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THE RAVENS OF DESPAIR

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THE RAVENS OF DESPAIR

There are some individuals in this universe who follow fear and trouble. They are drawn to it like a magnet, ending up time and time again in places rife with threats and danger, full of enemies at work or monsters at large. They arrive in the nick of time, when all seems darkest.

Then there are others, in this wide, nigh-infinite universe, who seem to follow sorrow. They are drawn to heartbreak and defeat. They lurk in the shadows of the darkest of days and the worst of nights. They arrive, and bring the darkness with them. So hungry are they for sadness that they are called the Ravens of Despair.

They are ancient and they are everywhere but they remain relatively unknown because, like so many things in this universe, they are very good at staying hidden. So they have become nothing more than legend, a dark fairytale, and only those beings as old or as well-travelled as Time Lords have an inkling that they are real. Even fewer know just how dangerous they can be.

HISTORY

The Ravens are old. Legends of them stretch back to when even the Time Lords were young. But they in turn were created by an even more ancient species, the Alturons.

The Alturons originated in another dimension, one composed entirely of psychic energy. They themselves were also composed of nothing more than thought, and that being their nature, sought to master and control all such things, removing all chaotic and uncontrolled thoughts from their dimension.

They encountered our universe when it was relatively young, and found it entirely unsatisfying – or aesthetically displeasing, translations vary. Even back in the first days, our reality was full of war and strife, chaos and confusion, pain and suffering. Quickly, the Alturons determined that the cause of all these problems were negative emotions – hate, fear, pain and sorrow. Correcting the universe, then, was simply a matter of removing all the fear, anger and sadness from the inhabitants.

They couldn't do this by themselves. Lacking any physical form, they found it difficult to interact with the organic creatures of our universe. To overcome this, they made servant species, creatures built to carry out their will. These creatures took different forms to better match their purpose, each designed to devour a particular emotion for their own sustenance. They were intended to spread across the universe, feeding like locusts, until all the negative emotions were purged.

There was, however, a fatal flaw in their design, due to the Alturon's imperfect understanding of our universe. Just as a leech will cause more blood to flow than it can ever fit in its stomach, these "pathophages" caused their victims to experience the emotion being drained from them, at terrible extremes. So although they drew strength and sustenance from the emotions they drained, they completely failed to reduce their prevalence. Instead, they increased them.





The Alturons did not notice, however. They had already returned to their universe, assured in the knowledge that ours would soon be perfected by their handiwork. They have not been seen since. Some ponder if perhaps the pathophages made it into the Alturons' dimension and devoured their masters. Others believe the Alturons may still be alive, and if they should return, could be made to stop their mad creations. Thankfully, most of the hungry creatures soon destroyed themselves.

The pathophages that devoured fear and hate were drawn to places of great war and destruction, and soon made those places even worse. Enormous galactic wars broke out in their presence. In the destruction, almost all of the pathophages were destroyed or, left with nothing but corpses to feed upon, and starved to death.

There was one species that did not die off so quickly. The creatures that drained sorrow endured because sorrow endures. Many humanoids find sadness comfortable: too familiar to fear, too safe to escape. Sadness can hide deep in the psyche for decades, slowly draining the joy and will from its victims, yet sustaining them just enough to go on. The Ravens do much the same, patiently feeding in the shadows for years upon years. They have spread across the

universe, hiding in the unbound misery they find in so many, slowly destroying their host and everything around them.

Just like the other pathophages they can overfeed and destroy their food source, but they have learnt to compensate for that, and even gain strength in their numbers. Some have formed large colonies, creating enormous ships to help them travel across the stars. These great grey "Rookeries" can house thousands of Ravens, perhaps even millions, producing enough sorrow to sink entire worlds into despair and provide the parasites with food for centuries. Eventually even the largest civilisation will run dry or destroy itself to end its misery, and the creatures will move on once more.

As they moved across the universe, legends of the Ravens and their great ships spread, and their appearance has become a harbinger of destruction and loss. This ensures that the Ravens have something ready to feed on wherever they travelled. So they have only grown in number over the aeons, and more and more planets and species have provided them with sustenance.

They have no name for themselves, claim no territory and sing no songs of victory, so they are not known as one of the great enemies of the universe. They



have no terrible empire or ever-expanding borders, so they cannot easily be contained or destroyed. They are indeed like locusts: they roam at random, feed at will, and leave nothing but emptiness in their wake.

It's possible that the Mind Parasite the Third Doctor encountered in Strangmoor Prison was one of the last of the creatures the Alturons built to remove hate. How the Master found such a creature, and convinced it to work with him, remains a mystery (see *The Mind of Evil* in *The Third Doctor Sourcebook*).



