

The City of Graves

The Lands of GOW contain many wonders both strange and terrible. A survey of these sites include Asterion's Fortress on the archipelago ruled by the Seven Principalities, the ruined Cyclops city known as Bal-Petor south of Kesh and the haunted Sea of Trees in the nation of Okigawa. Among the strangest, however, is the place called the City of Graves.

Long years ago the City of Graves was a cemetery, constructed over time by a nation that fell, like most nations, into the dark well of history -- the people, their language, their homes vanished. All that was left of them was a vast, sprawling field of crypts, headstones, and mausoleums running up and down hills and even spanning a river. Trees grew up through graves and vines choked the marble porticos of death-chapels. Only a ghouls plaintive howl or a flowing spectral form infused the place with a semblance of habitation.

Then the Ainur nomads arrived. An Ainur shaman had years before proclaimed his people would find a home in a City of Graves. When the tribe came upon the cemetery they knew they had found their home. The marble slabs and posts made excellent walls for homes and helped reinforce the timber stockade the Ainur built to defend the settlement and corral their horses, cattle and goats. The surrounding land, abandoned for so long, was rich and fertile.

The ghouls attacks came several weeks later. Hands reached through the floors to snatch children, night-time strollers were ambushed and dismembered. The slaughter was horrific. With the aid of their shamans the fierce Ainur fought back and destroyed the monsters.

However, the Ainur shamans realized as long as their people lived in the cemetery the ghouls (an even greater undead) would hunt them. Prevailing upon the sense of self-preservation inherent in all creatures, the shamans worked an agreement with the cemetery's ghouls. The Ainur would be allowed to live in peace as long as criminals convicted of crimes punishable by death were fed to the ghouls along with enemies the Ainur captured in war. As a final item the Ainur also promised to bar their shamans from the city. The holy men would be allowed yearly visits to minister to the people but otherwise must live as hermits far out in the countryside.

To ensure the treaty held the ghouls (who seemed unusually intelligent and organized) formed a police corps designated as the Pale Hand. These creatures would patrol the cemetery for undead who broke the agreement.

This arrangement has lasted generations. The cemetery -- now metropolis -- appears on all maps of the Lands of GOW. Trade routes now stop at the place. Researchers and archaeologists find the cemetery a rich source of finds. Even so travelers are warned despite the curious balance between the living and the dead, the unattended foreigner still occasionally disappears when staying in the City of Graves.



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