappearance. Some come from old friends seeking him out; we receive less of them now, as we all learn to accept his passing. But other letters are pleas for help against the legions of the night. In the beginning, they were all addressed to Dr. van Richten, but then we published new editions of his guides, and now more and more of these letters are addressed to Laurie and myself. These cries shall be answered.

The loss of Uncle Rudolph is the only irreparable tragedy Laurie and I have ever suffered in our quest to do right; I can only pray it will be the last.

Please come home,

Gennifer Weathermay-Foxgrove



If that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing. —

Edmund Burke (1770) Ravenloft is a world caught between light and darkness. It is home to foul horrors and lurking nightmares, but even in the Realm of Dread, this evil does not stand unopposed. Some people who encounter the creatures of the night fall beneath their claws, becoming victims. Others succumb to the myriad lures of evil and join the ranks of the damned. But some souls possess the virtue and the willpower to face the forces of darkness and emerge victorious. These few souls are the heroes of the Land of Mists. If the player characters persevere, they can save lives, redeem souls, send villains to their doom, and, perhaps, leave the world better than they found it. The path is treacherous, though; heroes who lack wits or wisdom may merely rush to their graves, and those seduced by corruption may face a fate far less pleasant than death.

Adventurers of every race and class can be found in Ravenloft, though all must live by the Dark Powers' rules. If the Dark Powers find a special ability particularly distasteful — or intriguing — characters may find its effects subtly twisted. These changes apply to all creatures in the Realm of Dread, whether they are lifelong residents or have just recently emerged from the Mists. The following sections provide all the guidelines needed to reshape characters for a Ravenloft campaign.

First, "Races" reintroduces humans and the nonhuman races, explaining their roles in Ravenloft society.

Next, "Classes" details how the Mists affect each of the *Player's Handbook* adventuring classes and suggests roles they often fill in Ravenloft campaigns.

"Skills" takes a new look at a few familiar skills and adds the skill of Hypnosis.

The section that follows, "Feats," offers several new abilities for characters to choose from. Heroes in Ravenloft may be able to contact the spirit realm, walk unnoticed among the living dead, or recall knowledge from past lives.

Next, "Faiths" presents a sampling of Ravenloft's most influential religions, including two new cleric domains.

"Equipment" provides new gear available to the heroes — and their foes.

Lastly, "Final Thoughts" offers a few considerations toward shaping a hero's persona.

Races



My misfortune is that I still resemble a man too much."

—Victor Hugo, *Notre-Dame de Paris*

Although humans make up the vast majority of Ravenloft's population, all of the civilized races can be found in one form or another. All racial traits perform as listed in the *Player's Handbook*. A new race for player characters, the half-Vistani, can be found at the end of this section.

Homelands: Noteworthy cultural centers for the race.

Recommended Feats: Nonhuman races are often known for specific traits, such as the dwarven zeal for metalwork. Members of the listed race often have one or more of these feats. These are merely suggestions, however, not restrictions.

Base OR: Racial modifier to the character's Outcast Rating; see sidebar.

Starting Languages

The Dread Domains are home to widely differing and often isolated cultures. Thus, no Common language has arisen. Characters can substitute any domain language for Common to represent their native tongue and can take domain languages as bonus languages. Chapter 4 lists each domain with its native tongues. A few languages have risen to prominence in the Realm of Dread and are thus particularly useful. Each language has its own alphabet.

Balok: The oldest language of Ravenloft, Balok spread from its native Barovia throughout the Balinoks and the southwestern Core. Balok is marked by guttural consonants and thick vowels and is not overly pleasant to the ear. However, many of the centrally located domains where Balok is spoken contain trade routes, so it has come into use as a trade tongue by some merchants and innkeepers.

Darkonese: This complex and highly structured language has not spread far beyond the borders of Darkon. However, the sheer size of that kingdom ensures that Darkonese remains significant. Many nonhumans, such as elves and dwarves, are natives of Darkon and mix Darkonese with their racial tongues, and many wizards note that the highly precise definitions of Darkonese words lend themselves well to magical writings.



The Player Characters

Mordentish: This language is divided into two distinct dialects with markedly different vocabularies. "High" Mordentish is preferred by the upper classes, while speaking the "Low" dialect marks one as a commoner. Scholars posit that this linguistic cleft may have arisen from an imperfect melding of two separate, now-forgotten languages. The result is a highly flexible language that has spread throughout the northwestern Core. Due to its association with the culturally advanced domains of the northwest, Mordentish is widely considered the language of literature.

Vaasi: This language, most recognizable for its harmonious vowels, is strongly associated with the cultures of the southeastern Core. By church law, for example, all religious rites of the Church of the Lawgiver must be recited in Vassi; all texts must use its script. A patois spoken in Kartakass, mixing Vaasi with the Sithican dialect of Elven, is considered highly poetic and is much favored by bards and minstrels.

Draconic: While few have seen the wily wyrms in the Realm of Dread, their language is still the preferred tongue of magic. A few scholars suspect that the origins of Ravenloft lie in some other world, and when that world introduced the arcane arts to Ravenloft, it recorded them in the dragon's language. Regardless, Draconic is not a spoken language in Ravenloft; it is merely the wizards' conceit to keep their secrets from curious eyes.



Humans

Humans are the standard by which all other races must be measured. They form such a vast majority of Ravenloft's population that many humans know the nonhuman races only through rumor or legend. Humans fill every niche in society and represent a wide spectrum of cultures and ethnic groups. Traits common among the human folk of specific domains can be found in chapter 4. Some sages have pondered why humans are so prevalent in the Land of Mists. Are the Dark Powers drawn to some inherent spark in the human spirit that other races lack? If so, it may be this: every human holds the potential to perform great good or to commit great evil and can choose which path to follow. Humans are the masters of their own nature; it is both their greatest strength and their most fatal flaw.

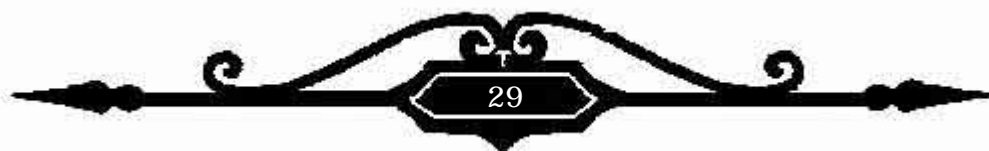
Homelands: Human communities can be found in every settled domain. That is, as far as settled domains go — even Sithicus has tiny human communities. Some domains have no "civilized" human settlements, though human encampments or nomadic elements may exist.

Recommended Feats: Any. See chapter 4 for traits common to the folk of each domain.

Base Outcast Rating: 0

Nonhuman Races

Despite the speculation above, humans are far from the only race to possess free will.





Outcast Ratings

Most of Ravenloft's folk live and die within a score of miles from their birthplace and can spend their entire lives without ever knowingly encountering the supernatural. When combined with cultures rich in suspicion and superstition, the result is xenophobia. This is expressed as an Outcast Rating (OR), which may modify the Difficulty Classes of social skill checks performed by any character who appears unnatural or out of place.

A character's Outcast Rating can be modified by her race, social standing, physical deformities, or even the gear she carries. As a character's OR rises, NPC reactions toward her turn from standoffish to fearful.

OR applies as a circumstance penalty to Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information, and Perform checks, but it applies as a bonus to Intimidate checks. OR modifiers never apply when dealing with friends or allies, such as other PCs, or others who share the source of your OR modifiers, such as other members of your own race.

Example: Elves have a base Outcast Rating of 3. If they interact with nonelves, they suffer a -3 penalty to Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information, and Perform checks but enjoy a +3 bonus to Intimidate checks.

Outcast Rating reflects only first reactions; it is possible to improve one's standing. For each good deed a character performs (stopping a crime, defeating a monster preying on the community, helping a farmer harvest crops, and so on), that individual dispels some of the surrounding community's fear; her OR drops in that community by 1 point, to a minimum of 0.

Some domains may impose their own OR modifiers; see chapter 4 for more details.

It is true that nonhumans possess undeniable, inborn traits, such as dwarven industriousness or halfling curiosity. A few sages — all human of course — claim that Ravenloft's inhuman creatures, from elves to gnomes to vampires to lycanthropes, are all merely facets of the human soul, placed in the world by nameless gods to reflect against humanity's light. Most nonhumans scoff at this, for their cultural traits are not ironclad. Nonhumans may have *tendencies*, but like any other mortal, they are responsible for their own fates.

With the exception of a very few domains, such as Darkon and Sithicus, nonhumans face a cold reception when they roam in the lands of men. In some lands, nonhumans are simply considered unnatural — freaks of nature to be pitied or ridiculed. In other lands, humans may react with deeply rooted, superstitious fear. Nonhumans who visit a few domains, such as Falkovnia and Tepest, may even be risking their lives.

Calibans

Orcs are unknown in Ravenloft, even as creatures of legend. For this reason, no half-ores are native to the Land of Mists. However, creatures do exist that fill the half-ore's role: calibans.



The Player Characters

Thankfully rare, Calibans are twisted humans exposed to curses or foul magic while still in the womb. The birth of a caliban in a community is often seen as a sure sign of the presence of witchcraft — specifically, the corrupting aura of a hag.

Calibans are physically powerful but misshapen humanoids. No two Calibans look alike, but common deformities include twisted backs or limbs, asymmetrical features, bristly skin, or tusklike teeth. Calibans are widely considered brutish, savage creatures; their name is a corruption of "cannibal," stemming from their most infamous reputed habit. In truth, many Calibans *are* simple-minded, petty brutes, but this is often the product of their upbringing. Rejected as monsters, most calibans spend their lives hidden in dank cellars or flee civilization to roam the wilds. In truth, a Caliban's heart can be as pure and noble as that of any human.

Use the racial characteristics of the *Player's Handbook* half-ore when creating a caliban player character.

Homelands: As creatures of unnatural origin, calibans can hail from any populated domain. Most are born in lands where magic is relatively common, such as Darkon, Hazlan, and Tepest.

Recommended Feats: Alertness, Endurance, Great Fortitude, Jaded, Lunatic, Run, Skill Focus (Intimidate, Wilderness Lore), Voice of Wrath.

Base Outcast Rating: 5

Dwarves

Dwarves are a stout race, built as solidly as the mountains they call home. Their skin, typically a light tan or dark umber tone, is coarse and often streaked with ore dust or soot, as dwarves take pride in displaying the efforts of their labors. Hair and eye color, ranges from rust red to browns to black; dwarven hair often turns silver or slate gray by adulthood. Dwarves prefer the same somber, earthen tones in their clothing, often adorned with precious metals.

The dwarven mindset centers on the forge and family.

They respect dedication in all forms — to hard work, to their clan, and to codes of honor. A dwarf holds nothing so precious as her family and nothing so beautiful as finely worked steel. Dwarves have little time for frivolity. Their music consists entirely of dirges for their ancestors or anthems of clan tradition. Other races often view dwarves as dour and humorless creatures but retain high praise for dwarven craftsmanship.

Dwarves claim a spiritual kinship with the earth itself. Some humans have distorted this, believing that dwarves are actually elemental spirits. Many human folktales speak of dwarves who require a diet of gold and gems or who turn to stone if touched by sunlight.

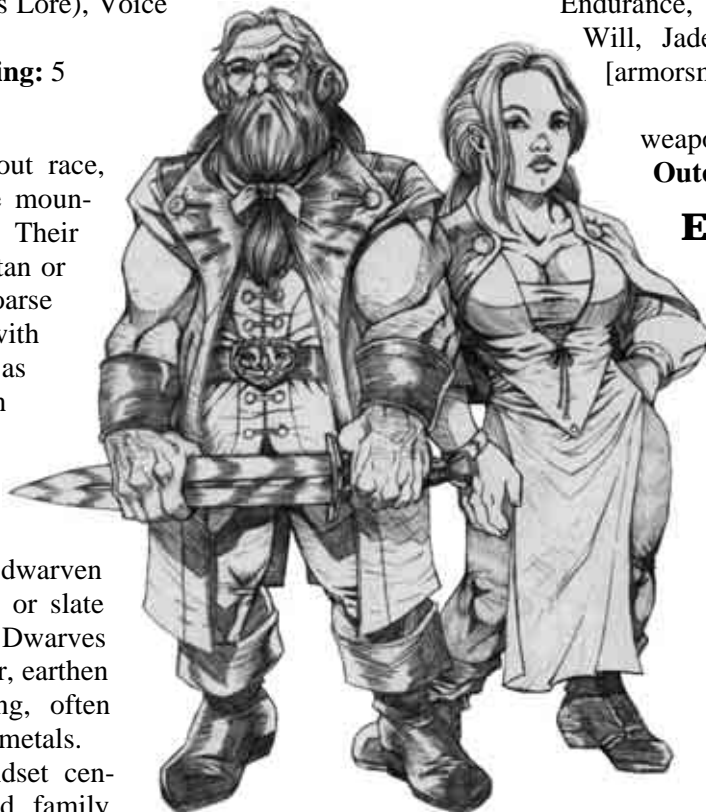
Homelands: The center of dwarven culture is the town of Tempe Falls in Darkon, though nearby Corvia also hosts a sizeable dwarven population. Smaller dwarven communities have also spread south along the Balinoks and to other mountainous regions, such as the Sleeping Beast of Lamordia. In recent years, dwarven explorers have also been making inroads into the forsaken region of the Mountains of Misery once known as Arak. There they have been laboring to reopen the abandoned mines and a long-neglected trade route that once connected Tempe Falls to Liara in Nova Vaasa.

Recommended Feats: Back to the Wall, Courage, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Endurance, Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Jaded, Skill Focus (Craft [armorsmithing, blacksmithing, stonemasonry, weaponsmithing]).

Base Outcast Modifier: 3

Elves

Two seemingly unrelated elven societies exist in Ravenloft. The elves of Darkon tend to have dark hair and eyes of green, violet, or gray. Elves from the domain of Sithicus all share the traits of silvery hair and amber eyes.



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Both groups share the elven traits of pointed ears, vulpine features, and lithe builds.

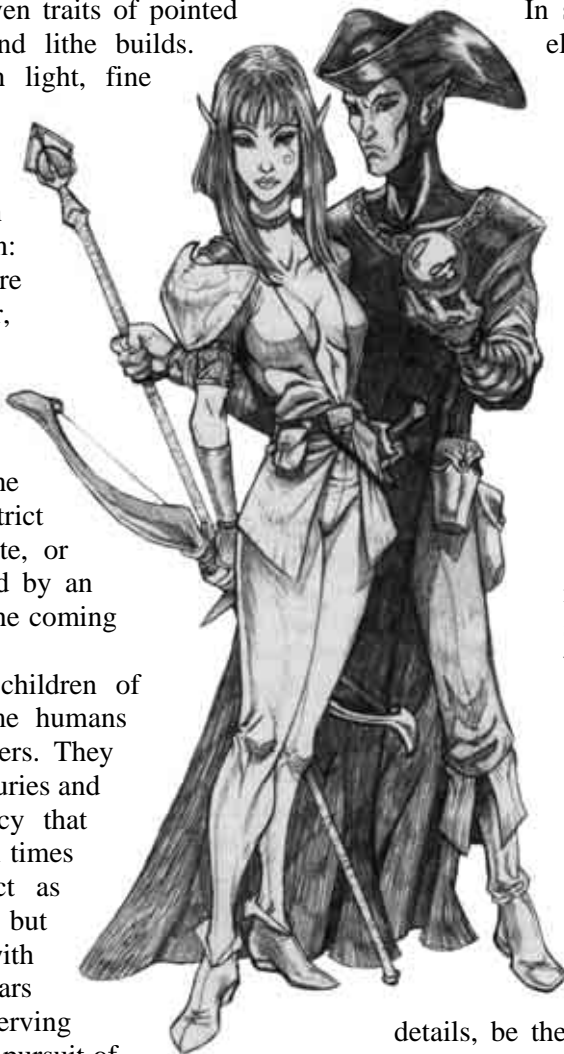
Elves prefer to dress in light, fine fabrics like silk or satin.

Sithican elves prefer drab colors, but the fashion of Darkonian elves is set by season: pastel greens and blues are worn in the summer, followed by yellows, oranges, and reds as the trees turn color in the autumn. During the winter months, the Darkonian elves restrict themselves to black, white, or gray tones, to be replaced by an explosion of colors with the coming of spring.

The "fair folk" are children of nature, respected by some humans but quietly feared by others. They measure their lives in centuries and lack the sense of urgency that seems to drive humans. In times of need, elves can react as quickly as any other race, but they see nothing wrong with dedicating months or years to perfecting a sonnet, observing beauty, or engaging in the pursuit of pleasure. Humans often call elves hedonistic and claim that they have only a bystander's understanding of death. In fact, in some lands, elves are commonly thought — however erroneously — to be fey creatures, immortal nature spirits merely aping the human form. More than one unfortunate elf has had her immortality tested by the inquisitors of Tepest.

Homelands: Darkon's Mistlands contain three primarily elven communities—Neblus, Nevuchar Springs, and Sidnar — where elves mingle freely with other races. On the far side of the Core, Sithicus stands as the only domain with a primarily nonhuman population. Legends speak of still more elven cities hidden from human eyes by powerful elven magic or the Mists.

Elves occasionally settle in human lands, where they can become respected scholars.



In some locales, tales circulate of elves who served as advisers to entire human dynasties.

Recommended Feats: Alertness, Ethereal Empathy, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Wilderness Lore), Track, any metamagic or item creation feat.

Base Outcast Rating: 3

Gnomes

Gnomes are spindly humanoids with tanned skin and wizened faces. They have fair hair and large, sparkling blue eyes. Most humans find gnomes less threatening than other nonhumans simply due to their small size, but humans remain wary of gnomes' reputed inborn magical powers and eccentric personalities. Gnomes prefer to wear comfortable clothes in bright, primary colors, decorated with gem-encrusted jewelry that would be gaudy by anyone else's standards.

Gnomes possess intense intellectual curiosity. They are fascinated by intricate details, be they riddles or the fine cogs of a pocket watch. Gnomes enjoy nothing so much as solving a difficult puzzle — building patterns out of chaos. Gnomes often work as alchemists, gem cutters, engineers, or clockmakers. Many gnomes also possess a wicked, morbid sense of humor. Gnomes often pass the time by telling macabre tales laced with irony, and they enjoy playing practical jokes, particularly on anyone they consider too dour. Gnomish practical jokes are usually remarkably elaborate but are virtually never intended to cause the recipient any true harm.

Homelands: The largest primarily gnomish settlement in Ravenloft is the town of Mayvin in Darkon. Demand for gnomish skills has also drawn small communities — very rarely more than one hundred strong — to Valachan and Hazlan. The largest gnomish population outside Darkon — still no more than 150 gnomes, all told — exists in Nova Vaasa, where it has become fashionable for nobles to have a gnomish jester in their courts.

The Player Characters



Half-elves find it difficult to maintain long-term relationships. Forced into the life of an outsider — though not reviled like Calibans — half-elves often pride themselves on their iconoclastic nature. Many pour their alienation and anguish into artistic pursuits, becoming musicians or wandering bards. A few even reject their given names, adopting dramatic titles like the Wind Haunter or the Deathseeker.

Homelands: Like Calibans, half-elves are creatures of unusual birth. A half-elf may be born to a wandering elf in any domain but most hail from the regions surrounding the elven lands of eastern Darkon or Sithicus.

Recommended Feats: Alertness, Iron Will, Jaded, Redhead, Run, Track, Skill Focus (Diplomacy, Disguise, Perform).

Base Outcast Rating: 1

Rumor has it that most of these jesters also serve as court spies, aided by their magical talents and small size.

Recommended Feats: Alertness, Craft Wand, Craft Wondrous Item, Dodge, Open Mind, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Bluff, Craft [alchemy, clockmaking, gunsmithing, locksmithing]).

Base Outcast Rating: 2

Half-Elves (fey-Born)

Half-elves are the product of rare love affairs between elves and humans. Although half-elves inherit most traits from their human parent, they often retain faint elven traits: pointed ears, angular features, and green or violet eyes. Half-elves have no communities of their own and tend to adopt the prevailing human fashions of their homeland.

Although half-elves are at risk in a few domains, such as Falkovnia and Tepest, they do not face the same level of animosity many other nonhumans do in human lands. Half-elves are generally pitied by both humans and elves; some even consider half-elves mildly cursed by their heritage. It is said that half-elves are doomed to outlive their human loved ones and to grow old and die before the eyes of their elven kin.





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Halflings

Halflings are tiny humanoids, easily mistaken at first glance for human children. Halflings do possess a childlike curiosity about the world around them, which often expresses itself as wanderlust. Halflings prefer simple, comfortable garb and avoid ostentation. Halfling hair and eye color is usually dark brown.

Halflings are lucky enough to avoid most of the animosity that other nonhumans face. With their small size and lack of supernatural powers, halflings present humans with little to fear. Humans respect halflings' courage and general good nature — sometimes to a fault. Humans often treat halflings with good-intentioned condescension, believing that all halflings are as innocent and harmless as the young children they resemble. Some human bards claim that halflings were created when a powerful hag tried to purify a human as an experiment, driving all the evil from his body. The experiment was a success, but the victim was reduced to half his former size, the "evil half vanishing to none-knows-where. Halflings pay this legend very little mind.

Homelands: Most halflings are nomadic, wandering in clans from one domain to another.



Unlike the constantly drifting Vistani, however, halflings tend to take root in a given area for a few years, experiencing all it has to offer before moving on. Any settlement in Ravenloft of sufficient size may boast a halfling community, though these may be ghettos.

Some halflings have settled down to form permanent communities. The largest of these are both in Darkon. Halflings in the city of Rivalis raise goats, produce cheese and take pride in their flower gardens. The town of Delagia supports itself through fishing and is actually built atop Lake Korst, its buildings resembling beaver dams.

Tales are told of a village of halflings hidden somewhere in the forests of Sithicus. These halflings were hideously tortured by the black knight who previously ruled that land, however. They are now said to be insane, feral creatures.

Recommended Feats: Courage, Dodge, Mobility, Open Mind, Skill Focus (Diplomacy, Tumble), Weapon Finesse.

Base Outcast Rating: 1

New Race: Half-Vistani

Half-Vistani (or *giogoto*, in the Vistani *patterna* [see below]) are the result of a union between a Vistana and a *giorgio* (any non-Vistani human). Unlike the other special races of Ravenloft, half-Vistani are entirely human. However, the traits they inherit from their Vistani blood separate them from normal men.

Love affairs between *giorgio* and the Vistani are often torrid and brief. The cultural rift cuts deeply, so precious few *giogoto* ever grow up knowing both of their parents. Most often, the Vistana parent moves on in the night, abandoning the child to the *giorgio*. Rarely, a *giogoto* child is raised by the tribe of its Vistana parent. In either case, the child may be cared for but is never truly accepted. The *giogoto's giorgio* family may fear that the child will develop the peculiar talents of her Vistani kin, and since the *giogoto* is not fully "of the blood," she finds herself unable to share entire worlds of Vistani experiences.

A player creating a *giogoto* character should also refer to "The Vistani" in chapter 5 for additional details.

Personality: Broken homes are the *giogoto's* birthright. Many spend their lives haunted by their youth; a rejected child often matures into a sullen and withdrawn adult.

The Player Characters

It is no small matter to straddle the cultural rift of their birth, so most *giogoto* choose to adopt one culture over the other. They either adhere to the customs of their homeland or wrap themselves in the Vistani mystique. Regardless of the heritage they favor, half-Vistani tend to be passionate and pessimistic individuals.

Physical Description: Half-Vistani resemble their Vistani parents, often inheriting their angular and aquiline features, eyes and hair of deep brown or black, and dusky or olive complexions. Of course, *giogoto* often exhibit traits of their *giorgio* heritage as well. A *giogoto* can conceal her Vistani heritage, fooling *giorgio* with a successful Disguise check (considered minor details only). Such tricks fail against true Vistani, however, who can identify those who are "of the blood" with but a glance.

Relations: *Giogoto* are caught between two worlds; *giorgio* treat them like Vistani, and the Vistani treat them like *giorgio*. A *giogoto's* outlook toward nonhumans usually mirrors that of his homeland. It is not uncommon, however, for half-Vistani to be more accepting toward other "unwelcome" creatures, such as Calibans and half-elves.

Alignment: In many ways, the *giorgio* life mimics that of half-elves. Many half-Vistani spend their lives alienated from society and often grow to distrust authority. *Giogoto* ethical alignment tends toward chaos, but they are no more inherently good or evil than any other humans.

Homelands: The Vistani endlessly wander throughout the

Land of Mists, so a *giogoto* may be born in any domain. The ruthless oppression of Vistani in Invidia makes native half-Vistani rare in that domain, while *giogoto* are slightly more common in neighboring Barovia. No permanent half-Vistani communities exist anywhere in Ravenloft.

Religion: *Giogoto* raised by *giorgio* typically adopt the prevalent faith of their homeland. *Giogoto* raised by the Vistani are seldom religious; the Vistani worship no gods and have many legends of their cruel mistreatment at the hands of godlike beings in the distant past. Some Vistani, particularly those of the Vatraska tribe, treat fate, the Mists, and the forces of nature with a respect that approaches reverence, however.

Language: *Giogoto* have no language of their own, instead learning the domain languages of their homeland. *Giogoto* who embrace their Vistani heritage often also learn *pattema*, the Vistani's spoken language, and *tralaks*, the Vistani system of trail symbols.

Names: *Giogoto* raised by *giorgio* are often given names drawn from their homeland's cultures.

Giogoto raised by the Vistani are named in the Vistani tradition, and it is not unheard of for a half-Vistani raised by a *giorgio* to be named after her wayward Vistana parent.

Vistani Male

Names: Bela, Grigori, Iosif, Karol, Ludovic, Nicu, Pyotr, Simione, Stefan, Vasile.

Vistani Female Names:

Ana, Eliza, Isabela, Lela, Natasha, Pampusza, Rozalina, Sofya, Ursula, Yvonne.

Adventurers: Many *giogoto* become wanderers, seeking happiness in foreign lands. Many fall in with other outcasts and eccentrics during their aimless travels.





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Half-Vistani Racial Traits

- +2 Wisdom, -2 Charisma: Giogoto retain traces of their Vistana parent's powerful sixth sense, but as outcasts, they lack the Vistani's fierce ethnic pride.

- Medium-size: As Medium-size creatures, half-Vistani have no special bonuses or penalties due to their size.

- Half-Vistani base speed is 30 feet.

- +2 racial bonus on Wilderness Lore checks. A *giogoto* inherits her Vistana parent's affinity for nature. Provided fuel and some means of igniting a spark, half-Vistani can always light a fire as a standard action, even under adverse conditions (pouring rain, gusting winds, and so on). When wilderness survival depends on being able to start a fire, the half-Vistani racial bonus to Wilderness Lore checks rises to +4.

- Diluted Blood: For all special abilities and effects, half-Vistani are considered human, though they do not gain the extra feat or skill points standard humans receive. Only pureblooded Vistani can use special spells or magic items with racially specific Vistani powers.

- Moon Madness: A *giogoto* suffers from the *lunatio* during the full moon each month, her mind clouded by restlessness and anxiety. She cannot prepare spells or heal naturally during this period. On each of the three nights of the full moon, she must succeed at a Will save (DC 15) or run wild under the night sky.

- Base Outcast Rating: 2. A *giogoto* who hides her Vistani heritage can reduce her base OR to 0 with a successful Disguise check (see above).

- Automatic Languages: Any domain language. Bonus languages: Any domain language, *pattema* (including *tralaks*). Half-Vistani often learn the tongues of their Vistana and giorgio parents.

- Recommended Feats: Alertness, Ethereal Empathy, Lunatic, Track, Voice of Wrath.

- Tribal Heritage: A *giogoto* character must select a tribe from the following list at the time of creation, reflecting the branch of her Vistani ancestry. (Further information on Vistani *tasques* can be found in chapter 5.) This tribe determines additional benefits and favored class.

Canjar: +2 racial bonus on Spellcraft checks. This bonus rises to +4 when attempting to learn new spells. Favored Class: Wizard.

Corvara: +2 racial bonus on Open Lock and Sense Motive checks. Favored Class: Rogue.

Equaar: +2 racial bonus on Handle Animal and Ride checks. Favored Class: Ranger.

Kamii: +2 racial bonus on any metal-based Craft checks (e.g., blacksmithing) With a successful Appraise check, Kamii can identify metals and determine where any metal item originated. Favored Class: Rogue.

Naiat: +2 racial bonus on Perform checks. Naiat have a base Outcast Rating of 0. Favored Class: Bard.

Vatmska: +2 racial bonus on Heal and Profession (herbalism) checks. Favored Class: Cleric.

Zarovan: Racial bonus of (1d10-1d4) to initiative. Roll at the start of each encounter. Favored Class: Sorcerer.

Classes



And I have slain a vampire shape that sucked a black king white,

And I have roamed through grisly hills where dead men walked at night.

And I have seen heads fall like fruit in a slaver's barracoon,

And I have seen winged demons fly all naked in the moon.

—Robert E. Howard, "Solomon Kane's Homecoming"

The heroes of Ravenloft come in many forms. Some heroes, like barbarians and fighters, are well suited for battling physical foes. Spellcasters, like clerics and sorcerers, wield their numerous talents against more spiritual threats. Some heroes, such as bards and rogues, can be invaluable during investigations or exploration.

All class features altered by the Mists are listed below. Any class features not listed function normally in Ravenloft.

Barbarian

Villages huddle in the frozen wastes of Vorostokov. Nomads wander the burning sands of the Amber Wastes. Tiny homesteads struggle to beat back the cyclopean forests of Verbrek. Life for the people of these communities is a daily struggle against unforgiving terrain. Their clans need hunters, warriors, and protectors — and the most powerful of these is the barbarian. Lone barbarians can also be found in other lands, where they live as solitary hermits or mountain men and avoid the noise of civilization.

The Player Characters

Among the monstrous races, barbarians are believed to be relatively common among lycanthropes and the larger goblinoids.

Barbarians respect physical prowess above all else; they eschew the practiced combat techniques and "dirty tricks" of the fighter, seeking to win their battles through sheer force. Any education a barbarian receives comes from folktales heard at an elder's knee, so most barbarians are intensely superstitious. The Voros of Vorostokov, for example, believe that written words inherently contain evil magics.

The folk of more "enlightened" cultures view barbarians as uncouth at best or drunken berserkers at worst. Tales are whispered of unsuspecting travelers who fell afoul of inbred barbarian clans who would sell the pelts of anything they could catch.

Barbarians usually adventure to test their might, to gain power, or to protect their lands and family.

Altered Class Features

- **Barbarian Rage:** This operates as stated in the *Player's Handbook*. However, barbarians enjoy an additional +4 bonus to Fear, Horror, and Madness checks while enraged. Barbarians not currently in the throes of rage when one of these checks arises do not gain the +4 bonus.

Bard

Bards tend to hail from more civilized lands, where travel is easiest and audiences are most receptive. Bards in Ravenloft may take the form of traveling storytellers who offer news of distant lands, often in highly embellished form, for a hot meal and a few coins. In some cases, bards are tortured performers whose talent is barely distinguishable from their madness. These bards maintain their fragile grip on sanity by channeling their feverish imaginations into their art — and into the forces of magic. Bards are also commonly associated with Vistani entertainers — particularly those of the Boem *tasque* — who entrance audiences with their swirling dances and the frenzied music of their violins.

Many bards, regardless of birthplace, aspire to study at the famed bardic colleges of Kartakass. For a bard, little in life yields more prestige than to be admitted to the Harmonic Hall or to perform in Harmonia's amphitheater.

Bards are restless creatures who wander from one audience to the next. As such, their calling often appeals to those who lack communal ties, such as half-elves or *giogoto*.





As entertainers, bards are often adept in the fine arts of diplomacy and can be invaluable in gaining the trust of local villagers in strange lands. Most bards consider themselves observers of the world and seekers of new experiences and sensations.

Altered Class Features

- **Spells:** Some spells function differently in Ravenloft. See "Altered Magic" in chapter 3.
- **Bardic Knowledge:** Reliable information seldom travels far in Ravenloft's insular realms, hampering the quality of knowledge a bard picks up in her travels. A bard must apply a +10 circumstance penalty to the DC of all bardic knowledge checks concerning domains she has never visited. This penalty drops 1 point for each month that a bard spends in that domain, until the penalty drops to nothing. When creating a bard PC, consider the character to be already completely familiar with a number of domains equal to her bard level. (For example, a 1st-level bard would not suffer a penalty to bardic knowledge checks about her home domain.)

Tales of Death and Madness

At the DM's discretion, an evil bard can perform so chillingly (such as singing a dirge, enacting a play of foul murder, or telling a tale about one man's descent into corruption) that he frightens his audience. If the bard succeeds by 10 or more on his Perform check, members of the audience are required to make a Fear check (see chapter 3).

Cleric

Clerics bear the sacred responsibility of carrying the divine message of their patron deity to his mortal followers. Of course, in Ravenloft, this message is as likely to be the Lawgiver's ceaseless demands of obedience or Zhakata's ravenous cruelty as it is to be the words of hope offered by deities like Ezra or the Morninglord. Clerics in Ravenloft may be the shepherds of their congregations, adventuring to remove the faithful from danger, or they may be itinerant priests, preaching the word of their god in the earnest hope of converting new followers to their faith. Then again, they might be depraved cultists, secretly carrying out the obscene mandates of their foul patron.

Additional information on the religions of Ravenloft can be found in the Faiths section, starting on page 49.

Altered Class Features

- **Spells:** Some spells function differently in Ravenloft. See "Altered Magic" in chapter 3.
- **Spontaneous Casting:** If they want, evil clerics of nonevil deities can opt to channel spell energy into *cure* spells in the same manner as neutral clerics of neutral gods. This choice still determines whether the cleric turns or commands undead.
- **Turn or Rebuke Undead:** See sidebar.

Turning and Rebuking Undead

The connection undead have to the Negative Energy Plane is strengthened in Ravenloft. All undead add +1 to their Turn Resistance. If an undead has no listed Turn Resistance, then consider it to have +1 Turn Resistance. This modifier stacks with those imposed by a sinkhole of evil (see "Altered Magic" in chapter 3).

All undead darklords automatically add a bonus to their Turn Resistance equal to +1 or their Wisdom modifier (if positive), whichever is greater.

In other worlds, if a cleric or paladin has twice as many levels as the undead have Hit Dice, she would normally destroy any undead that she would ordinarily turn. In Ravenloft, turned undead are destroyed only if prevented from fleeing from the source of turning by the best and fastest means available to them as their next action.

Example: A 9th-level cleric successfully turns a 4 HD wight. On its next action, the turned wight must use a double move to flee as far as it can from the cleric. If the wight is unable to flee from the cleric — whether magically bound, hemmed in by other foes, or simply cornered — it is destroyed.

Druid

Druids are the pagan practitioners of a truly ancient religion who revere and draw power not from any deities, but from nature itself. According to tradition, the first druids entered Ravenloft with the domain of Forlorn, but they spread to many other lands in the centuries that followed.



The Player Characters

Druids are the guardians of the untamed wilds. Most druids are secretive about their faith and avoid civilized lands, for good reason: not only do druids find the cities of mankind unsettling, they often face hostility from ignorant locals. Most folk in Ravenloft know of the druids only through the filter of folklore, and they often confuse druidic magic with witchcraft, a feared and poorly understood form of magic said to be the plaything of hags. To avoid danger, many druids pass themselves off as clerics of "modern" gods when passing through settled lands. Druids strive to preserve the purity and balance of nature. Many claim that the Lands of Mists are out of balance, tainted — or even overrun — by seeping, unnatural evil. Most druids adventure to eliminate these sinkholes of evil, restoring the natural balance and fearsome beauty of their beloved wilderness.

Altered Class Features

- **Animal Companion:** Animal companions may fall under the influence of powerful domain lords. A druid's companions do not forget their friendship, however, and will not attack the druid or her companions even if a darklord directly commands them to do so. Animal companions in these situations often flee to resolve their conflicting loyalties.

These animals often shadow their druidic masters from a distance, fearfully spying on them from a distance. If an animal companion leaves the influencing darklord's domain, its behavior returns to normal. See "Altered Magic" in chapter 3 for more details. Druid companions are *not* dread companions.

- **Woodland Stride:** This ability does not allow the druid to cross closed domain borders.

- **Trackless Step:** While the druid leaves no physical trail, she still leaves her scent that can be followed by beasts (and even intelligent monsters) with keen senses of smell.

- **Venom Immunity:** This ability does not protect against the effects of closed domain borders.

Fighter

Fighters are "everyman" heroes: men and women, lacking in any supernatural gifts, who prefer to face their obstacles head on. Fighters can be found in every settled domain and can fill any niche requiring martial skill and physical prowess. They serve as armored knights in Darkon, Nova Vaasa, and the Shadowlands, and toil as soldiers in Falkovnia's armies, but their ranks may also include anything from a constable or a bodyguard to a thuggish bandit, or even just a peasant with long practice in defending her livestock from cunning wolves.





Chapter Two

Fighters tend to adventure for clear-cut, "mundane" reasons. Like anyone else, they seek to better their stations in life and secure their happiness. A fighter might adventure to seek fame and fortune, to pursue justice or vengeance, or she may simply follow her own moral imperatives. Fighters are often invaluable when battling physical threats, but without magical aid, they can find themselves all but helpless against some unnatural foes.

Altered Class Features

• **Bonus Feats:** Fighters add Back to the Wall, Courage, Dead Man Walking, and Jaded to their list of possible bonus feats.

Monk

In some ways, monks have much in common with clerics. They primarily concern themselves with matters of the spirit. Unlike clerics, however, monks place little faith in higher powers. A monk turns her eyes inward, seeking to use strict discipline, intense meditation, and focusing exercises to perfectly purify her spirit (or *ki*) and, through it, her flesh. Monasteries dedicated to this pursuit are nestled in the exotic realms of Rokushima Taiyoo and Sri Raji. In the latter domain, the monks (called *fakirs* in the Rajian tongue) test their inner strength by inflicting sometimes-grotesque physical punishments on themselves, such as piercing their flesh with iron skewers and hooks. The monk tradition also exists in the lonesome city of Paridon, where the local adherents have melded it with occult lodge traditions to create the "theological philosophy" they call the Divinity of Mankind.

Tales also exist of lone monks who wander other domains. Rather than joining monasteries, these monks often learn under a single master and pass on their teachings to a single apprentice.

Monks are keenly aware that they live in a world brimming with carnal and spiritual temptation. Those who choose to adventure do so to set themselves against these honeyed barbs, knowing that inner strength means nothing if it is never tested. Some monks are selfish, purifying their spirits in the pursuit of power, but other monks wander to help steer those souls who lack the enlightenment to protect themselves from corruption.

Altered Class Features

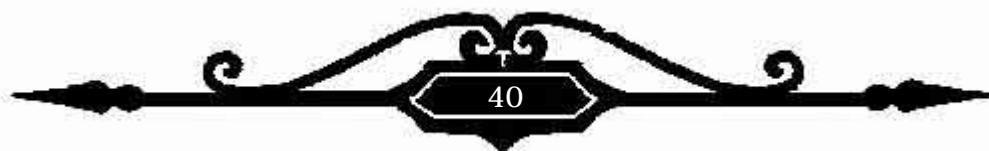
- **Diamond Body:** This ability does not protect against the effects of closed domain borders.
- **Abundant Step:** This ability does not allow the monk to cross closed domain borders.
- **Empty Body:** This ability allows access only to the Near Ethereal. See "Altered Magic" in chapter 3 for more on ethereal effects.
- **Perfect Self:** If the monk has a good or evil moral alignment, she develops a reality wrinkle with an initial radius of 1,000 feet per level. If the monk fails any power checks, consider them failed power rituals; each failed check adds 1d4 corruption points to the monk's total and halves the wrinkle's radius. See "Fiends" in chapter 5 for more details.

Paladin

No one in Ravenloft simply *decides* to become a paladin. They are extremely rare, the chosen ones of divine forces, selected for their spiritual purity. These divine forces imbue paladins with holy powers, appointing them to champion the meek and deliver justice to the forces of darkness. Paladins tend to see Good and Evil as living, elemental forces that should be easily divided into black and white. Of course, true paladins understand the difference between the pure, unremitting evil of a vampire and the misguided wrongs of a drunken bully, and they react appropriately. Paladins blinded by hubris quickly become servants of the Dark Powers.

The divine forces that grant a paladin her special abilities are as faceless as the Dark Powers themselves — in fact, they may well be the Dark Powers. Evidence exists, however, that paladins are an aberration in the grand tapestry the Dark Powers have woven for themselves. Paladins possess extensive, powerful gifts in their personal life-quest against the forces of evil, but in many ways the deck seems stacked against them. The Dark Powers may seek to destroy paladins in their realm, or it may be that the Dark Powers are enraptured with the potential paladins hold, and they simply provide them with fitting challenges.

Paladins native to Ravenloft usually ascribe their divine powers to the prevailing deities of their homeland. They almost never adventure simply for the pursuit of lucre or personal gain; they seek out and battle evil because they know it is the right thing to do.



The Player Characters

It is the rare paladin indeed who dies of old age in Ravenloft; many become fatalistic as they proceed through life, knowing that the examples they leave after their deaths will be as important as the actions they took in life.

Altered Class Features

- **Detect Evil:** No mortal magic can detect moral alignment in the Realm of Dread. In Ravenloft, this ability usually duplicates the effects of the spell *detect chaos*. In two cases, however, the paladin's spiritual purity allows her to come close to defying the edicts of the Dark Powers. First, a paladin can use this ability to detect Innocents (see "Powers Checks" in chapter 3). At the extreme opposite of the moral spectrum, a paladin can also use this ability to sense the true nature of evil outsiders.

- **Divine Grace:** The paladin's noble spirit bleeds out into the world around her, subconsciously placing virtuous minds at ease and sinister minds on edge. The paladin can apply her divine grace bonus when attempting to improve the reactions of good NPCs (effectively allowing her to count her Charisma bonus twice). However, this modifier counts as a penalty when attempting to improve the reactions of evil NPCs (effectively negating the paladin's Charisma bonus). Note also that the divine grace bonus applies to all Fear, Horror, and Madness saves.

- **Divine Health:** This protection is not inviolate in Ravenloft. Darklords and curses are powerful in the Realm of Dread. As such, the paladin is not immune to diseases spawned by these sources.





• **Aura of Courage:** Although the Ravenloft paladin remains immune to magical fear, she is not immune to "natural" Fear saves, which are the product of her own sense of survival. (In a sense, playing a PC immune to fear in a horror campaign is simply missing out on the point.) Instead, the paladin receives the Courage feat for free at 2nd level.

• **Turn Undead:** See sidebar on page 38.

• **Spells:** Some spells function differently in Ravenloft. See "Altered Magic" in chapter 3.

• **Special Mount:** A paladin's special mount is a dread companion. See the "Dread Companions" sidebar.

• **Disruption:** As a paladin's divine powers grow in strength, they begin to disrupt the very planar fabric of the evil-tainted world around her.

Although this disruption is negligible when compared to that caused by a good outsider, darklords can sense the presence of a paladin in their domains as they would sense a festering wound on their own body. With a successful Scry check (DC = 25 - the paladin's level), a darklord can detect the approximate location of a paladin within her domain within a one-mile radius ("in that town" or "in the woods west of this keep"). With an extraordinary success, the darklord narrows the approximate location down to a 100-foot radius. The darklord automatically retries the Scry check once per 24 hours. It is rumored that in the past, darklords could *automatically* sense paladins in their domains, but if these rumors were true, how would any of the holy warriors survive past their formative years?

Dread Companions

Some classes can call upon the world for a steadfast animal companion, and the world will respond. In Ravenloft, it falls to the Dark Powers to heed this call. Their response is the dread companion.

The Dread Companion is a template that should be added to any familiar or paladin's mount summoned within Ravenloft. A dread companion uses all of the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here. The creature's type changes to magical beast (if it is not one already).

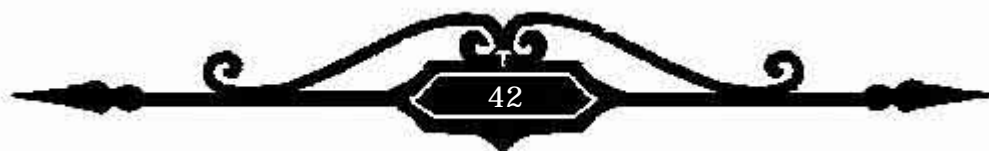
Dread companions share their master's ethical alignment, but their moral alignment is always evil. Do not be mistaken; they are not mindlessly malicious, nor are they dedicated to their master's destruction. Indeed, they are utterly loyal to their masters — to a fault.

Dread companions share an empathic link with their masters. Through this link, they are privy to all of their master's innermost thoughts and desires. Their masters may understand why some wishes are best left unspoken, but dread companions utterly lack a conscience. They cannot grasp why their master's desires should be repressed, no matter how dark or selfish. If the master desires an object, the companion may try to steal it; if a rival causes its master harm of any kind, the companion may seek revenge. The dread companion of a scrupulous master knows that its master does not want to acknowledge her unspoken desires, and may act in secret. In psychological terms, when a character calls for a familiar or paladin's mount in Ravenloft, she receives her own id in flesh and blood.

When the master is at low levels, a dread companion has a rather dull mind (see the respective sidebars in the *Player's Handbook*). As the master gains power, however, the intellect of her dread companion follows suit. The dread familiar of a neophyte wizard may just seem mischievous; at higher levels, that same dread familiar is capable of crafting devious and cunning plots.

When a dread companion is faced with a situation that would call for a Fear, Horror, or Madness check, it does so independently of its master. Indeed, some of the most stalwart dread companions are inured to the terrors that send their masters fleeing. Note also that a dread companion to a good or neutral character has different modifiers to these checks, due to its own inherently evil alignment. Special cohorts (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, p. 45) are treated the same way.

Familiars and other companions brought in from other realms (that is, not native to the Ravenloft world) do not become dread companions. They retain their original alignments and other traits.





Ranger

Like the barbarian and druid, rangers are most at home in the wilderness. Unlike those classes, rangers are often welcome in civilized lands, particularly rustic communities where the wilds press close. Like druids, rangers strive to maintain an uneasy balance between nature and civilization. Where the druid protects nature from the intrusions of mankind, however, rangers often guard humans from nature's savagery. In untamed lands like Vorostokov, they may hunt game to provide for their clans or scout out new territory. Rangers in settled lands are usually employed as game wardens for noble estates. In Sithicus, elven rangers patrol the deep forests astride monstrous stag beetles, hunting evil creatures and discouraging foreign visitors. Most folk consider rangers somewhat rustic, but their skills are generally respected.

Rangers are master trackers and scouts. Rangers usually adventure to eliminate dangerous beasts and other menaces from their chosen territories. Some patrol the wilds to protect or provide for their homelands. Others, particularly lycanthropes, prey on humanity, becoming more dangerous than any beast.

Altered Class Features

- **Spells:** Some spells function differently in Ravenloft. See "Altered Magic" in chapter 3.

Rogue

Like fighters, rogues are an "everyman" hero, lacking any supernatural gifts. Where the fighter prefers confrontation, however, the rogue prefers to solve problems through intellect and guile. A rogue knows that there's no point in battling a chamber full of zombies if you can find the secret passage that bypasses them. With their extensive expertise in skills and their impressive bag of tricks, rogues can be invaluable when creeping through ancient tombs or interacting with suspicious NPCs. Rogues are commonly associated with thieves and tricksters, but they can just as easily be explorers, investigators, or even a mere — if sharp-witted — townspeople.

Rogues often adventure in the name of personal gains; they like to know "what's in it for them".





The rewards a rogue fights for may be wealth or political power, but a rogue is just as likely to adventure to ensure the safety of a loved one or to gain the satisfaction of a mystery solved.

Altered Class Features

- As the *Player's Handbook* rogue.

Sorcerer

Sorcerers are born with inherent magical powers. Depending on one's point of view, this may be a fantastic gift or a wretched curse. As a rule, the denizens of Ravenloft are highly suspicious of any beings with inherent magical powers, viewing them as both more and less than human. Common folktales, however misguided, claim that sorcerers are changelings left by the fey, or reviled practitioners of witchcraft, or even that they gain their powers through trafficking with fiends. Sorcerers are known to be common among Vistani women; the spell lists of Vistani seers are almost exclusively drawn from the schools of divination and enchantment. Male Vistani who exhibit sorcerous powers are killed at once, lest they grow to become Dukkars.

No sorcerer *asks* to be born with magic in her blood, but adventurers who continue to advance in the class *have* chosen to further develop their talents. Even so, sorcerers are wise to reveal their magical gifts only to those they trust.

As supernatural anomalies themselves, sorcerers are often fascinated by other strange phenomena. Sorcerers frequently adventure to explore the world's unnatural mysteries, seeking to unravel the riddle of their own existence.

Altered Class Features

- **Spells:** Some spells function differently in Ravenloft. See "Altered Magic" in chapter 3.
- **Familiar:** A sorcerer's familiar is a dread companion. See the "Dread Companions" sidebar for more details.

Wizard

What a sorcerer gains through reluctant birthright, wizards must earn through years of toil. Wizards can call on arcane magic to bend reality to their will — they can change one creature into another, animate the dead to serve them, or summon eldritch forces to smite their foes. They command all this without even the veneer of spiritual guidance divine spellcasters receive. Endless years of study and research, combined with

their need for forethought, often result in wizards developing at least mildly obsessive and controlling personalities. Some wizards grow drunk on their own power or are corrupted by the evil forces inherent in their spells and begin to think they are the sole arbiters of their fate.

Wizards are respected or even admired in some domains, such as Darkon and Hazlan, but often conceal their arcane powers in less accepting lands. Wizards can be found in nearly any domain, however, often lurking in remote towers or secretly using magic to further their goals in other arenas.

Adventuring wizards know that the study of arcane magic is a great temptation but that the rewards are just as great. Although wizards lack the physical prowess of many other adventurers, their spells can harm creatures of the night that laugh at the mightiest swing of a fighter's sword. Wizards often adventure to learn new arcane secrets and add to their power.

Altered Class Features

- **Spells:** Some spells function differently in Ravenloft. See "Altered Magic" in chapter 3.
- **Familiar:** A wizard's familiar is a dread companion. See the "Dread Companions" sidebar for more details.

Skills



he wicked are always surprised to find that the good can be clever.

—Marquis de Vauvenargues,
Reflexions et Maximes

Skills are a vital tool to individualize your character beyond the skeleton of race and class. An occult scholar might use Knowledge skills to become an expert on arcane topics and monster lore. An investigator might specialize in Gather Information and Sense Motive, perhaps even learning a few of the roguish skills used by the criminals she pursues. An "everyman" hero, thrust into horrific proceedings through no will of her own, might have high ranks in Profession or Craft skills, or she might focus on skills like Hide and Move Silently, hoping stealth will keep her alive. .

Learning Skills

Ravenloft is a land of isolation and eerie secrets. In some cases, a skill may be the prized possession of a tiny cabal of scholars, or a skill common in one domain may be totally unknown in another.





When a hero learns a new skill, the player should explain how the character was able to gain access to that skill. For example, a merchant who has seldom stepped outside the bustling markets of Martira Bay is probably skilled in Appraise, Bluff, Diplomacy, and Sense Motive, but she is unlikely to know the first thing about Wilderness Lore. On the other hand, a nomad from the Amber Wastes is likely quite skilled in desert survival techniques but would be hard pressed to demonstrate where she might have learned to Swim. At the DM's discretion, Knowledge or Craft skills may require training under a teacher.

Requiring players to justify their hero's skill choices can thus keep some skills appropriately rare and can be used to enrich a PC's background. Chapter 4 includes the skills most appropriate to each domain.

Revisited Skills

Some skills have new uses or special restrictions in the Land of Mists.

Alchemy

You can create gunpowder with a successful Alchemy check (DC 15). It costs 5 sp to prepare 1 ounce of gunpowder. You can save time by creating multiple ounces in a single batch, but if you fail the Alchemy check by 5 or more, you accidentally ignite the entire batch. This inflicts 1 point of fire damage per ounce to everything within 5 feet. Those caught within the blast radius can make a Reflex save (DC 20) to take half damage.

Animal Empathy

If you attempt to improve the attitude of an animal under the influence of a darklord, the animal adds the darklord's Charisma bonus to the DC of your check. (See "Enchantment" in chapter 3 for more details.)

Bluff

Heroes in Ravenloft campaigns may investigate suspicious strangers, unravel mysteries, or infiltrate secret societies, all involving a great deal of social interaction. Bluff can be used in a variety of situations; two new uses are presented here. Both fortune-telling and seduction rely on your ability to judge the desires of the target. If you first succeed at a Sense Motive check (DC 20), you gain a +2 insight bonus to your Bluff check.

Telling Fortunes: This is the skill of inventing plausible fortunes from thin air. It is the art of picking up clues about a target and telling her

what she wants to hear; it does not include the ability to actually peer into the future. This skill is most commonly the tool of charlatans, false prophets, and Vistani seers who decide not to tax their Sight.

The DM should apply a circumstance modifier based on how far-fetched or specific the prediction is. A vague, common prediction ("You will meet a dark stranger") might carry no modifier to the DC, while the modifier for an outrageous or easily refuted prediction might rise to +10 or even +20. The use of arcane props like a crystal ball or a *tarokka* deck gives a +2 circumstance bonus to the Bluff check.

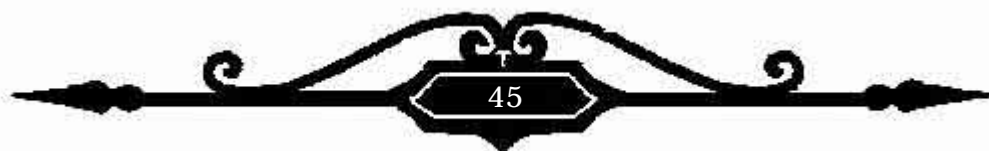
Seduction: Most commonly associated with the act of physical seduction, this skill can also include a carnival barker delivering a spiel to draw patrons into her tent or a crime boss trying to lure a constable onto her payroll. Seduction is the art of manipulating a target by sensing her desires and promising to deliver on them. With a successful Seduction check, you can convince a target to perform a small service for you — perhaps following you to a secluded locale or paying a few coins.

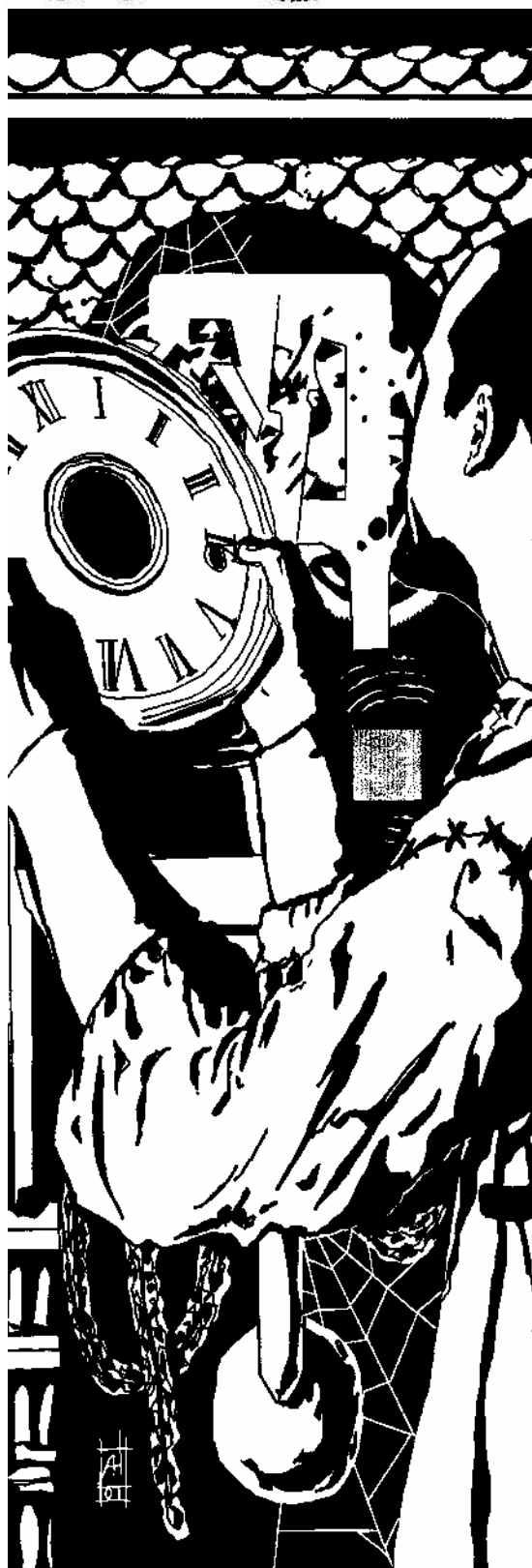
The DM should apply a circumstance modifier based on how well the promise matches the target's desires, how demanding the requested service is, and whether the seducer can deliver on the promise. An impoverished family man may be resistant to physical enticement but willing to accept a few coins, for example. Likewise, a randy sailor may respond well to attentions of a lady, but he might balk if asked to follow her into an acrid-smelling, web-choked cellar. Use the example circumstances listed in the *Player's Handbook* as a guideline.

Seduction cannot rob a target of her free will. If an NPC attempts to seduce a PC, the PC is not *charmed*. Instead, the DM should present the NPC and her offer in an enticing light. If a seduction check fails, the target realizes the seducer is attempting to manipulate him — but in the right circumstances, he may still find the offer appealing.

Craft

Craft includes two new specializations: clockmaking and gunsmithing. Clockmaking is the skill used to create mechanical clockworks, ranging from ponderous clock towers to delicate pocket watches. Gunsmithing is used to craft gunpowder weapons and bullets.





If you have 5 or more ranks in clockmaking, you enjoy a +2 synergy bonus to gunsmithing checks when building or repairing wheel-lock weapons. The clockmaking skill is uncommon in domains below CL 7 (Medieval); gunsmithing first appears at CL 8 (Chivalric). If you fail a craft check by 5 or more points when crafting a bomb (see "Equipment"), the bomb explodes.

Knowledge

Several new fields of study may be of interest to Ravenloft characters.

Monster Lore: Monster lore encompasses several different skills; the character must select a specific type of monster to study. Thus, a character might learn aberration, beast, construct, dragon, elemental, fey, giant, humanoid, magical beast, monstrous humanoid, ooze, outsider, shapechanger, undead, or vermin lore. (Animal and plant lore are already included in the Knowledge [nature] skill.) These skills can be used to evaluate a character's knowledge of the habits or weaknesses of the chosen creature type.

Ravenloft: This is a specialized form of Knowledge (planar). It represents an understanding of the planar fabric of the Realm of Dread, including the Mists, the nature of domains, closed borders, darklords, and so on. This is an extremely rare skill, known only by a handful of arcane scholars, most of whom are darklords.

Lore Skills: Lore skills mix academic study with a broad overview of legend and superstition. Characters can attempt to use lore skills untrained (an Intelligence check, which the DM should roll) by relying on their knowledge of common folklore. However, folklore is often misleading. If a character trained in lore fails the skill check, she realizes that she simply does not know the needed information. If an untrained character fails the check, the DM should provide a skewed (or even dangerously unreliable) version of the desired information.

New Skill

The following is a class skill for monks, sorcerers, and wizards.

Hypnosis (Cha; Trained Only)

You have studied the hidden workings of the human mind and can unlock its secrets.

Check: You can use hypnosis to induce a deep, calming trance in your subject. The effects of a hypnotic trance are identical to those created by the *hypnotism* spell.



The Player Characters

Unlike the spell, however, the skill allows you to hypnotize only one target at a time, who does not receive the -2 penalty to her Will save. Each attempt to use hypnosis requires 1 hour. If the target is unwilling, you must first succeed at a Bluff check to disguise your intent.

A Hypnosis check is opposed by the target's Will save. Loud or distracting surroundings grant a +2 circumstance modifier to the target's Will save. Willing targets can voluntarily choose not to make their saving throw.

Once the target is hypnotized, you can either plant a suggestion (as per the *hypnotism* spell) or aid the recovery of a target who suffers from the effects of a failed Madness save. The latter option is detailed under "Recovering from Madness" in chapter 3.

Retry: Generally, you cannot retry a Hypnosis check against an unwilling target; the target becomes too suspicious to cooperate. If attempting to hypnotize a willing target, you may retry freely. Retries are a vital component in the process of helping targets recover from Madness effects, in fact.

Feats



When he was angry, one of his eyes became so terrible, that no person could bear to behold it; and the wretch upon whom it was fixed instantly fell backward, and sometimes expired. —William Beckford, *Vathek* Gothic tales often feature characters whose strange abilities link them — perhaps unwillingly — to supernatural forces but allow them to prevail. Some of these new feats are listed with roleplaying prerequisites, such as the death required by Haunted. You can still take these feats at 1st level by incorporating the event into your character's background.

Back to the Wall [General]

You are at your best when your situation is at its worst. The minions of evil may overwhelm you, but the gods be damned if you don't take a few of them down with you.

Prerequisite: Base attack bonus +2.

Benefit: You gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls and Armor Class when you are at one quarter or less of your maximum hit points.

Cold One [General]

You are cold and clammy to the touch.

Prerequisite: You must have lost at least one level to an energy drain attack.

Benefit: Mindless undead (those without Intelligence scores) ignore you unless you attack them first. Intelligent undead must succeed at a Wisdom check at DC 13 to realize that you are not undead. Due to your slowed metabolism, if you are ever dying (reduced to -1 to -9 hit points), you lose hit points at the rate of only 1 point every two rounds. When recovering from damage via natural healing, you recover only 1/2 hit point per character level per day of rest (round down, with 1 hp/day as the minimum). This is an extraordinary quality.

Courage [General]

You are particularly fearless in the face of danger.

Benefit: You get a +4 bonus to all Fear saves.

Dead Man Walking [General]

After a brush with the horrors of the night, you accept that you are living on borrowed time.

Prerequisite: You must have survived an encounter that turned against you (failed a Horror save or been reduced to -1 hit points or lower).

Benefit: Upon making a successful Fear or Horror save, you receive a +2 bonus to all saving throws and skill checks for the duration of the encounter due to the icy calm with which you face mortal danger. The recognition that everyone dies sometime can be a source of strength.

Ethereal Empathy [General]

You have the psychic ability to sense the emotions imbued within ethereal resonance. (See "Sinkholes of Evil" in chapter 3 and "Ghosts" in chapter 5 for more on resonance.)

Prerequisite: Wis 13+.

Benefit: You can sense the emotional content of ethereal resonance within a 30-foot radius with a successful Wisdom check. DC is determined by the rank of the resonance.

Rank:	1	2	3	4	5
DC:	20	15	10	5	0

Sensing resonance is a partial action and can be retried each round. If you achieve an extraordinary success, you can see into the Near Ethereal for one round — a visual flash of the resonating scene. However, you can see only resonance, not ethereal creatures, borne ethereal scenes may require Horror saves.





Chapter Two

Ghostsight [General]

You can see creatures in the Near Ethereal. Since ghosts make up the majority of creatures in Ravenloft's Near Ethereal, folklore views this as the ability to see the dead.

Prerequisite: You must have had a brush with death (been reduced to -1 hit points or lower, or slain and then brought back to life).

Benefit: You can see creatures that are ethereal as if they were normally visible. Unlike the *see invisible* spell, this capacity does not reveal illusions or allow you to see invisible or astral creatures. Your ability to see ethereal creatures is limited only by your own visual range. You are vulnerable to gaze attacks from ethereal creatures. You have no special ability to hear or physically affect ethereal creatures. This is a supernatural ability.

Special: You are strangely attuned to the Ethereal Plane. Ethereal creatures can see you unusually clearly and must succeed at a Spot check at DC 15 to realize that you are not actually in the Near Ethereal as well. These creatures may even be drawn to you out of curiosity, desperation, or malice.

Haunted [General]

The spirit of a friend, ally, or loved one has returned from the grave to watch over you as a geist.

Prerequisite: For the obvious reason, someone close to you must have died.

Benefit: Your guardian spirit normally remains in the Near Ethereal. Those who can see ethereal creatures may spot the geist lurking near you, but it is otherwise invisible and intangible. The geist acts as a second pair of eyes and ears when it manifests, allowing you a second roll on Search, Spot, and Listen checks. The geist can also inform you of events that take place in your presence while you are asleep or unconscious, or it can simply offer companionship.

Special: The geist communicates through phantasms; it cannot affect physical objects. You can ask the geist to manifest whenever you are alone. The geist immediately vanishes if another intelligent, living creature enters the scene. You can summon the geist as often as you want, but each time it manifests, it inflicts 1 point of temporary Charisma damage as it unconsciously draws strength from your will to live.

Jaded [General]

Like an experienced investigator or a veteran of the Dead Man's Campaign, you have been hardened against the horrors of the world by cruel experience.

Benefit: You gain a +4 bonus to all Horror saves.

Lunatic [General]

Your mind and body are tied to the cycles of the moon, making you more energetic and excitable as the moon waxes. This effect may be the result of subtle madness or a diluted supernatural heritage, such as Vistani blood.

Prerequisite: Chaotic alignment.

Benefit: You have a +1 bonus to all attack rolls, Fortitude and Reflex saves, and Charisma-modified skill checks whenever the moon is gibbous (more than half full). This bonus rises to +2 during the three-night period of the full moon. During the three-night period of the new moon, you suffer a -2 penalty to these rolls instead. The modifiers are reversed for Will saves: +2 during the new moon, -1 during the gibbous moon, and -2 during the full moon. This is an extraordinary quality.

Open Mind [General]

An adaptable mind keeps your sanity resilient.

Benefit: You enjoy a +4 bonus to all Madness saves.

Redhead [General]

According to the folklore of some domains, people born with red hair have been marked by the fey.

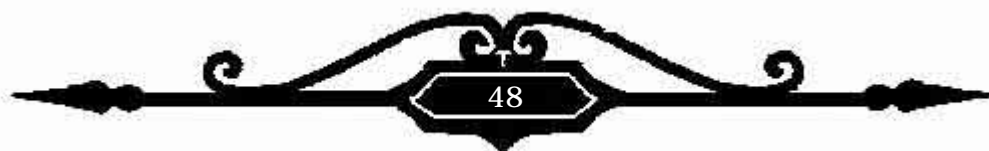
Prerequisite: Wis 11+.

Benefit: Choose one 1st-level or two 0-level druid spells. The spell (or orisons) must be chosen when the feat is taken and cannot be changed later. You can cast this spell (or each orison) once a day, as a druid equal to your character level. Like a druid, you must select a time of day when you regain the spell, but you do not need to spend time preparing it. This is a spell-like ability.

Special: You may take this feat only at the beginning of the game. You don't need to take this feat to have red hair, but you do need to be born a redhead to take this feat.

Reincarnated [General]

You have vague, dreamlike memories of a former life. You even possess skills you've never knowingly learned.





Benefit: Choose a nonrestricted skill you do not have as a class skill. That skill is always considered a class skill for you. Your spirit was reborn because it is emotionally linked to a creature that has lingered in this world. If you ever encounter your "soul mate," it will instinctually recognize you, and you gain a +2 bonus to all Charisma-based skill checks when interacting with it.

Special: You may take this feat only at the beginning of the game.

Voice of (Wrath [General])

The unseen forces of vengeance heed your commands.

Benefit: You gain a +4 bonus to all curse checks. (See "Curses" in chapter 3.)

The Leadership Feat

As alignment is inherently inscrutable in the world of Ravenloft, the Leadership feat becomes a bit quirky.

Leadership does not allow a character to determine the alignment of his cohorts, at least in the traditional interpretation of the alignment model. Additionally, certain followers may have hidden problems of their own — a paladin's loyal page might truly be a werewolf, or a minstrel companion might be in the thrall of a vampire lord. As followers may be only one alignment step away from the character they follow (according to the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, p. 46), some modification of this is necessary for the Realm of Dread. In Ravenloft, this alignment step applies only to the ethical axis. A character of neutral ethics may have practically anyone as a follower, while a lawful character attracts only lawful or neutral characters (albeit of any moral bent), and chaotic characters may attract only fel-low chaotic types and neutral

Faiths



h! could — but it cannot be — ye are lost in wonder — let me at last do justice on myself! To heap shame on my own head is all the satisfaction I have left to offer to offended Heaven. My story has drawn down these judgments: let my confession atone — but ah! what can atone for usurpation, and a murdered child!"

—Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*

The Land of Mists is home to numerous religions, ranging from widespread, organized churches that build towering cathedrals to honor their faith to skulking, nocturnal cults that perform their sacrifices in hidden catacombs. This section presents a sampling of particularly notable or notorious religions in the Dread Domains. Player character clerics can choose any of these faiths, though in some cases this worship — as with the predatory Wolf God — may call the character's depiction as a hero into question. Major Religions

The gods of Ravenloft do not form a single, continuous pantheon. Rather, they are divided into numerous, henotheistic religions. The followers of a given religion usually recognize the existence of other deities but often dismiss them as inferior.

The Akiri Pantheon

The Amber Wastes are still beholden to the glories of a pantheon of ancient gods. In Pharazia, the angelic despot Diamabel seeks to forge a religion in his own name and punishes worship of the old gods with death. But Diamabel can no more erase the memory of the gods than the biting desert sands can erase their ancient shrines. Worship secretly continues in Pharazia, and the desert nomads and denizens of Har'Akir still openly revere the old gods — and fear their wrath.

Three gods of the Akiri are particularly significant. Ra, the sun disc, is held to be father and king of the gods; mortal kings cannot rule without his blessing. Clerics of Ra often serve as community leaders and viziers. Osiris, who was slain by his brother but restored from death, is now lord of the afterworld just as Ra rules the living realm. Osiris also controls the rejuvenating power of the desert springs. Clerics of Osiris prepare corpses and guard the sanctity of death.





The Unspoken Pact

When a cleric enters Ravenloft from another world, she immediately feels a hollowness slip into her heart, a void that the strength and compassion of her deity once filled. Although clerics continue to receive the blessings of their divine patrons, they no longer feel their gods at their side. This absence often causes clerics new to the Land of Mists to suffer crises of faith or pass through periods of deep depression.

For natives of the Land of Mists, this remoteness is perfectly normal; they expect the gods to be distant and inscrutable as a matter of common sense. Some clerics in Ravenloft claim to be the direct vessel of their respective deities, but these folk are widely regarded as madmen and false messiahs.

Without the gods' watchful eyes to monitor all that is said and done in their name, many imported religions experience a "theological shift." As godly legends are passed from one mortal to another, religious teachings often adapt to their new homelands, or even evolve to suit the specific needs of powerful clerics. Tales even exist of clerics who betrayed the core beliefs of their faith yet kept their divine powers. As an example, rumors insist that the grand religion of the Shadowlands, dedicated to the neutral good deity Belenus, is actually steeped in evil practices.

Why are the gods withdrawn? Why do they watch in silence as mortals slowly twist their teachings? It may be that the Dark Powers intervene between a deity and its faithful, warping the flow of divine magic. Ravenloft's theologians have identified one belief that appears in many forms, across many faiths. This belief, which strains mortal comprehension, claims that the gods respect an unspoken pact with the faceless masters of Ravenloft. The gods are not to directly interfere in the ways of Ravenloft's mortals, and the Dark Powers are not to meddle in the ways of the gods. Of course, these collected slivers of a legend fail to explain how the Dark Powers could enforce this pact — surely they are not as powerful as the combined might of all the gods of the worlds.

One final theory is even more extreme. It holds that the Dark Powers have severed their realm from the ministrations of the gods entirely. According to this theory, when mortals in the Land of Mists pray to their gods, it is the Dark Powers that reply. Some madmen and heretics claim that a few gods worshipped in Ravenloft — gods who continue to answer the prayers of their clerics — are long since dead. They even insist that some of these gods simply do not exist and never did.

Lastly, sinister cults quietly worship Set, the god of deceit and the destructive power of nature, who slew his brother Osiris but survived the vengeance of the gods. Many of Set's minions pose as clerics to other gods, seeking to subvert the faithful.

Ra: *Symbol:* An ankh superimposed on a solar disc. *Favored Weapon:* Falchion.

Osiris: *Symbol:* Crossed flail and staff. *Favored Weapon:* Light flail.

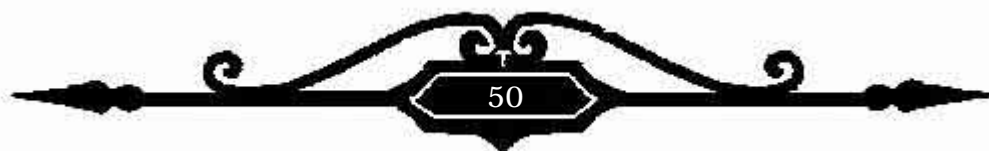
Set: *Symbol:* A coiled cobra. *Favored Weapon:* Short sword.

Belenus

In many other worlds, Belenus is just one member of a wide pantheon of deities worshipped by Celtic tribes. In the Land of Mists, Belenus has become a central god in the religions of two otherwise unrelated cultures, one in Tepest, the other in the Shadowlands. Unfortunately, both branches of the Belenus faith have developed a troubling common element: intolerance.

Belenus is a sun god, like Ra, and the master of fire. His followers claim that Belenus bestows the life-giving light and heat of the sun on those who please him and withholds it from those who earn his wrath, cursing them with icy cold and darkness. Solar eclipses are seen as dire omens.

In Tepest, Belenus worship exists as a rustic folk religion, and his clerics also venerate other patron deities from his pantheon. The faithful here often mingle their legends of Belenus and other gods with time-honored tales of shadow fey, ravenous goblins, and fiendish hags and witches.





For generations, Tepestani clerics were content to watch over their small congregations, but this changed in the wake of the Grand Conjunction. Believing that the domains of G'Henna and Markovia had been destroyed by the fey, a village priest of Viktal, a man named Wyan, organized an inquisition to fight back against the fey. Fifteen years later, the inquisition continues and has sadly gained a reputation for being over-zealous. The clerics execute any "fey" they can catch and may include calibans, elves, half-elves, and sorcerers in their pogrom.

In the domain Nidala, Belenus worship takes a markedly different turn. Here, a powerful organized religion honors Belenus, their "one true god," in a huge and glorious cathedral. In the matriarchal society of the Shadowlands, only women can join the priesthood, and they must all make vows of chastity. Men can serve the church, but only as guardians or enforcers. Worship of any other religion is ruthlessly persecuted — as are countless other transgressions. The priestesses of Belenus all gratefully obey the edicts of their nation's great protector, the holy warrior Elena Faith-hold.

Symbol: "Celtic"-style Golden sunburst.

Favored Weapon: Sickle.

The Eternal Order

Azalin, the ruler of Darkon, constructed this religion around the fearful folklore of his subjects as a tool for societal control. Darkonian tradition holds that their land originally belonged to the dead. The living stole this world, banishing the unliving to the Gray Realm, but someday, in a prophesied event called the Hour of the Ascension, the vengeful dead will return to reclaim what is rightfully theirs. The clerics of the Eternal Order worship a patchwork pantheon of death gods borrowed from other religions. Worship focuses on performing countless rituals intended to appease the dead and continually postpone the Hour of the Ascension.



When the Requiem destroyed Il Aluk, many Darkonians believed the Ascension had come at last. In the aftermath, the Eternal Order's clergy blamed the

Requiem on the weak faith of the Darkonian people. The Eternal Order is rapidly crumbling, but the Darkonians responded by abandoning the Order in droves. As an organized religion, the some clerics — and the underlying superstitions of the Darkonians — remain.

Symbol: A hooded human skull.

Favored Weapon: Scythe.

Ezra

The Church of Ezra was born almost ninety years ago, when a son of the notorious Dilisnya dynasty claimed that a divine entity, Ezra, Our Guardian in the Mists, had given him a message to spread to all the world. According to most traditions in the church, Ezra was a virtuous mortal woman who, despairing of the evils of the world, forever surrendered her mortality to the Mists to become an eternal guardian of mankind. However, the fractious sects of the Church of Ezra have been debating the true nature and teachings of their ascended patron for decades.

The original, lawful neutral sect, also called the Home Faith, is centered in Borca. It appoints Ezra's faithful clerics, called anchorites, to the task of protecting and healing her faithful, keeping them safe from the forces of evil.

The lawful good sect in Mordent also teaches that anchorites must convert as many souls to Ezra's flock as possible for their own good. The mystical, neutral Dementlieu sect claims that Ezra was a goddess who abandoned her callous fellow gods to offer mortals succor, and spends its time studying the true nature of their goddess. Lastly, the lawful evil sect centered in Nevuchar Springs prophesies an imminent Time of Unparalleled Darkness, when the unfaithful will be consumed by darkness. All anchorites agree that Ezra cannot protect those who do not accept her into their hearts.

The Mists domain is unique to anchorites; Ezra's patronage allows them to call on the Mists of Ravenloft for aid.

Symbol: A silver longsword superimposed on an alabaster kite shield and adorned with a sprig of belladonna.

Favored Weapon: Longsword.





Hala

According to Hala's holy text, *Tales of the Ages*, nine gods created the world from the roiling mists of Chaos. The gods then withdrew, intending to allow mortals to fill their world with acts both good and evil. But the mortals lacked wisdom, and the world was soon filled with pain and anguish.



Just one of the Nine Gods, the goddess Hala, returned to the world to ease its suffering. She gathered together thirteen women and thirteen men and taught them the secrets of the Weave, an ancient form of magic. Unfortunately, this brand of magic is also

known as witchcraft and provokes widespread, superstitious fear. Witchcraft's wretched reputation is largely due to hags, the most infamous practitioners. Although witchcraft is not inherently evil, it is thought to be rife with occult dangers. Exposure to witchcraft is thought to create Calibans, and according to folklore, witches who lose control of their magic may be permanently transformed into monstrous hags.

The Church of Hala is a secretive and highly mystical faith. Her clerics — who call themselves witches — operate a number of hospices scattered throughout Ravenloft where they offer rest and healing to anyone who comes to their door. The church does not actively seek new followers, however, and nowhere is the Church of Hala the predominant religion.

Hala's witches often face hostility when beyond the doors of their hospices. Any witch of Hala unwise enough to encounter the inquisitors of Tepest, for example, should count herself lucky to escape with her life.

Symbol: A ring formed by thirteen serpents, each devouring the tail of the one before it.

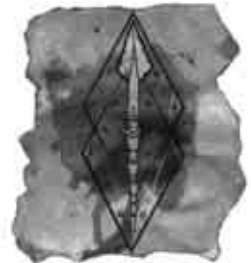
Favored Weapon: Dagger.

The Lawgiver

This god is referred to by many titles, including the Iron Tyrant and the Black Lord. The Lawgiver's clerics claim that the revelation of their god's true name would strike a mortal dead. His religion rewards blind obedience and asserts the divine providence of kings. Those born into wealth and power *deserve* to rule; those born into poverty deserve only what they earn through dutiful service to their masters.

The Lawgiver is the state religion in Hazlan and Nova Vaasa. In the latter, Prince Othmar uses it to justify his own regime.

The Lawgiver's clerics attempt to enforce the rigid stratifications of Vaasi culture wherever they go. Clerics drawn from different social classes do not mix, and the Church forbids marriage between different ethnicities or races. All rites must be performed in Vaasi, and all sacred texts must use its script.



The Lawgiver fell silent during the Grand Conjunction. This troubling lapse has opened a minor schism among the clergy. On one side stand those who believe the lapse was meaningless, or a test; a minority opposition believes that the Lawgiver was somehow incapacitated. Although the Church of the Lawgiver ruthlessly purges them, a handful of heretics even whisper that the Lawgiver died in the cataclysm, that all his clerics now worship is a litany of empty titles.

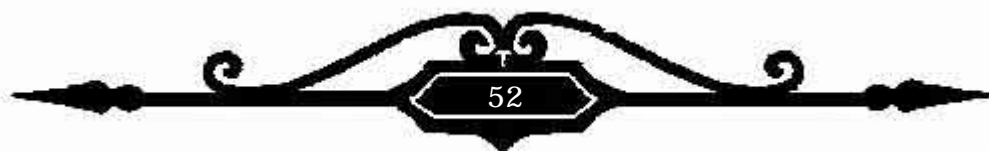
Symbol: A stout iron spear, bound in coils of bronze.

Favored Weapon: Whip.

The Morninglord

The Cult of the Morninglord was born late in the fifth century, when the faith's founder claimed that when he was a young boy, the Morninglord appeared to him in physical form and protected him from the roaming menaces of the Barovian night. Based on this singular encounter, the Morninglord is usually depicted as a luminous, sylvan humanoid. Although he is formed of soft, golden light, his face is smeared with blood. The cult teaches that this strange detail may be a sign that even the greatest good may hold some evil stain, and even the most depraved evil may yet contain a spark of good.

The Morninglord is the god of the rosy dawn that marks the end of every night. The deity asks little of his followers, save that they treat each other with kindness and retain hope in their hearts. This humble faith holds great appeal for those who have little more





than hope and kindness to offer, and the cult is spreading rapidly among the downtrodden Gundarikites of Barovia. Its simple teachings conceal a message of intense hope. No matter how bleak the future may seem, no matter how dark the night, the dawn *will* come. Many of the Morninglord's followers follow a prophecy that, someday, the Morninglord will return once again to lead the world into the daylight.

The cult may hide more than its optimistic message. One of the cult's founders was a cleric who secretly hunted the undead by night. It is possible that even to this day, the cult's clerics are trained in the methods of battling vampires.

Symbol: A simple, rose-tinted disc of gold.

Favored Weapon: Halfspear.

The Rajian Pantheon

The denizens of Sri Raj i worship an extensive pantheon of gods that are so complexly intertwined that outsiders often have difficulty grasping the basic concepts of their religion. The core of Raj ian belief is the concept of reincarnation; Raj ians believe that the world is actually a kind of mortal hell. Souls are doomed to live, die, and be reborn as new creatures in an endless cycle of suffering. Only through perfect spiritual understanding and enlightenment can souls escape to an eternal paradise.

Two gods in the Rajian pantheon are particularly noteworthy. The Dark Sisters are cultists of the goddess Kali. Each day, they collect a human sacrifice, hauling the unfortunate to the leader of their cult, Arijani. Also known as the Black Mother, Kali is a goddess of both destruction and creation. She is a bloodthirsty entity who delights in murder, but she also creates new life from death.



The City and University of Tvashtri are both dedicated to their namesake patron. Tvashtri is an enlightened god of industry and invention. Under the teachings of Tvashtri, the university has become one of the greatest — if also most remote — centers of learning in the Land of Mists.

In the year 740, the Grand Conjunction nearly destroyed the Realm of Dread. Just a few days after the tremors ended, new lands appeared at the borders of Sri Raji, forming the Verdurous Lands. In Sri Raji, the Grand Conjunction is thus known as the Rebirth of Kali; it is commonly believed that Kali utterly destroyed the old world, then created a new one.