NATURE & APPEARANCE

The nickname of “ravens” is poetic rather than descriptive. Although they do have long beak-like faces, they are humanoid in size and shape. They also share with ravens pitch-black colouring, although the Ravens of Despair have more folds than feathers. From behind, they could be mistaken for a man in a heavy dark robe and strange hat. On a dark night in medieval Europe, their beaks might even cause them to be mistaken for a plague doctor, in his leather uniform and long-nosed pomander mask.

Nothing beneath their “cloak” or “mask” is visible. They have arm-like appendages, but these end in just more rustles of skin and feather, no hands nor talons extending beyond. Most of the time, they keep their wings close to their body, almost invisible, only using them to grapple prey and hold them still for feeding.

They move at a steady walking pace, but without a gait or footfalls. They make no noise. They can speak if needed, but the voice sounds more like a distant echo rising up from some deep channel far below. Most of the time they find they need to do nothing but stand and wait. They are so still and unresponsive it is unnerving and unnatural, and few can spend long in their presence without being shaken by it.

Those brave or foolish enough to look closer, into the blackness under the mask will discover the truth of the Ravens. Although they have a solid presence, and their arms are easily strong enough to knock down a large opponent or hold a strong prisoner, there is nothing physical inside their shell. Instead, they are filled with a swirling matrix of dark neural energy. This is the same kind of energy used to create Psychic Paper and similar gadgets. Just as Psychic Paper reads the target's mind, selects the appropriate information and projects what they expect to see, the neural energy within each Raven seeks out the saddest feelings, worries and memories in its target and pulls them to the forefront. In the process, the Raven gains energy, feeding on its target's sadness. The victim is not aware of any attack, they only feel suddenly overcome with sad thoughts and memories, and the terrible emotions associated with them. Of course, if the target was already suffering grief or torment, the effect of a Raven will go unnoticed.

A single attack does no little permanent damage, but few minds are strong enough to withstand a prolonged barrage. As the sorrow endures, the target soon becomes unable to imagine anything beyond their despair. They become withdrawn and inactive, numb to sensation and seeking no comfort or distraction. Some escape into fantasy reverie or full madness. Many die, whether by taking violent action against themselves, or losing any sense of self-preservation in a dangerous world, or simply by losing all interest even in the basic needs of daily life, such as food, sleep and exercise. Others manage to cling on but may as well be dead, existing without any sense of life, hope or meaning. If the Raven's feeding is ended, this damage can be healed, but only over much time.

In other cases – after several weeks of feeding, for the average mind – the sad memories are repressed or even destroyed along with the emotions behind them. On the surface, this can be a good thing: the target forgets his sorrows and





feels rejuvenated. However, this mental excision is unsafe and unstable; the total loss of memories or their later resurfacing can cause terrible confusion and damage, even driving the victim insane.

Although composed mostly of energy, the “Ravens” are still a kind of living creature, resembling very much the earth leech. Their “robes” are a crystalized exoskeleton supporting their energy forms, and their beak-like mask conceal feeding tendrils. Whether their final shape was chosen as deliberate camouflage or was simply a bizarre coincidence is unknown.

Their “cloth” shells are extruded much like spiders weave silk, and can be used to create almost any material or structure around the Raven. By combining their efforts, they are able to weave ‘rookeries’ or cathedrals of enormous size, and even fit such edifices to travel through space. Such efforts do require great time and energy, however, and destroying these structures will leave the inhabitants scattered and weakened.

Killing a Raven itself is difficult. They have a tiny organic brain-like organ suspended in the centre of their neural matrix, but both their robes and the energy itself are extremely resistant to damage. A sufficiently large energy blast of the right kind at the right wavelength could cancel out their matrix, allowing their brain to be attacked and destroyed, but there are no stories of this being successful. They need nothing but emotion to live, so cannot be choked in the vacuum of space or crushed by the pressure of deep water. Fire or explosives may burn away their robes, but the energy matrix would be unharmed.

Their greatest defence mechanism however is their ability to become unseen. When necessary, they can use their psychic abilities to project an image of whatever the target expects to see. Like Psychic Paper, this ability does not work on those with psychic training, and theoretically could also be countermanded by an energy override. Of course, before you can make a Raven visible, you have to know it is there first.

There are ways to detect the presence of the Raven, if an observer knows what to look for. Children are few where the Ravens walk, as children tend to dispel despair easily, and those without hope rarely wish to create a new generation to suffer with them. Likewise, those trapped in despair stop creating and

inventing, so their civilisations stagnate and their technology falls apart. Sadness prefers to dwell in shadows and silence, so those may also indicate the presence of the Ravens.

