

# TOMBS <sup>of the</sup> desolation



ROBERT J. SCHWALB



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# INTRODUCTION

Tales of the desert wastes known as the Desolation abound among the peoples who live along its borders. Many still recall the days when the undead first began their shuffling march south, their bony claws grasping the living to feed and to swell their numbers with what was left of their victims. The tide of death seemed without end—surely doom had come to the Empire.

Had it not been for the courage of the crusaders, those doughty folk who took up arms to safeguard the Empire from the undead host, the Northern Reach and the lands to the south would have fallen long ago. Now they guard the Desolation's borders against future incursions, vigilant in their defense of the innocent, watchful for the rotting horde's inevitable return.

The first of a series of setting expansions, the *Tombs of the Desolation*™ supplement offers a closer look at the world of Rûl and its inhabitants. This book zooms in on one of the continent's most dangerous regions, a wasteland littered with the wreckage of an ancient and wicked civilization, now infested with the animated remains of those vile people. Game Masters will find extensive detail about the region and its inhabitants, including story ideas, new creatures, and a challenging adventure. This supplement also expands player options, adding three new ancestries to those described in the *Shadow of the Demon Lord*™ rulebook, paths to support those ancestries, and a selection of new spells.

The Desolation is yours to use as you wish. It might be a source of the darkness afflicting the world, a homeland that new characters hope to forget, or simply a new place to explore. Everything in this book is optional; feel free to alter or ignore this material to suit your needs.

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# INTO the wastes

The Desolation is a blasted landscape in which only the hardiest and most resourceful people stand a chance of survival. Yet the burning sun, the treacherous terrain, and the savage dust storms pale in comparison to the threat posed by the region's monstrous evil. Legions of the dead crawl across the dunes and march across the stony plains, driven by ancient masters sealed inside great black pyramids scattered across this inhospitable land. Though few dare the Desolation's perils, the lure of fabled treasures and of powerful magic lost since ancient times draws fools and heroes alike. The ruins of the terrible empire of Gog hold countless secrets, awaiting those bold enough to pry them from the skeletal claws of guardians doomed never to die.

The wasteland and its denizens cast a long shadow across the Northern Reach, affecting the lives of everyone living on its borders. Although the setting is suited to more experienced adventurers, it can be the catalyst for a group's formation. Characters might answer the call to battle issued by the Crusader States, devoting themselves to fighting the hordes spawned in the deep wastes. Others might have been born to this land, never knowing a life free from fear. And adventurers flock to the borders, signing on with expeditions in the hopes of winning vast fortunes.

This chapter presents new options for characters with ties to the Desolation or who are descended from people touched by its darkness. New ancestries, paths, and spells expand the options for creating characters and developing their stories.

## PEOPLES OF THE DESOLATION

The Desolation is a constant threat menacing the Northern Reach, where only the foolish or desperate dare to tread. It affects the people on its borders in different ways. Some bear the stain of dark magic, while others choose to turn their heritage into an opportunity for power.

**Human:** Humans are the most numerous people living on the Desolation's borders, as much responsible for creating the wastelands as they are for containing it. When the undead first spilled forth from the sands, humans took up arms to drive them back and raised mighty strongholds against the darkness. The call to action drew humans from all backgrounds, ethnicities, and professions.





Descendants of the Men of Gog, corrupted humans who claimed these lands long ago, still inhabit the region among the others. Though their blood bears their ancestral taint, such individuals are no more virtuous or vile than others. People with the blood of Gog have chalky skin, dark eyes, and little body hair. Odd birthmarks resembling words in unknown languages are common.

**Dwarf:** Most dwarfs consider the Desolation to be a human problem. Humans created it, and the marching dead were all once human. Wise dwarfs, though, understand that if the walking corpses triumph over humanity, they will turn their fell attention to others. They have joined forces with the human defenders in the Crusader States, lending their expertise at the forge and their hardy constitutions to the cause. A few dwarfs, especially those seeking a glorious end, find the Desolation's treasures too tempting to pass up.

**Orc:** The provincial governor of the Northern Reach dispatched a force of orcs and humans from Sixton to slow the invasion. These forces held back the walking dead long enough for reinforcements to arrive from Caecras and eventually established the citadel of West Hold. The stronghold remains friendly to orcs and offers sanctuary to those who have escaped the chains of slavery in the Empire.

**Other Ancestries:** The defenders of the citadels rarely ask questions about the lives of volunteers—all help is welcome.

Goblins work as scouts, laborers, spies, and squires in the citadels and the borderlands. As with anywhere in the Empire's provinces, there's plenty of work for them here.

Clockworks lack the numbers to have a significant presence on the desert's edge, but those who make their way to the Crusader States always find welcome. They need none of the things that living people do, and those who fall in battle never rise up as undead to bolster the enemies' ranks.

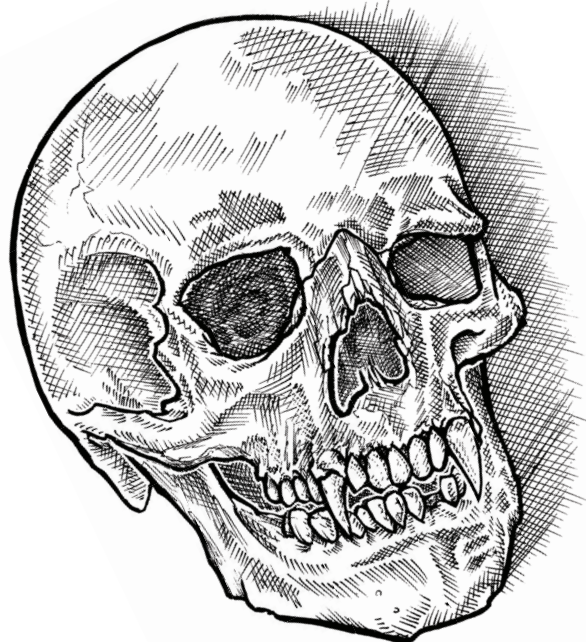
Fauns and halflings are rare. Fauns sometimes drift north to escape the scorn of their home communities. Halflings, being skilled farmers and artisans, can earn good livings supplying the crusaders with foodstuffs, beer, weapons, and armor. Even changelings whose true natures have been exposed sometimes find a place among the crusaders.

## NEW INTERESTING THINGS

At the Game Master's discretion, characters starting the game near the Desolation can roll on the replacement **Interesting Things from the Desolation** table instead of the tables included in chapter 1 of *Shadow of the Demon Lord*.

## INTERESTING THINGS FROM THE DESOLATION

d20	Interesting Thing
1	A cartouche bearing strange symbols.
2	Old, stained linen wrappings.
3	The answer to the next riddle you hear.
4	A gambling problem.
5	A canopic jar filled with sand.
6	A necklace of human teeth.
7	A piece of desert glass.
8	An ornately wrought sacrificial blade.
9	A really bad sunburn or a mass of scars.
10	A bronze khopesh (treat as a sword).
11	A small stone that is always warm to the touch.
12	An urn filled with ashes.
13	A mummified tiny animal.
14	A dead scarab beetle.
15	An odd symbol carved from bronze.
16	A chunk of petrified wood.
17	An obsidian arrowhead that, when placed on a flat surface, turns to point toward the center of the Desolation.
18	A sandbag weighing 18 pounds.
19	A scroll of papyrus that bears illustrations of humans engaged in lewd and improbable activities.
20	A small cup that fills with fresh water each day at dawn.







## NEW ANCESTRIES

The Desolation's influence stretches across the Empire. It can offer escape from death or summon those who have abandoned the mortal world for the isolation of the wilds.

## REVENANT

Sometimes death calls too soon, claiming the soul before a mortal can fulfill a destiny, right a wrong, or repay a debt. When the burden of responsibility proves too heavy to set aside, death may stay its hand and let the mortal complete those unfinished tasks as a revenant.

**Between Life and Death:** Revenants are neither fully alive nor fully dead. They count as living creatures but never suffer the ailments that plague the living, such as the throes of fever or the agony of venom. They still can be wounded and can be destroyed by weapons. But even when brought low, the pull of their obligations drags revenants from the grave once more to finish the work they began.

**Deathly Pallor:** Revenants look more or less as they did when they were fully alive, but dark circles ring their eyes, and they tend toward gauntness. New-made revenants

use cosmetics and pack their bodies with fragrant spices to cover up the stench of decay. Simple disguises are insufficient to mask the nature of older revenants, who use magic to conceal the truth of what they have become.

**Driven and Relentless:** Mighty oaths, great injustices, and strong emotions keep revenants in the world. Rising from the grave instills them with a single-minded focus on achieving their objectives. Not all emerge from the transformation with their mental faculties intact; many experience emotional swings that range from manic exuberance to the blackest depression.

**Tied to the Desolation:** The Desolation is the source of the power that creates revenants. In ancient times, the Men of Gog who lived in this toxic place used foul magic to extend their lifespans or to escape death altogether. Those who could not afford such spells bargained directly with Father Death to give them more time. The dour god refuses most requests, but mortals who have been wronged and crave vengeance sometimes gain his blessing, escaping the Underworld until they can put their affairs in order.

**Common Names:** Revenants use the names they had in life or adopt ones that summarize their new existence, such as Raven, Harlequin, Tears, or Vengeance.

## CREATING A REVENANT

First create a human, dwarf, or orc character. Other ancestries may be available at the Game Master's discretion, but they must be living and mortal, possess souls, and not be created by magic—so no changelings or clockworks. Then apply the following traits to that character.

**Starting Attribute Scores** Strength +1, Intellect -1

**Characteristics** Defense -1, Insanity +1d3

**Immune** damage from disease and poison; diseased, fatigued, poisoned

**Darksight** You can see in areas obscured by shadows and darkness within medium range as if those areas were lit. Beyond this distance, you treat darkness as shadows and shadows as lit.

**Eternal Returns** You die instantly when you become incapacitated, and you remain dead for 1d3 hours. At the end of this time, if your head is still attached to your body, you return to life, heal damage equal to your healing rate, and gain 1d3 Insanity. Otherwise, you are destroyed.

**One Foot in the Grave** You heal only half the normal amount of damage from magic and potions.

## LEVEL 4 EXPERT REVENANT

**Characteristics** Health +6

You learn one spell, gain Eyes of the Underworld, or gain an expert trait from your other ancestry.

**Eyes of the Underworld** You can use an action to make a Will attack roll against the Will of one target creature within short range that can see you. On a success, the target becomes frightened for 1 minute. On a failure, the target becomes immune to your use of this talent until it completes a rest.



# 1 into the wastes

## OPTIONAL RULE: RISING FROM THE DEAD

The GM might allow a dead character to return as a revenant, provided he or she meets the criteria and doing so would be appropriate to the story. For example, an expert character might have been killed before she had a chance to find her husband's murderer, while a master character could return to find the cure to a vile contagion that not only destroyed him but threatens many others. If the GM intervenes in this way, the character typically returns to life at the start of the next adventure, with all damage healed, and gains all the revenant traits.

## REVENANT ANCESTRY TABLES

Use the tables from your character's base ancestry to determine his or her background before returning from the dead. Then choose from or randomly determine the options presented in the following tables to describe how the character became a revenant and the effects of that transformation on his or her personality and nature.

### CAUSE OF DEATH

d20	Cause
1	You were executed for a crime you did not commit.
2	You were brutally murdered after watching your loved ones die.
3	You stumbled into a violent situation and were killed as a result.
4	You committed suicide.
5	You died protecting or fighting for a dark magic-user.
6	Your spouse poisoned you.
7	Your sibling or parent murdered you.
8	A rival had you assassinated.
9	A lethal trap killed you suddenly.
10	A monster butchered you while you were fighting to protect your loved ones.
11	A cultist ended your life using dark magic.
12	A demon tore you to pieces.
13	A falling piano or other heavy object abbreviated your lifespan.
14	You succumbed to disease.
15	You died after fooling around with a dangerous relic.
16	Some natural disaster claimed your life.
17	A psychopath tortured you for days before killing you.
18	You drowned.
19	You were burned at the stake for demonology, sorcery, or heresy.
20	Cultists sacrificed you to the Demon Lord.