Kali: *Symbol:* Skulls strung together on a leather necklace. *Favored Weapon:* Sap.

Tvashtri: *Symbol:* A pinwheel fan. *Favored weapon:* Punching dagger.

The Wolf God

The Wolf God is worshipped in the primordial forests of the southwestern core. Outsiders know only scattered tales concerning this savage and predatory entity. These stories claim that the Wolf God is worshipped by demonic wolves that walk like men, and these man-wolves honor their patron through frenzied and carnal rites, drenched in sacrificial blood, performed under the light of the full moon.



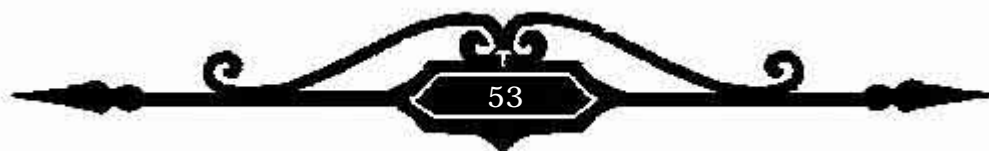
Followers of the Wolf God hold that wolves are divine creatures. All other predators — and humans in particular — are abominations, pathetic rivals that must be slain or a herd that must be thinned.

Symbol: A wolf's head. Followers often use actual wolf skulls.

Favored Weapon: None. Those who cannot attack with tooth and claw are prey.

Zhakata

The stony wastes of G'Henna are littered with towering statues of the beast-god Zhakata, who is always depicted as a monstrous creature squatting atop a pile of bones. Zhakata is not worshipped; he is appeased. The people of G'Henna believe that Zhakata exists in two aspects: the Devourer and the Provider. Sadly, G'Henna has experienced only the Devourer. Zhakata demands endless sacrifice, usually of foodstuffs but occasionally of living creatures. The Devourer is a god of cruel austerity; all crops must be donated to the priests of the great Temple of Zhakata, who deduct Zhakata's share, then dole out the rest back to the starving populace in meager portions.





Chapter Two



Buying or selling food is a religious offense. Obesity is an act of sacrilege.

The people of G'Henna continue to make their painful sacrifices to Zhakata in the desperate hope that

someday they will indeed appease him. On that legendary day, Zhakata will walk G'Henna in physical form and transform himself into Zhakata the Provider.

Generations of G'Hennans have starved themselves to death in the hopes of someday earning the era of plenty that would follow.

In G'Henna, people observe no difference between civil and religious law. Clerics of Zhakata eat well, taking the best of the daily dole, and their word is law. However, all clerics must still defer to the commands of Zhakata's high priest, Yagno Petrovna.

Symbol: Small reliquary containing human finger bones.

Favored Weapon: Flail.

Table 2-1: Ravenloft Deities

Deity/Faith	Alignment	Domains	Worship Centers
Belenus	Neutral good	Fire, Good, Sun	Shadowlands, Tepest
Eternal Order, The	Neutral evil	Death, Evil, Knowledge, Repose	Darkon
Ezra	Lawful neutral	Mists, Destruction, Healing, Law, Protection	Northern and western Core
Hala	Neutral	Healing, Magic, Plant	Southern Core
Kali	Chaotic evil	Destruction, Evil, Healing, Trickery	Sri Raj i
Lawgiver, The	Lawful evil	Death, Evil, Law, War	Southeastern Core
Morninglord, The	Chaotic good	Good, Luck, Protection, Sun	Barovia
Osiris	Neutral good	Good, Protection, Repose, Water	Amber Wastes
Ra	Lawful good	Air, Good, Law, Sun	Amber Wastes
Set	Lawful evil	Death, Evil, Trickery	Amber Wastes
Tvashtri	Chaotic good	Chaos, Knowledge, Magic, Plant	Sri Raji
Wolf God, The	Chaotic evil	Animal, Strength, Trickery	Verbrek
Zhakata	Lawful evil	Destruction, Earth, Fire, Protection	G'Henna



New Cleric Domains

Mists Domain

Deity: Ezra

Granted Power: Once per day, you may call on the *shield of Ezra*, a film of luminous mist that envelops your body for one round per cleric level. The form of protection granted is determined by your alignment. Lawful good: 25/+5 damage reduction vs. metal weapons. Lawful neutral: 15/+1 damage reduction vs. all physical attacks. Neutral: +10 to all Fortitude and Reflex saves vs. damaging spells. Lawful evil: +10 to all Will saves vs. mind-affecting spells and effects. This is a supernatural ability.

Mists Domain Spells

- 1 Obscuring Mist.** Fog surrounds you.
- 2 Fog Cloud.** Fog obscures vision.
- 3 Gaseous Form.** Subject becomes insubstantial and can fly slowly.
- 4 Solid Fog.** Blocks vision and slows movement.
- 5 Mind Fog.** Subjects in fog suffer -10 Wis, Will checks.
- 6 Wind Walk.** You and your allies turn vaporous and travel quickly.
- 7 Teleport without Error.** Mists instantly transport you anywhere, with no off-target arrival.
- 8 Vanish.** Mists instantly transport a touched object.
- 9 Imprisonment.** Traps subject within the Mists.

Repose Domain

Deities: The Eternal Order, Osiris

Granted Power: You can grant *final rest* by tracing your deity's symbol on a newly dead body. That corpse then receives a Will save (using your Will save bonus) to resist any attempt to transform it into an undead creature, including the *animate dead* and *create undead spells* and the create spawn ability of undead creatures. This is a spell-like ability you can use once per day.

Repose Domain Spells

- 1 Detect Undead.** Reveals undead within 60 feet.
- 2 Gentle Repose.** Preserves one corpse.
- 3 Speak with Dead.** Corpse answers one question/two levels.
- 4 Halt Undead.** Immobilizes undead for one round/level.
- 5 Raise Dead.** Restores life to subject who died up to one day/level ago.
- 6 Antilife Shell.** 10-foot field hedges out living creatures.
- 7 Resurrection.** Fully restore dead subject.
- 8 Control Undead.** Undead don't attack you while under your command.
- 9 Soul Bind.** Traps newly dead soul to prevent *resurrection*.

Equipment



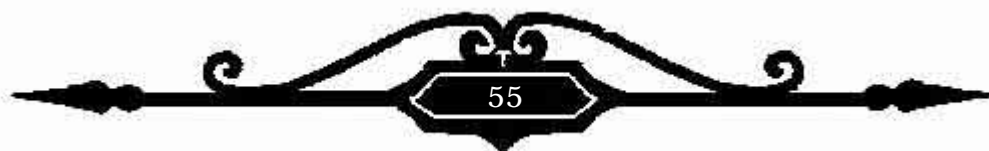
When they joined the struggle there was something they could not have known at the time, that no blade on earth, no blacksmith's art could ever damage their demon opponent. He had conjured the harm from the cutting edge of every weapon.

—*Beowulf*, as translated by Seamus Heaney

Ravenloft contains a mix of cultures drawn from numerous worlds. In some lands where magic is rare and trade is common, scientific principles have advanced to offer new inventions.

Cultural Levels and Equipment

A domain's Cultural Level is strongly tied to its technological advancement. Whenever a character purchases equipment, the DM should apply a Cultural Level to the item being purchased.





Chapter Two

As detailed in chapter 1, Cultural Levels in Ravenloft range from 0 (Savage) to 9 (Renaissance). An item's CL is a loose representation of the eras of history in which the item should be widely available.

Many items will have a CL expressed as a range or a minimum. For example, full-plate armor comes into vogue at CL 7 (Medieval) but falls out of fashion with the advent of gunpowder. Thus full-plate armor would have a narrow range of CL 7-8. On the other hand, a simple tool like a metal dagger comes into use at CL 2 and never goes away, so a dagger would have CL 2+. The DM should compare the item's CL range to the domain's CL. If the domain CL falls within the item's CL range, the item can be found at the standard price. If the domain CL does not fall within the item's range, then either that domain has not yet developed the technology needed to build it, or that item has fallen out of use.

Multiply the difference between Cultural Levels x 100% and add it to the item's price. This represents the extra costs of having the item imported or hiring a craftsman in a seller's market. When applicable, apply the CL price modifier after masterwork costs are added but before adding enchantment costs.

Remember to compare the item's adjusted cost to the community's gold piece limit (see "Community Wealth and Population" in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*); some items may not be locally available at any price.

Example: After a close call in Tepest, Laurie visits the town of Viktal in search of a new musket. A musket's CL is 8+, but Tepest has a CL of 6. That's a difference of 2, so any musket she finds will cost +200% extra, a total of 1,500 gp. With a population of 3,600 people, Viktal has a gold piece limit of 3,000 gp. Laurie does find a musket for sale — but it'll cost her.

Table 2-2: New Weapons

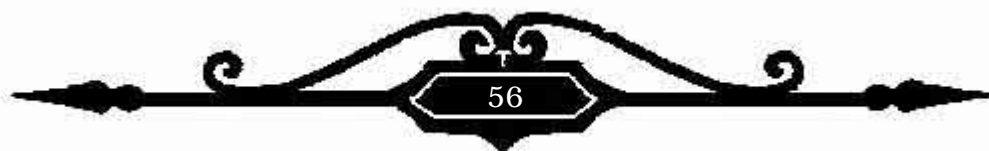
Weapon	CL	Cost	Damage	Critical	Range Increment	Weight	Type
Tiny							
Bayonet	3+	1 gp	1d4	x2	—	1/2 lb.	Piercing
Straight razor	5	2 gp	1d4	x3	—	1/2 lb.	Slashing
Small							
Pistol	9	250 gp	1d10	x3	50ft.	3 lb.	Piercing
Bullets, pistol (10)	3+	3 gp	—	—	—	2 lb.	—
Medium-size							
Musket	8+	500 gp	1d12	x3	150ft.	10 lb.	Piercing
Bullets, rifle (10)	3+	3 gp	—	—	—	2 lb.	—
Rapier, Parthian	9	300 gp	1d6/1d10	18-20/x2/x3	—/50ft.	5 lb.	Piercing

Table 2-3: Grenadelike Gunpowder Weapons

Weapon	CL	Cost	Damage	Blast Radius*	Range Increment	Weight
Bomb	8	150 gp	2d6	5ft.	10ft.	1 lb.
Smokebomb	8	70 gp	Smoke	**	10 ft.	1 lb.

*A miss requires a roll for deviation as for regular grenadelike weapons, but rather than dealing splash damage to all creatures within 5 feet, the weapon deals the same damage to all creatures within the blast radius of where it actually lands.

** See text.





The Player Characters

Equipment Descriptions

Firearms in Ravenloft: The Exotic Weapon Proficiency feat gains a character proficiency with all gunpowder weapons. Otherwise, a -4 penalty is assessed against all attack rolls. Firearms can be made into masterwork weapons or even enchanted like any other ranged weapons.

Most firearms in Ravenloft use wheel-lock firing mechanisms: pulling the trigger releases a spring-wound wheel. This spins against a flint, which sprays sparks into the priming pan, igniting the gunpowder. Wheel-lock weapons won't fire if they become wet. Masterwork firearms tend to use the safer and more sophisticated snap-lock mechanism: pulling the trigger snaps a flint-headed hammer against a metal plate, sending sparks into a covered priming pan. Snap-lock weapons are generally weatherproof, though complete drenching will still foul the powder.

Weapons

Bayonet: A bayonet is a narrow, daggerlike blade that can be attached to the end of a musket. A bayonet attached to a musket is considered a Medium-size weapon. If used on its own, a bayonet makes for an unwieldy dagger, since it lacks a hilt. A bayonet is a simple melee weapon.

Bomb: This round gunpowder bomb must be lit before it is thrown. Lighting the bomb is a standard action. The explosion deals 2d6 points of fire damage. Those caught within the blast radius can make a Reflex save (DC 20) to take half damage.

Any character carrying a bomb who suffers fire damage must make a Reflex save (DC 13). If the character fails this save, the bomb's fuse has accidentally been lit; unless put out, it explodes one round later.

Bullets: These large, round, lead bullets are sold in bags of ten. The bag has negligible weight.

Musket: The musket holds a single shot and requires a standard action to reload. A musket can be fitted with a bayonet or, as a last resort, used as a club.

Pistol: This pistol holds a single shot and requires a standard action to reload.

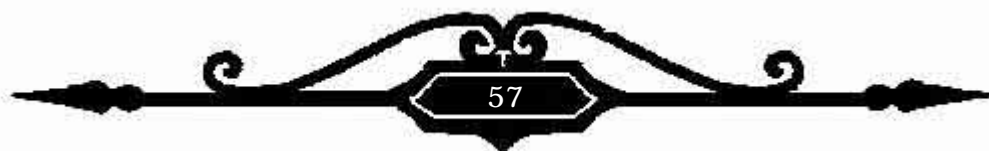
Rapier, Parthian: The curious Parthian (or "parting shot") rapier is considered the bane of honorable duelists and is usually found as an aristocratic display piece. It is simply a rapier with a pistol built into the hilt. The Parthian rapier is poorly balanced compared to either a standard rapier or pistol and is an exotic weapon. It does boast an insidious advantage, however. If the wielder makes a successful attack with the rapier blade, by simply pulling the trigger she then can immediately fire the pistol at the same target as a free action. The target cannot use her Dexterity bonus to AC in this follow-up attack.

You can use the Weapon Finesse feat when attacking with the rapier blade. You suffer a -4 penalty to attack rolls made with the pistol if you do not have the Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearms) feat.

Table 2-4: Adventuring Gear

Item	CL	Cost	Weight
Book, blank	5	3 gp	1 lb.
Book, printed	9	10 gp	1 lb.
Herbs	—	2 sp	1 lb.
Clockworks	CL	Cost	Weigh
Automaton, fine	9	500 gp	1 lb.
Automaton, diminutive	9	1,000 gp	5 lb.
Automaton, tiny	9	2,000 gp	10 lb.
Automaton, small	9	4,000 gp	10 lb.
Grandfather clock	7+	400 gp	80 lb.
Mantle clock	8+	500 gp	5 lb.
Pocket watch	9	1,000 gp	•

• No Weight worth noting.





Chapter Two

Smokebomb: This cylindrical bomb must be lit before it is thrown. Lighting it is a standard action. One round after it is lit, this nondamaging explosive emits a cloud of smoke in a 20-foot radius that persists in still conditions for 1d3+6 rounds and in windy conditions for 1d3+1 rounds. Visibility within the smoke is limited to 2 feet. Everything within the cloud has 90% concealment.

Any character carrying a bomb who suffers fire damage must make a Reflex save (DC 13). If the character fails this save, the bomb's fuse has accidentally been lit; unless put out, it goes off one round later.

Straight Razor: A small, finely honed blade with a folding handle.

Adventuring Gear

Book, Blank: These books are smaller and less durably bound than a wizard's sturdy spellbook. A typical book measures 4 by 6 inches and has one hundred pages of parchment. Books of this quality are often used for personal journals or published works.

Book, Printed: The emergence of the printing press has allowed literature to flourish in advanced domains. Although print runs are usually low — rarely more than one hundred copies — authors can publish their works for eager audiences. A library in Ravenloft might include manuals written to teach complex skills or martial techniques, epic tales presented as adventurers' memoirs, angst-ridden romance novels, or even the infamous *Van Richten's Guides*. At Cultural Levels lower than 9, books must be scribed by hand and thus tend to be restricted to vital topics: legal tomes, historical records, or religious texts.

Clockwork, Automaton: The first automatons were created by the gnomes of Mayvin, who considered it a challenge to create the most complex simulation of life from delicate gears and springs. Automatons have since become a favored curiosity piece among the wealthy. Automatons are typically capable of only one or two simple movements, such as crawling forward or tapping a bell. The largest automatons may be capable of a complex task like drawing a (preset) picture or signature. Automatons are spring wound.

Some adventurers have heard tales of automatons that can perform complex, analytical functions, like playing chess. If not a hoax, these automatons have been given a semblance of life by their creators through magic or obsessive desire and should be considered dexterous but fragile constructs.

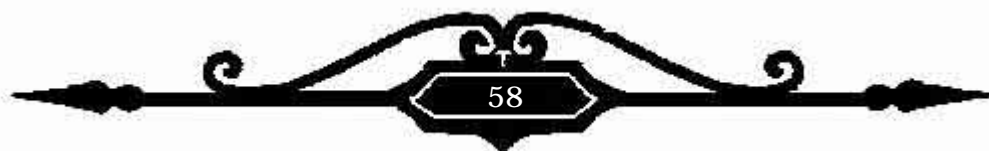
Clockwork, Clock: The most common example of the clockmaker's craft, these mechanical devices are capable of keeping accurate track of the time of day. Masterwork clocks cost twice the listed price but can include additional features, such as dials that track the cycles of the sun or moon or tiny figures that emerge to chime the passing of the hour. All clocks must be wound at least once a day to keep accurate time.

The smaller and more delicate a clock, the more time-consuming and costly it is to construct. (The cottage-sized clockworks within clock towers break this pattern, of course.)

Herbs: Any relatively common herb, including garlic bulbs, tea leaves, and sprigs of belladonna. Some herbs may be difficult to obtain outside specific conditions of climate and terrain.

Table 2-5: Special Substances and Items

Item	CL	Cost	Weight
Gunpowder, keg	8+	250 gp	20 lb.
Gunpowder, horn	8+	35 gp	2 lb.
Silvered weapons	4+	x5	—





Special Substances and Items

Gunpowder: While gunpowder burns (with an ounce consuming itself in one round and illuminating as much as a sunrod) or even explodes in the right conditions, it is chiefly used to propel a bullet out of the barrel of a musket or a rifle or is formed into a bomb. An ounce of gunpowder is needed to propel a bullet. Gunpowder is sold in small kegs (15-pound capacity and 20 pounds total weight) and in water-resistant powder horns (2-pound capacity and total weight). If gunpowder becomes wet, it is rendered useless.

If a character fails a Reflex save against a fire-based attack, any gunpowder she is carrying ignites, inflicting 1 point of damage per ounce carried to the carrier and anything within a 5-foot blast radius. Everyone (but the carrier) caught within the blast radius can make a Reflex save (DC 20) to take half damage.

Silvered Weapons: Any metal weapon can be silvered for five times its listed cost. Apply this modifier before adding masterwork costs, if applicable.

Final Thoughts



In the depths of every heart, there is a tomb and a dungeon, though the lights, the music, and revelry above may cause us to forget their existence, and the buried ones, or prisoners whom they hide.

—Nathaniel Hawthorne, "The Haunted Mind"

By following the guidelines in this chapter, you can create the framework of a player character. Race, class, skills, and feats; these rules are the meat and bones of a hero, but they remain incomplete. The heart and soul of your character is her *personality*, and only you can breathe life into your creation.

The protagonists of Gothic tales often encounter villains or creatures that represent their own inner demons made manifest. By providing your hero with vibrant characterization, you offer the DM greater opportunities to engage your hero with adventures tailored to her interests. A wizard obsessed with acquiring magical power might find herself on a quest for the spellbooks of a lich; a barbarian who steadfastly protects his clan from chattering goblin raiders may eventually assume the title of chieftain.

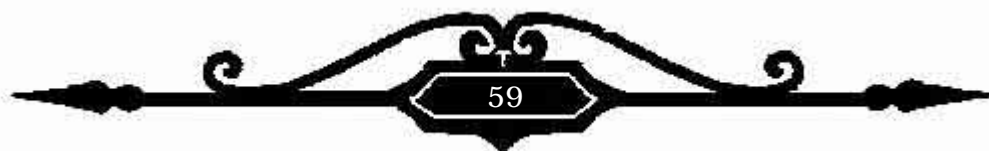
Death by Pitchfork

The minions of darkness have a habit of striking when heroes are ill prepared to face them. All too often, heroes may be forced to defend themselves with common objects. Furthermore, many characters who heroes encounter in Ravenloft, from mobs of irate villagers to thieving goblinfolk, are more likely to wield such weapons of opportunity than true military arms.

Tool-grade weapons are similar to the military-grade weapons listed in the *Player's Handbook*. Characters wielding such items suffer a -1 penalty to attack and damage rolls, however. The tools listed below are considered simple weapons. No character can be proficient with an item that lacks an obvious grip or handle, such as a wooden plank. Listed below are several tool-grade weapons and the military-grade weapons they resemble.

- Axe: Battleaxe
- Crowbar: Light Mace
- Flail, Grain: Light Flail
- Gaff: Light Pick
- Hammer: Light Hammer
- Hatchet: Handaxe
- Hoe:* Quarterstaff
- Machete: Scimitar
- Pick: Heavy Pick
- Pitchfork: Trident
- Poker, Fireplace: Halfspear
- Scythe: Scythe
- Shovel:* Quarterstaff
- Sickle: Sickle
- Sledge: Warhammer

* Unlike a quarterstaff, these tools are not double weapons.



Chapter Two

So, as a final exercise, whenever you create a Ravenloft player character, place yourself in your hero's mind and consider the following questions. This is not a test, and there are no wrong answers.

1. What do you look like? Are you alluring? Plain? Grotesque? Do you dress in finery or tattered rags? Do you have any scars or distinguishing features? A character's appearance may hint at her past. For example, a fighter hunting the weretiger who infected her with lycanthropy might still bear scars from the attack.

2. Where is your family? Where is your homeland? Are you native to Barovia, or were you drawn into a quest from the arid Amber Wastes? Do you have a cozy cottage to call home, or have you been banished from your ancestral estate? Some players may believe that loved ones can't be threatened if they don't exist, but consider this: a hero with no one to lose also has no one to turn to in times of need.

3. What is your greatest love? For what or whom would you make sacrifices? A romantic interest? A family member? Yourself? Your god? Magic? Youth? Knowledge? Power? Would you make a personal sacrifice or sacrifice Someone else?

4. What is your greatest regret? Do you have any memories that haunt you at night? Were you unable to prevent a death? Do you have a mental or physical trait that you despise? Did you betray a friend in a time of weakness?

5. What makes your skin crawl? What are your hates or fears? Many elves are disgusted by the acrid scent of gunpowder, and dwarves are said to dislike the sea. Do you dislike the smell of live-stock, or do you hate the sweltering heat of summer? Does witnessing an injustice set your teeth to grinding, or does the sight of spiders send you into shivers? Do you find a race, culture, religion, or form of magic primitive or unnatural?

6. What fascinates you? What topics draw your interest? Do you attend operas, or do you read tawdry novels? Would you pore over the intricate patterns of a magic scroll, the strands of a cobweb, or the gears of a clock tower?



The Player Characters

Do you have a weakness for riddles? Do you live your life in search of new sensations?

7. What are your habits? Do you have any patterns in your life? A sorcerer might twist his beard when lost in thought; a caliban might collect "trophies" from slain foes; a bard might practice every night to hone her musical skills.

8. What are your secrets? Do you hide anything from the outside world? Are you disguising a trait, or have you buried an event from your past? Why do you keep this secret? If your secret was revealed, would you merely be embarrassed, or might you face persecution or place someone at risk?

9. Are you rational or passionate? Do you pride yourself on following your head before your heart, or are you a true romantic? Characters with chaotic alignments tend to be more comfortable with their emotions, but lawful characters are certainly capable of passionate outbursts.

10. Are you sophisticated or superstitious?

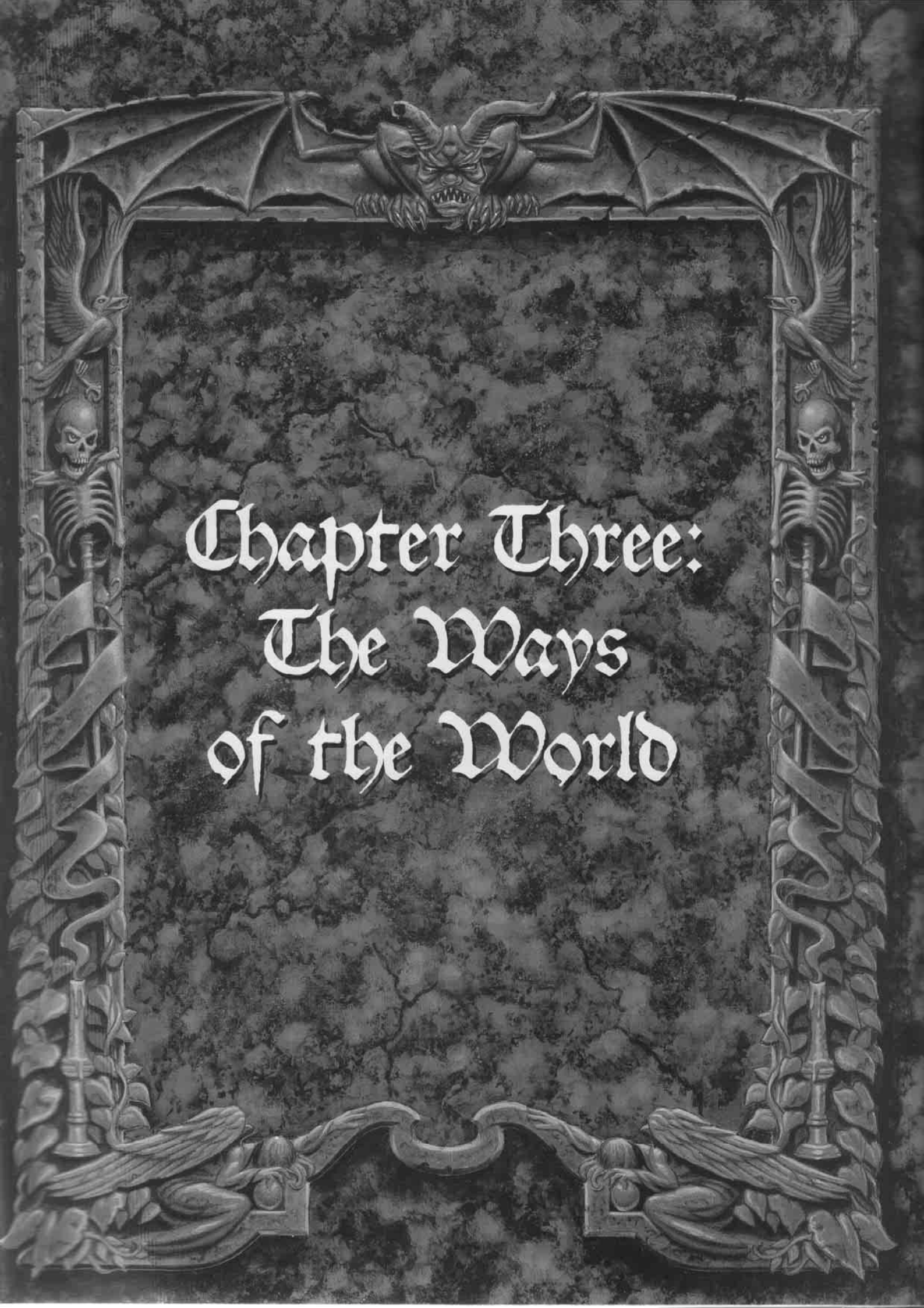
Were you educated in the finest boarding schools, or were you raised by tanners who left their farmstead only to check their traps? A cosmopolitan character might be experienced in the skills of etiquette, while an unrefined peasant might know countless folktales about the fey.

11. How strong is your faith? Many denizens of the Land of Mists scoff at religion, believing that the gods have long since ceased to care about mortal concerns. If religious, do you worship the prevalent religion of your homeland, or have you adopted a foreign creed? Are you pious or zealous?

12. How self-confident are you? Do you continually question your own motives? Do you struggle with an inner darkness? Or do you stride boldly forth, knowing in your heart that your actions are correct?

13. What drives you to adventure? Why have you taken up the dangerous life of an adventurer? Are you simply mercenary, seeking treasure? Are you on a hunt for vengeance? Are you driven by altruistic motives? Do you believe you have a destiny to fulfill? Are you trying to reclaim a stolen birthright? Are you struggling to be reunited with a lost love?





Chapter Three:
The Ways
of the World

The case began with a bolt of lightning, smashing glass, and a woman's scream — and Alanik insists that is where it ended.

The morning after the storm, I watched Alanik examine the battered bedchamber of the missing Lady Thérèse. An ashen-faced servant assured us that none of the manor's staff had dared to alter the room's particulars since the alarm of the previous night.

The broken body of one Mme. Emmanuelle, reported missing the day before, now lay in gentle repose atop the bed, her bloodless arms delicately folded over a small book. A nearby writing desk produced numerous sketches of one Bertrand H___, a local gentleman. His body, also missing, remained unaccounted for. The glass doors that once opened to Lady Thérèse's balcony now lay in glittering shards upon the floor. Of Lady Thérèse herself there was no trace.

Alanik gently pried the book from the dead woman's grasp. As he silently turned its pages, I watched the familiar intrigue build in his eyes. At last I could stand the suspense no longer. "Is it a clue?" I asked.

"No," he replied, "a solution." It was the diary of the missing Lady Thérèse. Alanik quickly directed me to three entries that would, as he put it, "lay the matter bare."

Six Days Previous

"I fear my heart will burst! Today I learned that Bertrand has asked for Emmanuel's hand in marriage! That conniving witch! What could he see in her? What could she possibly give him that I cannot? I have loved him for years — he should be mine! Yet he only has eyes for that empty little head of hers. I will not accept this indignity! I know of an old hermit who lives outside the town. He is wise in the forbidden ways. He can call upon forces to *right* this wrong."

Two Days Previous

"The pact is sealed. The old sorcerer led me through an incantation that even now winds its way to my beloved. That wretched Emmanuelle will die at sunset. In his grief, Bertrand will come to me for consolation. I shall dry his tears, and he will remain by my side forever. This has been promised me."

One Day Previous (Final Entry)

"Injustice! I curse the fates that mock me! Emmanuelle died at dusk, 'tis true. But Bertrand — *my* Bertrand — was at her side when their carriage turned over in a ditch! Both were crushed! Even as I write these words, their bodies await a funeral; twin graves in Bertrand's family plot! The old hermit will pay dearly for this . . .

"A messenger has come from town, racing the storm. My hand shakes as I record his news. Bertrand and Emmanuelle . . . their bodies have been stolen! Gone! What can this mean?

"A flash of lightning — a shadow on my curtains — something on my bale—"

Thus ended Lady Thérèse's journal. Alanik declared that we must hasten to Bertrand's family plot. Once at the graveyard, we found the groundskeeper in a state of consternation. After spending the previous day digging graves for the unfortunate Bertrand and Emmanuelle, he returned today to find both holes completely filled with earth.

Alanik directed my gaze to two sets of tracks in the rain-soaked soil, leading to the plot. The larger prints walked with steady, determined paces. The smaller feet appeared to have been dragged, kicking, every step of the way.

"You don't suppose," I asked, my throat quite dry, "that we have found our victim?"

"Indeed we have," he replied, staring at the grave intended for Emmanuelle. "Victim and murderess both."

The night is darkening round me, The wild winds coldly blow; But a tyrant spell has bound me, And I cannot, cannot go.

— Emily Jane Bronte, "The Night Is Darkening Round Me"

The Realm of Dread is ruled by faceless masters, Dark Powers that subtly twist reality to suit their grim tastes. This chapter includes all the rules needed to create the Gothic atmosphere of Ravenloft, where courage is pitted against intimate horror, where the thirst for vengeance carries power, where innocence must resist the temptations of sin, and where magic does not always do what it is told.

The first section, "Fear, Horror, and Madness," offers three new types of saving throw, designed to test heroes' resolve.

"Curses" explains how any character can rail to the heavens in the name of vengeance — and be heard.

"Powers Checks" details the path of corruption fated for those who succumb to evil's charms.

Finally, "Altered Magic" presents the ground rules that all spells and magic items in Ravenloft must obey.

Fear, Horror, and Madness

Itrembled not — I stirred not — for a crowd of unutterable fancies connected with the air, the stature, the demeanor, of the figure, rushing hurriedly through my brain, had paralyzed — had chilled me into stone. — Edgar Allan Poe, "Ligeia" Ravenloft is a world that freely mixes adventurous action with subtle horror: it is a world of Gothic adventure. Heroes in Ravenloft campaigns may find themselves facing slaving monsters that can slay with a touch, haunted by the memory of horrendous cruelties, or exposed to alien forces that can wrench their minds apart. The heroes can prevail — but only if they can face their fears.

Fear, Horror, and Madness saves represent the power of terror — a roleplaying tool to help players visualize the hysteria that often clouds the minds of characters in classic tales of horror. The DM can always consider these saving throws optional. If a player portrays the stark terror of her hero without prompting, no die roll is necessary.

Note: Creatures without Intelligence scores are immune to Fear, Horror, and Madness effects.

Making the Saving Throw

Fear, Horror, and Madness saves are considered Will saves in all respects. Anything that modifies a Will save likewise modifies Fear, Horror, and Madness saves; anything that modifies saves vs. fear effects modifies Fear saves.

Fear, Horror, and Madness saves all use the same basic mechanic: a Will save against a specified DC. Specific DCs depend on the situation and type of check being made and are provided in the following sections. Luck effects and resistance effects (such as those generated by a *luckstone* or a *cloak of resistance*) do not affect Fear, Horror, and Madness saves; they are outside the purview of luck and are not "active" effects that would be resisted. Divine effects do aid Fear, Horror, and Madness saves, however.

If a character succeeds at the Will save, then there is no effect, and she is immune to that specific source of fear, horror, or madness for 24 hours.

If a character fails the Will save, then the margin of failure determines the result. Subtract the final check result from the DC; this result determines whether the character suffers a minor, moderate, or major effect.

Failure Margin	Effect
1-5 points	Minor
6-10 points	Moderate
11-15 points	Major
16+ points	Major, plus additional effect (see below for specifics).

When determining the results of failed Horror and Madness saves, the player also needs to roll 1d4 to select a specific effect.

Recovery Checks

A character who fails a Horror or Madness save needs to make recovery checks to shake off its effects. Recovery checks are actually just Horror or Madness saves, usually with the same modifiers and DC. However, succeeding at a recovery check removes a Horror effect or lessens the severity of a Madness effect; failing a recovery check does not cause additional ill effects. Characters may take 10 on recovery checks. See "Recovering from Horror" and "Recovering from Madness," below, for more details.



Fear Saves

A character should make a Fear save when facing overwhelming odds and/or immediate, dire physical danger. Fear saves can also be used to test the morale of the heroes' foes. Common fear triggers include the following.

- The group is badly outnumbered or outclassed by opponents (EL is 4+ higher than the party level).
- The most powerful character in the group or half of the group's members are killed.
- A menacing creature is immune to the group's attacks.
- A menacing creature is at least two size categories larger than the biggest member of the group.
- A menacing creature has the Frightful Presence special attack.
- The character is helpless and threatened by immediate death (trapped underwater, for example).

Appearances are everything; if a character doesn't know she's in dire peril, then she has no reason to make a Fear save. Likewise, if a player

thinks her hero is doomed, a Fear save may be warranted. Illusions can often trigger these "false" Fear saves.

Determining the Fear Save DC

When a Fear save is prompted by a menacing creature, the DC is equal to $8 + 1/2$ the creature's HD + the creature's Charisma modifier (if the threat has a Fearsome Presence, add 10 instead of 8). A DM in a rush can just set the DC to the menacing creature's CR + 8, which nets a roughly similar target number.

When a Fear save is prompted by multiple creatures or a menacing situation, the DC is equal to the obstacle's EL + 8. This requires some judgment calls on the part of the DM; while a simple pit trap won't send anyone into a wild panic, a sealed room with sliding walls that slowly push the heroes into a pit filled with whirling blades might.

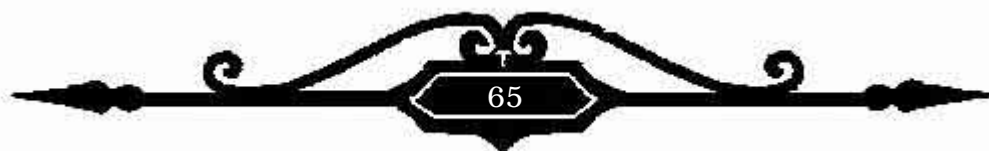
Circumstance modifiers often factor into Fear saves. The modifiers below apply to the check and stack with each other.

Failure Results

Minor Effect: Shaken. The character suffers a -2 morale penalty to attack rolls, checks, and saves.

Table 3-1: Fear Save Modifiers

Modifier	Condition
+4	Character or ally possesses a weapon, form of magic, or bit of lore that has <i>proven</i> to be useful against the threat.
+2	Character or ally possesses a weapon, form of magic, or bit of lore that is <i>believed</i> to be useful against the threat.
+4	A loved one is endangered.
+2	A friend or ally is endangered.
+1	An Innocent is endangered.
+1	Character has defeated a similar threat in the past.
+1	Character is in close quarters (no place to run).
-2	Character has faced and been defeated by a similar threat within the past 24 hours.
-1	Character has faced and been defeated by a similar threat in the past (but not within the past day).
-1	Character is alone.
-1	Character has lost more than half of his or her maximum hit points.





Chapter Three

Moderate Effect: *Frightened*. The character is shaken and flees as well as she can. She can fight to defend herself if unable to flee. A frightened character can use special abilities, including spells, to flee; indeed, she must use such means if they are the only way to escape.

Major Effect: *Panicked*. The character suffers a -2 morale penalty on saving throws and must flee. She has a 50% chance to drop what she's holding, chooses her path randomly (as long as she escapes from immediate danger), and flees any other dangers that confront her. If cornered, she cowers. A panicked character may use a special ability or spell to escape.

If the character fails the Fear save by 16+ points, she is panicked and must make an immediate Horror save (DC = failed Fear save DC - 5).

Additional Failures: Fear effects stack. A shaken character who fails another Fear save becomes frightened. A frightened character who fails another Fear save becomes panicked.

Recovering from Fear

Fear effects last 5d6 rounds. Certain spell effects (such as *modify memory* or *remove fear*) can remove all Fear effects.

Horror Saves

Most Ravenloft campaigns include scenes in which the heroes witness scenes of terrible cruelty or behold events that simply *should not be*. Horror is a broader emotion than fear, and more intimate. Horror often permanently colors a character's view of the world, be it through the shock of realizing that such merciless events are possible or the paralyzing dismay of discovering some monstrous trait within oneself. Horror is the murderer of innocence.

Possible examples of scenes that might require a Horror save include seeing someone torn limb from limb, watching a friend transform into a hideous monster, or learning that you slew an innocent bystander while possessed by an evil spirit.

Determining the Horror Save DC

Horror saves are typically prompted by unusual, unique situations rather than by creatures,

so unlike Fear saves there's no quick formula to determine the DC. Instead, the DM should use her best judgment to apply a DC to the scene. As a rule, the more gruesome, abnormal and/or insane the scene, the higher the DC should be. A few examples follow.

Table 3-2: Horror Save Triggers

DC	Horrific Scene
5	Signs of violence (a drying pool of blood, a splintered door, etc.).
8	A decaying body.
10	A scene of pain or suffering (a beggar ravaged by disease; a doctor sewing wounds shut).
12	A freshly slain corpse.
15	A scene of terrible agony (torture, involuntary transformation).
20	A scene of evil, cruelty, and madness (finding dismembered bodies that have been turned into marionettes).
25	Malign paradigm shift (see below).

A "malign paradigm shift" is a situation in which a character discovers that an important element of the surroundings is not only drastically "wrong," it has been so all along, unbeknownst to the character. Examples include PCs realizing that they are the only people in a crowded inn who *aren't* evil shapeshifters, or discovering that the carriers of a plague epidemic are actually all the victims of rampant vampiric feeding — and are still under the vampires' control.

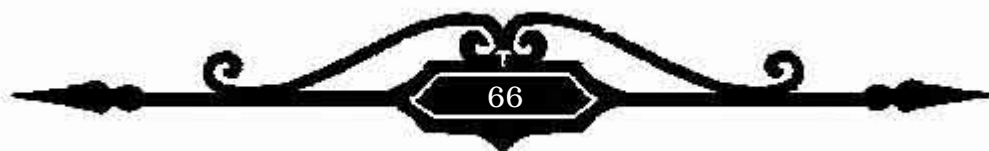




Table 3-3: Horror Save Modifiers

Modifier	Condition
+4	A loved one is clearly endangered by the threat.
+4	The victim of the threat is a despised foe.
+2	A friend or ally is clearly endangered by the threat.
+2	The victim of the threat is a foe.
+1	An Innocent is clearly endangered by the threat.
-1	An Innocent is participating in the scene (but not threatened).
-2	A friend or ally is participating in the scene (but not threatened).
-4	A loved one is participating in the scene (but not threatened).
-4	Character is inadvertently responsible for the scene.
-1	Character is of good alignment.
+1	Character is of evil alignment.
-1	Character is in close quarters (no place to run).
+1	Character is in an open area (room to run away).
+2	Character has been warned about what she's about to witness.
+1	Character has overcome or endured a similar event in the past.
-2	Character has failed a Horror save prompted by a similar scene within the past 24 hours.
-1	Character has failed a Horror save prompted by a similar scene in the past (but not within the past 24 hours).
-1	Character is alone.
-1	Character has lost more than half of his or her maximum hit points.

Circumstance modifiers often factor into Horror saves. All modifiers apply to the check and stack with each other.

The DM will have to make judgment calls when applying some of these modifiers. For example, if a villager suddenly grabs a hero's betrothed and starts to transform into a werewolf, the DM should apply a +4 bonus to the hero's roll (loved one threatened). On the other hand, if the hero's *betrothed* suddenly starts to transform into a werewolf, the DM may apply a -4 penalty (loved one involved) instead.

Characters typically do not need to make Horror saves when witnessing the aftereffects of their own intentional actions. As an example, if PCs defeat a band of goblins in battle, they do not need to make Horror saves when examining the slain bodies. The same is true of monsters for *their* victims.

Failure Results

If a character fails a Horror save, the player should roll 1d4 and compare it to the effect category to select a specific symptom of Horror. If a character fails a Horror save by 16+ points, he suffers a major Horror effect and must make an immediate Madness save (at DC = Horror save DC -5).

Player Tips: You can speed up Horror saves by rolling the d20 and the d4 at the same time — if you succeed at the Horror save, you can just ignore the d4 roll. Alternatively, if you and the DM both agree that a Horror effect in the category you rolled is particularly suited to the scene, you can ignore the d4 roll and simply choose that effect.

DM Tip: When a character fails a Horror save, make a note of the cause of the failed check, the failed save's DC, and the date in your campaign's calendar (a sample note might read: "Rotting body,





Chapter Three

Oct. 31, DC 8."). Horror saves have long-term results, and this information will come in handy later for recovery checks.

Minor Horror Effects

1d4	Effect
1	Aversion
2	Fearstruck
3	Frozen
4	Nausea

Moderate Horror Effects

1d4	Effect
1	Nightmares
2	Obsession
3	Rage
4	Revulsion

Major Horror Effects

1d4	Effect
1	Fascination
2	Haunted
3	Mental Shock
4	System Shock

Aversion: The character is frightened. Although the Fear effect has a duration of only 5d6 rounds, for as long as the character suffers from this Horror effect he is automatically shaken whenever he comes within 50 feet of the location where he failed this Horror save or any identical places.

Fearstruck: The character is panicked. This Fear effect lasts 5d6 rounds, but the character suffers no further effects.

Frozen: The character is momentarily overwhelmed by the scene before him and can take no action for three rounds. He is considered flatfooted for the duration.

Nausea: The sight causes the character to become physically ill. He suffers an effective decrease of 1d4+1 points of Constitution. For an equal number of rounds, he cannot cast spells and can take only partial actions as he struggles to retain his last meal. The character regains these lost Constitution points at the rate of 1 per hour.

Nightmares: For the moment, the character is merely shaken. This Fear effect lasts 5d6 rounds. However, the next time the character tries to go to sleep, the horrific events of this scene will play themselves out again in his mind, causing the character to wake with a scream after only 5d6 minutes. The nightmares return every time he tries to sleep, preventing rest. For as long as this Horror effect lasts, the character cannot regain arcane

spells, and each full day without rest incurs a cumulative -1 morale penalty to all attack rolls, saves, and checks, to a -4 maximum penalty.

Lack of sleep also erodes the character's health. Without rest, he cannot regain hit points through natural healing.

Sleep can grant dreamless rest, allowing the character to regain spells and negate accumulated penalties. If the character does not receive a *sleep* spell every night, however, the nightmares begin again.

Elves neither truly sleep nor dream and thus are immune to this effect; players of elven characters should reroll the d4 or choose another moderate effect instead.

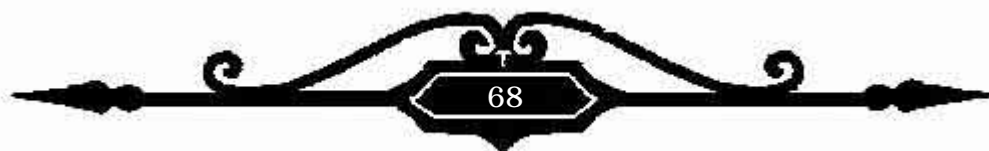
Obsession: The character is unable to shake this horrific memory. He continually replays the events in his mind, mumbles about them under his breath, and tries to bring all conversations back to this terrible topic.

His obsessed mind becomes clouded, and he seldom sleeps. With each day of restless obsession, he suffers a cumulative -1 morale penalty to initiative and Listen, Search, and Spot checks, to a maximum penalty of -4.

The character ignores his health while obsessed. He cannot regain hit points through natural healing, and each full week without rest also inflicts 1 point of effective Constitution decrease. Once the character recovers from Obsession, lost Constitution points return at the rate of 1 per day. (See "Recovering from Failure," below.)

Rage: The character's mind is overwhelmed by a primitive, mindless fury directed toward the source of horror. He must drop anything in his hands that is not a weapon, then rush forward to attack the object of his hatred in melee. This blind fury acts as a barbarian's rage ability, with the following exceptions: unlike a barbarian, the character is not in control of his actions. He cannot retreat from battle and will not stop attacking the subject of his rage even if it is destroyed. He must also move toward the subject using the most direct route, even if this means passing through threatened areas. If anyone — even an ally — tries to block his path and he cannot move around, he must fight his way through the obstacle.

The rage lasts a number of rounds equal to 3 + the character's (heightened) Constitution modifier. When the rage ends, the character regains control of his actions, but he is fatigued (as detailed under the Barbarian in the *Player's Handbook*).





Revulsion: Works as Aversion, except that the character is shaken if exposed to anything that merely *reminds* him of the horror scene. A character horrified by a vampire attack may suffer repulsion upon seeing a large swarm of bats or hearing the conversational mention of a vampire, for example.

Fascination: The character develops a morbid fascination with the scene. This obsession becomes so overpowering that it warps the character's personality. In the fascinated character's mind, the source of the horror effect becomes more and more powerful. The fascinated character may eventually believe that the source is omnipotent; he may even revere it. As an example, a character who becomes fascinated after witnessing a vampire draining the blood from a victim may seek out that vampire and offer his servitude. As the fascinated character warps himself into a willing slave of his own horror, he suffers a cumulative, effective drain of 1 point each from Wisdom and Charisma each week. If either score drops below 3, the character becomes a lost one (see "Additional Failures" under "Madness Saves").

Once the character recovers from Fascination, lost Wisdom and Charisma points return at the rate of 1 each per day.

Haunted: Witnessing the horrific scene shatters the character's ability to see any good in the world. He suffers the Obsession effect and also suffers 1d6+1 points of effective Charisma decrease as his spirit becomes hardened and withdrawn. Once the character recovers from the Haunted effect, lost Constitution and Charisma points return at the rate of 1 each per day.

Mental Shock: The character's mind simply shuts down, unable to comprehend what it is witnessing. While suffering from mental shock, the character can take no actions and is considered flatfooted. He will walk if dragged along but cannot run.

Mental shock lasts three rounds. At the end of that duration, the character must make another Horror save at the same DC to escape the effects. If he fails, the effects persist, but he can retry the saving throw once every three rounds until he succeeds. If the horrific scene is no longer present, the character gains a cumulative +1 morale bonus to each retry until he succeeds.

System Shock: The shock proves to be too much for the character's heart; he must make an immediate Fortitude save against the same DC or suffer 3d6 points of temporary Constitution damage.



Chapter Three

Additional Failures

Some Horror effects (such as Rage or Mental Shock) have outburst durations that can be measured in rounds, but all Horror effects actually linger for days. (See "Recovering from Horror" for long-term durations.)

A character can carry only a single Horror effect at a time. If a subsequent failed Horror save indicates a result of equal or lesser severity, use another outburst of the existing effect. If a failed Horror save indicates a result of greater severity, remove the existing effect and default to the greater one instead. Horror effects do not stack.

Examples: Radford fails a Horror save, resulting in Rage (a moderate effect with a duration of two weeks). During these two weeks, any additional failed Horror saves indicating a minor or moderate effect automatically default to another bout of Rage. If Radford's player fails a Horror save indicating a major result, then determine it normally. In this case, a d4 roll comes up with Haunted. The Rage effect is then removed, and Haunted becomes the new default.

Horror effect durations superimpose; the duration is measured from the time of the latest failed Horror save.

Recovering from Horror

Minor Horror effects last one week. Moderate effects last two weeks. Major effects last thirty days. At the end of this duration, the character rolls a recovery check (a Horror save). Use the DC of the original Horror save with a -2 morale bonus, since time and distance heal all wounds. If the character succeeds at this check, the Horror effect is removed. If she fails, the Horror effect persists for another duration period. A character can retry failed Horror recovery checks each time she reaches the end of a duration period. The -2 DC modifier is cumulative with each attempt.

Example: George makes a Horror save (DC 18), with his result a 14: a failure. Since George failed by four points (18 - 14 = 4), this results in a minor effect. After one week, he can make a recovery check at DC 16 (DC 18 - 2) to shake off the effects. If George fails this save, he can try again in another week at DC 14 (DC 18 - 4), and so on, until he succeeds.

Numerous spells and magical effects (such as *modify memory* or *remove fear*) can also remove all Horror effects.

Madness Saves

Failed Madness saves can cripple a character; fortunately, they're also the least common type of effect. Make a Madness save in the following three situations:

- The character makes mental contact (using spells, special abilities, and so on) with any darklord, aberration, elemental, ooze, outsider, plant, or insane mind (any creature suffering from a Madness effect). Druids and clerics with the Plant domain are exempt from making Madness saves when contacting plants.

- The character is the victim of "gaslighting," a purposeful attempt by another party to drive her insane.

- The character suffers a total catastrophe. This can include witnessing the brutal destruction of the rest of the party, leaving the character to face the threat alone; a paladin being stripped of her powers for her misdeeds; suffering an involuntary alignment change; or being subjected to a horrific physical transformation (such as being turned into a broken one).

Determining the Madness Save DC

A Madness save's DC is determined on a case-by-case basis.

Mental Contact: If a Madness save is prompted by contact with an alien or insane mind, the DC is 10 + 1/2 the contacted creature's HD + contacted creature's Wisdom modifier.

Gaslighting: Gaslighting comes in two varieties. If an opponent tries to drive a character mad with a spell or other magical effect (such as *bestow curse* or *wish*), then default to the saving throw indicated by that spell (typically a Will save). That saving throw stands in for the Madness save.

One character can also gaslight another through nonmagical means. To do this, the perpetrator must gain the victim's trust and remain in close proximity to the victim for thirty days, using that time to slowly convince the victim that her sanity is slipping away.

At the end of the thirty days, the perpetrator must make an opposed Bluff check against the victim's Sense Motive check. If the victim fails this check, she has been driven mad; as with other Madness saves, the degree of failure determines the result (subtract the victim's Sense Motive result from the perpetrator's Bluff result).





The perpetrator can select a specific Madness effect from the selected category if he wishes.

If the victim's Sense Motive check defeats the perpetrator's Bluff check, she is unaffected. If she succeeds by 10 or more points, she immediately becomes aware of the perpetrator's failed gaslighting attempt. If the perpetrator is not detected, he can try again (with each attempt taking another thirty days).

Total Catastrophe: Madness saves prompted by personal catastrophes can be considered a particularly shattering form of Horror save. The DM should use the recommended DCs and modifiers listed under Horror saves, though this will often require the DM to make a judgment call.

Failure Results

Failed Madness saves can quickly hinder or cripple a character. As with Horror saves, the player should roll 1d4 and compare it to the failure category to select an effect. In addition to the listed Madness effects below, all failed Madness checks cause effective ability decreases to Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma. (Roll separately for each ability score.)

A character with a minor Madness effect suffers a temporary decrease of 1d6 points per ability. The character regains 1 point in each ability score per hour.

A character with a moderate Madness effect still suffers an effective decrease of 1d6 points per ability, but these points cannot be regained without effort. See "Recovering from Madness" below.

A character with a major Madness effect suffers an effective decrease of 1d10 points per ability. As with moderate effects, these points cannot be regained without effort.

If a character fails a Madness save by 16+ points, her mind is shattered. Unable to function, she immediately drops to -1 hit points and starts to die. If she survives this shock to the system, she suffers a major Madness effect and an effective ability decrease of 1d12 points per ability.

Minor Madness Effects

1d4	Effect
1	Blackout
2	Denial
3	Horrified
4	Unhinged

Moderate Madness Effects

1d4	Effect
1	Delusions
2	Depression
3	Hallucinations
4	Paranoia

Major Madness Effects

1d4	Effect
1	Amnesia
2	Multiple Personalities
3	Schizophrenia
4	Suicidal Thoughts

All Madness effects described below are in addition to the effective ability decreases detailed above. As a note, minor Madness effects tend to be forgiving and pass within a few hours. Moderate effects can be troubling, but PCs can usually continue to function. Characters suffering from major Madness effects often pose a danger to themselves and others and require close supervision.

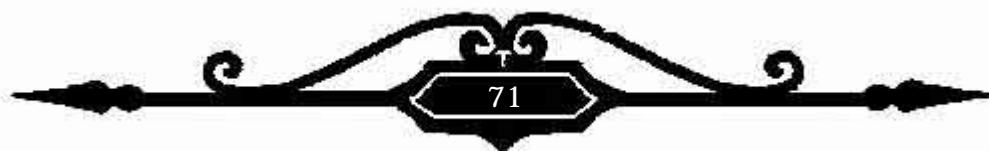
Blackout: The character is merely shaken at first. However, she will not recall anything in the time period between (and including) the scene that prompted the Madness save and when she regains the last of her decreased ability scores.

If the character is alone, the DM may simply cut to when she "comes to," wandering and alone, with no memory of how she came to be in her current location. Some spells, such as *modify memory*, can restore lost memories.

Denial: The character's mind refuses to accept the existence of the threat that prompted the Madness save. Until she regains all decreased ability scores, she acts as if this threat simply does not exist. Denial provides the character with an effective +4 insight bonus to any Will saves against that threat's attacks but otherwise offers no protection. When all ability scores are regained, the character once again acknowledges the existence of the threat (but loses the insight bonus).

Horrified: The character suffers a moderate Horror effect (determined randomly). This Horror effect's duration lasts only until the character regains all decreased ability scores, rather than the usual two weeks.

Unhinged: The portion of the character's mind that *should* have gone mad simply shuts down instead. This leaves the character able to function but affects her personality. She receives an effective +2 morale bonus to all Fear and Horror saves, but her alignment temporarily changes (roll 1d8 to





randomly select a new alignment, omitting the character's original alignment from the options). A Sense Motive check (DC 20) can reveal that the Unhinged character is "not quite herself," assuming it isn't obvious. The character regains her normal alignment (but loses the morale bonus) when all decreased ability scores are restored.

An alignment change due to this Madness effect does not cause an additional Madness check.

Delusions: The character believes something about herself that is simply not true. The nature of this delusion is usually tied into the event that provoked the Madness save. Examples might include a character who believes she has endless wealth (paying for services with pebbles she insists are rubies), believes she transforms into a wolf under the light of the full moon (and insists she must be caged), or believes that she is a specific NPC ("I am Count Strahd! Bow before me!"). The character can perform actions only if she can rationalize them within the context of her delusion. For example, a character who believes she is actually a vampire would not be willing to expose herself to sunlight.

If a character ever performs an action that should be "impossible" within the context of her delusion (in other words, if the player cannot immediately provide a rationalization for the action), the character must make an immediate Horror check at DC 15.

Depression: The character is overcome by a deep melancholy, sapping away her will to live and her interest in the world around her. Such a character just wants to be left alone; she will not suggest ideas, give commands, or otherwise direct other characters. In fact, in any given situation, the character must make a Will save at the same DC as the failed Madness save to take any action whatsoever. If the character fails this Will save, she will do nothing at all, even in dangerous situations. In a combat situation, she cannot take any actions and is considered flatfooted.

Even if the character is motivated to act, she does so listlessly and reluctantly. She can follow the instructions of allies, but she suffers an effective -4 morale penalty to all attack rolls, loses any Dexterity bonus to AC and Reflex saves, and cannot take attacks of opportunity. On the other hand, the character's utter lack of interest in her surroundings actually provides her with an effective +4 insight bonus to all subsequent Fear, Horror, and Madness saves.

Hallucinations: The character perceives something in the world that simply does not exist. In a sense, Hallucinations can be considered the "external" companion to the "internal" Delusions effect. As with Delusions, the nature of the hallucination is usually related to the event that prompted the failed Madness check.

Examples: A character might believe that she can see ghosts, that biting insects have infested her armor, or that illithids visit her at night. She might even occasionally encounter an NPC who actually exists only in her mind.

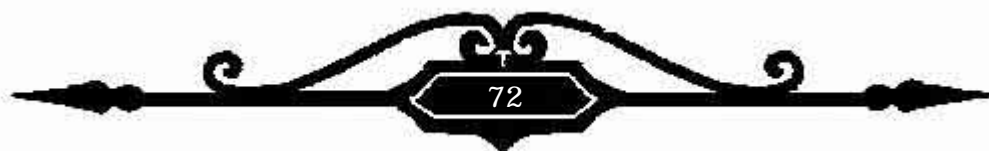
In a sense, a hallucination can be thought of as a phantasm spell on the level of a *major image*, but one where the insane character is both caster and subject. As with illusions, the DM should present hallucinatory episodes as real events when they first manifest. Menacing hallucinations may provoke Fear or Horror saves (DC depends on the specific scene; see the respective sections on determining DC). Hallucinations can even attack the character, though they inflict only subdual damage, as the character merely *believes* she is being harmed.

Characters have little mental defense against their own inner demons. Thus, a hallucinating character suffers a -2 morale penalty to all Fear and Horror saves provoked by her own visions.

If a character somehow becomes aware that her hallucinations are just that, she must still concentrate to convince herself that the visions are not real. This works just like disbelieving illusions; to dispel a hallucination, the character must make a Will save at DC (13 + character's Wisdom modifier). Unlike with illusions, however, the reassurances of allies cannot grant a hallucinating character any bonus to her Will save. An attempt to disbelieve a hallucination is a standard action and can be retried each round.

If a character successfully disbelieves a hallucination, the episode still continues for another 1d4 rounds. That hallucination can no longer provoke Fear or Horror saves, however, nor can it inflict subdual damage.

DM Tips: One way to present hallucinations is to secretly inform the other players of the nature of the character's madness. Later, once those players know that the episode the DM described won't be real, the DM can present the episode to the group as a real event, and only the hallucinating character will react as if the threat is real — adding to the insane character's confusion.





The DM can then enhance this "rubber reality" scenario by letting the hallucinating character see a *real* threat that mimics a recurring vision. As an example, a character who hallucinates about monstrous wolves might be on watch, alone, when she spots a real pack of dire wolves skulking around the campsite. The other characters would then have to guess whether she was merely "crying wolf again."

Paranoia: The character believes that she exists at the center of a conspiracy dedicated to her destruction. No amount of rational argument can convince her otherwise. Although the character's madness does not extend to actual hallucinations, the DM should present all NPCs and conversations with other characters in a menacing light. The DM might drop subtle visual clues that other characters are inhuman, or thread vague, easily misinterpreted "threats" into NPC dialogue.

As with hallucinations, the DM may want to give the other players secret signals that the scene is not being presented quite as it actually exists, or the DM may want to focus on the paranoid character's interaction with NPCs only when separated from other PCs. This avoids the extra work of explaining what's *really* happening to the other players.

The paranoid character must succeed at a Will save with a DC equal to that of the failed Madness save to place any trust in other characters. If the character fails the Will save, she must refuse all offers of help as being "obvious traps."

If a paranoid character ever does come upon actual evidence that she has been betrayed or that others are conspiring against her, she must make an immediate Horror save (at DC 12 + character's Wisdom modifier).

Amnesia: A much more disabling form of the Blackout effect, Amnesia is the result of an affected mind's desperate attempt to shield itself from the memory that provoked the failed Madness save. Throwing the baby out with the bathwater, the amnesiac character immediately blocks out all memory of the maddening event — along with many of the months or years that came before it.

If a failed Madness save results in an Amnesia effect, the DM should roll d%. Multiply this percentage times the character's total levels (rounding down). The character then receives that many negative levels.

Although an amnesiac character still has access to all of her skills, she loses all memory of

events since gaining those levels. A character who acquires a number of negative levels equal to her character level regresses to childhood.

Example: A 15th-level fighter fails a Madness check, resulting in Amnesia. The DM rolls d%, with a result of 48. The fighter then acquires seven ($15 \times 48\% = 7.2$, rounded down) negative levels. This character would not remember any events he has witnessed or any people he has met since becoming an 8th-level fighter.

Restoration spells cannot remove these negative levels; they are caused by memory loss, not negative energy.

Multiple Personalities: The character's psyche makes a desperate attempt to contain the mental trauma it has suffered by splintering into separate identities. The character retains a core personality, 10d10 fragments, and 2d10 alter egos.

The core personality is the character's original persona. It has access to all of the character's memories, skills, and abilities.

Fragments are partial personas, easily described in a single phrase, such as "coin collector," "sleepy child," or "talented dancer." The player can assign a single skill or ability to each fragment. Fragments can use their one talent if called upon, but they always ignore anything that has no relation to their single subject.

Alter egos are fully formed personalities. Each alter ego considers itself a distinct individual, but alters often believe that their race, class, or even gender differs from the core personality. As with Delusional characters, these alter egos cannot be convinced that they are not as real as the core personality. The player should flesh out the persona of each alter ego:

- Roll 1d6 to determine each alter ego's approximate age. **1:** Child. **2:** Adolescent. **3:** Adult. **4:** Middle aged. **5:** Old. **6:** Venerable.

- Roll 1d6 to determine each alter ego's supposed sex and race. **1:** Same sex, same race. **2:** Male, same race. **3:** Female, same race. **4:** Male, different race. **5:** Female, different race. **6:** Same sex, different race. Most alter egos who believe themselves a different race will still consider themselves humanoids, but some alter egos may believe they are giants, fey, or even magical beasts.

- Roll d% on *Table 5-5* in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* to select a trait as the base of the alter ego's personality.





Alter egos have access to all of the core personality's skills and abilities, but they will not use them if doing so is "out of character." For example, a wizard's alter ego that believes itself to be an ogre distrustful of magic would not cast spells.

The player should keep a numbered list of her hero's fragments and alters for ease of reference.

Whenever a character suffering from Multiple Personalities has to make a Will save, she must also make an immediate additional Will save equal to the failed Madness save's DC or randomly switch personalities (as a free action). The character should also make a Will save (DC 15 + character's Wisdom modifier) each time she rests. If the character succeeds at the Will save, she wakes up as the core personality. If she fails, she switches to a random persona.

The core personality has no conscious memory of time spent in other personalities, but the character does not acquire negative levels as with Amnesia. Alter egos typically *are* aware of each other and can "leave messages" for each other if they wish. It is not uncommon for alter egos to dislike each other or the core personality.

Schizophrenia: The character's personality suffers a serious collapse. As the character's sense of self erodes, she can experience drastic and unpredictable personality shifts. Once every week, and whenever the character makes a Will save of any kind, she must succeed at a Will save (DC 15 + character's Wisdom modifier) or have her alignment immediately and randomly change. The player should roll 2d4 of different colors: one die represents ethical alignment (1: Lawful. 2: Neutral. 3: Chaotic. 4: Original alignment); the other represents moral alignment (1: Good. 2: Neutral. 3: Evil. 4: Original alignment). A character might be a saint one moment, a monster the next.

An alignment change due to this Madness effect does not cause an additional Madness check.

Suicidal Thoughts: This is a more serious form of the Depression effect. In addition to all of the effects detailed under Depression, the character's will to live hangs by a thread. If the character fails any subsequent Fear, Horror, or Madness saves, she must soon (within an hour) make an attempt to take her own life. The character makes the suicide attempt via the most efficient means at her disposal: leaping off a high balcony, drinking poisonous chemicals, hurling herself into a river, and so on.

A character can also use a piercing or slashing melee weapon to inflict a *coup de grace* against herself.

This is also possible with some ranged weapons, such as crossbows and firearms.

Additional Failures

If a character fails another Madness save while already suffering a Madness effect, do not roll 1d4 to determine a new effect. The character's mind, already insane, merely sinks deeper into its existing dementia. Ability score decreases are cumulative with multiple failed Madness saves, however.

If any of the character's mental ability scores ever drop below 3, she becomes what is commonly known in Ravenloft as a lost one — a walking catatonic whose mind was shattered by memories too horrible to bear. The character becomes an NPC until she has at least a 3 in all mental ability scores; until then, the character eats and drinks if fed, walks if led, and may occasionally mumble some gibberish, but otherwise she can take no meaningful actions.

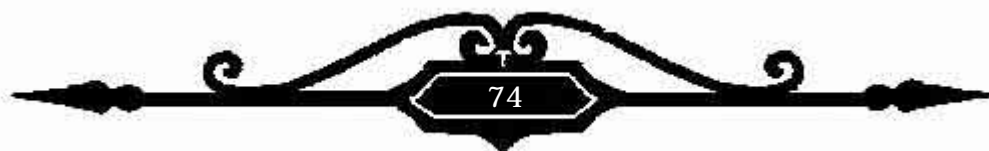
The DM can shape a lost one's personality by looking at which ability score has dropped to 1 or 2. A lost one with minimal Intelligence may seem like a cheery and friendly fellow, but he might have absolutely no short-term memory. He is unable to remember anything about anyone from one minute to the next. A lost one with minimal Wisdom might have a vibrant memory but would be completely stymied by any kind of external task, such as opening a door latch or changing his clothes. A lost one with minimal Charisma might wander in a daze, mumbling strange rhymes, and is seemingly unable to register the existence of other creatures.

If any ability score drops to 0, the character slips into complete catatonia (see "Ability Score Loss" in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). If all three ability scores are raised above 0 again, the character wakes up as a lost one.

Madness and Alignment

Some Madness effects can cause a character's alignment to temporarily change. This is an involuntary alignment shift but does not require an additional Madness save. Some classes require specific alignments, like the lawful good paladin. In these cases, the insane character should be considered an effective "ex" member of that class and may or may not lose class abilities. (For example, an ex-barbarian loses the ability to rage, whereas an ex-monk still retains all abilities.)

This loss of class abilities is only temporary; because the alignment change is involuntary, the character is not considered to have actually abandoned the class.





When the Madness effect causing the alignment change is removed, the character's original alignment is restored and she can continue to gain levels in that class as normal. Divine spellcasters such as the cleric, druid, or paladin may be required to atone first, however.

Madness and Campaign Style

To gain their full effect, Madness effects depend heavily on the players' willingness to portray various forms of mental damage. This isn't a problem in a Ravenloft campaign using a great deal of personality and character development. However, if you prefer simply to use Ravenloft as a Gothic backdrop for vampire bashing, many Madness effects run the risk of impairing the fun of the game. If Madness effects don't suit your style of play, it's best to simply remove them from the game. In this case, failed Madness saves only cause the effective ability decreases described above.

The character can attempt a new recovery check once per restful month against the original DC until Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma return to normal. However, particularly if the character's Wisdom score was drastically lowered by the Madness save, the DC may be so high that the character cannot succeed. In these cases, the character needs to turn to outside help.

Magic: If available, magic is the quickest and most efficient method of recovery. *Restoration* can restore drained ability scores but requires three castings to remove a Madness effect (one casting to restore each ability score), while the spells *greater restoration* and *heal* can each cure madness at a stroke. Note that of these spells, only *heal* can restore memories lost to a Blackout or Amnesia. *Modify memory* can also restore lost memories, but it may require multiple castings to recover all lost memories.

Hypnosis: If the character does not have access to magic, access to a character with the Hypnosis skill is the next best option. The *hypnotism* spell can be used in the same way; use this system, but the spell's increased efficiency grants the subject a +2 bonus to her recovery check.

Hypnosis is a new technique, first developed by (and still largely limited to) the alienists, or doctors, working in Ravenloft's handful of asylums and sanitariums. Were magic more plentiful in Ravenloft, this skill would be even less known — it is primarily a nonmagical substitute for the *hypnotism* spell.

When a character is curing madness, the DC of a Hypnosis skill check is equal to the DC of the subject's failed Madness save. The hypnotist may benefit from the modifiers listed on Table 3-4. If the hypnotist has at least 5 ranks in Heal, he gains a +2 synergy bonus to the skill check.

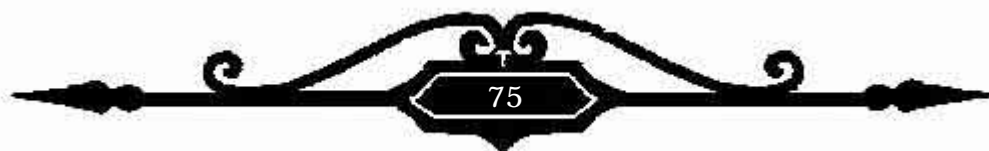
Recovering from Madness

The road from madness to sanity is often long and difficult. Madness effects are removed when all ability points lost to the failed Madness save are regained. In the case of minor Madness effects, this period is mercifully short: never longer than 6 hours. Moderate and major effects require much more effort to shake off. Several methods are available to characters in need of recovery:

Peace and Quiet: If the character rests for thirty days without failing any subsequent Will saves, she can make a recovery check (a Madness save) against the same DC. If this check succeeds, she regains 1 point in one of her decreased ability scores. While the player can choose which ability score to place the point in, the fastest road to recovery lies in restoring Wisdom to normal first.

Table 3-4: Hypnosis Therapy Modifiers

Modifier	Condition
+2	The hypnotist can sense the subject's emotions through magical means (including <i>hypnotism</i>).
+1	The therapy takes places in a setting where the subject feels safe and comfortable.
+1	The hypnotist has the same alignment as the subject (disregarding Madness-induced alignment change).
+1	The hypnotist comes from a similar background as the subject (including homeland, social class, and character class).





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The hypnotist can retry Hypnosis checks once per week (per subject) until the subject recovers. This means that the aid of a successful hypnotist can give the insane character four chances to make recovery checks each month, rather than just one. A character cannot use Hypnosis on himself.

A successful Hypnosis check garners two results. First, the subject can attempt an immediate recovery check to regain a single ability point, as detailed under Peace and Quiet, above. Second, each successful use of Hypnosis reduces the DC of the recovery check by 1 point.

Example: A villager has failed a Madness save at DC 24. Sadly, the villager's total bonus to his Will save is only +2; it was +3, but he lost 2 points of Wisdom when he failed the original Madness save. Even if he rolls a 20 on his recovery check, the best he can do is a 22; without help, he'll never recover from his madness.

Fortunately, the skilled hypnotist Dr. Heinfroth takes the villager under his wing. In their first treatment session, the doctor makes a Hypnosis check against DC 24. With his total bonuses, he rolls a result of 26; a success. The villager's future recovery checks will now be only DC 23. The villager still can't make that, but another successful hypnosis session the next week would reduce the DC to 22, and so on — and the villager's chances for recovery would start to grow.

Sanitariums: A few sanitariums are scattered across Ravenloft. While their purpose is to lift the affliction of derangement, more often they simply serve as prisons for the insane. Recovery in a sanitarium works just like hypnosis (in fact, that's the typical method of recovery used), but the sad truth is that a patient in a sanitarium is unlikely to receive the careful attention she requires. Each sanitarium offers a flat 1d8-5 (between -4 and +3) morale modifier to all recovery checks made in its care. As the modifier indicates, many patients in Ravenloft's sanitariums would be better off locked in their nephews' attics.

Patients in a sanitarium can make one recovery check per month, using the modifier above. Each success restores 1 point in one decreased ability score (player's choice) and reduces the DC of future recovery checks by 1 point. This bonus is cumulative.

Curses



towards thee I roll, thou all-destroying but unconquering whale; to the last I grapple with thee; from hell's heart I stab at thee; for hate's sake I spit my last breath at thee."

- Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*

The thirst for vengeance carries its own terrible power. When an injustice is committed, the Dark Powers hear the cries of the wronged. If their need for justice is great enough — and if their hatred burns hotly enough — the Dark Powers may respond. Curses carry the cruel and poetic justice of Ravenloft, but they are also evil, and begotten of evil.

This section provides guidelines for laying curses and judging their severity and effects.

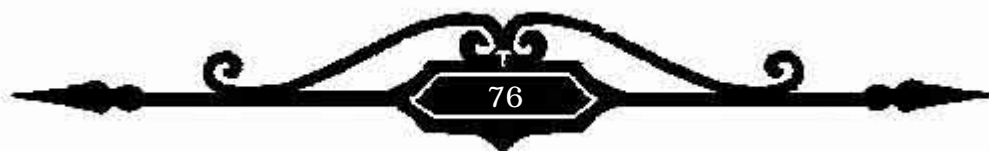
Types of Curses

Curses in Ravenloft fall into three basic groups. Adventures are most familiar with the type of curses created by spellcasters — such as a cleric casting *bestow curse*. In Ravenloft, however, any character can lay a curse; granted by the Dark Powers and fueled by the hatred of the wronged party, these are known as curses of vengeance. Lastly, there are those who willingly or unwittingly draw the forces of wrath down on themselves; these are self-induced curses.

Curses of Vengeance

Curses of vengeance are common in Gothic tales. A curse of vengeance is brought into being when a character believes herself to be wronged and, in her outrage, wishes damnation upon the offender. Even the humblest peasant can call on terrifyingly powerful forces. Examples might include the following:

- The lord of an estate sets his hounds on a young Vistani boy caught poaching. The slain boy's mother promises that the lord will also lose his firstborn. When the man later sires a child, it is born a murderous spirit naga.
- A hedge wizard is falsely accused of murdering children and burned as a witch. Even as the flames lick at her feet, she swears to one day return and destroy the village that wronged her.





Laying a curse of vengeance requires a curse check (see "Laying the Curse," below). A curse of vengeance does not grant the target a saving throw, nor can spell resistance protect against it.

Magical Curses

Magical curses are those spellcasters create through effects like *bestow curse* or *geas*. The advantage of curses empowered by magic is that they bypass the curse check, automatically taking effect. However, since they are magical, the victim does receive a saving throw (as listed under the spell description), and spell resistance does apply.

Virtually any spell effect with lasting, deleterious effects can appear in Ravenloft's folklore as a curse. Curselike spells like *insanity*, *polymorph other*, and *unhallow* appear in many cautionary tales. However, casting these spells does not incur the curse rules used in this section (although curses of vengeance may mirror their effects).

Self-Induced Curses

In some cases, a curse's invoker and its victim are one and the same person. Driven by inner lusts or obsessions, a character summons the attention of malign forces, voluntarily drawing damnation down upon herself. The most notorious example of a self-induced curse is the tale of Strahd von Zarovich, as told in the *Book of Strahd*, Desperate to regain what he saw as a wasted youth and steal his younger brother Sergei's fiancée for himself, Strahd made a pact with death and willingly murdered Sergei to seal the bargain. Strahd was granted the youth he desired — the eternal and hollow youth of a vampire — and cursed to be forever haunted by the woman he betrayed.

In Ravenloft, these self-induced curses are enforced by the Dark Powers and are called powers checks, which are detailed in the next section. Any character who desires the dark gifts of corruption can willingly fail a powers check, proving her sincerity by performing "Act of Ultimate Darkness."

Crafting the Curse

The first and most important step of invoking any curse is the creation of the curse itself. Every curse is unique and capable of producing nearly any result. The more atmospheric the curse, the better chance it has of gaining the ear of the Dark Powers.

Wording

Let us return to the example of the falsely accused witch. It's not very gripping if her dying words are a trite, "Mark my words, I'll be back! And when I return, you'll all be sorry!" To make matters worse, the vague curse fails to explain how it will take effect. But consider if that same accused witch settled into an unnatural calm once the fire was lit, staring intensely at each face in the jeering crowd, then delivered this speech as the flames consumed her:

"You would burn me in the name of seven slain babes. The blood of your children is not on my hands — but it will *be!* Seven children from each generation shall I claim! Seven children times seven winters! And once I have claimed my due, I shall be born again — as *one of you!* As one of your own children, I shall bring ruin to you all!"

This version of the curse is much more impressive. Not only is the hatred and resolve of the character invoking the curse made clear, the curse provides specific guidelines as to how it will take effect.

A curse should also reflect the personality of the invoker and the circumstances in which the curse is laid. A curse invoked by a character wise in the ways of curses, who has time to contemplate her revenge, may use highly stylized or even poetic language. The legendary curse said to guard the tomb of Tutankhamun, "Death Shall Come on Swift Wings to Him Who Disturbs the Peace of the King," is an excellent example. The wronged Vistani mother seeking revenge against the manor lord might present her curse in the form of a rhyme:

*You, who slew my only son;
You, no better than a snake!
Here is wisdom cruelly won:
Sire so son, for your own sake.*

On the other hand, a character gurgling her last words on the end of a brigand's sword lacks the time for soliloquies. A dying character, or a crude brute, might spit out a curse that is short and sweet. A wronged caliban might hiss, "May the world repay you with all the kindness you've shown me." The offender afflicted with this curse might be cursed with a physical deformity, incurring OR modifiers, whenever she treats other people with rudeness or cruelty.





Game Mechanics

Curses should at least imply specific effects, but they should never directly mention game mechanics. Cursing a barbarian to "lose 2 points of Strength when you most need it" disrupts the setting's atmosphere and should be avoided. However, if the same curse is phrased, "May your strength fail you when you most need it," it achieves the same effect and preserves the flow of the game.

Broad Prohibitions

A curse that simply prohibits a character from using her abilities — such as a curse that robs a wizard of her ability to cast spells or permanently cripples an ability score — often results in causing frustration, not torment. A far more insidious and effective curse allows the accursed to retain her abilities but makes her suffer whenever she uses them. A better curse for the wizard would be to suffer blinding headaches that strike whenever she casts a spell, inflicting 1 point of subdual damage per spell level. Curses that warp, rather than destroy, a character's abilities have a better chance of taking effect.

Crime and Punishment

Curses should be tailored to reflect the offense that provoked them. The most effective curses remind the offender of her transgressions every time they manifest. Our examples of the accused witch and the aggrieved Vistana both provide curses that fit the crime, as does the tale of Strahd von Zarovich.

Further examples of tailored curses could include a brutal thug who commits murder in a fit of rage and is then cursed to transform into a werebeast whenever the rage returns; an opera diva who poisons a rival singer, but then discovers that her singing voice has become shrilly inhuman; or a cowardly soldier who abandons his allies before a battle, and is then cursed to flee forever, suffering nightmares if he sleeps in the same place twice.

Constant vs. Triggered Effects

Curses generally manifest either constant or triggered effects. A constant effect continually plagues the character, with no respite. These effects can include such drastic changes as being polymorphed into another type of creature, permanent blindness, or the curse of undeath. Usually, however, they are much more mild; a severe curse

with constant effects may be considered to have "broad prohibitions" and thus has less chance of taking effect.

A triggered effect manifests only under certain conditions, or when the accursed character performs specific actions. An afflicted lycanthrope, forced to transform into a ravenous beast in the light of the full moon, is a classic example of a triggered curse. Further examples might include a rogue who stutters whenever she lies, or a young heir whose alignment will gradually shift to evil if she ever returns to her ancestral estate. The example of the aggrieved Vistana offers another triggered curse: if the manor lord never fathers a son, the curse will never manifest. If the afflicted character can avoid the conditions that trigger her curse, she can still lead a normal existence.

Escape Clauses

Every curse should contain an "escape clause" — a means by which the accursed character can free herself from the effects of the curse. In Ravenloft, magic cannot permanently dispel curses, so the inclusion of an escape clause is vital. In the case of lethal curses like undeath, removing the curse may result in the death of the accursed, but even this is a form of release. Most of the time, though, a curse should offer a more substantial chance of escape.

Escape clauses take one of two forms, *avoidance* or *redemption*. Avoidance clauses allow the accursed to stop the curse from manifesting by avoiding the conditions that trigger it. A fighter cursed to lose her strength whenever she wields a sword might switch to another weapon, for example. All curses with triggered effects include an avoidance clause by their very nature.

Redemption clauses offer a way for the accursed to permanently break the curse. A character might be cursed to never see her home again until she has come to the aid of seven Vistani; when she completes those seven good deeds, the curse is lifted. Consider the curse of the accused witch one more time: her curse predicts that seven of the villagers' children will die each winter for seven years, after which the invoker will return to destroy the village. If the villagers — or the heroes they call on for help — can disrupt the pattern of deaths, the curse may be broken. If forty-nine children have not died within seven years, the wrathful spirit will move on to its final rest.





Severity

Once the DM approves or creates the curse, she must judge how powerfully the curse would affect the victim's life. The DM should apply a severity level to each curse, using the guidelines below. Curse severity is divided into five ranks: embarrassing, frustrating, troublesome, dangerous, and lethal. A sixth rank is reserved solely for those curses that bind darklords to their domains and is detailed under "Powers Checks."

Embarrassing Curses

These are the least powerful of curses, used to repay relatively harmless transgressions. They can inflict only minor physical or behavioral changes. The accursed character suffers a +1 modifier to her Outcast Rating whenever the effects of her curse are apparent, but curses of this severity cannot manifest any more serious game effects. A well-known example of an embarrassing curse is the Vistani pendant for staining thieves' hands black.

Examples

- Eyes turn a strange color or glow like embers.
- Minor spasms — facial tic or twitching fingers.
- Hair turns stark white or falls out.
- Open sores or skin blemishes.
- Forked tongue.
- Hands turn black or grow an extra finger.
- Gains a strange habit — bays at the moon, growls when angry, always shredding something.
- Voice stutters or hisses.
- Hungers for raw meat, bones, or blood.

Frustrating Curses

These curses can interfere with the accursed character's everyday life. They are usually invoked to repay relatively moderate offenses. Frustrating curses can create minor game effects, such as draining Strength. The accursed character suffers a +2 modifier to her Outcast Rating when the effects of her curse are apparent.

Examples

- -2 to an ability score.
- -1 to attack rolls or a saving throw.
- Minor Fear, Horror, or Madness effect.
- Colorblindness.
- Significant physical change: face becomes bestial, fur or scales, hunchback, short tail, grow or shrink up to 1 foot, and so on.
- Voice sounds inhuman.