GETTING RESOLVE BACK

So, you’re surrounded by black-robed emotion-eating monsters from the dawn of time. That’s depressing.

You may as well give up now. Let them win. There are too many of them, you don’t have a hope. Right?

Or maybe you want to fight back and get your Resolve back. There are two ways to do that.

Firstly, you can spend a Story Point and get points back with the *It Was Just A Scratch* rule (see the usual rules for spending Story Points in the *Doctor Who: Adventure in Time and Space* rules).

Alternatively, someone else can give you a pep talk with Convince, against a Difficulty of 12 + your Ingenuity. If successful, that gives you back 1, 2 or 3 points of lost Resolve. Both players should roleplay this out.

GOALS

The Ravens have just one over-arching, instinctual goal: to feed, and by feeding, consume all the sorrow in the universe. This is perhaps not an achievable aim; some would say that the capacity for sorrow of intelligent creatures may be infinite, and it is certainly true that the Ravens increase suffering wherever they go, at least until their victim kills themselves.

It is irrelevant to Ravens that their goal is illogical or impossible; they are driven by their programming and their primitive minds are consumed by their singular purpose. This makes them difficult to distract or deter, they are not known to negotiate and cannot be intimidated. However, their simple-mindedness also makes them easy to control: if offered a greater source of food, for example, they will typically leave a lesser one alone. If hungry enough, they may even take unnecessary risks or act irrationally. However, their hunger takes millennia to build, and they can lie dormant for centuries if need be.



RAVENS OF DESPAIR

AWARENESS	2	PRESENCE	3
COORDINATION	2	RESOLVE	6
INGENUITY	2	STRENGTH	4

SKILLS

Knowledge 3, Fighting 3, Subterfuge 4.

TRAITS

Alien

Alien Senses: The Ravens can instinctively detect sadness and despair from even a great distance. They gain +4 to Awareness related rolls when their target is suffering these emotions.

Armour: Although their robes appear to be nothing but cloth, the thickly woven crystals are highly resistant to damage, reducing any taken by 5.

Environmental: As they are little more than energy and crystals, the Ravens can survive the vacuum of space and similar harsh environments.

Face in the Crowd: Even without directly using their Hypnosis abilities, the Ravens can easily pass without notice, because most humanoids try not to see the things that make them sad. They gain +2 to Subterfuge rolls for sneaking or hiding.

Hypnosis: Ravens can hypnotise their victims. They don't need to do or say anything – they just need to be nearby and have time to work their evil.

Despair Blast: The Ravens can force a target to remember or even re-experience their saddest memories. They cannot induce any other state or action. The Ravens use Resolve + Presence for this roll, and victims usually resist with Resolve + Presence or Resolve + Strength.

If the attack is successful, the victim suffers Resolve damage, using the Raven's Ingenuity as the base damage. (So, a Good Success would drain 2 points of Resolve, a Fantastic Success would suck away 3 and so on).

A victim reduced to 0 Resolve is temporarily incapacitated with strong emotion. If the Raven

keeps attacking, it can drain Ingenuity and Strength to kill its victim with sheer despair, but they prefer not to kill in this fashion. It's the Raven equivalent of bolting your dinner and feeling sick afterwards.

Despair Aura: The presence of Ravens evokes negative, sorrowful emotions in those nearby. The more Ravens, the bigger the field. If you're in the Aura of a Raven, then every time you get a 'Yes, But' or 'No, And' result on a skill roll, you're drained of a point of Resolve. When Resolve runs out, the Ravens target Ingenuity and then Strength, as above.

For example, an invisible Rookery shows up at a space station orbiting Mars. When Engineer First Class Miri tries to fix the malfunctioning solar array, she gets a 'Yes, But' result, and loses a point of Resolve. She can't help but think that she's so far away from home, and misses her family. It's enough to make her cry – and the Ravens feast on her tears.

Several weeks later, the effect of the Aura has grown worse. Miri's lost all her Resolve and most of her Ingenuity. She's stumbling through the decaying station, half-mad and in the pits of black despair. Her reduced Attributes means she's more likely to fail any rolls she makes, and each failed roll risks losing more Ingenuity or Strength.

Psychic: The Ravens can read minds and scan memories for sadness and woe. With a successful Resolve + Ingenuity roll, they gain all knowledge their target has of these events.

Weakness: The Ravens are not stupid but they are extremely simplistic creatures, built to simply find sorrow and devour it, and to do so with an obsessive compulsion that cares about little else, even self preservation. This can make them easier to trick or outwit, like luring ants to honey.