## REASON FOR RETURN

1d6	Reason for Return
1	Vengeance
2	Love
3	Duty or an oath
4	Delusion
5	Hate
6	Spreading chaos

## DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

d20	Feature
1	You never cast a shadow.
2	You are so thin that you appear skeletal.
3	Vermin infest your body.
4	You have a curious odor.
5	You do not bleed.
6	You move with an awkward, jarring gait.
7	Your smile stretches weirdly across your face.
8	You're missing a few fingers and toes.
9	You have a terrible scar as a result of your death.
10	You are bloated.
11	You smell of the spices you use to preserve your flesh.
12	In place of eyes, you have glowing red pinpricks floating in pools of darkness.
13	You have a raspy voice.
14	You have no teeth.
15	Your face never shows expressions.
16	You are always filthy, no matter how often you bathe.
17	You wrap yourself in funerary linens.
18	Your eyes and mouth have been sewn shut, but you can still see and speak.
19	Your neck is broken and never heals. Your head flops about when you move.
20	The air around you grows chill.



## UNUSUAL BEHAVIOR

d20	Feature
1	You laugh at inappropriate times.
2	Your hands shake.
3	You sometimes see things that aren't there.
4	You often think people are watching you.
5	You feel compelled to touch things.
6	You believe something to be true that is obviously not, and you cling to that belief even when presented with evidence that it is false.
7	You experience horrific nightmares that cause you to wake up screaming.
8	You see dead people.
9	You frequently cut or harm yourself to feel pain.
10	You hear voices whispering to you at all times.
11	A person only you can see is always in your field of view. It's up to you to decide who this individual is and what he or she looks like.
12	If you speak while angry, another entity uses your voice to interject strange and unsettling words and phrases into your speech.
13	You find most food and drink repulsive. You can hold down only insects and foul water.
14	Your mood swings with little warning.
15	You always feel like you forgot something important.
16	When you go to an unfamiliar place, you must take a few moments to find all the exits.
17	You constantly scratch and tear at your skin.
18	Your eyes always flick back and forth.
19	You punctuate your speech with grotesque croaking noises.
20	You sometimes hear the screech of ravens and the beating of many wings when you attack creatures that have souls.

## SALAMANDER

The genies shaped the first salamanders from elemental flame to serve as thralls to those wild and willful beings. For centuries, the salamanders and their descendants lived apart from the other peoples in the world, free from machinations and intrigues, but the rise of terrible evils has coaxed them out of hiding to walk the lands in their final days.

**Born from Fire:** The genies formed salamanders by infusing elemental flame with their own essence, granting the fire solidity, humanoid form, and sentience. Their fiery heritage is still evident in the tall, twisting horns rising from salamanders' brows, the spurs growing on their arms and legs, and their crimson skin. With pupilless white eyes and long, sharp teeth, salamanders' features range from exotic to diabolical. A typical salamander stands between 7 and 8 feet tall and can weigh up to 400 pounds.

**Elementals:** As elemental beings, salamanders enjoy long lives, but lacking mortal souls, they cannot return from death. When a salamander dies, its body burns up in a flash of fire.

**Slaves of the Genies:** The genies made salamanders to do their bidding, and salamanders believe they likewise fashioned the world from chaos. Other elementals were made to be creators and healers, but salamanders were designed as destroyers. They fought the genies' enemies: the faerie, trolls, and anyone else who sought to bind and control their masters. Thus their first encounters with humanity were in battle, which left a lasting negative impression. As madness infected the genies, their interest in the world waned, leaving the salamanders free to find their own destinies. Most made their homes in the Burning Vaults, but some survived in the Desolation's wastes.

**Fierce and Volatile:** A people of intense passion, salamanders have difficulty hiding their emotions, especially anger. In dealings with others, they can be aggressive to the point of causing offense, even threatening, if they don't get their way. Such emotional outbursts never last for long, though, and they quickly forget what raised their ire in the first place.

**Common Names:** Azagad, Beruul, Dedan, Fereen, Heeseh, Ignez, Seekriz, Zeez.

## CREATING A SALAMANDER

**Starting Attribute Scores** Strength 10, Agility 9, Intellect 9, Will 11

**Perception** equals your Intellect score

**Defense** equals your Agility score

**Health** equals your Strength score

**Healing Rate** equals one-quarter your Health

**Size 1, Speed 10, Power 0**

**Damage 0, Insanity 0, Corruption 0**

**Languages and Professions** You speak the Common

Tongue and Firespeak, a hissing and clicking language of the flame elementals.

**Immune** damage from disease, fire, and poison; diseased, poisoned

**Cold Intolerant** You take double damage from cold. When you take damage from cold, you also become fatigued for 1 round.

**Heat** At the end of the round, each creature grabbed by you or that has grabbed you must get a success on a Strength challenge roll or take 1d3 damage from the intense heat radiating from your body.

**Fiery Death** When you die, flames burst from a point within your space out to a number of yards equal to your group level. Everything in the area takes damage equal to 1d6 + your group level. Each creature in the area that gets a success on an Agility challenge roll takes half the damage instead.



## LEVEL 4 EXPERT SALAMANDER

**Characteristics** Health +5

You either learn one spell or gain Scorching Reprisal.

**Scorching Reprisal** When you become injured, you can use a triggered action to release a burst of flames in a 2-yard radius from a point within your space. Everything in the area takes 1d6 damage. Each creature in the area that gets a success on an Agility challenge roll instead takes no damage.

## SALAMANDER AGE

3d6	Age
3	You are a child, 8 years old or younger.
4-7	You are an adolescent, 9 to 15 years old.
8-12	You are a young adult, 16 to 50 years old.
13-15	You are a middle-aged adult, 51 to 100 years old.
16-17	You are an older adult, 101 to 150 years old.
18	You are a venerable adult, 151 years or older.

## SALAMANDER PERSONALITY

3d6	Personality
3	Hate consumes you. You enjoy hurting other people.
4	You have a nasty temper and resort to violence when angered.
5-6	You are a braggart and a bully.
7-8	You are rude to people you don't know and unfriendly to those you do know.
9-12	You are bold and aggressive.
13-14	You are friendly, charming, and boisterous.
15-16	You try to do the right thing, but your passions sometimes get in the way.
17	You have learned to control your emotions, so that you seem cold and reserved to others.
18	You have an infectious cheer. You put others at ease, and people want to be around you.

## SALAMANDER APPEARANCE

3d6	Appearance
3	You have a monstrous appearance that even your own people find unsettling. A profusion of horns and spurs erupt from all over your body, and your skin is a sickly, blotchy color. Your visage is a snarling mass of bone and flesh, eyes yellowed and dull.
4	You are a firetail, an offshoot of the salamander race born with a serpentine tail instead of legs. Aside from this mutation, your features are those of other salamanders. Your tail imposes a -2 penalty to your Speed but grants you 1 boon on attack rolls made to grab.
5-6	You have crude, brutish features with mottled orange-and-black skin. You are considered plain or even unattractive by your people.
7-8	You have 1d6 + 3 toothlike horns growing from the top of your head. Your skin is rough and scaly, pierced by bizarre bone spurs all over your body.
9-12	You have the appearance of a typical salamander.
13-14	You are attractive for a salamander. Your horns are smooth and spurs small.
15-16	You are striking for a salamander. Your black horns are smooth and polished, your eyes blaze with an inner radiance, and your skin is warm and unbroken by spurs.
17	You are beautiful, even by the standards of other peoples. You have attractive features and a presence that grabs attention. You have no bone spurs, and only two small horns sprout from your forehead.
18	Your appearance sets you apart from nearly all of your kind. You have a shapely or muscular form with striking features. The horns and spurs common to your race are arranged in such a way that almost everyone finds you appealing and perhaps a little exotic.



## SALAMANDER BACKGROUND

d20	Background
1	You nearly died, and your body has suffered as a result. You partly turned to flame and now appear scorched and are missing a few of your extremities.
2	You discovered the gates of Hell and passed through them to live among the devils for 1d3 years. You start the game with 1d3 Insanity and 1 Corruption.
3	You were kidnapped and enslaved by a wicked magician. After 1d6 years of abuse and exploitation, you escaped.
4	You committed a crime against your people and fled from your homeland to escape the repercussions.
5	Undead besieged and destroyed your home. You are the only survivor.
6	You briefly fell in with a cult dedicated to a monstrous being known as the Inferno. You broke with the cultists once they started summoning demons. You start the game with 1 Corruption.
7	You ventured into the Desolation and survived to tell of it.
8	You lost someone close to you.
9	You were captured by travelers and sold as a slave in the Nine Cities. You only recently won your freedom.
10	You earned a living working in your profession.
11	You fell in love with someone of a different ancestry. You could have had a relationship with another character, if you both agree.
12	You have a spouse and 1d6 2 children (minimum 0).
13	You left your home long ago to see the world. You speak one additional language.
14	Your parents were leaders in your community, and you have lived in their shadow your whole life.
15	You saved the life of someone important, and that person now owes you a favor.
16	You were whisked away from your homeland by a magician who summoned you to serve him or her for a time.
17	Orphaned, you were found by a druid who raised you in the ways of the Old Faith.
18	You found something unusual in the Desolation. Start the game with one item from the <b>Interesting Things of the Desolation</b> table (this is in addition to the interesting thing that all characters start with).
19	You helped defend your community. You start the game with a spear.
20	You came into money and start the game with 2d6 cp.



## SALAMANDER BUILD

3d6	Build
3	You are short and slender.
4	You are short and muscular.
5-6	You are short for your people.
7-8	You are thin, willowy, or gaunt.
9-12	You have typical height and weight for your people.
13-14	You are somewhat overweight.
15-16	You are tall.
17	You are tall and thin.
18	You tower over other salamanders, your body hulking and powerful.

## VAMPIRE

Vampires emerge from crypts and climb out of graves to prey on the living when night falls. Most vampires are true monsters, cruel and indiscriminate killers made incapable of remorse by the unholy curse sustaining their unnatural existence. A few manage to control the terrible impulses and curb their appetites enough to cling to the tattered shreds of their lost humanity.

**Sire-Bound:** A vampire can create another vampire by bringing a human to the brink of death and feeding the victim a measure of the vampire's blood. This act kills the victim, who then rises the next night as a vampire under its sire's control (see "Creating New Vampires" on the next page). Since creating new vampires means more competition for fresh blood and risks attention from inquisitors and undead-slayers, vampires sire offspring with great reluctance.

**Maddening Thirst:** Blood is never far from a vampire's thoughts, being needed to sustain its immortal existence. The agony of this thirst and the fear of helplessness combine in a relentless craving that intensifies the longer the vampire goes without drinking.

**Feral and Monstrous:** Though traces of their humanity linger in the vampires' undead states, long, sharp fangs fill their mouths, and their features become drawn and pale by the pangs of blood thirst. When a vampire attacks, its visage twists into something monstrous, its naked hunger inspiring fear and panic.

**Witch-King's Curse:** The Witch-King created the first vampires from his most loyal servants, transforming them into immortal subjects made dependent on him for blood. The vampires in his service benefited from preternatural strength, quickness, keen senses, and durability, making them useful to the Dark One and loyal thanks to their incessant thirst. All vampires descend from them, and it's believed some ancestors survive to this day, sealed in the Desolation's black tombs.

**Common Names:** Vampires might use their human names or adopt new ones. Many feel the transformation is a rebirth and assume new identities suited to their new existences. Such vampires adopt noble titles or monikers that reflect their new natures, such as the Red Duchess, Shade, Desire, or She.



## CREATING A VAMPIRE

All vampires begin as humans, so first create a human character and then apply the following traits to that character.

**Attribute Scores** Strength +1, Agility +1, Intellect +1, Will +1

**Characteristics** Perception +1, Defense +1, Speed +2, Insanity +1d6, Corruption +1d3

**Immune** damage from cold, disease, poison; asleep, diseased, fatigued, immobilized, poisoned, and slowed

**Darksight** You can see in areas obscured by shadows and darkness within medium range as if those areas were lit. Beyond this distance, you treat darkness as shadows and shadows as lit.

**Sire-Bound** You are bound to the vampire that created you until it uses an action to free you or it is destroyed. You cannot attack the vampire that made you, and you become compelled by it while it is within short range of you.

**Dreadful Appearance** When you attack a living creature that can see you, the target must make a Will challenge roll. The target becomes frightened for 1 minute on a failure. On a success, it becomes immune to your Dreadful Appearance until after it completes a rest.

**Natural Weapons** You have long fangs, which count as swift finesse weapons that deal 1d6 damage.

**Unnatural Existence** Your healing rate is 0 and cannot be increased above 0.

**Blood Pool** You need blood to sustain your existence. You measure the blood you have accumulated in a pool of **blood points**. When you first become a vampire, you gain 1 blood point from the vampire that created you. You add blood points to your pool using the **Drink Blood** talent (see below) up to a maximum number equal to 1 + your group level.

Each time you complete a rest, you must spend 1 point from your blood pool. If you have no blood points to spend, you gain 1 Insanity and take a -1d6 penalty to Health (minimum 0; see Torpor below). The penalty is cumulative, and you are impaired while you have it. You can remove the accumulated penalty to Health by using an action to spend 1 blood point.