- Must eat a strange substance once a day: raw meat, blood, gold, soil, and so on.

Troublesome Curses

A curse of this severity dramatically alters the accursed character's lifestyle, though it cannot place the victim in mortal danger. Such curses can create major physical changes or even alter the personality of the accursed. Troublesome curses are usually invoked only to punish major offenses, where the offender has caused serious physical harm. The accursed character suffers a +4 modifier to her Outcast Rating when the effects of her curse are apparent.

Examples

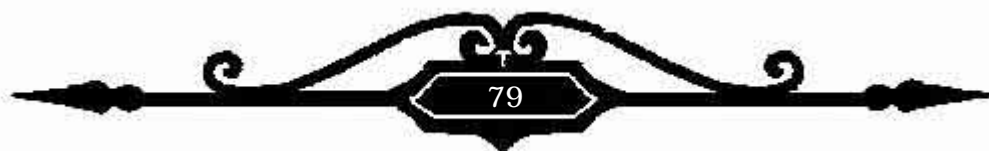
- -4 to an ability score or -2 to two ability scores.
- -2 to attack rolls or a saving throw.
- Moderate Fear, Horror, or Madness effect.
- Deafness.
- Haunted by a victim's ghost.
- Major physical change: vestigial wings, hands become spindly and clawed or resemble paws, change sex, face becomes monstrous.
- Personality change: gain an uncontrollable lust for an object the curse prevents you from obtaining, or ethical alignment change.

Dangerous Curses

These curses drastically alter the accursed character's lifestyle and can impose major physical and/or mental changes. Fortunately, dangerous curses are typically invoked only to repay the most serious of offenses, such as murder or torture. A curse of this severity can often make the accursed character appear monstrous; she suffers a +6 modifier to her Outcast Rating when the effects of her curse are apparent.

Examples

- -6 to an ability score or -2 to up to three ability scores.
- -3 to attack rolls or a saving throw.
- Blindness.
- Major Fear, Horror, or Madness effect.
- Afflicted lycanthropy.
- Can eat only a strange substance: raw flesh, blood, bones, and so on.
- Moral alignment change when presented with objects of desire.
- Polymorphed into an animal: toad, snake, hawk, and so on.
- Stalked by a monster.
- Rise as an undead creature after you die.





Chapter Three

Lethal Curses

Lethal curses are invoked only to punish the vilest of offenses and can shatter the afflicted character's way of life — or even cause her death. The invoker can lay a lethal curse only in a moment of intense emotion, usually grief or rage. The recipient of a lethal curse has often proven that she is beyond redemption. One of the most infamous examples of a lethal curse is the Vistani *mishamel*, which causes the victim to literally melt. Lethal curses can create immediate, drastic physical and mental changes. The accursed character suffers a +8 modifier to her Outcast Rating when the effects of her curse are apparent.

Examples

- -8 to an ability score, -4 to two ability scores, or -2 to four ability scores.
- -4 to attack rolls or a saving throw.
- Torturous death.
- Immediate, permanent transformation into a monster: hag, undead, construct, and so on.
- Permanent alignment change.
- Must kill once a day or suffer cumulative penalties.

Laying the Curse

Once the curse is created, the DM needs to determine whether it takes effect. All curses must be delivered in some demonstrable way — curses gain their strength from the emotion invested by the invoker. In most cases, the invoker speaks (or shrieks) the curse, loudly and clearly. However, curses are not sonic-based attacks; the target does not need to hear the curse for it to take effect, nor can *silence* spells prevent a curse from being laid. It is also possible to invoke curses through physical acts, such as inscribing words of warning on a tomb or pouring one's hatred into a cursed magic item.

Magical curses are resolved like any other spell. Curses of vengeance are resolved through a "curse check": a Charisma check modified by the situation. For the DM, the first steps of a curse check are to judge the curse's justification and the drama of the scene.

Justification

Justification is a measure of the Dark Powers' justice, weighing whether or not the target of the curse deserves to become its victim. It measures the severity of the offender's transgression against the invoker's need and desire for vengeance.

The more justified a curse, the better chance it has of taking effect.

Note that justification is measured from the invoker's point of view — whether she *believes* she has been wronged is more important than the truth. A band of heroes may well be entirely justified in storming a villain's lair and striking her down to stop some gruesome sacrifice. But if that villain saw herself as having been terribly wronged — perhaps the sacrifices are preserving the life of a loved one — then her dying curse could still be highly justified.

In game terms, justification falls into three categories:

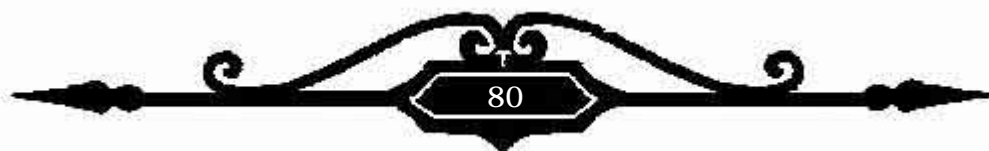
Unjustified: These curses are baseless; the target of the curse does not deserve to be punished, and the invoker knows it. A character who tries to abuse the power of curses by flinging them at every foe she encounters may soon find all of her curses falling into this category. Curses can also be considered unjustified if the invoker tries to punish a minor transgression with a curse of too high severity.

Justified: These curses are generally fair. The invoker *has* been wronged, the target *does* deserve some punishment, and the severity of the curse is a good match for the severity of the transgression. Curses that would otherwise be highly justified can slip to this category if the punishment is too severe. The accused witch is a good example: she has been terribly wronged, and the villagers do deserve her wrath. Yet her curse is too monstrous and harms the guilty parties through their innocent children.

Highly Justified: These curses are invoked to repay terrible transgressions. The invoker must have suffered a terrible wrong, and the target must truly deserve to be punished for the crime. For a curse to be highly justified, the offender usually needs to have performed an act worthy of a powers check. The grieving Vistani is an example of a highly justified curse — the manor lord has killed the invoker's son, and he is unlikely to receive justice through any other means.

Drama

Curses that enhance the drama of the scene are more powerful than those that add nothing to the game's atmosphere. Calmly tossing off a curse as though making a quip about the weather carries very low drama.





Meanwhile, a curse delivered in a hysterical display of grief, with the invoker tearing at her hair and weeping uncontrollably, would probably be considered high drama, as would any curse delivered so powerfully that the players all pause from the game for a moment to soak it in.

Of special note are curses delivered as the invoker's dying words. If the invoker uses her final breath to spit her outrage and hatred at the target of the curse, the curse will have a better chance of taking effect. The invoker always dies immediately after delivering such a curse, however, even if she might otherwise have been saved. Some sages believe that the invoker somehow channels her life force into the curse itself, adding to its strength.

It is known that people who die with a curse on their lips cannot be raised until their dying curse has run its course.

Making the Curse Check

When one NPC curses another, the DM should usually decide whether the curse takes effect based on one simple question: does it add to the story? An evocative curse that enhances the drama of a scene should take effect, while a lackluster curse should not.

If a player character is involved, either as the invoker or the target of a curse, curses of vengeance are resolved through a curse check. To make a curse check, follow these steps:

1. Craft the Curse. The invoker creates a curse, paying special attention to its wording. An evocative curse is more effective than one that is vague or hastily thrown together.

2. Determine Justification. The DM decides how justified the curse is.

This determines the DC of the Charisma check:

Highly Justified DC 20

Justified DC 25

Unjustified DC 30

3. Determine Severity. The DM judges the extent of the curse's effects and applies a severity level, ranging from embarrassing to lethal.

4. The Powers Check. The DM rolls a powers check for the invoker. The chance of failure is based on the curse's severity (see the next section, "Powers Checks"). If the invoker fails the powers check, the Dark Powers have heard and responded to her dark desire.



Chapter Three

The curse has a better chance of taking effect, but the invoker must pay a terrible price.

5. Determine Modifiers. Tally all the applicable curse check modifiers from Table 3-5.

6. Roll the Curse Check. The invoker rolls a Charisma check against the DC set by justification, adding all applicable modifiers. If the curse check succeeds, the curse takes effect.

Table 3-5: Curse Check Modifiers

Wording	Modifier
Mentions Game Mechanics	-3
Includes Broad Prohibitions	-3
Not Tailored to Victim	-3
No Escape Clause	-3
Powers Check	Result
Succeeded	-5
Failed	+5
Drama	
High	+5
Average	+0
Low	-5
Dying Words	+2
Invoker's Background	
Male	-1
Female	+2
Spellcaster	+1
Nonspellcaster	-1
Voice of Wrath Feat	+4
Outlander	-2
Invoker's Alignment	
Lawful	-1
Chaotic	+1
Good	-1
Evil	+1

Lifting Curses

The only way to permanently free an afflicted character from a curse in Ravenloft is through the curse's escape clause. The Vistani can revoke their curses at will, but no other invoker can do so — once the curse takes effect, it assumes a life of its own.

Some spells (like *remove curse*) can offer temporary relief from the effects of curses, but the

accursed character must first succeed at a Will save. For magical curses, the DC of the spell's saving throw is determined normally, but the severity of the curse adds an additional modifier, as shown below.

For example, if an 8th-level cleric with scores of 15 in Wisdom and Charisma casts *bestow curse* to lay a troublesome curse, the saving throw DC is 10 + 3 (spell level) + 2 (wisdom modifier) +2 (severity modifier), for a final DC of 17.

With curses of vengeance, the DC of this save is 10 + 1/2 the invoker's HD + invoker's Charisma modifier + severity modifier. If this same cleric invoked a troublesome curse of vengeance, the save would be DC 18 (10 + 4 + 2 +2).

Curse Severity	DC Modifier
Embarrassing	0
Frustrating	+1
Troublesome	+2
Dangerous	+3
Lethal	+6

Powers Checks



am the wound, and yet the blade!

The slap, and yet the cheek that takes it!

The limb, and yet the wheel that breaks it,

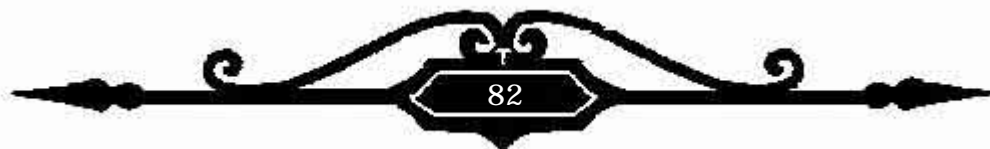
The torturer, and he who's flayed!

— Charles Baudelaire,

"L'Heautontimoroumenos"

Evil comes in many forms, but it is never so dangerous as when it is *convenient*. Evil can seduce us in ways that Good would never try. Good demands much — patience, compassion, self-sacrifice — and its rewards are often obscure. Evil seems to ask nothing but gladly offers anything we could desire: power, riches, even love. But the gifts of Evil are poisoned fruits, tainted by the very acts undertaken to claim them. Each gift we accept, each moral shortcut we take, leads us further from the light and one step closer to Evil's final reward: our destruction.

Unseen by mortals, the Dark Powers sit in judgment of all that occurs within their realm and silently watch countless other worlds as well. Whenever a mortal performs an evil act in Ravenloft, there is a chance that the Dark Powers will respond, both rewarding and punishing the transgressor in a single stroke; this is resolved through a powers check.





If a character continues down the path of corruption, the Dark Powers may eventually grant the transgressor her own domain.

Mortals may never know what the Dark Powers hope to achieve with their dark gifts. Perhaps the Dark Powers act as caring but overly harsh parents, cursing transgressors to frighten them back onto the path of righteousness, or perhaps the Dark Powers seek to inflame mortals' sins, alternately taunting and teasing the morally weak into bottomless spirals of doom.

Making the Powers Check

As with curses, the DM should decide whether NPCs who perform evil acts fail their powers checks based simply on whether failure would enhance or detract from the drama of the game.

Whenever a player character willingly performs an evil act, the DM should resolve the powers check by making a percentile roll. Mortals have no control over the whims of the Dark Powers; no magic or special ability can ever modify this dice roll.

The DM should find the character's transgression on Table 3-6 to determine the chance of failure. If the DM rolls this number or less on the d%, the offending character fails the powers check and moves one stage down the path of corruption. If the DM rolls higher than the listed number, the character succeeds at the powers check; the act has fallen beneath the Dark Powers' concern — this time.

The DM can raise or lower the chance of failing a powers check, depending on the character's motivation. If a character performs an evil act for particularly vile reasons, the chance of failure might rise by as much as half. If a character performs a transgression for altruistic purposes — such as casting a necromantic spell to save a life of an ally — the DM may reduce the chance of failure by half.

If a character performs an evil act that does not appear on Table 3-6, the DM can use the listed transgressions to judge the chance of failure. Only truly despicable acts should have a chance of failure as high as 10%. Some deeds are so monstrous that they cannot help but attract the attention of the Dark Powers. Anyone who commits one of these Acts of Ultimate Darkness automatically fails the accompanying powers check.

Powers checks are intended to enhance the game, to divert the attention of a hoary host of potent unknowns to the actions of the PCs.

Use them wisely and where they serve the game. If overused, powers checks can slow the game to a crawl, as the DM meticulously rolls dice every time someone swats a fly or coughs in the vague direction of an old woman. Use the guidelines below to determine when you should incorporate them into the game.

Crimes or Acts of Violence

These transgressions directly cause others to come to harm. To determine the chance of failure, compare the transgression to the alignment of the victim on Table 3-6. An "Innocent" is any character with the Innocence special quality. (See sidebar, below.)

Assault, Unprovoked: Violent crimes in which the offender has no intention to kill the victim or cause lasting harm. These attacks are often the result of bigotry, bullying, or petty cruelty. Common examples include muggings, picking a drunken brawl, or striking a child in anger.

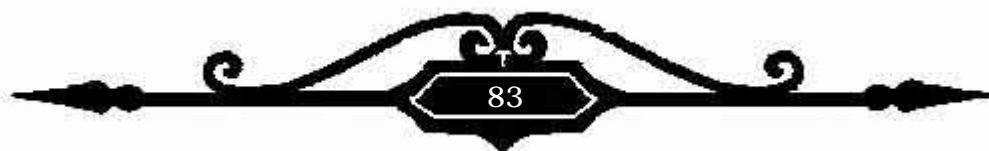
Assault, Grievous: An attack in which the offender intentionally causes lasting harm to the victim. The offender typically has no concern for the victim's life. Common examples include vicious beatings and attempted murder.

Betrayal, Major: Betrayals include the breaking of trust or of a promise. Breaking a holy vow, however, is considered an unholy act and is detailed below. To be considered a major betrayal, the act must result in lasting harm or death to the betrayed victim. Examples can include a traitorous guard selling the defense plans of his master to assassins, or a merchant renegeing on a major contract, bankrupting his business partner's family.

Betrayal, Minor: A minor betrayal results in minor but lasting effects for the betrayed party. Common examples include breaking up a happy marriage or acts of public humiliation.

Extortion: Extortion is the criminal act of using the threat of violence to coerce others into giving you something that rightfully belongs to them, or obeying your commands. Common examples include blackmail, armed robbery, and taking hostages.

Lying: Lying includes telling falsehoods and purposefully withholding truths. The Dark Powers hear every word spoken within their realm, but harmless white lies and tall tales are beneath their concern. To warrant a powers check, the lie must directly result in the hearer coming to harm.





Examples might include declining to warn a friend that her drink is poisoned or tricking a herdsman into entering the lair of a fearsome beast to search for his lost sheep.

Murder, Brutal: Brutal murder is the act of deliberately taking a person's life through painful and sadistic means. Examples might include Vlad Drakov's method of impaling victims on long stakes, or a creature that tries to keep its prey alive for as long as possible while feasting on it. Brutal murders that involve particularly extended suffering may also count as torture.

Murder, Nonbrutal: Nonbrutal murder does not include extended suffering — the killer just wants the victim dead. The murder must still be premeditated; killing in self-defense does not warrant a powers check. Vengeance and personal gain are common motives for this brand of murder.

Theft, Grave Robbing: Raiding crypts and looting corpses defiles the sanctity of the dead. Grave robbing includes violating ancient tombs, unearthing coffins to steal corpses, and looting the bodies of the fallen. In cultures where the tombs of dead are particularly revered, grave robbing may be considered an act of desecration (see below).

Theft, Major: Theft is the act of taking any item that rightfully belongs to someone else. Whether the theft is major or minor depends on its effect on the victim, not the stolen item's value in gold pieces. Any theft that results in serious hardship for the victim counts as a major theft. Common examples include stealing the meager savings of a peasant family and taking a magic item that the victim needs to keep a curse in check.

Theft, Minor: Any theft that causes the victim little more than passing aggravation is considered minor. Common examples include stealing an apple from a successful fruit stand or silverware from an aristocrat's pantry.

Threats of Violence: Intimidation in itself causes little harm and is often beneath the concern of the Dark Powers. To warrant a powers check, the offender must have both the means and intent to follow through with her threats, and the victim must honestly fear for her safety.

Torture, Routine: Routine torture is the act of inflicting pain to extract information. This is an evil act even when performed toward an ultimate good. Many so-called heroes have been seduced into evil through the misconception that the ends justify the means. Common examples include torturing an enemy to learn the location of her head-

quarters, battle plans, or even the location of hostages.

Torture, Sadistic: Sadistic torture is the act of causing intense suffering to derive pleasure. Those who engage in such foul deeds soon draw the attention of the Dark Powers.

Unholy Acts

Unholy acts are transgressions against a religious code — a particularly serious act for divine spellcasters.

As with acts of violence, a character must *knowingly* violate a religious code to warrant a powers check. A character who has no reasonable way to know of the existence of a religious tenet should not be punished for failing to obey it.

To determine the chance of failure, compare the transgression on Table 3-6 to the core alignment of the violated faith. Violating the religious codes of one's own faith, regardless of its alignment, is a particularly serious offense.

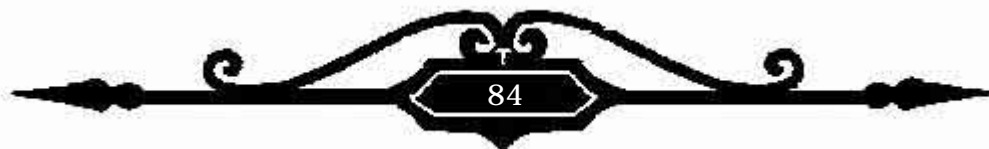
Breaking a Tenet: All religions have certain practices that their faithful are expected to follow. As an example, followers of the Morninglord are expected to sing a short hymn of thanks each morning. Willingly violating one of these rules is considered breaking a tenet.

Breaking an Oath: Some religions require followers, particularly their clergy, to swear oaths demonstrating their devotion. The clerics of Zhakata, for example, must swear to obey the commands of their high priest at all times, while clerics of Osiris are sworn to protect the sanctity of the dead. Willingly violating such an oath warrants a powers check.

Breaking a Vow: The clergy of some religions are required to swear lifelong vows in the name of their deity. For example, the priestesses of Belenus in the Shadowlands are considered to be spiritually wed to their god and thus must take vows of chastity. A character who breaks a holy vow must make a powers check, and her religion may enforce additional penalties.

Defilement: Defilement is the act of causing a sacred place, object, or person to lose its holy blessings. Deeds might include fouling holy water, breaking into a sealed tomb, and even purposefully robbing someone of her Innocence.

Desecration: Desecration is a more serious form of defilement. Rather than merely causing a sacred object to lose its blessing, desecration actually renders the object unclean in the eyes of its god.





Examples include performing a bloody sacrifice on the altar of a good-aligned deity and or casting the *desecrate* spell.

Supernatural Evil

Powers checks can also be incurred through trafficking with unholy supernatural forces. With these acts, the chance of failure is determined not by the alignment of the victim, but by the power of the occult forces the transgressor calls. Unlike in Unholy acts, the transgressor does not need to know that a form of magic is considered profane to warrant a powers check.

Laying a Curse: See "Making the Curse Check" on page 81. The curse's severity determines the chance of failure.

Casting an Evil or Necromantic Spell: Some spells call on forces that mortals were not meant to wield. The "Altered Magic" section later in this chapter details which forms of magic require powers checks. The chance of failure is equal to the effective spell level of the spell being cast. Note that some special abilities, such as the Empower Spell feat, can alter a spell's effective level. If a spell has both the "evil" and "necromancy" descriptors, the chance of failure is doubled.

Using an Evil Magic Item: Some magic items have one or more special abilities that mirror the effects of spells that incur a powers check. Using such a special ability incurs a powers check as if the user had cast the spell. For example, whenever a character uses a sword *of life stealing* to bestow a negative level on a foe, the wielder must make a powers check as if she had cast *energy drain*.

The end of the "Altered Magic" section lists all of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* magic items that require powers check to use, bear, or craft.

Bearing an Evil Magic Item: Some magic items are so infused with evil that a character runs a risk of corruption merely by keeping the item in her possession. This is most often the case with intelligent evil items or those with powers that are continually in effect, such as a darkskull. A character with this item in her possession must make a powers check once a week. The chance of failure is equal to that of the item's highest-level spell effect.

Crafting an Evil Magic Item: Magic Items hold the potential to be powerful tools of evil. An evil spell is cast once and is then gone, like a bee losing its sting. A magic item with evil abilities can sting again and again, spreading evil long after its creator is gone. These items can be created only by

calling on evil forces. Powers checks for Crafting evil magic items often carry significant chances of failure. First, add the total chance of failure for all prerequisite spells. If the magic item is reusable (as opposed to one-use items like scrolls, potions, or magic arrows), add 10% of the prerequisite experience cost.

For example, for a cleric, the prerequisites for Crafting a *hand of glory* include *animate dead*, a 3rd-level spell, and 288 XP. The cleric's chance of failing a powers check for creating a hand of glory is thus 31% (3% + 28%). Creating some magic items can incur a powers check with a chance of failure well over 100%; consider crafting such an item to be an Act of Ultimate Darkness.

If a metamagic feat augments a character's spell that results in a powers check, the level of that metamagic feat adds to the level of the spell in question for the purposes of determining the chance of failing a powers check. Characters who use feats are going out of their way to make something happen; using them to aid heinous sorceries is all the more noticeable to the Dark Powers.

The Effects of Failure

No person is born evil. All player characters are assumed to enter a Ravenloft campaign with "clean" souls — they have never failed any powers checks, and the forces of corruption have no claim on their spirits. If the player wants, and if her character meets the prerequisites, a hero can enter the campaign with her Innocence intact (see sidebar). Alternatively, if the player and DM agree, a player character could enter the campaign having already failed one or more powers checks. Such a character might be struggling against some dark inner nature, or she might now be on a quest for redemption from the mistakes of her earlier years.

If a character fails a powers check, the Dark Powers respond with gifts of darkness — and the character moves one stage toward corruption. At each stage, the corrupted character receives an occult boon and an accompanying curse. The gifts and curses bestowed by the Dark Powers are inexorably tied: a rogue who gains low-light vision might also suffer from light sensitivity, inflicting -1 penalties to attack rolls in bright daylight; a monk who receives a bonus to her natural armor might grow a thick, scaly hide. As with the curses offered earlier in this chapter, these curses apply OR modifiers whenever their effects are noticed. Curses arising from failed powers checks should manifest at least as often as the accompanying gift comes into play.

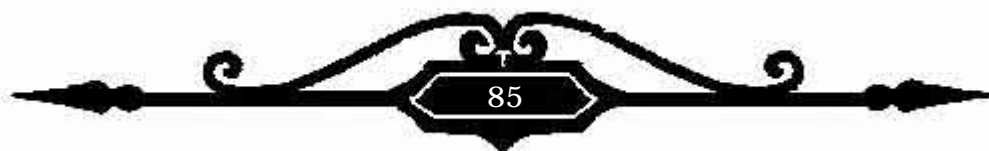




Table 3-6: Recommended Powers Checks

Crimes or Acts of Violence	Evil NPCs or Monsters	Neutral NPCs or Strangers	Good NPCs or Friends	PCs, Family, or Innocents
Assault, Unprovoked	*	1%	2%	3%
Assault, Grievous	1%	2%	4%	6%
Betrayal, Major	1%	3%	6%	9%
Betrayal, Minor	*	1%	3%	6%
Extortion	*	2%	5%	8%
Lying	*	*	*	1%
Murder, Brutal	3%	6%	10%	**
Murder, Premeditated or Nonbrutal	2%	3%	6%	10%
Theft, Grave Robbing	*	1%	5%	7%
Theft, Major	*	1%	4%	7%
Theft, Minor	*	*	3%	6%
Threats of Violence	*	*	1%	2%
Torture, Routine	4%	7%	**	**
Torture, Sadistic	10%	**	**	**

Unholy Acts	Evil Faith	Neutral Faith	Good Faith	Own Faith
Breaking a Tenet	*	1%	2%	5%
Breaking an Oath	*	2%	5%	10%
Breaking a Vow	*	5%	10%	**
Defilement	*	4%	8%	**
Desecration	*	8%	**	**

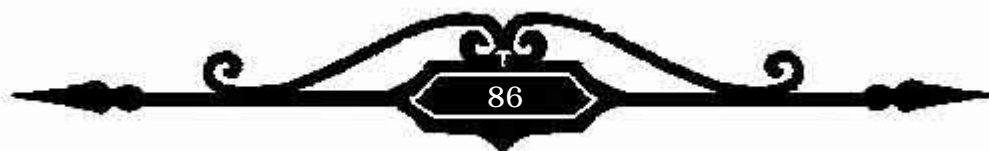
Supernatural Evil

	Embarrassing	Frustrating	Troublesome	Dangerous	Lethal
Laying a Curse	1%	2%	4%	8%	16%
Casting an Evil or Necromantic Spell	1% per effective spell level				
Casting an Evil and Necromantic Spell	2% per effective spell level				
Using an Evil Magic Item	as casting equivalent spell				
Bearing an Evil Magic Item	as using item's most powerful ability				
Crafting an Evil Magic Item	total percentage chance of prerequisite spells, plus 10% of XP cost				

* This act does not warrant a powers check. 13

The Dark Powers tailor all of their gifts and curses to the victim. As a rule, the Dark Powers' gifts tend to make it easier for a corrupted character to repeat her transgressions but harder to conceal her crimes.

In the initial stages of corruption, when redemption is still at hand, both the gifts and the curses bestowed by the Dark Powers tend to be minor and easily concealed. In later stages, however, the trap starts to close.





The curses gain strength, forcing the corrupted character to rely more heavily on her dark gifts — abilities that often require more powers checks to use.

Innocence

Innocence represents a soul completely free of the taint of evil. Any character can choose to be Innocent at 1st level so long as she meets the prerequisites. Innocence is a supernatural quality. It is not a feat, because it is easily lost. Indeed, although all people are born Innocent, most lose their purity long before they leave childhood.

Prerequisites: You must be humanoid and of good alignment and must have never committed any act worthy of a powers check, regardless of the success or failure of that check.

Benefits: Evil is repelled by your inner light. You get a +3 divine bonus to all saving throws against any spell effect or supernatural ability that either requires a powers check or is used by an evil creature.

Drawbacks: Your naivete leaves you with a -2 competence penalty to Horror saves and Sense Motive checks. Evil clerics can turn — but never destroy — you just as they would rebuke undead. Spells in Ravenloft cannot directly target moral alignment, but some can target Innocence.

Losing Innocence: You immediately lose all effects of Innocence if you ever fail to meet the above prerequisites or if you ever suffer a moderate or major Horror or Madness effect. You may also voluntarily lose your Innocence at any time. Once lost, however, Innocence can never be regained.

The Path of Corruption

The path from Innocence to the final damnation of a darklord is distressingly short — a mere seven steps — and all too easy to traverse. Each stage is listed with a sampling of dread gifts the Dark Powers can bestow. The DM can use the Suggested Spell-like Abilities sidebar to select powers to model a corrupted character's gradual transformation into a creature of the night. Each stage also bestows a curse, each of increasing severity. If the DM carefully considers how these powers and curses will interact, she can transform what may appear to be a collection of random modifiers into an evocative descent into darkness.

Three example paths demonstrate a few of the many different ways the path of corruption might manifest. The *Path of the Ringleader* applies to a character who prefers to linger in the shadows,

ordering his minions to do his dirty work for him. The *Path of the Brute* applies to a cruel and unsubtle bully. The *Path of the Coward* applies to a character who regularly abandons his friends and allies in the face of danger to save himself. A DM may wish to create a unique path of his own if a character is especially fiendish in an unconventional way.

Stage One: The Caress

The Dark Powers reward a character's first touch of evil with a minor boon. The character also gains an embarrassing curse. A corrupted character can usually conceal any physical deformities created at this stage with little effort — gloves, tinted glasses, and so on.

Example Rewards

- +2 bonus to an ability score.
- +10 bonus to speed.
- +2 bonus to checks for one skill.
- +1 bonus to a saving throw.
- +1 bonus to natural armor.
- Low-light vision.
- Natural attack form (bite, claws, horns, and so on) dealing 1d3 points of damage.
- Spell-like or supernatural ability equal to 1st-level spell 1/day or 0-level spell 2/day

Path of the Ringleader: The character gains the ability to cast *charm person* once per day as a spell-like ability, but whenever he does so, a strange spider skitters out from under his clothing.

Path of the Brute: The character gains +2 Strength, but his features grow subtly coarse and ugly.

Path of the Coward: The character gains +10 to speed, but only when loping along on all fours.

Stage Two: The Enticement

Once the corrupted character demonstrates a willingness to return to her evil ways, the Dark Powers grant her greater assistance in her evil endeavors. They temper this, however, with a frustrating curse.

Example Rewards

- +4 bonus to an ability score (or +2 to two ability scores).
- +20 bonus to speed.
- +4 bonus to checks for one skill.
- +2 bonus to a saving throw.
- +2 bonus to natural armor.
- Low-light vision.
- Natural attack form dealing 1d4 points of damage.
- Poisonous natural attack form.
- Free feat.





- Spell-like or supernatural ability equal to 2nd-level spell 1/day, 1st-level spell 2/day, or 0-level spell 3/day.

Path of the Ringleader: The character develops a ravenous appetite for vermin. On any day the character eats at least a handful of spiders, he gains venomous saliva; a successful bite attack carries the effects of Medium-size spider venom (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

Path of the Brute: The character grows larger and more menacing. His ability score bonuses increase to +4 Strength and +2 Dexterity, but he suffers a -2 Charisma penalty.

Path of the Coward: The character gains a +4 bonus to Move Silently checks whenever moving on all fours. The character grows thick pads on his hands and feet, making them resemble paws.

Stage Three: The Invitation

The corrupted character has continued in her evil ways, and any hope of redemption is quickly fading. The Dark Powers now offer a powerful boon but also bestow a troublesome curse. A character who proceeds this far down the path of corruption has difficulty turning back.

Example Rewards

- +6 bonus to an ability score (or +2 to three ability scores).
- +30 bonus to speed.
- +6 bonus to checks for one skill.
- +3 bonus to a saving throw.
- +3 bonus to natural armor.
- Natural attack form dealing 1d6 points of damage.
- Spell-like or supernatural ability equal to 3rd-level spell 1/day, 2nd-level spell 2/day, 1st-level spell 3/day, or 0-level spell at will.

Path of the Ringleader: The character can cast *summon* swarm twice a day as a supernatural ability. The swarm spews out of the character's nose and throat and crawls back inside his body when the spell's duration ends. The swarm always starts centered on the character, but he can move it as a druid. The character also develops a ravenous appetite for rotting meat; if he does not eat at least 10 pounds of meat each day, he suffers biting pains (and 1d4 points of temporary Constitution damage) as the swarm begins to devour him from the inside out.

Path of the Brute: The character's Strength bonus rises to +8, and he gains a +2 bonus to Constitution, but whenever he is angered he automatically flies into a mad Rage (as the horror effect).

The character has grown at least a foot in height.

Path of the Coward: When running on all fours, the character's bonus to speed rises to +30, plus he gains a +4 bonus to Jump checks. However, he finds that fear grips him all the more often; he suffers a -2 penalty to all Will saves.

Stage Four: The Embrace

The corrupted character's evil deeds mark her as a true villain. The Dark Powers respond with a major gift, but the accompanying dangerous curse can create serious mental or physical changes. The corrupted character can no longer live the normal life she started with. If the corrupted character is a PC, the player may occasionally lose control of her character's actions (as in the case of afflicted lycan-thropy, for example).

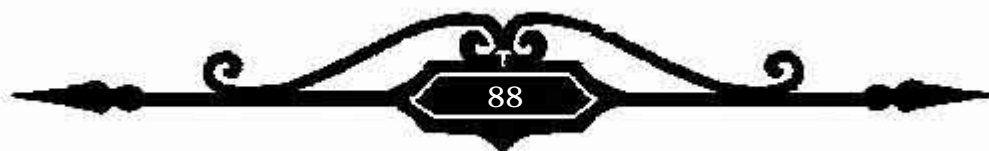
Example Rewards

- +8 bonus to an ability score (or +2 to four ability scores).
- +40 bonus to speed.
- +8 bonus to checks for one skill.
- +4 bonus to a saving throw.
- +4 bonus to natural armor.
- Natural attack form dealing 1d8 points of damage.
- Spell-like or supernatural ability equal to 4th-level 1/day, 3rd-level spell 2/day, 2nd-level spell 3/day, or 1st-level spell at will.

Path of the Ringleader: The character can *summon* swarm four times a day. Additionally, twice a day the character can will his symbiotic minions to spew forth and spin a *web* as a supernatural ability. Vermin are visible rippling beneath the character's skin; he suffers penalties of -4 Constitution and -2 Charisma. **Path of the Brute:** The character is massive for his race, but he appears distinctly degenerate. His ability score modifiers increase to +12 Strength, +4 Dexterity, +4 Constitution, -4 Intelligence, -4 Charisma. **Path of the Coward:** The character becomes an afflicted lycanthrope, transforming into a jackal (use the *Monster Manual* dog) whenever he fails a fear save.

Stage Five: The Creature

By now, the corrupted character's evil has reshaped her into a creature of the night. For characters who proceed this far down the path of corruption, redemption often comes only in death. The Dark Powers now bestow even greater gifts but strike the character down with a lethal curse.



The Dark Powers' curse never destroys the corrupted character, though she may wish it had. At the DM's discretion, a player character who falls this far from the light may be removed from the player's control, becoming a villainous NPC.

Example Rewards

- +10 bonus to an ability score (or +2 to five ability scores).
- +10 bonus to checks for one skill.
- +5 bonus to a saving throw.
- +5 bonus to natural armor.
- Natural attack form dealing 1d10 points of damage.
- Spell-like or supernatural ability equal to 5th-level 1/day, 4th-level 2/day, 3rd-level spell 3/day, or 2nd-level spell at will.
- Free class level.

Path of the Ringleader: Once per day, the character can expel his vermin with the effects of an insect plague spell. The character is a walking hive for his minions; he grows cadaverous, his skin diseased. The character's ability score penalty increases to -6 Constitution and -8 Charisma. The character must rely on his dark gifts to keep his henchman obedient.

Path of the Brute: The character's ability score modifiers increase to +14 Strength, +8 Dexterity, +8 Constitution, -8 Intelligence, -4 Wisdom, and -4 Charisma. The character is a hulking, brutal creature resembling an ogre.

Path of the Coward: The character can assume jackal form at will, gaining the Improved Control Shape feat. Despite this, the character still transforms whenever he fails a Fear save. To make matters worse, the character suffers a -6 penalty to all Will saves.

Stage Six: The Darklord

With his final act of evil, the corrupted character proves himself beyond redemption and seals his fate. The Dark Powers grant the corrupted character his own domain — a prison, molded in his own image, from which he will never escape. Most new darklords rule over small Islands of Terror or physical islands in one of the Core's seas. Hand-in-hand with the new domain comes the darklord's curse: the object of his most desperate desire is placed within his sight but forever just beyond his grasp. Darklords have widely differing abilities and weaknesses; indeed, the Dark Powers seem to reward captivating personalities with greater power. A few powers known to be common to many darklords are provided here.





Secrets of the Dread Domains offer a comprehensive gallery of darklords, providing extensive examples for DMs who want to design their own. Player characters who become darklords automatically become NPCs run by the DM.

Common Powers

- *Closing the Borders:* Darklords are imprisoned within their domains but can force others to share their fate. Darklords can close the borders of their domains at will, creating supernatural barriers of immense power. No mortal magic can pierce a closed domain border. In some domains, the Mists themselves rise up to close the borders — anyone who enters the Mists becomes disoriented and eventually finds herself wandering back into the domain. The manifestations of closed borders are often a reflection of the darklord's personality.

A few darklords are said to be unable to close their borders, as part of their darklord's curse.

- *Sinkhole of Evil:* All darklords emit their own sinkhole of evil. Ethereal resonance within a 300-foot radius of a darklord rises by one rank. See the sidebar on page 94.
- *Turn Resistance:* All undead darklords receive a bonus to their turn resistance equal to +1 or their Wisdom bonus, whichever is greater.
- *Detect Disruption:* A darklord can sense the disruption created by a paladin within his domain with a successful Scry check. See chapter 2.
- *Persistence:* Some darklords cease to age when they receive their domain. For some, the aging process simply slows, while others continue to age normally.

Suggested Spell-like Abilities

The DM should tailor the effects of these spells to suit the twisted nature of a failed powers check. As examples, a corrupted character may be able to *polymorph* into or *summon* only a specific type of creature, such as a wolf or monstrous vermin, or the foul vapors of a *stinking cloud* might spew from a corrupted character's gaping mouth. At the DM's discretion, these powers can manifest as supernatural rather than spell-like abilities. These abilities take effect as if cast by a sorcerer of the corrupted character's level.

0-level: *dancing lights, daze, detect poison, ghost sound, inflict minor wounds, mage hand, open/close, resistance* *

1st level: *bane, cause fear, change self, charm person, chill touch, command, curse water, deathwatch, delay poison, * detect animals or plants, detect snares and pits, doom, endure elements, * expeditious retreat, faerie fire, feather fall, * hold portal, hypnotism, inflict light wounds, jump, * magic fang, * pass without trace, * protection from good, * silent image, sleep, speak with animals, spider climb, * summon nature's ally I, ventriloquism*

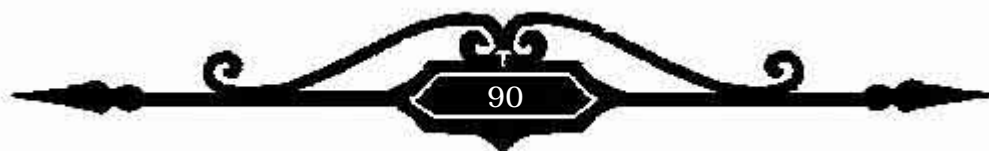
2nd level: *alter self, animal trance, arcane lock, barkskin, * bull's strength, * cat's grace, * charm person or animal, chill metal, darkness, darkvision, * death knell, desecrate, detect thoughts, endurance, * enthrall, fog cloud, ghoulish touch, inflict moderate wounds, invisibility, * knock, minor image, pyrotechnics, resist elements, * scare, see invisibility, silence, snare, soften earth and stone, spectral hand, summon nature's ally II, summon swarm, tree shape, warp wood, web, whispering wind*

3rd level: *animate dead, bestow curse, charm monster, clairaudience/clairvoyance, contagion, deeper darkness, dimmish plants, dominate animal, emotion, fear, fly, * gaseous form, * greater magic fang, * haste, * inflict serious wounds, major image, meld into stone, phantom steed, poison, protection from elements, * scrying, sculpt sound, speak with dead, speak with plants, stinking cloud, suggestion, summon nature's ally III, vampiric touch, water breathing.* *

4th level: *arcane eye, control plants, dimension door, discern lies, dominate person, enervation, giant vermin, improved invisibility, * inflict critical wounds, modify memory, neutralize poison, * phantasmal killer, polymorph self, rusting grasp, spell immunity, * stonkskin, * summon nature's ally IV, tree stride, unholy blight.*

5th level: *awaken, circle of doom, dispel good, dream, ethereal jaunt, false vision, greater command, hold monster, insect plague, magic jar, nightmare, persistent image, * slay living, spell resistance, * summon nature's ally V, telekinesis, unhallow.*

* The tainted gifts of the Dark Powers are inherently selfish. These spell effects can target only the corrupted character.





Redemption

The road to damnation is swift but not certain. It is possible for a character to recoil from her evil deeds and, with time and toil, return to the light. If a character is truly penitent, the Dark Powers may subtly guide the corrupted character's fate to test her repentance. To escape the effects of a powers check, the corrupted character must encounter an event echoing the one that resulted in her failed powers check. This time around, the corrupted character must choose the righteous path. For example, if a character failed a powers check for killing a group of helpless captives, she must do all that she can to protect the lives of the next group of helpless captives she encounters.

It is no mean feat to scrub corruption out of the soul, however. The character must repeat the process a number of times equal to the chance of failure 1 of the original powers check. If the character accomplishes this, she can attempt a new powers check at the same chance of failure. If the character succeeds at this check, the Dark Powers loosen their grip on her soul; she retreats one stage from the path of corruption. (A corrupted character at the Embrace would retreat to the Invitation, and so forth.) Characters can possibly work their way back to "Clean," but they can never reclaim Innocence. Acts of Ultimate Darkness cannot be redeemed.

It may even be possible for a darklord to redeem his blackened soul — but in all the known history of Ravenloft, not one ever has.

Altered Magic



is now *the moment still and dread, When Sorcerers use their baleful power; When Graves give up their buried dead To profit by the sanctioned hour*

— Matthew Lewis, *The Monk*

A cleric uses a magical *glyph* to seal an ancient crypt, trapping the evil within. A necromancer toils in a moonlit graveyard, *animating* a horde of undead minions. Many characters in Ravenloft possess the power to twist or even shatter the laws of nature for their own ends. Magic allows mortals to control men's minds, smite their foes with supernatural energies, or even grant life to the dead. In short, magic allows mortals to play at being gods.

This section details the limitations and consequences of using magic under the cold gaze of the Dark Powers. First, "General Guidelines" presents

laws that the Dark Powers impose on all magic and supernatural abilities.

Next, "Spells in Ravenloft" details the specific changes affecting the spells from the *Player's Handbook*.

"Altered Magic Items" follows with additional general guidelines that apply to all magic items.

Lastly, "Magic Items in Ravenloft" offers the specific changes made to the magic items and artifacts from the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Who Knows This?

Spellcasters native to Ravenloft have learned most of the limitations of magic through generations of research. Folklore is likewise filled with warnings against the risks of tampering with the laws of nature, though these superstitions often exaggerate or distort the truth. If a spell effect — such as detecting moral alignment — simply does not function in Ravenloft, most Spellcasters believe that the effect is inherently impossible. They may even scoff openly at the thought that such things may be possible in "other lands."

Spellcasters from other worlds have to learn how magic has been warped through trial and error. If you are playing an "outlander" spellcasting hero in Ravenloft, you may want to skip the rest of this chapter, preserving the mystery and allowing you to learn magic's secrets along with your character.

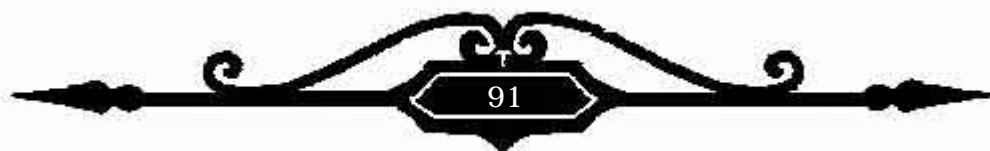
General Guidelines

All spell effects and supernatural powers in Ravenloft must obey the following guidelines. Use these guidelines when introducing new magic into Ravenloft. Of course, a DM can also fine-tune these rules to foster a more horrific atmosphere in any setting.

Specific spell alterations follow this section.

Abjuration

These spells would normally return an extraplanar creature to its home plane, but the Dark Powers do not allow such easy escape from their realm. Instead, abjuration spells transport the creature to a random location (selected by the DM) within Ravenloft (but not across closed domain borders).





Chapter Three

Astral

The Dark Powers severely constrict Ravenloft's connection to other planes. Although astral matter can be drawn into Ravenloft, any spell that would normally project a subject into the Astral Plane automatically fails. However, see "Teleportation."

Closed Domain Borders

No amount of mortal magic can overcome the effects of a closed domain border. However, a creature's natural or extraordinary abilities may render it immune to the effects of a specific border closure.

Example: Creatures without a Constitution score have no biological processes, making them immune to poison by their very nature; thus they can pass through poison-based closed border effects without harm.

Conjuration

Conjured creatures are more difficult to control in Ravenloft. In the round that the creature appears, the creature can attempt a Will save with a -2 penalty against your spell. Success indicates that the creature escapes your control and can act freely. Generally, it will seek to return to its home dimension.

Calling: All calling spells contain an implicit pact between you and the outsider or elemental you conjure: when the creature has performed its assigned task, it is normally free to return to its plane of origin. Yet the Dark Powers severely restrict escape to other planes, preventing a called creature from leaving Ravenloft unless it can find an exit, like any other creature. When the called creature attempts to leave Ravenloft after completing its task and discovers it cannot, the pact is broken. You lose all control over the creature, which is likely to feel betrayed.

A called creature's behavior once a broken pact frees it from your control depends on the creature's alignment. Evil or neutral creatures might try to destroy you in retaliation.

If you attempt to call an elemental, there is a 20% chance that the spell produces a dread elemental instead. Dread elementals will be detailed in **Denizens of Darkness**. DMs without access to that accessory can treat dread elementals as standard *Monster Manual* elementals, with the following changes: dread elementals have the Mists descriptor, and their moral alignment is always evil.

Using a calling spell to conjure an evil creature requires a powers check.

Summoning: Summoning spells are significantly warped by the severe restrictions on planar travel in Ravenloft. Rather than summoning outsiders for assistance, you conjure creatures taken from the surrounding region. Thus, only creatures found in the domain in which this spell is cast can be summoned.

Summoned creatures in Ravenloft do not use the outsider template. Thus, *summon monster I* would summon a dire rat, not a fiendish dire rat. Attempts to summon an outsider like a succubus or kyton automatically fail unless such a creature happens to be in the domain. Attempts to summon elementals automatically produce dread elementals.

Most domains, such as those of the Core, have rich ecologies where many of the creatures listed under the *summon* spells can be found. Some wretched domains have extremely limited or even nonexistent ecologies. If you choose a creature to summon that is not present in the domain, the spell fails. Chapter 4 lists each domain with its ecology:

Full Ecology: This is always followed by a list of climate/terrain conditions found in the domain. Any creature native to these conditions is usually available to be summoned.

Sparse Ecology: The domain has an extremely limited ecology; this is usually the case in domains with blasted or alien landscapes. Only vermin and oozes can be summoned.

No Ecology: There are no living creatures within the domain. Only Mist creatures can be summoned.

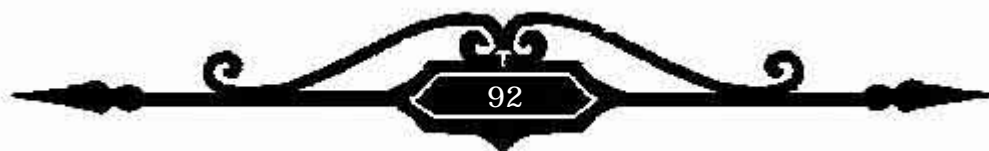
Summoned creatures return from whence they came at the end of the spell's duration, as described in the *Player's Handbook*. Because they never cross planar borders, no pact is broken, and the creatures do not turn against the caster.

If you summon creatures under the influence of the darklord, the creatures still appear, but the influence modifiers still apply (see "Enchantment").

Mists: Elementals or outsiders with the Mists descriptor are conjured from the Mists themselves — the very planar fabric of the Realm of Dread. These creatures can be summoned in any domain.

Detecting Alignment

The Dark Powers shield evil in their realm. Any attempt to detect a target's moral alignment automatically fails.





Some spells can or must be defined as affecting a specific alignment (chaotic evil, neutral good, and so on) at the time of casting. In these cases, you specify only the intended target's ethical alignment. The spell then targets any applicable subject with the chosen aspect in its ethical alignment. However, these spells *can* be specifically targeted to affect Innocents.

Example: A spell defined to affect "neutral" creatures would affect neutral good, true neutral, and neutral evil creatures equally.

Magic effects that detect alignment only in an indirect fashion (such as *protection from evil* or a paladin's smite evil ability) often still work normally.

Death

Spells with the death descriptor harm their target by directly attacking its life force — its soul, in essence. In Ravenloft, casting such a spell requires a powers check. Targets killed by death spells often return from the grave as undead creatures.

Divination

Divination is notoriously untrustworthy in Ravenloft, except in the hands of the Vistani. Attempts to peer into the future or to petition one's god for guidance often produce misleading results or fail completely. It might be said that the Dark Powers want mortals to make their own choices, for good or ill.

The Dark Powers shield undead creatures in their realm. Such creatures can always attempt a Will save to avoid any spell effect that would reveal their undead nature.

Scrying: Scrying other locations, as with the *arcane eye* spell, is more reliable but carries its own risks. These spells normally create an invisible sensor. In Ravenloft, they create a visible, ghostly sensor resembling the caster's own equivalent sensory organ. Any creature can detect the sensor by making a Spot or Scry check against DC 16, due to its fine size.

The caster may be vulnerable to attacks sent through the sensor. Visual sensors can channel gaze attacks, and auditory sensors can channel sonic attacks. A vampire that notices the ghostly eye created by *clairvoyance* can target the caster with its domination gaze, for example.

Enchantment

If you force a compelled creature to commit an act requiring a powers check, it is you who must make the powers check, not your unwilling minion.

Some darklords have the ability to control certain creatures within their domains. If you attempt to control (either through charm or compulsion) the mind of a creature under the influence of a darklord, or try to free a creature from a darklord's influence, that creature stacks the lord's Charisma bonus with its own Will save bonus. No creature under the influence of a darklord can be directed to attack that darklord; if ordered to do so, the pitiful creature may resolve its confusion by fleeing the scene.

Example: A vampiric darklord may be able to control the wolves in his domain at will. If you attempt to charm or compel any wolves in the vampire's domain, those wolves add the darklord's Charisma bonus to their Will saves to resist your spell.

Ethereal

Any spell effect that would normally transport a subject to the Ethereal Plane actually leads to the Near Ethereal, the borderland between Ravenloft and the Deep Ethereal. A character who shifts to the Near Ethereal is still within the Realm of Dread and cannot travel deeper into the Ethereal Plane.

The Near Ethereal is known by many names in Ravenloft. It is the Other Side in Mordent, the Gray Realm in Darkon, and is called the Spirit World in many mystical traditions. The Near Ethereal is a land of lingering memories and of the dead, where incorporeal undead linger, unable or unwilling to move on to their final rest.

Strong emotions can take on tangible form in the Near Ethereal. See the "Sinkholes of Evil" sidebar for more details.

Evil

The effects of spells with the evil descriptor automatically require a powers check, but their effects are usually enhanced. As an example, an evil spell may get a +1 bonus to its effective spell level.

Extraplanar

Although Ravenloft is located in the Deep Ethereal, by fiat of the Dark Powers all spell effects function as though it were on the Material Plane.





Sinkholes of Evil

Ravenloft is a land shaped by passion and fear. Emotions linger, forming ethereal resonance. (See "Ghosts" in chapter 5 for more details on resonance.) If these emotions are powerful enough, they can seep into the subconscious minds of creatures on the Material.

All resonance is imbued with one or more focal emotions. The *emotion* spell in the *Player's Handbook* offers an excellent starting point for possible emotions. A secluded grove used for a lovers' tryst may retain echoes of their desire; a torture chamber may retain the fear and hatred its victims felt for their captors. If the resonance is powerful enough — as determined by its rank — it applies a penalty to any Will saves made to resist its focal emotions. As an example, creatures in the lovers' grove might suffer a penalty to Will saves against any effect that would create feelings of love or affection, including *charm* spells. Creatures in the torture chamber may suffer penalties to saves vs. fear effects or the "hate" version of the *emotion* spell. See the chart below for the appropriate DC modifiers.

When acts of evil spawn resonance, as with the torture chamber above or the lair of a murderous creature, that imbued evil causes the area to become spiritually unclean. In these "sinkholes of evil," the spiritual malevolence quietly weakens resolve and bolsters the undead. In these foul regions, the listed DC penalty applies to all Will saves and all attempts to turn or rebuke undead.

Ravenloft is riddled with these dens of evil. Darklords carry their own sinkholes with them. Resonance automatically rises by 1 rank (to a maximum of rank 5) within a 300-foot radius of a darklord. When the darklord moves on, the resonance returns to its former level.

Characters with the Ethereal Empathy feat can sense these imbued emotions. Sinkholes of evil distort resonance, making the scene appear dark and menacing.

Rank	Ethereal Modifier	Material Modifier
1	+0	+0
2	+1	+0
3	+2	+1
4	+4	+2
5	+6	+3

Rank: The rank of the underlying ethereal resonance. See chapter 5 for guidelines on assigning resonance ranks.

Ethereal Modifier: The DC modifier applied to Will saves made in the Near Ethereal.

Material Modifier: The DC modifier applied to Will saves made on the Material Plane.

Creatures originally from the Material Plane are considered to be on their "home plane." In Ravenloft, only outsiders and elementals should be treated as extraplanar.

Illusion (Shadow)

Ravenloft has strong ties to the Plane of Shadow. Spells that utilize shadow material are more effective, but dangerous to cast.

If you use shadow material to create illusionary creatures, objects, or forces, those conjurations are 20% stronger than the spell indicates. If you use shadow energy to create an illusory spell, damaging spells deal 20% more damage than listed, and nondamaging effects have an extra 20% chance of working.

However, at the end of the spell's duration, you must attempt a Will save against your own spell. If you fail this saving throw, any shadow creations that have not been dispelled spontaneously transform into true shadows (see the *Monster Manual*), with total HD equal to the effective spell level. These shadows are free willed.

Mind-Affecting

The Dark Powers shield undead creatures within their realm. Undead creatures with Intelligence scores can choose to project false thoughts to those who use mental powers on them.





An undead creature can project these false thoughts automatically (without need for a saving throw), but if the creature is unaware of the attempt to read its mind or caught by surprise, it cannot hide its true thoughts.

Typically, undead creatures project peaceful, friendly, and reassuring thoughts to lull the caster's suspicions. The creature can allow access to its true thoughts, if it so desires.

If you attempt to contact the alien mind of an aberration, an elemental, an ooze, an outsider, a plant, a darklord, or a creature suffering from any Madness effect, you must make a Madness save. (Druids and clerics with the Plant domain are exempt when contacting plants.)

Necromancy

Necromantic spells disrupt the natural cycles of life and death. The only necromantic spells that do not require powers checks are those that are purely defensive, do not create or enhance undead creatures, and do not require the manipulation of your life force or that of another subject. (Example: the *deathwatch* spell.)

Note: In Ravenloft, it is often easier to *create* undead creatures but harder to *control* them.

Necromantic spells that require powers checks often feature enhanced effects. The few that do not require powers checks often carry risks not found when cast in other worlds.

Teleportation

The magic of teleportation typically involves instantaneous travel through the Astral Plane. Although Ravenloft's restricted planar ties would seem to render this process impossible, the Dark Powers do allow teleportation spells to function within their realm — but only under their own rules. In Ravenloft, teleportation is instantaneous transportation through the Mists.

For most purposes, each domain within Ravenloft should be considered a separate plane. Spells below 6th level cannot transport creatures or objects across domain borders. Powerful spells (such as *teleport without error*) can accomplish this, but no spell can transport anyone or anything across a closed domain border or out of Ravenloft.

Weather

Some darklords can control the weather in their domains, or at least exert influence on it. Spell effects cannot override the darklord's control of the weather. The darklord may choose to let the spell work normally, but he will be aware that this

spell was cast, even if he takes no action to thwart it.

Spells in Ravenloft

Any aspect of a *Player's Handbook* spell not altered in the following listings functions normally in Ravenloft.

Animal Friendship: See **Enchantment**.

Animal Messenger: See **Enchantment**.

Animal Trance: See **Enchantment**.

Animate Dead: See **Necromancy**. This spell works almost too well in Ravenloft. Normally, the highest number of undead skeletons or zombies you can animate with a single casting is equal to your caster level in HD. When clerics cast this spell in Ravenloft, however, this rises to twice their caster level in HD.

You may add as many HD to your undead creations as you desire during casting, as long as the total does not exceed twice your caster level.

The maximum number of undead you can control at any one time (including multiple castings) is 4 HD worth of undead creatures per caster level.

Remember that the HD of an undead creature affects its resistance to turning and rebuking attempts. Furthermore, creatures whose HD exceed your caster level can attempt a Will save to break free of your control.

In Ravenloft, casting this spell requires no material component, but it does require a powers check.

Antimagical Field: See **Closed Domain Borders**.

Antipathy: See **Detecting Alignment**.

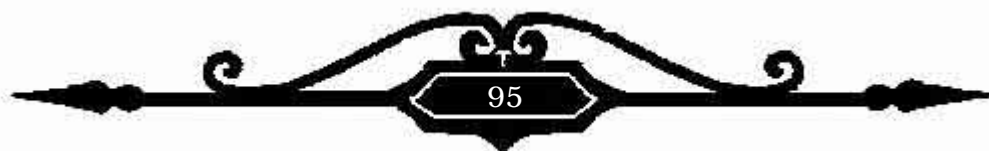
Arcane Eye: See **Divination (Scrying)**.

Astral Projection: See **Astral**.

Atonement: This spell cannot remove the effects of a failed powers check.

Awaken: If you awaken a plant to humanlike intelligence, it slowly and inexorably absorbs the evil taint of the Realm of Dread from the very soil. Once a month, the awakened plant must succeed at a Will save (DC = the number of months that have passed since it was awakened) or have its moral alignment permanently shift to evil.

Banishment: See **Abjuration and Extraplanar**. Any outsider or elemental targeted by this spell makes its Will saving throw with a +4 bonus.





Chapter Three

Bestow Curse: Curses are very powerful in Ravenloft. The stronger the curse, the less likely it is that a mere spell can suspend it. You may invent your own curse, as mentioned in the *Player's Handbook*. Such curses should be designed using the guidelines for inventing curses presented earlier in this chapter.

Curses you invent may be of any severity but must include an escape clause. The curses in the spell listing are considered to be of dangerous severity.

After you craft your curse, the DM assigns its severity. This severity inflicts a penalty to the subject's saving throw; these modifiers can be found under "Lifting Curses," earlier in this chapter.

Casting *bestow curse* requires a powers check. The chance of failure is determined by the severity of the curse, not the effective spell level.

Binding: See Detecting Alignment.

Blasphemy: See Abjuration, Extraplanar. A creature banished to another domain cannot come within sight of you for one full day. Casting this spell requires a powers check.

Blink: See Ethereal.

Break Enchantment: See Enchantment if you attempt to use this spell to free a creature from the influence of a darklord.

If you use this spell to dispel a curse, the subject must make a successful Will save to temporarily be rid of the curse's effects; the duration of relief is only 10 minutes per caster level. This is enough time to discard cursed magic items.

Calm Animals: See Enchantment. All creatures under the influence of a darklord are allowed saving throws to resist the effects of this spell.

Charm Monster: See Enchantment.

Charm Person or Animal: See Enchantment.

Chill Touch: If a living creature targeted by this spell fails its Fortitude save, it suffers 1 point of temporary Strength damage and 1 point of temporary Constitution damage. If the Fortitude save succeeds, a living target still suffers 1 point of temporary Strength damage.

Casting this spell requires a powers check.

Circle of Death: Creatures killed by this spell must succeed at a Will save or spontaneously animate as skeletons under your control. Casting this spell requires a powers check.

Note: See *animate dead* for the total number of undead creatures you can have under your control at any one time.

Circle of Doom: If the targets of this spell fail their Fortitude saves, they also suffer 1 point of temporary Strength damage. Casting this spell requires a powers check.

Clairaudience/Clairvoyance: See Divination (Scrying). A "familiar" place is one you have visited personally. If you have observed the location only through indirect means, including scrying, there is a 50% chance that the spell will fail. A darklord is considered familiar with the entirety of his or her domain.

An "obvious" place denotes one directly connected to the scene before you. If you see a door, you can cast the spell on the other side of the door, but you cannot cast it around a corner and through the door.

This spell can reach only across a single Mist-bound region and does not work directly on the Mists.

Clone: If you grow a duplicate while the original still lives, the Dark Powers infuse the clone's flesh with its own life force, mirroring that of the original at the time the piece of flesh was taken. The duplicate's moral alignment is always evil, and the clone will be obsessed with the goal of destroying the original so it can replace her.

Casting this spell requires a powers check.

Command: See Enchantment.

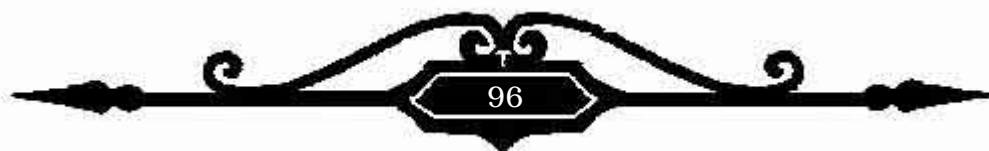
Commune: See Divination. This spell simply does not function in Ravenloft.

Commune with Nature: The radius of effect never extends beyond domain borders. You may attempt to sense the general location of the darklord as one of your three facts, so long as he is within range.

If you select this option, however, the darklord gets a Will save to avoid detection. Whether or not the darklord succeeds at this saving throw, he instantly becomes aware of your general location.

Consecrate: This spell works normally in Ravenloft. *If consecrate* is cast within a sinkhole of evil, the two effects counteract. If the area of the sinkhole exceeds the area of the spell effect, then the region not covered by the spell is still a sinkhole of evil with the original modifiers.

Contact Other Plane: See Divination, Mind-Affecting. This spell opens a mental conduit to the darklord. Duration is reduced to 1 minute per 2 caster levels. You know only that you have contacted a powerful, malevolent force. The darklord need not answer truthfully; in fact, he does not have to answer at all.



The Ways Of The World

The DM should roleplay any conversation between you and the darklord.

Neither party can make attacks through this mental contact, but the lord discovers your approximate location, to within two miles. The darklord may decide to humor your questions, or he may opt to dispatch minions to hunt you down.

Contacting a mind so filled with evil can easily drive a person insane. You must make a Madness save, using the Mental Contact guidelines to determine DC. Make this save in lieu of the Intelligence check discussed in the spell description. A darklord can willingly project thoughts of evil and despair at you. If he does this, add +2 to the DC of the Madness save.

Contagion: Casting this spell requires a powers check.

Control Plants: See Enchantment. Some darklords may have influence over plant creatures.

Control Undead: All undead creatures with more than 3 HD add a +2 bonus to their Will save to resist control. This spell cannot affect darklords. Casting this spell requires a powers check.

Control Weather: See Closed Domain Borders, Weather.

Control Winds: See Closed Domain Borders, Weather.

Create Greater Undead: As *create undead*. Note that many greater undead are template creatures and thus may still possess many or all of the memories and abilities they had while alive.

Create Undead: Add a +1 bonus to your effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a powers check.

Curse Water: Casting this spell requires a powers check.

Daylight: Although the light from this spell is as bright as sunlight, it is not considered to be true sunlight. Therefore, creatures affected by true sunlight (such as vampires) suffer no ill effects from *daylight* beyond those in the spell description.





Death Knell: The effects of this spell last for 20 minutes per HD of the target creature. Casting this spell requires a powers check.

Deathwatch: Undead creatures with Intelligence scores may attempt a Will save to avoid detection as "undead." If the save is successful, the creature reads as "fighting off death" if unwounded or "fragile" if wounded. This effect holds even if the creature has an obviously undead appearance.

Demand: See Enchantment.

Desecrate: The modifiers applied by this spell stack with those applied by a sinkhole of evil. Casting this spell requires a powers check.

Destruction: If the subject of this spell succeeds at her Fortitude save but is still killed by the secondary damage, she may return as a type of incorporeal undead (of the DM's choice) with total HD equal to the slain victim's character level. This incorporeal undead is not under your control. Casting this spell requires a powers check.

Detect Evil: See Detecting Alignment.

Detect Good: See Detecting Alignment.

Detect Thoughts: See Mind-Affecting.

Detect Undead: Undead creatures receive a Will save to avoid detection. The aura strength you detect is based on the number of undead creatures that fail their Will saves.

Example: Gennifer casts *detect undead* on a dark pit, where lurks a group of 12 zombies. Only 4 of these zombies fail their saving throw. Thus, Gennifer detects only a "moderate" aura of undeath.

Dictim: See Extraplanar.

Dimensional Anchor: The target of this spell is unable to cross any domain borders or enter the Mists for the spell's duration.

Dimension Door: See Teleportation. If you arrive in a place that is already occupied by a solid body, you are trapped in the Mists, not the Astral, but may attempt to return as described in the *Player's Handbook*.

Discern Location: This spell works normally, except that it never reveals on what plane any subject in Ravenloft lies. You are aware that this information has been left strangely "blank." This is true even when the spell is cast on worlds beyond the Realm of Dread.

Dismissal: See Abjuration and Extraplanar. If the extraplanar creature fails its saving throw, there is a 50% chance that the creature is teleported to a random location in Ravenloft. Otherwise, the spell has no effect.

Dispel Evil: See Abjuration. The spell does dispel enchantments cast by evil creatures and evil spells. However, it is generally ineffective against curses of vengeance (see "Curses").

Dispel Good: As *dispel evil*.

Dispel Magic: See Closed Domain Borders. This spell cannot dispel curses of vengeance.

Divination: The base chance of a correct divination remains unchanged, but you are not made aware if the dice roll fails. Instead, the Dark Powers provide an answer that is purposefully misleading and possibly malicious.

Dominate Animal: See Enchantment, Mind-Affecting.

Dominate Monster: See Enchantment, Mind-Affecting.

Dominate Person: See Enchantment, Mind-Affecting.

Drawmij's Instant Summons: The item cannot be summoned through closed domain borders.

Elemental Swarm: See Conjunction (Summoning). At the end of the spell's duration, each summoned dread elemental must make a Will save. If the save is successful, you no longer have any control over that creature; it may run amok or even attack you. If the dread elemental fails its save, it vanishes without incident, returning to the Mists.

Energy Drain: As *enervation*, except that any person killed by this spell must succeed at a Will save or become an undead creature (of the DM's choice) with as many HD as the victim had levels.

Enervation: For each negative level the subject gains, she also takes 1 point of permanent hit point damage unless a cleric casts *lesser restoration* on the subject within one day, *restoration* within one week, or *greater restoration* within thirty days.

In Ravenloft, the maximum number of temporary hit points this spell can give an undead creature is 50.

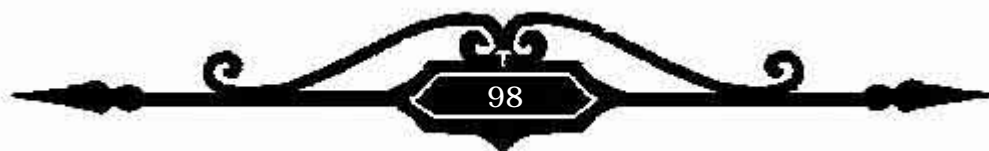
Casting this spell requires a powers check.

Ethereal Jaunt: See Ethereal.

Etherealness: See Ethereal.

Find the Path: This spell cannot find locations outside the domain in which it is cast. If Mists surround the domain, you can focus on them to reach the border.

The Realm of Dread contains a few physical portals to other worlds. If such an exit is within the domain, this spell can guide you to it, provided you know what you're looking for.





As some portals appear only under specific conditions, *find the path* has no effect if the portal is not present when the spell is cast.

Finger of Death: Three days after being killed by this spell, the victim's body automatically animates as a zombie. This new zombie retains its Intelligence score and has as many Hit Dice as the victim had levels. If you are present when this happens, the zombie must make a Will save. Failure means that the zombie falls under your control; success means that it becomes free willed. A free-willed zombie despises you and seeks you out, hoping to wreak its vengeance. If you are not present when the zombie animates, it automatically becomes free willed.

Casting this spell requires a powers check.

Freedom: See Closed Domain Borders. This spell cannot free a darklord from his domain.

Freedom of Movement: See Closed Domain Borders.

Gate: The gate created by this spell is one-way only, leading into but not out of Ravenloft. This spell can be used in two ways:

Planar Travel: See Teleportation.

Calling Creatures: See Conjunction (Calling). If you know the true name of a specific outsider or elemental creature already within Ravenloft, you can use this spell to summon it and demand a service. Trying to conjure an evil creature with this spell requires a powers check.

Geas/Quest: As *lesser geas*, except that the additional punishment you assign can be equivalent to any curse of up to Dangerous severity.

Gentle Repose: This spell can be cast on corporeal undead. If the undead creature is freshly dead, it can maintain a lifelike appearance for the duration of the spell.

Ghoul Touch: You automatically succeed at your Fortitude save to resist the carrion stench emitted by the target of your spell. Casting this spell requires a powers check.

Glyph of Warding: See Detecting Alignment. Storing a spell that requires a powers check in a spell glyph requires a powers check as if you had cast that spell.

Greater Command: See Enchantment.

Greater Glyph of Warding: As *glyph of warding*.

Greater Planar Ally: As *lesser planar ally*.

Greater Planar Binding: As *lesser planar binding*.

Greater Restoration: As *lesser restoration*.

Greater Scrying: As *scrying*.

Greater Shadow Conjunction: See Illusion (Shadow).

Greater Shadow Evocation: See Illusion (Shadow).

Hallow: This spell works normally, except that its duration is indefinite rather than instantaneous. Although the effects granted by this spell cannot be dispelled, they gradually dissipate if the site is not maintained through regular use and worship. If the site is abandoned for any reason, the effects of *hallow* fade to nothing after a number of years equal to your caster level.

If you fix a spell effect to the *hallow* site, see Detecting Alignment.

Harm: Casting this spell requires a powers check.

Helping Hand: The ghostly hand cannot cross domain borders. If the subject is in a different domain than you, the hand does not find her, even if that subject is within your visual range.

Holy Word: See Abjuration, Extraplanar.

Horrid Wilting: Any living creature killed by this spell must succeed at a Fortitude save or become a 2nd-rank ancient (see "Ancient Dead" in chapter 5) bent on destroying you. However, the mummy usually does not attack immediately, as it has years in which to plan its revenge.

Casting this spell requires a powers check.

Imprisonment: This spell cannot affect darklords, who are protected by their innate connection to their domains. When cast by clerics of Ezra, the subject is actually trapped within the Mists, but the effects of the spell otherwise remain the same.

Inflict Light Wounds: Casting this spell requires a powers check.

Inflict Moderate Wounds: As *inflict light wounds*.

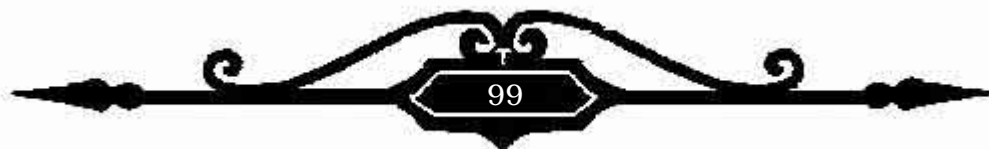
Inflict Serious Wounds: As *inflict light wounds*.

Insanity: Add a +1 bonus to the effective spell level. The Open Mind feat is effective in the Will save against this spell.

Casting this spell requires a powers check.

Leomund's Secret Chest: The hidden chest is actually located in the Mists. It cannot be summoned while you are in a domain with closed borders.

Lesser Geas: Normally, a recipient who does not complete your commands suffers cumulative penalties to her ability scores. In Ravenloft, you may assign an alternative punishment for not fulfilling the assigned geas.





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The punishment cannot be life threatening (nothing more severe than a Frustrating curse), but it must slowly worsen each day that the quest is ignored. Likewise, following the geas should gradually cancel the punishment. Returning to the geas is considered the curse's escape clause.

For example, a subject might shrink 10% in height each day she violates the geas. Each day the creature returns to the geas, she reverses one day of shrinkage.

Use the severity of the additional punishment to evaluate the effectiveness of *remove curse* in alleviating the effects of a geas.

Lesser Planar Ally: See Conjuring (Calling).

Lesser Planar Binding: See Conjuring (Calling). The called creature receives a +2 bonus to any attempts to escape from the magic circle you have prepared for it. The methods by which a called creature can try to escape are listed in the spell description.

Limited Wish: This spell functions only if the Dark Powers allow it to. The Dark Powers usually grant the wish, but they always try to pervert its intent. Thus, this spell rarely performs as desired when cast in Ravenloft. When evil characters wish for something dark and twisted, they have a 50% chance of receiving their wish exactly as requested, indicating that the Dark Powers deemed the wish's intent to be already corrupted.

A wish intended to allow you to escape from Ravenloft, destroy a darklord, or otherwise violate one of the basic tenets of the land simply fails. Any wish used for evil requires a powers check.

Locate Creature: As *locate object*, but a darklord can always attempt a Will save to avoid being discovered by this spell. If the darklord succeeds at this saving throw, he also instantly knows the location of the person who cast it.

Locate Object: See Closed Domain Borders. This spell cannot detect a subject on the other side of a domain border, even if it is within the spell's normal range — or even within eyeshot.

Magic Jar: This spell undergoes disturbing changes. If your host's body is slain, your spirit does not necessarily return to the magic jar. You must succeed at a Will save or be bound to your host's corpse. If the save succeeds, the spell works normally. Otherwise, you become an undead monster occupying the host's body; add the "Undead" special quality (see the *Monster Manual*). In addition, you receive special powers depending on the previous HD of your host body:

Hit Dice

4 or fewer

5-7

8-11

12+

Special Powers

None

Energizing Touch (Su)

Fast Healing (Ex)

Aura of Fear (Su)

Energizing Touch (Su): This touch attack performs just as the *energization* spell.

Fast Healing (Ex): You recover 1 hit point of damage per round.

Aura of Fear (Su): This power performs as the spell *fear*, except that the area affected is a sphere surrounding you at all times, not a cone.

These special powers are cumulative. Hence, a 12 HD monster would enjoy all three.

If the host's corpse is not destroyed within 24 hours of death, it animates with your life force. If the head or torso has been destroyed, you die.

Your original body also animates as an undead creature under your control. This creature has no Intelligence score and only half as many Hit Dice as you had caster levels. The DM can choose the specific type of undead creature created.

Lastly, the life force of the host remains trapped in the jar. This imprisoned life force should be considered a ghost, and it may eventually learn to reach out from its prison to avenge itself.

Destroying the receptacle usually kills the life force within it but does not end the spell. When the spell duration runs out your life force is still expelled from the host's body but is unable to return to your own body, becoming a ghost.

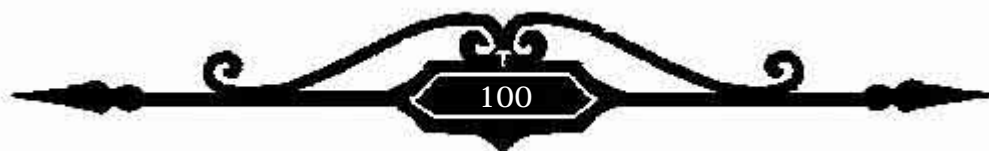
Casting this spell requires a powers check.

Mass Suggestion: See Enchantment, Mind-Affecting.

Miracle: As *limited wish*.

Modify Memory: This spell can negate the effects of a failed Fear or Horror save and can be used to restore memories lost to failed Madness saves. You either wipe the memory of the event from the subject's mind or alter the subject's memory so that the horror of the situation is masked.

The spell can cause sinister effects as well. If used to force a subject to relive a scene that was originally cause for a Horror save, the subject acts as though she were really there. If the results of a previous Horror save for that situation failed, then the results of that check may come back to haunt the victim. For example, if the previous result had been Aversion, the character again feels the need to run in horror.





If the previous Horror save succeeded, the subject must make a new Horror save, with a +1 morale bonus for having survived the scene before.

Keep in mind that this spell cannot be used to alter a subject's personality or alignment. Even if a good character is given the memories of a foul villain, she continues to follow her conscience — perhaps coming to believe that she has "reformed."

Making a person relive a scene of horror almost certainly warrants a powers check.

Negative Energy Protection: Ravenloft insulates undead creatures from the influence of other planes. Thus, the attacking undead creature suffers only 1d6 points of damage from the positive energy, and if it succeeds at a Fortitude save, it takes no damage from the spell at all.

Neutralize Poison: See Closed Domain Borders.

Nightmare: If the victim is killed by the damage inflicted by this spell, she returns from death as an allip bastellus. This creature is free willed but remembers nothing of its mortal life, so it does not seek revenge.

Casting this spell requires a powers check.

Planar Ally: See Conjuring (Calling).

Planar Binding: See Conjuring (Calling).

Plane Shift: See Teleportation. This spell can transport you or another subject to a different domain. To choose a specific domain as your destination, you must have personally visited it at least once. If you do not specify a destination, you appear in a random domain. You appear at a random location within the targeted domain.

Project Image: See Illusion (Shadow). The duplicate is so real that it becomes partially tangible; the image can manipulate objects with an effective Strength of 1.

Protection from Good: Casting this evil spell does not require a powers check.

Protection from Evil: This spell affects only those subjects *known* to be evil — it cannot be used to "sniff out" evil that hasn't previously been substantiated. This is a very delicate matter best handled at the discretion of the DM. Exactly how someone quantifiably knows that another is evil, even in the definitive terms of the alignment axes, is a matter of personal experience.

Prying Eyes: If a returning eye replays a scene that would normally require you to make a Horror save, you must still make the saving throw. However, your distance from the scene grants a +4 circumstance bonus to your save.

Raise Dead: This spell requires the deceased creature to make a Fortitude save at DC (30 - caster level). If the save succeeds, the spell performs normally. If the creature fails its save, it animates as an undead creature with HD equal to the subject's character level. The DM may choose the type of undead creature the subject returns as, but this spell cannot create lichs. The newly created undead creature is free willed.

Casting this spell requires a powers check.

Refuge: See Teleportation.

Reincarnate: In Ravenloft, this spell may actually reincarnate a person as an undead creature, as the Dark Powers funnel the returning spirit into a random corpse rather than a living animal. To determine whether this occurs, the returning spirit must make a Will save at DC (20 - caster level). If the saving throw is successful, the spell performs normally. If the save fails, the spirit returns as an undead creature.

To determine the type of undead creature created, roll on the table on page 244 of the *Player's Handbook* to determine the species of the new incarnation, then apply the "Undead" special quality. The undead creature should have HD equal to the deceased creature's character level.

Casting this spell requires a powers check.

Remove Curse: *Remove curse* works poorly in Ravenloft, where its duration is limited rather than instantaneous. The subject of the spell must make a successful Will save to be temporarily rid of a curse, modified by the curse severity; see the *bestow curse* listing for specific modifiers. The duration of relief is only 10 minutes per caster level.

Remove Fear: This spell applies to Fear and Horror saves as well as magical fear effects.

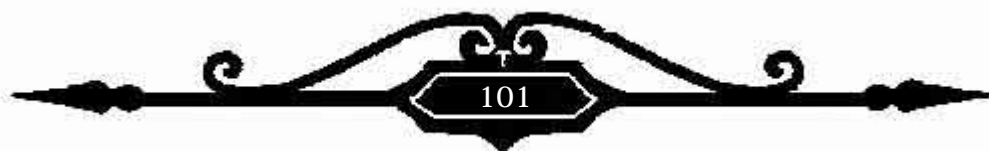
Resurrection: As *raise dead*.

Scrying: See Divination (Scrying). Any creature in a different domain is considered to be on another plane for the purposes of this spell.

If you fail your Scry check, the spell reveals only a random location within the Mists. You will normally see only an image of swirling fog, but there is a 10% chance of glimpsing some horrid, evil creature, prompting a Horror save.

Shadow Conjunction: See Illusion (Shadow).

Shadow Evocation: See Illusion (Shadow).





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Shadow Walk: This spell still enables you to move from place to place as described in the *Player's Handbook*. However, even though this spell transports you to the brink of the Plane of Shadow, the Mists prevent you from traveling even one step beyond their clutches. You cannot use this spell to cross closed domain borders or escape to another plane.

Slay Living: Casting this spell requires a powers check.

Soul Bind: If the focus gem is destroyed while a soul is still trapped within it, the freed spirit becomes an incorporeal undead creature (of the DM's choice) with total HD equal to the deceased creature's character level. This spirit is free willed.

Casting this spell requires a Powers check.

Speak with Dead: Casting this spell requires a powers check.

Spectral Hand: This spell's duration is doubled to 2 minutes per level. Casting this spell requires a powers check.

Spell Turning: In the case of a resonating field, a die roll of 98 to 100 normally sends both spellcasters into the Mists, not another plane. If you are in a domain with closed borders, both spellcasters take 1d10 points of damage, then roll again on the chart until you receive a different result. Both spellcasters take 1d10 additional points of damage each time the dice roll results in a roll of 98 to 100.

Status: While this spell does not allow the cleric to determine whether or not a friend affected by this spell is controlled, mesmerized, *charmed*, and so on, it reveals whether the character is horrified, diseased, or afflicted by a "natural" mental problem (even one that is a result of a failed check).

Storm of Vengeance: See Weather.

Suggestion: See Enchantment, Mind-Affecting.

Summon Monster I-IX: See Conjunction (Summoning).

Summon Nature's Ally I-IX: See Conjunction (Summoning).

Summon Swarm: See Conjunction (Summoning).

Sunbeam: The light from this spell is considered to be equal to true sunlight. Therefore, in addition to the normal damage inflicted, it harms creatures vulnerable to sunlight as if they were standing outside on a clear day.

Sunburst: As *sunbeam*.

Symbol: As *glyph of warding*.

Sympathy: See Detecting Alignment.

Teleport: See Teleportation. Should a "Mis-hap" result in one or more characters taking enough damage to reduce them to 0 or fewer hit points, their bodies warp or merge to become a single, twisted broken one. (Broken ones will be detailed in **Denizens of Darkness**; DMs without that accessory can use Calibans instead.)

Teleportation Circle: See Teleportation.

Teleport without Error: See Teleportation.

Some areas of Ravenloft change quite often, so consider that a "reliable description" of the target locale may not be as reliable as it seems.

Transport via Plants: See Closed Domain Borders.

Trap the Soul: This spell works normally in Ravenloft, with the following clarifications:

If casting the spell involves speaking the subject creature's name, this must be the creature's true name. A nickname, pseudonym, or alias will not suffice, even if it is the name by which the creature is most commonly known.

Conjuring spells are unreliable in Ravenloft. If you use the "spell completion" option when casting this spell, the targeted creature receives a +2 bonus to its die rolls (including SR and/or Will save) to resist.