TECH LEVEL: 6 **STORY POINTS:** 1-3

Abbots: For these higher-order Ravens, raise Ingenuity to 4 and Resolve to 7, remove the Weakness Trait, and add 3 Story Points.

Cardinals: As for Abbots, but raise Ingenuity to 6 and Resolve to 8 and add 3 more Story Points (so 7-10 in total).



Although their goals are simplistic, they can make plans. Just as they can weave large, complex cathedral-ships, they can postulate great webs of schemes and traps to ensure a large or long-term food source. Their enormous lifespan also allows them to operate such schemes over vast time frames, so that only the equally long-lived (or time travellers) can even see their traps being sprung. The Ravens have long learnt that their slow pace helps them survive, and never do anything quickly, even strike. They can wait patiently for aeons for the right moment – the right war, the right apocalypse, the right disaster – that will allow them to fully infiltrate and incapacitate a people or a species, so they can suck them dry unseen and undisturbed.

THE RAVENS ON EARTH

When the Black Plague swept across Europe and killed one third of the population, there were stories told in the far north of black-robed monks who would visit a village days after the first appearance of the disease, like crows lighting on a battlefield. The legends said that if the monks did not come, the fever would pass with only a few casualties, whereas the sight of the monks meant God had sent his servants to count the dead as they fell, and the villagers would die to the last man. These may have been the Ravens of Despair, coming out of hiding en-masse only when the plague provided such ripe pickings of grief. The Raven's masks are very similar to the beaked plague-doctor masks that were worn after the 15th century. No doubt some physicians copied the garb of the monks... and maybe there were still Ravens on Earth back then, blending in with the other doctors.

The Ravens are not given to destruction. Although most of their prey lose their mental or physical health when drained, if not their lives when they lack the will to go on, the Ravens do not deliberately kill if they can help it. In part this is a sensible urge to protect and nurture their food source, but it more stems from their original purpose of creating a more ordered universe. Mass destruction or great shows of force are not in their nature, even though such things may cause great sorrow. They prefer more subtle, more insidious disasters to work upon their prey.

ALLIES

The Ravens have no concern for other races except as potential food, so they almost never make explicit alliances. However, like remora fish, they will follow other species in order to find vulnerable prey.. They avoid species bent solely on destruction like the Daleks, for they rarely leave anything behind but ashes. Those who enslave, dominate or torture, like the Sycorax or the Sontarans, however, may have some Ravens in tow as they spread their evil presence.

The Ravens have a curious relationship with the Cybermen. In their aim to convert all species into cybernetic creatures, the Cybermen share the Ravens' goal of removing all emotion from the universe. However, the two cannot hunt in the same ground, as cyber creatures offer no sustenance. For similar reasons, the Ravens avoid Roboforms, Autons and other unemotional races.



Just as the Ravens use some species to help them feed, other species and individuals have been known to use the Ravens to aid their own plans. A planet gripped by despair is a planet that will be unwilling or unprepared to defend itself from attack. This is another reason why the Ravens have learned to be so secretive: their detection can lead to others swarming in to destroy their food source before they have eaten their fill.



Others have formed a more symbiotic relationship with the Ravens. One notable example occurred in the 21st century on Earth. An enterprising corporation called CareLess Industries opened a health and relaxation holiday retreat on the coast of Spain, promising a miracle cure for the stressed and anxious. Their seemingly phenomenal success attracted crowds of customers, but the effect was due to the resort being built on top of an ancient medieval tower, the foundations of which still housed a small cadre of Ravens. They were walled in by Knights Templar in the early 14th century, but were still alive and still hungry some seven hundred years later. The Ravens' sorrow-cleansing talents made CareLess Industries quite wealthy until they gained enough strength to escape.

ENEMIES

All those with a mind to lose have a reason to hate the Ravens but there are a few that are especially devoted to their destruction. The Daleks for example, know of the Ravens, and have found that their powerful psychic attack can weaken even the perfect hatred which is so central to the Dalek mind. They do not fear the Ravens, but will seek to destroy them before other targets.

There is an order of Catkind Nuns called the Sisters of Regret that suffered terribly at the hands of the Ravens. Offering their services as funeral directors and mourners, they based their entire faith around the purity of suffering. As such they were an easy target and almost their entire order was driven to insanity and suicide when the Ravens had finished feeding. Survivors, if there were any, or friends of the dead, have a special hatred for the Ravens.