**Blood Healing** You can use an action or a triggered action on your turn to expend 1 blood point and heal damage equal to 1 + your group level.

**Torpor** When the penalty to your Health from the Blood Pool trait drops your Health to 0, you become unconscious, resembling a corpse. If you take any damage while unconscious, you are instantly destroyed. As an action, another creature can feed you fresh blood from a living creature to remove the accumulated penalty to your Health and end this affliction.

**Drink Blood** When a living creature you have grabbed takes damage from an attack using your fangs, the creature takes a penalty to its Health equal to its healing rate for 1 hour, and you add 1 point to your blood pool. While the creature has this penalty, it is fatigued.

**Superstition** While you can see the object of your superstitious fear (see below), you make attack rolls and challenge rolls with 3 banes.

**Burned by Sunlight** You take 2d6 damage and reduce your blood pool by 1 at the end of each round you are in an area lit by sunlight. As well, you take double damage from Celestial spells and make challenge rolls to resist those spells with 1 bane.

## LEVEL 4 EXPERT VAMPIRE

**Characteristics** Health +6

**Pass for Human** You can use an action to alter your appearance so that you look as you did in the prime of your life. You keep this appearance until you take damage, you attack, or you use an action to resume your normal appearance.

## CREATING NEW VAMPIRES

To create a “child,” or vampire brood, you must drain blood from a living human until it becomes incapacitated and then feed the victim your blood by using an action and spending 1 blood point. The victim dies at the end of the round. If the corpse is exposed to sunlight, it instantly burns to ash. If, however, the corpse is interred somewhere the light cannot reach, such as a tomb or a crypt, it rises as a new vampire when the sun next sets.

## VAMPIRE ANCESTRY TABLES

When determining your character’s background and description, start with the human ancestry tables in *Shadow of the Demon Lord* to establish your identity before you became a vampire. Then choose or randomly determine the options presented in the following tables to describe how your character became a vampire and how the experience affected you.

## SUPERSTITIOUS FEAR

d6	Superstitious Fear
1	Symbols of the gods
2	Mirrors
3	Running water
4	Cats
5	Silver
6	Garlic

## UNUSUAL QUALITIES

d20	Unusual Quality
1	You never cast a reflection on mirrored surfaces.
2	Your fangs sprout from the end of your tongue, which is horrid and long.
3	You stink of decay.
4	Your eyes gleam redly.
5	All animals except rats, bats, and wolves are hostile to you.
6	You look like a walking corpse. Suppurating wounds and eruptions spread across your body, your hair falls out in clumps, and your pupils are milky white.
7	Your fingers lengthen into claws. They count as swift finesse weapons that deal 1d3 damage.
8	You lose all your body hair.
9	You can speak only in whispers.
10	You weep blood.
11	Whorls and patterns cover your skin.
12	Flies follow you where you go.
13	You must bury yourself in dirt in order to rest.
14	You cannot create new vampires.
15	Children cry in your presence.
16	While the blood points in your blood pool equal or exceed half your maximum, you appear bloated and flushed.
17	You have a persistent, rattling cough.
18	Your skin is paper-thin and your body appears skeletal.
19	Fur grows in the palms of your hands.
20	You cast no shadow.

## SIRE'S IDENTITY

d6	Sire
1	Someone you met in passing but did not really know
2	An ancestor or member of your family
3	A complete stranger
4	A rival or enemy
5	A close friend
6	Your lover

## SIRE'S MOTIVE

d6	Your sire turned you into a vampire to . . .
1	. . . get revenge against you or someone else.
2	. . . torment you or someone else.
3	. . . gain a companion.
4	. . . acquire a servant.
5	. . . corrupt you.
6	. . . fight against his or her enemies.

## RELATIONSHIP TO SIRE

d6	Your sire . . .
1	. . . mistreats and abuses you, delighting in your suffering.
2-3	. . . abandoned you, though he or she still has power over you.
4	. . . has great affection for you.
5	. . . freed you.
6	. . . was destroyed. Roll again to determine the earlier relationship, ignoring rolls of 6.





## NEW PATHS

The paths characters walk near the Desolation lead to strange and dangerous places.

### PRINCE OF DARKNESS

#### *Expert Path*

Vampirism offers great power at a terrible price. Vampires are faster and stronger than ordinary humans, but they suffer from an overpowering thirst for blood. Unable to walk in sunlight, they become creatures of the night, skulking in the shadows to ambush their prey and evade the inquisitors who would consign them to the purifying flames.

Their dependency on fresh blood creates enemies wherever vampires go.

Communities soon grow wise to the predator in their midst; the hunter becomes the prey as the people gather into bloodthirsty mobs intent on destroying it. Thus vampires need cunning and control over their dark impulses to survive the many dangers arrayed against them.

Princes of darkness find ways to keep their blood thirst in check and to improve their talents. They suffer from all the same weaknesses as their fellows but develop techniques to aid in hunting, withstand enemies' attacks, and elude discovery and capture.

To choose this expert path, you must be a vampire.

## PRINCE OF DARKNESS STORY DEVELOPMENT

d6	Story Development
1	You turned to ancient writings to learn more about yourself and your potential. You might have pursued this course as part of your magical studies or sought out one knowledgeable in Necromancy to teach you how to control your nature.
2	You looked to religion to find the answers to your undead existence, and your faith helps you control your impulses. Freed from the compulsion to drink blood, you have been able to learn more about what you truly are.
3	Applying your knack for problem-solving to the predicament of your undead self, you have enhanced your innate powers.
4	A pact with a supernatural agency helped you to unlock new capabilities.
5	Tested in battle, you learned how to effectively blend your fighting techniques with your unnatural talents.
6	You discovered a tome written by one of the first vampires and from it learned how to master your undead nature.

### LEVEL 3 PRINCE OF DARKNESS

**Attributes** Increase two by 1

**Characteristics** Health +6, Corruption +1

**Languages and Professions** You can either speak another language or add a profession.

**Draining Bite** A target fatigued by Drink Blood attack is slowed for as long as it remains fatigued from the attack.

**Misty Escape** When you become incapacitated, you can use a triggered action to transform into a billowing cloud of mist, fly up to your Speed, and then resume your normal form. While in mist form, you are immune to all damage, can move through spaces occupied by other creatures, and can move through openings wide enough to permit the passage of air. This movement does not trigger free attacks. Once you use this talent, you cannot use it again until after you complete a rest.

### LEVEL 6 PRINCE OF DARKNESS

**Characteristics** Perception +1, Health +6, Corruption +1

**Charming Bite** A creature already fatigued by your Drink Blood trait that would become fatigued again in this way must get a success on a Will challenge roll or become charmed until it is no longer fatigued.

**Sunlight Tolerance** You take half damage from exposure to sunlight.

### LEVEL 9 MASTER PRINCE OF DARKNESS

**Characteristics** Health +6, Speed +2, Corruption +1

**Flowing Mist** You can use Misty Escape whenever you take damage, and you regain the ability to use it after the end of the next round.

**Resilience** You take half damage from weapons.

## BLIGHTER

### Master Path

Blighters are believed to be responsible for the Desolation's present form. At one time, these magic-users were counted among the mightiest of the Witch-King's servants. They drained the land of life to raise armies of the dead, constructed magnificent monuments to themselves and their master, and loosed destructive power against their enemies. The blighters' techniques yet await those ambitious and hardy souls willing and able to pry them from the Desolation's ruins.

Blighters exploit the world's resources, destroying life to feed their ambition. Thus, this path appeals to students of the dark arts, the reckless, and the insane.

### LEVEL 7 BLIGHTER

**Attributes** Increase three by 1

**Characteristics** Health +2, Power +1, Corruption +1

**Languages and Professions** You can speak another language or add a profession.

**Magic** You learn the *blight* spell.

### BLIGHT

### BLIGHTER ATTACK I

**Requirement** You must not be in a blighted area.

**Area** A sphere with a radius of 5 yards centered on a point you can reach

**Duration** See the effect

The area becomes blighted for 1d6 years, during which time no plants can grow there. As well, any creature attempting to cast a spell in the blighted area must first get a success on a Will challenge roll. On a failure, the casting is not expended but the action to cast the spell is wasted.

When you cast the spell, all normal plants turn to ashes that swirl around the area, partially obscuring it for 1 round. As well, each living creature in the area must get a success on a Strength challenge roll or become fatigued for 1 minute and take a -1d3 penalty to Health until it completes a rest. The penalty to Health is cumulative with repeated castings.

You increase by 1 the number of castings you have for one spell you have learned that has a rank equal to or less than half your Power. You retain the extra casting until you expend it.

**Permanence** If you cast this spell in the same area each day for 8 days, the area becomes permanently blighted.

### LEVEL 10 BLIGHTER

**Characteristics** Health +2, +1 Corruption

**Magic** You learn one spell.

**Empowering Blight** When you cast the *blight* spell, you make attack rolls and challenge rolls with 1 boon for 1 round.



## DUST WALKER

### Master Path

Dust walkers learn their techniques from the mad genies of the Desolation's deep wastes by discovering their names and harnessing their power. The knowledge they gain destabilizes dust walkers' minds, making them as willful and ruinous as their crazed patrons. Some pursue this path to heal the land, while others seize it to grow their own power.

### LEVEL 7 DUST WALKER

**Attributes** Increase three by 1

**Characteristics** Health +3, Power +1

**Languages and Professions** You can speak another language or add a profession.

**Magic** You discover either the Air or Earth tradition, or you learn one spell from one of those traditions.

**Earth Walker** You move at full Speed across difficult terrain composed of sand, dust, earth, or rocks.

**Fling Dust** When you make a melee attack with a weapon, you can use a triggered action to fling dust at your target. The target must get a success on a Strength challenge roll or become impaired until the end of the round.

### LEVEL 10 DUST WALKER

**Characteristics** Health +3

**Magic** You learn one spell.

**Dust Storm** You can use an action to turn into a cloud of swirling dust and move up to your Speed. While in this form, you are immune to damage, can move through spaces occupied by other creatures, and can move through openings wide enough to permit the passage of air. This movement does not trigger free attacks. When you finish moving, you resume your normal form, and each sighted creature within 2 yards of you must get a success on a Strength challenge roll or become blinded for 1 round. You can use this talent a number of times equal to 1 + your Power score. You regain expended uses when you complete a rest.

## SLAYER OF THE DEAD

### Master Path

Undead are abominations that threaten to spread across the world unless stopped. Certain dedicated men and women take up arms to destroy the living dead wherever they find them. Most slayers of the dead began as crusaders, developing their talents from necessity and nursing a hatred that sends them in pursuit of the foe.

### LEVEL 7 SLAYER OF THE DEAD

**Attributes** Increase three by 1

**Characteristics** Health +5

**Languages and Professions** You can speak another language or add a profession.

**Anticipate Undead** Undead make their attack rolls against you with 1 bane, and you make challenge rolls with 1 boon to resist their attacks.

**Fearless** You cannot become frightened. When you roll to resist gaining Insanity, you make the challenge roll with 1 boon.

### LEVEL 10 SLAYER OF THE DEAD

**Characteristics** Health +5

**Never Surrender** While you are injured, you have a +2 bonus to Defense.

**Undead Bane** When you attack an undead creature, you make the attack roll with 1 boon, and your attack deals 1d6 extra damage.



# MAGIC

Magic expresses itself in many different traditions on the world of Urth, from the havoc and ruin created by Destruction spells to the more subtle effects of Enchantment and Illusion. Some sorts of magic, though, produce a narrower range of effects, such as spells unique to certain paths or that relate to certain ancestries or lands. Spells of such minor traditions are never higher than rank 3.

## BLOOD SPELLS

Blood magic has a dark legacy, devised by the vampires from their obsession with the body's most vital humor. These spells manipulate blood and force it to obey the caster's commands, often with alarming results.

You can use Intellect or Will to cast Blood spells.

### BLEED

BLOOD ATTACK 0

**Target** One living creature within short range

Bubbles form on the target's skin. Make an Intellect or Will attack roll against the target's Strength. On a success, the bubbles burst and the target takes 1d3 damage, and at the end of each round, the target must get a success on a Strength challenge roll or take 1 damage. Getting three successes on the challenge roll or healing any damage ends this effect.

**Attack Roll 20+** The target takes 1d3 extra damage.

### RESTORE HUMORS

BLOOD UTILITY 0

**Target** One living creature within your reach

You touch the target and make an Intellect or Will challenge roll. On a success, the target heals damage equal to its healing rate. On a failure, the target takes damage equal to half its healing rate.