See Extraplanar. Outsiders and elementals are the only creatures you can demand a service from upon freeing them.

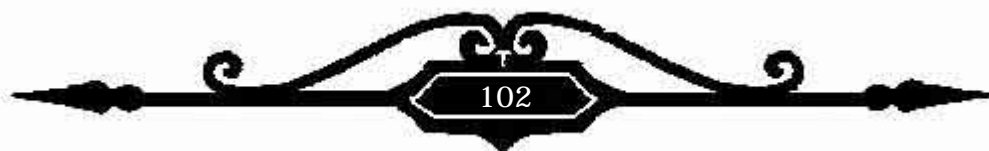
Tree Stride: See Closed Domain Borders.

True Resurrection: As *raise dead*.

True Seeing: This spell functions as described in the *Player's Handbook*, with the following clarifications:

You can use this spell to see ethereal creatures and resonance (see "Ghosts" in chapter 5). Unless these objects have an obviously ghostly appearance, however, you do not automatically sense that they are ethereal.

The spell also states that the subject sees the true form of polymorphed, changed, and transmuted things. In Ravenloft, this generally refers only to changes created through spells or spell-like powers, not supernatural or extraordinary abilities. Thus, natural shapechangers like vampires, lycanthropes, and doppelgangers always appear in their current form, whatever their true form may be.





The divine version of this spell allows the subject to discern only ethical alignment, not moral alignment.

Unhallow: The effects of this spell stack with the penalties applied by a sinkhole of evil. If you fix a spell effect to the *unhallow* site, the effect lasts for two years, not one (see Detecting Alignment). Casting this spell requires a powers check.

Unholy Aura: You get a +1 bonus to the effective spell level. Casting this spell requires a powers check.

Unholy Blight: You get a +1 bonus to the effective spell level. Casting this spell requires a powers check.

Vampiric Touch: For every die of damage you inflict, the subject takes 1 point of permanent hit point damage unless a cleric casts lesser *restoration* on the subject within one day, *restoration* within one week, or *greater restoration* within thirty days.

Three days after being killed by this spell, the victim's body animates as a fledgling vampire (or vampiric spawn, if the victim had 4 or fewer HD) unless the appropriate preventative measures are taken. If you are present when this happens, the new vampire must attempt a Will save. Failure means that the creature falls under your control; success means that it is free willed. If you are not present when the vampire animates, it automatically becomes free willed. A free-willed vampire despises you and seeks to avenge itself.

Casting this spell requires a powers check.

Vanish: See Ethereal. The vanished object is merely shunted to the Near Ethereal. Any creature capable of seeing into the Near Ethereal (via spells, abilities, and so on) can see the vanished object, which remains in the same position relative to its surroundings.

Wail of the Banshee: This spell's range is extended to Close (25 feet + 5 feet/level). Any female humanoid (not necessarily an elf) killed by this spell becomes a ghost with the frightful moan special attack. The new spirit is free willed and almost certainly tries to wreak vengeance upon you.

Casting this spell requires a powers check.

Wish: As *limited wish*.

Word of Chaos: See Abjuration, Extraplanar. A creature banished to another domain cannot come within sight of you for one full day.

Word of Recall: See Teleportation.

Altered Magic Items

The Dark Powers hold magic items in Ravenloft to the same changes and limitations as the spells above. If a magic item has a power that duplicates a spell effect, it suffers the same alterations as that spell. This section details a few additional changes that apply only to magic items.

Special Abilities

Any aspect of a *Dungeon Master's Guide* special ability not listed here performs normally in Ravenloft.

Disruption: Undead creatures get a +2 bonus to their Fortitude save.

Etherealness: See Ethereal.

Ghost Touch: This ability performs normally in Ravenloft. As a note, these items are created by fusing material objects to their own ethereal resonance.

Spell Storing: Storing a spell incurs the same chance of failing a powers check as casting it.

Unholy: Crafting these items requires a powers check.

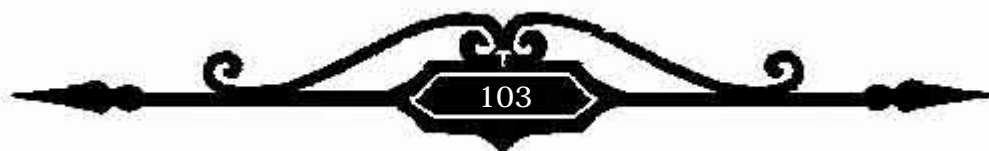
Intelligent Items

Intelligent magic items can be a powerful source of evil in Ravenloft. Many evil artifacts possess at least some manner of rudimentary cunning, allowing them to appeal to the base nature of their possessors. Evil items in Ravenloft get a +5 bonus to their Ego score. If an evil item succeeds at dominating its possessor, there is a 50% chance that the item will present itself to the nearest darklord, seeking a more "worthy" owner.

Cursed Items

When someone creates a magic item while under the influence of powerful emotions, or with dark intentions — as with a vengeful wizard who crafts a weapon to slay those who wronged her — she may unwittingly lay a curse into her own creation. The DM should judge the character's intent just as if she had crafted a curse of vengeance (see "Curses," earlier in this chapter); in this case, the character lays the curse through an item, not words.

Cursed items are powerful and dangerous in Ravenloft. The severity of an item's curse grants an unholy bonus to all saving throws:





Chapter Three

Curse Severity Saving Throw Penalty

Embarrassing	0
Frustrating	+1
Troublesome	+2
Dangerous	+3
Lethal	+6

Also, a new form of curse is common in Ravenloft:

Power for a Price: The item does not have a set number of charges. Instead, the user can build up charges by using the item to perform a specific act. This act — the "price" paid for the item's powers — is typically related to the effect of the desired power and always requires a powers check. An example is a sword with powers that can be used only after its blade has taken a humanoid life.

In some cases, these items may have reduced effects. As an example, a cursed gauntlet might be enchanted to cast *remove disease* with a touch. Rather than simply eliminating the disease, the cursed gauntlet draws the sickness into itself. The next time the gauntlet is used, its touch acts as a contagion spell. The gauntlet cannot be used to *remove disease* again until the disease has been "discharged" into a victim.

Magic Items in Ravenloft

Using any item that simply mirrors a specific spell effect (as with scrolls, wands, and items like brooms of flying) warrants a powers check just as if the spell had been cast. This section lists additional magic items from the *Dungeon Master's Guide* that suffer specific changes.

Amulet of the Planes: As *plane shift*.

Assassin's Dagger: Crafting this item requires a powers check.

Bag of Holding: If a *bag of holding* is placed within a *portable hole* (or vice versa), the items implode, destroying both items and anything stored within them. Any creature (except darklords) within a 10-foot radius must make a Fortitude save (DC 20) or be wrenched through the implosion to a random location in Ravenloft, taking 10d6 points of damage in the process.

Bowl of Commanding Water Elementals: See Conjuraton (Summoning).

Bracelet of Friends: See Teleportation.

Brazier of Commanding Fire Elementals: See Conjuraton (Summoning).

Cape of the Mountebank: See Teleportation.

Censer of Commanding Air Elementals: See Conjuraton (Summoning).

Cloak of Ethereality: See Ethereal.

Crystal Ball: As scrying.

Crystal Hypnosis Ball: The user comes under the influence of the darklord of the domain in which the item is used.

Cubic Gate: The gates opened by the cube are one-way only, leading into Ravenloft. Unwitting outsiders may enter, but characters cannot escape the Realm of Dread.

Darkskull: Crafting or bearing this item requires a powers check.

Demon Armor: Crafting this item requires a powers check.

Dimensional Shackles: As dimensional anchor.

Efreeti Bottle: This item is difficult to create in Ravenloft; see Conjuraton (Summoning).

Flask of Curses: In Ravenloft, the curses unleashed by this item can be even more dangerous. Roll on the following table to determine the severity of the curse freed from the flask, then refer to the "Curses" section to flesh it out:

% Roll Curse Severity

01-30 Embarrassing

31-50 Frustrating

51-70 Troublesome

71-90 Dangerous

91-00 Lethal

Crafting this item requires a powers check.

Gem of Seeing: As *true seeing*.

Hand of Glory: Crafting this item requires a powers check. In Ravenloft, these items can be made only from the hands of executed criminals.

Hand of the Mage: In Ravenloft, these items can be crafted from the hands of elven wizards or hags.

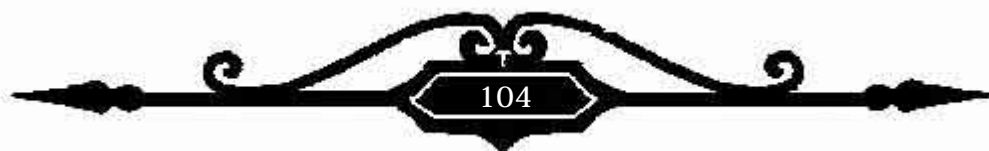
Helm of Opposite Alignment: The involuntary alignment shift caused by this item requires a Madness save.

Helm of Telepathy: See Enchantment, Mind-Affecting

Helm of Teleportation: See Teleportation.

Holy Avenger: Darklords get a +4 insight bonus to their Scry checks when detecting the disruption caused by a paladin wielding this weapon.

Horn of Valhalla: The conjured barbarians are always evil. They obey the commands of the horn's possessor in merciless, bloodthirsty fashion.





If the barbarians do not have any opponents to fight, they gladly turn on each other.

Iron Flask: Crafting this item requires a powers check. Captured creatures are free to act as they wish after their hour of service has elapsed. These creatures are usually highly hostile toward the flask's user.

Life-Drinker: Crafting or using this item requires a powers check.

Mace of Blood: The involuntary alignment shift caused by this item requires a Madness save. Crafting this item requires a powers check.

Mace of Smiting: Crafting this item requires a powers check.

Mask of the Skull: *As finger of death.* Crafting or using this item requires a powers check.

Medallion of Thought Projection: See Mind-Affecting.

Medallion of Thoughts: See Mind-Affecting.

Mirror of Life Trapping: *As imprisonment.* Crafting this item requires a powers check.

Mirror of Mental Prowess: See Mind-Affecting, Divination (Scrying), Teleportation. The mirror cannot answer questions in Ravenloft.

Mirror of Opposition: Crafting this item requires a powers check.

Necklace of Prayer Beads: Crafting a *bead of smiting* (unholy blight version) requires a powers check. *Beads of summons* do not function in Ravenloft.

Necklace of Strangulation: Crafting this item requires a powers check.

Nine Lives Stealer: Crafting this item or using its death-dealing ability requires a powers check.

Oil of Timelessness: This oil can be used to preserve the flesh of corporeal undead.

Orb of Storms: See Weather.

Periapt of Foul Rotting: Crafting this item requires a powers check.

Periapt of Health: This item offers only a +4 luck bonus against supernatural diseases.

Phylactery of Faithfulness: This item does not function in Ravenloft. The Dark Powers demand that mortals rely on their own judgment.

Pipes of the Sewers: See Enchantment.

Portable Hole: See *bag of holding*.

Ring Gates: See Teleportation.

Ring of Djinni Calling: See Conjunction (Calling).



Chapter Three

Robe of Stars: See Astral. The wearer cannot use this item to travel to the Astral Plane.

Rod of Alertness: This item cannot detect moral alignment, but it can detect harmful intent.

Rod of Rulership: See Enchantment. Using this item to command undead creatures or evil outsiders to do your bidding requires a powers check.

Rod of Security: In Ravenloft, the "pocket paradise" created by this powerful item is considered a tiny domain. The Dark Powers immediately seek out a suitable darklord from among the creatures that enter the space. When a darklord is chosen, the domain becomes fixed; creatures can remain within its borders indefinitely. Unfortunately, the "paradise" also slowly warps to suit the corrupt nature of its lord. The *rod of security* does not function in domains with closed borders. Darklords cannot enter the "pocket paradise."

Rod of Withering: Crafting or using this item requires a powers check.

Scarab of Death: Crafting this item requires a powers check.

Slaying Arrow: Crafting this item requires a powers check.

Stone of Commanding Earth Elementals: See Conjunction (Summoning).

Sun Blade: As *sunbeam*.

Sword of Life Stealing: Crafting or using this item requires a powers check.

Sword of the Planes: Ravenloft lurks in the Deep Ethereal, so this weapon carries a +3 bonus.

Trident of Fish Command: See Enchantment.

Well of Many Worlds: This item does not function in Ravenloft.

Altered Minor Artifacts

Book of Vile Darkness: In addition to the effects already listed, an evil divine spellcaster who reads this book gains just enough experience points to gain two experience levels. Any good character who reads the unholy text must make a Madness save (DC 15).

Sphere of Annihilation: Using the sphere to destroy a living creature requires a powers check. Casting *gate* on a sphere of annihilation cannot tear open a planar rift; the sphere merely vanishes in a massive explosion, inflicting 2d6x10 points of damage to everything within a 180-foot radius.

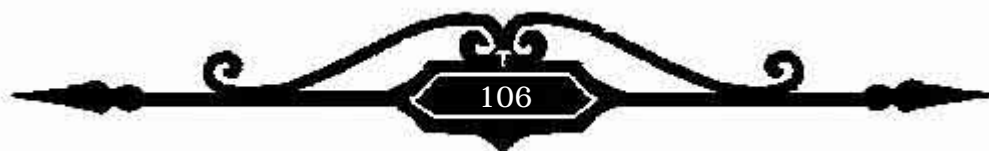
Staff of the Magi: This artifact's *plane shift* power does not function in Ravenloft. Attempting to use the power does not drain any charges.

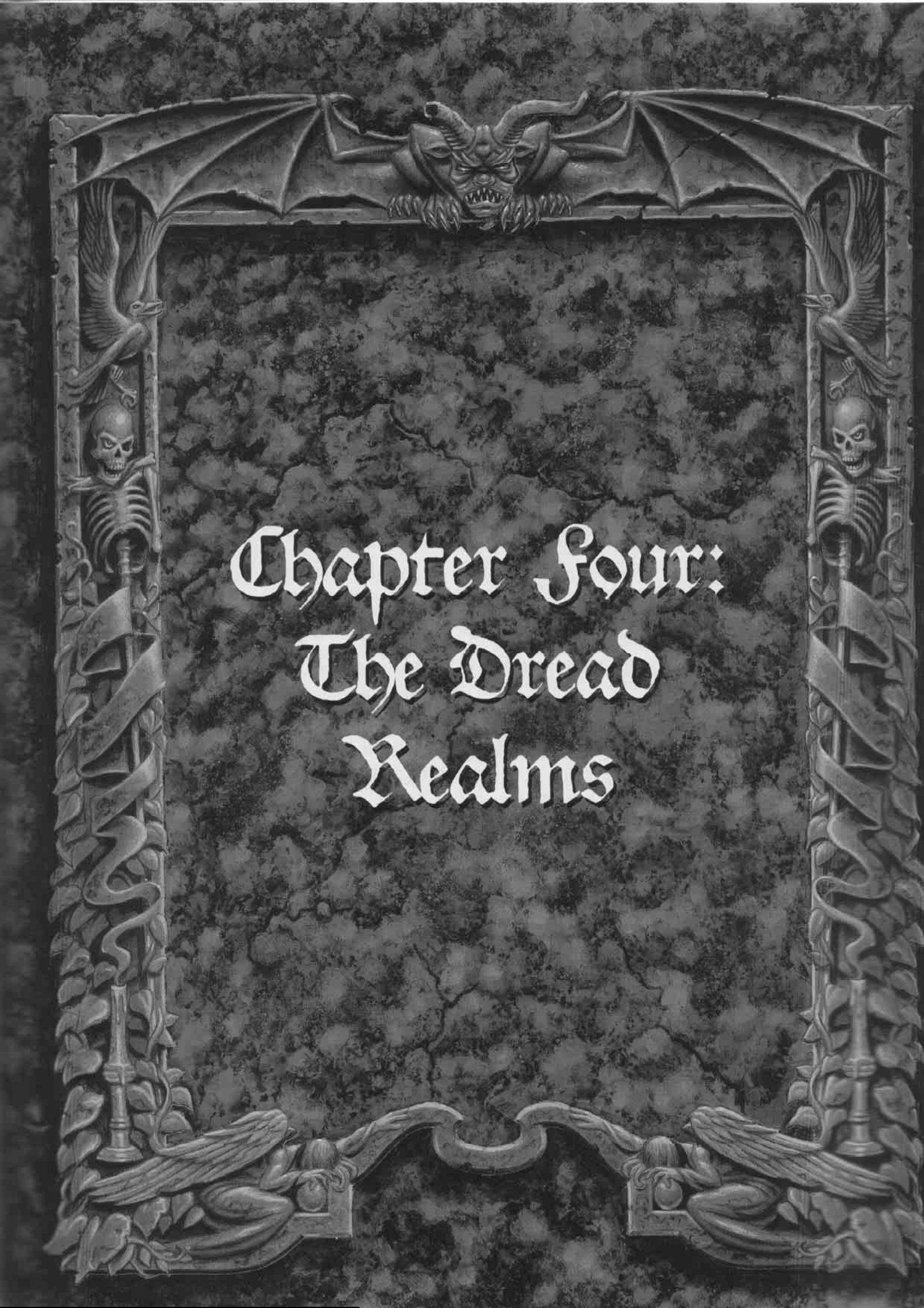
Talisman of Pure Evil: To be considered "exceptionally foul and perverse," the wielder must be a darklord or an evil outsider. Using this item requires a powers check.

Talisman of Pure Good: To be considered "exceptionally pure in thought and deed," the wielder must be Innocent. If a victim swallowed by the rift was a darklord, he or she may have prepared contingencies that will allow an eventual return from death.

Major Artifacts

Major artifacts possess amazing powers far beyond the capabilities of mortal magic. At the DM's discretion, the abilities and spell effects created by major artifacts may remain unchanged in Ravenloft. Major artifacts may even possess the power to pass through closed domain borders or burst free of Ravenloft's clutches entirely. However, evil, intelligent major artifacts may not *want* to leave.





Chapter Four:
The Dread
Realms

I have been drowning in the dark dreams of nameless gods. For five years I floated in oblivion, but now I have escaped the trap set by my tormentors.

My years of "exile" have been costly. This laboratory, Avernus, my entire kingdom, all are crumbling from neglect. Not one of my subjects was fit to assume my throne. I have always known this, even used it to my advantage. My subjects are little better than mewling brats. Without my firm hand, they would gladly slaughter each other to claim my crown. Yet not one of them understands what it is to bear a crown's weight.

My son, Irik, was no more fit than they. He had too much of his mother in him. He preached weakness and called it mercy. He offered martyrdom and called it a son's love. Yet when I demonstrated a *father's* love for his son — a *king's* love for country — he called it tyranny.

Irik was to be my heir, my legacy. Yet he never understood what it is to be a ruler of men — the terrible responsibility. He would have allowed rebels to slander him in the streets; he would have ignored the foes at our borders. His mercy would have collapsed the kingdom.

That is why I killed him. I *had* to execute my son to uphold the kingdom. But without Irik, I had no legacy. I was forced to continue my rule . . . indefinitely.

My powers are vast. If I could only escape this prison of mists I could give Irik new life — a second chance to prove himself a worthy heir. But here, my tormentors, the implacable forces that shape this realm, deny me the greatest gifts of my intellect.

I am haunted by the memory of my son. Even as I record these words, Irik's shade denies that my tormentors even exist. He claims they are my own creation, imaginary foes I have conjured up to blame for my own failings.

But Irik does not know what I know. As always, he forgets that *I* am the father and *he* the child. I have spent five years locked in darkness, at one with the land. I could not act; I could not even think; but I could listen. I could hear the living, the dead, and the land itself. And buried deep within that cacophony, I could hear the whispers of my tormentors.

I remember little and understand less of what I heard. But understand those whispers I will; I must not forget these secrets, so dearly bought. I have stolen a glimpse at knowledge my tormentors do not wish me to have. I now know that there are mysteries in this world that even my tormentors do not understand.

I do not yet comprehend what I have learned. I possess mere slivers of the truth. But it is enough simply to know that these mysteries *exist* and that they confound my tormentors.

The solution may require years of labor; it may require decades. But even if it takes centuries, I *will* solve this puzzle. My tormentors may rob me of my freedom and my magic, but they cannot steal my defiance, nor can they reduce my endless supply of time.

My tormentors will never let me go free. I understand that now. But when I understand this mystery, I will teach my tormentors that they are *not* the masters of my fate.

I will throw off their shackles. I *will* have Irik back.

I will teach my tormentors to fear.



et from those flames No light, but rather darkness visible Served only to discover sights of woe, Regions of sorrow, doleful shades where peace

And rest can never dwell, hope never comes That comes to all.

— John Milton, *Paradise Lost*

This chapter describes most of the known domains of Ravenloft. Particular attention is devoted to those domains that might be homelands for Ravenloft PCs. The catalogue that follows is by no means comprehensive. Other domains almost certainly exist, and as the ages roll on, the Land of Mists will no doubt continue to grow like a creeping cancer, spawning new lands brimming with new nightmares.

Traveling the Dread Realms

Journeying from one domain of Ravenloft to another — and even *within* the bounds of a domain — can be a perilous and maddening undertaking. The Land of Mists has its share of physical dangers, including treacherous terrain and waters, inclement weather, and wild predators. These hazards aside, overland travel often involves risks that are subtler, though just as hindering and frightening.

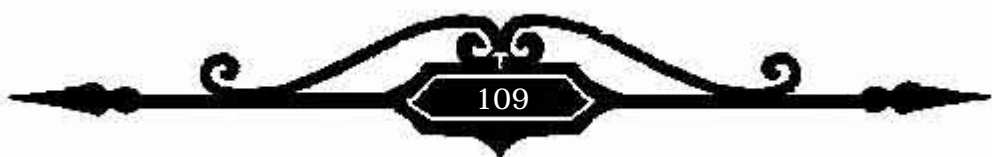
Travelers learn quickly that in the embrace of the Mists, time and distance can be meaningless. When surrounded by the roiling vapors, a dreadful numbing sensation settles over a traveler's perceptions, a chill of the mind rather than the body. The passage of time is difficult to discern, and space seems to ebb and flow around the traveler. Without open sky or landmarks, navigation is essentially impossible. Modern magnetic compasses spin in sluggish circles or stand motionless. Many travelers emerge from the Mists as if from a nightmare, convinced they have been trekking through the vapors for mere minutes or many tedious months. Inevitably, their perceptions differ widely from the reality; most journeys through the Mists take a few days, though almost any stretch of time is plausible.

For these reasons, travel between the Core, clusters, and islands is problematic. Since the dawn of history, the Vistani have traditionally served as solemn guides for Mist travelers. The gypsies seem to understand the roiling mysteries of the Mists intuitively, and though the route they follow may be long and arduous, they almost always bring their charges safely to their proper destination.

Unfortunately, securing such reliable passage has a hefty price. Merely tracking down a Vistani caravan and then convincing the gypsies to consider one's request are formidable tasks in themselves. The Vistani usually charge whatever they feel the traveler can afford, whether coin or valued possessions. Often they require their customer to complete an unfathomable and dangerous task in return for their services.

Other options do exist, however. As contact between the various domains has improved, perceptive explorers and merchants have ascertained that travel through the Mists may be unpredictable, but it is far from random. Entering the Mists along a particular bearing in a particular domain leads to the same distant location . . . more often than not. The consistency of this strategy is less than perfect, however. These so-called Mistways can lead hikers, caravans, or vessels far astray from their intended destination. For example, journeying due south from Hazlan and into the Mists usually takes a traveler to southeastern Pharazia. Occasionally, however, that same Mistway leads to eastern Vorostokov or northern Sri Raji. Particularly insidious Mistways ground seagoing vessels suddenly on dry land; one route strands ships that sail the Nocturnal Sea in Har'Akir's sands. Although many Mistways function in both directions, some do not. Canny travelers never assume that reversing their route will deliver them safely home. Despite these troublesome qualities, however, those who brave the Mists have begun to studiously chart the Mistways, recording the domains they link as well as their reliability.

Even journeys through the open countryside of a domain have their own dilemmas. While distances that separate settlements or sites are normally stable, some travelers have found that the landscape plays with their minds in devilish fashion. A woodsman might discover that a journey that normally takes only a few hours, one that he has made dozens of times in the past, suddenly necessitates an arduous trek of a week or more. Such strangeness has a tendency to manifest at the worst possible moment, such as when ravenous horrors worry a traveler's steps. Most folk believe that this phenomenon is a matter of perception, perhaps a fugue brought on by an encounter with the Mists. Surely the land itself could not be changing beneath their feet?



Charted Mistways

When a Mistway fails to deliver travelers to the expected location, it is said to have *drifted*. Most Mistways have *moderate* reliability, drifting 30% of the time. Mistways with *poor* reliability drift 50% of the time, while exceedingly rare Mistways have *excellent* reliability, drifting only 10% of the time. When a Mistway drifts, it usually leads travelers to a random location in Ravenloft, though a handful of Mistways have a perplexing habit of consistently drifting to the same point.

In recent years, explorers and mariners have identified the Mistways listed below. Conferring names on known Mistways has become a popular practice, as it allows navigators to refer to the routes unambiguously.

The Bleak Road: Southern Barovia — North-em Vorostokov (Poor Reliability, Two-Way).

The Emerald Stream: Northern Sea of Sorrows — Eastern Sri Raji (Moderate Reliability, Two-Way).

The Heretic's Egress: Southwestern G'Henna — North-Central Darkon (Moderate Reliability, Two-Way).

The Jackal's Ruse: East-Central Nocturnal Sea — Western Har'Akir (Moderate Reliability, One-Way).

Leviathan's Clutches: West-Central Sea of Sorrows — Saragoss (Excellent Reliability, One-Way).

The Path of Innocence: Southern Valachan — Northern Odiare (Poor Reliability, One-Way).

The Road of a Thousand Secrets: Southern Hazlan — Southeastern Pharazia (Moderate Reliability, Two-Way).

The Shattered Passage: Southern Kartakass — Northeastern Bluetspur (Moderate Reliability, One-Way).

The Shrouded Way: Northwestern Darkon — Southern Paridon (Moderate Reliability, Two-Way).

Via Corona: Northeastern Darkon — Eastern Nidala (Moderate Reliability, Two-Way).

The Wake of the Loa: Northwestern Nocturnal Sea — Northern Souragne (Moderate Reliability, Two-Way).

The Way of Venomous Tears: Southwestern Sea of Sorrows — Northeastern Rokushima Taiyoo (Poor Reliability, Two-Way).

Domain Format

The domain descriptions in this chapter adhere to the format outlined below.

Cultural Level: The Cultural Level of a domain describes the degree of technological and social advancement that dominates the local society. This in turn dictates what kinds of goods and services can be obtained in the domain. Some domains may have more than one Cultural Level because of size or an unusual society. See chapter 1 for descriptions of Cultural Levels and chapter 2 for guidelines on how to implement them.

Landscape: Each domain has an ecology rating, which determines how certain summoning spells function (see chapter 3). Appropriate climate and terrain categories referenced in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* and *Monster Manual* are also included. The bulk of this section provides a description of the domain's topography, vegetation, bodies of water, climate, architecture, and other notable features.

Major Settlements: The most important settlements in the domain are listed in alphabetical order with their populations. Assets and gold piece limits can be derived using the town ratings presented in chapter 4 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. Other settlements may exist in large domains but will generally be of insignificant size.

The Folk: The domain's approximate total population is given, with a breakdown by race. Unless otherwise noted, "dwarves" are hill dwarves, "elves" are high elves, "gnomes" are rock gnomes, and "halflings" are lightfoot halflings. "Other" indicates a mixture of standard nonhuman races (calibans, dwarves, elves, gnomes, half-elves, half-Vistani, and halflings) that are not explicitly cited, as well as a smattering of living, intelligent monsters that can pass for human (such as lycanthropes and doppelgangers). Undead are not included in population statistics, except in special cases; neither are full-blooded Vistani. Other special populations may be listed if they are significant (such as the goblins of Forlorn). The languages and religions of the domain are both listed in descending order of popularity. The official or dominant language(s) and religion(s), if any, are labeled with an asterisk. The rest of this section describes the physical appearance of native humans, local dress, and the general demeanor and customs of the domain's inhabitants.

The Law: This section includes the domain's form of government, its current ruler, and a description of how law and order is maintained.



Not all domains have a centralized authority, and some have no formal government at all.

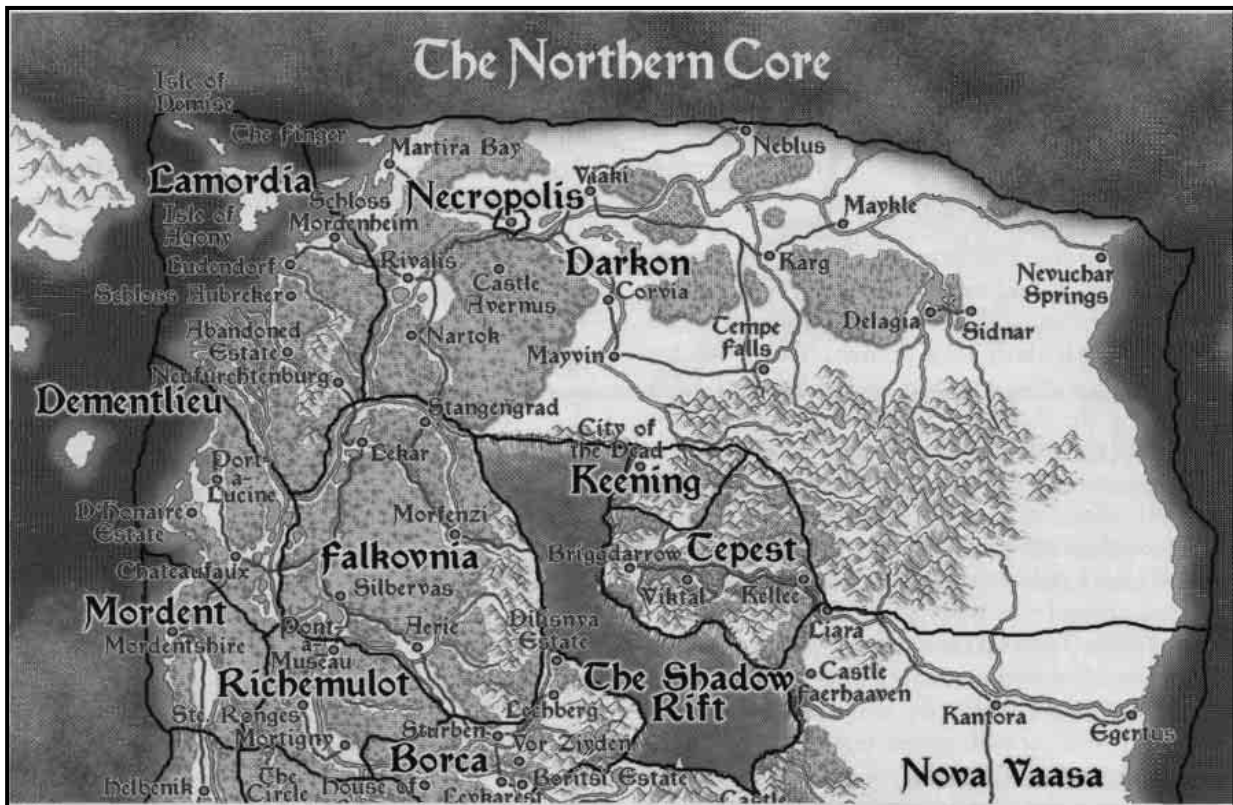
Trade and Diplomacy: This section lists the domain's important resources, including foodstuffs, raw materials, crafted items, and other more unusual assets, such as knowledge or culture. The names of local coin denominations, if any, are listed here as well. A description of the domain's relationships with other domains follows, including political, military, and economic alliances and rivalries.

Characters: This section provides guidelines for designing characters native to the domain. The classes, skills, and feats that are listed here are particularly appropriate for the domain's inhabitants; all are drawn from either the *Player's Handbook* or chapter 2 in this book. The skills Knowledge (geography) and Knowledge (local) are almost always appropriate selections for characters, regardless of domain. Feat "derivatives" refers to those feats that have the cited feat as a prerequisite. For instance, "Power Attack (plus derivatives)" includes Power Attack itself as well as Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Sunder, and Great Cleave. These classes, skills, and feats are only suggestions, there are no absolute restrictions on the options available to Ravenloft characters.

"What Domain Are YOU From?"

The term "domain" is used throughout this chapter for the sake of convenience. Here it refers to an area in the Land of Mists that is controlled by an imprisoned darklord. It is worth noting, however, that the word does not carry the same meaning for Ravenloft's inhabitants. Although they may refer to a particular domain as a "domain," folk may also call it a realm, barony, kingdom, nation, and so forth. Conversely, some domains are regarded merely as wild or haunted regions without well-defined borders or any political identity.

It is essential to remember that the natives of Ravenloft are "inside the black box." Unlike you, gentle reader, they do not have the privilege of perusing a book that presents the truth about their world. They aren't aware that the geographical and political divisions of their world are enforced by faceless, menacing powers. They don't understand that their reality operates according to principles that would be deemed mad on other worlds. And they certainly don't use such terms as "domain," "darklord," or "Ravenloft," at least in the same sense that Ravenloft players and DMs do.





Chapter Four

The Core

The Core is the most densely populated and well-traveled region in the Land of Mists. There are more known domains within the Core than there are beyond it, lending weight to its standing as the veritable center of the world. It is a rugged, temperate land characterized by both bustling villages and trackless wilderness. The Balinok Mountains are the principal geographic feature of the Core, running north to south across the center of the continent. The mysterious Shadow Rift, a yawning chasm filled with black fog, interrupts the Balinoks near the center of the Core. The Core's frontiers are defined to the north and south by the Mists, to the east by the Nocturnal Sea, and to the west by the Sea of Sorrows.

Although the landscape varies from domain to domain in the Core, some generalizations about the continent as a whole can be made. To the east of the Balinoks, densely forested river valleys and floodplains dominate, with most waterways flowing toward the Sea of Sorrows. West of the mountains, sweeping grasslands stretch out on an upland plateau to the shores of the Nocturnal Sea. The temperate climate has a regular cycle of seasons, though weather extremes are common in many domains. The Core is a region of both prosperity and misery, where a host of tyrants skulk in their dark manses and plot endlessly against one another. The villages hum with thriving commerce and intrigue, while cunning predators, both natural and aberrant, stalk the wilds.

Barovia

Cultural Level: Medieval (7).

Landscape: Full Ecology (Temperate Forests, Hills, and Mountains). Straddling the loftiest reaches of the Balinok Mountains, Barovia (ba-RO-vi-a) is a harsh, rural domain held in the grip of tyranny and superstition. Its landscape is dominated by the Balinoks, in particular by the twin snow-capped peaks of Mounts Baratok and Ghakis. The mountains run like a craggy spine down the center of the realm, spreading east and west to include the rugged hills on either side of the range. The Balinoks within Barovia are particularly treacherous, characterized by jagged outcroppings and sheer cliffs. Travel is made all the more perilous by the ice and snow that choke mountain passes nine months out of the year.

The narrow valleys that cut the slopes of the Balinoks widen to the east and west.

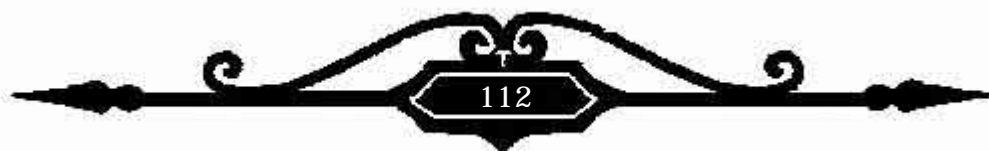
Crystalline mountain streams quickly transform into broad, mighty rivers that wind their way through the thickly forested dales. Numerous vital waterways begin their journey across the Core high in the Barovian Balinoks — the Gundar, Luna, and Nharov Rivers to the west and the Ivlis and Saniset Rivers to the east. With the exception of the upper reaches of Mounts Baratok and Ghakis, the domain is dominated by ancient forests, broken only occasionally by mossy meadows. At night, hulking wolves stalk the woods, and the skies swarm with huge, screeching bats. Lake Zarovich, one of the largest freshwater bodies in the Core, is nestled between Mounts Baratok and Ghakis, along the Old Svalich Road. This highway is the sole link between the eastern and western Core south of the Shadow Rift. Thus, despite Barovia's forbidding landscape, a surprising number of merchants and pilgrims travel through the realm each summer, urgently crossing the Balinoks before the Old Svalich becomes impassable again in late autumn.

Most buildings in Barovia are constructed of brick and dense timber that is plastered and painted deep russet or light dun. Many homes and shops are adorned with rows of mineral-flecked stones set into the plaster. The thatched rooftops are steep and set with tiny, leaden rose windows in the gables. In the spring, window boxes overflow with vivid flowers, and harvest time brings pumpkin lanterns, intended to keep the minions of evil at bay. One of the realm's most remarkable features is the ring of perpetual fog that surrounds the village of Barovia. Although Barovia's winters are long and brutal, the remainder of the year is mild, characterized by gentle precipitation and sun-dappled days.

Major Settlements: Barovia (pop. 500), Krezk (pop. 2,000), Immol (pop. 1,600), Teufeldorf (pop. 3,500), Vallaki (pop. 1,500), Zeidenburg (pop. 4,600).

The Folk: Population — 27,7000. Humans 98%, Half-Vistani 1%, Other 1%. Languages — Balok,* Luktar, Vaasi, Sithican, Forfarian, Thaani. Religions — the Morninglord,* Ezra, Hala.

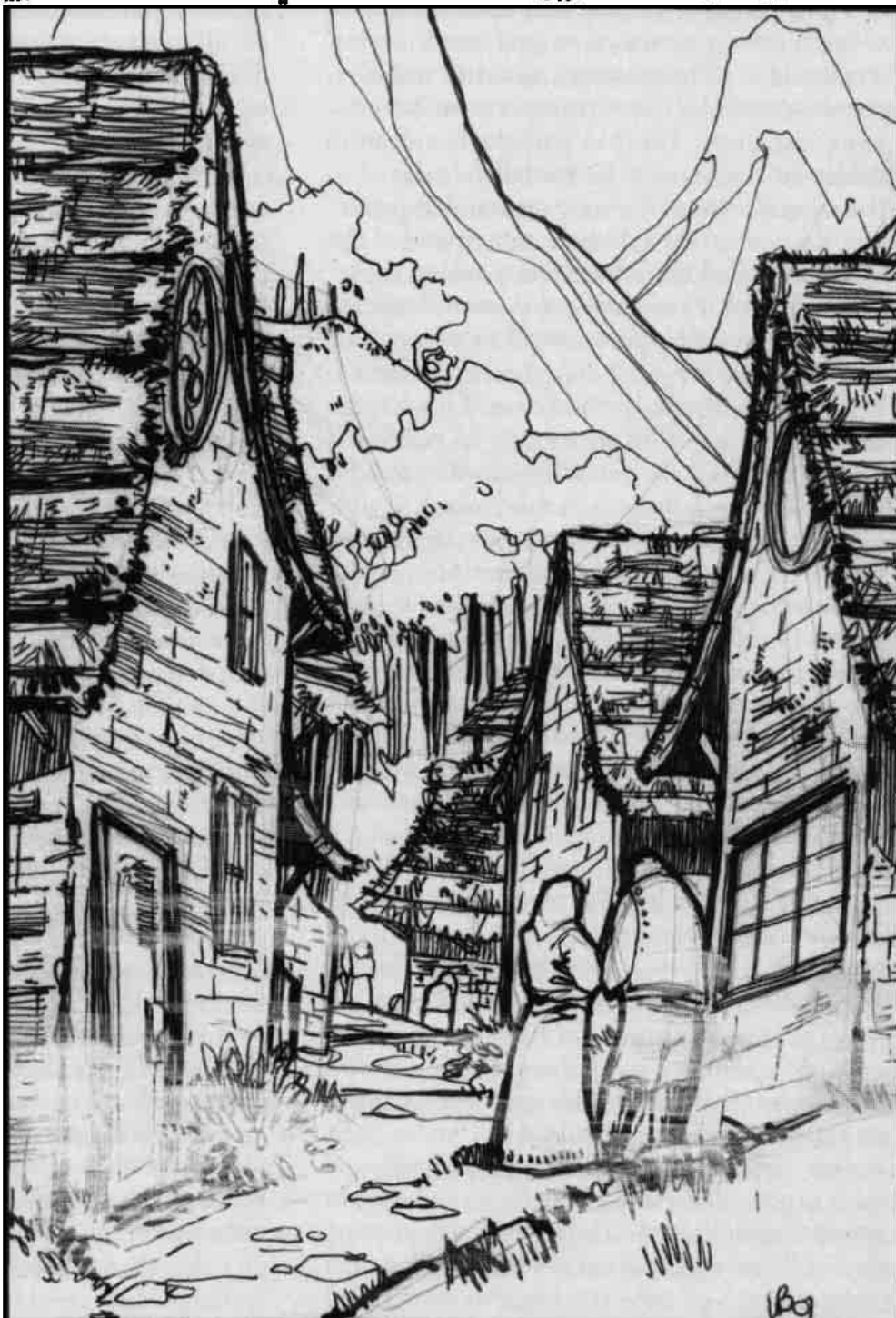
The two dominant human ethnic groups are the Barovians and the Gundarakites. Both groups tend toward thick, stocky builds with broad shoulders and wide hips. Skin tones run from pale olive-tan to light brown.



Men grow their hair to a medium length, generally to just above the shoulder. Women wear their hair long, with younger women frequently braiding their locks. Most men wear thick, drooping mustaches, though beards are common only among younger men. Barovians and Gundarakites also dress in a similar manner. Men wear loose white shirts, embroidered sheepskin vests, and dark breeches. Women wear blouses and long skirts and cover their heads with kerchiefs. Barovian women favor black, gray, and dark brown colors and wear the kerchief only when married. Gundarakite women dress in muted, natural colors, favoring yellows, greens, and blues, and wear the kerchief only when unattached.

Despite their physical similarities, Barovian-Gundarakite animosity runs deep. Since Barovia annexed Gundarak when that realm's duke was assassinated nearly twenty years ago, Gundarakites have become the second-class citizens of Barovia. Harassment and violence against Gundarakites is on the rise, and as local militias tighten control of Gundarakite movements and activities, the Gundarakites have begun to respond with sporadic resistance.

The Vistani also have a strong presence in Barovia, due in no small part to their enigmatic alliance with Barovia's ruler, Count von Zarovich.



The gypsies move with relative freedom through the realm, protected by the count himself. Two other notable ethnic groups are found exclusively in the southern village of Immol. The fair-skinned, redheaded Forfarians are descended from natives from the haunted land of Forlorn to the south. The Thaanii, who exhibit a staggering variety in their physical features, are said to be the descendents of refugees, slaves escaped from a hellish existence deep beneath the earth.



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The people of Barovia may be ethnically diverse, but as a group they are a gruff, suspicious lot. They tend to be brusque with outsiders, and even the most amicable Barovian natives are no-nonsense and severe. The dour attitude that seems to dominate Barovia may be partially attributed to the rampant fear of the supernatural that permeates the realm. The folk here are terrified of the creatures of darkness; doors and windows are securely locked at sundown, and most Barovian settlements resemble ghost towns by early evening.

The Law: Feudal hereditary monarchy. Barovia is ruled by Count Strahd von Zarovich, the most recent despot in an ancient line of feudal tyrants going back centuries. "The devil Strahd," as he is called locally, is a cruel but distant ruler, rarely taking a direct interest in the day-to-day (or perhaps night-to-night) business of his realm. Strahd leaves local governance to the *boyars* (noble landowners) and *burgomasters* (mayors), who are free to rule as they see fit. These petty but coveted positions of authority are traditionally hereditary, but turnover is high due to replacement by the count — for incompetence, weakness, or sedition — or suspicious deaths. The main duty of boyars and burgomasters is to maintain a militia, for which they collect burdensome taxes, though Strahd himself does not demand regular tribute from his people. Boyars and burgomasters also enforce the peace, appoint magistrates for civil disputes, and keep a wary eye on ambitious craft and merchant guilds.

The western foothills of Barovia have taken on a more militant atmosphere in the past two decades as Barovian boyars and burgomasters struggle to keep the Gundarakites under their thumb. Young Barovian men are paid a handsome wage to come down from the Balinoks and serve in the western militias, which are strained by growing tension between Gundarakites and the Barovian occupation. A growing resistance movement led by young Gundarakite firebrand Ardonk Szerieza is fanning the flames of resentment and bitterness.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources — wheat, corn, turnips, cabbage, potatoes, plums, sunflowers, grapes, goats, sheep, chickens, trout, pike, sausage, spirits, timber, iron, salt. Coinage — wolf-fang (gp), raven-claw (sp), rat-tooth (cp).

Although it is not formally isolationist, Barovia has limited contact with other realms. The rustic character of the land, combined with the count's reclusive and tyrannical nature, does little to stimulate outside interest in the realm.

Trade alliances between merchants in Barovia, Kartakass, and Invidia are not unheard of, however. Despite the distance between their realms, it is widely believed that Strahd and Azalin Rex, king of Darkon, despise one another.

Characters: Classes — clerics, fighters, rangers, rogues, sorcerers. Skills — Climb, Craft (blacksmithing, carpentry, weaponsmithing), Knowledge (monster lore), Profession (brewer, farmer, fisher, herdsman), Sense Motive, Use Rope, Wilderness Lore. Feats — Blind-Fight, Ethereal Empathy, Lunatic, Skill Focus (Knowledge [monster lore]), Voice of Wrath, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Borca

Cultural Level: Chivalric (8).

Landscape: Full Ecology (Temperate Forest, Hills, and Mountains). Borca (BOR-ka) is a beautiful domain scarred by betrayal and ruthlessness. The domain lies along the northwestern edge of the Balinok Mountains, in the rolling dales that stretch out beyond the icy crags of Mount Gries. Borca is a green, fertile land blanketed with wildflowers throughout the spring and summer. Ancient, verdant forests cover much of the domain, overgrown with tangled brambles and twining ivy. The trees and shrubs are heavy with nuts and fruits, and the ground is blanketed by spongy little toadstools. Most of these morsels, however, ooze with sweet-smelling toxins, a notorious feature of Borcan foodstuffs fortunately betrayed by a telltale purplish tinge. The domain is also known for its geothermal activity; hot springs bubble up from the ground everywhere, spewing steam and sulfurous fumes into the air. The Luna and Vasha Rivers flow gently east through the realm, fed by the crystalline snowmelt of the Balinoks.

Homes and shops in Borca are broad, massive buildings of plastered and whitewashed brick. The gabled rooftops are shingled in thin, charcoal-gray wood and topped with slim, knobby spires. Wooden trim of dark green or blue, carved with stylized vines and mushrooms, graces the doors and windows. Small, white marble statues of the goddess Ezra stand serenely at the entrances of many homes. The smooth stone streets of villages are narrow, shaded by the overhanging upper floors of buildings. Borca has a temperate climate, leaning toward severe winters and cool, pleasant summers.





Major Settlements: Levkarest (pop. 8,500), Lechberg (pop. 5,500), Sturben (pop. 2,000), Von Ziyden (pop. 1,200)

The Folk: Population — 34,200. Humans 95%, Halflings 4%, Other 1%. Languages — Balok,* Mordentish,* Falkovnian, Luktar, Halfling. Religions — Ezra,* Hala.

Borcans have average, athletic statures. Although blessed with delicate hands, Borcans seem to "age" quickly, given their harsh environment, with skin tones ranging from fair to creamy tan. Hair and eye color ranges widely, but dark brown is common for both. Men of all classes keep their wavy hair at a medium length, allowing it to grow wild and roguish. Women grow their hair quite long, adorning it with thin ribbons and wooden or tortoiseshell combs. Clothing is utilitarian among commoners, with men dressing in loose shirts and trousers and women in blouses and medium-length skirts. Dull earth tones are the norm in such humble garb. Nobles, on the other hand, dress in baroque Dementlieuse fashions, though they shy from bright colors, preferring a black and white scheme accented with silver jewelry. Commoners and nobles alike don more colorful clothing exclusively for festivals.

As a people, Borcans have a sullen air about them, an attitude that has permeated all aspects of daily life. This is largely due to the crushing taxation most folk endure, combined with the cruel, arbitrary rule of Borca's mistress. The oppression has worn down what was once a lusty, life-loving attitude among Borcans, leaving a defeated people who go about their business with a resigned fatalism. A weary, pained look clings to their features; they shuffle through their tasks as if afflicted by a numbing poison. Their only respite is the grace of the goddess Ezra, whose largest and most influential sect of clerics goes forth from the Great Cathedral of Levkarest.

The Law: Pseudofeudal despotism. Ivana Boritsi, commonly known as the Black Widow, is the current mistress of Borca. Having inherited the rule from her mother, Camille, who met an unexpected death, Ivana's only political interest seems to be indulging herself at her subjects' expense. Her sobriquet is derived from her infamous fatal romances, as Ivana's lovers have a habit of ending their lives in her bedchamber. Although the realm is ostensibly governed under a feudal system, Ivana is the only true landowner, with all citizens in direct vassalage to her. Borca's prominent aristocracy is a mere plaything for

Ivana; nobles enjoy their status only as long as it pleases the Black Widow. Ivana grants and revokes noble titles erratically, creating perpetual flux in the makeup of the Borcan nobility.

Ivana demands severe taxes from her nobles of the moment, who in turn demand tribute from the commoners. Prominent nobles retain enforcers to collect these taxes, but it is the notoriously corrupt forces of Ivana's cousin, Ivan Dilisnya, that maintain order in Borca. Ivan is the only noble who seems to resist Ivana's cruel whims, and the only Borcan who truly holds his own estate. Curiously, however, there is rumored to be little love lost between the cousins.

Little more than glorified thugs and leg breakers, Ivan's enforcers never pass up an opportunity to extort the meager money Borcans have to their names. Protection rackets are an epidemic, with payment required from anyone unfortunate enough to run into a roving band of Dilisnya enforcers. Bribery is required merely to prevent a business from being vandalized or to keep enough food to live through the winter. There is virtually no criminal or civil law in Borca, save what can be bought through dirty coin.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources — wheat, rye, corn, potatoes, apricots, sheep, cattle, chickens, beer, wine, timber, iron, copper, lead, salt, marble, leather goods, usury, culture. Coinage — nightshade (gp), hemlock (sp), foxglove (cp).

Despite the corruption that plagues Borca, the realm is politically and culturally active. Although it is not the cultural equal of Dementlieu, Borca does export its rich traditions of visual arts, music, and architecture to other realms. Ivana has overseen the establishment of a trading alliance with the neighboring realms of Dementlieu, Mordent, and Richemulot. This has kept foreign wealth flowing into Borca, and thus into Ivana's coffers. The four realms have also arranged a mutual defense pact to protect against the military aggressions of Falkovnia to the north. Borca is further plagued by clandestine incursions of Vistani-hunting mercenaries from Invidia. Although the gypsies are not loved in Borca, Ivan Dilisnya has warned that further threats to Borcan sovereignty will result in armed retaliation.

Characters: Classes — bards, clerics, fighters, rogues. Skills — Alchemy, Bluff, Craft (leatherworking, painting, sculpture, stonemasonry), Forgery, Intimidate, Knowledge (architecture and engineering, nature, nobility and royalty), Profession (apothecary, herbalist, scribe),





(Sense Motive, Feats — Dodge (plus derivatives), Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearms), Jaded, Skill Focus (Alchemy), Voice of Wrath, Weapon Focus (dagger, pistol).

Darkon

Cultural Level: Dark Age (5) to Chivalric (8). Darkon's Cultural Level ranges from Chivalric along the Jagged Coast and the edges of the Forest of Shadows to Dark Age in the wildest regions of the Mountains of Misery.

Landscape: Full Ecology (Temperate Forests, Hills, Plains, Mountains, and Swamps). Darkon (DAR-kon), one of the largest domains in the Core, is a land of legend steeped in intrigue, terror, and magic. Stretching across the entire northern third of the continent, the domain encompasses an astonishing variety of landscapes. In the west, the Sea of Sorrows laps at Darkon's shore, while the domain's eastern edge ends at the frigid shores of the Nocturnal Sea. North of Darkon lies the vast expanse of the Mists, which roil and shift much more chaotically than elsewhere in the Core. Thus the bleak northern frontier, known as the Mistlands, is constantly in flux.

The Mountains of Misery overlook all of southeastern Darkon, crowned by the barren volcanic peaks of Mounts Nirka and Nyid. Rugged and trackless, the mountains are surrounded by broken badlands that sprawl far to the west. The rest of the eastern half of Darkon is dominated by the Vale of Tears, a wide, rolling floodplain dotted with small, shadowy woodlands. Darkon's eastern shore is cold and bleak, a flat, wind-beaten coastline featuring only slim, sandy beaches.

Western Darkon is a thickly forested floodplain broken by the central Boglands and the western Jagged Coast. The Forest of Shadows enshrouds most of the region, a menacing wood so ancient and dense that no light can reach the forest floor. The Boglands consist of patchy marshes surrounding the dark depths of the Great Salt Swamp. The Jagged Coast is a harsh, rocky shore region riddled with caves and possessing only the sparsest vegetation. The coast is a maze of tiny islands and hidden coves, and the Sea of Sorrows itself is storm ridden along Darkon's shores.

Darkon is etched with a web of prominent waterways, most flowing into the mighty Vuchar River as it rushes westward. Numerous freshwater and saline lakes dot the landscape as well, most in the Mountains of Misery and the Boglands.

Darkon's villages exhibit dazzling variety in their architecture; each settlement is graced with a unique style that complements its surroundings. The folk of Corvia, for instance, have hollowed out the massive stone buttes of their village to create homes and shops. The metropolis of Il Aluk, once the jewel of Darkon, is now a damned city so inhospitable to life that it has been rechristened Necropolis. The climate in Darkon is temperate tending toward extremes, with harsh winters, hot summers, and brief but pleasant springs and autumns.

Major Settlements: Corvia (pop. 4,400), Delagia (pop. 1,500), Karg (pop. 8,500), Martira Bay (pop. 10,400), Maykle (pop. 2,600), Mayvin (pop. 1,500), Nartok (pop. 7,500), Neblus (pop. 2,900), Nevuchar Springs (pop. 1,100), Rivalis (pop. 5,500), Sidnar (pop. 1,400), Tempe Falls (pop. 2,500), Viaki (pop. 8,900).

The Folk: Population — 117,300. Humans 75%, Halflings 14%, Gnomes 5%, Elves 3%, Half-Elves 1%, Dwarves 1%, Other 1%. Languages — Darkonese,* Halfling, Gnome, Elven, Dwarven, Falkovnian, Lamordian, Mordentish, Tepestani, Vaasi. Religions — the Eternal Order,* Ezra.

The Darkonians have no common physical appearance; nearly every conceivable combination of stature, facial features, and skin, eye, and hair colors can be observed among them. Skin tones tend slightly toward fair to light tan, but this is hardly the norm. Despite this variety, all Darkonians tend to dress in practical garb, with men favoring a tunic and breeches and women a blouse and skirt. Earthen colors are preferred. Among nobles, both genders pride themselves on their elaborate cloaks and long boots and gloves.

The diverse Darkonians nevertheless take pride in their common heritage. Indeed, outsiders who settle in Darkon often find forgotten roots in the region, lending credence to the theory that Darkon was perhaps a historical crossroads for many far-flung lands. The principal shared trait among the Darkonese is an almost fatalistic fear of the undead. Local legends speak of an Hour of the Ascension, when generations of the deceased will rise from the grave and claim Darkon from the living. All Darkonians are raised to believe and fear this apocalyptic scenario.

Perhaps because of the relatively large population of dwarves, elves, gnomes, and halflings in Darkon, prejudice against nonhuman races is not as widespread here as in other domains.





Although races still tend to congregate with their own kind, the purely reactionary fear or hatred of nonhumans that dominates so much of the Land of Mists is largely absent in Darkon.

The Law: Feudal hereditary monarchy. The grim wizard-king Azalin Rex, newly restored to his throne in Castle Avernus, rules Darkon with an iron fist in a velvet glove. For nearly five years, Azalin was missing, vanished in the wake of the Requiem. He has only recently reappeared and is quickly moving to reestablish the firm rule he once enjoyed over his realm. Azalin governs harshly but has set up a strong feudal base for his monarchy. A powerful baron rules each major settlement and the surrounding region, governing as he sees fit. Barons are free to have their own vassals, set local laws, appoint magistrates, and control trade in their lands. Local militias are conscripted in most settlements to keep the peace. Barons and lesser nobles also have their own personal forces, ranging from a contingent of bodyguards to a small private army.

Azalin demands regular tribute from his vassals but little else, preferring to spend his time in arcane pursuits rather than politics. The wizard-king's presence among his subjects is strongly felt, however, due in no small part to his secret police, the Kargat. Organized according to a pyramidal, secretive hierarchy, the Kargat are greatly feared among the Darkonians. They monitor the activities of nobles and guilds, spy on other domains, and carry out Azalin's own inscrutable plots. They are immune to baronial law and answer to no one but their immediate superiors and Azalin himself.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources — wheat, barley, rye, oats, hops, potatoes, carrots, cabbage, grapes, hogs, sheep, cattle, goats, chickens, dairy, herring, cod, flounder, sausage, beer, wine, timber, peat, gold, silver, copper, iron, lead, salt, gems, cloth, ceramics, perfumes, ships, arcane knowledge. Coinage — crown (pp), skull (gp), bone (sp), chip (cp).

Darkon is arguably the most powerful domain in the entire Core, and with Azalin's return it will likely remain so for some time. Although other realms may contribute more to the culture of the Core, Darkon is a true political, military, and economic kingdom, exerting its influence to achieve power and wealth. It does brisk trade with virtually all of the realms to the south, though the transformation of II Aluk into Necropolis has stymied traffic on the Vuchar River and its tributaries. Only the realm of Falkovnia has a

persistent adversarial relationship with Darkon, though trade continues along the highways that join the realms. Perennial invasion attempts by Falkovnian forces are always repelled, chillingly enough, by hordes of undead that rise to protect Darkon from the mortal invaders.

Characters: Classes — bards, clerics, fighters, rogues, wizards. Skills — Alchemy, Bluff, Craft (armorsmithing, blacksmithing, bowmaking, gemcutting, locksmithing, shipmaking, stonema-sonry, weaponsmithing), Diplomacy, Gather Information, Knowledge (arcana, monster lore), Perform (buffoonery, chant, harp, lute, shalm), Profession (farmer, fisher, miner, sailor, scribe). Feats — Blind-Fight, Cold One, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearms), Ghostsight, Haunted, Run, Skill Focus (Knowledge [monster lore]).

Dementlieu

Cultural Level: Renaissance (9).

Landscape: Full Ecology (Temperate Forests and Plains). The coastal domain of Dementlieu (DAY-mon-lyoo) is a bastion of civilization in the Core, a land of secrets and hidden loyalties. The domain lies on a broad, green floodplain dappled with lush woodlands and heaths. The realm's western shore along the Sea of Sorrows is blessed with numerous natural ports, including glittering Pernault Bay. Although the terrain is flat, Dementlieu's soil is sandy, and crop yields tend to be low, with stunted plants and small fruits. Scattered, sun-dappled forests cover the regions that agriculture has not claimed. The coastline is edged with rolling, sand dune beaches. The Musarde River meanders north through the domain, peeping the eastern countryside with oxbow lakes.

Dementlieu's highways bustle with activity, funneling people and wealth toward Port-a-Lucine. The buildings in the domain are tall and narrow, densely packed edifices of dull brown stone that loom over the narrow, twisting village streets. Windows and doorways are trimmed with white-washed wood, and the shallow, gabled rooftops are shingled in rich, dark brown wood. Towers are crowned with elegant stone ornaments and statues of legendary artists and civic leaders. Dementlieu's climate, blessedly mild, is characterized by frequent precipitation and moderate temperatures. Severe winters and sweltering summers are not unheard of, however.





Chapter Four

Major Settlements: Chateaufaux (pop. 1,500), Port-a-Lucine (pop. 5,400).

The Folk: Population — 13,600. Humans 94%, Halflings 3%, Other 2%. Languages — Mordentish,* Lamordian, Falkovnian, Halfling. Religions: Ezra.*

The Dementlieuse tend toward slim but athletic builds and strong features and high cheekbones. Skin tones range from very pale to olive-tan, while eye color ranges from pale blue to green to dark brown. Hair is usually dark blond to light brown in color, with the occasional auburn. Beards and mustaches are common among men but always kept neatly trimmed and styled. Women never cut their hair short; noblewomen pin up their locks very meticulously, while poor women braid their hair. Clothing is important to the Dementlieuse, especially among the nobility. Commoner men wear dark woolen trousers and light cotton shirts and don cloth caps whether inside or outdoors. Gentlemen prefer breeches and silk shirts with tailed coats, as well as tall black hats. Wigs are considered proper for men in public life. Commoner and noble women alike wear long, dark dresses with high-button boots and always wear hats when outdoors. Women of the lower classes wear simple bonnets, but the hat of a noblewoman is large and elaborate. Black, white, and shades of gray are favored for day-to-day life, but for special occasions the nobles try to outdo one another with opulent, brightly colored formalwear.

The Dementlieuse believe themselves to be a highly civilized people. They appreciate beauty and learning in all its forms, and their society is structured according to rigid etiquette. Adherence to decorum is vital, and those who overstep the delicate balance between deference and bravado find themselves scorned. The Dementlieuse believe that their advanced society has earned them a place of respect among the civilized realms of the world, and they say so openly. Not all outsiders are so grateful for Dementlieu's contributions, and many folk consider the Dementlieuse to be shiftless fops who produce nothing of value. Arcane magic is an accepted facet of life in Dementlieu, though its place in society is hardly respectable. Magic is seen as a quaint distraction, primarily useful as entertainment. Most wizards are stage performers rather than powerful sages, the vast majority being enchanters or illusionists.

The Law: Aristocratic republic. Marcel Guignol serves as the lord-governor of Dementlieu,

advised by the five-member Council of Brilliance from the capital at Port-a-Lucine. Dementlieu has a complex and multifaceted aristocratic society, though the feudal system has long since dissolved. True power still rests in the hands of the most powerful noble families. The realm's nobles elect the lord-governor for life, though dissatisfied nobles may have him deposed and hold a new election. The lord-governor is free to select his own advisers for the Council of Brilliance, but the nobles often firmly suggest candidates.

The lord-governor's duties include writing and enforcing laws, promoting the arts, administrating the realm's public institutions, appointing criminal judges and civil magistrates, and personally adjudicating important trials. Voluntary conscription is organized by the lord-governor to provide a militia for all settlements, though most nobles have much better trained and armed troops in their personal retinues. Port-a-Lucine has the added protection of Alanik Ray, a renowned elven investigator who lends his skills to the city's watch on occasion.

Despite Dementlieu's powerful aristocracy, there is a pervasive tradition of the wealthy providing for the needy. Accordingly, there exists an extensive network of food distribution and housing for the poor, sponsored by the realm's nobility. Literacy is seen as very important, and even the poorest children are taught to read and write. Despite the progressive appearance, Dementlieu's lower classes still wallow in desperate poverty and unspeakable crime. The nobles, meanwhile, believe that their benevolence gives them the right to use and abuse the poor at their whim.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources — potatoes, wheat, barley, apples, grapes, cattle, dairy, herring, sardines, wine, timber, cloth, weapons, books, ships, culture, scientific knowledge. Coinage — corona (pp), solar (gp), lunar (sp), bit (cp).

In spite of its small size, Dementlieu is a powerful and respected realm. Culture is Dementlieu's chief export; Dementlieuse trends in painting, sculpture, music, fashion, poetry, literature, and cuisine quickly spread throughout the Core. Dementlieuse scientists and craftsmen have developed numerous coveted technologies, introducing other lands to such wonders as movable type, the magnetic compass, optics, explosives, and miniaturized clockworks.

Dementlieu wields its cultural and technological supremacy as another realm might wield an



The Dread Realms

army, exerting a great deal of influence on the culture of other lands. The domain has a trade alliance with the neighboring realms of Borca, Mordent, and Richemulot that has only increased its influence on those lands. It also participates in a mutual defense pact with the same realms to protect against potential aggressions from Falkovnia.

Characters: Classes — bards, clerics, fighters, rogues, sorcerers, wizards. Skills — Appraise, Bluff, Craft (bookbinding, calligraphy, gunsmithing, locksmithing, painting, sculpture, shipmaking, weaving), Diplomacy, Hypnosis, Knowledge (arcane, nobility and royalty), Perform (ballad, dance, drama), Pick Pocket, Profession (cook, fisher, sailor, scribe), Spellcraft, Swim. Feats — Ethereal Empathy, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearms), Ghostsight, Open Mind, Reincarnated, Weapon Finesse (pistol, rapier).

Falkovnia

Cultural Level: Medieval (7).

Landscape: Full Ecology (Temperate Forests and Plains). Falkovnia (fol-KOV-ni-a) is a sinister realm crushed by the iron fist of military tyranny. It is a region of rolling lowlands swathed in dark forests. The woods are wild, shadowy places filled

with vicious predators and unspeakable horrors. The towering trees of Falkovnia have bark so dark it is nearly black. In the eastern parts of the realm, dead trees are unusually common. Stripped of leaves and bark, they stand bleached white like driftwood. Falkovnian legend says that a tree dies for every person executed by the realm's merciless ruler. The realm's mighty forests are slowly shrinking as the fertile land is cleared for agriculture. Grain is an important export in Falkovnia, and in the late summer, the countryside transforms into fields of swaying gold. Tributaries of the Musarde River skirt the borders of Falkovnia but do not penetrate the dark interior. Lake Kriegvogel, with its abyssal waters of midnight blue, is the domain's only notable body of freshwater.

Falkovnia's cities are dark and unfriendly, free of any aesthetic sensibility whatsoever. Homes and shops are squat, efficient structures of unfinished timber and brick stacked densely next to one another. Stone city walls and fortresses are towering, gray, and featureless. Garbage, offal, and mud cover every surface, and the air swarms with horseflies and yellow jackets. Falkovnia's climate is one of extremes, characterized by bitter winters and hot, humid summers.





The realm has a serious problem with disease, especially during the summer and in the congested cities.

Major Settlements: Aerie (pop. 2,600), Lekar (pop. 15,900), Morfenzi (pop. 1,500), Silverbas (5,800), Stangengrad (pop. 6,500)

The Folk: Population — 64,300. Humans 93%, Halflings 2%, Half-Elves 2%, Gnomes 1%, Elves 1%, Other 1%. Languages — Falkovnian,* Darkonese, Balok, Mordentish, Halfling, Gnome, Elven, Dwarven. Religions — Hala, Ezra.

Falkovnians are fair skinned and usually visibly underfed and overworked. Dark blond to medium brown hair is typical, as are hazel to deep brown eyes, though green eyes are not unheard of. Men wear their hair in savage crew cuts, while women grow their hair long, wild, and unkempt. Falkovnians dress in deliberately drab clothing; to stand out is to draw the attention of the realm's soldiers, which can mean death or worse. Dull earthen colors are common, with men favoring tunics and breeches and women blouses and long skirts. Most commoners wear rag wrappings instead of shoes. Folk who do not belong to the soldiery are usually filthy with mud, dung, lice, and fleas. All Falkovnians are branded on their foreheads at birth with the ruler's seal, a hawk's head. This clearly identifies Falkovnians in other lands and reminds every citizen of his true status: property.

Falkovnians are a downtrodden lot. Overtaxed and overburdened, they have little to look forward to but death. The unending horrors of military brutality have eroded any sense of beauty or hope they once harbored in their hearts. Some acquire a brutal personality, taking on the qualities of their military oppressors. Most Falkovnians, however, are simply passive and just a little paranoid. They tend to be reticent and inhumanly jaded to violence and gore.

If life in Falkovnia is cruel for humans, it is a nightmare for nonhumans. Although Falkovnia has almost no native nonhuman races, all those who pass through the region are slapped into irons. Such "subhuman" races are considered state property, to be treated as chattel slaves. To breed out the taint of nonhuman blood, racial intermarriage is encouraged by the state, though Falkovnian custom forbids it. Those unfortunates with only one human parent are also deemed state property.

The Law: Military despotism. Vlad Drakov, the mercenary-king, rules Falkovnia with an iron hand. Drakov is infamous not only for perennial

aggression against his neighbors, but his unwavering cruelty toward his own people. A restless and bloodthirsty warrior, Drakov seems to oppress his people simply for the sake of doing so, just to see how monstrous he can be. It is widely known that he is a sadist; he is said to demand a nightly execution by impalement to accompany his evening meal.

Falkovnia is a military state, pure and simple. There is no civilian government or police force. There is no true aristocracy; soldiers are the highest social class. Drakov's army not only maintains the peace, but also oversees nearly every aspect of public life. Military tribunals conduct all trials, and justice is universally swift and harsh. Punishments are usually shocking public displays of torture and execution, crowned with the unspeakable practice of hanging the bodies of slain criminals to rot on city walls.

Not every individual in the army is a warrior. Bureaucrats and other civil servants also receive military commissions and titles. Falkovnians, however, reserve their greatest hatred and fear for the Talons, Drakov's elite soldiers. Shock troops with a fanatical loyalty to their lord, the Talons are themselves cruel sadists and are whispered to possess nearly supernatural battle prowess.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources — wheat, oats, barley, hops, rye, potatoes, cattle, hogs, dairy, falcons, beer, dye, timber, salt, weapons. Coinage — falconhead (gp), falconclaw (sp), falconeye (cp).

Falkovnia produces a tremendous amount of grain, especially wheat, and it is rapidly solidifying a position as the breadbasket of the Core. Falkovnian merchants — guarded by Falkovnian soldiers, of course — maintain trade outposts throughout the domains of the Core. The exportation of cereals generates a king's ransom for Drakov, which he then uses to fund the maintenance of the army.

This vital contribution aside, Vlad Drakov has made it quite clear that his is to be a throne of conquest. The mercenary-king has tried his hand at invading every bordering realm at one time or another, but without success. Nearly every campaign has met with disaster — some spectacularly so — which only enrages Drakov further. It may be that Falkovnian conquest is destined to fail. Regardless, the realms of Mordent, Dementlieu, Borca, and Richemulot have agreed to a mutual defense pact to safeguard against future Falkovnian aggression.





Characters: Fighters, rangers, rogues, wizards. Skills — Bluff, Craft (armorsmithing, blacksmithing, weaponsmithing), Handle Animal, Hide, Intimidate, Move Silently, Profession (brewer, lumberjack, stable hand), Wilderness Lore. Feats — Back to the Wall, Great Fortitude, Improved Critical, Jaded, Run, Toughness, Weapon Focus (bastard sword).

Forlorn

Cultural Level: Iron Age (3). Ruins in Forlorn reflect a Medieval (7) culture.

Landscape: Full Ecology (Temperate Forests, Hills, and Plains). Forlorn (for-LORN) is a blasted highland domain, a forsaken land from which humanity has long been driven. Nestled just south of the Balinok Mountains, Forlorn is a land of thickly forested uplands with sparse heather and mosses clinging to the exposed rocky hillsides. The woods are dark, twisted places full of grasping branches and ominous shadows. In some areas, the forest has been actively destroyed by the land's goblin inhabitants, reduced to a wasteland of broken stumps and sucking mud. The Maw of Arawn, rising from the center of Forlorn, is a jagged peak that perpetually belches noxious vapors. The only notable body of water is the Lake of Red Tears, whose deep, dark waters appear crimson when the sun reflects off the nearby red granite cliffs.

Major Settlements: None.

The Folk: Population — unknown; 1,900 goblins. Languages — unknown. Religions — unknown.

Forlorn is not a settled land. The primary inhabitants are goblins, horrid humanoid creatures that value little but strength and slaughter. Although generally lawless, the goblins do pursue some organized goals, particularly the systematic destruction of the land's forests. They otherwise occupy themselves with petty power struggles, distracted only by the occasional captive outsider, whom they gleefully torture and devour. Rumors persist of a tiny contingent of humans remaining in Forlorn, descendants of an ancient order of druids. If such humans exists, then they have concealed their presence quite well, perhaps out of fear of the goblin clans.

The Law: No formal government. There exists a loose clan system among Forlorn's goblins. Each clan has a distinctive tartan pattern, which the goblins display on tattered kilts and standards. An outsider would be hard pressed to tell one clan

apart from the others, however. The strongest goblin in a clan dominates its weaker kin until toppled by a challenger. Clans battle among themselves for resources, prestige, and pure sport. The goblins' tenacious destruction of Forlorn's forests leads some outsiders to speculate that the goblins serve a hidden master. Rumors abound that creatures far more terrifying than the goblins haunt the crumbling castle above the Lake of Red Tears.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources (not exploited) — timber, iron, clay, salt. Coinage — none.

Forlorn is an untamed land, a dark and mysterious corner of the Core to its neighbors. The goblins have no interest in communication or trade with the surrounding realms. Indeed, lumberjacks and miners have made occasional forays into Forlorn in search of its unclaimed resources; none have ever returned.

Characters: None.

Hazlan

Cultural Level: Medieval (7).

Landscape: Full Ecology (Temperate Hills, Mountains, and Plains). Hazlan (HAZ-lun) is a domain of ancient magic and severe oppression, lying in the extreme southeast of the Core, at the southern end of the Balinok Mountains. The Hazlani Balinoks are rugged but traversable, though vegetation is sparse and landslides are not uncommon. The dusty cliffs and canyons slope downward to a sweeping landscape of knolls and valleys stretching off to the horizon. Massive blocks of golden stone and half-buried statuary hint at a forgotten era. Mineral springs, common in the foothills, are warm pools of jade-green water encrusted with alkali salts. Farther eastward, the foothills become dry plains blanketed by brown grasses and briars. Herds of sheep wander the lonely plains, their bleating carried weakly on the breezes. Occasional stands of trees dot the grasslands, but overall Hazlan is a land of open sky and trackless terrain.

The poorer Rashemani majority dwells in simple, squat structures of whitewashed brick. Roofs are flat and facades are unadorned, though tiny, dutifully tended vegetable gardens grow alongside many homes. The estates of the wealthy Mulan, by comparison, are sprawling, opulent abodes. Magnificent edifices of polished gray, pink, and russet stone are surrounded by serene gardens of poppy flowers and bubbling fountains. Delicate latticework covers the tiny, rounded windows.





Towering minarets and domes inlaid with intricate mosaics sparkle in the sun. Hazlan has a generally mild but temperate climate featuring long, hot summers and short, wet winters. Although the Balinoks are capped with snow, truly frigid weather is rare elsewhere in the realm.

Major Settlements: Ramulai (300), Sly-Var (4,500), Toyalis (8,200).

The Folk: Population — 26,100. Humans 92%, Halflings 4%, Gnomes 3%, Other 1%. Languages — Vaasi,* Halfling, Gnome, Balok. Religions — the Lawgiver,* Hala.

The Hazlani can be divided into two distinct ethnic groups: the Rashemani and the Mulan. The Rashemani make up 99% of the human population and are considered the lower class. They have short, muscular statures and skin that ranges from light olive-tan to a deep, ruddy bronze. Hair color is usually dark brown or black, and eye color is almost always dark brown. Men keep their hair wild and wear bushy beards, while women work their long tresses into elaborate braids. Both genders dress in baggy trousers, tunics, or smocks and prefer earthy colors highlighted with dark reds, blues, and greens.

The upper-class Mulan are tall and slim with angular features and fine cheekbones. Their skin is pale and sallow, their eyes gray or light hazel. Mulan hair is naturally a dark blond, but both genders ritually shave their heads daily. They also remove what little body hair they have and cover their skin with elaborate tattoos. Men and women wear distinct designs by tradition, and receiving one's first tattoo is a sign of adulthood among the Mulan. Both genders wear cloth wrappings instead of trousers or breeches and swath themselves in luxurious scarlet robes. Women wear vests, but men prefer to go about bare chested. Soft slippers and baroque jewelry complete the ensemble.

The Hazlani are hard-edged people with a deep sense of pride. Most are raised in the church of the Lawgiver, which tends to instill both a fatalistic streak and a somewhat cruel nature. Rashemani are practical and gruff, preferring actions to words. The Mulan, meanwhile, are generally arrogant and paranoid and obsessed with protecting their place at the top of society. Years of nervous submission under Hazlik's cruel eye have turned the Rashemani and Mulan alike into distrustful and suspicious folk. They have learned to be wary of others' motives and tend to regard everyone they meet as cold rivals or outright enemies.

The Rashemani react with stubbornness, refusing to submit to those without authority to back up their strength. The Mulan, meanwhile, become livid with rage when their demands are not met in a prompt fashion.

The Law: Feudal ethnocratic despotism. Hazlan's ruler is the Mulan wizard-tyrant Hazlik, who holds power through sheer ruthlessness and arcane might. Although he rules under no mandate, Hazlik has established something resembling a feudal state, with a council of Mulan governors overseeing various regions in his realm. Each governor is personally responsible for enforcing Hazlik's decrees, collecting taxes, and keeping the peace. The governors appoint other Mulan to help administer their territories, granting land and minor titles in return for shared culpability. Although there is the appearance of law in Hazlan, it is the byzantine system of boons and favors among the Mulan that usually determines who can obtain justice. The Rashemani are stranded on the outside of this system, unable to participate except when it is strategically expedient for the Mulan to involve them.

There is no state military in Hazlan. Each Mulan family recruits a personal group of Rashemani soldiers, resulting in several hundred small corps of bodyguards, each in the service of a different master. Hazlik, for his part, has no interest in the politics of his own people, instead concentrating on his magical research. While the arcane arts were once outlawed in Hazlan, Hazlik has since institutionalized them. His wizard academy in Ramulai trains the most promising young apprentices, molding them to Hazlik's own mysterious purposes.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources — wheat, barley, corn, cotton, olives, grapes, hazelnuts, opium, tea, goats, sheep, cattle, honey, copper, lead, iron, leather goods, cloth, arcane knowledge. Coinage — soulorb (gp), moondagger (sp), bloodpenny (cp).

Hazlan is an insular domain where the folk are more concerned with their own squabbles than events in distant lands. The land's reputation as a place of magical power, however, draws the curious and the foolish. Hazlik apparently has little interest in making allies with his neighbors and is known to use captured spies for magical experimentation. Hazlan conducts some trade with Nova Vaasa and the Barovian village of Immol, but the Hazlani are generally not eager to invite outsiders to their realm.



The Dread Realms

Characters: Classes — clerics, fighters, rogues, wizards. Skills — Alchemy, Climb, Craft (calligraphy, leatherworking, weaving), Knowledge (arcana), Profession (apothecary, farmer, herdsman, scribe, stable hand, tanner), Ride, Spellcraft. Feats — Combat Casting, Mounted Combat (plus derivatives), Spell Focus (Divination), Toughness, Voice of Wrath, Weapon Focus (falchion).

Invidia

Cultural Level: Chivalric (8).

Landscape: Full Ecology (Temperate Forests and Hills). Nestled in the heart of the southwestern Core, Invidia (in-VID-i-a) is a land where passions are easily inflamed and daggers are drawn with little provocation. Cut by the murky waters of the Gundar and Musarde Rivers, the land stretches out largely unspoiled, broken only by the occasional farm or vineyard peeking through the thick, old-growth forests. Massive trees soar above an open floor of soft, green grasses and spongy mosses. The oaks, redwoods, and maples burst into fiery colors in autumn, unrivaled in their beauty anywhere in the Core. Noisy flocks of crows and swallows soar over the lush landscape, darting to and fro in the warm breezes. The bulk of the domain's population is concentrated in the bustling

river villages, and even rural folk tend to live within an hour's ride of a settlement. Journeys through the wilderness are lonesome; travelers only rarely spy lone carts burdened with hay or casks or wine. Their only companions in the wilds are lean packs of wolves, which keep menacing pace with travelers for hours at a time.

Invidia's buildings are tall with steeply gabled roofs tiled in black wooden shingles. Although plastered and painted a creamy dun color, most Invidian structures have crumbling facades that expose the red brick underneath. Interiors are wooden, the staircases and rafters darkly stained and intricately carved with grapevine designs. Baroque towers, topped with charcoal-gray cupolas and grim statuary, tower above the grandest buildings. Invidia's climate is temperate, although the realm boasts long, pleasant summers.

Major Settlements: Curriculo (pop. 1,000), Karina (pop. 2,300).

The Folk: Population — 6,900. Humans 99%, Other 1%. Languages — Balok,* Mordentish, Falkovnian, Luktar, Vaasi. Religions — Ezra, Hala.

Unlike many domains, Invidia does not have its own distinct ethnic group. Most Invidians are of mixed heritage, with Barovian and Kartakan blood running strongest.





Chapter Four

As such, few generalizations can be made about their physical appearance. Invidians range from swarthy and stocky to fair and lean, but they do tend to have the best features of their ancestors. Invidian clothing is simple but aesthetically pleasing. Men wear tunics, breeches, and high boots. Women dress in loose-fitting shirts and layered skirts. Bits of sparkling jewelry are commonly worn by both genders, with tasteful, solitary earrings or rings predominating.

Invidians are infamous for their passionate personalities; it is not, however, a compliment to say that someone has an "Invidian heart." Invidians are hot-tempered and tempestuous, frequently allowing their passions to get the better of them. Marital infidelity is common, as are the grudges and spilt blood that inevitably follow. Bitterness is nursed for years over small (or even imagined) slights, and it is not unknown for violence to erupt even within families when tempers flare.

These stereotypical traits aside, the Invidians are solid enough people. They are hard workers who nonetheless like to enjoy the fruits of their labors and have little respect for either the stuffy or the lazy. The populace is generally divisible into a loose class system, although the delineations are not as sharp as in other lands. The rich still look down on the poor, but the nobility tends to be weak and ineffectual. Accordingly, the domain hosts a strong merchant middle class. Most Invidians hold a deep loathing for the Vistani. Although this might be overcompensation in light of Malocchio's anti-Vistani policies, their hatred is no less chilling.

The Law: Formerly independent villages shifting to despotism. The vicious tyrant Malocchio Aderre has ruthlessly been increasing his hold on Invidia for nearly a decade. Prior to Malocchio's ascent to power, Invidia had experienced a period of isolation and weak self-governance at the local level. This state of affairs had persisted since a local witch rumored to be of Vistani blood assassinated the previous despot, Bakholis. A cruel lord, Bakholis seemed more interested in protecting his hunting rights than in governing. Although Malocchio is perhaps even more brutal than his predecessor, he has taken a much more aggressive approach to managing his realm. He encourages trade between the domain's villages and generally pursues a more unified vision for Invidia. Although Invidia itself cannot raise much of an army, Malocchio has hired

mercenaries from across the Core to serve his expansionist agenda. Furthermore, the mercenary-king of Falkovnia, Vlad Drakov, has lent Invidia his own troops, though his motives for such an uncharacteristic show of good faith are unknown.