Others have faced the Ravens and lived, but at a terrible price. During the diaspora of humankind in the 29th century, the Ravens found the lost and lonely humans on one of the nationarks to be easy prey. The spread of depression and despair across the ship did not go unnoticed however, and several scientists set about trying to stop it. One of them was the brilliant biochemist Reshanthi Gereh who developed a kind of vaccine, a virus that produced incredibly high levels of happiness in its subjects. Faced with the now almost entirely unmanned nationark's fatal collision course with a star, she released the virus into the population without testing it.

The results were catastrophic. The virus worked only too well, driving all exposed into a psychotic mania of endless laughter and revelry. However, this did drive the Ravens away, fleeing to their nearby Rookery and setting off to find easier prey. With her own last flickerings of sanity, Gereh discovered the true cause of the ship's malaise, and realised she now had the means of destroying this terrible enemy. She commandeered a shuttle and left her home, intent on spreading her "cure" across the universe, so it might be safe from the Ravens forever.

Although there is only one of her, she continues to produce supplies of her virus and attempts to "inoculate" whole planets, too insane to care that she dooms them to an equally horrific death of manic carelessness.

Finally, the Alturons would be distressed to find out that their creations designed to remove all suffering were in fact causing it. Of course the Alturons are believed to be long dead, and even if they were alive, they rarely come to our dimension. Should one be



found, however, and be shown concrete proof that their creations were faulty, they could be convinced to work against the Ravens.

ORGANISATION

The Ravens have no fixed structure: they were built to be wandering grazers, not social creatures. However, just as they recognise the value of more elaborate plans, they can adapt to following a leader when it serves their purpose. If a hundred or more Ravens are gathered in one place there is a chance that one of them will spontaneously evolve into a superior form. Their black robes are shed and replaced with those of a burnt orange colour. Beneath the dark hood, the energy matrix vibrates at a higher frequency and the organic brain doubles in size. The other Ravens instinctively recognise the new individual as their leader and defer to him in all things. If they need to give these higher ranking creatures a name to others, they refer to them as “the Abbot”.

Abbots are stronger and faster than their subordinates, as well as smarter, and can pull memories much quicker, and break through the defences of even a shielded or highly complex mind. What makes the Abbots most dangerous however, is their ability to think and plan. Ravens are patient and unyielding but their lack of ability for complex thought means they can be outwitted or distracted, and only their infinite patience allows their plans to go unobserved. Abbots have no such weakness. If a Raven encounters something it cannot understand, it will send for an Abbot if one is present in the group. Such a delay can provide an opportunity to escape.

Sometimes, such as on their massive spaceship-cathedrals, there can be thousands of Ravens in a single place. If there are a sufficient number of Abbots gathered in such close proximity, a second evolution may take place. One of the Abbots may evolve into a red-robed Cardinal. These creatures are sufficiently intelligent that even a Time Lord might find a conversation with them worthwhile. They are capable of organising a huge population of Ravens towards elaborate and truly vast goals. What’s more, they can think expansively and even creatively about the Ravens’ existence and purpose.

It is possible that a particularly long-lived Cardinal could subvert the Ravens to his own unique purpose, something not at all resembling their current design. It might

even be possible for a particularly charismatic and strong-willed individual to subvert or dominate the decisions of a Cardinal, and drive the Ravens to some even darker purpose – or perhaps, try to divert them to doing good, if such a thing could be arranged. Only a truly amazing individual could accomplish such an inversion, however.

HABITAT

Although they are sometimes called Cathedrals of Woe, the similarities between the giant Rookery-vessels of the Ravens and actual churches are few. The Ravens’ homes feature reaching spires, each one riven with dim stone-like corridors lit by flickering torchlight but there the similarities end. Instead of a single spire, the “Cathedrals” are in fact a conglomeration of hundreds or thousands of them, shooting out at all angles. This betrays their origin: they are crystalline growths, not unlike some earth silicates and precious stones.

Just like the “robe” shells of the Ravens, the Cathedrals are woven out of their energy matrix. Unlike earth crystals, they do not shine, and the great ships are as black as the Ravens’ robes.

Scattered across the surface are doors and windows like black mouths in a warren. Not all of them lead somewhere. The Ravens appear humanoid, intelligent and organised, but ultimately they are little more than termites, and their Cathedrals are their mounds. The pathways within wind seemingly at random in an endless labyrinth, although the Ravens can navigate with ease. Intelligent creatures with good scanning technology (and something heavy or dangerous to do the demolition) may find they can move a lot faster by going through the walls.

If they cannot do so, they may never escape the Byzantine mazes and hallways of the structure – and may be driven mad before they do. That would be defence enough alone, but there are also many prisons deep within the structure. These cells have no numbers and are as randomly scattered as the rest of the rooms, and indeed are almost identical to the tiny alcoves in which the Ravens rest while the ship travels through space. As mentioned, the Ravens have little will to kill, but they have a poor understanding of the needs of living creatures. At best, a prisoner can expect enough food and water to stay alive. At worst, they will be left forgotten to starve in a ten-foot square pitch-black vault.