### BLOOD TO WATER

BLOOD ATTACK 1

**Target** One living creature within short range

If the target has Health 10 or less, it dies instantly, watery blood leaking from its orifices. Otherwise, make an Intellect or Will attack roll against the target's Strength. On a success, the target takes 1d3 damage and becomes dazed and fatigued for 1 round.

### TRANSFUSION

BLOOD ATTACK 1

**Target** One living creature within short range

A hole opens somewhere on the target's body and then closes. Make an Intellect or Will attack roll against the target's Strength. On a success, roll 2d6. The total rolled is imposed as a penalty to the target's Health, and you gain a bonus to Health equal to the same amount. Both the penalty and the bonus last for 1 minute.

**Special** If you are a vampire, you can gain 1 blood point instead of the bonus to Health.

### BOILING BLOOD

BLOOD ATTACK 2

**Target** One living creature within short range

Blood boils in the target's veins. If the target has Health 15 or less, it dies instantly, its body bloated and blackened. Otherwise, make an Intellect or Will attack roll against the target's Strength. On a success, the target takes 2d6 + 3 damage.

A target killed by this effect explodes and sprays boiling blood in a 3-yard radius centered on a point within its space. Each creature in the area must get a success on an Agility challenge roll or take 1d6 damage.

**Attack Roll 20+** The target takes 1d6 extra damage.

### HEMORRHAGE

BLOOD ATTACK 3

**Target** One living creature within medium range

If the target has Health 20 or less, it dies instantly, blood spraying from its orifices. Otherwise, make an Intellect or Will attack roll against the target's Strength. On a success, a grisly bleeding wound appears somewhere on the target's body; the target takes 5d6 damage and starts bleeding. The bleeding lasts until the target heals any damage or until it or a creature next to it gets a success on an Intellect challenge roll to stanch the wound. While bleeding, the target takes 1d6 damage at the end of each round.

**Attack Roll 20+** The target takes 2d6 extra damage.



## OTHER NEW SPELLS

The Desolation inspires a variety of magic to protect against the horrors of the landscape or to master them. The following new spells add to existing traditions.

### AIR SPELLS

#### HEAT WAVE

AIR ATTACK 1

**Area** A cone, 3 yards long, originating from a point within short range

Each living creature in the area must get a success on a Strength challenge roll or become fatigued for 1 minute. While fatigued in this way, the creature takes 1 damage each time it makes an attack roll or a challenge roll.

#### SHIMMER WALL

AIR UTILITY 1

**Area** A shapeable line, 5 yards long, 2 yards tall, and 1 yard wide, originating from a point within short range

**Duration** 1 minute

You raise the air temperature in the area, causing it to shimmer for the duration. Creatures beyond short range of the area's edge make attack rolls with 3 banes against creatures behind the area.

#### BIND DUST DEVIL

AIR UTILITY 3

**Target** A cube of sand or dust, 1 yard on a side, originating from a point within medium range

**Duration** 1 minute

At the end of the round in which you cast this spell, the target becomes a **dust devil** (see chapter 3). You cannot voluntarily end this spell. When the effect ends, the dust devil dissipates, covering the ground under its space with sand or dust.

When the dust devil appears, make a Will attack roll against its Will. The dust devil becomes compelled for the duration on a success or becomes hostile to you on a failure.

### CELESTIAL SPELLS

#### SUN HAMMER

CELESTIAL ATTACK 4

**Area** A vertical cylinder, 25 yards tall with a 2-yard radius, centered on a point on the ground within extreme range that is lit by the sun

A beam of intense sunlight deals  $2d6 + 3$  damage to everything in the area. Each creature that takes damage this way must make a Strength challenge roll. It falls prone and becomes fatigued for 1 minute on a failure, or just takes half the damage on a success.

### CURSE SPELLS

#### CURSE OF THE TOMB KINGS

CURSE ATTACK 3

**Target** One living creature you can see within medium range

Make an Intellect attack roll against the target's Strength and another against its Will. On a success against Strength, the target takes 2d6 damage as intense pain racks its body. On a success against Will, the target becomes frightened for 1 minute. On a success against both Strength and Will, the target also becomes cursed. While cursed in this way, the target is fatigued and cannot heal damage.

### EARTH SPELLS

#### QUICKSAND

EARTH ATTACK 3

**Area** A circle on the ground with a radius of 4 yards centered on a point within short range

**Duration** 1 minute

The ground in the area becomes difficult terrain for the duration. Any creature in the area when you cast the spell or at the end of each round for the duration must make a Strength challenge roll. A creature becomes stuck on a failure; on a success, a creature is moved to the nearest open space outside the area. If a creature that is already stuck gets a failure on this check, it becomes submerged instead and cannot breathe.

A stuck creature is immobilized. It can use an action to make a Strength challenge roll, removing this affliction on a success.

A submerged creature is blinded and immobilized. It can use an action to make a Strength challenge roll with 1 bane. It becomes stuck instead on a success, or takes 1d6 damage on a failure.

When the spell ends, the ground returns to its normal consistency. Stuck creatures and those submerged in earth or mud can continue attempting to free themselves as described above. However, if the ground was stone, each stuck creature instead remains immobilized until it is freed, and each submerged creature takes damage equal to its Health, dying instantly. Freeing a stuck creature requires dealing at least 10 damage to the ground in the area using weapons or tools.

## NECROMANCY SPELLS

### LICHE

NECROMANCY UTILITY 6

**Requirements** You must be mortal and not created by magic.

Before you can cast this spell, you must spend 8 hours each day for 1 month, 1 week, and 1 day creating a phylactery to store your soul. You decide what the phylactery looks like—such as an amulet, a small box, or a weapon—but it costs 100 gc in materials. When you finish, the phylactery is an object with Defense 25 and Health equal to your Health.

**Target** One dose of poison you can reach

**Duration** 1 hour

The poison becomes lethal for the duration. If you drink it before the duration ends, you take damage equal to your Health and die instantly. Your soul becomes trapped inside the phylactery until that object is destroyed, at which point your soul moves on to whatever awaits it in the afterlife.

Eight hours after you die from drinking the poison, you become an undead creature until you are destroyed. Your undead status does not arrest decay, so unless you take steps to preserve your body, your flesh rots away until only your skeleton remains. As a result of your transformation, you gain the following traits:

**Attribute Scores** Strength +1, Will +1

**Characteristics** Defense +1, Health +20, Perception +2, Corruption +1d3

**Immune** damage from cold, disease, and poison; asleep, diseased, fatigued, immobilized, poisoned, slowed

**Darksight** You can see in areas obscured by shadows and darkness within medium range as if those areas were lit. Beyond this distance, you treat darkness as shadows and shadows as lit.

**Phylactery** So long as your phylactery is intact, you heal damage at the end of a rest as normal. If you become incapacitated, your body turns to dust and re-forms in an open space within short range of your phylactery 1d20 hours later. You return to life with damage equal to your Health -1.

If your phylactery is destroyed, you immediately take damage equal to your Health and die instantly.

**One Foot in the Grave** You heal only half damage from magic and potions.

**Grave Touch** Your touch awakens paralyzing revulsion in living creatures. You can use an action to attack a creature you can reach. Make an Intellect or Will attack roll with 1 boon against the target's Defense. On a success, the target takes 4d6 + 3 damage and must get a success on a Strength challenge roll or become frightened for 1 minute. While frightened in this way, the target is slowed. If the target is already slowed, it becomes immobilized instead; if it is already immobilized, it becomes defenseless instead.

## PROTECTION SPELLS

### ELEMENTAL ADAPTATION

PROTECTION UTILITY 1

**Target** Up to five creatures you can reach

**Duration** 2 hours

You touch each target. For the duration, each target is immune to the effects of deprivation and exposure.

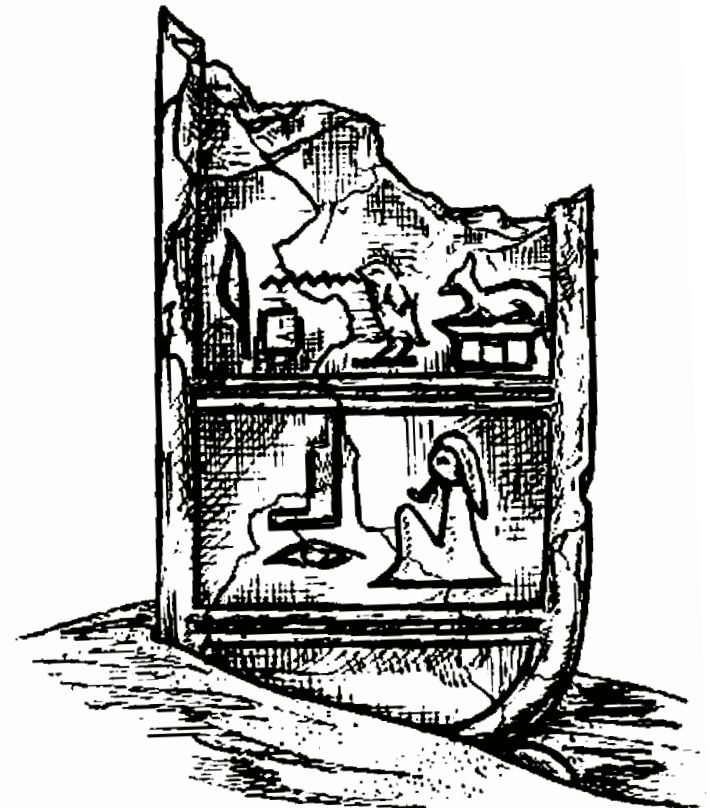
## WATER SPELLS

### DESICCATE

WATER ATTACK 2

**Target** One living creature within short range

A fine stream of crimson mist rises from the target's body as you relieve it of its vital fluids. Make a Will attack roll against the target's Strength. On a success, the target takes 2d6 damage and becomes fatigued for 1 hour. If the target drinks a number of gallons of water equal to its Size, it removes this fatigued affliction. If the target was already fatigued, it instead takes 2d6 extra damage.







## These endless wastes

The bloody, hateful Troll Wars prepared the way for the area north of the Reach to become a blasted wasteland. The trolls, then masters of elemental magic, turned the land against the faerie, who answered with their own sorcery. Too much blood, death, and reckless magic on both sides transformed a great, vibrant jungle into a tortured landscape of shattered mountains, dusty plains, and twisted woods haunted by things cruel and wicked. Shunned by the faerie and abandoned by the trolls, the land was left to suffer from the evil the fighting spawned.

The region might have recovered as the memory of the horror perpetrated there faded, but humanity sealed its fate. Migrating tribes of humans drifted into the the Autumn Lands over the years. Many made peace with the faerie living there, but the most warlike and savage among them refused to bend the knee to the Bright Folk. Instead they continued north and settled in the broken lands, where they would become the Men of Gog.

The accursed place amplified the settlers' violent tendencies. Where the First People lived alongside the faerie and showed great reverence for nature, the Men of Gog exulted in destruction. They built great cities in the dying lands, supplementing their meager crops by raiding south and feeding on the flesh of the changed and warped. All this caused them to lose some of their humanity and become as monstrous as the land in which they lived.

Centuries later, the Men of Gog gathered up their armies under the Witch-King's banner and marched south, bolstered by demons, undead, and other monsters. The horde shattered Edene and put the civilized lands in chains, precipitating the darkest time in Rûl's history.

The Kalasans ended the Witch-King's hegemony, casting down the tyrant and sending his servants into the depths of the earth and to the Empire's edges. Their corruption slowly transformed these remnants into the monstrous humanoids at large in the world today: beastmen, troglodytes, arachne, deep ones, and others. But those who fled for their ancestral homes simply disappeared into the dunes, presumably destroyed by the very lands they had helped to destroy.

But those Men of Gog did not vanish. They transformed themselves, shedding their mortality and embracing an undead existence that let them survive long enough to visit vengeance against the descendants of those Kalasans who ended their rule. A century ago, the first Men of Gog returned, with tattered strips of leathery flesh stubbornly clinging to brown, brittle bones, clad in rotting armor of antiquated design. What started as a trickle soon became a flood of undead horrors whose ranks only grew when their victims rose from the dead.

Disturbing reports of the invasion soon reached Sixton, capital of the Northern Reach. The provincial governor hastily assembled an army of humans and orcs on loan from the Empire to stanch the flood. At the same time, the Matriarch of the New God's cult called for a crusade against the undead threat, urging men and women from all across the Empire to shield the innocent. Thousands answered the call and traveled north, bringing with them ideas and advances from the south. Swelling the beleaguered ranks of the defenders, the crusaders soon outnumbered the Reach's army and eventually took charge of protecting the Empire against the armies of the dead.