Malocchio's greatest obsession is his burning hatred for the Vistani. The gypsies are, to say the least, not welcome in his realm; all Invidian mercenaries have standing orders to kill Vistani on sight. Besides this unseemly duty, Malocchio's soldiers collect taxes, protect Invidian merchants, and generally enforce a militant order in the realm. Invidians are fearful of these brutal soldiers but have learned to follow their orders unhesitatingly and avoid them whenever possible. Although brigand activity has been successfully suppressed by the mercenary presence, attacks from solitary madmen — such as Karina's infamous Midnight Slasher — seem to be on the rise.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources — barley, rye, hops, wheat, oats, potatoes, cabbage, grapes, hogs, wine, beer, sulfur, salt. Coinage — drymark (gp), sweetpiece (sp), bitterbit (cp).

As can be expected, the activities of Invidia's new ruler have agitated the surrounding domains. Alarmingly, Malocchio has recently begun to order his troops over Invidia's border to literally hunt Vistani in other lands. This strategy has particularly enraged Ivan Dilisnya, commander of Borca's military, who has sworn armed retaliation if his troops catch Invidian mercenaries on Borcan soil. Malocchio is also risking conflict with Barovia, where Vistani are rumored to be under special protection from Count von Zarovich. Not all realms are hostile to Invidia, however. As noted, Falkovnia's king seems to support Malocchio's ambitions for his own reasons; whether this will grow into an alliance remains to be seen. A brisk trade across the Invidia-Barovia border has always existed, and as long as outright war doesn't break out, merchants will likely continue to trade with the Gundarkites in Barovia's western foothills.

Characters: Classes — bards, fighters, rogues, sorcerers. Skills — Bluff, Gather Information, Intimidate, Profession (brewer, herbalist), Sense Motive, Wilderness Lore. Feats — Combat Reflexes, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearms), Improved Initiative, Lunatic, Quick Draw, Weapon Focus (dagger, pistol).





Kartakass

Cultural Level: Medieval (7).

Landscape: Full Ecology (Temperate Forests and Hills). Located in the south-central Core, Kartakass (KAR-ta-kass) is a land of music where joyful song echoes through the black forests, tinged ever so slightly by a tone of fear. It is a domain of dense woodlands blanketing a region of rocky upland terrain southwest of the Balinok Mountains. The forests are wild and treacherous here, from the thorny undergrowth to the fierce wolves that stalk the wooded ridges. The wilderness is far from lonely, however, as the sweet baritone voices of lumberjacks at work float over the hills. The domain is riddled with spectacular natural caverns, endlessly branching labyrinths of limestone that wind deep into the cold earth. As daylight begins to wane, silvery fog rises from the ground, settling in low places and making travel through the forests all the more dangerous. The Musarde River's headwaters lie in Kartakass, and here the mighty waterway is clear and sparkling, pooling into serene ponds and lakes on its way to the valleys of Sithicus.

Buildings in Kartakass are massive log lodges with broad facades and towering thatch roofs. Rows of narrow windows, bold wooden carvings, and delicate floral patterns grace the fronts of homes and shops. Most structures feature enormous

central fireplaces ringed by a raised dais for musical performances and storytelling. Natural surroundings are frequently incorporated directly into the domain's architecture. Living trees may be employed as natural pillars, or a structure may open up directly into a cavern of glittering crystal. Even the humblest settlements feature public amphitheatres for annual singing contests. Kartakass's climate is generally moderate, but harsh winters sometimes strike the domain.

Major Settlements: Harmonia (pop. 1,500), Skald (pop. 2,800).

The Folk: Population — 4,500. Humans 98%, Half-Elves 1%, Other 1%. Languages — Vaasi,* Balok, Sithican. Religions — Ezra, Hala.

Kartakans are a lean, graceful breed of folk blessed with long limbs and angular, handsome features. Their skin is very fair and creamy, sometimes dotted with a few scattered freckles. Their eyes are always a startling shade of blue-violet. Kartakan hair is wavy and normally a flaxen blond, but very rarely a child with raven tresses is born. Men keep their hair long and wild, often growing it past their shoulders. Women allow their hair to grow all the way to their waists and likewise shun styling it. Neatly trimmed goatees and long, full mustaches are typical among men. Kartakan clothing is comfortable but dashing.



Men and women alike wear blousy shirts and trousers, the latter tucked into high black boots. Women frequently wear short vests over their blouses, while men prefer full coats. Wide-brimmed hats are popular with men, particularly among woodsmen and travelers. Clothing colors are vibrant, with brilliant reds, yellows, and blues being the most popular hues. Delicate embroidery is frequently used to decorate Kartakan garb. Jewelry is used sparingly; the sparkle of a single earring or ring is considered most attractive.

Kartakans are a warm, gregarious lot noted for their love of music and talent with song. There are melodies for every occasion and daily activity, and a Kartakan village at work or play is a veritable festival of music. These folk also have a fondness for poetry and storytelling. Tall tales, called *eeshkas*, are a Kartakan tradition meant to teach lessons and play on the gullibility of listeners. Wandering bards are also a local institution, and some, such as the dashing Harkon Lukas, gain a celebrity of sorts. The arrival of a famous bard stirs a Kartakan settlement to celebration and passion. A popular, bitter local brew called *meekulbrau* sweetens voices and loosens inhibition. Kartakans are content and thankful for the simple pleasures of life. They respect tradition, wisdom, and musical skill above all else. They fear little but the vicious wolves that stalk the domain, creatures that have been known to enter homes at night and drag slumbering victims from their beds. Legends speak of a time when the wolves disguised themselves as men, tricking unfortunate souls just long enough to leap on and devour them.

The Law: Meritocratic independent settlements. Kartakans have a shared culture, but each settlement in the domain is autonomous. No central authority dictates or enforces law throughout Kartakass. Each settlement chooses a *Meistersinger* at an annual competition marked by wild revelries and constant music. The individual who wins the singing contest becomes the *Meistersinger*, responsible for governing throughout the next year. Although he appoints others to organize a village's militia, the *Meistersinger* is otherwise personally involved in all matters that concern the community. He delegates nothing, arbitrating all disputes and meting out justice as he sees fits. He also serves as a cultural and moral leader charged with ensuring that the youngest generations learn the *mora*. These songs, which Kartakans believe are divine

gifts from the mouths of the gods themselves, teach moral lessons to children and adults alike. Although vocal talent is the principal gauge of a *Meistersinger's* worthiness, those who fulfill their duties poorly are almost always ousted the next year. Most *Meistersingers* serve for many years before retiring from public life voluntarily.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources — rye, barley, oats, beets, potatoes, cabbages, hogs, cattle, dairy, sausage, beer, timber, salt, musical instruments. Coinage — ballad (gp), dirge (sp), canticle (cp).

The lack of a sovereign ruler has prevented Kartakass from achieving any real political standing with other lands. Although it is a rustic domain, it conducts lively trade with its neighbors, particularly Barovia and Invidia, with whom it shares informal mercantile alliances. Kartakan merchants are cunning and charismatic opportunists infamous throughout the southern Core for their congenial demeanors, which often hide predatory mindsets. Similarly, Kartakan lumberjacks are known for being a touch overeager and have been caught illicitly felling wood in other domains. Overall, Kartakass's reputation is healthy with other lands, though the elves of Sithicus take an increasingly dimmer view of migration into their territory.

Characters: Classes — bards, fighters, rangers, rogues, sorcerers. Skills — Craft (carpentry, weaving), Gather Information, Knowledge (nature), Perform (ballad, harp, lute, ode, storytelling), Profession (brewer, farmer, lumberjack), Wilderness Lore. Feats — Expertise (plus derivatives), Lunatic, Skill Focus (Perform), Voice of Wrath, Weapon Focus (Rapier).

Keening

Cultural Level: None. Ruins suggest that Keening was once a Chivalric (8) domain.

Landscape: No Ecology (Temperate Mountains). Keening (KEEN-ing) initially appears to be a normal enough, if forbidding, domain. It is an isolated region nestled between the forests of Tepest, the Shadow Rift, and the Mountain of Misery. Its only notable feature is Mount Lament, a bleak, windy peak crowned with wisps of fog. The mountain's dark gray stone supports little vegetation, only pale green mosses and lichens. The slopes of Mount Lament seem eerily empty; not a single living creature dwells in the domain. A nameless settlement lies in ruins near the base of the mountain, inhabited only by the undead.





The winds that constantly blow across Mount Lament sometimes seem to moan a mournful song. The domain is temperate but chill, its skies perpetually overcast and its seasons featureless.

Major Settlements: None.

The Folk: Population — none; 970 undead. Languages — none. Religions — none. No mortal creatures are known to dwell in Keening. The village that lies at the foot of Mount Lament is populated by mindless undead abominations, which are said to shuffle through a grotesque parody of their mortal lives. The Tepestani, who have dwelled in Mount Lament's shadow for as long as they can remember, know nothing of the village's horrid fate or the nature of its once-living inhabitants.

The Law: No formal government. Keening is a forsaken, desolate land not meant for the living. If any creature calls Keening its realm, it is likely undead or mad.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources (not exploited) — lead, copper, gypsum. Coinage — none.

Those who know of its haunted reputation avoid Keening at all costs. Brigands and dwarves from the Mountains of Misery have occasionally ventured into the domain, seeking mineral wealth or other plunder. The Tepestani know better than to attempt anything so foolish.

Characters: None.

Lamordia

Cultural Level: Renaissance (9).

Landscape: Full Ecology (Temperate Forests, Hills, and Plains). Lamordia (la-MOR-di-a) is a bleak coastal realm in the northwestern Core, a land ravaged by the elements. The domain lies south of Darkon's Jagged Coast on the Sea of Sorrows and includes the string of islands known as the Finger, which stretches out to the northwest. Notable are the frozen Isle of Agony, where a demonic creature is said to lair, and rocky, forsaken Demise. During the summer months, a muddy causeway links the islands of the Finger, but few travelers brave the brackish muck. The interior is a region of towering forests where the black trees grow massive and dense. The woods are forlorn and eerily still, but travelers often have the impression that they are being watched from the shadows. Each spring, woodsmen inevitably find thawed corpses deep in the wilderness, their forms mangled beyond recognition. The terrain is rugged in the north, especially along the rocky

upland region known as the Sleeping Beast. To the south, a wooded delta marks where the mighty Musarde River meets the Sea of Sorrows.

Lamordian villages are tidy and attractive, whether awash in summer wildflowers or slumbering peacefully beneath winter snow. Two or three stories tall, the neat rows of homes and shops look down over narrow streets of gray, smooth cobblestone. Buildings are constructed with thick timber frames and brick, then plastered and painted white or cream. Roofs are steep and gabled, with thick thatch to keep out the cold. Although Lamordia is a temperate domain, its winters are extraordinarily harsh. Blizzards blanket the land with unending snow and batter the inhabitants with bitter, howling winds. For much of the year, sleighs and snowshoes are the preferred modes of transportation. The summer is no less difficult on travelers, as thick, sucking mud collects in low areas.

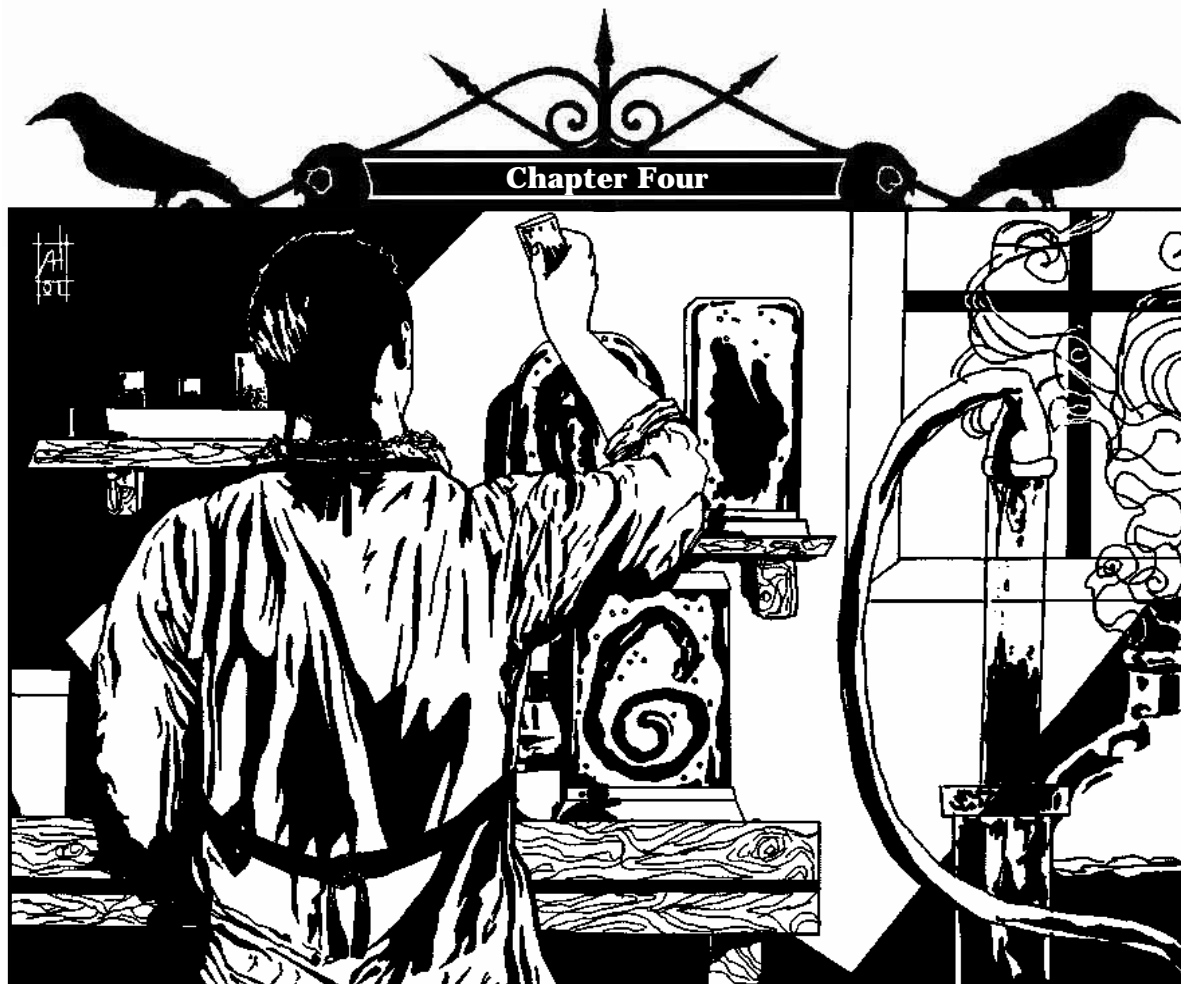
Major Settlements: Ludendorf (pop. 900), Neufurchtenburg (pop. 700).

The Folk: Population — 3,200. Humans 99%, Other 1%. Languages — Lamordian,* Mordentish, Falkovnian, Darkonese. Religions — none.

Lamordians are lean, square-shouldered folk tall in stature and wiry in physique. Their skin is exceptionally fair but tinted ruddy from the numbing wind that seems to blow across the domain constantly. Eye color is almost always a shade of green or blue. Their straight or wavy hair is light blond to dark brown, though fairer hair is slightly more common. Men cut their hair to a medium length, usually to just above the neck, and keep it styled back. Women grow their hair long and either pin it up or weave it into twin braids. Mustaches and beards are never seen on men, but muttonchop sideburns are quite popular. Clothing is exceptionally well made in Lamordia, but modest and somber. Men wear collared shirts, vests, and trousers, with wealthier men adding a waistcoat and scarf. Nobles often wear pointed black caps as well. Women prefer modest woolen dresses with high collars and frequently wear tight, white bonnets. Color is almost unheard of in Lamordian garb; black, white, and shades of gray are the only hues to be seen. Jewelry is never worn, even among the nobility, though noblemen carry accessories such as canes and pocket watches.

Lamordians are extremely hardy folk accustomed to the domain's savage winter storms and generally treacherous environment.





They persevere with calm determination, convinced that they can survive and thrive through sheer hard work and will. Unlike many folk in the Land of Mists, Lamordians are not at all superstitious. They are in fact rational almost to a fault and believe in tackling every problem with a commonsense solution. No church has been able to gain a foothold among the Lamordians, who are deistic or outright atheistic. They are skeptical of anyone who promises easy answers through faith or magic, which they see as crutches for a weak mind. Lamordians pursue humble crafts and try to savor the simple joys of life. They reserve their disdain for Victor Mordenheim, a somewhat shady surgeon and scientist who conducts strange experiments on his estate in northern Lamordia.

The Law: Hereditary aristocracy with republican settlements. Baron von Aubrecker rules Lamordia from his estate in the Sleeping Beast. The baron is an aristocrat hailing from the family that has ruled Lamordia for centuries. He continues to uphold his household's tradition of distant rulership, collecting tribute and maintaining small garrisons of his own soldiers throughout the domain. The baron is more interested in holding court at his manor than regency, and he seems to

be most content in the darkest winter months, when the snowbound settlements cannot bother him with their petty problems.

Each of Lamordia's settlements has a mayor, appointed by a council of wealthy aristocrats, who in turn are elected by all male Lamordian landowners in the village. The mayor's main responsibility is to encourage trade and economic ties with other settlements and domains. While Lamordia's villages are neat and orderly, few laws are enforced even at the local level; the Lamordians manage to get through daily life with a minimum of conflict and crime. Nonetheless, should the need arise, troublemakers are dealt with swiftly by both town militias and the baron's enforcers.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources — rye, sheep, cattle, dairy, furs, cod, mackerel, herring, flounder, beer, sausage, furs, salt, leather goods, furniture, ships. Coinage — glutton (gp), sable (sp), marten (cp).

Lamordia has a perhaps deserved reputation as a domain where travel can be difficult and hazardous. For this reason, and maybe also because it is such a cold, lonely place, Lamordia's ties with other lands have been slow to emerge.



Trade continues to expand in Darkon, Dementlieu, and Falkovnia as outsiders learn of the exceptional quality of Lamordian furs and handicrafts. Baron von Aubrecker cares nothing for his realm's political standing in other lands, and most Lamordians have precious little regard for the opinions of outsiders anyway.

Characters: Classes — fighters, rangers, rogues. Skills — Alchemy, Craft (carpentry, clockmaking, gunsmithing, leathermaking, shipmaking, weaving), Profession (apothecary, fisher, herdsman, lumberjack, sailor, tanner), Sense Motive, Wilderness Lore. Feats — Endurance, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearms), Open Mind, Skill Focus (Craft), Toughness, Weapon Focus (pistol, rapier).

Markovia

Cultural Level: Stone Age (1). Some of Markovia's structures reflect a Medieval (7) Cultural Level.

Landscape: Full Ecology (Warm Forests, Hills, and Mountains). Markovia (mar-KO-vi-a) is a tropical island in the northern Sea of Sorrows, a land of inexplicable lushness amid the cold, eternal fog. Dense forests blanket the island, echoing with the cackle of tropical birds. The verdant vegetation is awash in vibrant flowers and fantastic insect life. The canopy blots out all light, so that the forest floor, tangled with vines and tree roots, is perpetually swathed in shadow. Markovia's interior is mountainous; the black peaks, draped in green forest and white wisps of cloud, rise up to touch the sky. Spectacular waterfalls roar down the sheer mountain cliff faces, plummeting into misty, crystalline pools. The island's beaches are narrow but idyllic strips of soft white sand surrounding placid lagoons. The shore is dotted with ancient basalt statues, peculiar human figures with their heads and arms upraised to the sky.

Major Settlements: unknown.

The Folk: Population — unknown. Languages — unknown. Religions — unknown.

Despite its pristine beauty, Markovia is far from uninhabited. Sailors on the Sea of Sorrows have spotted structures on the island, including a monastery of ashen stone on the southern cliffs. There are regular sightings of "beast-men," creatures that appear to be animals yet walk on two legs and wield primitive tools and weapons. These disturbing encounters aside, many domains are eager to exploit Markovia's exotic and valuable

resources. Unfortunately, colonists who have attempted to settle on the island have vanished without a trace.

The Law: No formal government. Markovia's ruler, if any, is unknown. The lack of an obvious civilization would seem to indicate that the island's master is either a recluse or a barbarian king of the legendary beast-men.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources (not exploited) — sugarcane, bananas, yams, cassava, pineapples, coconuts, tuna, pearls, oysters, timber, gold, silver. Coinage — none.

As stated, efforts to establish permanent settlements on Markovia have met with failure. Even vessels that ply the waters just off the island's coast — usually seeking pearls amid the vast oyster beds — have a disturbing tendency to run aground suddenly on hidden shoals.

Characters: None.

Mordent

Cultural Level: Renaissance (9).

Landscape: Full Ecology (Temperate Forests, Plains, and Swamps).

Mordent (MOR-dent) is a bleak domain on the Core's western coast, a land of fishing hamlets and desolate, haunted moors. Tracks of dense forest still cover much of the countryside, alternating with low, foggy plains and rolling heaths. Stiff winds whistle across the eastern moors; some travelers have reported hearing chilling howls carried on the breezes. At night, curling fog creeps out of the moors and into the domain's decrepit graveyards. Majestic ruined manors, crumbling and choked with dark ivy, loom out of the fog. Abandoned to the restless spirits of the moors, such estates are widely regarded as haunted, and the Mordentish know better than to investigate when a dim light is spotted in an upper window. In particular, they avoid the infamous House of Gryphon Hill, where the dread spirit of Lord Wilfred Godefroy lurks. Mordent's shore along the Sea of Sorrows is rocky and battered by cold winds, the rugged chalk cliffs rising up a hundred feet or more. Salt spray perpetually hangs in the air, and belligerent seagulls gather to snatch the bait of fishermen. It is in Mordent that the broad Arden River finally joins the Sea of Sorrows, at Arden Bay.

Mordent's seaside communities, huddled in the bitter ocean winds, are stoic clusters of shanties and venerable taverns. The whitewashed buildings are constructed with thick wooden frames, soft brick,





and plaster. Wooden plank roofs grace the humble structures, gray and warped by the sea air. Every window and door is equipped with sturdy storm shutters. Narrow tin chimneys puff white smoke into the sky, and weather vanes spin frantically in the shifting winds. Twisting wooden staircases descend the steeper cliffs, providing access to the humble vessels moored along the docks below. Mordent is a gray, damp land, its temperatures moderated by the sea; extreme summers and winters are uncommon.

Major Settlements: Mordentshire (pop. 2,600).

The Folk: Population — 5,500. Humans 99%, Other 1%. Languages — Mordentish,* Falkovnian, Vaasi. Religions — Ezra, Hala.

The Mordentish are lean, hearty people hardened by generations of fishing and sailing. Their skin tends to be fair and ruddy, though dusker tones are not unknown. Mordentish eyes are usually a faded blue, green, or gray. Hair color varies widely, with flaxen blond and medium brown being most common. Men cut their hair very short or grow it past their shoulders, often keeping it in a neat braid or ponytail. Women grow their hair exceptionally long, though those with curlier locks trim it to halfway down their backs. Clothing is woolen and durable and kept fastidiously neat and clean whenever possible. Men wear loose shirts with breeches and high socks; wealthier men also don waistcoats over their elegant, lacy shirts. Women wear long dresses close fitting on top and flaring below the waist. The Mordentish seem to prefer somber colors, either black and grays or dark hues of blue, green, yellow, and red. Ornamentation is shunned, though patterns such as checks or plaids are sometimes seen. Jewelry is rarely worn, as it is regarded as gaudy even among the nobility.

The Mordentish are simple, practical people who value common sense and established traditions. They do things at their own pace and are prideful of their ways. They are also superstitious folk who believe whole-heartedly in the supernatural, particularly the restless dead. They are not paralyzed by fear, however. The Mordentish have learned to respect and avoid haunted places lest the resident spirits seek out the curious in their homes. This strategy seems to work for them, at least most of the time. The Mordentish are polite and friendly toward strangers but always remain somewhat reserved. They guard their own secrets closely and have a knack for getting others to talk

candidly without revealing much of anything themselves.

Mordent is the former home of Rudolph van Richten, the famed monster hunter and scholar of the macabre, now presumed deceased. Gennifer and Laurie Weathermay-Foxgrove, granddaughters of Mordent's noble lord, currently manage van Richten's herbalist shop in Mordentshire. The twins are themselves acquiring a reputation as dedicated sages and hunters of the supernatural, much to the distress of their father. They idolize their grim uncle, George Weathermay, renowned as Mordent's favored prodigal son. A stalwart foe of evil, Weathermay rides a forlorn path across the Core in search of the minions of darkness.

The Law: Hereditary aristocracy. The ailing Lord Jules Weathermay, patriarch of the Weathermay family, rules Mordent from his grand estate, Heather House. The Weathermays have always governed with a light hand, and despite Lord Weathermay's poor health, life rolls on in Mordent, as consistent as the tides. The Weathermays are the last prominent noble household in the domain, the others having fallen to tragedy and attrition centuries ago. Indeed, the crumbling estates that dot Mordent's moors testify to such vanished bloodlines. The Weathermays have managed to hold on to both their estate and their lineage, though their presence is barely felt outside of the village of Mordentshire. Lord Weathermay rarely pronounces any laws; he merely collects regular taxes and keeps a close eye on his lands. Mordent's villages are essentially autonomous, administering their own laws and militias. Mayors and other civic servants are elected from among the male property owners, who remain dutifully mindful of how their decisions will affect the poor. The mayor of Mordentshire, Daniel Foxgrove, is the widower of Lord Weathermay's daughter and father of Gennifer and Laurie.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources — barley, wheat, hops, sheep, cattle, dairy, flounder, sole, sardines, lobsters, oysters, chalk, clay, ships. Coinage — mournepiece (gp), weepstone (sp), saltpenney (cp).

Fishing provides an important backbone for Mordent's economy, though sheep herding is also vital to the domain. Mordent does brisk trade with Dementlieu, where demand for seafood and wool provides Mordent with access to high culture and new inventions. Borca and Richemulot are also important trading partners. All four domains have



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agreed to a mutual defense pact to protect against potential threats from militaristic Falkovnia. For a domain of such small size and with a predominantly agrarian landscape, Mordent is a familiar land to folk throughout the Core. This may be due to its reputation as the rural, slow-paced sister to Dementlieu.

Characters: Classes — bards, clerics, fighters, rogues, sorcerers. Skills — Balance, Craft (clockmaking, shipmaking, weaving), Gather Information, Knowledge (monster lore, religion), Profession (fisher, herbalist, herdsman, sailor, scribe), Swim, Use Rope. Feats — Cold One, Ethereal Empathy, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearms), Ghostsight, Haunted, Skill Focus (monster lore), Weapon Focus (pistol, rapier).

Necropolis

Cultural Level: Iron Age (3). Necropolis was a Chivalric (8) domain prior to the Requiem.

Landscape: No Ecology (Temperate Settled Area). Necropolis (ne-KRAW-pol-iss) was once a bustling metropolis called II Aluk, the most prosperous city in the domain of Darkon. That lofty honor was ripped from the city when Darkon was struck by the Requiem. Situated at the epicenter of the cataclysm, II Aluk was victim to a horrifying

fate: every living person in the city was instantly slain and reborn as an undead creature. Today, Necropolis is a city of the dead populated entirely by the unliving. Every living creature that enters Necropolis dies, only to immediately rise as the city's newest inhabitant. Although marred by vandalism and neglect in places, Necropolis stands as it did at the time of the Requiem, an undead mockery of its former life.

Major Settlements: None. Necropolis itself is a single settlement.

The Folk: Population — none; 26,800 undead. Languages — Darkonese,* Halfling, Gnome, Lamordian, Falkovnian. Religions — none. The creature named Death is revered like a god, though it has no clerics or organized church.

Although it has been swept clean of the living, Necropolis does not stand still. Those who have observed the city from afar report that the streets still bustle with activity. Unfortunately, the living can only guess what sort of unfathomable tasks occupy the walking dead.

The Law: Undead despotism. An entity known only as Death rules Necropolis, and all undead give homage before its unholy might. Virtually nothing is known about Death, save that it seems to be the only force that can stand before Darkon's





wizard-king, Azalin Rex. The undead of Necropolis obey Death unwaveringly, which lends credence to the rumor that the undead tyrant is death itself, the very embodiment of mortality and finality.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources — none. Coinage — none, though Darkonian currency still can be found in Necropolis in abundance.

No sane living creature wants anything to do with Necropolis. The city has become a gangrenous blight on the face of Darkon, a hindrance to trade and a challenge to Azalin's power. Necropolis's population has only grown as a trickle of foolhardy or ignorant travelers join the ranks of the unliving. Astonishing rumors are whispered throughout Darkon that the city's undead have developed a complex society divided into factions and sects that no living creature could fathom.

Characters: None.

The Nocturnal Sea

Cultural Level: Varies from island to island. Most are Chivalric (8) or Medieval (7).

Landscape: Full Ecology (Temperate Aquatic). Most islands have Full Ecology (Temperate Forests, Hills, Plains, and Swamps). The treacherous Nocturnal Sea lies to the west of the Core, its cold waves lapping on the beaches below the western plateau. Weather on the sea is violent and erratic. Gray storm clouds constantly race across the sky, rumbling with lightning. Savage storms blowing freezing rain and sleet can whip up in an instant, battering ships mercilessly. Near islands, jagged shoals lurk beneath the waters, posing a deadly threat to all but the most experienced mariners. The perpetually overcast sky makes navigation difficult for vessels without magnetic compasses. No sun, moon, or stars peek through to provide bearings, forcing sailors to navigate by sparse landmarks and instinct.

The Nocturnal Sea is dotted with islands, though many of these are tiny and uninhabited. Known islands include Liffe, a rustic isle of farmers and musicians; sober Graben and Knammen; L'île de la Tempete with its mysterious lighthouse; the ominous Isle of the Ravens; and frigid, forsaken Todstein.

Major Settlements: Graben — Graben (pop. 1,900), Kirchenheim (pop. 300), Knammen (pop. 300), Seeheim (pop. 300); Liffe — Armeikos (pop. 3,000), Claveria (pop. 400), Moondale (pop. 1,600).

The Folk: Population — 14,900. Humans 99%, Other 1%. Languages — Grabenite, Sithican, Vaasi. Religions — the Lawgiver, Ezra.

Although vessels from throughout the eastern Core frequent the Nocturnal Sea, sailors from other lands rarely choose to settle on the sea's bleak islands. Settlements are scattered, wind-beaten outposts of civilization in an otherwise vast and forbidding ocean. Few generalizations can be made about the islanders that dwell there, save that they have remarkable perseverance to survive amid such bleak waters. They are protective of their privacy and autonomy but remain receptive to commerce with outsiders. The appearance of the islanders varies widely, and while many are of Nova Vaasan or Darkonese descent, others are of unique and isolated ethnic groups.

The Law: No formal government. No domain claims the Nocturnal Sea as its own, though maritime tradition holds that a realm's sovereignty extends a half-mile out to sea. Since safe sea lanes have not yet been established in the Nocturnal Sea, control of maritime traffic is not seen as an asset in most domains.

A handful of islands have their own rulers, but government is usually decentralized and informal. Liffe is the realm of Baron Evensong, a highborn bard who prizes his island's independence. On Graben and Knammen, settlement elders called deacons oversee governance with the mandate of the Grabens, a wealthy merchant family. The masters of the Nocturnal Sea's other bleak islands are unknown and, in the judgment of superstitious sailors, perhaps best kept shrouded in mystery.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources — potatoes, corn, sheep, dairy, cod, herring, mackerel, lobsters, seals, talc, salt, ships. Coinage — none. Trade is conducted through barter on most islands, but merchants in Liffe have begun to deal in the currencies of Darkon and Nova Vaasa.

Although exceedingly hostile to seafaring, the Nocturnal Sea nonetheless draws many merchants and explorers into its gray embrace. Inhabitants of the more hospitable islands are eager to trade with mainlanders, and the opportunities have been worth the risks to merchants in the eastern Core. Likewise, the possibility of discovering new lands beyond the Mists has drawn many a brave captain to plunge into the sea's uncharted waters.

Characters: Classes — bards, fighters, rogues. Skills: Balance, Climb, Craft (carpentry, shipmaking, weaving), Intuit Direction, Knowledge





(nature), Perform (ballad, harp, lute, ode), Profession (farmer, fisher, sailor), Swim, Use Rope, Wilderness Lore. Feats — Cold One, Dodge (plus derivatives), Expertise (plus derivatives), Skill Focus (Wilderness Lore), Weapon Focus (rapier).

Nova Vaasa

Cultural Level: Medieval (7).

Landscape: Full Ecology (Temperate Forests, Hills and Plains). Nova Vaasa (NOva VAH-sa), situated on a plateau in the southeastern Core, is a land dominated by sweeping grasslands and crushing urban poverty. The plains are rocky and trackless, but the grasses that cover them are short, tamed by the constant grazing of horses. The wind whistles eerily across the steppes, which are dotted with rocky uplands and copses. For the most part, however, the domain is exceptionally flat, stretching from the Balinok Mountains in the west to the Nocturnal Sea in the east. Crumbling stone ruins and humble horse ranches break up the landscape. Broad rivers meander across Nova Vaasa's steppes, cutting deep gorges through the plateau where they reach the Nocturnal Sea. The domain enjoys access to numerous important waterways, including the Dnar, the Borchava, the Ivlis, and the Saniset. The eastern coast is rugged and adequate natural ports are rare; the flat plateau

drops down to treacherous bluffs and narrow, rocky beaches.

Near settlements, the plains are cleared for vast farms needed to feed the domain's swelling population. The cities are nightmarish scenes of dreadful urban squalor. The streets throng with beggars, and the ditches are piled with refuse and plague-bloated corpses. The press of people and beasts of burden is positively suffocating. Buildings are constructed of reddish beige brick on foundations of rough gray stone, with tiny windows and gabled roofs of golden-yellow shingles. Nova Vaasa's weather can be brutal during winter, but spring always brings mild warmth and wildflowers.

Major Settlements: Arbora (pop. 4,500), Bergovitsa (pop. 6,600), Egertus (pop. 3,800), Kantora (pop. 16,500), Liara (pop. 2,600).

The Folk: Population — 67,700. Humans 91%, Halflings 5%, Gnomes 3%, Other 1%. Languages — Vaasi,* Halfling, Gnome, Balok, Darkonese. Religions — the Lawgiver.*

Nova Vaasans are rugged people of average stature with wide hips and stout limbs gained through generations of horsemanship. Their facial features are distinctive, featuring angular chins, prominent cheekbones, and wide, full-lipped mouths. Skin color is generally fair and ruddy, but Nova Vaasans with pale olive or sallow skin are



not unusual. Eyes are almost always dark green or gray. Hair color ranges from dirty blond to black, though darker colors are most common. Women grow their straight hair exceptionally long, often past their waists, and young girls work these tresses into two long braids. Men, meanwhile, prefer to keep their hair cut to just below the shoulder. Men of all stations grow long mustaches, which they wax into stiff curls.

Nova Vaasan clothing varies greatly with social class. The garb of commoners is simple and often poorly maintained. Men wear trousers and long shirts, sometimes with a vest. Women wear blouses with culottes and often cover their heads with kerchiefs. Commoner clothing is never dyed, only natural dirty white or brown, and is patched repeatedly. Most commoners wear cloth wrappings instead of proper footwear. Aristocrats stand out from the unwashed masses in their brightly colored, meticulous vestments. Male nobles wear flared riding breeches with tall black boots and finely tailored coats trimmed with lace. Most men wear neckerchiefs bearing their family crests, and felt caps are popular among older men. Women go about in velvet riding skirts with black boots and billowing blouses. Noblewomen never wear hats, instead wrapping themselves in gauzy scarves trimmed with tinkling bells and coins. Clothing dyed in vibrant shades of red, blue, and purple predominates, and stripes and spiral patterns are quite popular. Jewelry is usually limited to thick bracelets and earrings.

The class divide in Nova Vaasa is wide and deeply entrenched. The poor make up the vast majority of the population. These people are truly destitute and miserable, afflicted by hunger, disease, and crime. The aristocracy, meanwhile, is comparatively tiny in size but extremely wealthy. Five families — the Bolshniks, Chekivs, Hiregaards, Rivtoffs, and Vistins — own nearly all property in the domain. A very small middle class has begun to emerge in recent years, composed of civil servants, merchants, and underworld types. Despite its wealth and size, Nova Vaasa has the feeling of a society on the brink of decline. Vice and violent crime are rampant in the overpopulated cities, while the nobles become wealthier each day on the backs of the poor. The commoners are concerned only with surviving and drowning their misery in vices. Most nobles dwell in their own arrogant, anodyne world, believing that commoners are subhuman beasts of burden to be used and abused at whim.

Surprisingly, rebellion and unrest are unheard of, due primarily to the doctrines of the Lawgiver's church.

The Law: Hereditary aristocracy. Nova Vaasa is currently ruled by Prince Othmar Bolshnik, the patriarch of the Bolshnik family. Traditionally, Nova Vaasa's leadership passed from the head of one noble family to the next every five years. Unfortunately, Othmar has not relinquished his mantle in over twenty-five years, a fact that has caused undeniable tension among the five ruling families. Such is Othmar's military and political power, however, that none dares attempt to oust him.

Othmar is a vain and ruthless ruler focused on cementing the Bolshniks' dominance among the noble families and maintaining the status quo in Nova Vaasan society at large. Each noble family governs its lands independently, however, and Othmar only rarely steps in to collect tribute. Nobles rule harshly and without pity, though the Hiregaard family treats the commoners in its lands relatively fairly. For the most part, law and justice do not exist in Nova Vaasan society as they do in other realms; there is no recourse for those who have been wronged criminally or privately. Nobles care nothing for issues that do not directly involve their interests. Thus, the streets and plains of Nova Vaasa are largely lawless. Settlements have only weak civic government, run by those who have proven themselves loyal to the local family. Each noble family maintains a small private army that includes cavalry, though the Bolshnik forces are by far the largest and best equipped.

Othmar's only rival as the master of Nova Vaasa is not a fellow noble at all, but a mysterious criminal overlord known only as Malken. This shadowy figure is rumored to control all that occurs in the underworld of Liara and a good deal of illicit activity elsewhere in the domain as well. Malken is practically a bogeyman to the poor of Nova Vaasa. In the darkest alleyways of the domain, it is Malken's word, not Othmar's, that is the law.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources — wheat, corn, millet, barley, oats, rye, cabbage, beets, potatoes, apples, pears, sunflowers, hemp, flax, horses, chickens, cod, herring, wine, gypsum, amber, chalk, salt, leather goods, furniture, ships. Coinage — bridle (gp), spur (sp), horseshoe (cp).

Nova Vaasa is a significant economic power, though the wealth generated from its resources benefits only the five noble families. Thus, while





trade with other lands expands, the crushing poverty that most Nova Vaasans endure only gets worse. Gambling, liquor, and flophouses have also begun to take their toll on the domain's productivity. Under the direction of Malken, underworld activity has become organized, and it may be only a matter of time until the nobles begin to feel its pinch.

Most trade is conducted with Barovia, Tepest, Hazlan, and the islands of the Nocturnal Sea. Demand for Nova Vaasan goods, however, spurs merchants to trek through the Balinoks each spring from the western Core. Nova Vaasa's most famous exports are its horses, prized throughout the Core for their strength, speed, obedience, and beauty. Although the noble families have legendary stables and lineages, the finest horses seem to come from tiny rural ranches.

Characters: Classes — clerics, fighters, rogues. Skills — Craft (leatherworking, shipmaking), Gather Information, Handle Animal, Intimidate, Knowledge (nobility and royalty, religion), Pick Pocket, Profession (farmer, fisher, herdsman, rancher, sailor, stable hand, tanner), Ride. Feats — Jaded, Mounted Combat (plus derivatives), Quick Draw, Skill Focus (Ride), Toughness, Weapon Focus (heavy flail, pistol).

Richemulot

Cultural Level: Chivalric (8).

Landscape: Full Ecology (Temperate Forests, Hills, and Plains). In the bustling cities of Richemulot (REESH-muh-loh), secrets are traded like so much gold, and unseen foes slink about on clandestine missions. Situated in the east-central Core, Richemulot is a land of pristine forests and gentle river valleys. The forests are sun-dappled places full of massive trees and fragrant shrubs and forbs. The mighty Musarde River winds through the domain, providing a vital trade route. The landscape is largely undeveloped, broken only by isolated cottages and farms, because most of the domain's population is concentrated in its three large settlements. While travelers may not encounter a single soul in rural Richemulot, the cities are bustling with people. Strangely, these ancient settlements still retain an empty atmosphere; vacant houses, shops, and other structures hint that the cities could support up to three times as many inhabitants. Not even the Richemuloise know why their cities stand abandoned; the original inhabitants of these silent avenues are a mystery. Regardless, they were marvelous builders.

The narrow streets are lined with beautiful facades of creamy stone, though the buildings are chipped and worn in places. The high rooftops are covered with thin, square wooden shingles and dotted with narrow, soaring spires. The cities are further blessed with elaborate sewer systems that twist deep into the earth. Richemulot's climate is temperate but mild; heavy snows are a rare occurrence in winter.

Major Settlements: Mortigny (8,200), Ponta-Museau (pop. 16,500), Ste. Ronges (6,500).

The Folk: Population — 45,300. Humans 93%, Halflings 5%, Half-Vistani 1%, Other 1%. Languages — Mordentish, Halfling, Balok, Falkovnian. Religions — Ezra, Hala.

The Richemuloise tend to be wiry folk, short in stature but athletic. Their skin tone is fair, ranging from milky pale to light tan. Blue eyes are quite common, but shades of green and gray are also seen. Richemuloise hair is sleek and straight, with colors running from honey blond to dark brown. Black hair is seen only among noble families. Long hair is traditional for both genders, with men preferring to keep theirs in a single ponytail or braid. Excessive facial hair is considered barbaric for men, but thin, well-groomed mustaches are widespread. All Richemuloise dress comfortably and neatly, regardless of social status. Men and women alike wear loose shirts, which men keep open in front during warmer months. Men wear baggy trousers, women knee-length skirts. High, hard-soled boots are considered standard footwear for city folk. Daily clothing is rarely patterned or decorated, and colors tend to be drab whites, grays, and beiges. Jewelry is rarely worn, even among the nobility. For festivals and other special occasions, men of all classes don elegant waistcoats, while women wear flowing dresses that leave little to the imagination.

The Richemuloise put little stock in the superficial. They believe that a man's significance is defined by what he knows — his skills and knowledge, and how he applies those assets. This attitude has created what seems to a remarkably unstratified society. Despite the size of the domain's cities, no grubby beggars or other destitute poor are seen on the streets. Neither are there aristocrats clad in opulent finery and attended by entourages of servants. Indeed, almost all Richemuloise seem to be moderately comfortable. Property ownership is not a social watermark, as any Richemuloise family can take up residence in an abandoned building and call it home.





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Unlike many domains, Richemulot has a significant immigrant population. Folk from other domains often flee oppression or poverty in their homeland in search of the opportunities and free property in Richemulot's cities.

In truth, it is not affluence that defines the nobles of Richemulot, but knowledge. While nobility is hereditary, the aristocratic families hold their power in the form of information, which is brokered and exchanged like a commodity among the Richemuloise elite. A prominent noble can wreak social and economic havoc with a single nugget of gossip. A cobbler who happens on an astonishing secret can become a noble overnight if he knows how to properly use this new influence. The intrigues of Richemuloise courtly life are dizzying in their complexity, and few outsiders could keep up with either their nuances or pace. Trading in knowledge can be a lethal pursuit, however, as more than one noble has buried a secret forever with a dagger or vial of poison.

The Law: Hereditary aristocracy. Richemulot is dominated by the Reinier family of Pont-a-Museau and informally ruled by its matriarch, Jacqueline Reinier. Jacqueline is widely regarded

one of the most brilliant and ruthless Richemuloise nobles, and few of her subjects would argue that the domain's fate could be in more capable hands. Indeed, while Jacqueline is undeniably conniving and conceited, she has a strong patriotic streak and believes firmly in a vision of Richemulot as a powerful nation with its own identity. She encourages outsiders to settle in the domain, asking only that they own a weapon and swear fealty to Richemulot itself. Richemulot has no community militias, but Jacqueline expects all Richemuloise to be prepared to defend the realm, especially against the ever-present threat of Falkovnia.

The hereditary nobles of Richemulot have absolute control over most aspects of daily life in the domain. Aristocrats arbitrate civil disputes and regulate trade, and enforcers retained by individual noble families keep the peace. The nobles exercise their authority lightly, however. Power can be a transitory thing in Richemulot, and few nobles want to risk overstepping their bounds and finding themselves disgraced by a vicious rumor.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources — wheat, oats, barley, apples, potatoes, dairy, cloth, furniture, leather, ceramics, glass, weapons, iron and tin





goods. Coinage — scandal (gp), secret (sp), rumor (cp). Richemulot is a growing power, and its economic and political connections with other domains are expanding accordingly. Richemuloise city dwellers produce a wide variety of crafted goods, all of which are prized in other lands for their aesthetic beauty and durability. In particular, trade with Borca, Dementlieu, and Mordent is brisk. Richemulot has also entered into a mutual defense pact with these domains to protect against invasion from Falkovnia.

Characters: Classes — bards, clerics, fighters, rogues, wizards. Skills — Bluff, Craft (gunsmith-ing, locksmithing, stonemasonry, weaponsmithing), Diplomacy, Forgery, Gather Information, Innuendo, Knowledge (nobility and royalty), Profession (apothecary, bookkeeper, scribe), Sense Motive. Feats — Alertness, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearms), Expertise (plus derivatives), Iron Will, Skill Focus (Gather Information), Voice of Wrath, Weapon Focus (pistol, rapier).

The Sea of Sorrows

Cultural Level: Varies from island to island. Most are Chivalric (8) or Medieval (7).

Landscape: Full Ecology (Temperate Aquatic). Most islands have Full Ecology (Temperate Forests, Hills, and Plains). The Sea of Sorrows lies to the west of the Core, a frigid expanse of gray ocean that stretches out into the Mists. Although storms are not frequent on the sea, the winds are unpredictable, often picking up or dying suddenly. Where the air is calm, thick fog banks cover the water's surface. Ship captains try to keep their speed low, as obstacles and other vessels can appear out of nowhere in the haze. Daylight is weak and sickly on the sea, while night is as black and oppressive as a tomb. Without stars to guide them, sailors find navigation exceedingly difficult, though wealthier captains have benefited from the magnetic compass in recent years. Clever navigators have learned to set a straight course within sight of the Core's western coast and maintain it as best they can until land is again spotted. The sea has something of a haunted reputation; tales of ghost ships, particularly the legendary *Relentless*, are not uncommon among veteran sailors.





Chapter Four

Numerous islands dot the Sea of Sorrows, but most are sparsely inhabited, if at all. The largest is Markovia (see above), a tropical isle in the northern sea. Other known islands include pastoral Ghastria, rocky Blaustein, and Dominia, home to the Heinfroth Asylum for the Mentally Disturbed.

Major Settlements: Ghastria — East Riding (pop. 600).

The Folk: Population — 1,300. Humans 99%, Other 1%. Languages — Mordentish, Lamordian, Darkonese. Religions — Ezra, Hala.

The Sea of Sorrows has few permanent inhabitants. Although ships carrying merchants and explorers constantly ply her fog-bound waters, the sea is only a highway for these souls. The scattered folk who dwell on the sea's islands are hardy, stalwart people. Most are of Mordentish or Lamordian descent, but some hail from more distant lands. It is hard to speak generally about the sea's island inhabitants. Some, such as the simple farmers of Ghastria, warmly welcome any contact with the Core. Others, such as the thugs and ruffians of Blaustein, are likely to brutally attack those foolish enough to land on their island. As a whole, however, islanders tend to be survivors. Isolation from the Core has taught them self-reliance and honed their maritime skills.

The Law: No formal government. No domains claim the Sea of Sorrows as their own. Traditionally, a realm's territory extends to a half-mile beyond its shores. The rest of the sea is regarded as neutral, best left to the islanders and ghosts.

Each inhabited island is governed differently, but it is usually the will or charisma of a single leader that maintains law and order. Ghastria is ruled by the Marquis Stezan d'Polarno, an aristocrat who throws annual galas for nobles who make the journey to his island. Blaustein is controlled by the dread Bluebeard, a secretive tyrant who commands fervent loyalty among his subjects. Dominia's only settlement is the asylum of Daclaud Heinfroth, a renowned institution for treating those plagued by madness.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources — potatoes, turnips, sheep, cattle, dairy, herring, cod, tuna, sardines, salmon, lobsters, whales, wine. Coinage — none. A smattering of obscure coins pass through some settlements, but trade is conducted through barter on most islands.

For the Core's western coastal domains, the Sea of Sorrows has proven to be a valuable source

of food and a gateway to distant lands. Unfortunately, the perpetual cloak of fog has also created a prime hunting ground for pirates. When tales of ghost ships and haunted isles highlight such threats, only the most courageous captains dare to brave the sea's dangers. With the exception of Ghastria, where foodstuffs from the Core fetch impressive prices, markets on the islands have not generally been profitable for seafaring merchants. Most vessels quickly leave waters close to the Core, seeking out the exotic lands beyond the Mists.

Characters: Classes — fighters, rogues. Skills — Balance, Climb, Craft (carpentry, shipmaking, weaving), Intuit Direction, Knowledge (monster lore, nature), Profession (farmer, fisher, sailor), Swim, Use Rope, Wilderness Lore. Feats — Back to the Wall, Cold One, Dodge (plus derivatives), Expertise (plus derivatives), Haunted, Skill Focus (Wilderness Lore), Weapon Focus (rapier).

The Shadow Rift

Cultural Level: Unknown.

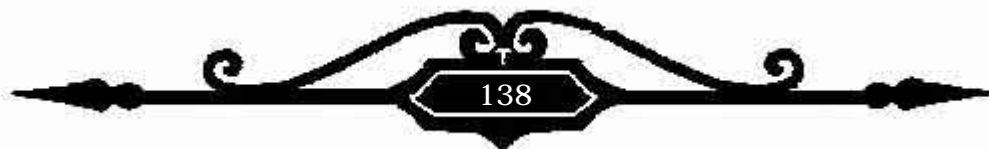
Landscape: Unknown. The Shadow Rift is a vast chasm that festers like a wound in the center of the Core. Its sheer cliffs drop away abruptly from the neighboring domains, as if the land has simply crumbled into nothingness. The Blackmist River in Tepest cascades off the precipice, roaring into the yawning void below. Roughly two hundred feet below the Rift's edge, black vapors swirl in hypnotic patterns, an unsettling, ebon reflection of the Mists themselves. These tenebrous vapors conceal whatever lies at the bottom of the Rift. If any mortals have descended into that abyss and returned, they have not revealed what secrets the Rift may hold.

Major Settlements: Unknown.

The Folk: Population — unknown. There is little reason to believe that anything at all inhabits the Shadow Rift. Nonetheless, wild tales persist of various creatures emerging from the Rift and preying on nearby communities — shapeshifters, ghostly humanoids, demonic berserkers, and myriad other horrors.

The Law: Unknown. If the Shadow Rift is indeed, as some folk have speculated, a gateway to another world, then it must be an alien and lightless realm. Few can guess what sort of otherworldly tyrants rule in such a place.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources — unknown. Coinage — unknown.





Over a decade ago, a Tepestani noble funded the construction of a staircase that would have led down into the Shadow Rift. Creation of this Descent, as it was called, was halted when workers who entered the black mists never emerged. To date, there have been no further organized efforts to explore the Rift's mysteries.

Characters: None.

Sithicus

Cultural Level: Medieval (7).

Landscape: Full Ecology (Temperate Forests and Hills). Sithicus (SITH-uh-cuss), located in the southwestern Core, is a shattered elven kingdom, perhaps the only domain in the Land of Mists populated primarily by nonhumans. As might be expected, it is a land of ancient forests where the dense, leafy boughs above blot out the sun. The wilds are overgrown and treacherous, reeking constantly of wet decay and sickly-sweet resin. Patches of briars and nettles form dense snarls, and the forest floor is slick with rotting leaves and moss. Mottled ivy and gray ferns grow everywhere, and pools of fetid water gather algae in the hollows. Fallen logs litter the understory, encrusted with florid, poisonous fungi. Rocky uplands peek out of the sweeping forest landscape

here and there, providing roosts for great, russet eagles. The Musarde River and its tributaries cut through the domain's gently rolling terrain. Near the center of the domain is the jagged maw of the Great Chasm. Out of this sheer canyon rises a black peak topped by the ruins of Nedragaard Keep, the fortress of Sithicus's dwarven tyrant. Shattered three years ago in the Hour of Screaming Shadows, the cracked ruins now jut from the earth like blackened teeth. Ravens wheel forlornly about the towering shards, and some elves swear they have glimpsed mournful shades drifting around the ruins at night.

Elegant architecture was once prized by the elves of Sithicus, but today the domain's settlements are crumbling. The wondrous elven wood and crystal masonries are neglected and covered with ivy. Twisting towers of living wood are blighted with insect galls and rot, and the gardens stand choked with thistles and brambles. Roads that once glittered like an evening sky are dull and crumbling. The arcane libraries slowly rot under an assault of mildew and silverfish, yet the elven wizards seem oblivious. Temples to forgotten gods are charred and blasted as if from lightning, the holy names stricken.





Chapter Four

The climate in Sithicus is temperate but mild. Although the sun often blazes cruelly in the late summer months, the elves are sheltered by the cool shadows of the forest.

Major Settlements: Har-Thelen (pop. 500), Hroth (pop. 900), Mal-Erek (pop. 500).

The Folk: Population — 4,300; Elves 96%, Half-Elves 2%, Humans 1%, Other 1%. Languages — Sithican,* Vaasi, Balok, Mordentish. Religions

— Ezra, Hala.

The overwhelming majority of Sithicans are high elves, though these Sithican elves speak their own unique language. Over the years, human merchants and craftsmen from Kartakass have settled in Sithicus, often marrying into elven houses of low station. Predictably, there is a growing population of half-elves in the domain, though more prestigious houses spurn these outcasts. Rumors persist of a tiny settlement of halflings in the Iron Hills of the northeast, but the region is considered by the elves to be haunted.

Sithican elves are grim, cold folk compared to the high elves found elsewhere in the Land of Mists. Their clothing is drab, the preferred colors being white, beige, ash, and gray-green. The deep adoration of nature and beauty is gone, replaced by solemn apathy. Sithican elves believe that their culture will survive, as it has done for centuries, no matter what troubles befall it. The domain's wicked monarchs may rise and fall, the petty problems of other realms may come and go, but Sithicus itself will endure. Denial tinges the elves' cold arrogance; all around, the wonders of their culture are crumbling. They cling to their traditions dourly, draining them of meaning and suffocating their society for reasons they can no longer remember. Outsiders are treated with disdain or even hostility by the Sithican elves, who remain haughty and suspicious toward all other races and lands. Even humans who have dwelled in Sithicus for a generation or more are considered second-class citizens.

The Law: Despotism and aristocracy. Azrael, a dwarven despot with unholy powers, rules Sithicus through sheer fear. The dwarf recently seized control of the domain from the black-hearted knight who once ruled from Nedragaard Keep. Although the knight was undeniably harsh to the Sithican elves, he cared little for his role as their monarch. Azrael has proved a much more monstrous tyrant. The dwarf governs erratically, appearing periodically in elven settlements, demanding tribute and slaughtering any who dis-

please him. No explanation or excuse is ever given. The Sithican elves hate Azrael passionately but fear his wrath even more. The dwarf king commands troops of undead soldiers and is widely rumored to be a supernatural creature himself. Speculation abounds regarding Azrael's relationship with Sithicus's Vistani, whom he seems to envy, fear, and hate.

Azrael's presence aside, the Sithican elves adhere to the traditional loose elven aristocracy. Without a true elven monarch to unite them, however, relationships between settlements and noble houses can become tense and bitter. Each settlement is ruled by the word of the eldest elven noble, who governs lightly. There are houses for each task or role in elven society, though some are much more prestigious and powerful than others. The noble, ranger, and wizard houses are particularly prominent. Since the elves value their freedom above all else, laws are few and far between. Protecting the resources of the forest and the privacy of elven settlements are the primary priorities. Sithican militias are small but well trained and diversified, with fighters, rangers, and wizards in their ranks.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources — oats, cabbage, carrots, turnips, peppers, squash, peaches, grapes, sheep, goats, wine, spirits, timber, furs, salt, gems, crystal, cloth. Coinage — rose (gp), crown (sp), sword (cp).

Although suspicious and insular, Sithican elves have reaped the benefits of expanding trade with neighboring domains, particularly Kartakass. Thus, reluctantly and gradually, contact with other lands has increased. Merchants are eager to acquire the rare vegetables, spirits, hardwoods, and handicrafts the elves produce. Tiny settlements of human traders and laborers have begun to appear in Sithican territory, which angers the more isolationist elven houses. Azrael does not discourage such economic colonialism, however, as it benefits his own coffers.

Characters: Classes — bards, druids, fighters, rangers, wizards. Skills — Bluff, Craft (bowmaking, carpentry, gemcutting, weaving), Handle Animal, Intimidate, Knowledge (arcana, nature, nobility and royalty), Profession (herbalist, scribe), Wilderness Lore. Feats — Dodge (plus derivatives), Lunatic, Point Blank Shot (plus derivatives), Reincarnated, Track, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (composite longbow, longsword).





Tepest

Cultural Level: Early Medieval (6).

Landscape: Full Ecology (Temperate Forests and Hills). The domain of Tepest (TEP-est) is a land of dark, menacing forests where the folk are beset by malicious, creeping evils and paranoid hysteria. These woodlands are eerie, preternatural places where shadows persist throughout the day and wisps of fog cling to the ground. The ancient trees are gnarled and grotesque, their branches and roots seeming to grasp at interlopers. Toadstools and mosses carpet the muddy ground, and weird sounds echo through the thickets. The forests seem sinister even by the light of day, and at night they teem with flickering shadows, glinting yellow eyes, and the eerie glow of St. Elmo's fire. Travelers sometimes stumble upon unnatural copses of trees that are perpetually wrapped in spring bloom, autumn color, or winter snow. Rivers and the East Timori Road divide the forests, and the Tepestani have names for them all — Wytchwood, Brujamonte, Goblinwood, and so forth. The black waters of Lake Kronov, in western Tepest, provide easy fishing throughout the year, as they never freeze over completely. Fishermen must keep a watchful eye out for the water monster known as the Avanc and avoid the haunted shores of Castle Island.

Villages are cozy little points of light amid the forest gloom. Most buildings in the domain are crudely constructed of smooth stones. The conical roofs are thatched with hay or peat, with central, wobbly chimneys. The humblest homes are merely sod huts built atop shallow pits. Nobles, meanwhile, dwell in grim keeps that are little more than featureless monoliths of stone surrounded by wicked palisades. The domain's most beautiful structures are the small stone temples dedicated to Belenus. The splendid chapels are open to the sky, as if anticipating a glimpse of the god's face through the ashen sky. Stylized stone images of Belenus's solar disc adorn villages throughout the domain.

Tepest's climate is temperate but moderate; truly brutal winters or scorching summers are unusual. Most days are overcast and foggy, the sun shining weakly through the gray haze.

Major Settlements: Briggdarrow (pop. 300), Kellee (pop. 3,700), Viktal (pop. 3,600).

The Folk: Population — 15,500; Humans 99%, Other 1%; 2,900 goblins. Languages — Tepestani,* Darkonese, Vaasi, Sylvan. Religions — Belenus,* Ezra, the Lawgiver.

The Tepestani are muscular and handsome people, if slightly short in stature. Their skin is fair and frequently freckled, and eye color is green or blue. Hair color can range from strawberry blond through dark brown, but most Tepestani are true redheads, with auburn to carrot-orange hair. Men keep their hair cut to just above the shoulder, but women prefer to grow their tresses exceptionally long, especially if it is naturally curly. Many men wear full beards and mustaches, either wild and unkempt or braided. Clothing is simple and durable: trousers and baggy shirts for men, long skirts and blouses for women. Clothing is secured with cloth cords rather than fasteners or belts. Folk wrap themselves in dense, layered furs in the winter months. Earthen colors, especially browns and dark greens, predominate in local garb. Decoration or other adornment on clothing is rare. Wealthier folk stand out with their high leather boots and massive fur cloaks. The Tepestani wear little jewelry, save for the occasional bronze armband or earring.

The Tepestani take pleasure in hard work and the simple joys of life, such as family, food, and music. While they consider toil and hardship to be sacred facets of life, they are also passionate people. The Tepestani year is dotted with seasonal festivals that feature nightly singing, dancing, and drinking. Nonetheless, the Tepestani are extremely superstitious and fearful folk. They are terrified of the "little beasties" that stalk the domain's forests, seeking foolish travelers on whom to prey. These goblin bands are particularly cruel and murderous, but the forests are also home to malicious fey, cannibalistic hags, and other horrors. The Tepestani make few distinctions between the various forest denizens, regarding them all as unholy magical beings. Although in the past the Tepestani huddled in fear from these creatures, they now respond with sword and flame to signs of supernatural activity, led in their crusade by the clerics of Belenus. Everywhere the Tepestani see signs of evil's influence, even among their families and neighbors. Fear has led to hysteria, and though creatures of darkness have indeed been destroyed by the vigilance, an untold number of innocents have also been slain.

The Law: Aristocratic and theocratic independent settlements. It is culture rather than formal government that unites the Tepestani. A council of senior wealthy males administers each settlement independently. These elders govern with relative impunity, though they act only when in unanimous agreement.





In larger settlements, petty magistrates and warriors are appointed by the elder council to oversee day-to-day law and order. The clerics of Belenus have significant influence over the elders in most settlements. This influence has grown in recent years, as Belenus's clerics maintain that only their god's cleansing fire can protect the innocent from the forest's denizens. To that end, the clerics root out suspected evildoers and then quickly convene tribunals to interrogate and sentence them. Such hasty justice often leads to a cascade of accusations as the guilty attempt to divert the clerics' attention to others. Wyan of Viktal is at the front of the church's expanding power. He is a severe man who unflinchingly takes drastic measures when purging a settlement of evil's taint.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources — barley, wheat, oats, turnips, potatoes, pears, sheep, goats, hogs, dairy, sturgeon, pike, peat, timber, gypsum, beer. Coinage — none. Tepest conducts trade through barter, though some currency from Darkon and Nova Vaasa moves through the domain.

Isolated as it is, Tepest has never enjoyed extensive contact with other domains. The East Timor Road and South Dnar River, both leading into Nova Vaasa, are Tepest's only conduits to the outside world. The evil reputation of the domain's forests is enough to dissuade travelers even from a broad highway like the East Timor. The recent hysteria that has gripped Tepest further discourages the few outsiders interested in political or economic ties with the domain. Nonetheless, limited trade persists with settlements in northern Nova Vaasa.

Characters: Classes — bards, clerics, fighters, rangers, sorcerers. Skills — Craft (carpentry, leatherworking, weaving), Intimidate, Knowledge (monster lore, religion), Perform (ballad, dance, flute, harp), Profession (farmer, fisher, herbalist, herdsman, lumberjack), Sense Motive, Wilderness Lore. Feats — Iron Will, Lunatic, Redhead, Skill Focus (Knowledge [monster lore]), Toughness, Weapon Focus (longsword, throwing axe).

Valachan

Cultural Level: Medieval (7).

Landscape: Full Ecology (Temperate Forests and Hills). Nestled in the southwestern Core, Valachan (VAHL-eh-kahn) is a rugged domain blanketed by lush evergreen forests and prowled

by fearsome black panthers. The trees are ancient and massive, shrouded by cool fog and a thick beard of mosses. Eerie hoots and growls echo through the hollows, and the chill air is heavy with the primeval scent of damp redwoods. Although the shadowy understory is dotted with low, dewy ferns, travel is difficult due to the treacherous terrain. Ridges and narrow canyons wind their way through the domain, providing concealment for skulking predators. Rocky streams flow eastward toward the Arden River, their whitewater rapids teeming with fish.

Villages are densely clustered in Valachan, bustling pockets of industriousness amid the eldritch wilderness. The windowless buildings are constructed of heavy logs or planks, with gabled roofs shingled in black slate. Large, single-room lodges are common even among wealthy nobles, who take great pride in their cavernous abodes and encourage villagers to socialize within. Structures are decorated with elaborate, stylized carvings of panthers, bears, wolves, and ravens. Heraldry is important to the Valachani, and homes are proudly adorned with the matriarch's insignia. Baron von Kharkov's Castle Pantara, in contrast to the inviting homes of his subjects, is a menacing fortress of charcoal-gray stone. Although temperate, the Valachan's climate is exceedingly wet, with heavy rainfall throughout the year. Temperatures are moderate through all seasons, but sweltering summers occur occasionally.

Major Settlements: Helbenik (pop. 3,500), Rotwald (pop. 4,400), Ungrad (pop. 1,500).

The Folk: Population — 19,100; Humans 97%, Gnomes 2%, Other 1%. Languages — Vaasi,* Mordentish, Gnome, Sithican. Religions — Ezra, Hala.

Valachani are tall, muscular people with wide shoulders and long, sturdy limbs. Their skin is typically a dark coffee brown, though colors ranging from a creamy tan to nearly charcoal black occur. Eye color is almost always dark brown, but the odd individual with unsettling bile-yellow eyes is sometimes born. Valachani hair is glossy black and worn long and straight by both genders. Men never wear beards or mustaches, but many grow long sideburns. Clothing is durable and simple, with both men and women preferring to go about in loose trousers and tunics often decorated with fringe and animal teeth. Faded black and white are the favorite colors, though these are accented with bold reds, greens, and blues. Valachani wear knee-





high boots of soft leather throughout the year, even when not outdoors.

The Valachani are a stalwart people accustomed to a rustic life amid the domain's eerie forests. They personify the creatures of the forest in myths, reserving their greatest reverence and fear for the panthers, which are numerous and notoriously cunning. Valachani value perseverance and strong family ties but tend to be suspicious of "book learning" and the trappings of more advanced domains. A Valchani who does not know how to shoot a bow or survive in the wilderness is less than a whole person. Despite their individualism, the Valachani are social people with exceedingly complex rituals for life's milestones, including birth, coming of age, marriage, and death. Lengthy festivals mark these events in settlements. Handcrafted gifts are exchanged and wealthy Valachani attempt to outdo one another by obtaining the best foodstuffs and entertainment.

The Law: Aristocratic monarchy. Valachan's ruler, Baron Urik von Kharkov, is a cold man who values obedience and his own privacy above all else. This stern aloofness does not endear the baron to his subjects, but the Valachani have learned to pay their taxes dutifully and thereby avoid the baron's attention and infamous temper. Von Kharkov demands petty servitude from random commoners on occasion, summoning them to Castle Pantara for a single night. Those who are summoned often return infected with the White Fever, a mild but debilitating flu that strikes many Valachani throughout their lives. Each year, von Kharkov forcefully takes a young Valachani woman as his bride; to date, the unfortunate soul he chooses has never lived out the year. These sinister facts only heighten fear of the baron and feed rumors that he truly is inhuman.

The baron's private army of enforcers collects taxes and rounds up anyone unfortunate enough to draw von Kharkov's ire. Expertly trained in swordsmanship and wilderness skills, these enforcers are monstrous sadists zealously loyal to their lord. The mysterious Lady Adelaide, the Veiled Mistress, commands them. Arrogant and astonishingly vicious, Adelaide shares the appetites of the baron. She can be bribed by the offering of a handsome youth, who usually emerges scarred without and within from the mistress's wicked attentions.

Despite the oppressive presence of the baron's minions, life in most Valachani settlements is

peaceful. The most powerful nobles administer justice and arbitrate disputes as they see fit, but corruption is rare. Nobility is hereditary through the mother's side, and men rather than women marry out of their families. Although tradition dictates that nobles be respected and deferred to because of their wealth, commoners do not tolerate incompetence or weakness in their betters. Nobles who lack the guile to defend their positions are quickly eliminated and their assets divided among the remaining aristocrats. Serving in a settlement's militia is an honorable and profitable pursuit, as nobles reward service with wealth, titles, and arranged marriages.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources — wheat, barley, hops, cherries, apples, peas, flower bulbs, hogs, sheep, dairy, salmon, trout, timber, furs, gold, copper, bows, furniture. Coinage — pantherhead (gp), cateye (sp), claw (cp).

Despite expanding trade with neighboring domains, Valachan retains a strong streak of independence. Baron von Kharkov apparently has little interest in establishing alliances with other realms. His enforcers patrol the domain's frontiers irregularly, equally likely to harass, rob, or murder curious travelers. Thus, the Valachani are left to forge their own bonds with foreign merchants. For now, the Valachani seem content to trade their wares and avoid entangling themselves in the affairs of other lands.

Characters: Classes — barbarians, druids, fighters, rangers, sorcerers. Skills — Climb, Craft (basketweaving, bowmaking, carpentry), Hide, Intuit Direction, Knowledge (nature), Move Silently, Profession (farmer, guide, herbalist, lumberjack), Wilderness Lore. Feats — Alertness, Courage, Improved Critical, Point Blank Shot (plus derivatives), Skill Focus (Wilderness Lore), Track, Weapon Focus (composite longbow).

Vechor

Cultural Level: Classical (4).

Landscape: Full Ecology (Warm Forests, Hills, and Swamps). Vechor (VEH-kor) is a domain of chaos and turmoil where the land itself can be unstable. Lying east of the Core, beyond the cold, gray waters of the Nocturnal Sea, Vechor's coast is a tidal marshland. Lush, salt-tolerant vegetation and clouds of buzzing mosquitoes inhabit this border between land and sea. Farther inland, dense, verdant tropical forests are cut by the wide Nostru River as it winds its way toward the coast. At the domain's eastern frontier, the Cliffs of Vesanis rise





up toward a drier plateau that quickly becomes lost in the Mists. Vechor's climate is perpetually hot and humid, marked by a long and merciless rainy season. Rapid, seemingly impossible shifts in weather are not unusual. Storms that drop hail, sleet, and even snow can sweep through the domain unexpectedly, vanishing just as quickly as they appear. Cyclones regularly strike the domain with frightening ferocity.

Much like the weather, Vechor's landscape has a disturbing tendency to shift over time, as fluid and unpredictable as a maelstrom. Most of these changes occur over the course of days, but rapid, violent shifts are not unheard of. The forests seem to rearrange themselves at random, obliterating landmarks and rendering maps useless. Trails are redirected to new destinations, and the coastline appears to creep back and forth. This effect can be observed in the domain's settlements as well. The square, pale brick structures can vanish or appear from nowhere. Streets and alleyways twist and turn differently each time they are traversed. Even the heavens above Vechor are not immune. The sky changes colors, oozing from azure to sickly green to brilliant purple. The sun and moon appear to change size with each dawn and dusk, bloating to fill the sky or dwindling to a weak blot of light.

Major Settlements: Abdok (8,000).

The Folk: Population — 15,900; Humans 99%, Other 1%. Languages — Vechorite.* Religions — none. Vechorites acknowledge their king as a god but do not worship him.

Vechorites have lean, athletic builds and average statures. Their complexion is dusky, from an olive-tinged light tan to a deep bronze. Their deeply set eyes are either an intense blue or green or, more rarely, a startling gold or silver. Vechorites' straight, unruly hair ranges from honey-blond to flat black in color. Most work their long locks into a cascade of fine braids. Men grow small, neat mustaches but shun beards. Vechorite clothing is light, providing the wearer with mobility and keeping him cool in the domain's muggy climate. Both men and women favor short skirts and tunics that are worn over the left shoulder and belted at the waist with a sash. Simple sandals are the preferred footwear. Men dress in white, beige, or gray, but women prefer floral colors such as pale reds, oranges, yellows, pinks, and violets. Jewelry, particularly necklaces and bracelets, is popular with both genders; gold, silver, gems, shell, bone, and wood are used in equal measure.

Every Vechorite bears the brand of an "E" on the forehead, written in the local language. This is done voluntarily as an honorific for their king.

Despite the unnerving strangeness of their homeland, Vechorites are a warm and content people. They take simple joy in farming, fishing, hunting, and handicrafts. Vechorites are notoriously fickle, however, and tend to act out of emotion and impulse rather than rationality. They have learned to accept the ephemeral nature of the domain as a fact of life. It is no secret that Vechor's king is hopelessly mad. The Vechorites believe that a land is both an extension and reflection of its ruler. Thus, they do not find it surprising that Vechor itself can seem as insane as their king. Their response is to simply take the mayhem in stride. Particularly startling changes in Vechor's landscape are considered omens of the king's mood or demeanor.

The land's fluid character has touched Vechorite society as well. There are few social restrictions or barriers in Vechorite culture, and virtually no taboos. There is only a loose class structure, and women are considered equals with men. The strong dominate the weak with little fear of reprisal. Perhaps the only enduring social tradition is marriage, which is regarded as a sacred symbol of stability. Widowed men and women do not remarry, and unfaithful spouses are punished with death.

The Law: Ochlocratic despotism. Vechor is ruled by Easan the Mad, a reclusive wizard-tyrant. Easan's reign is supported by a firm conviction among the Vechorites that he is divine. According to the natives, Easan has ruled their land for eons, and though this claim may be hard to accept, Easan has certainly reigned longer than the life span of a normal man. The king is never seen in public, so outsiders can only speculate as to his nature. Easan's palace in Abdok, for all its opulence, stands silent. It is rumored that the king spends most of his time in a mystical dwelling beyond the Cliffs of Vesanis, cackling madly and listening to the whispers of ancient evils.

There is no formal law in Vechor, only an unspoken code of loyalty to Easan. Although the king's presence is barely felt in daily life, none dares speak against him. Those who voice words of rebellion vanish without a trace, presumably into Easan's insane clutches. There are no civil or criminal authorities in Vechor's settlements. Violence and theft are repaid with brutal mob justice;





lynchings are carried out in the streets, the offenders hacked to death with blades. Vechor's settlements have no standing militias, but all young men are rigorously trained in both hunting and combat.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources — rice, millet, cassava, cotton, bananas, sugarcane, cacao, coffee, tea, rubber, gums, spices, vanilla, cattle, tuna, shrimp, turtles, pearls, timber, gold, silver, gems. Coinage — wildcrown (gp), wildorb (sp), wildpenny (cp). The currency used in Vechor is clearly ancient, the coins worn and irregular in shape. Although their value is still recognized among the Vechorites, barter is commonplace as well.

For all its madness, Vechor has seen contact with other domains increase in recent years. Merchants are eager to trade for the domain's exotic and valuable resources, and the Vechorites have responded in kind. Commerce has expanded with coastal settlements in Darkon and Nova Vaasa in particular. Easan has not yet reacted to the presence of outsiders in his realm, though none can truly say what the mad wizard's attitude is toward this growing exchange.

Characters: Classes — druids, fighters, rangers, sorcerers. Skills — Craft (pottery, stonemasonry, weaving), Intimidate, Intuit Direction, Knowledge (arcana, nature), Profession (farmer, fisher, herdsman, miner), Swim, Wilderness Lore. Feats — Courage, Dodge (plus derivatives), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Open Mind, Quick Draw, Weapon Focus (kukri).

Verbrek

Cultural Level: Medieval (7).

Landscape: Full Ecology (Temperate Forests, Hills, and Swamps). Verbrek (vehr-BREHK) is a wild domain in the grip of fear, where the wolf is master and humanity huddles like cowering prey. Lying in the heart of the southwestern Core's river lowlands, the domain is shrouded in a patchwork of towering forests, misty hollows, and overgrown wetlands. Here the wilderness is primeval and untamed, the dense and thorny vegetation making travel an arduous experience. Travelers must learn to be wary of Verbrek's wolves, hulking, silver-furred beasts that stalk their prey with human cunning. Those who brave the domain's trackless wilds are constantly harried by a terrifying sensation of being hunted. Snapping twigs and rustling leaves are enough to send travelers into panicked flight, like frightened deer. There are no wide,

well-traveled roads in Verbrek, only the most rugged and poorly maintained trails. The broad, muddy Arden and Musarde Rivers and their tributaries serve as the domain's primary conduits to other lands.

The scattered hamlets and lone farmsteads that dot the domain are wholly without comfort in the surrounding gloom of the wilderness. Civilization seems to be hanging on by a thread, the savage forests threatening to devour its tiny strongholds. The squat buildings are constructed of massive, rough-cut logs and thatched, gabled roofs and chimneys of smooth river stones. Muddy trenches five feet or more deep surround the domain's humble livestock pens, an often futile strategy to keep the wolves at bay. Verbrek's climate is extremely even, featuring cold winters and warm summers, with rainfall most plentiful in late spring.

Major Settlements: None. Verbrek is sparsely populated, and most folk dwell in solitary farmsteads or settlements of fewer than twenty people.

The Folk: Population — 800; Humans 99%, Other 1%; 1,100 natural werewolves. Languages — Mordentish,* Balok, Vaasi, Sithican. Religions — the Wolf God,* Ezra, Hala.

Verbrekers are a sturdy breed, short in stature but muscular. Their skin ranges from very fair and freckled to light tan in color, though it is typically weathered and toughened with calluses. A Verbreker's eyes are usually blue or green, and hair color runs from honey blond to medium brown, but auburn is not uncommon. Both men and women keep their straight hair long and unstyled, with men preferring to maintain a length just above the shoulder. Men often grow mustaches and beards, always together. Verbreker clothing is simplistic, loose fitting, and functional. Men wear trousers and tunics, while women dress in blouses and long skirts slit up the thigh. Many Verbrekers, male and female alike, wear hooded cloaks when outdoors. Shades of green and neutral colors such as white, beige, and brown predominate local garb. Folk from all walks of life carry a hatchet and knife at all times.

Verbrekers are at home in the wilderness, though their relationship with the natural world could best be described as an uneasy truce. Verbrekers have a healthy respect for nature, but that respect is tempered with a fear of nature's savagery. They stoically strive to carve out a corner of civilization along the banks of Verbrek's rivers,





recognizing all the while that in the battle between humanity and nature, nature is likely to emerge the victor. In the meantime, they endure by learning the ways of their wilderness, thereby avoiding a senseless and early death. They value basic survival skills and are easily angered by urban folk who risk everyone's neck through their recklessness or ignorance.

The Verbrekers are not the true masters of the domain, a fact that they acknowledge with grim fatalism. Verbrek belongs to the werewolves, who have their own brutal tribal society. Raised on wolf myths and the occasional encounter with the lycanthropes, Verbrekers are taught to fear werewolves and avoid them at all costs. Now and then, on a moonlit night, a lone victim is heard screaming in the distance, dragged off by the bloodthirsty beasts. Verbrekers respond simply by double-checking the locks, throwing another log on the fire, and thanking the gods that they aren't the victims tonight.

The Law: Independent settlements governed by elders. Verbrek has no centralized authority or regional government, though Verbrekers do share a cultural bond. A council consisting of the oldest male from each household makes decisions for each settlement. Most of these elder councils are democratic, with disputes settled by majority votes. Petty rivalries are uncommon, however, since survival, not power, is on the minds of most Verbrek patriarchs. Settlements are too small to require true militias, but nearly all Verbrek boys are trained in wrestling, boxing, archery, and sword-play when they enter manhood.

The werewolves of Verbrek have a cruel and savage culture, but its particulars are a mystery to most Verbrekers. Werewolves attack Verbrekers only sporadically, though they could easily slaughter household after household if they desired. It may be that the lycanthropes commit just enough atrocities to keep the Verbrekers fearful and away from their sacred places, which are rumored to dot the domain. The werewolves are said to worship a being known simply as the Wolf God, a primeval force of fury and carnage. Tales of moonlit sacrifices, blasphemous beast rites, and frenzied ritual hunts are common among the Verbrekers.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources — oats, barley, hops, cabbage, potatoes, peppers, cattle, hogs, chickens, dairy, mushrooms, timber, furs, beer, clay. Coinage — none. Trade is conducted through barter in Verbrek, though some Mordentish

and Richemuloise currency moves through the domain.

Verbrek is regarded as something of a treacherous, backwater realm. Tales of rampaging werewolf packs discourage outsiders from venturing into the domain with any frequency. The only regular visitors are river merchants, who ply the domain's waterways in search of the furs, timber, foodstuffs, and other commodities that the Verbrekers produce. In turn, they bring scarce crafted items, particularly iron tools, on which the Verbrekers depend. Regardless of the season, travelers may encounter the gregarious Captain Nathan Timothy navigating Verbrek's rivers. The captain is willing to transport passengers aboard his cargo vessel, the *Virago*, for a reasonable fee.

Characters: Classes — druids, fighters, rangers, sorcerers. Skills — Craft (bowmaking, carpentry), Hide, Knowledge (monster lore, nature), Move Silently, Perform (storytelling), Profession (farmer, fisher, herdsman, lumberjack), Swim, Wilderness Lore. Feats — Dodge (plus derivatives), Jaded, Lunatic, Point Blank Shot (plus derivatives), Run, Skill Focus (Wilderness Lore), Weapon Focus (composite longbow).

Clusters

Clusters are composed of two or more domains, though none approaches the magnitude of the Core. Like those of the Core, the domains within a cluster usually share a common climate and terrain. Some cluster domains have a subtler bond, however, such as a shared history. Each is distinctive, and few generalizations can be made about them.