Cathedrals are low-powered vessels, generally incapable of high speed or great force. They do not travel through hyperspace or any of the other ways commonly used to go faster than that boringly slow speed of light, and have no weapons besides the Ravens living within. They can however harness the energy of the Ravens to perform a similar disappearing act as the Ravens do as individuals. This allows the massive ships to hang close to target plans yet remain unobserved, even for centuries. It is possible that the structures that harness this gift of the Ravens could be used to psychically project other ideas, if a particularly brilliant mind had the time and access to reconfigure it.

Although the Ravens would seem to have no desire to stay still, there are stories of a Rook World, a gigantic conglomeration of Rookeries woven together into a world able to house billions of Ravens. Presumably anyone exploring such a world or even orbiting it would be instantly overwhelmed by the aura of collective grief, and be never heard from again.



ADVENTURE IDEAS

Below are three adventure outlines, followed by a two-part story arc, all involving the Ravens of Despair.

SUMMER HOLIDAY

The rich and famous of England are all talking about the same thing – the ultimate holiday rest-cure slash emotional detox resort. One visit to this amazing new clinic on the coast of Spain and the visitor comes back with a whole new lease on life. Addictions are gone, emotional baggage resolved, psychological wounds healed and peace made with the argumentative ex-spouses. It sounds too good to be true, but one of the characters has won a free trip and they soon find that simply sleeping one night in the refurbished medieval castle leaves them feeling better than they ever have in years.

Of course, the resort is run by CareLess Industries and the cleansing effects are from the Ravens walled in down below. Soon everyone can hear the tap-tap-tap echoing through the brickwork – the sound of the Ravens chiselling through the stone. Curious characters soon stumble upon hidden passages and ancient Templar vaults, and may even inadvertently help the Ravens escape. Then the isolated castle suddenly starts turning into a death trap as the starving Ravens drive as many of the staff and visitors as possible into spirals of darkness and despair – sending the visitors straight back to their addictions and other bad habits.

Can the characters work out how to drive away the Ravens before they get taken hostage by a paranoid drug-crazed rockstar? There are clues in the ancient Templar documents to how they managed to wall up the Ravens in the first place, but that involved one knight sacrificing himself as bait for a trap...

- **Antagonists:** The Ravens, mentally damaged celebrities with no sense of consequences or morality, descendants of the ancient Templars intent on stopping the trap from being re-opened.
- **Action Scenes:** Fleeing from the Templar agents. Battling against the Ravens with whatever weapons are at hand (there may be some swords in the castle armoury, some celebrity bodyguards may have guns). Surviving in a hotel where more and more inhabitants are lost in despair or madness.

- **Problems:** The Ravens probably can't be killed and will need to be re-trapped deep below the castle. The celebrities, even if not depressed, will not like to be given orders by lowly time-travellers.
- **Continuing the Adventure:** The Templar documents refer to ancient diaries detailing a previous encounter with the Ravens, further back in time. Could there be more groups, waiting to escape their prisons? And if CareLess also found the documents, have they already set up operations at these places?

HARD TIME

The characters get a distress signal from the *S. S. Wormwood*, a vessel that turns out to be an ancient prison hulk. Once clearly the pride of some great time-faring police force of the far future, it is now falling apart. When they board they find the crew are gone or dead, and only some of the prisoners remain – and they are in danger as the ship's life support is running out. It would save power and keep everyone alive if the security systems were deactivated. That would be fine for the minor criminals, but whoever built the ship had managed to capture some of the greatest criminals in the universe. Individuals as dangerous as the Master, Davros and the Rani are imprisoned in the lower decks, as indeed are some of the characters' greatest personal nemeses. Indeed, it was one of them who figured out how to broadcast a distress signal. Said enemy is even willing to forget old "arguments" if they'll help him escape. He is the only one who knows the truth about the ship, and how to fix some of the systems, after all. Well, him and a few others he might need for assistance.

He's desperate enough to be honest about this too, because the true danger of the *Wormwood* is that their last arrest was of a few dozen Ravens. Prisoners are natural sources of despair, especially those who have been so thoroughly foiled by the likes of the Doctor or his allies. Crushed under the weight of their failure, they were easy prey to the Ravens and even if their cell doors open, few, if any, will have the will to escape. Can they leave the worst villains in the universe to die in the soon-to-collapse spaceship, taking with them hundreds of much more innocent men? Or can they team up with their worst enemies to find a way to lock down the Ravens, restart the ship and ensure that evil lives to fight another day?