Now, decades later, a string of mighty fortresses stand fast against the undead, garrisoned by devoted defenders of the Empire, the New God, and all living things. These crusaders watch the desert for the hordes emerging from the dust clouds and give their lives to send the monsters back to the hell that spawned them.

## A DEAD AND DYING LAND

The Desolation spreads across the lands north of the Reach: west to the foothills of the Burning Vaults; east to the Spider Wood, the remnants of the old jungles that once covered these lands; and north until the land breaks apart into islands sprinkled across a storm-tossed sea. A place seemingly empty of life, the Desolation is defined by sandy dunes, vast stretches of dusty, rock-strewn plains, and pools of boiling mud. Storms race across the region, spitting violet lightning and raking the ground with howling wind, burying the few remaining landmarks under mountains of powdery dust. The Desolation is unforgiving and cruel, punishing anyone who dares to explore it.

## SPECIAL TERRAIN

The Desolation contains uniquely hazardous terrain.

**Ash Wastes:** All across the Desolation stretch great expanses of flat land, covered with a thick layer of powdery dust so that travelers kick up plumes with each step they take. At the end of each hour a living creature travels across an area of ash wastes, it must make a Strength challenge roll. On a failure, it takes a -1d6 penalty to Health and becomes fatigued. If the creature is already fatigued, the penalty to Health worsens by 1d6. The penalty and the affliction last for 1d3 days (roll once for both). However, both are removed by any effect that removes the diseased affliction.

Ash wastes count as plains.

**Bone Fields:** The windstorms raging across the wastes sometimes tear up mass graves, creating bone fields that stretch for miles. These enormous heaps contain the bones of animals, humans, and other creatures mixed together, where **Bone machines** and **boneguards** sometimes lurk. Bone fields count as difficult terrain.

**Dead Lands:** These areas of dead magic appear all across the wasteland. Some are small, only a few yards across,

while others can cover a square mile or more. Each creature in an area of dead lands takes a -3 penalty to Power (minimum 0) as long as it remains in the area. Dead lands overlap other forms of terrain and do not affect travel.

**Mud Flats:** Pools of bubbling mud collect in the west, where the rocky terrain becomes broken as it climbs towards the volcanic Burning Vaults. Narrow causeways offer routes through the mud flats, though they can crumble away without warning, sending travelers into the boiling filth. The mud deals 1d6 damage to creatures that touch it and 3d6 damage to creatures submerged in it. A creature takes damage this way just once per round. Mud flats count as swamps.

**Stone Plains:** A band of stone plains commands about a hundred miles of the Desolation's southern extent. Covered with rocks ranging in size from pebbles to massive boulders carved into monstrous shapes by windborne grit, it is an alien landscape with few signs that anything ever lived here. The stone plains count as plains.

**Wandering Dunes:** Most of the Desolation is an expanse of desert with great hills of sand that creep along, driven by the incessant hot winds coming out from the north. Wandering dunes count as desert.

### MADDENING HEAT

Living creatures traveling across the Desolation by day are at risk of exposure to extreme heat. Any creature that takes a penalty to Health from a failure on the challenge roll to resist exposure also gains 1 Insanity.

## NOTABLE LOCATIONS

In addition to terrain hazards, the Desolation holds geographical features of particular interest.

### BLACK WATERS

Black Waters, a water-filled crater on the Desolation's edge, is surrounded by bones and reeks of noxious chemicals. The water is toxic to ingest, though madness brought on by the intense heat leads some creatures to sample it anyway.

**Noisome Atmosphere:** The pool stinks. Any creature that breathes the air within long range of it must make a Strength challenge roll with 1 bane. On a failure, the creature becomes fatigued for as long as it remains within long range of the pool and for 1 hour after. On a success, it becomes immune to the noisome atmosphere until after it completes a rest.

**Toxic Water:** Any creature that ingests the pool's water takes damage equal to half its Health and becomes poisoned. At the end of each minute thereafter, the creature must get a success on a Strength challenge roll with 3 banes or take damage equal to its healing rate. This poisoned condition persists until removed by magic.



## BURNING VAULTS

This string of active volcanoes marks the Desolation's western border, an ominous range too dangerous for most people to explore. Heavy black clouds hang over it year round, underlit by the flames and cinders belched from the burning peaks.

**Cinder Rain:** The black clouds over the Burning Vaults rain cinders across the slopes and sometimes into the dunes beyond. At the end of each hour a creature spends in or near the Vaults, it must get a success on a Strength challenge roll or take 1 damage from the fiery sparks swirling in the air.

**Eruption:** Each time the group completes a rest in the Vaults, roll a d6. On a roll of 1, roll a d20. After a number of hours equal to that roll, a nearby volcano erupts, vomiting lava, rocks, and smoke that rain down everywhere within a few miles of it. Everything in the area that isn't under some sort of shelter takes  $5d6 + 20$  damage. Each creature that gets a success on an Agility challenge roll takes half the damage.

**Steam Vents:** Plumes of steam frequently blast from fissures across the Vaults' lower slopes. Whenever a character in this region makes an attack roll or a challenge roll and the total of the roll is 0 or less, a fissure within short range of the triggering creature vents. Superheated steam fills a cone  $2d6$  yards long that extends toward the triggering character, dealing damage to each creature in the area equal to  $3d6 +$  the length of the cone. A success on a Strength challenge roll halves the damage.

**Tremors:** Whenever a character in the Vaults makes an attack roll or a challenge roll and the total of the roll is 20 or higher, tremors spread across the ground in a  $3d6$ -yard radius centered on a point in the triggering character's space. Each creature standing in the area must get a success on an Agility challenge roll or fall prone.

## FIREHEART

A city of black stone commands a spur jutting out from the side of Mount Wrath, one of the largest volcanoes in the Vaults. Here dwell several thousand **salamanders** who claim dominion over the mountain and its environs. A wall of black basalt 30 yards high rings the city, and fires blaze from the top to deter intruders. Inside, Fireheart is a tangle of streets twisting around the misshapen and warped structures that house the salamanders. The most

striking feature is Conflagration, a grand citadel of stone that rises from a pool of lava fed by streams leaking from the volcanic fissures above the city.

## THE CRUSADER STATES

The Empire bestowed land to the Cult of the New God to create a bulwark against the undead threat. The cult then divided the land into parcels and entrusted their governance and maintenance to five citadels arranged along the Desolation's border. These lands form the Crusader States, controlling a 50 mile wide swath of territory from the Iron Peaks in the east to the Troll Mountains to the west.

Five mighty strongholds protect the Empire from the Desolation. Around each stands a small village, home to the people who supply provisions to the garrison. Should



a citadel come under attack, the villagers take shelter behind its walls and aid the defenders. Living on the edges of civilization places great demands on people, so most head south when no longer able to contribute to the cause through age and infirmity.

The land shows signs of the crusaders' frequent clashes with undead. Burned-out towns and villages stand in the spaces between the citadels, the remains of destroyed undead rot where they fell, and twisted war machines, broken weapons, muddy fields, and mass graves are common sights.

## CRUSADER PATROLS

Regular patrols move through the area looking for signs of undead activity and for people who don't belong. A typical patrol consists of a crusade commander (as a **veteran** with the **leader** role), 2d6 + 3 crusaders (as **mercenaries**), and a scout (as a **brigand**), all riding on **warhorses**.

Crusaders wear the colors of their citadels and emblazon their shields with symbols of the New God, bits of scripture from the holy books, or the likenesses of famous crusaders. Commanders trim their colors in gold to designate their positions of authority.

## HIGH WATCH

High Watch stands on the side of a low mountain in the Iron Peaks. A single curving wall supported by four high towers surrounds the keep, the garrison, and other buildings. Crusaders from High Watch wear cloaks of gold and white, adorn their armor with eagle feathers, and fly banners depicting a golden eagle on a white field.

Commander Edgar Galtry leads a force of fifty crusaders. In his mid-sixties, with shaggy white hair and beard, he's considering retirement and has spent much time grooming Anna Reeve to take his place. Reeve, though young, is renowned for her fighting skills. She has the loyalty of the garrison and is likely to be an even greater leader than Galtry.

High Point has seen little action over the years, but its placement on the mountainside gives the citadel a great view of the wastelands. When guards spot approaching undead, they light signal fires atop the tallest tower to warn the garrison at Vanguard. High Point also uses specially trained eagles to carry messages to the other citadels and return with answers.

## MARYTR'S POINT

The first citadel constructed takes its name for Drusella the Wise, a holy champion of the New God. She led a mob of common people to drive back the undead until the crusaders could arrive but was killed in the conflict. Defenders of the citadel use her likeness on their banners,

which depict a pale woman with auburn hair pointing the way to victory. The crusaders all wear red cloaks.

Martyr's Point lacks ostentation. Four bare walls are arranged like a sword pointing north, and four stout towers anchor them, with cannons atop each. Behind the walls are the yard, garrison, keep, mess, and other smaller buildings vital to the citadel's day-to-day function. The village around it is small and has not yet recovered from being burned to the ground a year ago.

The citadel's commander is Renee Caldwell, a plainspoken woman in her forties. She leads a force of two hundred crusaders. There are whispers of a dark cult hidden within the ranks, but efforts to root it out have turned up nothing so far.

## NEVERFALL

This great citadel of black stone features a massive central tower surrounded by six rings of stone walls. The village clings to the outer wall, a collection of wooden homes clumped behind a wooden palisade that bulges like a tumor from the citadel.

The twins Harry and Mildred Veld command a force of one hundred crusaders, who wear the black of the citadel and decorate their armor with bits of bone taken from the undead they've cut down. All live in fear of the commanders, for they are stern, dispatching swift and brutal justice to any who offend them. Whispers abound about the pair, suggesting their relationship may be something more than brother and sister.

## VANGUARD

An ancient clockwork named Angel, who's believed to be over five hundred years old, has commanded Vanguard since it was founded. Angel is tall, his body clad in ornately wrought steel plates and with great wings of gold feathers on his back. Three hundred crusaders live in the citadel, displaying angel wings on crimson banners.

Vanguard has seen the most fighting and suffered the greatest losses. The village beyond the imposing castle has been burned so many times that its people now live out of tents. Despite the hardships and constant violence, those living here are firmly committed to the cause and loyal to their commander.

## WEST HOLD

Established by the orcs who supplemented the Northern Reach's defenders when the undead first emerged from the wastes, West Hold has retained a high orcish population. Of the two hundred crusaders living here, over a quarter are orcs. The citadel's commander is a brutal orc named Bloodfist, who took the position by force from his ineffectual predecessor, beating him to death with his bare hands.

West Hold's crusaders are a violent, surly lot, often insubordinate when given what they decide are stupid orders. They wear the colors of their citadel—yellow and red—and some decorate their armor and shields with the setting sun that appears on the citadel's banners.



## DRIFT STONES

The reckless magic used by the trolls, and later by the Men of Gog, lingers in places all across the Desolation. Among the stranger examples of its effects are the drift stones found floating above the dunes in the eastern wastes.

A swarm of a hundred or more rocks, ranging in size from pebbles to boulders as big as castles, bob like balloons in the air, nudged by the shrieking winds across the shifting landscape. If a drift stone moves too far from its fellows, whatever power that suspends it in the air dissipates and gravity reasserts itself, bringing the rock to the ground and pulping anything under it.

Many larger rocks among the drift stones bristle with structures such as towers, obelisks, and monstrous carved visages. Amid these ruins one can find relics and trinkets from the Men of Gog and other vanished civilizations. In the cracks and crevices lurk all kinds of strange creatures, all of which fly and prey on anything that draws near or passes beneath the stones.

## OBSIDIAN TOMBS

The only structures in the wastelands that have been able to resist the Desolation's destructive climate are the great pyramids scattered amid the dunes. They are constructed from blocks of glassy black stone resembling obsidian and feature entrances sealed with two heavy doors, elaborately decorated with statues of strange and impossible creatures. All around the tombs roam the animated corpses of the long dead, mindless slaves to whatever dread power dwells inside.

Raised up using magic and slaves in the time of the Witch-King, the pyramids served as palaces for the tyrannical death lords and as prisons for political enemies and dangerous rivals. Their undead masters were entombed within when Gog fell, but the dark power flowing through their tombs continues to preserve the undying inhabitants and boosts their magical power to create and command the undead.

For hundreds of years, the tombs have been silent, their inhabitants trapped in the sleep of ages. A century ago, something roused them from their slumber, and since then they have worked toward returning Gog to its former unspeakable glory. From these sites the undead hordes march south, following in the Witch-King's steps to conquer the lands of the living.