The Amber Wastes

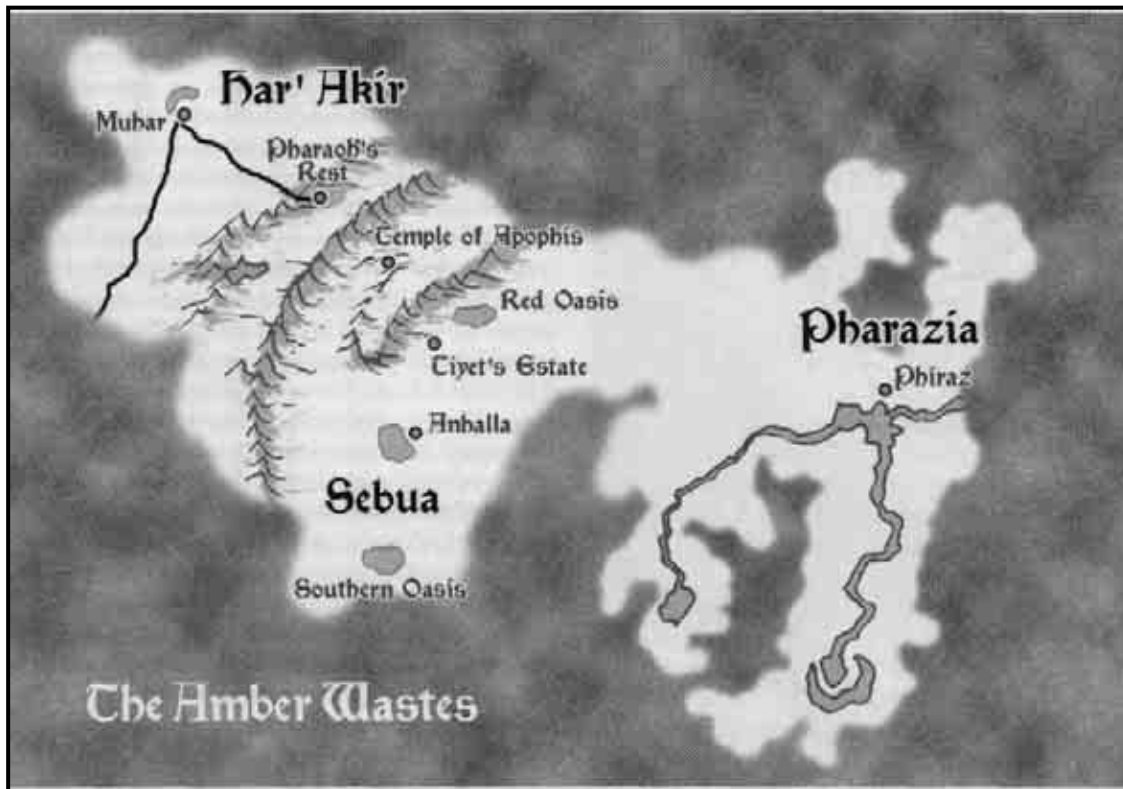
The Amber Wastes are desert lands parched by the relentless heat of the sun. There is no ebb and flow of seasons in these arid domains; the scorching temperatures are relentless. Here the Mists sometimes reveal themselves in strange ways, appearing as shimmering heat mirages or blinding sandstorms. The Wastes are harsh and unforgiving; life huddles near oases and hides beneath the shifting sands.

Har'Akir

Cultural Level: Bronze Age (2).

Landscape: Full Ecology (Warm Deserts, Hills, and Mountains). Har'Akir (har -a-KEER) is a land of vanished empires where the sands erode ancient monuments and the folk live in the shadow





of faded glories. It is a lonely realm, a patch of burning desert that drifts up against the towering cliffs that lie to the east. Riddling these barren crags are numerous forgotten tombs, concealing fabulous riches and horrifying curses. Foremost among these forbidden vaults is the crypt of Ankhtepot, Har' Akir's mightiest pharaoh, in the canyon known as Pharaoh's Rest.

The sole source of fresh water in Har' Akir is the Mubar Oasis, hidden among the rolling desert dunes. Its waters are clear and refreshing, though the local villagers strictly limit access to such a precious resource. The shores are lined with swaying palm trees and crowded throughout the day with camels, donkeys, and women bearing jugs of water. Buildings in Har' Akir are squat structures of whitewashed mud or sandstone. Doorways and windows are open portals that allow cool breezes to circulate indoors, though at night they are draped with linen to keep out the evening chill.

Settlements: Mubar (pop. 300).

The Folk: Population — 600; Humans 99%, Other 1%. Languages — Akiri,* Pharazian. Religions — Akiri Pantheon.*

The Akiri are short, wiry people, their features weathered by the desert sun and winds. Their skin is dark, ranging from a dusky bronze to a deep chocolate brown. Eye color is usually deep brown, though the eyes of some Akiri are flecked with gold or copper. Their straight, stiff hair is either dark brown or flat black, but many Akiri stain their locks a luxurious, glossy black. Male Akiri never grow their facial hair, and some shave their heads entirely. Both men and women wear loose, white robes of linen belted at the waist with a sash. The ubiquitous Akiri head cloth can be drawn across the face when stinging sand becomes windborne. Humble sandals are the customary footwear, though the Akiri remove these when indoors. Men and women alike decorate their eyes with pigments of gold, azure, and black. Women stain their hands with henna, a practice that is considered attractive by Akiri men. Jewelry is rarely worn, except for simple scarab amulets of sandstone, which almost all Akiri possess.

The Akiri are wary folk, suspicious of outsiders and anything they consider strange. Although not hostile toward foreigners, they are retiring and distant in their manner. They dutifully offer respite for weary desert travelers, but nothing more.





Even in the company of one another, the Akiri tend to be quiet and reserved. There is a tired sadness to their daily routines, as if they are remembering vanished times of happiness and nobility. Indeed, the crumbling statues and obelisks that peek through Har'Akir's shifting sands hint at a once mighty empire. Now nothing remains but a fragmented history of the cruel pharaoh Ankhtepot, whom the Akiri believe slumbers fitfully in his tomb.

The Akiri have a vibrant pantheon of gods with an elaborate mythology. Although the sun god Ra is the patriarch of these deities, it is the god of life and death, Osiris, who most Akiri revere. As a people, they are terrified of death, particularly the prospect of a gray eternity in the underworld. Accordingly, the Akiri try to adhere to the principle of *ma'at*, which dictates a cosmic order to all things, so that they might be admitted to paradise. Funerary traditions are paramount among the Akiri, since the dead are believed to require their mortal husks and possessions in the beyond. Merely entering a sealed tomb is considered a profane trespass in Har'Akir, and grave robbing is an unspeakable crime.

The Law: Theocracy. Clerics rule Har'Akir, a pale reflection of the powerful religious hierarchy that once advised pharaohs and governed from the shadows. Although the days of the god-kings are gone, the clerics have survived, and the Akiri continue to dutifully obey their edicts. It is the temple guards who keep the peace in Muhar and the clerics that mete out justice and make decisions for the community. They are led by the high priestess of Osiris, Snefru, a stern woman with decadent tastes. Beyond the village oasis, however, Har'Akir is a lawless wasteland. Travelers and hermits have no one but themselves to turn to for protection against the desert and its ancient evils.

Slavery is an accepted institution in Har'Akir, and nearly one-third of the domain's population is made up of slaves. The customary punishment for criminals is enslavement, not imprisonment. Slaves can work as household servants or even as skilled tradesmen. Most perform menial tasks, however, such as heavy labor and tending the muddy plots along the oasis shore.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources — wheat, millet, flax, beans, dates, figs, sheep, goats, cattle, camels, iron, salt, gypsum, talc, cloth. Coinage — none. Trade is primarily conducted through barter in Har'Akir, though merchants sometimes accept gold and silver as payment.



Ancient Akiri coins surface on occasion, but most are secreted away in forgotten tombs.

In the past, Har'Akir has had little contact with the outside world. This has changed in recent years, as desert nomads from Pharazia have begun to make the perilous journey from beyond the cliffs in the east. Unmistakable with their black robes and flashing scimitars, these wanderers seek trade with the Akiri, bringing robust slaves and sweet foodstuffs. Contact with other lands is sporadic at best, but tales of Har'Akir and its ancient treasures have gradually reached the Core. No doubt the brave and foolhardy will soon journey to Har 'Akir in greater numbers, seeking fabulous and exotic wealth. If the fates of previous treasure hunters are any indication, such interlopers will only nourish the vultures or perish screaming in a lightless crypt.

Characters: Classes — clerics, fighters, wizards. Skills — Alchemy, Bluff, Craft (basketweaving, calligraphy, pottery, stonemasonry, weaving), Handle Animal, Knowledge (arcana, monster lore, nobility and royalty, religion), Profession (apothecary, farmer, herbalist, herdsman, scribe, tanner, teamster), Ride, Sense Motive, Wilderness Lore. Feats — Endurance, Spell Focus (Necromancy), Voice of Wrath, Weapon Focus (short sword, shortspear).

Pharazia

Cultural Level: Early Medieval (6).

Landscape: Full Ecology (Warm Deserts). Pharazia (fa-RAZH-i-a) is a domain of endless, searing desert as pitiless as the judgment of a god. The rolling dunes shift eternally in the burning winds, and rocky outcroppings emerge and vanish from the sand. Overhead, vultures circle the blazing eye of the sun, patiently waiting for thirst and exhaustion to overcome travelers. Sparkling oases break the harsh tedium of the wastes, though far too rarely for desert wanderers. The oases feed the domain's brackish, muddy rivers, where slews of crocodiles sun themselves on the banks. Swaying palm trees along the oases and rivers provide precious shade, but travelers must compete with the desert creatures that claim the cool shadows for themselves.

Near the center of the domain is the city of Phiraz, a dusky desert jewel on the shores of a shimmering oasis. The city's square buildings are constructed of stone brick covered in whitewashed plaster. Blessed breezes waft through the open portals of doorways and windows.

The most opulent structures are built of polished stone and decorated with intricate geometric mosaics. Slender spires and gleaming domes soar above the city, as if yearning to touch the heavens. Narrow streets wind between homes and shops, opening into plazas thronging with eager vendors.

Settlements: Phiraz (pop. 8,800).

The Folk: Population — 10,200; Humans 99%, Other 1%. Languages — Pharazian.* Religions — none. Pharazians revere Diamabel, the beautiful ruler of Pharazia, as a divine being, though he has no temples or clerics.

Pharazians are handsome and trim people, their features angular. Their skin tone ranges from light olive-tan to dusky bronze. Eye color is almost always deep brown; the rare child with jet-black eyes is slain at birth out of superstition. Pharazians have sleek, black hair, which men keep trimmed short and women grow exceptionally long. Neatly groomed mustaches and beards are not uncommon among men. Pharazians wear long, loose robes donned over trousers or skirts. Head cloths are traditional for both men and women for the sake of modesty and as a guard against windborne sand. In public, women hide every lock of their hair beneath shawls, and veils conceal their faces save for the eyes. Sandals or slippers are the customary footwear. Jewelry and makeup are considered vulgar, at least in public.

Pharazians are tense, reserved folk mindful of their words and deeds. Moral purity is paramount to them, though more out of tradition and fear than spiritual conviction. Palpable anxiety colors their careful, measured speech, as if they are fearful of uttering the wrong words. Their nerves have frayed under the stern commandments of

Diamabel, whose confessors are vigilant for those who would stray from the fold. Pharazians eagerly betray offenders to the confessors, if only to gain a moment of respite from their puritanical watchfulness.

Deep in the sandy wastes, however, dwell desert nomads who refuse to submit to Diamabel's laws. These hardy wanderers are constantly on the move, pitching their vividly colored tents in a different spot each night. Distinctive in their black robes and astride their sleek horses, the nomads are hated and feared by the city folk of Phiraz, not the least for their heretical view that Diamabel is nothing more than a corrupted mortal. Sheikh Allahn el Rashaan, a cunning desert warrior, leads





the nomads on their crusade against Pharazia's master.

The Law: Moralistic despotism. Diamabel the Righteous rules Pharazia with an unforgiving hand, demanding that his subjects submit to his edicts with nothing less than perfect obedience. He is no mortal man, but a pale, angelic creature with feathered wings and a blazing countenance. Pharazians believe that Diamabel is a celestial agent sent among them to teach right word, thought, and deed. There is no god at the center of his commandments, only purity for its own sake. There are certain activities that must not be undertaken, foods that must not be eaten, words that must not be uttered, and thoughts that must not be pondered. Two hours of prayer are required each day for the penitent to reflect on their crimes and resolve to be obedient.

Diamabel's laws are enforced strictly, without ambiguity or leniency. Subjects are either obedient or wayward, and the latter are harshly punished for their sins. Confessors wearing pure white robes and bearing wicked scourges patrol the streets of Phiraz, escorted by armed warrior zealots. The confessors are vigilant for errant souls, who are expected to repent and submit to brutal lashings. The confessors have absolute discretion in meting out punishment, as their mandate comes from Diamabel himself. The Black Herald, a terrifying specter rumored to be the embodiment of Diamabel's vengeance, slays the worst transgressors under the cloak of night.

The desert nomads, meanwhile, are loyal to the banner of Sheikh Rashaan, who leads by virtue of his charisma, wealth, and battle prowess. Although they are sworn enemies of Diamabel, the nomads have their own strict code of laws. Likewise, their punishments are no less severe; violent criminals and traitors are horribly maimed and left in the desert to die.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources — wheat, barley, rice, millet, flax, melons, citrus, peas, beans, eggplant, figs, dates, coffee, camels, sheep, goats, cattle, cloth. Coinage — penance (gp), reproach (sp), blessing (cp). Prices are not fixed in Pharazian shops and markets, and haggling is integral to any exchange. Equipment costs 20% more than the listed price in the *Player's Handbook*, but if the buyer succeeds in an opposed Diplomacy check with the seller, the price is reduced to 20% less than the listed price.

Few travelers from other domains find their way to Pharazia. Those that have almost always

hasten to leave when they first clash with the domain's oppressive laws. Diamabel takes a dim view of outsiders, as their corrupting influence might disrupt the purity of his realm. Similarly, he forbids his subjects from venturing beyond Phiraz, lest they be slain, enslaved, or converted by the desert nomads. The nomads, for their part, conduct regular trade with the domain of Har'Akir far to the west, though the journey necessitates travel through forsaken Sebu. The appearance of their caravans is a welcome sight among the Akiri, and the wealth generated by such commerce has only expanded Sheikh Rashaan's power.

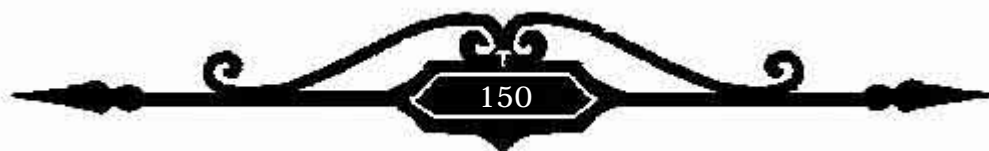
Characters: Classes — barbarians, fighters, wizards. Skills — Bluff, Craft (calligraphy, pottery, stonemasonry, weaving), Diplomacy, Profession (farmer, herdsman, scribe), Ride, Sense Motive, Wilderness Lore. Feats — Endurance, Expertise (plus derivatives), Mounted Combat (plus derivatives), Skill Focus (Ride), Two-Weapon Fighting, Voice of Wrath, Weapon Focus (scimitar).

Sebu

Cultural Level: Stone Age (1). Ruins in Sebu reflect a Bronze Age (2) culture.

Landscape: Full Ecology (Warm Deserts, Hills, and Mountains). Sebu (SEB-oo-a) is a forsaken domain, a desert wasteland that shelters lost secrets and glittering evils. The sun scorches a landscape of trackless sand dunes and barren, rocky flats. Oases are plentiful in the wastes, but parched travelers abruptly learn that many of them are brackish or tainted. In the west, the Valley of Death snakes its way among soaring cliffs, the red earth cracked and dry underfoot. The valley is strewn with silent tombs and ruined temples dedicated to forgotten gods, all swathed in the shadows cast by the cliffs. Natural sandstone buttes and arches fringe the eastern face of the crags, where the alkaline waters of the Red Oasis swarm with bloodthirsty mosquitoes. Storm clouds gather in the sky above Sebu throughout the morning, usually cooling the desert with brief, torrential rains in the afternoon. Vicious black sandstorms blow out of the hinterlands at times, devouring everything in their path with choking, searing sand.

Near the center of the domain, the ruined city of Anhalla lies ravaged by the desert and time. What were once wondrous stone buildings and monuments are now merely forlorn chunks of foundation and windblown dust.





Belligerent baboons dart through the ruins, tormenting any interlopers with their screeching and thievery. Pitiful mud dwellings, clearly the handiwork of recent residents in Anhalla, squat amid the rubble. In truth, a handful of children dwell in the city, wild youngsters who have learned to survive on their own in such harsh surroundings. On the outskirts of Anhalla, a magnificent walled estate still stands untouched by the slow death that is gradually claiming the city. Travelers have reported hearing sweet music and laughter floating over the walls, but none has ever glimpsed the festivities within and returned.

Settlements: None.

The Folk: Population — unknown; Humans assumed 100%. Languages — Wildspeak. Religions — none. Although the wild children only communicate in their savage Wildspeak, evidence from the ruins throughout Sebuia indicates that Akiri was once the dominant language of the domain. Similarly, the gods of the Akiri pantheon gaze sternly from Sebuia's weathered temple carvings. Clearly, Sebuia once shared strong bonds with the neighboring domain of Har'Akir to the west.

Sebuia is a desolate land without native people, save for the wild children of Anhalla. These Sebuian youngsters are feral and extremely shy, though their curiosity often goads them to observe travelers from afar. They are short and athletic and hardened by an arduous existence amid sand, sun, and scorpions. Their dark skin varies in tone from deep bronze to a rich, dark brown. They have wide, almond-shaped eyes, always the black-brown color of coffee. Their flat black hair is naturally straight, but the long, unkempt locks are densely matted and often suffused with lice and detritus. Many Sebuian children have gruesome scars, telltale signs of how harsh their short lives have been. Their clothing is meager and ragged, simply scraps of animal hide or woven reeds. Rarely do they bother wearing anything but a loincloth, though girls also don a short, tattered shift.

The Sebuian children are reclusive, skulking among the ruins of Anhalla like timid animals. They watch trespassers from the shadows, as alert for danger as wild antelope. Nonetheless, they can exhibit astonishing ferocity when threatened, fighting like desperate, cornered prey — or cunning predators. The joys of a carefree childhood are unknown to them; they must hunt, gather, and craft tools and weapons to survive.

The children worship no gods but revere the desert itself as their harsh mother. They communicate through a peculiar language of animal noises, which Pharazian nomads have dubbed Wildspeak. There is no written form of this tongue, which to listeners resembles a cacophony of jackal yips, baboon screeches, bird chirps, and other bestial sounds. Of course, the enduring enigma of the wild children is their origin. No clues have surfaced to suggest where their parents might be or how the youths might have come to dwell in a lost city deep in the trackless desert. For that matter, some Pharazian wanderers have begun to wonder how it is that the years roll on, but the wild children never seem to grow up.

The Law: No formal government. The Sebuian children have a primitive society that values group survival and harmony. There are no tribal leaders, though the wisdom of older children is respected and heeded. Power struggles are unknown, and when conflicts arise they are settled with a simple majority vote. Virtually all disputes are over matters of raw survival, such as strategies for procuring water and food. There are no laws or punishment among the wild children; each youngster earnestly contributes to the welfare of the group, because to do otherwise would mean death for them all.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources (not exploited) — beans, peas, dates, iron, salt, gypsum, talc. Coinage — none.

Despite its bleak landscape, Sebuia has plentiful natural resources. Wild legumes and vegetables grow along the oasis shores, and mineral deposits sparkle in the scorched cliffs. Nonetheless, outsiders are reluctant to venture to the domain. The nomads of Pharazia choose not to tarry in Sebuia, seeking trade beyond the Valley of Death with Har'Akir. Sebuia is widely considered an unholy land and is supposedly haunted by blasphemous horrors; some say it is cursed by forgotten gods for forgotten crimes. The creature called the Scabrous One, who stalks the dunes eternally for victims, is only the most infamous of these damned souls. Even in the face of such dangers, however, a handful of explorers has ventured into the tombs and temples of Sebuia, seeking the wealth of bygone ages. Some have even braved the sinister estate near Anhalla. None of these seekers has ever returned.

Characters: Classes — barbarians, druids, rangers. Skills — Climb, Craft (basketweaving, bowmaking, pottery, weaponsmithing), Heal, Hide,





Chapter Four

Jump, Knowledge (nature), Move Silently, Wilderness Lore. Feats — Back to the Wall, Dodge (plus derivatives), Endurance, Skill Focus (Wilderness Lore), Track, Weapon Focus (hand axe, shortspear).

The Frozen Reaches

In the Frozen Reaches, eternal winter reigns. Daylight is short, the sun peering above the horizon for just six hours. Endless snow blankets the rugged landscape, making travel arduous. The stiff winds howl eerily across the wastes, cutting through the thickest clothing. Several feet of ice covers the surface of lakes and ponds, and jagged floes choke the rivers. Dense evergreen forests tower around travelers, their bitter needles, nuts, and bark the only food for foragers. Farmers are forced to grow tiny plots of winter grains and hardy root vegetables. Fierce predators, maddened with starvation, stalk the wilderness. The Mists sometimes appear here as cruel, blinding blizzards.

Sanguinia

Cultural Level: Early Medieval (6).
Landscape: Full Ecology (Cold Forest, Hills, and Mountains). Sanguinia (sahn-GWIN-i-a) is a domain of jagged, frozen mountains.

The dizzying icebound peak of Mount Radu is the land's highest point. The slopes are treacherous, though primeval evergreen forests cling to them tirelessly. Rugged outcroppings and sheer ledges abound, making travel a lethal challenge for all but the most hardened mountaineers. Bitter winds scream across the heights, threatening to fling travelers from the mountain's face. Avalanches choke the mountain passes for months at a time. Frozen streams tumble down the mountainsides, their waters a mere trickle beneath the thick crust. Silent waterfalls hang from the rocky precipices, caught forever as glittering curtains of ice. East of Mount Radu, the glassy surface of Lake Argus is pockmarked with the holes of ice fishermen. Sanguinia is dotted with menhirs carved with primitive images of mythic heroes and frightening behemoths. The mountain tribes that erected such monuments have vanished, and not even the Sanguinians know of their fate.

Villages in Sanguinia are gray bulwarks huddled against the weather's limitless fury. The buildings are squat, round edifices, the windowless walls constructed several feet thick with gray cobbles and boulders. The roofs are made of two layers of wooden planks and insulated with dry, packed





packed evergreen needles. Much grander design is exhibited in Castle Guirgiu, the abode of Prince Mircea. Spired turrets pierce the mountain air, and the steep roofs of dark green slate are free of snow and ice. Although it is guarded only by a low wall and frozen moat, most Sanguinians quake at the thought of even approaching Mircea's dread domicile.

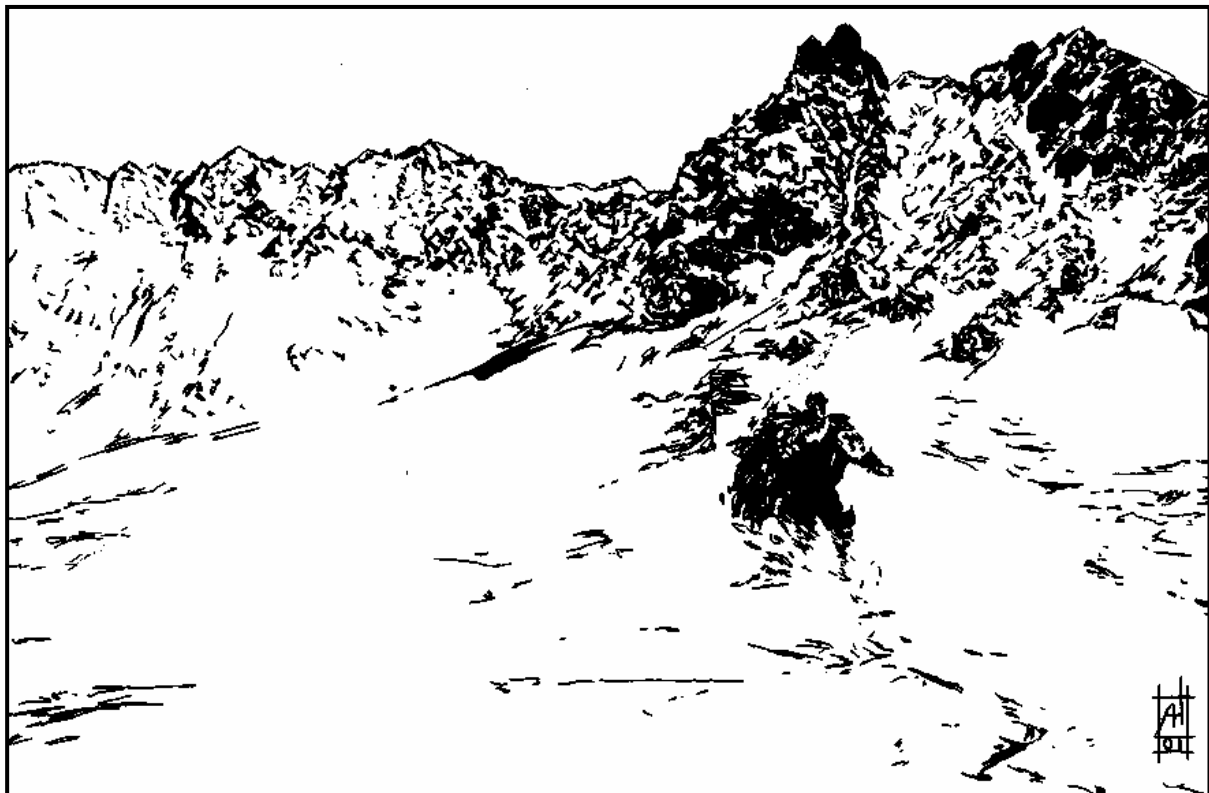
Settlements: Fagaras (pop. 800), Kosova (pop. 1,000), Tirgo (pop. 1,300).

The Folk: Population — 6,300; Humans 99%, Other 1%. Languages — Sanguine.* Religions — none.

Sanguinians are rugged people strengthened by a lifetime of clinging to the frigid mountains. Their shoulders and hips are wide, their chests deep. Their skin is fair, though their cheeks are perpetually ruddy from the freezing air. Sanguinian eyes are a cold, pale blue or gray in hue. Their curly hair ranges from sandy brown to nearly black. Both men and women let their locks grow long and wild. Men carefully braid their long mustaches and beards; a magnificently styled beard, hoary with frost, is considered very masculine. Sanguinian clothing is thick and extremely durable, made of layers of hides stitched together with sawdust insulation. Men and women alike wear trousers, shirts, long coats that hang

past the knees, and round fur hats. Dark colors are favored: black, grays, browns, midnight blue, crimson, purple, and deep orange-brown. Boots are studded with iron spikes to provide purchase on bare stone and ice, while snowshoes are used to cross wide expanses of snow.

The Sanguinians have managed to survive and prosper in exceedingly hostile surroundings, and this infects them with respect for endurance and practicality. They are honest and straightforward almost to a fault and have little patience for deception or timidity in others. Although survival is always on their minds, they treasure life's simple joys, such as music, dance, and romance. They reason that death may come at any time in the mountains, and life should be enjoyed to its fullest. Children are treasured among the Sanguinians; a healthy birth is cause for the grandparents to sponsor a week of nightly feasting and dancing. Simple children's rhymes about nature and silly characters are popular even among adults, who sing them passionately through the night. The Sanguinians fear little, except for wolves, avalanches, and the bloodthirsty, misshapen vampires that are known to haunt lonely mountain passes.





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The Law: Hereditary monarchy. Prince Ladislav Mircea, a cruel young tyrant, rules Sanguinia with almost casual malice. Few have even seen the reclusive monarch, though he is rumored to be stunningly handsome. Although monstrously harsh to those who displease him, Mircea seems to govern solely for his own jaded amusement. He is easily distracted and involves himself with his realm only for as long as it entertains him. He sometimes skulks in Castle Guirgiu for months at a time, much to the relief of the Sanguinians. Mircea levies severe taxes on his subjects but demands little else from them. His personal enforcers, clad in ashen coats and wielding wicked battleaxes, dutifully collect the tribute from each village but otherwise remain close to Castle Guirgiu. Settlements are left to govern and protect themselves. The most powerful landowners in a village serve on a council with limited seats and are responsible for making broad decisions that affect the whole community. The council also adjudicates significant disputes and organizes a village militia.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources — wheat, rye, turnips, onions, reindeer, goats, trout, perch, timber, furs, gold, copper, iron, salt, gems. Coinage — frostmark (gp), chillpiece (sp), nip (cp).

Sanguinia has had virtually no contact with the outside world for generations. Once in a great while travelers find their way to these frigid mountains, but they are usually quick to leave such a bleak, inhospitable land. Recently, Sanguinian hunters have discovered a vast, frozen valley called Vorostokov to the southeast. While this has prompted some eagerness to trade with the valley's residents, Vorostokov has its own dangers, including huge, fearless wolves that have begun stalking Sanguinia's lower elevations.

Characters: Classes — barbarians, bards, fighters, rangers, sorcerers. Skills — Balance, Climb, Craft (blacksmithing, carpentry, leatherworking), Jump, Perform (chant, dance, drums, limericks), Profession (fisher, herdsman, lumberjack, miner, tanner), Use Rope, Wilderness Lore. Feats — Back to the Wall, Cold One, Endurance, Power Attack (plus derivatives), Skill Focus (Climb), Weapon Focus (battleaxe).

Vorostokov

Cultural Level: Dark Age (5).

Landscape: Full Ecology (Cold Forests, Plains, Hills, and Mountains). Vorostokov (VOR-oh-STAWK-awv) is a vast, frozen valley crushed by endless cold and terrorized by brutish warriors.

Ringed by jagged, treacherous peaks, the domain's trackless steppes and forests are buried under perpetual snow. Weary reindeer herds and humans alike subsist on lichens, bark, and the bitter evergreen nuts that sprout every three months. The dark conifer forests are venerable and perilous, haunted by huge wolves and restless snow spirits. Brutal winds constantly whistle across the plains, and lethal blizzards are a weekly occurrence throughout the domain. The icebound Trau River meanders southwest across Vorostokov, draining into the black waters of the aptly named Bottomless Lake.

Vorostokov's tiny settlements are scattered, each a self-sufficient speck of civilization amid the frozen wastes. The domain's log buildings are long and low, single-room structures that reek of pitch and pine resin. The gabled roofs are thatched with winter hay and topped with tilting stone chimneys, their feeble smoke wisps vanishing in the wind. Animals, including reindeer and goats, are stabled inside residences so that their body heat warms the household. Modest but wickedly sharp palisade fences surround each home to keep out wolves and more unnatural interlopers.

Major Settlements: Kargo (pop. 100), Kirinova (pop. 100), Nodvik (pop. 100), Novayalenk (pop. 100), Oneka (pop. 100), Torgov (pop. 100), Voronina (pop. 100), Vorostokov (pop. 200).

The Folk: Population — 1,100; Humans 99%, Other 1%. Languages — Voros.* Religions — none.

The Voros are hearty folk, stout of build and blessed with powerful limbs. Their skin tends to be fair, varying from creamy white to a light tan or sallow. The biting winds of the domain tinge their cheeks with a perpetual ruddiness. Eye color is commonly a deep brown among the Voros, but sometimes a strange ginger hue is exhibited. Their straight hair is always dark brown or raven black. Women grow their tresses quite long, often past their waists, and traditionally braid it into a single lock. Men may wear their hair long and wild or in a variety of distinct styles, such as shorn temples or a topknot. Full beards and mustaches are common among men. Typical Voros clothing consists of hide shirts and trousers for men and long, layered dresses for woman. When venturing outdoors, men and women alike swathe themselves in heavy furs. Women wrap their shoulders in shawls and wear kerchiefs over their heads, while men don round fur hats. Skins and cloth are always natural colors, never dyed. Jewelry is rare, save for the occasional





earing of antler or bone. Travelers don snowshoes when trekking through the snowbound wilderness.

As a people, the Voros are warm and good humored, though their spirits have begun to dim with each passing year of winter. Despite the endless cold, they are resolved to survive and disregard that which they cannot change. They prize hospitality and socializing and are inherently suspicious of those who cannot enjoy a strong drink and a hearty laugh. Voros delight in eating, drinking, song, jokes, board games, and tests of might. Sweathouses, lodges where residents can relax amid thick steam, are a cornerstone of culture in Voros villages. Here, men and women alike gather to gossip and enjoy the therapeutic vapors. If the Voros have a weakness, it is their stubbornness and the slowness with which they are stirred to action. Dark streaks of cynicism mar the demeanors of many Voros, and this hopeless fatalism is often drowned in potent liquor.

The Law: Formerly independent settlements shifting to despotism. Gregor Zolnik, self-proclaimed *boyar* of Vorostokov, threatens to draw the entire domain into his grasp. In the past, a powerful warrior or wealthy landowner governed each village in Vorostokov, ruling as he saw fit. The boyar organized the region in times of war and collected tribute on behalf of the king's distant court. Since the eternal winter settled over Vorostokov, the region has been in limbo, the settlements unable to establish contact with the monarchy. Zolnik, a master hunter and sadistic bully from the village of Vorostokov, has stepped forward and proclaimed himself the new boyar of the valley. To consolidate his power, Zolnik has gathered a *boyarsky*, a loyal band of warriors, stalkers, and thugs. He is now engaged in a brutal reign of terror intended to bring Vorostokov's settlements under his control.

As might be expected, Zolnik has met with stubborn resistance in some villages. His response is always swift and monstrous — the wholesale slaughter of the settlement's hunters and trappers. Starvation has caused more than one village to accept Zolnik's brutal domination, as the boyar offers the game of his huntsmen in exchange for loyalty. Slowly, surely, the boyar's reach is extending from village to village, claiming the entire frozen valley as his personal dominion.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources — wheat, beets, potatoes, carrots, onions, reindeer, goats, trout, perch, pike, sturgeon, spirits, furs, timber,

resin, iron. Coinage — none. Trade in Vorostokov is conducted through barter.

Travelers from other domains have occasionally stumbled upon the "valley of eternal winter," but Vorostokov has remained a secluded land cut off from the outside world by unassailable icy peaks. Recently, however, rangers have discovered a tra-versable pass in northwestern Vorostokov, leading up into a mountainous realm called Sanguinia. Although some Voros are curious about this domain, grotesque creatures have been sighted descending from the mountains at night and vanishing into Vorostokov's forests.

Characters: Classes — barbarians, bards, fighters, rangers, sorcerers. Skills — Craft (blacksmithing, carpentry, leatherworking, weaponsmithing), Gather Information, Heal, Intuit Direction, Perform (ballad, chant, limericks, lute), Profession (brewer, farmer, fisher, herdsman, lumberjack, tanner), Wilderness Lore. Feats — Back to the Wall, Cold One, Endurance, Lunatic, Power Attack (plus derivatives), Skill Focus (Wilderness Lore), Toughness, Track, Weapon Focus (greatsword).

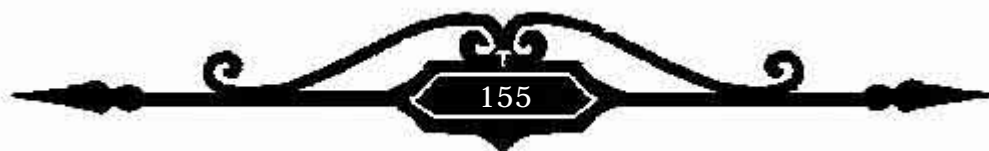
The Shadowlands

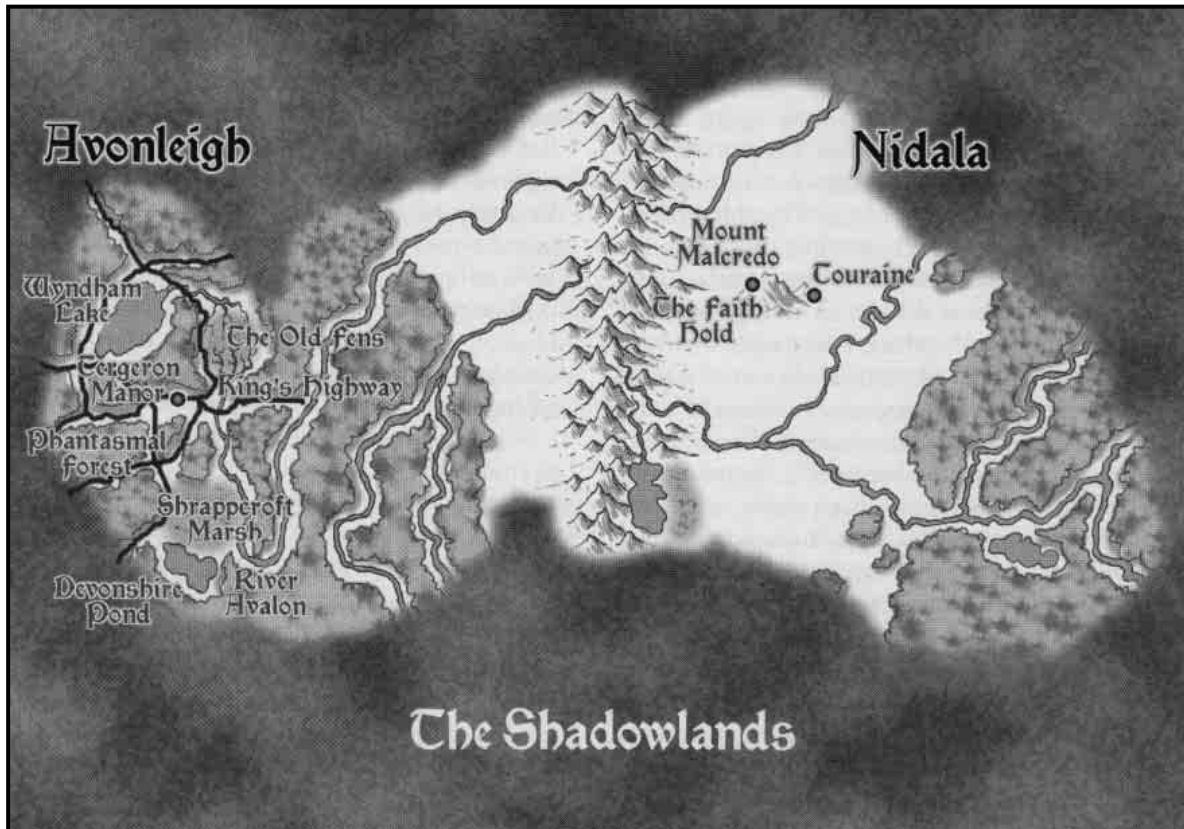
The forbidding Shadowlands are dubbed for the Shadowborn family whose fate seems entwined with the region. Regardless, it is an appropriate appellation for lands so suffused with darkness, both real and spiritual. Unspeakable atrocities and shameful secrets skulk within the dense forests, both also in strongholds of righteousness. Evil clashes with still greater evil, while the guttering flame of virtue threatens to dim forever.

Avonleigh

Cultural Level: Savage (0). Structures in Avonleigh reflect a Medieval (7) culture.

Landscape: Full Ecology (Temperate Forests and Swamps). Avonleigh (AV-on-LAY) is a haunted domain, a land of eldritch forests swathed in consuming darkness. There is no true day or night in Avonleigh, only endless shadow. Illumination is diffuse and sickly — even the brightest light sources penetrate the darkness no more than a flickering campfire. A perpetual damp chill hangs in the air, but the regular flow of seasons never seems to touch the domain. Where the sky peeks through the trees overhead, black clouds streak a starless sky. The eerie, twisted Phantasmal Forest,





its black trees and tangled brambles seeming to claw at trespassers, claims most of Avonleigh. The forest grows so densely that travel off of game trails is all but impossible. The undergrowth is choked with nettles, toadstools, rotting logs, and grasping vines. All around, the woods echo with inhuman sobbing, laughter, and screams. Rarely, the forests open up onto fogbound peat bogs, where yellow grasses and reeds hide deep, foul waters. The waters of Wyndham Lake and Devonshire Pond are similarly fetid, blanketed by algal scum and bubbling with gases and strange noises.

The remnants of the King's Highway bisect Avonleigh, running east-west through the center of the domain. This road is still traversable, though its cobbles have shifted through the years and bristling weeds poke through the cracks. Along the King's Highway, near the very heart of the Phantasmal Forest, stands Tergeron Manor, as foreboding and decrepit as a crypt. Beyond corroded iron gates it waits, a sprawling, opulent estate long since claimed by the surrounding forest. Invariably, the belfry atop the western wing transfixes travelers who look upon the Manor, for there a beacon of brilliant white light shines.

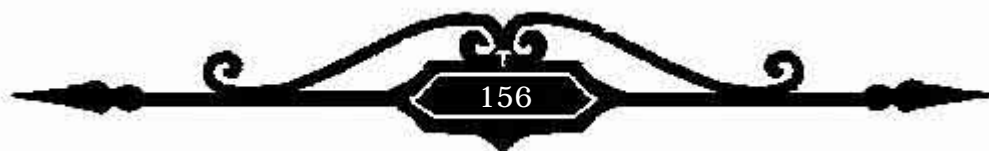
The light is not comforting, but cold and strangely sorrowful, the glow of mourning.

Major Settlements: None.

The Folk: Population — none. Languages — none. Religions — none. Scant clues from Tergeron Manor suggest that Nidalan was once Avonleigh's dominant language. Avonleigh is evidently not a realm where the living are welcome. Some curious souls have speculated that the light in Tergeron Manor is a sign of mortal residents. However, most outsiders believe that to venture into that brooding estate in search of life is somewhere between foolishness and madness.

The Law: No formal government. No living being is known to rule Avonleigh. Many outsiders draw the reasonable conclusion that some restless shade of Tergeron Manor considers Avonleigh its unholy realm.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources (not exploited) — peat, timber. Coinage — none. Avonleigh is clearly a cursed and haunted land, hardly the sort of domain that outsiders are disposed to visit. The inhabitants of the neighboring domain of Nidala are well aware of Avonleigh's reputation.





That domain's Knight Protector, Elena Faith-hold, seems convinced that the Phantasmal Forest has some special significance. Thus far, however, Elena's plans to breach the forest have proceeded slowly and been marred by maddening setbacks.

Characters: None.

Nidala

Cultural Level: Medieval (7).

Landscape: Full Ecology (Temperate Forests, Hills, Mountains, and Plains). Nidala (NAI-dal-a) is a domain of breathtaking, rugged wilderness scoured clean of wickedness by the ruthless vigilance of the domain's Knight Protector. The Theospine Mountains run through the center of the realm, their snowcapped heights soaring up to touch cold, gray sky. Sparkling streams and rivers flow down either side of the range, teeming with freshwater fish and shellfish. To the east, the jagged crags descend to rolling foothills, where flocks of sheep graze serenely under the watchful gaze of shepherds. Lake Amenta huddles close to the southern reaches of the Theospines, its frigid waters supposedly concealing the gateway to a mystical kingdom. Farther to the east, sweeping grasslands and fertile farms stretch out beyond the foothills, eventually changing into a densely forested flood-plain. The Knight Protector's warriors patrol the eastern woods for predators, and lumberjacks work year-round without fear.

West of the Theospines, Nidala's landscape is much more savage and sinister. The peaks slope down toward rocky badlands, which are riddled with black, twisting caverns. Here the air is still and swollen with a palpable tension. As the barren hills descend into gloomy forests, the sense of dread heightens. The gnarled trees creak and sway regardless of the winds, making even seasoned woodsmen edgy. Snapping twigs and low growls betray the movements of stalking beasts, natural and otherwise.

Near the edge of the eastern foothills stands the bustling city of Touraine, smoke rising from its thousand little chimneys. Its buildings are charming and tidy, each built two stories tall with stone and timber and finished with creamy plaster. The gabled roofs are shingled in vermilion tiles, and windows are guarded with beautifully carved wooden shutters. Above the city, perched atop Mount Malcredo, glowers forbidding Faith Hold, castle of the Knight Protector. A churning thunderstorm rages perpetually above the keep, arcs of

purple lightning periodically stretching out to strike the uppermost towers.

Overall, the climate in Nidala is cool and temperate, though winters can be extremely harsh.

Major Settlements: Touraine (pop. 20,200).

The Folk: Population — 30,500; Humans 99%, Other 1%. Languages — Nidalan.* Religions — Belenus.*

The Nidalans are lean folk blessed with strong limbs and commanding statures. They have smooth, fair skin that is frequently freckled or lightly tanned from working outdoors. A Nidalan's eyes are always an icy blue in color. Their straight hair is usually flaxen to dirty blond, but Nidalans with raven tresses are not unheard of. Men keep their hair trimmed short and grow their mustaches and beards out neatly to match. Women allow the hair to grow long, though rarely past the middle of the back. Clothing is rugged and functional, designed to allow the Nidalans to work easily and shrug off the chill air. Men wear loose shirts, vests, breeches, and high boots, while women don long dresses and aprons over blouses and pin their hair beneath stiff bonnets. Neutral colors such as black, white, and beige dominate Nidalan garb, though bright red accents are common. Jewelry is outlawed in Nidala, as the Knight Protector has decreed it vain and vulgar.

The Nidalans are grim folk exhausted and frustrated by the Knight Protector's endless moralistic decrees. Although they once enjoyed song, dance, and tragic plays, all such activities have been outlawed, leaving the Nidalans to pursue their livelihoods with a perceptible air of gloom. This is not to say that the Nidalans are utterly despondent at all times; rather, a vague, unshakable sense of loss clings to them, as if they feel profound regret. Family gatherings featuring elaborate feasts are central to Nidalan life, even if the atmosphere has been terse in recent years. Handicrafts are practiced throughout Nidala for recreation as well as profession, and many folk enjoy wood-carving in their spare time.

The Law: Theocratic monarchy. Elena Faith-hold, Knight Protector of Nidala, rules her realm through respect, order, and, above all, fear. She is a legendary holy warrior in the service of the sun god Belenus and takes her responsibilities to the faith extremely seriously. Unfortunately, the Nidalans have suffered mightily under her unwavering conviction and tenacity, and they pervert her name as "Elena Strangle-hold" in whispers.



Chapter Four



Elena issues weekly Decrees of Faith, commandments and prohibitions that have slowly accumulated into a mountain of a moral code. To enforce her decrees, Elena relies on her knights and clerics, as well as an elaborate network of informants spread through the realm. Mayors officially govern Tourine and smaller settlements, gathering four times a year to discuss matters that affect the entire domain. Most Nidalans recognize these men for what they are: the eyes and ears of Elena.

Those who violate Elena's decrees are punished savagely. Public floggings and maimings are standard sentences, but those with the gall to speak against Elena or Belenus's church are dragged in chains to the infamous torture chambers of Faith Hold. Given this cruelty, Nidala would probably be on the edge of revolt if it were not for a legendary dragon named Banemaw. It is Elena's presence alone that keeps this eldritch wyrm at bay, though he has been known to slaughter rural villages beyond the Knight Protector's reach.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources — wheat, barley, oats, rye, potatoes, hogs, cattle, sheep, dairy, perch, salmon, crayfish, timber, silver, copper, iron, lead, limestone, salt, furniture. Coinage — blaze (gp), flare (sp), flame (cp).

The Knight Protector discourages contact between her realm and other domains, reasoning that the corrupting influence of outsiders would only taint her subjects. Since Nidala is self-sufficient and somewhat remote, this has not been a problem in the past. Travelers who do find their way to Nidala are expected to adhere to Elena's decrees, an unlikely prospect since most outsiders are not even aware the laws exist. Thus, residents of other domains often find themselves on the way to Faith Hold's torture pits within days or even hours of their arrival in Nidala.

The Phantasmal Forest, which Elena has only recently discovered beyond the western woods of Nidala, seems to hold some special interest for the Knight Protector. She regularly sends troops of knights and clerics into the wicked forest, but to what end the Nidalans cannot say.

Characters: Classes — clerics, fighters, rangers. Skills — Bluff, Craft (armorsmithing, blacksmithing, carpentry, weaponsmithing), Gather Information, Intimidate, Knowledge (religion), Profession (farmer, herdsman, lumberjack, miner), Sense Motive. Feats — Jaded, Power Attack (plus derivatives), Reincarnated, Skill Focus (Knowledge [religion]), Weapon Focus (longsword).



Shadowborn Manor

Cultural Level: Medieval (7).

Landscape: No Ecology (Settled Area). Among the folk of Nidala, whispered legends speak of Shadowborn Manor, the ancestral home of the Shadowborn family. This venerable estate is rumored to lie somewhere in the Phantasmal Forest of Avonleigh. It is uncertain what the manor even looks like, for none has ever entered its grounds and returned. A handful of travelers has reported stumbling upon a wall of alabaster stone, smooth, seamless, and without end, deep in the Phantasmal Forest. These explorers were wise enough to recognize the perverted wrongness of such a thing and quickly fled; none can say what happens to those who dare to breach the wall.

Major Settlements: None. Shadowborn Manor itself is a solitary structure.

The Folk: Population — none. Languages — none. Religions — none. If there are any mortal beings in Shadowborn Manor, they surely must be unnatural minions of evil.

The Law: No formal government. Speculation as to the nature of Shadowborn Manor's master is wild and groundless. There are rumors that the spirits of fallen Shadowborn knights haunt in the manor. Other tales insist that it is an ancient foe of the Shadowborns that now calls the manor home.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources — none. Coinage — none. If Shadowborn Manor even exists, it is one of the most unapproachable and forbidden of all the domains of Ravenloft. Such a place almost certainly has no relationship with the larger world.

Characters: None.

The Verdurous Lands

The Verdurous Lands are sweltering, tropical domains where the lush vegetation grows dense and wild. The heat and humidity are unrelenting, drenching travelers in sweat. In these muggy lands, torrential rains define the years, deluging the verdant landscape with an annual wet season. The wilds are shadowy and menacing in the Verdurous Lands, stalked by vicious predators and choked by toxic plant life. Where humanity has slashed back the strangling vegetation and toiled to survive, nature seems to scabble and claw at his handiwork. In these lands, the savagery of the wilderness is unremitting and terrible.

Saragoss

Cultural Level: Stone Age (1). Ships in Saragoss reflect cultures from Bronze Age (2) to Renaissance (9).

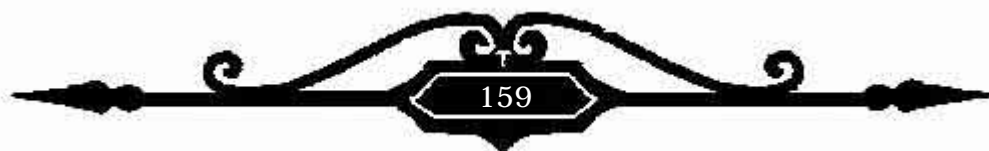
Landscape: Full Ecology (Warm Aquatic). Saragoss (SAHR-a-GAWSS) is an expanse of warm ocean choked by sargasso seaweed, where the wrecks of countless ships drift amid the fog. It is a mariner's nightmare, a sweltering purgatory where men are forced to turn on one another like animals to survive. The sargasso forms a tangled mat that snarls ships in its slimy tendrils, rendering escape from the domain hopeless. The hulks of vessels from countless eras list brokenly in the muck, many on the verge of plunging into the depths below. In places, the sargasso is so dense and spongy that one can walk across the ocean's surface, though unseen breaches in the mat make such travel perilous. Above, screeching gulls wheel in lazy circles, often swooping down to harass the domain's luckless inhabitants.

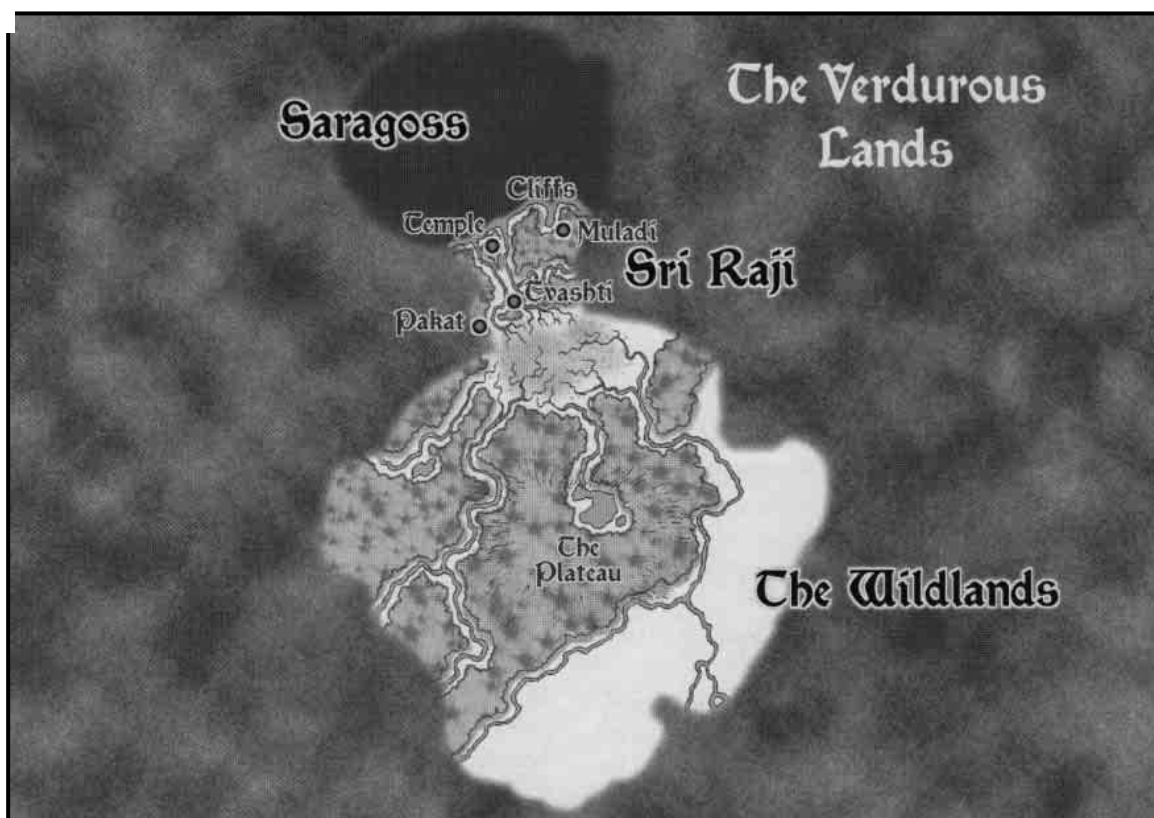
Below the surface muck, a forest of kelp sways in the murky depths. The waters are filthy, clouded with silt, shredded seaweed, and the rot of corpses. Sharks and barracuda glide through the tangled maze, sickly beams of sunlight flickering weakly through the choked surface. Deeper still, the rotting hulls of ships sit silently on the muddy bottom, an eerie graveyard where all of the domain's ships eventually come to rest. Schools of silvery fish and luminescent squid dart through the gaping holes in the wrecks. Jagged underwater crags of bone-white coral rise all around, riddled with black, twisting caves.

Perpetual fog shrouds Saragoss, concealing the treacherous seaweed from sailors. The scorching, cloudless stretches of weather that were once common no longer come to the domain. The muggy days are now shrouded in haze, though the heat is no less wilting. The fog breaks only when a violent squall is approaching, an omen of the harrowing ordeal that is to come. Storms are savage in Saragoss, pounding the ragged ships with torrential rain, howling winds, and lashing waves.

Major Settlements: None.

The Folk: Population— 1,100; Humans 98%, Other 2%. Language — Mordentish, Vaasi, Darkonese, Souragnian, Rokuma, many others. Religions — none.





Saragossans are drawn from cultures throughout Ravenloft, and as such they have no common appearance or culture. Once the sargasso claims a ship, its crew becomes trapped here, forced to fend off raiders from other vessels. Obviously, folk from domains with maritime traditions are the most likely to be ensnared in the sargasso beds. Vessels hailing from strange, unknown lands also become mired here, however. Regardless of their origins, Saragossans share a ragged appearance. Their skin is jaundiced and cracked, ravaged by the salt air. Their hair is matted and lice ridden, their clothing threadbare. Scurvy and undernourishment render many Saragossans weak and delirious.

Life in Saragoss is an ordeal, a brutal exercise in survival with no room for mercy or sentiment. In the view of the Saragossans, if preying on the weak extends their lives a few more weeks, then they are prepared to raid, betray, and murder without hesitation. Fresh water, food, and wood are the most valuable resources in Saragoss, and bloody skirmishes over these commodities are commonplace between ships. There is no room for trust among people who would kill for a piece of hardtack or scrap of driftwood. Mutiny and sedition are always simmering aboard most ships.

As if the threat from fellow sailors were not enough, there are constant sightings of oceanic horrors, from ships of undead buccaneers to scaly fish folk crawling up from the deeps.

The Law: No formal government. Saragoss is a domain in literal anarchy, where the strong prey on the weak at whim. There is nothing approaching order, justice, or even sanity in its ominous waters.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources (not exploited) — tuna, mackerel, snapper, eels, squid, turtles, sponges, seaweed, coral, pearls. Coinage — none.

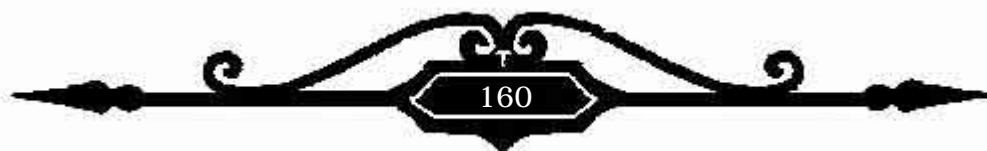
Save for its ensnarement of luckless vessels, Saragoss has no relationship to the outside world. The domain's wretched inhabitants are unaware that just beyond the fog to the southwest, the Yahasha Mountains of Sri Raji soar above the sea.

Characters: None. Outsiders who are claimed by Saragoss rarely, if ever, escape its choking grasp.

Sri Raji

Cultural Level: Classical (4).

Landscape: Full Ecology (Warm Forests, Hills, and Mountains). Sri Raji (sree RA-jee) is a land of tropical forests and crumbling ruins where



The Dread Realms



the people live according to traditions as old as time and cower in fear from their dread Maharaja. Enormous hardwoods tower around travelers in the forests, the limbs heavy with vines, mosses, and orchids. Green dampness permeates everything, as heavy rains batter the forests each night. The thickets echo with the cacophony of animal life, from the buzzing of parasitic insects to the shrieks of monkeys to the growls of prowling tigers. Ancient temples and shrines peek through the verdant shroud in places, hinting at forgotten secrets. To the northwest, the Yahasha Mountains climb toward white wisps of mist, as lush as the surrounding lowlands. Broad, muddy rivers meander down from the mountains, their banks swarming with listless crocodiles. Eminent among these waterways is the sacred Damuhm River, which flows from legendary Bahru, the Accursed City. Beyond Mount Yamatali, the highest peak in the Yahashas, the land plunges away into the forsaken, fog-bound waters of Saragoss.

Sri Raji's cities are walled bastions of civilization surrounded by vast rice fields. Within the city gates, throngs of filthy beggars swarm everywhere, clamoring for a single coin. The muddy streets are strewn with diseased corpses and

the dung of buffalo and elephants. The contrast with the city's spectacular architecture is striking. The blocky buildings are constructed of stone brick and finished with plaster, which is often painted with colorful trim. Slender columns, delicate latticework, and colorful awnings adorn even the humblest homes and shops. The grandest structures are breathtaking in their beauty, with walls of polished stone, imposing towers, and friezes depicting famous myths.

Major Settlements: Muladi (pop. 8,200), Pakat (pop. 3,500), Tvashti (pop. 2,100).

The Folk: Population — 27,300; Humans 99%, Other 1%. Languages — Rajian.* Religions — Rajian Pantheon.*

Rajians are lithe people short in stature but blessed with trim builds. Their skin tone is dark, ranging from a medium olive-tan to deep chocolate brown. Eye color is almost always dark brown, though rare individuals with pale gray or green eyes are sometimes seen. Rajian hair is straight and always black, though its sheen can be flat or glossy. Men cut their hair short, regarding long hair as barbaric. Women, however, grow their hair throughout their lives, pulling it back and braiding it into a single lock.



Chapter Four

It is acceptable for men to wear neat mustaches or beards or to be clean shaven, as suits their taste. Clothing is made of light cotton dyed with vibrant colors of every hue. Men wear loose shirts and wrapped leggings, often covered with a long coat, and don cloth caps or turbans. Women traditionally wear a sari, a single swatch of cloth wrapped around the body and worn over the shoulder, and cover their heads with a shawl when going about in public. Sandals or soft slippers are the customary footwear. Jewelry is common, particularly among women, who also paint their eyes and lips with luscious pigments and stain their hands with henna.

Rajians respect tradition and religious conviction above all else, perhaps blindly so. Since the ancient customs have proven their worth, the Rajians see little reason to give them up. Nonetheless, they are practical people, and have equal admiration for battle prowess, artistic talent, and scientific ingenuity. The illustrious University of Tvashti encourages the latter trait; within its libraries and temples, the wisest scholars study all facets of technology and the natural world.

Most traditions in Sri Raji are rooted in a complex, cyclical view of the cosmos. The Rajian gods are countless and interrelated, with one deity often regarded as a manifestation of another. The gods require continuous prayer and sacrifice, which the Rajians gladly give. Ritual hymns, chants, and dances are also vital, while sects with more philosophical bents have given rise to a strong monastic tradition. A central tenet of Rajian culture is reincarnation, a constant cycle of rebirth that comprises all living creatures. This concept is entwined with the domain's rigid caste system, such that fulfilling one's *dharma*, or proper role, in this life ensures that one is born into a higher caste in the next.

The Law: Theocratic and aristocratic monarchy. The terrible Maharaja Arijani rules from his palace Mahakala in the Accursed City of Bahru. Arijani is actually the high priest of Kali, the Black Mother, though none dares object to his self-proclaimed title of Maharaja. In truth, though Arijani's shadow falls darkly over Sri Raji, he is a reclusive ruler. Each day a single Rajian is chosen as a sacrifice to Kali; that person then journeys to Bahru on an albino elephant, never to be seen again. Apart from this horrific practice, the Maharaja demands little from his subjects, though his cleric spies are everywhere. Nobles and clerics of the Rajian gods control most aspects of society.

Although the clerics are of higher station, the nobles perform the actual tasks of governance. They levy taxes, control trade, and organize city militias, though most nobles also have their own private armies.

The caste system is a critical pillar of Rajian culture, serving as a strong organizing principle and a bulwark against unrest. Although there are numerous castes, they are divisible into four primary groups: *brahmin* (priests), *kshatriya* (nobles and soldiers), *vaishya* (merchants and craftsmen), and *shudra* (farmers). Rajians are born into a caste and remain in it throughout their lives. Those of lower castes are expected to obey and respect their betters, but there is no expectation for highborn individuals to treat the lower castes fairly or even humanely.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources — rice, tea, cotton, jute, coconuts, tobacco, peanuts, spices, rubber, cattle, goats, timber, iron, gems, cloth. Coinage — soma-drop (gp), lotus-flower (sp), rice-seed (cp).

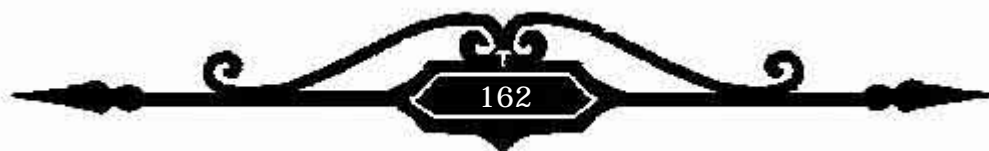
Sri Raji trades sporadically with numerous distant domains, though exchanges have always been marked by awkward cultural differences. Contact with other lands continues to increase, however. Just as Rajian explorers have pushed into the neighboring Wildlands and more far-flung realms, travelers from the Core arrive seeking Sri Raji's exotic goods. It remains to be seen when the Maharaja will turn his awful attention to these outsiders.

Characters: Classes — bards, clerics, fighters, monks, rogues, wizards. Skills — Craft (bowmaking, gemcutting, pottery, sculpture, stonemasonry, weaponsmithing, weaving), Diplomacy, Handle Animal, Knowledge (arcana, nobility and royalty, religion), Perform (ballad, chant, dance, drums, flute, harp), Pick Pocket, Profession (farmer, herdsman, scribe). Feats — Expertise (plus derivatives), Improved Unarmed Strike (plus derivatives), Reincarnated, Voice of Wrath, Weapon Focus (composite shortbow, scimitar).

The Wildlands

Cultural Level: Savage (0).

Landscape: Full Ecology (Warm Forests, Hills, Plains, and Swamps). In the Wildlands, man is not welcome. This is a realm of beasts, an untouched wilderness free from humanity's taming hand.





The Wildlands teem with life, from the ubiquitous buzzing black flies to fantastic animals that can be found nowhere else in Ravenloft. Endless, primeval rain forests dominate the landscape, lightless places echoing with the shrieks of tropical birds and monkeys. The forests blanket even the high central plateau, where majestic gorillas dwell beside crystal waterfalls. In the south, the forest opens into dry, sparse woodlands home to fearless herds of elephants. The east stretches out into vast, whispering savannas populated by a dazzling array of herbivores, including antelope, warthogs, giraffes, rhinos, zebras, and wild cattle. There are predators as well — lions, leopards, cheetahs, hyenas, and wild dogs — slinking through the swaying grasses and waiting patiently. The swamps of the north are the realms of reptiles, principally enormous, lethargic crocodiles. Curiously, snakes are nowhere to be found in the Wildlands. The landscape is dotted with countless lakes and waterholes and crisscrossed by a web of meandering rivers; hippopotami loll in the shallows of these nameless waters.

Major Settlements: None.

The Folk: None. No one has ever successfully settled in the Wildlands. It is as if the land itself strives to drive out the invaders. Even tiny camps on the edge of the forests or savannas are attacked by vicious predators and beset by endless catastrophes.

The Law: No formal government. The Wildlands are completely unsettled, ruled only by the proverbial law of the jungle.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources (not exploited) — timber, rubber, gold, silver, copper, gems. Coinage — none.

While the treacherous landscape and fearsome predators deter most outsiders from venturing into the Wildlands, the vast, untapped resources of the domain are seductive. Numerous explorers have made forays into the domain, seeking emeralds and gold deep in the interior. Perhaps the most tantalizing rumor is of a supposed "elephant graveyard," a grim wasteland where centuries' worth of discarded ivory stretch as far as the eye can see. Rajian trailblazers have been moderately successful in their explorations, perhaps because they are veterans of the Verdurous Lands' harsh climate. Such ventures remain risky undertakings, however, and it is unknown how many explorers have vanished into the Wildlands only to be devoured by ravenous beasts.

Characters: None.

Zherisia

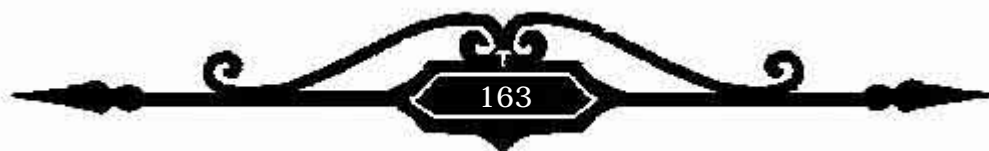
Once the city of Paridon was the bustling center of a domain called Zherisia (zair-ISS-i-a). Now the Paridoners find only unfamiliar lands beyond their city, but old habits die hard, and some still refer to their home as Zherisia. Although it outwardly resembles an island rather than a cluster, Paridon is not completely isolated. A wider world still extends beyond Paridon's streets, not outside of the city but below it. Beneath its fog-bound boulevards skulk living nightmares clawing at the edges of the city's shadows. Abominations squirm and gibber through the labyrinthine sewers, the natives of the subterranean domain of Timor.

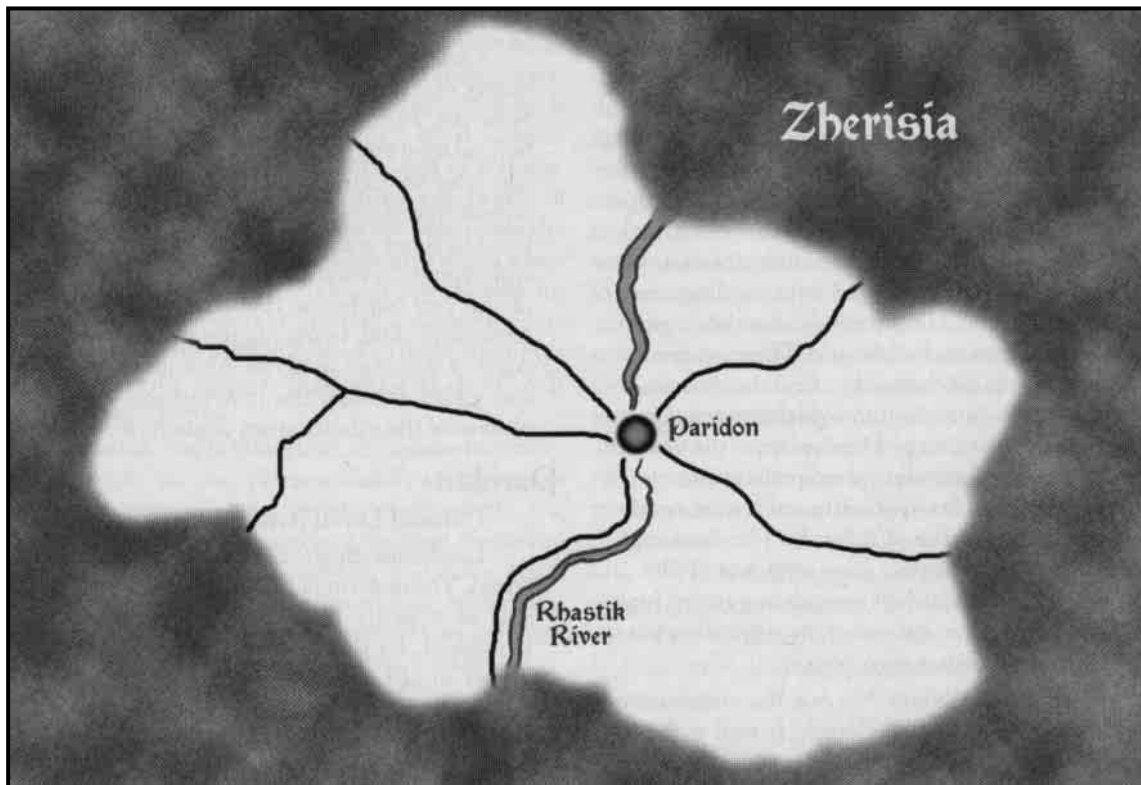
Paridon

Cultural Level: Renaissance (9).

Landscape: Sparse Ecology (Temperate Settled Area). The domain of Paridon (PAIR-i-dun) consists of a single bleak city steeped in fog and bloodshed. Its narrow streets of smooth cobblestones wind between tight clusters of buildings. Dense fog, white as a shroud, perpetually blankets the city, severely limiting visibility. Dark figures and clattering horse carriages can emerge from the haze with startling swiftness. Horses are rarely ridden, but such black carriages are frequently used to get around; many folk also conduct their business and errands on foot. The city has distinct neighborhoods with wealthy and poor residential districts, commercial avenues, a wharf along the Nodnal River, and seedy back alleys filled with streetwalkers and gamblers.

Most buildings are constructed to two or three stories, with gabled roofs and narrow doors and windows. Dressed stone blocks or plastered brick is used in most homes and shops, with heavy timbers for support. Roofs are shingled with thin wood or slate. Most structures are gray, unfriendly, and sparsely adorned with severe stone faces or ornaments of black iron. The estates of the wealthy are set back from the streets and surrounded by tall, forbidding gates and lovingly tended gardens. Tidy city parks once dotted Paridon, but most of these have been converted into meager plots of crops. Stunted food plants are also grown on rooftops. As dusk approaches, young boys wander the streets, lighting the iron streetlights that line the boulevards. In recent years, however, Paridoners rarely venture out at night, fearful of violent madmen and stranger things





The domain's most infamous predator is Bloody Jack, a nearly mythic killer who goes on gruesome rampages every thirteen years and whose latest rampage comes due this year.

Temperatures in Paridon are normally cool and mild, a weak drizzle sometimes falling like salty tears. The fog persists through the muggy summer months and during the bitter winters, when silent snow blankets the city.

Major Settlements: None. Paridon is itself a single settlement.

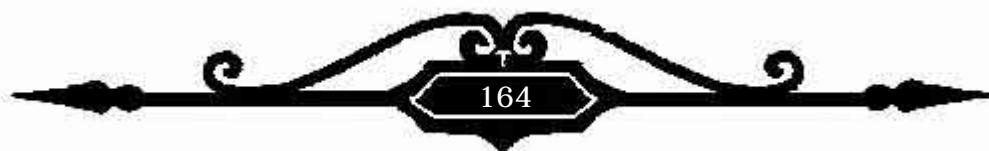
The Folk: Population — 11,600; Humans 99%, Other 2%. Languages — Zherisian.* Religions — Divinity of Mankind.*

Paridoners have wide hips and athletic builds, though aristocrats tend to be portly and commoners lean. Their skin is fair and ruddy, sometimes freckled lightly on the cheeks or nose. Eye color is normally gray with a bluish or greenish cast, but nearly any hue can occur. Their hair is straight or slightly wavy, and color varies widely, from blond to auburn to medium brown. Men cut their hair short, often slicking it back in a roguish style that the women find attractive. Neatly trimmed mustaches, beards, and muttonchops are popular. Women grow their tresses extremely long but pin them up in elaborate buns. Clothing among Paridoners is somber and coarse, though expertly

tailored. Men wear collared shirts, trousers, high boots, waistcoats, and heavy cloaks. Noblemen don tall black hats and tuck scarves under their necks. Women wear long dresses, coats, and high boots. It is indecent for a woman to be outdoors without a hat; common women wear simple bonnets, but the hats of noblewomen are elaborate. Jewelry is worn but is never flashy and is usually limited to solitary rings, pins, cameos, or necklaces.

Paridoners are sober people, the foggy streets of their city reflecting their demeanor. At one time they enjoyed food, drink, song, and dance with lusty enthusiasm, but their manner in recent times is noticeably dry and detached. Although violent criminals terrorize them, Paridoners remain perpetually stalwart. They are not easily discouraged and are possessed of remarkable tenacity and ingenuity. The class divide is deep and ironclad. The wealthy never associate with commoners, who are expected to mind their place and treat the nobles with respect and deference.

Although they worship no gods, many Paridoners, especially aristocrats, subscribe to a "theological philosophy" known as the Divinity of Mankind. Lodges of male Paridoners meet weekly to discuss philosophy, the arts, and natural science.





The crux of their beliefs is perfection of the mind, body, and spirit, an aspiration that has spawned a peculiar monastic tradition. Some folk whisper that the Divinity conceals more sinister activities and that lodge members participate in secretive occult rites steeped in the language of alchemy.

The Law: Aristocratic republic. The governance of Paridon is firmly in the hands of the aristocracy, who chafe at the notion of sharing power with the unwashed masses. Male nobles elect a City Council of nine from among their ranks every five years. The council is responsible for administrating most aspects of life in Paridon, including collecting taxes, adjudicating disputes, overseeing the city watch, and organizing programs for urban farming and public health. The council watches out for the interests of the nobles first and foremost, considering the welfare of the commoners only when it reinforces their image. Vice and violent crimes are commonplace in the streets, yet the council is preoccupied with punishing debtors and seizing assets. Its only recent action that has met with widespread approval has been to strengthen the city watch and increase evening patrols.

Despite the sharp class divide, Paridon's society is remarkably progressive in some respects. Professional advocates argue in civil and criminal trials, where legal precedent trumps legal principle. Merchants can protect themselves from financial ruin by paying a regular fee to usurers. The daily Paridon *Newsbill* is not controlled by the aristocracy and is sometimes critical of the council's actions.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources — beer, spirits, furniture, cloth, ceramics, leather and iron goods, jewelry, usury, culture, scientific knowledge. Coinage — pound (gp), shilling (sp), pence (cp).

Since Paridon has no arable land beyond the city proper, starvation is a serious concern. Although contact with other domains has fortunately increased in recent years, allowing Paridon to purchase foodstuffs, the city is still woefully underfed.

Most merchants who arrive in Paridon bring raw materials, which in turn are used in handicrafts that are sold in distant domains. Gradually, other realms have also discovered that Paridon is one of the most modern cities in Ravenloft, perhaps second only to Port-a-Lucine in Dementlieu. Accordingly, interest in Paridon's culture and scientific knowledge has grown.

Characters: Classes — fighters, monks, rogues. Skills — Craft (clockmaking, gunsmithing, locksmithing, weaving), Handle Animal, Hide, Knowledge (nobility and royalty), Move Silently, Pick Pocket, Profession (brewer, driver, porter, scribe), Sense Motive. Feats — Blind-Fight, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearms), Improved Unarmed Strike (plus derivatives), Quick Draw, Skill Focus (Sense Motive), Weapon Focus (pistol, rapier).

Timor

Cultural Level: Savage (0).

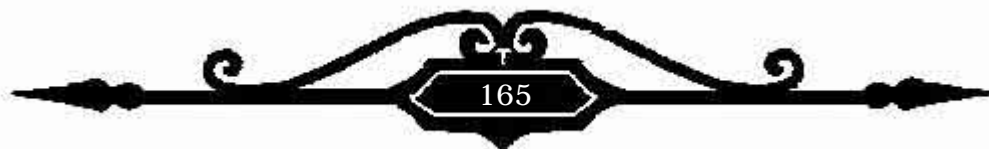
Landscape: Sparse Ecology (Temperate Underground). Timor (tim-OR) is a subterranean domain lurking like an insidious plague beneath the surface of the domain of Paridon. Composed of endless miles of brick sewers, Timor is a literal labyrinth. Anyone who intrudes on this lightless realm finds that the sewers only seem to lead down, not away from Paridon, as if channeling the filth into the bowels of the earth. The tunnels range from cavernous chambers to narrow, slimy passageways. Streams of sluggishly flowing sewage are underfoot everywhere, though rarely more than a foot or two deep. The foul stench is unbearable, but there is also genuine danger from toxic and explosive gases. The sewers are alive with vermin, particularly huge, loathsome centipedes. Gruesome curtains of slime, mold, and algae quiver on the tunnel walls. Black, blasphemous shapes move beyond the light of torches and lanterns, which only rarely catch a hulking outline or a flash of red eyes. Those unfortunate souls who become lost in Timor find that wandering randomly has a sinister tendency to lead the trespasser deeper underground. The farther one travels into the depths, the more frequent the glimpses of nightmarish creatures. The sensation of being stalked is intense and sickening, as if death at the hands of the faceless shadows were dreadfully inevitable. Many travelers, half-mad with fear, simply sit down and wait for Timor's horrors to close in on them.

Major Settlements: None.

The Folk: None. Although the true nature of Timor's inhabitants is unknown, witnesses who have seen monstrous shadows describe them as something out of a nightmare.

The Law: Unknown. Few Paridoners can speculate what kind of perverted commandments the abominations of Timor would obey.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources — unknown. Coinage — none.





Many Paridoners do not even know that Timor exists, though nearly all of the city's inhabitants have heard stories of monsters beyond description emerging from the sewers. If Timor's horrors are indeed venturing into Paridon, their purpose must surely be malevolent. Some Paridoner sages have observed that the city's sewers no longer conform to ancient maps of the subterranean systems. While it may be doubtful that the sewers have somehow changed of their own accord, this discovery has prompted several investigations of the tunnels. Thus far, all such expeditions have either quickly emerged after suffering suspicious accidents or vanished without a trace.

Characters: None.

Islands of Terror

Islands of Terror are domains surrounded by the Mists; they do not share stable borders with neighboring domains. They are among the most secluded domains in Ravenloft, though solitary wanderers always seem to find their way to such remote places.

Bluetspur

Cultural Level: Savage (0).

Landscape: Sparse Ecology (Temperate Hills, Plains, and Mountains). Bluetspur (BLOOT-spur) is surely one of the bleakest domains in all the Land of Mists. A vast, rocky wasteland stretches out as far as the eye can see, nearly devoid of life. The edges of the domain are flat and featureless plains of dust strewn with jagged cobbles and boulders. The interior is mountainous, the barren peaks soaring up to the summits of Mounts Gryst and Makab. Unearthly rock formations jut from the slopes, their unsettling spurs, arches, and twists suggesting the handiwork of a mad god. Phosphorescent fungi and slime molds cling to the undersides of rocks, but there are no animals or plants to be seen. Everything is as still as a tomb, not so much as a breeze stirring the cool air. A starless sky of perfect blackness yawns above, and the horizon glows with an eerie red color. The harsh odor of charred stone hangs in the air, undercut by a whiff of vinegar. There are no seasons in Bluetspur, no weather, and no true day and night. The ruddy glow of the horizon fades to pitch black and then waxes again in perfect, twelve-hour cycles.



When the domain is shrouded in darkness, vermilion strokes of lightning crack in the distance. Stooping low to the ground, travelers find they can just make out a relentless drone emanating from deep within the earth. This horrendous sound, muted as it is, causes their temples to throb with agony.

Major Settlements: None.

The Folk: None. If there is anything with a mind lurking beneath Bluetspur's wastes, then it is surely monstrous and unfathomable.

The Law: Unknown.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources — unknown. Coinage — none. No travelers willingly seek out such a hostile, barren land as Bluetspur. Most folk who find themselves here would rather blindly brave the Mists than tarry in a place so forsaken.

Characters: None.

G'Henna

Cultural Level: Classical (4).

Landscape: Full Ecology (Temperate Hills, Plains, and Mountains). G'Henna is a bleak, wind-beaten wasteland, a domain where hunger and hardship are ways of life. Legend states that the rampages of the beast-god Zhakata the Devourer wreaked havoc on the once fertile land.

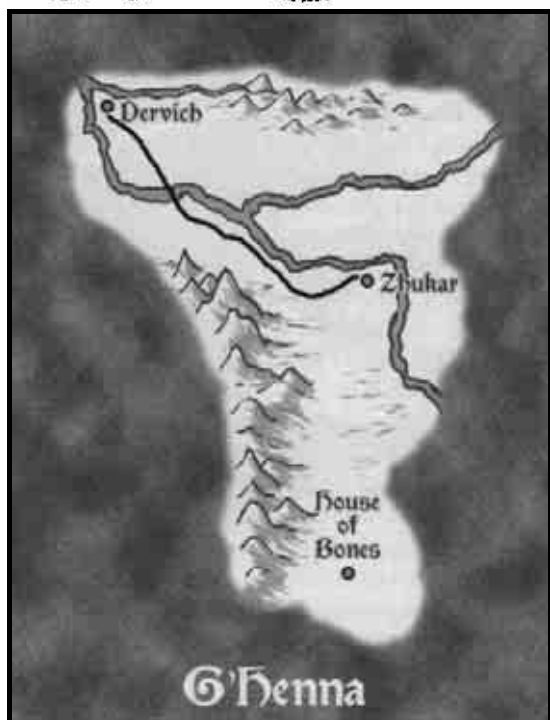
Constant, brutal gales blow across G'Henna's chill plains, bending the stunted grasses and brown shrubs. The rocky, dry soil is poor for both farming and grazing; herds of emaciated cattle and goats roam the wastes forlornly. Craggy uplands rise up like broken teeth throughout the domain, casting gray shadows across the land. The domain is covered with desolate stretches of cold desert, salt flats, and fields of fine, windblown ash. Savage windstorms scream out of the wastes, burning the skin and driving even stalwart herdsmen to safety. The silty, brackish waters of the Eel's Flow and Drogach Rivers meander through the badlands, providing little nourishment to the surrounding farmsteads.