- **Antagonists:** The Ravens, a rogue's gallery of legendary villains from across time
- **Action Scenes:** Racing across a disintegrating ship to repair it before it tears itself apart, altercations with the Ravens and the few remaining prisoners with a will to fight
- **Problems:** Finding a way to trust their enemies, at least long enough to get anything done
- **Continuing the Adventure:** Whoever built the ship and caught these villains must be a formidable force in time and space – so where are they, and do they want their ship back?

MOORNING DAY

The characters head to the year 5,000,000 to catch up with friends on New Earth and join in the annual celebration of the founding of New New York. However, instead of being full of revelry, the city



is composed and maudlin. Looking at the media or talking to people reveals that today is no longer Founding Day but Mourning Day, a time to remember and grieve for all those who lost their lives on all previous Earths before.

The media in particular is full of doom and gloom, as if the whole city is under a grey cloud it can't escape. The bad news is everywhere, because all the media is owned by a single station, with an enormous broadcast antenna – an antenna far too big for any regular television station.

In fact, the antenna is both a broadcaster and a receiver. It dominates the airwaves with its bad news to keep everyone feeling spiritually crushed, and then funnels all that sadness back into itself – then blasts it out into space. This is in the fervent hope that the Ravens will see the trail and swoop down on the city, unable to resist such potent sadness. The whole thing is a trap set by the last surviving member of the Sisters of Regret, intent on bringing the Ravens back to New Earth for her bloody revenge.

The Ravens she does attract, however, are being led by a cunning Abbot who spots the trap and hires some Judoon to go in first. Once the good sister is disarmed and captured, the Ravens set about turning the antenna's receiving capabilities into a weapon to drain the woe from every mind on the planet, an attack that will leave but a handful alive and even fewer sane.

If the characters can get past the Judoon, distract the Ravens and reconfigure the antenna, they could blast out a ray of joy that might drive the Ravens away – assuming they could also get everyone in New New York to be happy about something on TV. Anyone know any good jokes?

- **Antagonists:** A crazed catkind nun, the Ravens, some trigger-happy Judoon.
- **Action Scenes:** Breaking into the TV studio in the first place, fighting off the attacking Judoon, wrestling the Ravens while climbing up the side of a ten-mile high TV antenna.
- **Problems:** The Sister will make a great ally against the Ravens, but she's dedicated to a bloody revenge. Can they convince her not to kill, or will they let her loose and have to deal with the consequences?

- **Continuing the Adventure:** The broadcast has no doubt reached more than one species who might be curious to investigate. Meanwhile, many antisocial inhabitants of New New York will be interested to hear that their city has a device that can be used to kill millions.





THE CREST OF CORAZON

On a whim or a malfunction, the characters end up in Ecuador in 1530. This was the time that the northern Incan empire was divided in two between the two sons of the last king, and Atahualpa, king of northern Incan empire, set to work destroying his brother Huasca who ruled from Quito, the capital further south. Not long after his victory over Huasca, Atahualpa was killed by Spanish conquistadors...but this time, he might not be. After being captured by Atahualpa's men, the characters will discover that the new king has a strange new power.

After devouring the sacred mushrooms that grow on the side of the great volcano, Corazon, a shining haze appears around his head and he can inspire in his warriors an incredible frenzy of hatred – and a terrible fear in his enemies. He declares this power comes from a new god, Corazon himself, speaking to Atahualpa and telling him how to dominate the rest of the Incas and unite them to destroy the Spanish.

Corazon is no god but rather a lost and wandering Alturon. This creature rebelled against the Alturons' plan of controlling the emotions of our dimension, instead wishing to taste its greatest excesses. When Atahualpa stumbled on the hallucinatory mushrooms, the Alturon found his mind the greatest thing she had tasted: greed, envy, rage, megalomania, madness, mixed with impossible visions of a great and terrible apocalypse, with all life extinguished in the bloody tide of Atahualpa's obsidian axes. Rushing into his mind when he eats the substance, her energy form leaves a bright glowing crest and he in turn gains powerful psychic abilities, able to project his hatred into his allies, and fear into his enemies.

With both human and alien now addicted to the experience, the mushrooms are being spread across the Empire and the Alturon is drinking madness and bloodlust to excess. And the deeper it drinks, the more power and control it gains in this dimension. If things continue, it could easily control all the minds on earth.

The right frequency blast from a sonic screwdriver could drive Corazon out of Atahualpa, but it would need to be delivered at very close range, or be boosted by an enormous power source, something not easily found in 16th century South America. To have time to arrange one or the other, they'll need to convince the

conquistadors over the ridge to delay their attacks, or, ideally, to stop with the wholesale slaughter in general. Assuming of course, that won't change the time line...