## THE VANISHING CITY

The few travelers who managed to explore the Desolation and survive to tell of their experiences report having seen a city in the dunes, a place of silvery stone, high towers, and glittering light. The closer they traveled toward it, the more it withdrew to let intruders come no closer. The city moves in this manner even when approached from different directions. Although some dismiss its unsettling appearance as a mirage, it is in fact a hidden kingdom of the faerie stranded in the wastes after the wars against the trolls.

The magic sustaining the hidden kingdom has started to fail, and the Desolation's toxic influence bleeds through its boundaries, twisting the inhabitants into monstrous things. Now corrupted faerie creep out from the city to steal water and supplies from travelers and then watch them slowly die.

## WHISPER CANYON

A great chasm, 20 miles long and 5 miles wide, cuts across an area of stone plains north of the Iron Peaks. At its deepest, the canyon drops some 500 yards to a dark and rubble-strewn floor. It takes its name from the wind that constantly blows through the place, whispering as it passes through the rocks.

Cave mouths honeycomb the walls on both sides. They lead to deep, twisting passages and larger caverns in which thousands of **troglodytes** make their homes. These abhorrent descendants of the Men of Gog travel through subterranean highways below the Northern Reach, emerging to strike isolated settlements beyond the crusaders' cordon. Efforts to stop the raids have proven futile, for the tunnels are extensive and labyrinthine.

The largest of the troglodyte grottos features an obsidian obelisk fashioned a thousand years ago by their ancestors to honor their vile gods. High priests make human sacrifices at the stone, and each soul offered causes the green runes crawling across its surface to flare obscenely.

## WEATHER IN THE DESOLATION

The Desolation presents special environmental dangers to explorers. Use the following table in place of the Weather table in **chapter 9** of the main rulebook.

### WEATHER

3d6	Weather	Time Multiplier
3	Dust storm	x 4 (see text)
4-5	Mild heat	x 1
6-12	Normal conditions	x 1
13-15	Brutal heat	x 1
16-17	Strong winds	x 1.5
18	Dust storm	x 4

**Brutal Heat:** The temperatures climb during daytime hours, making travel harder. Characters make Strength challenge rolls to resist the effects of exposure with 2 banes.

**Dust Storm:** Boiling clouds of dust race across the wastelands. A dust storm typically forms a curving line up to 2d6 + 3 miles wide, 1 mile high, and about a half-mile deep. It typically moves at 70 miles per hour, so escaping it is nearly impossible. Movement during a dust storm generally isn't practical; if the attempt is made, multiply travel time by 4.

The storm heavily obscures its area, and creatures moving through it treat the area as difficult terrain. Objects in the storm take 1d6 damage at the end of each round.

A creature must make a Strength challenge roll with 1 bane when the dust storm enters its space and again at the end of each round the creature is in the storm. On a failure, it takes 1d6 damage and becomes blinded until it leaves the dust storm; it just takes 1 damage on a success. If the creature was already blinded this way, it takes 1d6 extra damage instead on a failure.

**Mild Heat:** The temperature is not as severe as normal. Characters make Strength challenge rolls to resist the effects of exposure with 1 boon.

**Strong Wind:** Wind blows throughout the day, carrying with it stinging grit and sand. At the end of each hour traveling in these conditions, each character must get a success on a Strength challenge roll or take 1 damage.

## INTERESTING FEATURES

All across the wastelands lies the debris of those who came before. Eroded monuments reach out of sand dunes, or a heap of bones breaks the otherwise barren plain. Whenever you want to introduce an interesting feature to the landscape, you can use the following table, either choosing a suitable result or letting the dice decide.

### DESOLATION INTERESTING FEATURES

d20	Feature
1	A petrified tree.
2	A 1-mile-long row of crosses, each of which bears a crucified <b>animated corpse</b> .
3	The base of a broken tower, the interior filled with sand.
4	A petrified <b>troll</b> standing with its arms thrown over its head.
5	The broken body of an <b>animated corpse</b> twitching on the ground.
6	The tip of one of the obsidian tombs stabbing up from the sand or mud.
7	A funnel of wind and sand screaming as it travels away from the group.
8	The blackened bones of some enormous creature.
9	A boulder sitting at the bottom of a crater.
10	A few paver stones marking the place where a road once existed.
11	A mound of skulls.
12	A giant stone head lying on the ground or recently uncovered from the sands by a storm.
13	The foundations of 1d3 ruined buildings.
14	The carapace of a <b>giant beetle</b> .
15	Weird tracks left by an unknown creature.
16	An obelisk leaning to one side, sinking into the sand or mud.
17	A patch of glass covering an area with a radius of 1d3 yards.
18	A flickering curtain of light perpendicular to the ground. Passing through transports a creature or object 1d20 miles away in a random direction.
19	The ruins of a small city, consisting of 2d6 stone buildings.
20	A rock hanging in the air, unmoving and immovable.





# secrets of the desolation

As a setting for adventures, the Desolation promises unique dangers and secrets to unravel. Characters traveling into the wastes find themselves tested at every turn. Not only must they contend with the deadly creatures roaming the region, they must also deal with the hazardous environment, which can be as deadly as any monster. Yet for all its perils, the Desolation offers fabulous riches, old and potent magic, and great power for those with the courage to seize them.

The Desolation's hostility toward living things makes extended forays into the wastelands dangerous—even lethal. Travelers will find no places to replenish provisions or acquire the necessary gear to undertake new missions, so explorers must retreat to the relative safety of the Crusader States, where they might or might not find the aid they need. Thus, adventures into the Desolation ought to be mission-based, with clear objectives that can be attained in a reasonable time frame so the surviving characters can escape.

## ADVENTURE IDEAS

The following story ideas can serve as inspiration for adventures that take place in this setting.

**Under Siege (Starting or Novice):** The characters come from a crusader citadel, whether members of the garrison or from the supporting community. When a large force of undead besieges the stronghold, cultists within the walls detonate a bomb to breach the citadel's defenses and let the shuffling corpses roam free inside. The characters must not only defend the citadel from the dead but also unmask the traitors who jeopardized their lives.

**The Dead Walk (Novice):** Despite the crusaders' best efforts, undead slip through the defenses all the time. After a significant force of the walking dead spills into the farmlands to the south, the characters and the community come under attack. After defeating the shuffling horde, the group investigates how the creatures broke through to prevent another such event.



**Rescue Mission (Expert):** The commander of one of the citadels goes missing, abducted by a death lord's servants. The characters are sent to pursue the kidnappers and retrieve the commander before the captors reach their master's lair.

**Tomb Raiders (Expert or Master):** A powerful dust storm clears the sand and debris covering an ancient city, long lost to the world. The characters, through their own volition or at the behest of their patron, venture into the Desolation to explore the site and relieve it of its treasures.

**Shipwrecked (Master):** The Crusader States often send airships out over the Desolation to gather intelligence about the undead's movements. The characters fly one of these vessels and discover something important. However, before they can return, flying monsters attack and damage the vessel, forcing the group to make a crash landing. If the characters hope to live, they must find a way out from the wastes.

### SHADOW OF THE DEMON LORD

The Shadow of the Demon Lord options described in the main rulebook can also draw groups into the Desolation. The devastation of the Black Sun, for example, could have started in the Desolation and gradually widened to spread the wastes across the whole of the continent. Similarly, famine and drought might result from the Shadow falling on the death lords, who, bolstered by demonic power, channel magic from the tombs to alter the continent's climate. The Desolation could even have formed in anticipation of the herald of the Demon Lord. So profound is this being's influence on the world, its presence can be felt even into the past, causing the lands to sicken and die before it arrives.

## RELICS OF THE DESOLATION

The tombs and ruins of the Desolation hold great riches and wondrous treasures for those with the courage to explore them.

### BLOOD MAIL

Close inspection of this rusty suit of mail reveals that what appears to be corrosion is actually old, dried blood. This residue comes from previous wearers who paid the armor's steep price in return for its power.

Blood mail was forged by the trolls and later discovered by some of the mightiest champions of Gog, changing hands many times before becoming lost in the wastes.

**Enchanted Armor** While you wear the armor, you have a +1 bonus to Defense.

**Blood Drinker** While you are injured and wearing this armor, you make attack rolls with 1 boon. However, at the end of each round that you are injured while wearing it, you must get a success on a Strength challenge roll or take 1d3 damage.

### BONE ARROW

The faerie's victory over the trolls was a close thing, won only by using dark magic. The immortal faerie have done much to erase that time from their memories, but a few relics survive. The *Bone Arrow* is one of these, an item fashioned from the bones of the first immortal to have been murdered.

A thin length of bone tapering to a point at one end and notched at the other, the *Bone Arrow* is fletched with stiff bone fragments. Although designed for use with bows and longbows, it can also be fired from crossbows and hand crossbows. The arrow can always be recovered from the corpse of a creature it strikes and is never at risk of becoming lost (though a creature in which the arrow sticks can carry it off).

**Enchanted Ammunition** You make attack rolls with 1 boon with a weapon using this piece of ammunition.

**Cursed Ammunition** When the total of your attack roll using this piece of ammunition is 0 or less, the arrow veers back and automatically strikes you, dealing 2d6 damage and subjecting you to the Slaying Arrow effect.

**Slaying Arrow** A living creature that takes damage from the *Bone Arrow* must make a Strength challenge roll. It takes 8d6 extra damage on a failure, or half this damage on a success. A creature incapacitated by the damage dies instantly, its skeleton blasting out of its body in a torrent of gore. Any character that sees this event must get a success on a Will challenge roll or gain 1 Insanity.

### CAULDRON OF DEATH

Skulls and capering skeletal figures cover the surface of this squat cauldron forged from black iron. The interior reeks of decaying meat and, in still air, a faint greenish mist rises from within. The interior is 1 yard deep and 2 yards in diameter.

The trolls fashioned this vile device, filling it with the corpses of elves and other faerie to create undead thralls. The Witch-King owned the *Cauldron of Death* for a time, but it was lost after his downfall.

**Raise the Dead** Any living creature placed inside the *Cauldron* takes damage equal to its Health and dies instantly, rising as an animated corpse 1d6 rounds later under the control of the creature that placed it inside the relic. The new undead creature stands up and moves out of the cauldron.

### MANTLE OF THE HARROWER

A soft, velvety robe of black so dark it seems to drink the light, the *Mantle of the Harrower* hangs loosely from the wearer's body, expanding to accommodate any frame. It always feels cool to the touch and absorbs no moisture, even when submerged in water.





**Deathly Raiment:** The mantle once belonged to the Witch-King's chief rival, a despicable warlock named the Harrower, who raised an army of undead to wrest control of Gog from the tyrant. The two forces clashed, and the Harrower was cast down in defeat. Rather than destroy him, the Witch-King sealed his enemy in what became the first black tomb, confining his foe with all his lackeys in the cramped space for all time.

The raiment is believed to be in that tomb still, though travelers whisper that they have seen the fluttering cloth drifting in the wind, as if leading them to its owner's prison.

**Darksight** While wearing the *Mantle*, you can see in areas obscured by shadows and darkness within medium range as if those areas were lit. Beyond this distance, you treat darkness as shadows and shadows as lit. If you already have darksight, increase the range to long range.

**Nightweave** You lose the Burned by Sunlight trait, if you have it, while you wear the *Mantle*. As well, creatures attacking you with Celestial spells make the attack rolls with 1 bane, while you make challenge rolls with 1 boon to resist such spells.

**Power of Death** While wearing the *Mantle*, you increase the number of castings for Death (see *Demon Lord's Companion*) and Necromancy spells you have learned by 1 each.

## CREATURES OF THE DESOLATION

Many strange creatures both living and dead haunt the wastelands. See chapter 10 of *Shadow of the Demon Lord* for information about using creatures in the game.

### BEASTMAN, ANUBIN

The Men of Gog devolved after the Witch-King's defeat; many became twisted horrors, warped by their corruption. Most became fomor and wargs, the beastmen that trouble the Empire even now. Those fleeing to the desert were transformed into anubin, jackal-headed humanoids noted for their quickness, ferocity, and ability to survive in a place lethal to others.

Anubin stand just shy of 7 feet tall and have lithe bodies browned by the sun. They wear loose white robes and cover their jackal heads with hoods. Many use **skeletal steeds** as mounts, while tribes train **giant scorpions** to serve as guards. (Those creatures are described later in this section.)