Zhukar is G'Henna's solitary city, and its fearful populace is ruled by starvation and miserable submission. The grim buildings are constructed of massive stone blocks roughly hewn and pale dun in color. Everywhere are carvings of monstrous stone faces bristling with horns and tusks. Colossal pillars and intricate mosaics of polished bone adorn the grander buildings. Beyond the city, many G'Hennans dwell in round tents of ragged hide, which can be easily packed up and moved when folk must search for better grazing grounds. Although chill, G'Henna's climate is temperate overall. Its winters, however, are unforgiving. Wind temperatures drop cold enough to crack stone, and the muddy rivers freeze completely through.

Major Settlements: Zhukar (pop. 10,100).

The Folk: Population: 19,500; Humans 98%, Other 2%. Languages — Balok,* Falkovnian. Religions — Zhakata.*

G'Hennans are lean and gaunt, their features sunken. Their skin is fair, though often with a faint sallow, ruddy, or dusky tone. Raw windburns commonly afflict those who dwell on the plains. G'Hennans' eyes are always exceptionally dark and often black as midnight. Their straight hair is a drab gray-brown or flat black in color. Men keep their hair short and slicked back and wear long, closely trimmed sideburns. Mustaches are not uncommon, but all married men wear a beard, which is waxed stiffly into a long braid. Women grow their hair to a moderate length, pinning it up under thin shawls. G'Hennan clothing is humble and often drab. Men wear blousy white shirts, vests with stiff collars, wide trousers, and short boots. Older men also wrap themselves in long, woolen robes and don small cloth caps. Women wear long dresses with wide hems and high collars, usually over baggy pantaloons.



Those who must survive on the bitter wastelands don long, thick coats and round fur hats. Clothing is always neutral in color: black, white, beige or brown. Jewelry is rarely seen except among Zhakata's clerics, who wear grisly ornaments crafted of human bone and teeth.

G'Hennans live in fear of Zhakata the Destroyer, a ruthless beast-god that exists only to annihilate whatever they toil to produce. All aspects of life in G'Henna are shaped around endless supplication of Zhakata. This constant devotion wears visibly on the G'Hennans. Grim and humorless, they have neither the time nor the inclination to savor pleasures such as dance or song. The horrors of starvation and the bottomless cruelty of Zhakata's clerics have long ago broken the spirits of most folk. Despite this, they have many sacred traditions, which are adhered to with solemn strictness. Mealtimes are hallowed events, and families gather dutifully, squatting on woven carpets at a low table, to partake of the meager fare. One of the most sacred heirlooms a family can possess is the guesing *cup*, a chalice made from the skull of an ancestor who was martyred by starvation.

The Law: Theocracy. Yagno Petrovna, Prophet of Zhakata, rules G'Henna from Zhukar, his divine word regarded as the supreme law of the land. Petrovna is a passionate zealot blessed with feverish visions of the Destroyer.

Three times a week, he preaches of Zhakata's boundless fury before the city's assembled throngs, working himself into a roaring fit of religious fervor. Petrovna sits atop the mammoth religious hierarchy of Zhakata's church, guiding it as the living voice of the Destroyer. There is no authority in G'Henna save that of the church. Clad in their distinctive vestments of scarlet and orange, clerics and holy warriors perform all military and civic duties. Petrovna also has a secret order of cleric enforcers known as the Inquisition. Unlike most of the church hierarchy, they operate from the shadows, vigilant for heresy and dissidence.

Zhakata is a feral, destructive god who eagerly tears down whatever the G'Hennans build and devours whatever they produce. To placate him, the G'Hennans are expected to donate all the food they produce directly to the church, which receives the offerings in a sunrise ceremony known as Zhakata's Taking. Whatever food remains by sunset is returned to the people as Zhakata's Dole. Fasting is a sacred sacrifice in G'Henna, and the Inquisition harshly punishes black market dealings in foodstuffs. The worship of any gods but Zhakata is forbidden, as is the practice of arcane magic. Once a week, Petrovna performs a horrifying miracle, transforming a criminal into a deformed abomination as a sacrifice to Zhakata. The only persistent hostilities the church encounters are from the barbaric bandits who dwell deep in the hinterlands. Hatefully atheistic, these raiders conduct a clandestine war of attrition against the church and Petrovna. Little is known of their cunning and shadowy leader, who is simply called the Jackal.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources — wheat, corn, oats, turnips, potatoes, sheep, goats, cattle, wine, beer, iron, copper, lead, iron goods. Coinage — stoneclaw (gp), irontusk (sp), bonefang (cp).

G'Henna has struggled to maintain contact with the realms of the Core in the hope that commerce will bring desperately needed food to the domain. Most merchants prefer to leave the domain to its fanatical clerics, however; the land produces few resources that cannot be obtained in more hospitable lands. Petrovna cares nothing for his realm's standing among outsiders. His only concerns are to ensure that Zhakata is properly venerated and to maintain order within G'Henna; the Inquisition hastily removes any foreigners who interfere with either task.



Characters: Classes — barbarians, clerics, fighters, rogues. Skills — Craft (blacksmithing, pottery, sculpture, stonemasonry), Diplomacy, Handle Animal, Intimidate, Knowledge (religion), Profession (brewer, farmer, herdsman, miner, scribe), Sense Motive. Feats — Endurance, Improved Critical, Jaded, Skill Focus (Knowledge [religion]), Toughness, Weapon Focus (whip).

Odiare

Cultural Level: Medieval (7), though there are remnants of a Renaissance (9) culture.

Landscape: Sparse Ecology (Temperate Settled Area). Odiare (oh-dee-AR-ay) consists of a solitary, foggy village where the memories of childhood horrors are still fresh in the minds of the populace. The town's narrow streets are paved in smooth cobblestones and are blessedly free of waste, mud, and other detritus. The humble homes and shops are tidy two-story structures built of soft stone brick, plastered, and painted white or cream. The shallow, gabled roofs are shingled with dusky red-orange tiles. Many of the village's structures are in a sorry state, however. Roofs are marred by gaping holes, plaster crumbles away in chunks, and shattered glass hangs limply in window frames. The Odiarans labor tirelessly to maintain the buildings as best they can. The Secolo Theater — once gutted by fire — has recently been rebuilt for use as a village meeting house. Nearby, a bronze statue of a nameless woman tops a fountain in the village square, the mournful figure clutching a broken doll to her chest. Hidden between the buildings are a handful of stunted gardens, the only source of food for the Odiarans. Overhead, the sun traces a low, lazy path through the hazy sky for a mere six hours each day. The long nights, meanwhile, are starless and chill; an eerie stillness settles over the village, marked only rarely by the distant echoes of laughing children. The climate is moderate in the village, with mild summers and cool, wet winters.

Major Settlements: None. Odiare is itself a single settlement.

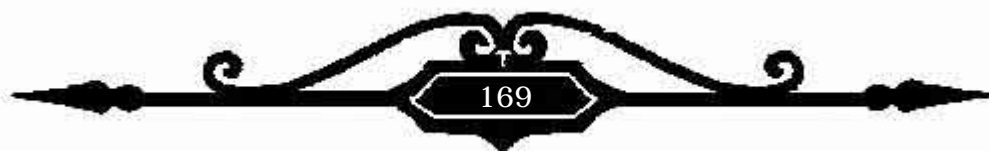
The Folk: Population — fewer than 100; Humans 100%. Languages — Odiaran.* Religions — none.

As a group, the Odiarans are young. Save for a demented, elderly toymaker, no villagers are over the age of thirty, and a few of the young adult couples have infants or toddlers of their own. They are trim and lean folk, if a bit undernourished. Their skin ranges from fair to medium olive-tan,

often with a ruddy or sallow tinge. Eye color varies widely, from pale green to deep brown. Their straight or finely curled hair ranges from dark blond to raven black, though darker hues are more common. Males keep their hair short and styled back, with young men always going about clean shaven. Females grow their hair to just below the shoulder. Odiaran clothing is humble and often threadbare from years of wear. The boys and men wear loose shirts, breeches, and high socks. Women and girls wear long, blousy dresses, tying their hair back with wide ribbons. Bright colors are rare in Odiaran garb, with most clothing appearing in neutral tones or washed-out hues of red, orange, and yellow.

The Odiarans are genial and considerate folk prizing simple values such as cooperation, sharing, and compassion. Although they are diligent and hard working, they also have an enduring affection for performance, including music, dance, and theater. Honesty comes easy to them, but a sheltered life in their strange village has made them more than a little naive. Their only fear is Maligno, Odiare's persistent bogeyman. According to legend, Maligno is a wooden puppet that skulks in the village's shadows, gleefully watching the Odiarans from hidden crannies. Maligno loves children first and foremost, but unfortunately his affection is twisted and malicious. The Odiarans believe it was Maligno who massacred the adults of the village nearly twenty years ago, aided by an army of malevolent toys. Although the little marionette has not been sighted for some time, many older Odiarans are terrified that he will return for them soon. Maligno's creator, an old toymaker named Guiseppe, still dwells in Odiare, laboring at his workbench in the depths of bleary madness.

The Law: Informal commonwealth. The Odiarans conduct themselves in a remarkably peaceful and orderly manner. The oldest villagers have authority by virtue of their wisdom and experience; other Odiarans obey their requests unhesitatingly. Most Odiarans respect in particular the words of Rudolfo and Giselle Velutto, the village's eldest inhabitants at twenty-three and twenty-seven respectively. Early morning town meetings serve as a focal point for organizing the various tasks for the day. Chores are doled out according to each individual's skills and strengths. Gardens must be tended, buildings must be repaired and maintained, and numerous tools and everyday items must be crafted by hand. Older citizens teach the young the fundamental skills and





trades that are vital to the village's continued survival. Although any Odiaran is free to leave the village and settle elsewhere, those who choose the Mists over Odiare are considered reckless and irresponsible.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources — wheat, corn, potatoes, chestnuts, almonds, olives. Coinage — none. Scattered silver currency can be found in Odiare, but the citizens have no use for hard coin and see little value in such baubles.

Odiare is a secluded and lonely village where many months often pass before outsiders wander into its quiet streets. The Odiarans are friendly to travelers, but their demeanor is tinged with apprehension. Indeed, Odiarans urge such outsiders to leave the village as soon as possible; they fear that Maligno will slay any newcomers he perceives as a threat to the children.

Characters: Classes — bards, fighters, rogues. Skills — Craft (blacksmithing, carpentry, leatherworking, stonemasonry, weaving), Diplomacy, Heal, Perform (ballad, buffoonery, dance, juggling, lute, storytelling), Profession (farmer), Search. Feats — Courage, Dodge (plus derivatives), Iron Will, Skill Focus (Craft), Weapon Focus (dagger).

Rokushima Taiyoo

Cultural Level: Dark Age (5).

Landscape: Full Ecology (Temperate Forests, Hills, and Mountains). Rokushima Taiyoo (ro-koo-SHEE-ma TA-EE-oo), also known as the Six Islands of the Sun, is a lush archipelago that rises impossibly from the surrounding Poison Sea. The domain's sobriquet might seem to be a misnomer, as there are only four isles. The Rokuma, however, assert that the two vanished islands sank into the ocean when their *shujin*, or local lords, were killed. The remaining isles surround the glassy surface of the Great Mirror Lake, which is fed by clear mountain springs. The waters of the lake rush between the islands, cascading down jagged slopes of coral and into the venomous depths of the Poison Sea. The roiling Nightmare Mists shroud the lake's western outlet to the sea, and ships voyaging into the dread vapors never emerge. The snowcapped peak of Mount Frost soars high above the surrounding islands, its slopes purportedly riddled with corrupted shrines and caches of plundered treasure. The island landscape is rugged and picturesque, blanketed by damp evergreen forests, arching wood bridges, and misty waterfalls.

Structures in Rokushima Taiyoo are elegant and possess a distinct aesthetic style. Wood is used almost exclusively in construction, fitted together without nails. Decorative gables, eaves, and screens are commonplace. The walls and sliding doors are often made of thin paper on a wooden frame, allowing for easy repairs following the domain's vicious storms and earthquakes. The *shujin*, however, dwell in enormous stone castles with multiple tiers climbing up to touch the sun. Serene shrines both magnificent and humble dot the islands; located on sites of natural beauty and power, they are identifiable by the sacred torii gates. The weather in the domain is fierce and merciless. Summers are oppressive and muggy, autumns beset by rampaging typhoons. Winters are brutally cold, burying the domain under endless snow. Springtime is short but comparatively pleasant, a time when the islands are covered in pale flower blossoms.

Major Settlements: Beikoku (pop. 1,800), Chuugoka (pop. 3,100), Eikoku (pop. 2,300), Roshiya (2,500).

The Folk: Population — 19,300; Humans 99%, Other 1%. Languages — Rokuma.* Religions — the Kami.*

The Rokuma are slight in stature but blessed with trim builds and physical grace. Their skin tone varies from creamy white to ruddy brown, usually with a sallow tinge. Eye color tends to be dark, ranging from hazel to midnight black. Rokuma hair is straight, sleek, and jet-black. Men and women both grow their hair long, arranging it in elaborate fashion with wooden pins, though commoner men sometimes prefer a shorter style. Men are clean shaven, regarding facial hair as barbarous. Women and men alike wear wide-sleeved robes belted at the waist with a sash over a long shirt or shift. Men also don loose trousers or wrapped leggings. Soft slippers or wooden sandals are the customary footwear. Male commoners are fond of wide straw hats to keep off the sun and snow. Black and soft pastels are favored colors in clothing.

The Rokuma are reserved and enigmatic folk, ascribing great value to social decorum and aesthetics. They prize beauty and harmony, whether in the natural world or in their relationships. They are reverent toward the *kami*, the spirits that are believed to dwell in all things, and worship at breathtaking natural shrines. The elderly are given great respect, and proper etiquette is imperative even among the poorest commoners.





The Rokuma have a deep respect for the warrior's skill with sword and bow. They see beauty in all of life's pursuits and feel secure in their place in the natural order. The constant warring between the island shujin, however, has created an atmosphere of terror in the domain's villages. The bloody conflict has cast a fearful shadow over the Rokuma, who endure harassment and brutality from the prideful samurai of their masters.

The Law: Feudal hereditary aristocracy. Each of Rokushima Taiyoo's four islands is ruled by a shujin, a feudal warlord with numerous lesser noble warriors under his vassalage. The domain's shujin are all brothers, endlessly bickering over the birthright each feels was denied him by a deceased father. Although each shujin is ostensibly responsible for overseeing his island realm, the brothers are completely obsessed with breaking one another's power. Their slow, smoldering war wreaks havoc on the lives of their subjects. Their samurai clash openly in the streets, heedless of the commoners who are caught in the conflict. Ninja clans slink through the shadows, carrying out sabotage and assassinations. Periodically, the struggle explodes into outright warfare as the forces of each brother slaughter one another in gruesome battles. In most villages, there is no longer any civic order at all.

In short, the greed and pride of the shujin is literally tearing the Six Islands of the Sun apart. The Rokuans try to carry on with their lives, hoping that adherence to tradition will carry them through the dark times. Many folk, however, have turned to shrewd brigands called *yakuza* to protect them from their own nobility.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources — rice, beans, tea, mulberries, citrus, herring, mackerel, tuna, sardines, salmon, crabs, squid, seaweed, beer, silver, copper, iron, lead, silk. Coinage — chrysanthemum (gp), water lily (sp), cherry blossom (cp).

Rokushima Taiyoo has long been an isolated domain embroiled in its own exhausting conflicts and unaware of the wider world beyond its shores. Recent contact with Dementlieuse and Darkonian sailors has not encouraged the Rokuans, who have found these outsiders brutish and disrespectful. Nonetheless, the presence of such travelers may prove to be a wild card in the struggle between the shujin. The brothers have taken notice of these foreign strangers and are even now scheming of ways to take advantage of their boorish naivete and tantalizing weapons.

Characters: Classes — druids, fighters, monks, rogues, wizards.





Skills — Craft (basketweaving, bowmaking, calligraphy, shipmaking, weaponsmithing, weaving), Diplomacy, Knowledge (nature, nobility and royalty), Perform (chant, drama, drums, harp, flute), Profession (brewer, farmer, fisher, sailor, scribe), Swim, Use Rope. Feats — Expertise (plus derivatives), Haunted, Improved Unarmed Strike (plus derivatives), Two-Weapon Fighting (plus derivatives), Weapon Focus (longsword).

Souragne

Cultural Level: Chivalric (8).

Landscape: Full Ecology (Warm Forests and Swamps). Souragne (soo-RAW-nya) is a domain that swarms and slithers with life, a lush river delta choked with dark bayous. Called Maison d'Sablet by the Souragniens, the wooded swamp that covers most of the domain stretches out like a languid snake. The muggy air is thick with gray fog and buzzing insects. Pale green moss hangs heavy on the cypress trees, where raccoons and opossums clamber. The few folk who dwell in the bayou pole their wooden rafts through the fetid waters, keeping a wary eye out for alligators and more unnatural threats. At night, the swamps come alive with the trilling of frogs, crickets, and cicadas. The delta fans northward toward the Souragne's warm, shallow coastline along the Murky Sea. Near the center of the domain is Lake Noir, its waters slick with algae and choked with cattails.

Most settlements are in the east, where ground is slightly higher and flooding less severe. The domain's villages are cramped and sweltering, the gray stone edifices of their buildings looming over narrow, muddy streets. Balconies and gates of wrought iron adorn the two-story homes and shops, alongside stone carvings of snakes and dancing skeletons. The plantations of the nobility feature magnificent estates with lustrous white pillars and gloomy willow groves. The high water table prevents traditional burial in Souragne, so the dead are entombed in morbidly beautiful mausoleums. Unrelenting, oppressive heat and humidity mark the domain's weather. The autumn rainy season brings temperatures that are only slightly cooler than the norm.

Major Settlements: Marais d'Tarascon (pop. 300), Port d'Elhour (pop. 1,200).

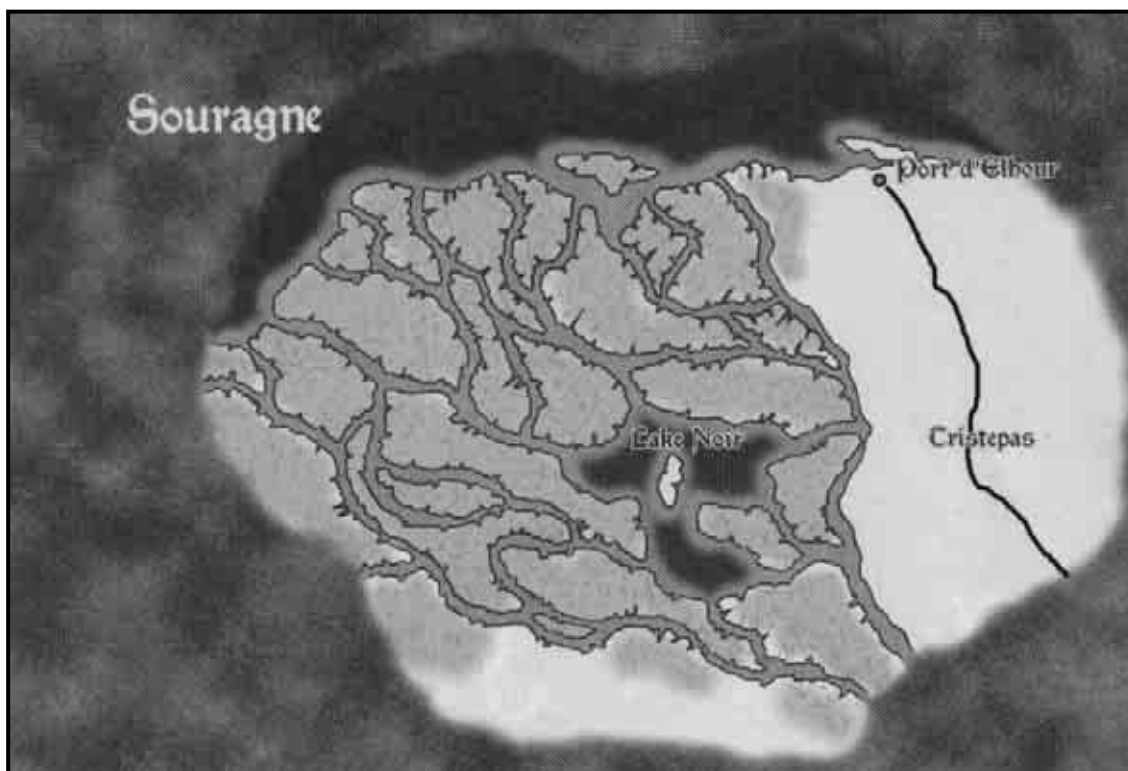
The Folk: Population — 3,100; Humans 99%, Other 1%. Languages — Souragnien.* Religions — the Loa.*

Souragniens are generally short in stature and slight of build, but their appearance otherwise exhibits remarkable variation. Their skin can range from milky pale to a deep coffee brown. Eye colors vary widely, from pale blue to hazel to nearly black. Hair is either straight or tightly curled and anywhere from auburn to raven black in color. Men keep their hair very short or shoulder length, with nobles preferring the latter, and shun facial hair. Women let their hair grow quite long, and while commoners don't mind wild and tangled tresses, noblewomen style their hair elaborately, pinning it up in delicate fashion. Among commoners, clothing is threadbare and humble; men wear a loose shirt and trousers, women a blouse and long skirt. Such garb is usually naturally colored rather than dyed. Nobles, on the other hand, go about in exquisite garments of vibrant hue. Men wear blousy shirts under jerkins, sashes, and breeches with high boots. Women wear revealing, ruffled dresses in pastel colors. Jewelry is common among the aristocracy, who love to show off their wealth through such baroque adornments.

The class divide in Souragne is deep and bloody. Property owners, no matter how humble their assets, are the elite, and all others must toil to serve them. Commoners are little better than slaves; they're exploited by the aristocracy until they collapse, then discarded. Among the nobles it is acceptable to savagely abuse commoners, even without reason. In villages, poor farmers rub shoulders with gamblers and streetwalkers, attempting to drown their miseries in vice. All Souragniens, regardless of class, tend to be earthy, passionate folk. They have little respect for academic knowledge, instead valuing cunning and strength of character.

Souragniens are also superstitious people, their beliefs revolving around natural spirits called *loa*. The *loa* are the embodiment of natural forces; chief among them is the Maiden of the Swamp, who represents Maison d'Sablet itself, and the Lord of the Dead. While numerous *loa* are revered, Souragniens truly fear the Lord of the Dead, who has the power to take the deceased as his own, raising them as zombies. Wild festivals throughout the year honor the *loa* and appease the Lord of the Dead in particular. Many customs in Souragne are believed to tap the power of the *loa* to attract success and romance or to strike one's rivals with misfortune.





When desperate, Souragiens sometimes turn to the Voodan, a secretive people who can work dread enchantments and command the undead. One of the most powerful Voodan is undoubtedly Chicken Bone, a shrewd old man who is rumored to have the ear of numerous loa, including the Lord of the Dead.

The Law: Independent aristocratic settlements. Villages in Souragne are essentially autonomous, the nobles electing a lord mayor from among their ranks every two years. Precious little governance actually occurs, however; lord mayors merely act as voices for the aristocracy, who create and enforce laws in the domain to suit their needs. There are no standing militias in Souragnien villages, but young noblemen are expected to serve a term as village constables.

Although he may be only a mythical being, the Lord of the Dead is so deeply feared in Souragne that the folk follow customs intended to please him. The dead are not interred for four days following death, out of deference to the Lord of the Dead, who may choose to claim the corpse as his servant. Similarly, all arcane magic save Necromancy displeases him, and as such its practice is strictly forbidden among the Souragniens.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources — rice, yams, sugarcane, cotton, catfish, crappie, shrimp, crayfish, spirits, salt. Coinage — gravestone (gp), fingerbone (sp), toothchip (cp).

Sailors who find their way to the Murky Sea regard Souragne as a hostile and unpleasant domain. Although the sugar and cotton grown here are highly valued in distant domains, merchants are wary of the sweltering climate, Maison d'Sablet's unseen horrors, and the peculiar ways of the Souragniens. The native nobility, for their part, strive to encourage trade with other domains. They hope to expand their influence into other realms and watch Port d'Elhour emerge as a vital harbor in the Land of Mists.

Characters: Classes — druids, rangers, rogues, sorcerers. Skills — Craft (basketweaving, gun-smithing, sculpture, shipmaking), Knowledge (arcana, nature), Perform (chant, drums, storytelling), Profession (farmer, fisher, herbalist, sailor), Swim, Use Rope, Wilderness Lore. Feats — Ethereal Empathy, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearms), Ghostsight, Skill Focus (Wilderness Lore), SpellFocus (Necromancy), Voice of Wrath, Weapon Focus (rapier, sickle).





Chapter Five:
Horrors of the
Night

Oh, how I loathe these nights. Month after month, I try to forget this horror, but then the moon's tortures return. This horrid wait for the inevitable would drive me to distraction if not for this journal. My body may betray me, but I am my thoughts; I must cling to them for the sake of my soul, and for the sake of my beloved.

The spasms are starting. I have little time left. I can feel the hot blood flowing through my limbs; I can feel the moon rising — that wretched moon! No. That rage is not mine. That is the beast; I must not surrender to it. I must keep control. I must think only of my beloved.

My skin is crawling; oh, it burns! Just look at him! How can he understand this suffering? He chains me like a beast in this dank cellar! He watches my agony! Does he enjoy it? No! I must not think that! I know it is not true. He is kind! He is gentle! He is protecting me from myself! He has done so much for me in the years since that monster afflicted me with its curse. He has done so much that I would destroy me. He is my true beloved.

And that is why the beast hates him! It hates his kindness! It detests his love! Gods, the pain! My hands — I can barely command my own hands. But I must focus! If I do not, the beast will kill him! Despite all his love, the beast stands between us. For as long as I am cursed, we can never be together, can never be wed, can never have a family. The moon is in me now; I can hear her! She wants me to feast upon him! I will not! I will not!

Head pounding — I can hear my bones cracking! Must cling to our love; it is all I have! I cannot be saved from the curse, but I can save my beloved from me! There is only one way to save him. I must — I must make him join me. If I am a beast, and he is just a man, then he will always be in danger. But if we are both beasts, then we can hunt together under the moon. We will be happy under her silver light! We will be mates! We will be a pack! Nothing will come between us!

That is why I took the saw! That is why I cut these accursed biting chains! He would stop me if he knew. I will be free! I do not want to hurt him — I will not hurt him much! I will only bite him once! I just need to taste his flesh! But I must cling to my thoughts. If not I will kill him! I will tear him! I can smell his fear!

Must not let the beast win! I will save our love! Must keep control!
Control! CONTROL!

THESE NO MY HANDS.



od in pity made man beautiful and alluring, after his own image; but my form is a filthy type of yours, more horrid from its very resemblance.

— Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

One of the most fascinating individuals ever to walk the Land of Mists was the late Dr. Rudolph van Richten. He was a man of great learning, yet also of simple desires, who was content to live a peaceful and quiet life with his wife and son. This simple, happy life was not to be, as fate and misfortune combined to rob him of his family and his innocent view of the world. The remainder of his life was spent hunting, fighting, and destroying the nightmares most men know exist but refuse to acknowledge. However, perhaps the greater accomplishment was not in battling the children of the night, but rather in documenting and researching them. In the course of his life, van Richten wrote nine treatises that changed the face of the Land of Mists. Each one delved into the origins, powers, and habits of a different creature and above all divulged how they might be opposed and defeated. Van Richten's work served as a beacon to those who refuse to stand helpless before the terrors that confront them and continues to serve as such after his untimely passing.

Van Richten's guides greatly added to the extant knowledge of certain monsters. A summary of some of the information divulged in each of those great works follows and should be considered an addition to the information already provided in the *Monster Manual*. Unfortunately, van Richten died with his work unfinished. There are many foes to face in Ravenloft besides those described below. However, even if van Richten's guides lack the information required to defeat a given enemy, the spirit of determination and exhortation to act found within each will always apply.

Vampires



was all but assassinated in my bed, wounded here," she touched her breast, "and never was the same since." "Were you near dying?" "Yes, very — a cruel love — strange love, that would have taken my life. Love will have its sacrifices. No sacrifice without blood." — J. Sheridan Le Fanu, Carmilla

Of all the monsters van Richten faced, vampires bore the brunt of his hatred. It was a vampire that stole the lives of his wife and child and thereby changed his life forever.





Unfortunately, van Richten is far from the only man to suffer from the activities of these nocturnal predators. As unliving avatars of greed and gluttony, vampires sow misery wherever they lair. Those who seek to rid the night of these monsters do a great service to all but should be advised that they are quite fearsome, and only grow more so with time.

Feeding

Vampires are unlike most undead creatures in that they must feed. For most of the undead, all biological processes have ended, including the need for food, but vampires are not so fortunate. Others must suffer for this misfortune, for vampires take their sustenance from living creatures, most often in the form of blood.

A vampire must feed on blood daily. The typical way to feed is to use the blood drain special attack on a living victim. A vampire must ingest no fewer than 4 Constitution points of blood per day to remain in perfect "health." For each day this requirement is not met, the vampire suffers one negative level and its powers are reduced as if it had lost an age category (see below). A vampire cannot fall below one level or below Fledging status through lack of feeding. A vampire who does fall to one level through lack of blood becomes a feral predator incapable of anything but the pursuit of sustenance.

Negative levels persist until the vampire is able to feed sufficiently. For each day the vampire ingests the minimum requirement of blood, one lost level and age category are restored.

Although vampires prefer to draw blood from living humans or humanoids, they can ingest blood from other sources, such as animals or fresh corpses. Blood from these sources is not as nourishing, with only half counting toward the daily requirement.

Varieties of vampire exist that gain no sustenance from blood, but instead feed on other bodily humors, organs, or even esoteric substances such as memories or willpower. These creatures are rare, however, and all vampires, regardless of type, must take sustenance of some kind from living creatures.

Sleeping

Vampires are also unusual in that they require sleep. In most cases, this is not the restful repose of a living creature, but more closely resembles a coma.

As the sun rises, the vampire falls into unconsciousness and cannot be awakened until the sun sets. Noises, lights, and even attacks do not stir the creature. Obviously, this is the preferred state in which to encounter one of these monsters. Once the sun does set, however, the vampire instantly springs to full alertness. A vampire that awakens in the company of the unprepared may be able to attack from surprise at the DM's discretion. Because of this helplessness during daylight hours, a vampire takes great care in choosing a resting place and makes certain that it is defended to the fullest extent it can manage.

Aging

Vampires grow more powerful with age. This is not biological aging, of course. A vampire appears to be the same age it was at the moment of death. The longer a vampire persists in a state of undeath, however, the stronger its connection with the Negative Energy Plane grows and the more powerful it becomes. This phenomenon poses a great problem to vampire hunters, for there may be nothing about a vampire's appearance to suggest how old, and therefore how powerful, it really is. Vampires are divided into six age categories. Each category has a title, though these titles are more for the convenience of sages than for practicality. Vampires themselves do not recognize age-based titles. In fact, the more clever vampires are careful to conceal their age from others.

Title	Age (Years)
Fledgling	0-99
Mature	100-199
Old	200-299
Ancient	300-499
Eminent	500-999
Patriarch	1000+

Fledgling vampires have no increased powers or abilities. Use the Vampire template from the *Monster Manual*, with no changes. For older vampires, the following table shows the modifications made to the Vampire template as the vampire ages. The changes are not cumulative.

Salient Powers

Vampires are distinctive in the great variety of abilities they exhibit. Although all vampires have certain characteristics in common, there can be considerable difference in the powers and weaknesses exhibited from individual to individual.





Table 5-1: Vampire Aging Modifiers

Title	Ability Score Modifiers						Dmg Red	Fast Heal	Turn Resis	AC	CR
	Str	Dex	Int	Wis	Cha	Speed					
Mature	+6	+6	+2	+4	+4	+10	20/+1	5	+4	+6	+2
Old	+8	+6	+4	+4	+6	+10	20/+2	6	+5	+7	+3
Ancient	+8	+8	+4	+6	+6	+20	25/+2	6	+6	+7	+3
Eminent	+10	+8	+6	+6	+8	+20	25/+3	8	+7	+8	+4
Patriarch	+12	+10	+8	+8	+10	+30	30/+3	10	+8	+8	+5

Ability Score Modifiers: The modifications made to each of the base character's ability scores.

Speed: Bonus, in feet, added to the vampire's base speed. This bonus also applies when the vampire is shapeshifted.

Turn Resist: Amount of turn resistance the base character receives.

AC: The bonus added to the base character's natural armor.

CR: The modification made to the base character's Challenge Rating.

Vampires gain salient powers as they age. The powers gained vary from vampire to vampire, though vampires of the same bloodline tend to have similar powers. A vampire's salient powers usually reflect its personality; a harsh, controlling vampire might gain the ability to command undead, while a skulking, treacherous vampire might be able to turn invisible.

The following list provides examples of salient powers. The typical vampire gains one salient power for every two hundred years of its existence.

Animate Dead (Su): The vampire can cast an *animate dead* spell once per day. The spell takes effect as if cast by a 12th-level sorcerer.

Command Undead (Su): The vampire can rebuke or command undead as if it were a 12th-level cleric. If the vampire can already rebuke undead, its effective level when rebuking is either raised by 4 or raised to 12, whichever is greater.

Dimension Door (Su): Once per day the vampire can cast a *dimension door* spell. This spell takes effect as if cast by a 12th-level sorcerer. The vampire cannot use the *dimension door* to cross running water or to enter a sanctified place or a home into which it has not been invited.

Extra Form (Su): This power improves the vampire's Alternate Form quality and can be taken multiple times. Each time it is taken, the vampire gains the ability to assume one extra form. Ravenloft vampires are known to take a much wider variety of forms; possible forms include but are not limited to dire rat, hawk, light horse, panther (use leopard statistics), owl, raven, and snake.

Fire Resistance (Ex): Fire is usually an effective weapon against vampires, but not against those with this ability. The vampire has fire resistance of 20.

Frightful Presence (Su): The vampire has the frightful presence special attack (*Monster Manual*) with default range and duration. The trigger for this power varies between vampires, but it is most often an attack. Other possible triggers include changing to an alternate form, snarling, or even smiling or looking into someone's eyes.

Hypnotic Vapor (Su): The vampire can use its dominate ability while in gaseous form. All the normal rules for this power apply. To the target, the gaseous vampire appears to roil in a hypnotic pattern, while colors shimmer in its misty form. Only the target perceives these changes in the vampire's gaseous form.

Improved Domination (Su): Will saves against the vampire's domination attack are made with a -4 penalty.

Improved Energy Drain (Su): The vampire's slam attack inflicts an extra negative level on those hit. This ability may be taken up to three times, with each time adding another negative level to the energy drain.

Invisibility (Su): The vampire can cast an invisibility spell, upon itself only, at will. The spell takes effect as if cast by a 12th-level sorcerer.

Light Sleep (Ex): Unlike most vampires, this vampire is not helpless during daylight hours. While it still must rest, it can be awakened by ambient noise or motion and definitely is awakened by any attack.





The sleeping vampire may make a Listen check with a -5 penalty to notice a noise or a Spot check with a -10 penalty to notice a light or motion (such as a torch or the opening of a casket). Once the threat is dealt with the vampire must return to sleeping.

Scent (Ex): All vampires have incredibly sharp senses, but a vampire with this ability has a sense of smell even more acute than usual. The vampire gains the Scent feat (see "Scent" in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

Shroud of Darkness (Su): The vampire can create a field of magical darkness at will. The vampire can create this field only around itself, but it can see normally in this darkness. The vampire's darkness is destroyed instantly if any part of it comes into contact with natural sunlight. Except in those respects, this ability is identical to a *darkness* spell cast by a 12th-level sorcerer.

Instead of gaining a salient power, a vampire might instead develop a salient weakness. As with salient powers, salient weaknesses tend to reflect the personality of their possessor, often serving to exaggerate or highlight the vampire's character flaws. A vampire given to anger might suffer from blood lust, while a particularly vain vampire might develop pallid flesh. The following list provides examples of salient weaknesses.

Blood Lust. The sight or smell of blood drives this monster into an uncontrollable frenzy. It is compelled to consume the inciting blood and may do nothing else, though it will not charge into certain death. It may risk death, however, and certainly does not hold back from combat. The vampire gains no bonuses from this frenzied state. Once the inciting source of blood is consumed, the vampire is temporarily sated and does not risk frenzy again until an hour has passed.

Corpse Feeder. The vampire is unable to drink blood from a living being and instead must sate itself on blood from fresh corpses. The vampire's Blood Drain ability still functions normally on living creatures, but the vampire receives no nourishment. On the positive side, the vampire receives full nourishment from blood drawn from fresh humanoid corpses, but this small benefit is more than counteracted by the vampire's need to kill its victims before feeding. Such vampires cannot help but attract attention quickly, and most must lead a nomadic existence.

Gluttony. The vampire must consume twice as much blood per day (8 Constitution points instead of 4) or suffer the penalties described above under "Feeding."

Pallid Flesh. Vampires are often pale, but usually not to a suspicious degree. A vampire with this weakness, however, has skin as white as ivory. Without great pains to hide this disfigurement, the afflicted vampire is unlikely to be mistaken for one of the living. A particularly unfortunate vampire might instead have pale gray or green skin, or even translucent skin.

Sterile. The vampire is incapable of creating other vampires or vampire spawn. It must instead rely on lesser undead or on dominated living beings for service and protection.

Unique Allergen. The vampire suffers from a strong aversion to a common substance, in addition to the standard aversion to garlic most vampires share. The vampire cannot enter an area containing the substance, nor can it approach an individual with the substance on his person. Common allergens include rose petals, salt, and wolfsbane, though any herb or mineral might function as an allergen.

Unnatural Aura. The vampire exudes an aura of evil and death that frightens animals. Untrained animals flee if possible and may attack if cornered, while trained animals are skittish and unresponsive. All Handle Animal checks made in the vampire's presence suffer a -10 penalty, and the animals' reaction to the vampire usually arouse suspicion. Beasts, magical beasts, and vermin are unaffected unless the DM rules otherwise. Animals under the vampire's control are also unaffected.

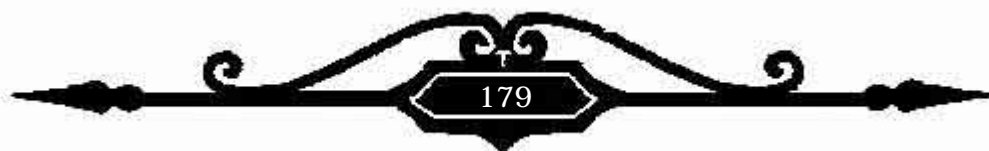
Advancement

Vampires can continue to gain levels in the classes they had in life, but their growth is usually much slower than a living creature's. The average vampire gains one level each time it goes up an age category. Particularly intelligent and active vampires might gain levels at a faster rate, while sedate or withdrawn vampires might gain none at all.

A vampire could conceivably gain levels in a new class instead, but this is very rare. Vampires usually lack the flexibility of thought and viewpoint required to learn a new class.

Vampire Spawn

Vampire spawn are subject to the same rules on feeding and sleeping as vampires, but they do not gain any enhanced abilities or salient powers as they age. Unlike a vampire, a spawn may be reduced to 0 Hit Dice from lack of feeding.





When this happens it is irrevocably destroyed, crumbling to dust.

When a vampire spawn's creator is destroyed, one of several things will happen to the spawn. Which will happen is not always predictable; as with many facets of vampirism, consequences vary from vampire to vampire.

In most cases, the vampire spawn are unchanged except for their newfound freedom of will. The spawn usually begin a solitary, predatory existence, although some may seek out social interaction with the living or with others of their kind. Newly freed vampire spawn have even been known to form hunting packs with their "siblings," though such packs usually fall apart due to competition and infighting.

Sometimes all of a slain vampire's spawn are instantly destroyed. This is most common with younger, weaker vampires. The worst of the known possibilities is that the vampire spawn may suddenly mature into vampires themselves. The vampire spawn in effect start over as Fledgling vampires, with the Vampire template being applied to the statistics the creatures had in life. Destroying a vampire without first eliminating its

spawn can be a risky venture, as one might suddenly find oneself facing a pack of full-strength vampires!

Ghosts



round the long, narrow hall, under the fearful light that came from nowhere, but was omnipresent, swept a rushing stream of unspeakable horrors, dancing insanely, gibbering hideously; the dead of forty years.

— Ralph A. Cram, "In Kropfsberg Keep"

Whereas vampires are beings of selfish and destructive greed, the lingering spirits of the deceased are typically creatures of deep and abiding tragedy. Commonly known as ghosts, these spirits remain trapped between worlds, held captive by the emotional power of their death. This tragic bearing can cause one to see ghosts as victims in need of assistance, and sometimes this is indeed the case. One should always be wary, however, for many ghosts were the architects of their own doom, and even those who were innocent in life may harbor deep hatred and bitterness in death.





Ethereal Resonance

One of the most intriguing results of van Richten's research on ghosts is his theory of ethereal resonance, which explains how ghosts come to exist. According to the theory, the emotions felt by living creatures leave a psychic imprint on the Ethereal Plane, which surrounds and pervades the material world. These psychic imprints are known as ethereal resonance. This resonance is usually so slight as to be almost nonexistent, but particularly powerful or persistent emotions can generate ethereal resonance of a stronger, more lasting nature. Ethereal resonance is essentially a shadow of the Material Plane, cast on the Ethereal, that provides an ethereal image of a specific moment in material time.

To illustrate, picture a house on the Material Plane. The house is home to an average, content family. No unusually charged emotions have occurred within; thus, the house emits only the slightest level of ethereal resonance. To travelers on the Ethereal Plane, the house would be barely detectable. They might get the sense that something was there but would be unable to perceive it in any concrete way. The living inhabitants of the home might be more easily detected, as they are the strongest sources of emotion in the area, but even they would be shadowy and intangible. Now imagine that the family was murdered within its home. The house has now been the site of very strong emotions: the fear and grief of the family and the rage and sadistic joy of the murderer. The ethereal resonance of the area suddenly increases dramatically. Now to ethereal travelers, the house stands out in full relief. Its walls are solid and opaque, and they can interact with it (such as opening the door). When the travelers open the door on the Ethereal Plane, nothing happens on the Material. The door remains closed because the travelers are not interacting with the actual, material door. Instead, they are interacting with a "ghost" of the door, an image of the way it appeared when the murders occurred.

In game terms, ethereal resonance is divided into five ranks:

Rank One is the lowest level of resonance. Rank one are devoid of any emotionally charged events. They may have been the sites of powerfully emotional events in the past, but if so they occurred so long ago that they have been forgotten by the living. A person who suddenly died from a heart attack would probably generate

only the first rank of resonance in an area. Minor arguments and small celebrations are also Rank one events.

Rank Two resonance occurs in areas where an event of some emotional strength has occurred. Events that create rank two resonance are usually brief and involve a small number of people, perhaps only one. A brief but terrifying murder might be sufficient to generate rank two resonance, as might a sorrowful suicide. A joyful reunion of long-lost family members might also reach rank two.

Rank Three resonance occurs in areas that have been home to very high levels of emotion. Usually the emotions of several people are required to create rank three resonance, though very powerful emotion from a single person might be sufficient, particularly if that emotion was sustained for a long period of time. A man tortured on a rack for days before being killed might build sufficient ethereal resonance to reach the third rank, as might a spirited worship service.

Rank Four resonance is rare and requires either strong emotion from a large number of people or maniacal emotion from a single person. Events that create rank four resonance are almost always tragic and gruesome. A ritual sacrifice or a mass murder might generate fourth rank resonance.

Rank Five resonance is almost unheard of and requires that a great number of people experience strong emotion or that maniacal emotion from a single person be sustained for a long period of time. Brutal genocide might result in rank five resonance.

Ethereal resonance is not permanent. Just as emotions create it, emotions are required to feed it, and without these emotions the resonance fades. Returning to our example, our imaginary house has been abandoned. No one goes there willfully, until over the years people begin to forget why no one goes there. The emotional power of the house has faded. The ethereal resonance of the house begins to fade as well. On the Ethereal Plane, the house begins to look more and more hazy and indistinct. As the years pass its walls start to lose their solidity and become transparent and insubstantial. Eventually, it might fade almost entirely. In game terms, ethereal resonance loses one rank each month in the absence of living beings who remember the event that spawned it, down to a minimum of rank one.





Chapter Five

Living creatures can be imprinted on the Ethereal Plane just as objects can. As constant sources of emotion, living creatures always radiate low levels of ethereal resonance. Whenever an individual's emotions reach a charged peak, such as moments of extreme anger, fear, joy, or sorrow, a lasting phantom of the individual is created on the Ethereal Plane, composed entirely of ethereal resonance. These phantoms are mindless images; they are not ghosts, though they may resemble them. The phantoms constantly reenact the event that led to their creation, without variation. These replays of past events can be witnessed by those with the Ethereal Empathy feat. Phantoms fade over time just as all ethereal resonance does.

Ghosts

Ghosts are the souls of deceased creatures, trapped on the Ethereal Plane. According to van Richten's theory, the interaction between human emotion and the ethereal can serve as a barrier in

the event of an emotionally charged death. The ethereal resonance created by the event serves to bind the soul of the dying to the Ethereal Plane and prevent it from moving onward. Ghosts are tormented by the circumstances surrounding their death, for they prevent the ghost from resting peacefully. Whether van Richten's theory is correct is impossible to say with certainty, but it does fit all available evidence.

Like ethereal resonance, ghosts are divided into five ranks. Rank one ghosts are the weakest, products of sudden or unemotional deaths. Rank five ghosts are the most powerful, resulting from deaths or extreme emotion and great consequence. Whenever a ghost is created, the rank of ethereal resonance in the area immediately rises to match the rank of the ghost. The ethereal resonance of an area haunted by a ghost does not fade over time, for the ghost itself serves as enough emotional fuel to keep the resonance strong.

Table 5-2: Ghost Rank Modifiers

Rank	Min Cha	Cha Mod	Free Manifest?	Special Abilities	CR
One	6	+2	No	0-2	+1
Two	8	+4	Yes	1-3	+2
Three	10	+6	Yes	2-4	+3
Four	12	+8	Yes	3-5	+4
Five	14	+10	Yes	4-6	+5

Rank: The ghost's rank.

Min Cha: The minimum Charisma the base character must have had in life to become a ghost of this rank. Base characters with a lower Charisma do not have sufficient force of personality to become a ghost of this rank. Base characters with an equal or higher Charisma can become ghosts of this rank or any lower rank.

Cha Mod: The modification made to the base character's Charisma after becoming a ghost. This modification does not count when determining whether the base character meets the minimum Charisma requirement for a given Rank.

Free Manifest: Whether a ghost of this rank automatically receives the manifestation ability. Rank one ghosts can have the manifestation ability only by selecting it as one of their special abilities. Higher ranked ghosts automatically receive the manifestation ability, and it does not count toward their number of special abilities. Rank one ghosts without the manifestation ability can interact with the Material Plane only through the use of their other special abilities, such as telekinesis or figments. Rank one ghosts without any special abilities are completely unable to affect the Material Plane and are forever cursed to be powerless observers. Spells or abilities that can detect ghosts still reveal their presence, however.

Special Abilities: The number of special abilities the ghost can potentially have. The exact number can be either selected or randomly determined by rolling 1d3, adding the ghost's rank, and subtracting 2.

CR: Modification made to the base character's Challenge Rating.





The emotional energy unleashed during a ghost's creation charges the ghost with power. Higher ranked ghosts are therefore more powerful than those of lower rank. A ghost's rank is fixed by the moment of its creation and cannot be changed except by extremely unusual circumstances, such as the intervention of the Dark Powers. The following chart shows the modifications that should be made to the Ghost template for a ghost of each rank.

Ghosts and Resonance

Ghosts and other ethereal creatures experience ethereal resonance as though it were a physical, material object. Conversely, ghosts are incapable of interacting with physical, material objects in the absence of ethereal resonance.

A ghost passes through all material objects as if they don't exist. They can also pass through ethereal resonance of a rank lower than themselves if they wish, though they can interact with such objects normally if they choose. Ghosts are unable to pass through ethereal resonance of equal or greater rank than their own; to them, it is completely solid and opaque.

Nonghosts on the ethereal plane may or may not be hindered by ethereal resonance, depending on their Charisma and the rank of the ethereal resonance. If the ethereal creatures have the minimum Charisma for a ghost of that rank, they may pass through the ethereal resonance, though they can interact with it if they choose. If they do not meet the minimum Charisma requirement, the ethereal resonance is treated as a solid, physical object.

Special Abilities

Ghosts can select from the following special abilities in addition to the ones listed in the *Monster Manual*. All saving throws are made against a DC of $10 + 1/2$ the ghost's Hit Dice + ghost's Charisma modifier unless otherwise noted.

Aura of Despair (Su): Those near the ghost are afflicted with a deep apathy and melancholia that makes action difficult. All those within (25 x ghost's rank) feet of the ghost must make a Will save. Those who fail suffer a morale penalty, equal to the ghost's rank, to all attack rolls, skill checks, and saves. The negative modifier lasts until the victim leaves the radius of this power. Those who pass their saves cannot be affected by this particular ghost's Aura of Despair for 24 hours.

Commanding Appearance (Su): The ghost can conquer the wills of those who look upon it. This ability is treated as a gaze attack with a range of 30 feet. Targets must make a Will save. Those who fail suffer the effects of the *dominate person* spell, as if cast by a sorcerer of level equal to the ghost's rank + Hit Dice.

Command Undead (Su): The ghost can rebuke or command undead as if it were a cleric of level equal to its Hit Dice. Ghosts that can already rebuke undead may add 4 to their effective level when rebuking.

Dream Walk (Su): The ghost can enter the dreams of the living once per night. The number of living creatures the ghost can affect at once is equal to the ghost's rank. All those affected must be within a (100 x ghost's rank) foot radius of the ghost. The ghost can send the targets either a dream or a nightmare; all targets must receive the same effect. If the ghost sends a dream, it can send the targets a message as if they were the target of a *dream* spell. If it sends a nightmare, all the targets are affected as if a *nightmare* spell had been cast on them.

Ebon Shroud (Su): The ghost can cast a *darkness* spell at will. It takes effect as if cast by a sorcerer of level equal to the ghost's rank + Hit Dice.

Entrancing Appearance (Su): The ghost taps into the fascination living creatures have with death, and all who look at it risk falling victim to it. This ability is treated as a gaze attack with a range of 30 feet. Targets must make a Will save. Those who fail are unable to take any action while the ghost remains in view. Victims can make subsequent Will saves to throw off the effects. The number of rounds a victim must wait before making another save is equal to the ghost's rank.

Ghost Writing (Su): The ghost can cause words to appear on any touched surface. The appearance of the words is up to the ghost; they may take the form of flowing script, haphazard scrawl, or even dripping blood. The words are entirely illusory and can be seen only by those the ghost wishes. The words can last a number of days equal to the ghost's rank, though the ghost can make them vanish earlier if it wants. There is no limit to the amount of ghost writing the ghost can have in existence at one time.

Mind Games (Su): The ghost is able to create illusions in the minds of the living. The ghost can use this ability at will. The ability takes effect as one of the following spells, dependent on the rank of the ghost:





Rank one: *silent image*
Rank two: *minor image*
Rank three: *major image*
Rank four: *illusory wall*
Rank five: *persistent image*

Although the spells resemble figment effects, they are in actuality phantasms. They occur only in the minds of the targets. In all other respects they behave identically to the spell descriptions. A ghost can choose to use a lower ranked spell if it wishes. Rank five ghosts can create illusory walls, for example. The spell takes effect as if cast by a sorcerer of level equal to the ghost's rank + Hit Dice.

Paralyzing Touch (Su): The ghost's touch inflicts a bone-chilling cold that can paralyze its victims. Those hit must make a Fortitude save. Those who fail are paralyzed for a number of minutes equal to 2d6 x ghost's rank. *Dispel magic* or a similar spell lifts the paralysis.

Phantasmal Killer (Su): The ghost can cast a *phantasmal killer* spell a number of times a day equal to its rank. The spell takes effect as if cast by a sorcerer of level equal to the ghost's rank + Hit Dice.

Phantom Shift (Su): The ghost can make ethereal resonance visible and tangible to the living. Every living creature within a 60-foot radius of the ghost ceases to see or feel the Material Plane as it is, but instead experiences the ethereal resonance of the area. This can be disconcerting but is generally not harmful. Rather, the shift serves to ease communication and interaction between the ghost and the living.

Unquiet Dead (Su): The ghost can cast the *animate dead* spell a number of times a day equal to its rank. The spell takes effect as if cast by a sorcerer of level equal to the ghost's rank + Hit Dice.

Advancement

The vast majority of ghosts are no longer able to gain levels, as their existence is completely focused on the circumstances surrounding their death. Very rarely a ghost might have sufficient determination and sense of self to continue to gain class levels, but even then opportunities for growth are few and far between. Of all ghosts, only domain lords might have both the drive and opportunity to continue to gain levels.

Liches



here is a power upon me which withholds. And makes it my fatality to live, — If it be life to wear within myself This barrenness of Spirit, and to be My own Soul's sepulchre, for I have ceased To justify my deeds unto myself — The last infirmity of evil.

— George Gordon, Lord Byron, *Manfred*

The lich is potentially the most fearsome of undead monsters. Imagine a wizard with immense power and knowledge now gifted with a hardy undead body, well suited to the channeling of magical energies, and a potentially unlimited life span in which to hone and perfect his art. Add to that a mind driven enough to seek out the secrets of lichdom, intelligent enough to grasp them, and twisted enough to enact them, and it should be easy to understand why the lich is so feared. Van Richten's research revealed that there are even more reasons to fear the lich than are commonly known.

Universal Powers

All liches in Ravenloft possess the following attributes, which should be added to the special qualities granted by the lich template.

Lich Sight (Ex): Like most undead, liches have darkvision to 60 feet. In addition to this, liches cannot be blinded or impaired by any light no matter how bright, even from a magical source. Spells such as *flare*, for example, have no effect on liches. Likewise, magical darkness does not limit liches' vision. In the eyes of a lich, it is as if neither darkness nor light exists.

Undead Control (Su): Liches are lords of the undead. A lich may attempt to command any undead that has Hit Dice less than or equal to half the lich's Hit Dice. The range for this power is astounding: up to 1,000 x the lich's Hit Dice in feet. The lich must have some way of perceiving the undead it is attempting to command, but with the vast magical knowledge liches possess, this is not difficult to accomplish.

Attempting to control an undead within range is a free action, and the lich may make any number of such attempts in a round. The targets are allowed a Will save against a DC of 10 + 1/2 the lich's Hit Dice + lich's Charisma modifier. Targets that save successfully cannot be controlled this round, but the lich may try again the next round.





Targets that fail the save can be commanded by the lich as if by an evil cleric, save that the lich may issue orders as a free action. The maximum total Hit Dice of undead that can be controlled by the lich at one time is equal to 3 x the lich's Hit Dice.

Undead under a lich's control have glowing pinpoint eyes like the lich itself. This is not a mere cosmetic modification, as the lich is able to see through the eyes of any of the undead it controls. This can be done regardless of the physical condition of the undead creature's eyes. This lich can likewise hear as if it were standing in the undead creature's place. The lich can exert its senses through only one of its controlled undead at a time, and while it does so it is unable to sense through its own eyes or ears. However, the lich immediately knows if it is being attacked, and it can switch between its own senses and those of its controlled undead as a free action.

The lich instantly loses control of undead that move beyond the range of this power, though there are rumored ways for the lich to circumvent even this limitation.

Salient Powers

In addition to their already impressive abilities, liches often develop salient powers. Whether a lich has salient powers, and how many it possesses, is related to its Intelligence.

Int	Powers
18 or less	0
19-20	1
21-22	2
23-24	3
25+	4

Int: The lich's intelligence.
Powers: The number of salient powers the lich possesses.

The following list provides example of salient powers a lich might possess.

Alternate Form (Su): The lich can change its appearance at will as if it had cast the spell *alter self*. The change lasts as long as the lich wills.

Animating Touch (Su): The lich can animate corpses as skeletons or zombies with a touch. There is no limit to the number of corpses that may be animated in this way. The animated corpses are not automatically under the lich's control; it must use its undead control ability on them as normal.

Augmented Spellcasting (Ex): The lich may prepare double the number of 1st-, 2nd-, and 3rd-level spells normally available to a caster of its level. If the lich has more than one spellcasting class, it may apply this power to only one of them.

Bone Command (Su): The lich can create structures of bone at will. The use of this ability requires that bone be present; the lich cannot create bones from nothing. The size and strength of the bone structures should be determined by the DM and is dependent on the amount of bone present.

A common use of this power is the creation of a swirling mass of bone splinters, similar to the *blade barrier* spell. The radius of the bone barrier is dependent on the amount of bone present, and it does 10d6 damage. In other respects it is identical to the *blade barrier* spell.

Chilling Wind (Su): At will, the lich can exhale a 50-foot-long cone of icy wind that lasts for one round. The wind inflicts 1d10 cold damage to those caught within, and the terrible howling that accompanies requires the affected to make a Fear save (DC 15). Any liquid within the cone freezes.

Fast Healing (Ex): The lich constantly draws on its phylactery to bolster its life force. The lich heals 5 points of damage each round so long as its phylactery is intact. The lich's distance from its phylactery has no effect on this ability.

Magic Mimicry (Su): The lich is able to draw on and redirect the magical energies of other spellcasters. Whenever a spell is cast in the lich's presence, the following round the lich may recast the spell without expending any of its own prepared spells. The spell is recast at the same level of effect as it was originally cast. The lich does not need to know the spell, but it can mimic spells cast by members of the same class only. A lich who is an 11th-level wizard cannot mimic a cleric or sorcerer's spells, for example. Nor can the lich mimic the spells of a caster who is a higher level than itself. Only one spell can be mimicked each round, and only in the round immediately following the original casting.

Metal Immunity (Ex): Once per day, the lich can render itself immune to metal. While in this state, metal weapons cause the lich no damage, and it can pass freely through metal doors or obstacles. However, the lich must drop any metal items it had on its person and cannot grasp any metal objects whatsoever.



Spells cast by the lich affect metal normally, and the lich in turn is vulnerable to spell effects emanating from metal objects. The lich can maintain this state for a number of rounds equal to its Hit Dice.

Poison Aura (Su): The lich's mere presence is so malevolent that nearby food and drink can become poisoned by it. This power has a radius of 3 feet and takes effect only when the lich wills it. The affected food or drink is treated as if it had been laced with lich dust (see "Poison" in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). The food itself appears unchanged, but the use of *detect* magic or a similar spell detects a magical aura. The poison becomes inert in 24 hours.

Proxy Travel (Su): The lich may instantly take the place of any undead it controls, regardless of distance. This is similar in effect to the *teleport* spell, save that there is no chance of error. The targeted undead creature is instantly destroyed. The lich cannot take the place of a controlled undead that is in a different domain.

Skull Scry (Su): The lich can use any skull in a 100-mile radius as a focal point for its sense of sight and hearing. The lich can see through the target skull's eye sockets and can hear as if it were in the skull's place. This ability cannot be used on skulls that are attached to a spine, magically animated, or still enclosed in flesh.

Undead Mastery (Su): The lich can exert limited control over a greater number of undead and to a greater range than normal. The lich can control undead up to a distance of 1,000 x its Intelligence in feet and can control a number of Hit Dice equal to 10 x its Intelligence. The lich does not have to perceive the undead; all undead that are not currently controlled are affected.

The undead do not get a save, but those of 9 Hit Dice or greater are immune. All the lich can do is summon them to itself or command them to attack a specific target or targets. More detailed control is not possible. The lich cannot use its undead control ability while it uses undead mastery.

Vortex of Evil (Su): Once per week the lich is able to send out a call to nearby beings of an evil alignment. This call creates a feeling of greed and ambition in the subjects and urges them to travel to the lich's location. Only subjects of an intelligence of 7 or higher are susceptible to the call. The call is felt by all such beings within a radius equal to the lich's intelligence in miles.





A successful Will save against a DC of 10 + 1/2 the lich's Hit Dice + the lich's Charisma modifier enables a subject to ignore the call. Once the called beings arrive, they are free from any obligation or attraction to the lich and must either be persuaded or forced to aid it.

Class Levels

Liches can continue to gain levels in spellcasting classes after attaining lichdom; there would be little appeal to the process otherwise. The lich can learn new spells and gain experience as is normal for its class. However, the long life span of a lich often leads it to engage in careful and meticulous plots that might take years to come to fruition; this patience often leads a lich to gain levels at a far slower rate than living spellcasters.

A lich's focus is too limited for it to gain levels in nonspellcasting classes.

Lycanthropes



And before the final blank overtook his dying eyes, he saw that She gave place to It; he saw more, that Life gave place to Death — causelessly, incomprehensibly.

— Clemence Housman, "The Were-Wolf"

The dread disease lycanthropy may be the most feared malady in the Land of Mists. It unleashes those parts of us that we strive so persistently to suppress: the dark, the primitive, the feral, the enraged. Worst of all, its presence lies submerged, hidden so that no one might suspect the ferocity of the animal within. Even the lycanthrope himself might be ignorant of the beast he becomes when the moon is full.

Natural Lycanthropes

Natural lycanthropes, also known as true lycanthropes, are born with the innate ability to assume the form of an animal and a hybrid beast. The nature of this power is a mystery, but it appears to be an inherited condition. One is either born a natural lycanthrope, or one is not; a natural lycanthrope cannot be "cured" of the condition, nor can one "contract" natural lycanthropy. Natural lycanthropes can inflict lycanthropy on others, but this is always the afflicted variety of lycanthropy, not true lycanthropy.

As lycanthropy is an inherent facet of their existence, natural lycanthropes are able to completely control their transformations. They may transform whenever they wish, and only unusual

circumstances can force them to change if they do not want to.

All natural lycanthropes are able to assume two forms in addition to their natural human form. The first of these forms is that of an animal. The lycanthrope always has the same appearance in its animal form. The animal form is usually larger than the average member of its species, but not abnormally so. Some lycanthropes, however, have dire animals as their animal form. The natural lycanthrope in animal form is in complete control of its faculties and can understand human speech, though it cannot speak itself.

Natural lycanthropes are also able to assume a hybrid form, a hideous cross between their human and animal forms. The hybrid form is bipedal and humanoid in shape. It retains the ability to hold and manipulate objects and can speak. Its head closely resembles the animal forms, and the body is usually covered with fur (or scales or feathers, as appropriate). The hybrid form is almost always powerfully built and usually possesses sharp claws that can inflict serious wounds. As with the animal form, the natural lycanthrope retains full control of its actions in hybrid form.

Afflicted Lycanthropes

Afflicted lycanthropes are those who have had the lycanthropic condition thrust upon them. Those who are injured by a lycanthrope but survive may contract lycanthropy, or one might be cursed to become a lycanthrope. Afflicted lycanthropy is like a disease that can be passed on to others or, with difficulty, cured. It is not a "common" disease, however, and a paladin's disease immunity confers him no guaranteed resistance against afflicted lycanthropy. Likewise, attempts to use the Heal skill on afflicted lycanthropy symptoms almost always fail; while it might be in the healer's power to ease the pain a lycanthrope feels, she won't be abating the lycanthrope's shape changing.

Unlike natural lycanthropes, afflicted lycanthropes have no control over their changes. They cannot initiate a change of their own will. Instead, their change is triggered by an event outside their control. The most common trigger is the full moon, but other possible triggers exist. Afflicted lycanthropes can assume only a single alternate form. That form may be either the animal form or the hybrid form. Afflicted lycanthropes of the same bloodline tend to have the same alternate form.





For example, a victim infected by a hybrid afflicted werewolf will likely assume a hybrid form itself when it changes. The alternate form is determined at the moment of infection and never changes.

Afflicted lycanthropes become animalistic and prone to rage in their alternate form. They attack innocents without remorse, often targeting loved ones. The afflicted lycanthrope usually has no memory of actions taken while changed.

Lycanthropes in Ravenloft

The following changes should be made to the Lycanthrope template for Ravenloft. These rules supersede those presented in the *Monster Manual*.

Curse of Lycanthropy: Lycanthropy seems to be a more virulent infection in Ravenloft. The DC of the Fortitude save to resist lycanthropy is increased to 18.

Alternate Form: Natural lycanthropes can assume an animal form and a bipedal hybrid form. Afflicted lycanthropes can assume only one of the two forms. For wereboars, hybrid and animal form stats are identical. For werebears, hybrids have a +1 AC bonus (size) and a +1 melee bonus for claws and bite.

Those who witness a lycanthrope changing forms must make a Horror save (DC 15).

Damage Reduction: Some lycanthropes have variants of the weakest form of damage reduction, with another special material replacing silver. Usually a specific material is tied to a specific animal type, but unique individuals are not unknown. The table below suggests some variant damage reductions for the lycanthrope templates listed in the *Monster Manual*.

Phenotype	Damage Reduction
Werebear	15/cold iron
Wereboar	15/oakwood
Weretiger	15/obsidian

In addition to the special qualities given in the *Monster Manual*, lycanthropes in Ravenloft have the following:

Chemical Bane (Ex): Lycanthropes, with the exception of wererats, are vulnerable to a particular chemical or herbal substance, depending on their animal type.

Phenotype	Chemical Bane
Werebear	Belladonna
Wereboar	Camphor
Weretiger	Ginseng
Werewolf	Wolfsbane



This substance acts as an Ingested poison for the lycanthrope, with a Fortitude save DC of 20. The initial effect is 1d6 points of temporary Constitution damage, while the secondary effect is 2d6 points of Constitution damage.

The Hunger (Ex): A lycanthrope must eat a certain amount of raw meat each day, depending on the size category of the lycanthrope's animal form.

Size	Raw Meat Required Daily
Tiny	1 lb.
Small	5 lb.
Medium-size	25 lb.
Large	50 lb.
Huge	75 lb.

If the lycanthrope does not consume this amount, it begins starving in three days, as described in the Environment section of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. A starving lycanthrope must make a Constitution check each day (DC 10, +1 for each previous check) or sustain 1d6 points of subdual damage. Cooked meat eaten is worth only half as much toward the daily requirement.

Alignment: Lycanthropes' moral alignment is always evil, though their ethical alignment may vary. The alignments listed in the table below replace those in the *Monster Manual*.

Animal Type	Alignment
Werebear	Usually neutral evil
Wereboar	Usually chaotic evil
Wererat	Usually lawful evil
Weretiger	Usually neutral evil
Werewolf	Usually chaotic evil

Lycanthropy as an Affliction: Not all afflicted lycanthropes involuntarily change shape upon the rise of the full moon. Variant trigger events can include other celestial or atmospheric occurrences, such as sunsets, comets, or storms; experiencing a particular emotion, such as rage or passion; or exposure to a certain place, object, or sensation, such as being in a forest, hearing music, or seeing blood. The exact trigger event varies with the individual lycanthrope, but lycanthropes of the same bloodline tend to have identical triggers. The afflicted character must make a Control Shape check as described in the *Monster Manual* when exposed to the trigger event.

Lycanthropy is more insidious in Ravenloft. Unless "pain" is their trigger event, afflicted lycanthropes normally do not need to make a Control Shape check when they take damage.

If an afflicted character spends skill points on Control Shape ranks, however, she unlocks the beast within and must thereafter make Control Shape checks when taking damage, as described in the *Monster Manual*.

Curing Lycanthropy: A character afflicted with lycanthropy cannot shake off the curse by eating belladonna. To cure a character afflicted with lycanthropy, the natural lycanthrope that infected the character first must be destroyed. If the character was infected by another afflicted lycanthrope, the natural lycanthrope that infected it must be destroyed, and so on. Regardless, the natural lycanthrope that originally started the bloodline must be dead before the afflicted character can be cured. Once this is accomplished, the spells *atonement*, *remove disease*, and *remove curse* must be cast on the character while he is in animal form. The character must then succeed at a Will save (DC 20) to break the curse. There is only one chance at a cure in Ravenloft. If the character fails this Will save, he will carry the affliction to his grave.

Salient Powers

Certain rare lycanthropes have powers above and beyond those common to their phenotype. Natural lycanthropes are most likely to have such powers, but they occasionally pass them to their afflicted progeny. It is rare for any lycanthrope to have more than one of these powers, and it is almost unheard of for one to have more than three.

Lycanthropes with salient powers can select them from the following list:

Animal Command (Su): The lycanthrope has the ability to rebuke or command animals of its animal form just as an evil cleric can rebuke or command undead. This ability takes effect as if the lycanthrope were a 12th-level cleric.

Energy Resistance (Ex): The lycanthrope has resistance 20 to a particular form of energy while in its animal or hybrid form. Fire and cold are the most common resistances. Werebears are particularly likely to have cold resistance.

Fast Healing (Ex): The lycanthrope recovers from wounds incredibly quickly. While in animal or hybrid form it has fast healing of 5. This ability can be taken a second time, in which case the lycanthrope also gains fast heal 5 in humanoid form.

Frightful Howl (Su): This is identical to the frightful moan ability described under the Ghost lycanthrope unleashes a low, mournful howl rather than a moan.

The lycanthrope can use this ability only while in hybrid or animal form. Werewolves are most likely to have this power.

Jump (Ex): The lycanthrope can leap great distances while in animal or hybrid form. While in these forms it is always treated as if under the effect of a *jump* spell. Weretigers are most likely to have this power.

Pass without Trace (Su): While in animal or hybrid form, the lycanthrope leaves no tracks behind, as if it were under the effects of the *pass without trace* spell.

Progeny Control (Su): Only natural lycanthropes can have this power. When the lycanthrope afflicts another creature with lycanthropy, the afflicted lycanthrope is under the command of the progenitor, as if the progeny were an animal affected by lycanthropic empathy (see the *Monster Manual*). This control lasts only while the progeny is in animal or hybrid form. Taking this ability a second time enables the lycanthrope to trigger its progeny's form changes at will. The progeny can make a *Control Shape* check to resist the change, but the progenitor can try again the next round.

Silence (Su): While in animal or hybrid form, the lycanthrope is always taking 10 on *Move Silently* checks, unless it chooses not to.

Spell Resistance (Ex): The lycanthrope has spell resistance 20. This resistance applies to all its forms.

Spider Climb (Su): Only lycanthropes with a hybrid form can have this power. While in hybrid form, the lycanthrope is able to climb sheer surfaces as if under the effects of a *spider climb* spell. This power is most commonly found in wererats.

Constructs



athanael was stupefied, — he had seen only too distinctly that in Olimpia's pallid waxed face there were no eyes, merely black holes in their stead; she was an inanimate puppet. — Ernst T. W. Hoffman, "The Sand-Man"

Pride is perhaps the most deadly of sins, and it is of pride that the artificial monstrosities known as constructs are born. When mortal man takes it upon himself to create life, he tampers with forces that would best be left undisturbed. Unfortunately, some refuse to recognize the wisdom of remaining within the natural order, and the result is a twisted mockery of life.





In most lands, the animation of a construct requires the use of great magics and expensive materials. Ravenloft does not hold such restrictions. Anyone with the mad desire to bring life to the inanimate can potentially do so, and the results are always tragic.

The Creation

A construct created not through magic but through the dark desires of its creator is known as a golem of obsession, or a dread golem. Dread golems are created when an individual is obsessed with giving life to the inanimate. The possible reasons for such an obsession are numerous. The creator may see the creation of life as a noble scientific experiment, an artistic project, or the opportunity to restore life to a lost loved one. The reasons are ultimately immaterial; what matters is the obsession itself. That obsession is the seed that ultimately gives the dread golem "life." The assembly of the golem's body, whether it be the sculpting of a statue or the sewing together of corpses, serves to imprint the construct with the creator's desires. The mechanism of animation, whether it be a fervent prayer or a channeled bolt of lightning, serves to focus the creator's anticipation to a crescendo. It is the emotion of this moment, when the creator is watching to discover whether his life's ambition has resulted in feverishly desired success or desperately feared failure, that truly serves to animate the construct. From the dark desires of his creator, the dread golem is born.

The Dread Golem

"Dread Golem" is a template that can be added to any construct, hereafter referred to as the "base construct." The template must be added at the moment of creation, under the circumstances described above. An existing construct cannot later become a dread golem, at least as far as is known.

Hit Dice: As base construct.

Speed: As base construct. A dread golem is able to run even if the base construct cannot.

AC: The base construct's natural armor improves by +4.

Attacks and Damage: As base construct, and gains a slam attack if one is not already possessed. Use the table provided with the Vampire template to determine the damage rating of the slam attack.

Special Attacks: As base construct.

Special Qualities: As base construct, plus the following.

Telepathic Bond (Ex): The golem has a constant telepathic bond with its creator. The golem is constantly aware of all of its creator's thoughts, hopes, fears, dreams, and desires. It can see through its creator's eyes and always knows its creator's location. It can also "speak" telepathically to its creator. This ability has unlimited range and cannot be blocked by any means magical or otherwise.

The golem's deep bond with its creator invariably leads to hatred and contempt. The golem acutely senses any anger or disappointment the creator feels toward the golem and knows its creator's darkest and most humiliating secrets. No creator can maintain the loyalty of the golem in the face of this intrusive intimacy.

This is a one-way power only. The creator has no such bond with her creation.

Saves: As base construct.

Abilities: +4 Dexterity, +4 Charisma. The construct also gains an Intelligence score of 9 if it did not already have an Intelligence score. A dread golem may have higher or lower Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma scores at the DM's discretion, but none has any of these abilities at a score lower than 3.

Skills: As base construct.

Feats: As base construct.

Climate/Terrain: As base construct.

Organization: Solitary.

Challenge Rating: +1

Treasure: None.

Alignment: Always chaotic evil.

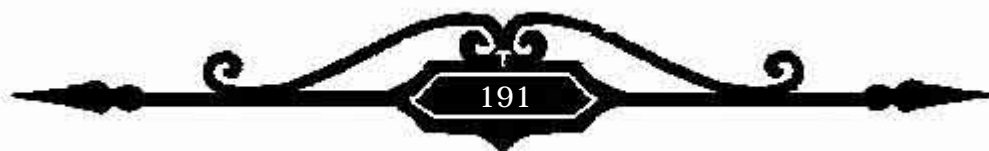
Advancement: As base construct.

Salient Powers

In addition to the above modifications, dread golems frequently have salient powers. These powers result from the materials used in the golem's construction or are a twisted mockery of the creator's goals and fears. Roll 1d4-1 to randomly determine how many salient powers the golem possesses, or choose an appropriate number.

Constrict (Ex): The golem is able to crush or strangle its enemies. The golem gains the constrict ability.

Contagious Touch (Sp): The golem can cast a contagion spell at will. The golem always inflicts the same disease with this power.





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Energy Drain (Su): Any living creature hit by the golem's slam attack suffers one negative level.

Frightful Presence (Su): The golem has the Frightful Presence ability, identical to the vampire salient power described above. Common ways for golems to trigger this power are by moaning, gibbering, or even tearing at their own flesh.

Heightened Scent (Ex): This power is most frequently possessed by flesh golems that were constructed with the sensory organs of an animal. The golem gains the Scent feat.

Improved Grab (Ex): The golem gains the improved grab ability. It must hit with its slam attack to use this ability.

Jump (Ex): The golem is capable of truly astounding leaps. It is treated as if always under the effect of a *jump* spell.

Laugh of Enfeeblement (Su): At will, the golem can unleash a booming, derisive laugh that affects all living creatures within 30 feet as if they had been hit by a ray of enfeeblement cast by a 10th-level sorcerer. Creatures that cannot hear the laugh are unaffected.

Rage (Ex): Once per day the golem can enter a rage as if it were a 20th-level barbarian. It does not have a Constitution score, so it does not gain extra hit points, but all other bonuses and penalties apply.

Regeneration (Ex): The dread golem gains Regeneration 5. Two relatively common varieties of damage must be selected that deal normal damage to the golem. Dread flesh golems, for example, are frequently unable to regenerate fire or acid damage. The dread golem cannot regrow lost body parts, but it can reattach severed body parts instantly by holding them against the stump.

Spider Climb (Ex): The golem can cling to surfaces as though under the effects of the *spider climb* spell.

Stench of Decay (Su): The golem constantly exudes a foul stench in a 20-foot radius that is identical in effect to the stinking *cloud* spell.

Trample (Ex): The golem gains the trample ability.

Zeitgebers

Almost all dread golems suffer from one or more zeitgebers, which are involuntary responses triggered by certain sights, sounds, or experiences. Like the golem's salient powers, the zeitgebers often mock the creator's goals by rendering the golem unable to act as desired in given situations.

The potential triggers and effects of zeitgebers are limitless. The sight of fire might cause a particular golem to cower in fear or stare transfixed at the flames. A song or style of music might cause another golem to dance clumsily or sing croakingly. Another golem might start howling uncontrollably when the full moon rises. The effect of zeitgebers in game terms are up to the DM, but they should serve as a tool for clever hunters to use against the beasts.

The Ancient Dead



he form was lifeless and inert, but it seemed to Smith as he gazed that there still lingered a lurid spark of vitality, some faint sign of consciousness in the little eyes which lurked in depths of the hollow sockets. — Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, "Lot No. 249"

The undead monsters van Richten dubbed the ancient dead are more widely recognized as mummies, but a shambling, bandaged monstrosity is only one of the appearances these fearsome creatures might take. Any culture that preserves the bodies and venerates the memories of the deceased might unknowingly harbor the ancient dead in its burial grounds, and these creatures do not kindly suffer the intrusions of the living.

Ranks

Like ghosts, the ancient dead are separated into ranks. The higher a mummy's rank, the more powerful it is. A mummy's rank is roughly determined by how powerful the mummy was in life, how venerated it was in life and after death, and how much care and expense went into its preservation and burial. Rank one mummies were usually servants mummified with their master, while rank five mummies were usually rulers of entire nations.

"Ancient Dead" is a template that can be applied to any living creature (referred to hereafter as the "base character"). The creature's type changes to "undead." The ancient retains all the statistics of the base character except where noted.

Hit Dice: Increase to d12.

Speed: See the chart below.

AC: The base creature receives a bonus to its natural armor class. The size of the bonus is determined by the mummy's rank and is shown in the chart below.





Attacks and Damage: Retains all of the base creature's attacks and gains a slam attack if it didn't already have one. Use the chart provided with the Vampire template in the *Monster Manual* to determine the damage rating of this slam attack.

Special Attacks: As base character, plus the following:

Damage Reduction (Ex): The ancient receives damage reduction at the value given on Table 5-3 below.

Disease (Su): All ancient dead inflict some variety of disease with their slam attack, though the disease inflicted varies from creature to creature. Select a disease from chapter 3 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* or invent a new one if appropriate. Add the rank of the ancient to the DC of the saving throw and change the method of delivery to Contact if it is otherwise.

Fear (Su): The ancient impose a supernatural fear on those who see them. Those viewing the ancient must make a Will save with a DC equal to $10 + \frac{1}{2}$ the ancient's Hit Dice + the ancient's Charisma modifier. Failure means the victim is paralyzed with fear for (ancient's rank x d4) rounds. Whether the target succeeds or fails, it cannot be affected by the ancient's fear aura again that day. The ancient might receive additional special attacks if it has any salient powers (see below).

Rejuvenation (Su): As if their physical invulnerability weren't enough, the ancient dead are capable of drawing on the Positive Energy Plane to heal damage. This is a relatively slow process and requires the ancient to be inert for a period of time. The following chart shows the ancient's rejuvenating capabilities:

Rank	Rate	Rest
One	5/day	1 week/1 day
Two	6/hour	1 day/1 day
Three	12/hour	1 day/1 hour
Four	1/minute	1 hour/1 hour
Five	2/minute	1 hour/none

Rank: The ancient's rank. Ancient dead of the first and second rank cannot rejuvenate once brought to 0 or fewer hit points. Third- and fourth-rank ancients cannot rejuvenate if brought to -10 or fewer hit points. Fifth-rank ancients can rejuvenate even if totally destroyed and usually require some special method of permanent destruction.

Rate: The rate at which the ancient recovers hit points.



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Rest: The number before the slash is the time the ancient must lie inert before rejuvenation can occur. The number after the slash is the time the ancient must lie inert after rejuvenation is complete. The ancient is always inert during rejuvenation. An inert ancient is incapable of any action and cannot perceive its surroundings; it is effectively helpless. An ancient that has started the rejuvenation process cannot end it until it is completed.

Special Qualities: As base character, plus the following:

Energy Vulnerability (Ex): Each of the ancient dead is vulnerable to a specific type of energy. The energy type varies from creature to creature, but vulnerability to fire is most common. The ancient suffers double damage from attacks of this energy type.

Immunity (Ex): The ancient dead are immune to certain energy attacks. The exact immunity varies from ancient to ancient, but most are immune to cold. Powerful ancients might be immune to additional types of energy. Table 5-3 shows how many forms of energy the ancient is immune to. Possible energy types include cold, fire, electricity, sound, air based, water based, or earth based.

Resistance (Ex): Some ancients are resistant to additional forms of energy. Whether the ancient has such additional resistance is shown in Table 5-3. The value of the resistance is 20.

Resistant to Blows (Ex): The ancient dead are incredibly resistant to physical attacks. Physical attacks only do half damage, applied before damage reduction.

Turn Resistance (Ex): The ancient receives turn resistance at the value given in Table 5-3.

The ancient might receive additional special qualities if it has any salient powers (see below).

Saves: Same as base character.

Abilities: Refer to Table 5-3. As an undead creature, the base character no longer has a Constitution score.

Skills: Ancient Dead receive a +8 racial bonus to the skills Climb, Hide, Listen, Move Silently, and Spot.

Feats: Same as base character, plus gains the Alertness and Toughness feats.

Climate/Terrain: The ancient dead are rarely found away from the site of their burial.

Organization: Solitary or pack (2-6)

Challenge Rating: Refer to Table 5-3.

Treasure: Double standard.

Alignment: Always evil, usually lawful.

Advancement: By character class.

Salient Powers

The ancient dead frequently have salient powers of their own. The typical ancient dead has a number of salient powers equal to its Rank -1, though some might have more or fewer. Salient powers can be chosen from the following list:

Table 5-3: Ancient Dead Rank Modifiers

Rank	Ability Score Modifiers						Dmg Red	Turn Resist	Imm/Res	AC	CR
	Str	Dex	Int	Wis	Cha	Speed					
One	+6	-4	-4	+2	+2	-10	5/silver	+0	1/0	+6	+1
Two	+8	-2	-2	+4	+4	-10	5/+1	+2	1/0	+8	+2
Three	+10	+0	+0	+6	+4	+0	10/+1	+4	1/1	+10	+3
Four	+12	+0	+2	+8	+6	+0	15/+2	+6	2/0	+12	+4
Five	+14	+2	+4	+10	+8	+10	20/+3	+8	2/1	+14	+5

Speed: The modification, in feet, made to the base character's speed.