- **Antagonists:** "Corazon", the rogue Alturon, Atahualpa, bloodthirsty Incan, and his entire Empire, the Spanish conquistadors
- **Action Scenes:** Being captured by the Incan warriors, escaping Atahualpa's warcamp, chasing down Corazon on the slopes of a boiling volcano
- **Problems:** Figuring out the nature of the crest, finding a way to separate the Alturon from its host, trying to broker detente between two deeply opposed and fanatically religious cultures
- **Things that may be tricky:** Finding a good guy in a terrible war – perhaps Atahualpa has a lieutenant who yearns for peace? Perhaps he has a counterpart among the Spanish?
- **Continuing the Adventure:** See *War and Grief* below.

WAR AND GRIEF

Corazon may have been driven away from his original hosts, but it is not going to give up. It finds just as much lust for blood and mad conquest in the minds of many of the conquistador generals, like Aguirre, the one they called "The Hungry Wolf" because he wished to devour all of South America. Tasting these minds renews Corazon's strength and in turn drives the conquistadors even more towards bloodshed and extermination, seeking nothing less than the total cleansing of the Americas in the name of their God.

Meanwhile Atahualpa's rage is not diminished, and he has regrouped his armies and inspired them as best he can without his mental gifts. In days, the fighting will begin anew and not stop until there is almost nothing left of the Incans but their stone temples.

Unsurprisingly, such imminent sorrow has attracted the attention of the Ravens themselves. Their robed agents walk amongst the villages that have already suffered, and a great Rookery hovers in space above, commanded by a powerful Cardinal. This Cardinal is smart enough to understand that the actions of Corazon will create enormous amounts of sadness,



the very thing the Ravens seek to obliterate. He could also be encouraged to use his agents and his ship to stop or slow the war, by making everyone become so sad they lack the will to fight, and also perhaps send word somehow to his makers about the rogue Alturon below.

To get all that to happen, however, the characters would need to escape the conquistadors, find their way back to their ship, get into space and then weave through the maze of a Cathedral of Woe to reach the Cardinal, all the while fighting off the sorrowful attacks of all the Ravens onboard.

- **Antagonists:** The entire army of Spanish conquistadors, a Rookery full of Ravens and a mad, enraged Alturon intend on ruling the world.
- **Action Scenes:** Escaping the conquistadors, setting up diversions to slow or prevent early battles or encounters, stealing the ship from whichever force has captured it, a desperate run to the centre of a Cathedral of Woe.
- **Problems:** Figuring out how to play the Alturon and the Ravens against each other, pondering the risk of damaging history
- **Continuing the Adventure:** With the aliens dispatched, history will go back to normal. Or will it? Perhaps the characters might like to try to lessen the purges of the conquistadors, and who knows what kind of future that might create, or what various time policing entities would have to say about it?

ALTURONS

AWARENESS	6	PRESENCE	1
COORDINATION	2	RESOLVE	6
INGENUITY	4	STRENGTH	-

Although strangers to our dimension and much diminished in power due to their incredible age, the Alturons still exist and may be encountered by the characters (see the adventures below for an example).

SKILLS

Convince 2, Knowledge 4, Science 6

TRAITS

Alien

Alien Appearance: The Alturons appear in our world as a haze of lights and flashing colours.

Environmental: As they barely even exist in our universe, the Alturons are mostly immune to anything our environment can produce.

Flight: The Alturons appear in our dimension as hovering balls of light and colour.

Hypnosis: Alturons dislike doing anything themselves but if they need to procure assistance or defend themselves, they can override a target's emotional state and replace it with one of their

choice. Due to the Alturon's restrained nature, however, this emotion will always be reserved and moderated. If the target is usually animated or passionate, this may provide a clue they have been hypnotised.

Immunity: Consisting of little more than psychic energy, the Alturons are immune to all physical weapons or effects.

Psychic: Although they can produce sound and language, the Alturons prefer to converse solely through emotion.

Telepathy

Vortex: Time moves differently in the Alturon's universe, and the refraction between theirs and ours allows them to move through time without the need of any device.

Weakness: Although they are beings of emotion, they shaped their own dimension to contain only ordered and restrained emotions. The wild and extreme emotions of some humanoids, especially humans, can cause them to become disoriented and afraid. This is the case even if the emotion is a positive one. If enough people were feeling a particularly strong emotion all at once, the effect could drive away an entire Alturon army.

TECH LEVEL: 12 **STORY POINTS:** 5-8