#### ANUBIN

DIFFICULTY 25

##### Size 1 beastman

**Perception** 12 (+2); shadowsight  
**Defense** 13 (large shield); **Health** 23  
**Strength** 13 (+3), **Agility** 11 (+1), **Intellect** 10 (+0), **Will** 11 (+1)  
**Speed** 12

#### ATTACK OPTIONS

**Khopesh** (melee) +3 with 1 boon (2d6 + 2 plus the anubin moves up to half its Speed without triggering free attacks on attack roll 20+)

**Bow** (long range) +1 with 1 boon (1d6)

#### SPECIAL ATTACKS

**Bounding Assault** The anubin uses an action to move up to half its Speed and make a melee attack. It makes the attack roll with 1 bane, but this movement does not trigger free attacks.

## CYCLOPS

Cyclopes live in the Burning Vaults, where they toil over forges to craft arms and armor of magical power. One-eyed giants with massive, muscular bodies, they stand 20 feet tall and weigh thousands of pounds. In battle, they wear suits of gleaming plate armor and wield massive swords of exceptional craftsmanship.

Cyclopes build strongholds on the smoking slopes of active volcanoes. They prefer isolation and patrol their lands with a vigilance bordering on paranoia. They live in fear of thieves making off with the fabulous wealth and relics of power they possess. Hatred and bitterness consume most cyclopes, but they despise humans more than all others and attack them on sight. They blame humanity, especially the descendants of Gog, for all the world's troubles.

Cyclopes speak High Archaic, and most know at least a few words of Trollish.

### CYCLOPS

DIFFICULTY 100

#### Size 3 giant

**Perception** 6 (-4)  
**Defense** 18 (full plate); **Health** 80  
**Strength** 18 (+8), **Agility** 11 (+1), **Intellect** 8 (-2), **Will** 12 (+2)  
**Speed** 12

**Immune** damage from fire and poison; poisoned

**Poor Depth Perception** When a cyclops attacks a target within 1 yard of it, it makes the attack roll with 1 bane.

**Crushing Footfalls** When a cyclops moves into a space occupied by a creature on the ground, the creature must make an Agility challenge roll. On a failure, it takes 3d6 damage and falls prone. If it's already prone, it takes 1d6 extra damage. A creature makes this roll once per round per cyclops regardless of how many times the cyclops moves through its space.

**Giantfall** When an effect knocks the cyclops prone, the cyclops's body covers an area on the ground that is as long and as wide as it is tall, starting at the edge of its space and extending away from the source of the effect that knocked it prone. The cyclops deals 6d6 damage to everything in the area where it falls.

Each creature in the area must make an Agility challenge roll with 3 banes. On a success, the creature takes half the damage and moves to the nearest open space outside the area. On a failure, it becomes trapped under the cyclops's body.

A trapped creature is prone, blinded, immobilized, and totally covered. It can use an action to make an Agility challenge roll with 4 banes. On a success, the creature moves to the nearest open space and removes all afflictions imposed by Giantfall.

#### ATTACK OPTIONS

**Greatsword** (melee) +8 with 3 boons (5d6 + 3 plus Powerful Strike)

**Boulder** (long range) +8 with 3 boons (5d6 + 3)

**Powerful Strike** If the target is Size 2 or smaller, it must get a success on a Strength challenge roll or be thrown 2d6 yards away from the cyclops, falling prone at the end of this movement.

## DEATH LORD

The death lords, also called lichs, were once the high nobles who served the Witch-King centuries ago. After they were driven into the wastes, they turned to necromancy to extend their lives and alleviate the anguish of hunger and thirst. They fashioned special containers called phylacteries from ornate boxes, blades, masks, and other treasures.

They then killed themselves with poison to free their souls from their bodies and trap them in the containers they had prepared. This act suspended them between life and death, keeping their souls in the mortal world and their dead bodies animate. This process requires tremendous magical power, so death lords are among the most dangerous magic-users in the world.

The magic sustaining death lords offers no protection against decay, however. They are withered, horrid things, their dry bones held together with bits of wire and leather, their unholy power gleaming red from their empty eye sockets. Their abominable state fosters madness and evil in their withered hearts, driving them to become agents of the apocalypse and enemies of all living things.

Most death lords dwell in the Desolation's black pyramids, though knowledge of their dark magic has spread to other lands from forbidden tombs, scrolls, and even pottery shards plucked from plundered treasure vaults.

Death lords speak High Archaic and  $1d3 + 1$  additional languages.

### DEATH LORD

DIFFICULTY 500

#### Size 1 horrifying undead

**Perception** 17 (+7); darksight  
**Defense** 20; **Health** 100  
**Strength** 15 (+5), **Agility** 15 (+5), **Intellect** 17 (+7), **Will** 17 (+7)  
**Speed** 8

**Immune** damage from cold, disease, and poison; gaining Insanity; asleep, diseased, fatigued, immobilized, poisoned, slowed

**Resilience** A death lord takes half damage from weapons.

**Spell Defense** A death lord takes half damage from spells and makes any challenge roll to resist a spell with 1 boon. A creature attacking the death lord with a spell makes the attack roll with 1 bane.

#### ATTACK OPTIONS

**Claw** (melee) +5 with 1 boon (3d6 plus Grave Touch)

**Grave Touch** If living, the target must make a Strength challenge roll with 1 bane. On a failure, it becomes slowed for 1 minute. While slowed in this way, the target is also frightened. If the target is already slowed by Grave Touch, it becomes immobilized for 1 minute instead. If it is already immobilized by Grave Touch, it becomes defenseless for 1 minute instead.

#### SPECIAL ACTIONS

**Counterspell** When a creature the death lord can see attacks it with a spell, the death lord can use a triggered action to counter it. The triggering creature makes the attack roll (if any) with 1 bane and the death lord makes the challenge roll to resist it (if any) with 1 boon.



**Void Step** The death lord can use an action or a triggered action on its turn to teleport to an open space it can see within short range.

#### MAGIC

**Power 6**

**Death\*** *killing touch (7), injure (3), life drain (3), poisonous breath (2), death fog (2), stop heart (1)*

**Divination** *vision (2), clairvoyance (1)*

**Necromancy** *spectral grasp (7), grave grasp (3), harvest soul (3), shrieking skull (2), well of dark power (2), army of the dead (1)*

**Teleportation** *dismiss (7), boundless step (2), travel (1)*

\* The *Demon Lord Companion™* supplement describes the Death tradition. If you don't have that book, replace this tradition and spells from it with those from a source you do have.



#### END OF THE ROUND

**Epic Recovery** The death lord removes one affliction from itself.

**Epic Adversary** Roll 1d3 + 1 to determine how many actions the death lord can use during the next round. The death lord can use these actions during any turn and can do so before its enemies act. Each time the death lord uses an action, it can move up to its Speed before or after the action.

**Lethal Presence** Each living creature within short range of the death lord must get a success on a Strength challenge roll with 1 bane or take 1d6 damage.

## DESICCATED ONE

Creatures that succumb to deprivation in the Desolation sometimes rouse themselves from death as desiccated ones, horrid monsters that feed on the liquids they extract from living creatures. They gather in loose bands, loping across the dunes, driven by a thirst that torments but can never kill them.

A desiccated one has a skeletal frame and a skull-like visage perched atop a thin neck. Its mouth hangs open slackly, but within coils a long tubelike tongue it injects into its victims to suck them dry. Whenever a desiccated one feeds, its body fills with the fluid, becoming sluggish and bloated.

#### DESICCATED ONE

DIFFICULTY 10

*Size 1 horrifying undead*

**Perception** 9 (-1); darksight

**Defense** 8; **Health** 20

**Strength** 11 (+1), **Agility** 8 (-2), **Intellect** 7 (-3),

**Will** 13 (+3)

**Speed** 10

**Immune** damage from cold, disease, and poison; gaining Insanity; asleep, diseased, fatigued, poisoned

**Fire Vulnerability** A desiccated one takes double damage from fire.

#### ATTACK OPTIONS

**Claws** (melee) +1 with 2 boons (1d6 + 2, plus the target is grabbed on attack roll 20+)

#### SPECIAL ATTACKS

**Desiccate** The desiccated one makes a Strength attack roll against the Strength of one target living creature it has grabbed. On a success, the desiccated one gains a cumulative +1d6 bonus to Health for 1 minute and the target takes 3d6 damage and becomes fatigued for 1 minute. If the target is already fatigued in this way, it takes 3d6 extra damage.

While the desiccated one has this bonus to Health, it takes a -4 penalty to Speed and cannot take fast turns.

## DUST DEVIL

Twisting ribbons of wind rip across the Desolation, impelled by an unnatural force. Wind genies, driven mad by the ruin of their land, merge with the shifting sands to become the hateful dust devils. They despise living things and delight in flensing their enemies' flesh from their bones.

### DUST DEVIL

DIFFICULTY 25

*Size 1 genie*

**Perception** 9 (-1); truesight

**Defense** 16; **Health** 20

**Strength** 12 (+2), **Agility** 15 (+5), **Intellect** 6 (-4), **Will** 9 (-1)

**Speed** 20

**Immune** damage from disease and poison; gaining Insanity; blinded, dazed, deafened, diseased, fatigued, frightened, immobilized, poisoned, prone, slowed, stunned, and any effect that would change the dust devil's shape

**Resilience** A dust devil takes half damage from weapons.

**Amorphous** A dust devil can move freely through openings wide enough to permit the passage of air, and it can move through spaces occupied by other creatures.

### ATTACK OPTIONS

**Buffeting Wind** (melee; reach +4) +5 (2d6 plus Blinding Dust on attack roll 20+)

**Blinding Dust** The target becomes blinded for 1 minute. If the target is already blinded in this way, extend the duration by 1 minute.

### SPECIAL ACTIONS

**Erratic Moves** When a creature gets a failure on an attack roll against the dust devil, the dust devil can use a triggered action to move 1d6 yards. This movement does not trigger free attacks.

## FORSAKEN

The death lords entrust command of their undead legion to the forsaken, a breed of intelligent animated corpses infused with the blackest magic. They look like withered zombies, flesh drawn tight to their bones and green pinpricks glowing in the darkness of their eye sockets. Unlike zombies, though, forsaken are fast and graceful. They carry bone staffs.

The forsaken were once the Witch-King's greatest champions and for their service were granted eternal life by their master's dark magic. They speak High Archaic in whispery voices.

### FORSAKEN

DIFFICULTY 25

*Size 1 horrifying undead*

**Perception** 13 (+3); darksight

**Defense** 13; **Health** 20

**Strength** 14 (+4), **Agility** 13 (+3), **Intellect** 11 (+1), **Will** 14 (+4)

**Speed** 12

**Immune** damage from cold, disease, and poison; gaining Insanity; asleep, diseased, fatigued, poisoned

### ATTACK OPTIONS

**Staff** (melee) +4 with 1 boon (2d6 + 1)

**Claws** (melee) +4 with 1 boon (1d6 + 1)

### SPECIAL ATTACKS

**Death Sigil** The forsaken raps its staff on the ground, causing a wriggling black sigil to appear on a point it can reach. Dark energy spreads across the ground from that point in a 2-yard radius and remains for 1 minute or until the forsaken uses this action again. Whenever a living creature on the ground in the area takes damage, it takes 1d6 extra damage.

**Keening** The forsaken screams. Each creature in a 3-yard cone extending from a point within the forsaken's space must make a Strength challenge roll with 1 bane. On a failure, the creature takes 1d6 damage and becomes immobilized for 1 round and deafened for 1 minute. Once the forsaken uses Keening, it cannot do so again for 1 minute.

## GIANT SCORPION

Giant scorpions hunt at night, creeping through the darkness to snatch prey in their pincers and pierce with their stingers. They live in the dunes, burying themselves under the sand by day. These beasts resemble their small kin but have black carapaces as strong as iron and can grow to 12 feet long or longer.

### GIANT SCORPION

DIFFICULTY 100

*Size 2-3 animal*

**Perception** 14 (+4); darksight

**Defense** 18; **Health** 50

**Strength** 14 (+4), **Agility** 13 (+3), **Intellect** 6 (-4), **Will** 10 (+0)

**Speed** 12

**Immune** gaining Insanity

### ATTACK OPTIONS

**Pincer** (melee) +4 with 2 boons (1d6 + 2 and the target is grabbed on attack roll 20+)

**Stinger** (melee) +4 with 2 boons against a grabbed target (1d6 plus Poison)

**Poison** The target must get a success on a Strength challenge roll with 3 banes or take 3d6 extra damage and become poisoned for 1 minute. If it is already poisoned, the target instead takes 3d6 extra damage.

At the end of each round while poisoned in this way, the target must make a Strength challenge roll. On a failure, it takes 1d6 damage.