Dmg Red: The ancient receives Damage Reduction at the value listed.

Turn Resist: The ancient receives Turn Resistance at the value listed.

Imm/Res: The number before the slash represents the number of energy types to which the ancient dead is immune. The number after the slash represents the number of energy types to which the ancient dead is resistant.

AC: The bonus the base character receives to its natural Armor Class.

CR: The modification made to the base character's Challenge Rating.





Alternate Form (Su): The ancient can change its physical appearance at will as if it were under the effects of the *alter self* spell. The changes last as long as the ancient wills.

Animal Command (Su): The ancient is able to exert control over one specific species of animal. Common animals are cats, eagles, jackals, monkeys, rats, vultures, and wolves. The ancient can rebuke or command animals of this species just as an evil cleric can rebuke or command undead. This ability takes effect as if used by a cleric of level equal to the ancient's Hit Dice.

Animate Objects (Su): The ancient can cast an *animate objects* spell once per day. The spell takes effect as if cast by a sorcerer of level equal to the ancient's Hit Dice, save that the duration is equal to the ancient's rank in hours.

Curse of Vengeance (Su): The ancient is able to curse its opponents as described in chapter 3, but with greater ease than normal. The mummy receives a bonus to its Charisma check when cursing. The bonus is equal to 4 + the ancient's rank.

Command Undead: The ancient gains the ability to rebuke or command undead as if it were a cleric of level equal to its Hit Dice. If the ancient already has this ability (and many were clerics in life), then it may add 4 to its effective level when rebuking.

Delay Disease (Su): The ancient is able to lengthen the incubation period of its disease power if it wishes, making it difficult for the afflicted to tell exactly when or how they contracted the illness. The ancient can lengthen the incubation by up to its rank in days, though it can choose to lengthen it for a shorter amount of time. The ancient can use this ability each time it infects a new victim.

Domination (Su): The ancient has a dominating gaze identical to a vampire's, save that the ancient's takes effect as if cast by a sorcerer of level equal to the ancient's Hit Dice.

Elemental Affinity (Su): This ability can be taken only by ancients who have cleric levels. The ancient gains one of the four elemental cleric domains (Air, Earth, Fire, or Water). It receives the granted power for that domain and can prepare the spells for that cleric domain as domain spells. The ancient's other cleric domains are unaffected.

Improved Grab (Ex): The ancient gains the improved grab ability. The ancient must hit with its slam attack to use this ability.

Mummify (Su): The ancient can create lesser mummies. This ability works only on victims who died while infected with the ancient's disease power. The embalming and animation process takes a full day for each rank the ancient wants the new mummy to possess. The ancient can create mummies of lower rank than itself only. The created mummy is completely under the ancient's command.

Passage (Su): The ancient can create passages through stone, earth, wood, or similar materials as if it were casting the spell *phase door*, with effects as if cast by a sorcerer of level equal to the ancient's Hit Dice. Each hour the ancient can create a number of passages equal to its Hit Dice.

Spell Resistance (Ex): The ancient has spell resistance of 20.

Weightlessness (Ex): The ancient has the odd ability to control its body weight, giving it enhanced powers of movement. Its speed is increased by +20 feet, and it can Climb at a speed of 20 feet as well. It leaves no tracks, even in snow, mud, or sand, and its movement is not hampered by such surfaces. A second-rank ancient can pass over a bog or quicksand as if it were a solid surface, while a third-rank ancient can pass over water and other liquids as if they were solid. An ancient of the fourth rank gains the additional ability to *levitate* itself as per the spell at will. A fifth-rank ancient can fly at a speed of 20 feet, with clumsy maneuverability, in addition to the above abilities.

Advancement

The ancient dead spend much of their time at rest, making the likelihood of their gaining levels small. An ancient who is particularly active might be able to advance in a class, though cleric is the only class one of the ancient dead is likely to pursue with vigor.

Fiends



lesh and blood can do nothing, sir, against devils; and that's what's in the Grey Room after dark."

— William Hope Hodgson, "The Gateway of the Monster"

Few hunters, no matter how successful and persistent their careers, ever have the misfortune of encountering one of the fell creatures known as fiends. These infernal monstrosities are evil to an extent that most cannot imagine, so much so that they warp the fabric of reality around themselves.



They are the embodiment of everything van Richten spent his life trying to combat, yet with all his knowledge, skill, and preparation, even he was overmatched in his lone confrontation with one of these entities. Do not lightly seek them out, for to fall into their clutches is to risk not only one's life, but one's very soul.

Transposition

Van Richten uncovered two ways in which a fiend might find itself in the Land of Mists. The first of these is the process known as transposition in which a fiend slowly trades places with a mortal already within Ravenloft.

Fiends appear capable of sensing the thoughts and feelings of mortals, even from another plane. They are particularly able to detect thoughts of evil and wickedness, and they are drawn to these as a moth is to a candle. Fiends appear to feed in some way from the wickedness of mortals (though it may in fact be psychological pleasure they receive rather than physical nourishment), and a fiend who manages to find a budding source of evil seeks to bring it to fuller bloom. A psychic link is formed between the fiend and its unwitting vessel, and the fiend uses this link to encourage the mortal to greater and greater acts of infamy. As the mortal succumbs, the bond between the two grows ever stronger. The mortal begins to physically change, increasingly resembling the fiend. This is an extremely painful process. The fiend's lust for continued malevolence eventually proves its undoing. If it continues to spur the mortal on, it eventually takes the mortal's place in Ravenloft. The mortal is trapped in whatever infernal realm the fiend came from, while the fiend is trapped in Ravenloft in turn.

An individual who fails a powers check might find herself transposing with a fiend in lieu of the usual consequences. Transposition occurs in five stages, with each failed powers check moving the victim to the next stage. The exact effects of each stage of transposition can vary depending on the type of fiend involved, but all transpositions have the effect of granting fiendish characteristics to the afflicted.

At stage one, the psychic bond between the fiend and the victim is formed. This stage is accompanied by minor physical changes in the victim, which can usually be disguised with difficulty. A victim transposing with a nabassu might find that his eyes have turned entirely gray, for instance, while one transposing with a succubus might actually become more physically





attractive, with wrinkles smoothing and blemishes vanishing. Some minor aches accompany this stage, but they are not debilitating.

In stage two, the victim suffers a glaringly obvious physical change, such as gaining scales or horns, and the pain increases drastically. So great is the pain that the victim suffers a -1 penalty to all skill and ability checks.

In stage three, the transposition begins in earnest. The "fiendish" template is applied to the victim. The victim's fiendish characteristics are now unmistakable. The victim might have scales from head to toe, or small, nonfunctional wings might sprout from her back.

In stage four, the fiend has nearly taken the victim's place. The "fiendish" template is removed and replaced with the "half-fiend" template. The DM should feel free to alter the template to better represent the breed of fiend the victim is bonded with.

With stage five, the mortal is doomed and the fiend entrapped. The mortal vanishes to the infernal realms, and the fiend takes her place in Ravenloft.

A victim can be saved from transposition up until the fourth stage, though this is a difficult prospect. Some spells can aid the victim. If a cleric native to Ravenloft casts *holy word* on the victim, the fiend is permanently forced from the victim's body. The victim may not survive, however. The victim must make a Fortitude save against a DC of 15 plus the stage of transposition. Failure means the victim dies, but such a death is certainly preferable to the fate that otherwise awaited the victim. The spell *banishment* may also rid the victim of the fiend. The effect is the same, though in this case the fiend gets a Will save to throw off the effects. Unfortunately, the victim retains all physical changes. A stage-three victim does lose the fiendish template, but his physical appearance remains the same. Neither spell can save a victim in the fourth stage of transposition.

Conjuring

A more common way for a fiend to enter Ravenloft is through magical conjuration.

The *gate* spell is an example of how a fiend might be magically called to Ravenloft. When the conjured fiend finds that it cannot return to its plane of origin, it will certainly be incensed. The summoner had best have magical means of compulsion ready, such as the *binding* spell, though it would be far wiser not to conjure a fiend at all.

Reality Wrinkles

The very presence of fiends has a warping effect on their surroundings. This warping is called a reality wrinkle. The sheer, undiluted evil of the fiend reacts with the Mists and creates what is essentially a mobile pocket domain centered on the fiend.

The size of the reality wrinkle is directly related to the power of the fiend. Powerful fiends such as pit fiends or balors have incredibly large reality wrinkles, while weak fiends such as imps might have reality wrinkles that barely extend beyond themselves. A typical fiend has a reality wrinkle with a radius of 2,000 feet per Hit Die, but individual fiends might have reality wrinkles that vary greatly from this guideline.

As mentioned above, the reality wrinkle serves as a pocket domain, with the fiend itself as lord. Unlike a true darklord, however, the fiend is not cursed, and it is free to wander within Ravenloft as it wishes. The reality wrinkle moves with the fiend, and wherever the fiend travels it temporarily usurps control of the land around it. This means that the fiend cannot be hindered by the closed borders of a domain, for its reality wrinkle supersedes those borders. Nor can a darklord exert any of its granted powers within a fiend's reality wrinkle. Darklords are immediately aware of any fiends within their domain, as they can feel the sudden severance with a portion of their land.

Power Rituals

Under normal circumstances, fiends exert no special powers within their reality wrinkles other than those described above. There is a method, however, known as a power ritual, for the fiend to gain such powers.

A power ritual is an arcane rite, known only to fiends, that enables a creature to draw great power directly from the land itself. The exact nature of these rituals is unknown, and each one seems to be unique. A fiend can only ever attempt one power ritual in each domain. After that one attempt, whether it succeeds or fails, the fiend is unable to draw further power from that land and must try another domain in its place.

If the ritual is successful (see the table below), the fiend's reality wrinkle immediately shrinks to half its former size, and its bond to the Land of Mists grows stronger. This bond is represented by corruption points.





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The more corruption points a fiend possesses, the stronger its bond to the land. A fiend starts with 0 corruption points. Each successful power ritual raises its corruption point total by 1d4. Corruption points make it harder for the fiend to successfully complete future power rituals, and they also make it harder for the fiend to escape Ravenloft.

Corruption Points	Chance of Failure
0	0%
1-2	10%
3-4	20%
5-6	30%
7-8	40%
9-10	50%
11-12	60%
13-14	70%
15-17	80%
18-21	90%
22+	100%

Corruption Points: The number of corruption points the fiend possesses at the start of the ritual.

Chance of Failure: The percentage chance that the power ritual fails, and also the percentage chance that any subsequent attempt by the fiend to leave Ravenloft fails. Fiends with many corruption points are so tightly bound to the land that they may be unable to successfully use portals or magic items that would normally enable them to escape. On the other hand, the fiend gains one land-based power. See "Land-based Powers," below. If the power ritual fails, the consequences are severe. The fiend suffers 6d10 points of damage as magical energy burns and scars its body from the inside. The fiend may not apply any resistances to this damage. This damage cannot be magically healed or regenerated, though most of it recovers with time. One quarter of the hit point loss, however, is permanent and will never be regained. Other consequences are possible, such as gaining corruption points or even being permanently banished from the domain.

Land-Based Powers

Fiends acquire land-based powers through the use of power rituals, as described above. Each domain grants a unique power to fiends that successfully perform power rituals within their borders. Samples of those powers are given in the list below. Unless otherwise noted, all land-based powers are considered supernatural powers, and

saves against all land-based powers are made at a DC equal to 10 + 1/2 the fiend's Hit Dice + the fiend's Charisma modifier.

Barovia (Obscuring Mist): The fiend can create an *obscuring mist* within its reality wrinkle at will. This mist has the same effect as the spell, save that it lasts until dismissed by the fiend. The fiend is unhampered by the mist.

Borca (Poison Touch): Once per day the fiend can poison a living creature by making a successful touch attack. This virulent poison is identical in effect to black lotus extract (see "Poison" in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

Darkon (Forget): Once per day the fiend can cause all creatures within its reality wrinkle to forget all events of the past 24 hours if they fail a Will save. Any mind-affecting spells that were influencing the affected creatures are dispelled by this effect.

Dementlieu (Mass Charm): Once per day the fiend can invoke a variation of the mass *charm* spell. All humanoids of Medium size or smaller in the fiend's reality wrinkle are affected as though the fiend had cast *charm person* on them. A successful Will save negates the effects. There is no limit to the number of creatures the fiend can have charmed in this manner at one time. The charm lasts 1 hour for every Hit Die the fiend has, or until the target is outside the fiend's reality wrinkle.

G'Henna (Cause Hunger): Once per day the fiend can cause all creatures within its reality wrinkle to become insatiably hungry and thirsty if they fail a Will save. Those who fail the save are compelled to seek out and consume all food and drink they can find. They are compelled to consume only that which is actually edible and are not compelled to consume that which they know to be poisoned. They are not compelled to act violently to satisfy this craving, though they might resort to theft. The effect lasts one round per Hit Die of the fiend, or until the target leaves the fiend's reality wrinkle.

Har'Akir (Disease Touch): At will the fiend can inflict a disease on living creatures with a successful touch attack. The disease is identical in effect to devil chills (see "Disease" in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

Hazlan (Detect Magic): The fiend is constantly aware of any magic cast within its reality wrinkle. It knows the precise location of the casting and which spell was cast.





Invidia (Corrupt Life): At will the fiend can cause all plant life within its reality wrinkle to shrivel and die. Animals seek to flee the fiend's reality wrinkle the moment this power is used, but its use causes them no lasting harm.

Kartakass (Siren Song): Once per day the fiend can sing a soft, melodic song that is carried throughout its reality wrinkle. All who hear the song are affected as though a sleep spell had been cast on them. A successful Will save negates the effect. There is no limit to the number of creatures that can be affected by this spell.

Lamordia (Hyper-regeneration): The fiend begins healing at an amazing rate whenever its hit points fall to 0 or lower. The fiend regains 10 hit points a round until fully healed.

Mordent (Phantom Shift): At will the fiend can create a phantom shift within its reality wrinkle. All creatures within the reality wrinkle are able to see and touch ethereal resonance. This effect lasts until the fiend dispels it.

Verbrek (Mass Polymorph): Once per day the fiend can create a mass polymorph effect. All humanoids of Medium size or smaller are affected as though a *polymorph other* spell had been cast on them. A successful Will save negates the effect.

Failure means that the target is transformed into an animal of the fiend's choice. All targets are transformed into the same type of animal. The effect lasts one round per Hit Die of the fiend, or until the target leaves the fiend's reality wrinkle.

Fiends are rumored to possess many other sinister powers. The DM is encouraged to give the fiend powers appropriate to the campaign.

Hags



will make you richer and more fortunate than you have ever been, but you must promise that you will give me whatever has just been born in your house." . . .

When he was nearly there, the maid opened the front door and called out to him that there was good news: his wife had just given birth to a little boy.

— Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, "The Nixie in the Pond"

Of the monsters van Richten documented in his treatises, hags are the one with which he had the least personal experience. That comes as no surprise, as these foul blights against nature are fortunately rarely encountered in the Land of Mists.





Unfortunately, van Richten's relative ignorance of hags meant that he had to turn to another for information, and that source, a hag itself, can hardly be considered a trusted confidante. A would-be hunter of hags should be cautious and not surprised if the foes she faces differ greatly from what she expects.

Origins

The true nature of hags remains something of a mystery. Van Richten's research led him to conclude that hags were a unique species, perhaps related to the fey races, but a species dependent on human males for procreation. They use their magical abilities to disguise themselves as human females and conceive children with human males while in these guises. The hag abandons the child, placing it with surrogate parents; this is usually done by switching the hag child with a normal human newborn. The child appears to be a normal human female until it reaches advanced middle age, at which point it begins to physically change into a hag. There is anecdotal evidence, however, that perfectly normal human females can also transform into hags, particularly those who delve deeply into the magical arts. There are also tales of powerful curses transforming women into hags.

The Change

Regardless of how it actually occurs, when a female becomes a hag she goes through what is known as the Change. The Change usually occurs sometime after the woman's fortieth year and before the fiftieth. Once the woman starts going through the Change, the following "Hag" template is applied to her.

Type: Changes to Monstrous Humanoid.

Hit Dice: Increase to d8 unless already higher.

Speed: Same as base creature.

AC: Natural armor improves by +5.

Attacks and Damage: Gains two claw attacks, each inflicting 1d4 points of damage plus the hag's Strength modifier.

Special Attacks: As base creature.

Special Qualities: As base creature, plus the following:

Spell-like Abilities: The hag gains the power to *change self* at will.

Saves: Receives a +2 bonus to Reflex and Will saves.

Abilities: The hag receives a +4 bonus to Strength and a +2 bonus to Wisdom.

Skills: The hag receives a +6 racial bonus to Listen, Hide, and Spot.

Feats: As base character, plus Alertness and Combat Casting.

Climate/Terrain: Potentially any.

Organization: Solitary or covey (3). Also frequently has humanoid minions.

Challenge Rating: +1

Treasure: Standard.

Alignment: Always evil.

Advancement: By character class and Table 5-4, below.

The above template represents a "young" hag, less than 200 years old, that has relatively recently gained access to its unique abilities. As hags age, their bodies become more powerful and they become more adept at their own brand of corruptive magic. As the hag ages, apply the modifiers shown on Table 5-4 to the Hag template.

Hag Magic

As hags grow older, their command over their unique form of magic increases and they gain new powers. Hag magic is poorly understood, but it seems to somehow tap into natural cycles. The hags draw upon natural cycles, corrupt them, and channel the power through their bodies in the form of spell-like abilities. The powers possessed by individual hags can vary widely, as they prefer drawing from different natural cycles to gain their powers. Following are details on the powers the hag can draw on. Once a power is selected, it cannot be changed. All hag powers take effect as if cast by a sorcerer of 8th level, or of level equal to the hag's Hit Dice, whichever is higher.

Minor Magic: Whenever the hag receives a Minor Magic power as a result of aging, it receives the listed number of spell-like abilities. For example, a hag that reaches the age of 200 receives three spell-like abilities, which can be any 0 or 1st-level spells from the druid or sorcerer/wizard spell lists. Hags prefer spells that command or corrupt the natural world or that enable them to harm or hamper living creatures. Likely choices include *charm person*, *dancing lights*, *ghost sound*, *obscuring mist*, *summon monster I*, *pass without trace*, *ray of enfeeblement*, and *sleep*. The spell-like abilities gained can be used at will.

Medium Magic: Whenever the hag receives a Medium Magic power as a result of aging, it receives the listed number of spell-like abilities.

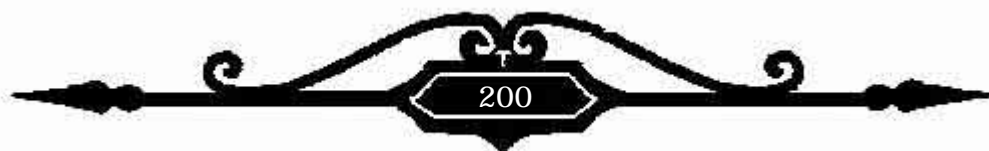




Table 5-4: Hag Aging Modifiers

Ability Score Modifiers												
Category	Age	Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha	Hag Magic	Aura	SR	AC	CR
One	40-199	+4	+0	+0	+0	+2	+0	None	None	0	+5	+1
Two	200-299	+5	+1	+1	+0	+3	+0	Minor (3)	None	12	+6	+2
Three	300-399	+5	+1	+1	+1	+3	+0	Medium (2)	20ft.	14	+7	+2
Four	400-499	+6	+1	+2	+1	+4	+1	Supernatural Ability	30ft.	16	+8	+2
Five	500-599	+7	+2	+2	+2	+4	+1	Minor (2)	40ft.	18	+9	+3
Six	600-699	+7	+2	+3	+2	+5	+1	Medium (2)	60ft.	20	+10	+3
Seven	700-799	+8	+3	+3	+3	+5	+2	Supernatural Ability	80ft.	22	+11	+3
Eight	800-899	+9	+3	+4	+3	+6	+2	Major (1)	100ft.	24	+12	+4
Nine	900-999	+9	+3	+4	+4	+6	+2	Major (1)	200ft.	26	+13	+4
Ten	1000+	+10	+4	+5	+4	+7	+3	Supernatural Ability	300ft.	28	+14	+5

With the exception of the Special Abilities category, values on the table are not cumulative.

Category: The age group the hag falls into.

Age: The hag's age in years. Hags cannot gain powers until after the age of forty, so the table begins there.

Ability Score Modifiers: Bonuses added to the hag's ability scores for each age category.

Hag Magic: The new powers the hag receives upon reaching the age category. Hag Magic is further explained below. Power gained are cumulative.

Aura: The radius of the hag's Corruptive Aura for each age category. Corruptive Aura is explained below under "Hag Magic"

SR: The hag's spell resistance value for each category.

AC: The hag's bonus to natural armor for each category.

CR: The number added to the hag's challenge rating for each category.

These spell-like abilities can be any 2nd- or 3rd-level spells from the druid or sorcerer/wizard spell lists. Likely choices include *animal trance*, *fog cloud*, *hold person*, *invisibility*, *scare*, *speak with animals*, *summon monster III*, *tongues*, and *water breathing*. The spell-like abilities gained can be used three times per day.

Major Magic: Whenever the hag receives a Major Magic power as a result of aging, it receives the listed number of spell-like abilities. These spell-like abilities can be any 4th- or 5th-level spells from the druid or sorcerer/wizard spell lists. Likely choices include *animal growth*, *animate dead*, *insect plague*, *solid fog*, *summon monster V*, *tree stride*, and *wall of thorns*. The spell-like abilities gained can be used once per day.

Supernatural Ability: Whenever the hag receives a supernatural ability as a result of aging, it

may select one special ability from the list below. Saves to resist these powers are made at a DC of $10 + 1/2$ the hag's Hit Dice + the hag's Charisma modifier.

Corruptive Aura: Hags disrupt the natural world with their very presence. Within a certain radius of a hag, the natural world ceases to function as it should. Weather patterns become incongruous, with rain falling during the summer or the sun shining brightly during winter. Animals behave oddly, with predators becoming timid and herbivores becoming aggressive. The older the hag, the wider the radius of this corruptive aura, as shown on Table 5-4. The effects of the corruptive aura are mostly cosmetic, unless the DM rules otherwise. However, a hag's corruptive aura does count as a sinkhole of evil.



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Cursed Glare (Su): This power is identical to the sea hag special ability *evil eye*, save for the DC of the Fortitude save, which is determined as above.

Horrid Appearance (Su): This power is identical to the sea hag special ability, save for the DC of the Fortitude save, which is determined as above.

Soothing Song (Su): Three times per day the hag can sing a soothing lullaby that puts nearby creatures to sleep. The radius for this power is 60 feet. All living creatures within that radius (except for any hags, who are immune) must succeed at a Will save. Those who fail fall asleep as if *asleep* spell had been cast on them by a sorcerer of level equal to the hag's Hit Dice, or of 8th level, whichever is greater.

Weakening Touch (Su): This power is identical to the green hag power *weakness*, save for the DC of the Fortitude save, which is determined as above.

Coveys

Hags in Ravenloft form coveys just as standard hags do, and gain identical powers when part of a covey, save that the spells cast by a hag covey take effect at a level equal to the Hit Dice of the oldest hag + 2, or at 9th level, whichever is higher.

Advancement

Hags can continue to gain levels as they did before the Change. They prefer to gain levels in physically oriented classes such as fighter or rogue, as they believe their naturally gained magical abilities are superior to any other forms of magic they might learn. Hags cannot gain levels as druids, as the nature of their magic is antithetical to druidic tenets. Hag clerics lose the ability to turn undead but gain an equivalent ability to rebuke undead. Hag clerics have access to the Destruction, Evil, Plant, and Trickery domains.

The Vistani



he had very red lips and very black eyes, she was built like a greyhound, and had the tongue of the devil

— F. Marion Crawford, "For the Blood Is the Life"

The Vistani are the most enigmatic of Ravenloft's inhabitants. These wandering gypsies somehow seem to be both separate from and intertwined with everything that goes on in the Land of

Mists. They are secretive and insular, keeping themselves isolated from the *giorgio*, yet provide services and entertainment to those same *giorgio* when the price is right. The mystery that surrounds them, and their notorious power to curse those who wrong them, cause them to be feared and hated by many, yet their independent spirit and ability to travel the nighttime wilderness without fear lead them to be respected and even admired by many others. They are a people composed of contradictions, and it is unlikely that anyone not of their blood will ever fully understand them.

Appearance

The appearance of the Vistani can be as varied as those of any other people, but certain characteristics are prevalent among them. Their complexions are naturally dark and are often made darker by exposure to the sun. Their hair is almost always dark and is usually deep black. Their eyes are usually dark as well, with brown being the most common shade, though hazel and green eyes are not infrequent.

Lifestyle

The Vistani are a people without a home. They gather together in caravans, the members of which are all part of a single extended family. These caravans wander the Land of Mists, their belongings carried by pack animals or loaded into covered wagons known as *vardos*. The master of the caravan is called the captain, an adult male Vistani who decides when the caravan makes camp, how long it stays, and where it travels to next. He also delegates responsibility to the other members of the caravan and has the final word in all matters of trade and commerce. Even the captain, however, is subservient to the *raunie*, the matriarch of the caravan. The *raunie* is often the oldest female Vistani in the caravan, though this is not always the case. The *raunie* passes judgment and gives sentence when crimes are committed within a caravan, and her voice is listened to and respected in all matters. The *raunie* is always a seer of some ability and is usually quite adept.

The Vistani do not tend fields and so have learned to take what food they can from the land itself. They are able to identify plants and animals with remarkable facility and have little trouble locating sources of drinking water. They are not able hunters, preferring to herd cattle and fish to provide meat. They barter and purchase whatever else they need from villages and are not averse to stealing or rustling when times are lean.





The Vistani keep to themselves unless they have something to gain by associating with outsiders. They refer to non-Vistani as *giorgio*, a word that means roughly "one who is not of the blood." Its usage varies from harshly insulting to mildly patronizing to merely factual. The Vistani as a whole do not hate or dislike *giorgio*, but they rarely accord them much respect. They simply feel that the *giorgio* have little to offer besides their coin. To be a *giorgio* is to be ignorant of the world's mysteries, fearful of the unknown, limited in experience, and dependent on others for survival. To be a Vistana, in their view, is to be none of those things. That the *giorgio* often fear and hate them is testament to their unenlightened natures. Not every Vistana is capable of being so dispassionate in the face of prejudice, but most Vistani recognize that Vistani are Vistani and *giorgio* are *giorgio*, and the two are and always shall be separate. The way things are is the way things are.

In the meantime, the Vistani have no compunctions about cheating, lying, or stealing in their dealings with the *giorgio*, if they feel such double-dealings are warranted. Vistani laws apply to the Vistani, and *giorgio* laws apply to the *giorgio*. This doesn't mean they won't seek justice for a wrong done to them; it just means they won't be surprised when the wrongdoing occurs.

Although those who have crossed them might think otherwise, the Vistani are not an evil people. Nor are they a good people. They simply are, in the same way the woods they travel through simply are. The Vistani see themselves as a part of nature in a way that *giorgio* do not; in fact, another meaning of the word *giorgio* is "unnatural." The Vistani and the *giorgio* may often be at odds, but this does not make one evil or the other good.

Language

The Vistani language is called the *patterna*. It is an unusual language, a hodgepodge of various humanoid languages and dialects that conveys meanings less with the words spoken than with the intonation and context of the speech. It has a flowing, rhythmic quality when spoken correctly, something for which few *giorgio* have the knack. The Vistani "script" consists of symbols known as *tralaks*. Tralaks are carved into trees or scrawled on stones to convey important information to other passing caravans. All tralaks are descriptive, with each one meant to convey a certain quality about the area in which it was written. One tralak is used

to warn Vistani of unfriendly *giorgio* in the area, for instance, while another is used to mark a source of fresh water. The Vistani have little other use for writing, and on the rare occasion when they must write something particularly long or meaningful, they appropriate the script of a *giorgio* language.

Vistani Powers and Weaknesses

The Vistani are an inherently magical people. Where this magic springs from is unknown, though the Vistani have their own tales on the subject. Their magic certainly does not spring from a divine source, as the Vistani pay homage to no gods. Nor does it resemble arcane spellcasting, as the Vistani have no need for components or spellbooks. The magic of the Vistani seems to be a natural part of their being, even more so for them than for sorcerers. A sorcerer must cast spells, while a Vistana simply acts, and lets the magic take its own course.

Racial Traits

Although the Vistani are humans, they are a very different breed of human. Full-blood Vistani have all the racial traits of humans, with the following exceptions. Vistani receive a +4 bonus to their Wisdom score and a +2 bonus to their Charisma score. They do not receive any ability score penalties. They do not receive an extra feat at first level, instead receiving the various powers described below.

Full-blood Vistani are not recommended as a player character race.

Curses

Vistani curses are legendary. Everyone fears the Vistani for their power to curse their foes, and no one crosses them lightly.

Vistani lay curses using the rules in chapter 3. Vistani curses are especially effective; all full-blood Vistani receive the Voice of Wrath feat for free.

The Vistani favor certain types of curses over others. The most common Vistani curse is a "Scar," an embarrassing or frustrating curse that serves as a constant reminder of the folly of injuring the Vistani. Scars are tailored to the individual. For example, a man who prides himself on his wit, and uses it against a Vistana, might find his tongue swelling any time he attempts to be humorous.





Other common Vistani curses include the Poisoned Carrot, a curse that compels the target to pursue something and at the same time renders the goal impossible to enjoy, and the Doombringer, which causes misfortune to follow the victim everywhere. The most feared Vistani curse is the *mishamel*, which literally causes the target to melt! The *mishamel* is reserved for the most heinous crimes. It is a lethal curse that at first causes only perspiration for four days. The sweating is mild on the first day but quickly worsens and becomes profuse and repugnant by the fourth. After the fourth day, the victim can no longer recover hit points naturally and must make a Fortitude save (DC 20) each day or suffer 1 point each of permanent Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution damage. When the victim's Constitution finally reaches 0, she melts into a puddle of water and cannot be restored to life by any means.

The Vistani can render their curses even more effective if they possess a focus item. A focus item is an item belonging to the target, such as an article of clothing; a part of the target's body, such as hair or nail clippings; an item the target has handled within the last day; or an effigy or representation of the target. A focus item gives the Vistani a bonus to their curse check. The size of the bonus depends on the quality of the item. A piece of the target's body is worth +4 to the check, while an item belonging to the target is worth +3. An item handled by the target is worth +2, while an effigy is worth only +1.

The Vistani can withdraw their curses at will but almost never choose to do so. However, they almost always include an escape clause within the curse, as it renders the curse more effective. Besides, they believe few *giorgio* are clever enough to make use of escape clauses anyway.

The Evil Eye

A form of curse unique to the Vistani is the evil eye. Any Vistana can invoke this extraordinary power against an enemy, but females are more adept at this power. A Vistana can use this power up to three times a day.

Evil Eye (Ex): The evil eye is treated as a gaze attack, save that the Vistana must take a standard action to employ it, and those merely looking at the Vistana are unaffected. The evil eye has one of the following effects, chosen by the Vistana. All saves against these effects are against a DC of 10 + 1/2 the Vistana's Hit Dice + the Vistana's Charisma modifier if the Vistana is a male, or 12 + 1/2 the Vistana's Hit Dice + the Vistana's Charisma modifier if the Vistana is a female.

Paralysis: The target must make a Will save. Those who fail are paralyzed for 1d4+1 rounds. Targets who fail their save by more than 4 are paralyzed for two rounds then go into convulsions that last for three rounds. These convulsions cause 1d8 points of damage each round. After the convulsions stop, the target must make a Fortitude save (DC 15). Success means the target falls unconscious, though this state more closely resembles sleep; the target can be awakened easily. Failure means the target dies immediately.

Fear: The target must make a Will save. Failure means the target is treated as though under the effects of a *fear* spell. The effect lasts for 1d4+1 rounds.

Domination: The target must make a Will save. Failure means the target is treated as though under the effects of a *dominate person* spell. The effect lasts for 1d4+1 rounds.

Suggestion: The target must make a Will save. Failure means that the target is treated as though under the effects of a *suggestion* spell. The effect lasts one day, or until the suggested task is completed.

The Sight

Only slightly less fabled than the evil eye is the Vistani power to see into the past and future. Only female Vistani possess this power; Vistani legends hold that men who seek to tell fortunes invite destruction to themselves and their entire caravan.

The method used by a Vistani seer to tell fortunes is entirely up to the individual. Some Vistani prefer to use crystal balls, while others prefer astrology. The most well-known method of fortune-telling is the tarokka deck, a deck of cards, each bearing a different archetypal image. Each card has a different meaning to the Vistani, and the order and context in which each card is drawn affects that meaning. Tarokka reading is an art form, and the fortunes told by the tarokka can be quite complex and detailed.

In the end, though, the method used by the seer is only a focus. The true power of fortune-telling lies within the individual, and the accuracy of the fortune depends solely on the skill of the seer.

There is one limitation of note on the power of the Vistani Sight. The Vistani as a whole are unable to see their own past and future with any clarity. They can see themselves in the past or future indirectly, while telling fortunes for others, but these moments will be vague and indistinct. Great though their powers are, even the Vistani are unable to know their own destiny.





The Vistani do not like to discuss these matters, but male Vistani with the power of the Sight are born every so often. They are always put to death immediately. A prescient male is known as a Dukkar, and they are believed to be creatures of great evil. The Vistani have several tales of Dukkars who managed to survive to adulthood, and none of them are pleasant.

Mist Navigation

Vistani have the uncanny ability to navigate their way through the Mists that surround and pervade Ravenloft. The Vistani simply direct their caravan into a bank of mist and emerge a few minutes later in another. The intervening distance may be hundreds of miles, and the Vistani can freely travel between the islands, the clusters, and the Core. The Vistani can take travelers with them and are usually willing to do so for a price. As the only beings both able to navigate the Mists and willing to profit from the ability, they are free to command almost any price they wish. The voyages through the Mists are always on target, but not always without danger. Many horrors lurk inside the Mists, and the Vistani have become accustomed to fighting them off.

Tracking Magic

While the Vistani are often skilled at mundane forms of tracking, more impressive is the Vistani power to mystically track individuals across great distances. Common foci for this power are divining rods and lodestones. The ability appears to be infallible no matter the distance to target. If the Vistani want to find you, they will. Magical protection against detection or location can block this power, but the Vistani are clever enough to use indirect methods if necessary, such as tracking down the target's friends or allies.

Static Burn

The Vistani are compelled to stay mobile. This is not a mere psychological compulsion, but is an actual physical affliction. Vistani who stay within a mile of any point for longer than a week begin to fall ill. The illness, resembling a flu or fever, is not life threatening or seriously debilitating, but it is only a symptom of the true problem. After 1d6+1 days of illness, the Vistani loses all of her magical powers, and they can never be regained. These Vistani are known as *mortu*, a word whose closest translation is "living dead." To the Vistani, the *mortu* are no longer Vistani, but are instead akin to

giorgio. *Mortu* are despondent and restless at best, mentally unbalanced at worst.

Tasques and Tribes

The Vistani can be divided into three groups, each sharing similar cultures, attitudes, and ways of life. The Vistani call these groups *tasques*. The three *tasques* are the Kaldresh, the Boem, and the Manusa. Each *tasque* is further divided into tribes. The exact number of Vistani tribes is not known for certain, but van Richten's research uncovered seven: three in the Kaldresh *tasque* and two each in the Boem and Manusa *tasques*. Information on each *tasque* and tribe is given below.

Kaldresh

The Vistani of the Kaldresh *tasque* are generally the most practical of the Vistani, concerning themselves more with crafts and trade than entertainment or mysticism. Kaldreshites tend to be physically fit and well suited for long travel and hard labor. They are pragmatic and somber in both dress and demeanor, eschewing unnecessary ostentation.

The Kaldresh are polite to *giorgio* and put up with insults and harassment that Vistani of other *tasques* would not likely suffer. This is merely an extension of their practicality, as they recognize the importance and necessity of *giorgio* coin. This is not to say that they are friendly with *giorgio*; they suffer their company but almost never accept them as friends.

Powers: The Kaldresh are the *tasque* least concerned with mystical matters, but they are not without powers of their own. They are apparently extremely long lived, and indeed, the Kaldresh believe that they are removed from time altogether. They do not appear to mean this metaphorically, and their powers of fortune-telling would seem to support their beliefs. A Kaldreshite seer is able to see events far in the past or in the future as if they were occurring now, and to the Kaldresh that may indeed seem to be the case.

The Kaldresh also have an unusual talent for locating conflict. Wherever blood is about to be spilled in war, it seems as though the Kaldresh have already arrived, ready to sell weapons or provide healing to the soldiers.

Crafts: The Kaldresh survive by crafting goods and performing services for the *giorgio*. Each tribe of the Kaldresh specializes in a different craft. Many of their crafts go to supply armies on the march. In many ways, the Kaldresh remove the necessity for supply wagons, as they always seem to have what an

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army might need and seem to be there to provide it. This is certainly a profitable skill for the Kaldresh, but it gives them an unfortunate reputation as feasters on human misery. Giorgio who know of the Kaldresh often call them "carrion crows." Some even claim that they cause conflicts just so they can have the opportunity to profit from them. The Kaldresh ignore these insults, knowing that the giorgio need no encouragement to fight amongst themselves.

When no wars are being fought, the Kaldresh set up camps on the edge of villages. They sell their goods at prices just low enough to undercut the local merchants, earning them no small amount of enmity. After a few days, they pack up and move on to the next town.

Tribes: There are three known tribes within the Kaldresh *tasque*: the Kamii, the Equaar, and the Vatraska.

The Kamii are excellent metalworkers, rivaling dwarves in their skills. They craft and sell weapons, armor, metal jewelry, tools . . . virtually anything made of metal can be found and purchased at a Kamii camp. They do not create magical items and therefore rarely have them for sale, but they do craft and sell masterwork weapons.

The Kamii also sell "cursed" weapons to those who insult or displease them. These weapons appear to be normal, even high-quality weapons, but they are subtly and skillfully flawed. "Cursed" weapons suffer a -1 enhancement penalty to attack and damage rolls. The weapons are not magically cursed and may be dropped or discarded at any time, but the flaws are so skillfully concealed that an Appraise check (DC 20) is required to notice anything wrong with them.

The Equaar are expert animal breeders, handlers, and trainers. When traveling they resemble nothing so much as shepherds working to make sure their disparate flocks and packs of animals do not wander off. Virtually any kind of animal can be bought at an Equaar camp, including animals that have already been trained. Trained animals sold by the Equaar include riding animals such as horses and ponies, pack animals such as donkeys and mules, and hunting animals such as dogs and falcons. Equaar horses are particularly prized and sell for at least twice as much as standard horses. They are worth the cost, however, as each is fully trained to obey a variety of commands. Equaar horses bond with their owners quickly and accept no other riders.



All of the Equaar have natural skills with animals and can be considered to have the Animal Empathy and Handle Animal skills at high levels. Many of the Equaar also possess the Track feat, enabling them to find wayward animals. They have been known to sell their services as trackers as well.

The Vatraska are healers and herbalists. They are a small tribe, and their caravans are difficult to find. Even when found, they may be mistaken for the Kamii, for they supplement their healing arts with blacksmithing and tinkering, though they do not approach the skill of the Kamii.

All Vatraska are trained from a young age in the healing arts and therefore possess the Alchemy and Heal skills to some degree. The Vatraska specialize in brewing healing potions, but virtually any variety of potion can be found at their camps. They are also excellent makers of poisons and sell them with no questions asked. Their dual nature as healers and sellers of poisons may seem like a contradiction, but the Vatraska act out of neither altruism nor malevolence. They simply do what they must to survive.

Boemians

Unlike the Kaldresh, the Boemians strive for ostentation. They lack the Kaldreshite talents for crafts, so they turn to services instead, and the service they specialize in is entertainment. The Boem flair for entertainment pervades their lives. Boem caravans are constantly accompanied by music. The people sing as they go about their daily business. Their *vardos* are heavily decorated and their clothing brightly colored. Even giorgio who fear and hate the Vistani cannot help but be entranced by the sounds and sights of a passing Boem caravan.

The Boemians are a passionate people, and their moods shift abruptly. In public, out among the giorgio, the Boemians are charming, lively, and romantic. They are open and friendly but cultivate just enough mystery to leave the giorgio curious and eager. In private, amongst only themselves, the Boemians are dark, angry, and brooding. They lament having to play the clowns for foolish townspeople who despise them. They bitterly deride giorgio for their settled lifestyle, yet they are equally jealous that they have no home to call their own. Boem camps are quiet and tense with a palpable feeling of anger in the air. They do not sing at night as they do in the day, instead telling tales of tragedy and horror. The Boemians are a tormented people, yet every morning they find the resolve to go forth and make merry once more.

Powers: The Boemians do not take a very mystical view of themselves or the world. They do not see themselves as removed from time as the Kaldresh do, and indeed their life spans appear to be much shorter than those of the Kaldresh. For them, time marches on inexorably and immovably, and no creature is capable of escaping it. This does not mean the Boemians lack the Kaldreshite skill at fortune-telling, however. Indeed, if the past and future are fixed and certain, as the Boem believe, all one has to do is map their course. Boemian seers are often able to see specific moments in the past or future with total clarity, but what lies between then and now may be a mystery. How well a seer guesses what lies between then and now is the true measure of his skill.

The Boemians seem to radiate a calming influence on others. Having negative feelings in the presence of a Boemian is a difficult thing to do. Anyone in the presence of a Boemian must make a Will save (DC 15) each round to maintain a negative feeling such as anger, suspicion, or hatred. Those who fail find those feelings suddenly dissipate, scattered by the Boemians natural likability. In game terms, those who fail the save ignore the Boemian's Outcast Rating, reacting to the Boemian as they would to their fellow townspeople. This effect is similar to the *charm person* spell, and any being immune to that spell is unaffected. Individuals with a specific reason to hate or dislike the Boemian, or Boemians as a whole, get a +4 bonus to their save and need save only once to be immune to the effect for the rest of the encounter.

Crafts: The Boemians are, above all, performers. Virtually anything that might serve to entertain can be found at a Boem camp. Indeed, a Boem camp resembles a carnival more than it does a caravan. Musical performances, plays, acts of prestidigitation, fortune-telling, and more can all be seen for a small price. The Boemians supplement these performances by selling a variety of trinkets and potions. They lack the skill of the Kaldresh in crafting such items, but they would never tell a giorgio such a thing. Indeed, the Boemians are quite skilled at making a worthless object seem like a priceless treasure.

The Boemians also offer other, more illicit services. Thievery, smuggling, and even kidnappings or assassinations can be contracted at Boem camps if one seeks them out. The Boemians do not advertise such services, but they have an uncanny knack for sniffing out and pulling aside interested buyers.





Tribes: The Boem *tasque* consists of two known tribes, the Naiat and the Corvara.

The Naiat, like the Equaar, are well known for their animal handling skills, but where the Equaar raise animals for sale the Naiat train animals to serve as entertainment. Bear wrestling is a popular sport at Naiat camps, and audiences thrill to the tricks performed by Naiat trained dogs and horses. Additionally, most every Naiat camp contains at least one skilled illusionist who can craft amazing, if imaginary, vistas and experiences for giorgio customers.

The Corvara are not particularly adept at any openly marketable skills. Even their showmanship is inferior to that of the Naiat, though they try to compensate for that by offering unsavory diversions such as gambling, drinking, narcotic dens, and cock-fighting. They have also perfected the art of con artistry and seek to bilk giorgio out of every last coin they possibly can. Inevitably they start to grate on their hosts beyond the ability of natural Boem charm to repair, and thus they tend to relocate much more often than the average Vistani tribe.

Manusa

The Manusa are the most exotic and aloof of the three *tasques*. Their numbers are far fewer than those of the other *tasques*, with perhaps as few as one caravan representing each tribe. Unlike other Vistani *tasques*, they do not market goods or services to the *giorgio*. Seeking out their company is a wasted effort, for they are never found unless they wish to be, and they usually wish to be alone. Even other Vistani find the Manusa impossible to track down.

When they are encountered, the Manusa are taciturn and distant. They rarely answer questions, and when they do their responses are cryptic. When they wish to speak, their words are direct and brief, with no time wasted on pleasantries. They care little for their appearance and are often disheveled and dirty as a result. They grow their hair long, and the men do not trim their beards or mustaches. The men dress in simple wool robes and caps, while the women wear colorful dresses and scarves. The Manusa appear older on average than most Vistani, and more burned and beaten by the weather. Their eyes are bright and piercing.

Powers: The known powers of the Manusa are vast, and it is almost a certainty that they possess other powers that remain mysterious. The Manusa appear to be able to manipulate time as if it were plaything. While the Kaldresh stand removed from time, and the Boemians know it as an irresistible

force, the Manusa bend it to suit their whims. They can see through time as others might through a window, walk through it as others might through a doorway. They can even take others with them if they choose. Time is so malleable to them as to be almost meaningless.

The Manusa also seem to be able to command the very Mists themselves, a power at least as impressive and daunting as their control over time. They can cause the Mists to rise at will and can use them to travel to any part of Ravenloft they wish in an instant.

The nature of these powers is a mystery, and it may be best that it remains so. The Manusa do not appear inclined to use their great powers for personal gain; any others who managed to gain hold of their secrets would almost certainly lack their restraint.

Crafts: The Manusa do not have a craft in the way the Kaldresh and Boemians do. They do not interact with the *giorgio* with any frequency and seem able to provide for themselves in all respects. When the Manusa seek out a *giorgio*, it is almost certainly because they wish to request a service, not because they wish to provide one.

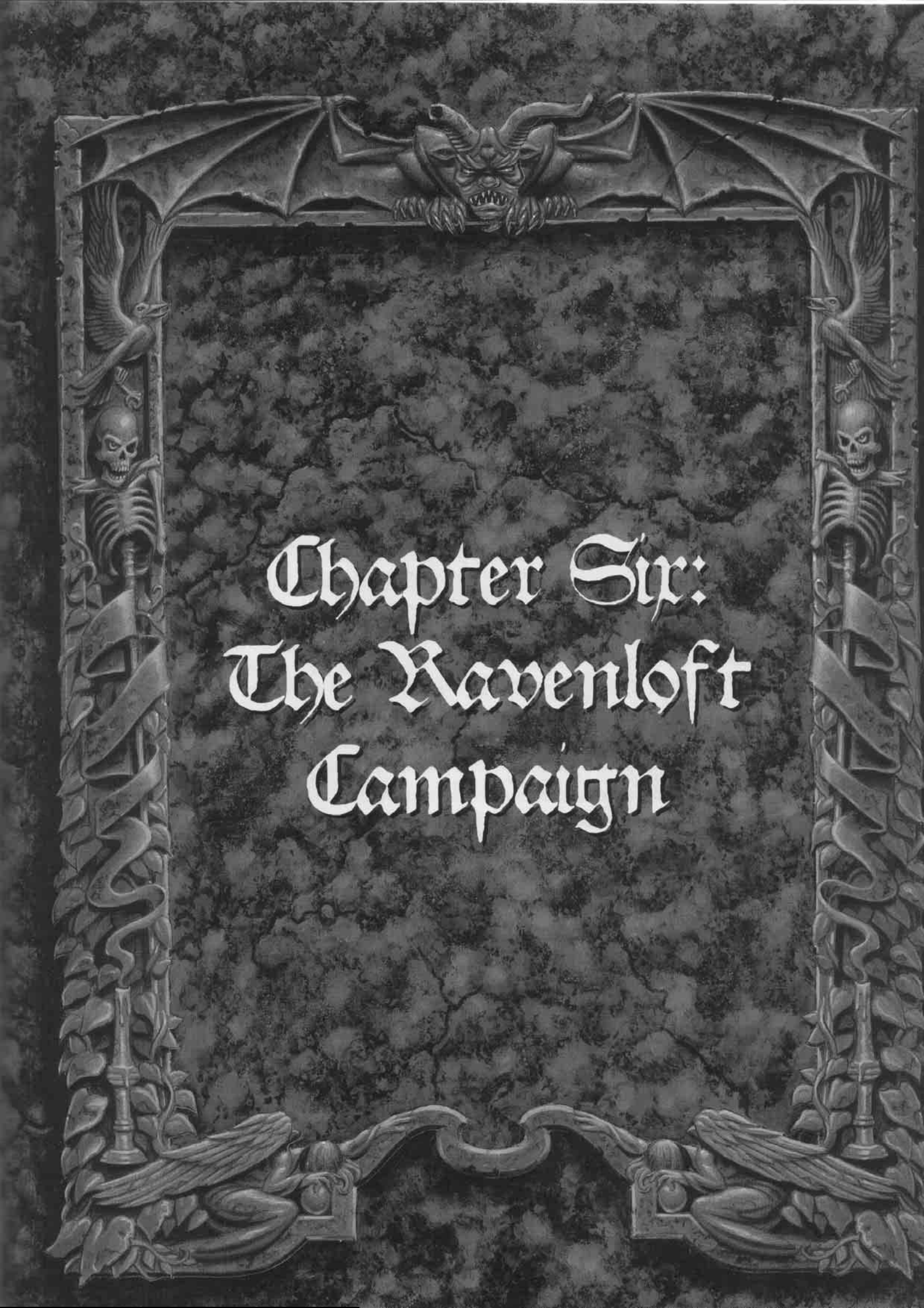
Tribes: There are two tribes in the Manusa *tasque*: the Canjar and the Zarovan.

All members of the Canjar tribe possess an innate talent for magic. Every adult has at least one level in the sorcerer class. In light of their other powers, the Canjar rarely seek to develop their sorcery to the fullest extent; 6th level seems to be the effective maximum they can achieve. Still, they are effective spellcasters and are believed to have many arcane spells known only to themselves.

The Canjar are superb crafters of magic items, but such items are never available for sale. They might provide them as payment for services or as gifts to extraordinary individuals.

Even other Vistani fear the Zarovan, for to the Zarovan other Vistani are as ignorant and helpless as the *giorgio*. The Zarovan bear their cousins no ill will, but the Zarovan have an unsettling degree of power over the other Vistani tribes. The Vistani believe that the Zarovan are the source of all Vistani magic. All the special abilities that separate the Vistani from the *giorgio* are said to flow from the Zarovan, and the Zarovan are thought to be able to cut or redirect that flow as they wish. Fearful of this power, the Vistani honor and respect the Zarovan while at the same time trying to avoid their attention.





Chapter Six:
The Ravenloft
Campaign

I understand it all now.

I was a listless and restless man in my youth. One day, by whim, I attended the estate auction of a deceased trader in Arbora. His heirs, desperate to settle the dead man's debts, had placed all his worldly possessions on the block. The proceedings bored me until a small, chipped stone tablet, engraved with exotic glyphs, was put up for bid. The moment I saw it, I was consumed by fascination such as I had never felt before. Acquiring the tablet for a small sum, I dedicated years to solving the riddle of its writings. I sought out scholars, learned the ancient script of the Axiri, and at last I translated the tablet's hieroglyphics.

The symbols told the painfully short tale of a young priestess, Sekhem-meru, who lived in some ancient age. Her life was cut short by a temple guard, who then fled into the desert and was never seen again. The priestess was interred in a grand tomb somewhere beneath the shifting desert of the Amber Wastes.

The tale merely stoked the flames of my enthralment. I knew then that I would not rest until I found the lost tomb of this slain priestess and claimed the treasures sealed within.

The struggle to reach the tomb was long and arduous, but I persevered, finding my way to the Amber Wastes. I attempted to mount an expedition using local workers, but my luck was sour. The superstitious locals would not take my gold. They warned me that ancient gods guard the tombs beneath the dunes and that the dead are easily woken.

In the end I was forced to turn to the desert raiders, enlisting them with promises of a hearty share of any treasures found. We braved the burning sands and, using markings on the tablet, eventually found the entrance we sought: a stone shaft carved beneath a cliff face, leading down into the darkness.

And still my fascination grew. I insisted on going first into the tomb. They lowered me into the shadows - and then they cut the rope. I see the dogs' plan now: they have left me to die and will surely return later to collect the ancient treasures for themselves.

I am trapped within this tomb, and my lantern will soon expend its oil. I will never leave this place alive. But I am no longer afraid.

Winding my way through the dust-choked passages, I reached the burial chamber of Sekhem-meru herself. Looking upon her sarcophagus, all suddenly became clear. A lifetime of fleeting dreams and haunting memories rushed in upon me.

The priestess and the temple guard shared a secret love, but they had sworn themselves to the gods. Unable to consummate their forbidden passion in this life, they swore a pact to be united in the next. The guard was to slay the priestess, then turn his blade on himself. The guard killed his love, but then found that he lacked the courage to join her in the afterlife. The guard fled from death, and his fear chased him through the centuries, through one life after another.

And for all that time, she waited for him - for me - with the patience of the dead.

I have returned to you at long last, my Sekhem-meru, and I am yours, body and soul.

— Found scratched into a tablet within an empty tomb beneath the burning sands of Sebuia.



t is a wild adventure we are on. Here, as we are rushing along through the darkness, with the cold from the river seeming to rise up and strike us, with all the mysterious voices of the night around us, it all comes home. We seem to be drifting into unknown places and unknown ways. Into a whole world of dark and dreadful things.

— Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (1897)

Ravenloft is a blend of Gothic horror and adventurous fantasy, and the result is a world of unique settings and themes. The purpose of this chapter is to aid both DMs and players in better understanding the world of Ravenloft and how to best evoke its atmosphere and ideas. Ultimately, everything in this chapter should be considered helpful guidelines and nothing more. The world of Ravenloft is yours to mold as you choose, to evoke the spirit of Gothic Adventure in the tales you tell.

Gothic Horror

Horror is the most basic element of Ravenloft. The goal of any Ravenloft adventure should be, at least in part, to give the players a good, fun, healthy scare. The Ravenloft setting provides an abundance of tools with which to scare the players: a mysterious world, dark gods, undead monsters, forbidden secrets. But it is important to know how to use these tools to greatest effect. Gothic horror emphasizes certain elements of fear over others.

Impotence

In Gothic horror, the villains are in control. The heroes are weak, even insignificant, by comparison. To be a hero in a Gothic horror adventure is to face the incomparable fear of knowing, deep down, that you cannot possibly prevail. If, after all is said and done, the hero does manage to vanquish the villain, she can only look back and marvel at how providence took her so far.

In Ravenloft, things generally are not quite so grim. The heroes are usually significant powers in their own right, particularly when working as a group. But a skilled DM has many ways to impose a feeling of powerlessness, even on a group of powerful heroes. Even the bravest heroes are certain to feel a sense of cold dread when they find themselves lost in a nighttime forest, surrounded by sounds of movement generated by unseen creatures. Trapping the heroes in unfamiliar circumstances, having monsters attack from concealment, facing them with foes against whom

their favored weapons are useless. . . these are all examples of ways to make your players start to wonder whether they're really up to the coming challenges.

Ignorance

The fear of the unknown may be the most powerful fear. Leaving the players in the dark about exactly what it is they are facing is an excellent way to send chills down their backs. Don't make information impossible to acquire, or useless when they do gain it, because this can sharply detract from the story. How can the players appreciate the plot if they know none of its details? Instead, slowly reveal important details as the story progresses, and perhaps arrange a minor encounter or two with the primary villain while its nature and motivations are still a mystery. Give your players a chance to guess about what they are up against; their imaginations might well provide the most frightening scenarios.

Isolation

In terms of sheer terror, there is little that can compare with the realization that you are completely, utterly alone. When you have no one to count on but yourself, no one to turn to for support or assistance, every challenge becomes that much more disheartening. Isolating the heroes from outside help, or even from each other, is an excellent way to foment a sense of dread.

Isolation need not be physical. Social isolation can be far, far more frightening. Stranding the heroes in an unfamiliar society, where they do not speak the language or understand the customs, can be just as effective as trapping them on a deserted island or in an abandoned castle. Even in a familiar society, like their hometown, social isolation can occur. Consider the fable of the Boy Who Cried Wolf. A young child, through his own foolishness and mischievousness, alienates the people of his village and loses their trust. When danger finally does come chasing after him, right on the outskirts of his own home, he has absolutely no one to whom he can turn to for aid. This is isolation in its purest form.

Suspense

A sudden shock can be frightening, but it is not the sort of fear Gothic horror relies on. Gothic horror prefers to make you afraid before anything frightening has even appeared, to make you look for attackers in empty shadows. Try to cultivate a





pervading sense of dread during your adventures, the idea that something very bad might happen at any moment. Describe the heroes' surroundings in crisp detail, emphasizing all the things that might make them suspicious or concerned. Incorporate all the senses. Mention every little noise, the faintest scent. When you have the heroes looking for danger in every direction and at every moment, they still won't be prepared when it finally does appear, and the built-up tension will make the moment of fear that much sweeter.

Subtlety

Ravenloft does not evoke fear through gore. Not only is that taking the easy way out, it usually doesn't work. Describing horrifically bloody scenes in gruesome detail is more likely to elicit gagging than gasps. It is far better to hint at the horrific and let the players' minds fill in the details. In storytelling, drops of blood are more frightening than chunks of flesh, rustling leaves are more frightening than screaming monsters, and a slowly opening door is more frightening than a blown-in wall. Keeping things simple is also keeping them scary.

Gothic Themes

As important as horror is, Gothic tales are about more than fear. Gothic stories convey certain attitudes and ideas about the world and the human condition. DMs should keep these themes in mind when constructing stories of Gothic adventure.

Good vs. Evil

In Gothic stories, there is Good and there is Evil. Morality is not relativistic. It does not bend and twist to accommodate the situation. Right is right and wrong is wrong, and you'd better choose a side before the wrong side chooses you.

This is not to say that Gothic worlds are worlds of black and white. Shades of gray are plentiful, but these are the result of human perception and deception. It may sometimes be hard to know exactly what is right and what is wrong, and evil will often try very hard to disguise itself as good, but our human inability to correctly assess a situation does not free us from the consequences of our actions. A witch-hunter seeking to stamp out the evil of hags who, blinded by hubris, puts innocents to the torch must still pay the price for her deeds, even if she believes her actions are just. Confusing matters of the world may not be identical to the morality we are

raised with and taught to adhere to. What man says is moral may not *be* moral, and here the fear of the unknown comes into play. The idea that there may be hard, unchanging rules about what is good and what is evil, and that we will be expected to adhere to those rules, but that we may not know for certain what those rules are is a terrifying concept, and one brought to life in Ravenloft through the Dark Powers. These unknown and unknowable forces sit in judgment over the inhabitants of the Land of Mists but never make any overt effort to reveal their motivations or standards for judgment. Only through the punishments they dole out after the fact do the people of Ravenloft come to know what displeases them, and these punishments are fearfully inconsistent. The very nature of morality in Ravenloft is constructed to breed fear.

Punishment and Reward

In Gothic stories, people tend to get what they deserve when all is said and done. In the end, evil is destroyed and goodness prevails. Innocents may suffer or even die along the way, but we can be more or less certain that they receive the rewards they deserve in the next life.

One important thing of note in Gothic tales is that justice delayed is far from being justice denied. Evil may thrive for a long period of time, but it will get what it deserves eventually. It may take years, decades, or even generations. A son may even have to bear the punishments learned by his father. How can such a state of affairs be just?

The Persistence of Evil: The actions of the past have bearing on the present. Evil acts committed in the past, even before living memory, can act as seeds of chaos that might not germinate until far in the future. Evil does not end until justice is done, and so evil carries on through years and through generations. A father who commits evil and goes unpunished bequeaths his villainy to his son, who will certainly show signs of his father's wickedness. He may not be doomed if he seeks out repentance and performs the appropriate penitence, but if he refuses to acknowledge that responsibility he will suffer for it... or his children will.

Fitting Justice: Unyielding as the forces of judgment might be, they are not without a certain macabre sense of irony. The punishments a person receives for his actions always fit the crime. An excessively proud sculptor might find his hands scarred and rendered useless.





A wealthy woman who refuses to give aid to a dying beggar might find herself penniless before too long. Perhaps the most fitting punishment in Ravenloft is the murderer who finds himself haunted by the ghost of his victim.

The Unkindness of Nature

Nature is not your friend. It is no one's friend. It does as it wants, and its wants often conflict with those of the needy. Rain seems to fall when dryness is needed. The sun disappears behind the clouds when light is necessary. The wind starts to blow when calmness is vital. Nature does not have it out for you. It simply doesn't care about you.

Passion

Gothic stories are tales of strong, deeply felt emotion. Villains, in particular, are often vessels of barely contained passions. Rage, lust, envy, obsession — all of the darker aspects of human feeling find their expression in the Gothic milieu. Less sinister emotions have their place in Gothic adventure as well. Love, in particular, often runs deep.

Pride

Of special note is pride. Hubris is known as the deadliest sin, and in Gothic stories it certainly seems to cause the most trouble. Man's pride in his own abilities and accomplishments is often the downfall of him and everything he holds dear. The scientist who tampers with the laws of nature, the sinner who believes himself beyond the reach of the gods, the woman so convinced of her virtue that she believes herself above all temptation... all of them build the foundations of their own destruction.

Gothic Adventure

Ravenloft is a world of both the Gothic and the fantastic. Many of the elements of a typical fantasy campaign can be found in Ravenloft, but these elements are often twisted or altered to better suit the Gothic themes of the world. Even though they are changed, they still play an important part in Ravenloft campaigns. Following are examples of how fantasy elements blend with the Gothic.

Combat

Combat is an integral part of most fantasy stories, and it plays an important role in Ravenloft as well. Ravenloft is well stocked with foes to fight and monsters to slay. The good folk of the Realm of Dread know few more dramatic ways to be a hero than to face down a creature of the night,

and combat should be a frequently featured part of Ravenloft adventures.

Swords vs. Firearms: Gothic stories almost always take place in a much more technologically and socially advanced milieu than fantasy stories do. Ravenloft strikes a balance between the two, blending technological and social aspects of both genres. As a result, the world of Ravenloft contains technology of a slightly higher level than the typical fantasy world, including firearms. One would expect that the availability of firearms would mean the end of swords, bows, and other standard fantasy weapons, but this is not the case in Ravenloft. The setting makes this distinction for several reasons. The domains of Ravenloft possess differing levels of technology, and firearms are unavailable in many lands. Even when a domain does possess sufficient technology to produce firearms, their availability is often restricted by the rulers of the domain, who fear the leveling power firearms have on the battlefield. The most important reason, however, is that firearms are expensive and unreliable. Gunpowder is dangerous to mix and to carry and is easily ruined by moisture, and even the most powerfully enchanted firearm is useless without it. Many of the land's most dangerous creatures can be harmed only by magical weapons, and few adventurers trust a magic firearm where a magic bow will do. For these reasons, swords, bows, and other fantasy weapons should always be prominent in Ravenloft combat, with firearms in the background if at all present.

Wits vs. Might: While combat will always have its place in Ravenloft campaigns, a hack-and-slash style of adventuring is ultimately doomed to failure in the average Ravenloft adventure. The reason is, quite simply, that the monsters are usually more powerful than the heroes, not simply in terms of sheer might, but also in terms of influence and awareness. While fighting first and asking questions later can be effective against a villain's minions, once the heroes reach the power behind the scenes they are likely to find their weapons and tactics to be ineffectual.

This is not to say that the monsters in Ravenloft are invulnerable. It merely means that more subtle methods are often required to defeat them. Heroes in Ravenloft should seek to understand their foes so that they may better destroy them. Every villain or monster in Ravenloft has a weakness, and generally the more powerful the creature, the more crippling their weaknesses are once exposed.





Heroes should strive to learn of their foes' origins, motivations, and relationships, for it is in discovering these that their foes' weaknesses are most likely to be uncovered.

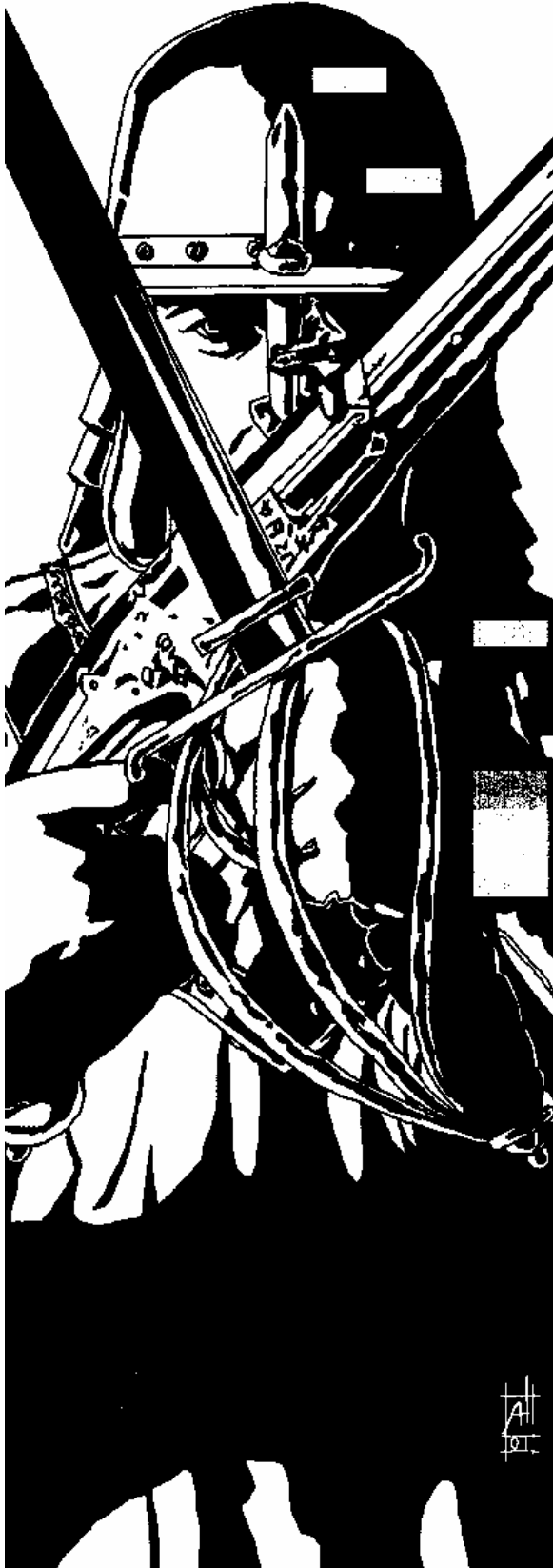
Magic

Magic is another staple of fantasy settings, and it has its place in Ravenloft. However, magic is only occasionally a major element in the Land of Mists. It usually takes a subtle, supporting role in Ravenloft adventures, furthering the story without dominating it. Below are some examples of how magic is thematically different in Ravenloft.

The Rarity of Magic: Magic is encountered far less in Ravenloft than it is in the typical fantasy campaign. Spellcasters are extremely rare and guard their secrets jealously. Schools of magic are almost unheard of, and those that exist are usually the tools or recruiting grounds of insular groups wary of outsiders. Magical items are difficult to come by, and those of even the slightest enchantment usually have long histories. Indeed, magic is rare enough in the Land of Mists that some even insist that it is nothing more than a superstition. They are wrong, of course, but most inhabitants of Ravenloft will never knowingly encounter anything magical in their lifetimes. Adventurers have an easier time locating magic than the average commoner, since the monsters they face hoard much of it, but even they should find it rare enough that its discovery is a truly wondrous event.

The Flavor of Magic: Magic in Ravenloft is usually of a darker nature than it is in most fantasy settings. Most magic is not inherently evil in Ravenloft (though some is; see chapter 3). However, those who are desperate to learn the secrets of magic often commit evil acts to further their understanding. Magic can be difficult to obtain in Ravenloft, so spellcasters seeking quick roads to power turn to such sources as liches, fiends, or evil artifacts to satisfy their longing. Even spellcasters who avoid the temptations of evil must often make great personal sacrifices to further their arcane knowledge. Spellcasters in Ravenloft tend to be obsessed at best and wicked at worst, and these tendencies color magic as a whole.

The Fear of Magic: The rarity and darker tone of magic in Ravenloft combine to make it something alien and unknown. Although most of the people of Ravenloft will never encounter magic themselves, this does not keep them from fearing its influence. Anyone known to be a wizard or sorcerer in Ravenloft should expect to encounter suspicion, fear, and perhaps even hatred from those encountered.





Because of this fear, most spellcasters keep their abilities hidden as best they can.

Exploration

Adventure stories often center around journeys. The world is usually wide and open, and the characters often travel to new places with every adventure. Ravenloft is a much smaller world than that of most fantasy settings, and freedom of movement within it is much more restrictive, but the Land of Mists still abounds with plenty of opportunities for quests and exploration.

Shifting Terrain: One of the hallmarks of the Ravenloft world is the malleability of the terrain. The world is an immense construct, and its makers, the Dark Powers, can reshape and rearrange the components as they see fit. Even those parts that are relatively stable, such as the Core, are given to small fluctuations in dimension and geography. As a result, Ravenloft always provides new opportunities for exploration and discovery, as what is there today may be overtaken by something new tomorrow.

Unexpected Journeys: The Mists of Ravenloft paradoxically provide both a barrier and an aid to travel. They surround the Core, clusters, and Islands of Terror, providing a daunting obstacle to would-be explorers, yet those who brave their roiling tendrils can find themselves emerging in unheard and undreamt of lands. Furthermore, the animated nature of the Mists means that adventurers might find themselves exploring new regions without even intending to! The Mists can rise up anywhere, anytime, and where one will end up when they recede once more is anyone's guess.

Exotic Locales: The nature of Ravenloft is such that domains of widely differing geography and culture can be found in relatively close proximity to each other. Even the Core, with mostly European geography and inhabitants, has a few areas that defy normal classification. The shifting seas of the Core also provide unique opportunities for adventures. Beyond the Core, each cluster and island provides a wholly new experience for adventurers. The Land of Mists may be limited in size, but it is nearly infinite in scope.

Fantasy as a Tool

As can be seen above, fantastic elements must often be moderated when added to a Gothic setting. However, fantastic elements can, if used properly, greatly enhance the opportunities for Gothic storytelling.

Some examples of how to use fantastic elements to enhance the Gothic are given below.

The Inexplicable: Almost all Gothic tales contain elements that defy conventional explanation. How a vampire or a ghost can exist is a question never answered in a Gothic story. *That* they exist is what matters, and the impossibility of explaining them only adds to the horror of their existence. Gothic fantasy emphasizes the inexplicable to an even greater degree. In a land where magic is possible, the world floats in a sea of mists, and shadowy, godlike figures can bend the rules of the world on a whim, anything can happen. What matters in Ravenloft is not whether events are logical, but whether they are effective in telling a story and crafting a horrific atmosphere. Imagine a group of adventurers entering a noisy, crowded tavern. They sit down at a table and talk quietly among themselves, waiting for the barmaid to serve them. A few moments later, they suddenly notice how quiet the tavern has become and look around, only to find that everyone has disappeared. Not only are the people gone, they see no sign that anyone has been there for days. Were they an illusion? Ghosts? Were they spirited away by a powerful entity? Were the adventurers themselves whisked away? The knowledge that the world does not obey any unalterable rules can make Gothic fantasy adventuring that much more terrifying.

The Inhuman: A common element of fantasy settings is the existence of a variety of intelligent humanoid races, each with its own cultures and personalities. This state of affairs provides Gothic storytellers with a unique environment in which to emphasize the isolation of being trapped in an alien society. The races of Ravenloft are far more insular and distrustful of outsiders than those of other worlds, and when the adventurers find themselves immersed in a culture where the people not only sound and act very differently but look and think very differently, their anxiety and loneliness should be that much greater.

The Invasive: Magic can affect people in very intimate, unsettling ways. It can take over your mind, weaken your body, and twist your shape into something altogether inhuman. That someone can control you in such powerful ways should be frightening to even think about, and much, much more frightening to actually witness . . .





Chapter Six

The World of Ravenloft

The world of Ravenloft is much like our own, at least in the basic ways. People awaken in the morning, work for their wage, return home to be with their families and enjoy some diversions, sleep soundly during the night and awaken again the next morning. Despite appearances, it is not a world overwhelmed by countless horrors. The horrors exist, but the average persons are unaffected by them. If they were, they would hardly be considered as horrifying. It is the relative normality of daily life in Ravenloft that makes the abnormal seem so terrifying, and the desire to return to normality often provides heroes with motivation to fight the darkness.

The Natural World

Ravenloft is a beautiful land. The forests are lush and gorgeous. The sky is a brilliant, unspoiled blue. The mountains are awe inspiring in their simple majesty. The rivers are clean and refreshing, and the air is crisp and sweet. Ravenloft is a land worth living in. It is a land worth fighting for. Don't surrender it to the night.

Relationships

Just as valuable as the land itself are the people within it. Yes, many of them are ignorant and cowardly, but just as many are brave and helpful. Communities in Ravenloft are often close and dedicated to each other. They are largely good people who deserve a world better than the one they have no choice but to live in. Player characters should have the opportunity to forge true friendships and meaningful romances, because it is in these relationships that heroes find strength to fight on.

Heroism in Ravenloft

Why deny it: being a hero in Ravenloft is hard. The entire world seems focused on empowering evil and hampering goodness. Leading a life of heroism is leading a life of difficulty. This section focuses on the unique struggles heroes in Ravenloft face.

Purity

Heroes in Ravenloft walk a dangerous road. Fighting evil requires encountering evil, and evil always seeks to gain sway over those it encounters. Villainy will take every opportunity to foment doubt and weaken the resolve of heroes, and those who would stay heroes must fight to keep their hearts pure and their minds focused.

Would-be heroes in Ravenloft would also do well to keep the proper motivations in mind. A good deed done with selfish motivation is not a good deed done, and eventually such duplicity will come back to haunt the "hero." Remember, in Ravenloft everyone reaps what he sows eventually.

Sacrifice

Being a hero in Ravenloft means making hard choices. What do you do when a friend is infected with lycanthropy? Or when a lover is made the undead slave of a vampire lord? Do you seek out a cure that may not exist, though it means allowing another monster to walk the night in the meantime? Or do you destroy the victim, foregoing any hope or possibility of saving innocent lives? Hard decisions are plentiful in the Land of Mists, and it takes a strong will to withstand having to make them.

Determination

Gothic adventurers should always expect one more monster to slay. Evil is too primal to be eradicated, and thus a hero's struggle never ends, except in death or surrender. Of the two possibilities, surrender certainly seems more attractive. Why continue to fight when evil remains as powerful as ever? What does removing a stone from a mountain really accomplish?

A true hero in Ravenloft recognizes that heroism is not one long war to be won or lost. It is a series of many wars, each as important as the one before or the one following. Each victory means another life saved, another dark corner of the world illuminated. These small victories mean something, and the will to fight on means something, too. Evil may be impossible to destroy, but it could certainly be stronger than it is now.

Emerging from the Crucible

For all the wickedness it contains, Ravenloft serves one undeniably good purpose: it forges some of the greatest heroes that have ever breathed. Rudolph van Richten is the finest example. He began life as a physically and spiritually weak man, living primarily for his own comfort and that of his immediate family. He ended his life as the greatest hero the Land of Mists had ever seen, an icon of strength and resolve who sacrificed everything for the well-being of others. The names of Ravenloft's other heroes may not loom as large, but the example they offer shines just as brightly.





Villainy in Ravenloft

Just as Ravenloft contains some of the greatest heroes ever known, so too does it contain some of the blackest villains. Ravenloft's villains are not ciphers, nor are they caricatures of villainy. They are fully realized characters, and in this lies their appeal.

Fatal Flaws

While heroes are often defined by their strengths, villains are usually defined by their flaws. Villains are villains precisely because they have one or more flaws in their being that cannot be overcome. These fatal flaws drive and shape the villain, determining who he is and what he does. Whenever portraying a villain, the DM should keep the villain's flaws in mind and run the character accordingly.

The Heroes Reflected

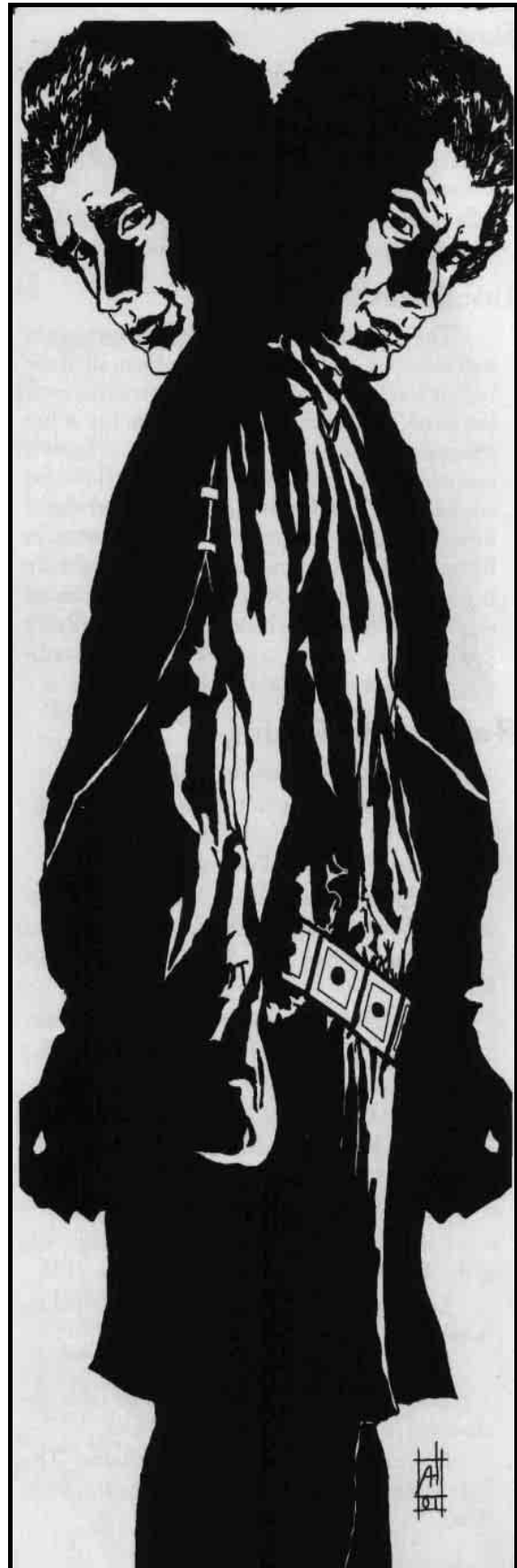
Heroes should see themselves in the villains they face. A villain should have motivations and methods that mirror those of one or more of the heroes. Few heroes can imagine anything quite as horrifying as a villain who makes the heroine think to herself, "That could have been me ... and it still could be."

The villain should recognize these common bonds as readily as the heroine. The villain might grow to hate the heroine all the more for remaining pure where the villain has faltered, or he might relish the opportunity to bring his same mistakes out in another, reinforcing the "superiority" of the path he has chosen.

Dynamism

Villains in Ravenloft should not be static characters. They should live and breathe just as much as the player characters do. A villain in Ravenloft should have a detailed background, motivation, behaviors, and methods. They should be individuals in their own right.

Just as the heroes change and grow, so must the villains. Villains should learn from their mistakes and try new ideas when the old ones fail. A villain who never changes and never improves is a boring villain who will quickly be caught up to and surpassed by the heroes.





Chapter Six

Power

Villains in Ravenloft act from a position of strength. It need not be purely physical strength; a villain with great wealth or lofty status can command power that far outstrips his physical abilities. Whatever the nature of the villain's power, the villain should wield enough of it to pose a serious challenge to an entire group of heroes.

Insidiousness

The wicked of Ravenloft know many ways to hurt someone, and a villain will use them all. If the hero is too strong to overcome physically, attack her mind. Drain her finances. Deprive her of her possessions. Destroy her home. If none of these is possible, go after her family or friends. If these too are guarded, attack total innocents until she is forced to come out into the open. Villains in Ravenloft are often monsters to the core, and there is no act so evil that it is beyond them. Heroes should usually have a chance to thwart a villain's machinations, but the very attempts should reinforce just how diabolical the villain can be.

Recommended Reading

- Bronte, Emily. *Wuthering Heights*.
Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan. Selected tales, including "The Hound of the Baskervilles."
Endore, Guy. *The Werewolf of Paris*.
Hodgson, William Hope. Selected tales, including *Carnacki the Ghost Finder*.
Howard, Robert E. *The Savage Tales of Solomon Kane*.
Hugo, Victor. *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*.
Jackson, Shirley. *The Haunting of Hill House* and "The Lottery."
Jacobs, W. W. "The Monkey's Paw."
James, Henry. Selected tales, including *The Turn of the Screw*.
James, M. R. *Ghost Stories of an Antiquary*.
King, Stephen. Selected tales, including *Cycle of the Werewolf*, *The Dark Half*, and *Salem's Lot*.
Le Fanu, J. Sheridan. Selected tales, including "Carmilla" and "Green Tea."
Leroux, Gaston. *Phantom of the Opera*.
Lewis, Matthew Gregory. Selected tales, including *The Castle Spectre* and *The Monk*.
Lovecraft, H. P. Selected tales, including "The Rats in the Walls" and *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*.

Maturin, Charles. Melmoth *the Wanderer*.
Poe, Edgar Allan. Selected works, including "The Fall of the House of Usher" and "The Raven."

Polidori, John. "The Vampyre."

Radcliffe, Ann. *The Mysteries of Udolpho*.

Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*.

Stevenson, Robert Lewis. Selected tales, including "The Body Snatcher" and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

Stoker, Bram. Selected tales, including "The Judge's House," *Dracula*, and *The Jewel of Seven Stars*.

Walpole, Horace. *The Castle of Otranto*.

Wells, H. G. *The Invisible Man* and *The Island of Dr. Moreau*.

Wilde, Oscar. *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

Yarbro, Chelsea Quinn. *The Godforsaken*.

Recommended Viewing

- An American Werewolf in London* (1981)
Black Sunday (1960)
Blade (1998)
The Blair Witch Project (1999)
Bram Stoker's Dracula (1992)
The Bride of Frankenstein (1935)
Cat People (1942)
The Company of Wolves (1984)
The Curse of Frankenstein (1957)
Curse of the Demon (1957)
Curse of the Werewolf (1961)
Dracula (1931)
The Exorcist (1973)
The Fearless Vampire Killers (1967)
Frankenstein (1931)
Freaks (1932)
The Frighteners (1996)
The Haunting (1963)
The Horror of Dracula (1958)
The Howling (1981)
I Walked with a Zombie (1943)
Ladyhawke (1985)
The Mummy (1932 and 1999 versions)
The Name of the Rose (1986)
Night of the Living Dead (1968)
Nosferatu (1922)
The Shining (1980)
Sleepy Hollow (1999)
The Wolf Man (1941)





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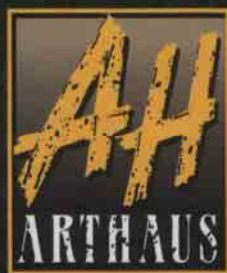


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