### SPECIAL ATTACKS

**Snap and Sting** The giant scorpion attacks twice with its pincers and once with its stinger.



## GREAT HORNED BEETLE

These enormous beetles roam the wastelands, preying on the animated dead and other creatures they can catch. They are named for the profusion of horns, spines, ridges, and fins protruding from their heads and carapaces.

### GREAT HORNED BEETLE

**DIFFICULTY** 100

#### Size 5 animal

**Perception** 8 (-2)

**Defense** 18; **Health** 100

**Strength** 16 (+6), **Agility** 9 (-1), **Intellect** 5 (-5), **Will** 6 (-4)

**Speed** 6

**Immune** gaining Insanity

#### ATTACK OPTIONS

**Horns** (melee) +6 (3d6)

**Mandibles** (melee; reach -3) +6 (2d6 + 3)

#### SPECIAL ATTACKS

**Double Attack** The beetle attacks with its horns and its mandibles.

**Undead Beetles:** The death lords sometimes use the carcasses of dead horned beetles as mobile siege engines. Ghouls feed on the soft tissues until only the shells remain. Death lords infuse the shells with dark magic, causing them to move once more. The beetles' hard carapaces deflect projectiles, protecting their undead cargo as they move to the battle's front lines.

An undead great horned beetle is a vehicle, using the rules described in the *Demon Lord's Companion*. It has the following statistics.

### UNDEAD HORNED BEETLE

**PRICE** 50 GC

#### Size 5 undead (vehicle)

**Defense** 18; **Health** 100

**Strength** 16 (+6), **Agility** 8 (-2), **Intellect** —, **Will** —

**Space** 3 × 8; **Maximum Speed** 6 (acceleration 2/ deceleration 2)

**Crew** One driver

**Cargo** 8

**Immune** damage from disease and poison; all afflictions; attack rolls against Intellect, Will, or Perception; effects that allow challenge rolls using Intellect, Will, or Perception

**Sluggish** The driver can only take only slow turns.

#### ATTACK OPTIONS

**Horns** (melee) +6 with 1 bane (3d6)

**Mandibles** (melee; reach -3) +6 with 1 bane (2d6 + 3)

#### SPECIAL ATTACKS

**Double Attack** The driver can command the beetle to attack with its horns and its mandibles.

## LAMIA

The Witch-King transformed some subjects into horrid forms, those who displeased and delighted him both. Gorgons, vampires, and many other terrifying creatures at

large in the world owe their existence to this mad tyrant. The lamias, close cousins to the gorgons, live in the ruins of the Desolation, where they hatch unspeakable plots to work chaos and evil in the world.

Lamias use illusions and charms to bewitch and lure travelers into their lairs. There they subject the unfortunates to their tender ministrations, their honeyed words darkening souls with corruption and tempting their victims to commit greater and greater acts of villainy.

Lamias don't have to eat, but they enjoy the sensation, especially when their victims are living. The servants they corrupt become their slaves and are often sent to snatch children to grace the lamias' dining tables. Others they use to sate their carnal appetites, discarding the slaves when they tire of the sport. Such abandoned wretches become ghouls, raving across the wastelands and tormented by hunger and thirst.

A lamia's appearance is monstrous, something the creature conceals behind the illusions it weaves. From the waist up, it has the body of an attractive human man or woman, though with four arms. From the waist down, the lamia's body tapers into a serpent's tail.

Lamias speak the Common Tongue, High Archaic, and Dark Speech.



## LAMIA

DIFFICULTY 250

### Size 2 horrifying monster

**Perception** 14 (+4); darksight  
**Defense** 17; **Health** 90  
**Strength** 14 (+4), **Agility** 17 (+7), **Intellect** 12 (+2), **Will** 16 (+6)  
**Speed** 18

**Immune** gaining Insanity; charmed, compelled, dazed, frightened, stunned

### ATTACK OPTIONS

**Scimitar** (melee) +7 with 2 boons (2d6 + 1)

**Tail** (melee; reach +1) +7 with 1 boon (2d6 plus the target is grabbed on attack roll 20+)

### SPECIAL ATTACKS

**Double Attack** The lamia attacks twice with its scimitar.

**Corrupting Whispers** The lamia makes a Will attack roll against the Will of one target creature within medium range that can hear it. On a success, the target gains 1 Corruption and becomes compelled for a number of rounds equal to its new Corruption total. Once the lamia uses Corrupting Whispers, it must wait 1 round before it can do so again.

**Fearsome Glare** When the lamia makes an attack roll against a target creature that can see it, the lamia can use a triggered action to force the target to make a Will challenge roll with 1 bane. The target becomes frightened for 1 round on a failure; on a success, it becomes immune to that lamia's Fearsome Glare until completing a rest.

### SPECIAL ACTIONS

**Serpent Strike** When a creature moves into the lamia's reach, the lamia can use a triggered action to attack the triggering creature with its tail.

### MAGIC

**Power** 3

**Enchantment** *presence* (4), *charm* (2), *command* (2), *question* (2), *compel* (1)

**Illusion** *disguise* (4), *figment* (2), *vertigo* (2), *invisibility* (1), *phantasm* (1)

### END OF THE ROUND

**Epic Recovery** The lamia removes one affliction from itself.

**Epic Adversary** Roll 1d3 + 1 to determine how many actions the lamia can use during the next round. The lamia can use these actions during any turn and can do so before its enemies act. Each time the lamia uses an action, it can move up to its Speed before or after the action.

## MUMMY

Mummies are withered human corpses covered in yellowing funerary linens. Some also wear clothing, plaques hanging from chains around their necks, masks, or crowns. They are all lumbering killers, driven by the magic powering them to destroy the living.

Many mummies in the Desolation are the preserved remains of the Witch-King's enemies, imbued with necromantic power to deny them the rebirth promised to all mortal creatures. Having spent centuries in this state has left them nearly mindless and hating all life they encounter.

## MUMMY

DIFFICULTY 100

### Size 1 horrifying undead

**Perception** 10 (+0); darksight  
**Defense** 17; **Health** 80  
**Strength** 17 (+7), **Agility** 9 (-1), **Intellect** 7 (-3), **Will** 15 (+5)  
**Speed** 6

**Immune** damage from cold, disease, and poison; gaining Insanity; asleep, blinded, deafened, diseased, fatigued, immobilized, poisoned, slowed

**Paralyzing Horror** A creature that gains Insanity from seeing a mummy also becomes immobilized while it is frightened in this way.

**Fire Vulnerability** A mummy takes double damage from fire.

### ATTACK OPTIONS

**Fist** (melee) +7 with 1 boon (3d6 plus 3d6 extra damage against an immobilized target)

### SPECIAL ATTACKS

**Mummy's Curse** The mummy can use an action or a triggered action on its turn to bestow a curse on one target creature within medium range. The target must make a Will challenge roll with 1 bane, becoming cursed on a failure. On a success, the target is immune to all mummies' curses until it completes a rest.

A creature cursed in this way cannot heal damage, and whenever it takes damage, it takes 1d6 extra damage.

The curse lasts until removed by magic or until the mummy is destroyed.

### SPECIAL ACTIONS

**Fiery Wrath** When the mummy takes damage from fire, it can use a triggered action to attack with its fist.

## MURK

Many things have drowned in the boiling mud on the edges of the Burning Vault, but not all rest easy in their grave. Sometimes a victim's essence lingers, merging with the slime to form a dripping mass of mud that smashes and destroys whatever it can reach. In its mindless violence, the murk is an incarnation of the wasteland's dangers.

## MURK

DIFFICULTY 50

### Size 2 monster

**Perception** 10 (+0); sightless  
**Defense** 8; **Health** 100  
**Strength** 16 (+6), **Agility** 8 (-2), **Intellect** 5 (-5), **Will** 15 (+5)  
**Speed** 6

**Immune** gaining Insanity; asleep, blinded, dazed, deafened, fatigued, frightened, stunned



**Freezing Mud** When the murk takes damage from cold or ice, it partly freezes for 1 round. Until the effect ends, the murk has a +2 bonus to Defense and a -4 penalty to Speed.

#### ATTACK OPTIONS

**Fist** (melee) +6 with 1 boon (3d6 plus the target becomes blinded for 1 round on attack roll 20+)

#### SPECIAL ACTIONS

**Mudslide** The murk punches a point on the ground it can reach. The ground within short range of that point becomes a soupy morass of mud that lasts for 1 minute. Creatures other than murks treat the area as difficult terrain.

## REVENANT

Revenants are mortals who have somehow eluded their deaths and linger in the world. Most escape the Underworld or Hell through sheer determination, refusing to go until they accomplish some deed or fulfill an obligation. Their position between life and death affords them many qualities possessed by undead creatures, even though they are still living and breathing people.

For more information on revenants, see **chapter 1** in this supplement.

### REVENANT

DIFFICULTY 50

#### Size 1 revenant

**Perception** 8 (-2); darksight  
**Defense** 16 (mail, large shield); **Health** 44; surprising return  
**Strength** 13 (+3), **Agility** 10 (+0), **Intellect** 8 (-2), **Will** 11 (+1)  
**Speed** 10  
**Insanity** 5

**Immune** damage from disease and poison; diseased, fatigued, poisoned

**Surprising Return** When a revenant would become incapacitated, roll a d6. On a 6, the revenant appears dead; 1 round later, it heals 2d6 damage and stands up.

**One Foot in the Grave** A revenant heals only half the normal amount of damage from magic and potions.

#### ATTACK OPTIONS

**Sword** (melee) +3 with 2 boons (3d6 + 2)

**Longbow** (long range) +0 with 2 boons (3d6 + 1)

#### SPECIAL ATTACKS

**Eyes of the Underworld** The revenant uses an action to make a Will attack roll against the Will of one target creature within short range that can see it. On a success, the target becomes frightened for 1 minute. On a failure, the target becomes immune to that revenant's Eyes of the Underworld until it completes a rest.

## SALAMANDER

Long ago, the genies fashioned salamanders from elemental flame, granting them physical forms and mortality. A society of warriors, salamanders fought for their masters, battling the faerie and mortal races until the time of the genies came to an end, which freed the salamanders to make their way in the world on their own. Now, most salamanders live in sweltering places, barren and desolate, such as the slopes of volcanoes, deserts, and mud flats.

Salamanders have humanoid-shaped bodies, with orange, red, or black skin. Their eyes are white without pupils and brown or black horns rise from their heads and extend out from their arms and legs. Some salamanders are born with tails instead of legs, but they are deemed a lower breed and considered freakish and wrong.

Salamanders speak Firespeak, a hissing and clicking language other peoples find difficult to pronounce. For more information on salamanders, see **chapter 1** in this supplement.

### SALAMANDER

DIFFICULTY 5

#### Size 1 elemental

**Perception** 8 (-2)  
**Defense** 11 (large shield); **Health** 16  
**Strength** 10 (+0), **Agility** 9 (-1), **Intellect** 9 (-1), **Will** 11 (+1)  
**Speed** 10

**Immune** damage from disease, fire, and poison; diseased, poisoned

**Cold Intolerant** A salamander takes double damage from cold. When it takes damage from cold, it also becomes fatigued for 1 round.

**Fiery Death** When the salamander dies, flames burst out to 4 yards from a point within its space. Everything in the area takes 1d6 + 4 damage. Each creature in the area that gets a success on an Agility challenge roll takes half the damage instead.

#### ATTACK OPTIONS

**Longspear** (melee; reach +1) +0 with 1 boon (1d6)

**Tail** (melee) +0 with 1 boon (1d3 plus the target becomes grabbed on attack roll 20+)

#### SPECIAL ACTIONS

**Scorching Reprisal** When the salamander becomes injured, it can use a triggered action to release a burst of flames in a 2-yard radius from a point within its space. Everything in the area takes 1d6 damage. Each creature in the area that gets a success on an Agility challenge roll instead takes no damage.

#### END OF THE ROUND

**Heat** A creature grabbed by the salamander must get a success on a Strength challenge roll or take 1d3 damage.

## ELEMENTALS

In a time long before humanity emerged from the caves, when the faerie roamed the mortal world, genies were the masters of the skies and seas, the flames and mountains. Some heretics believe these wild spirits brought the world into existence and prepared the way for all living things to grow and thrive. If they were indeed responsible for the birth of creation, the genies were distant creators at best, uncaring of what they had wrought.

The coming of the faerie and their magical mastery challenged the genies' dominance. To safeguard creation and to protect themselves from the potent fey magic, the genies fashioned servants from the elements and gave them life. At least four races of elementals are known: the rocklike gnomes who dwell in the bowels of the earth, the mercurial undines who caper and play in the oceans' depths, the whimsical sylphs at home in the clouds, and the brash and hateful salamanders, who claimed the most inhospitable places in the world.

## SAND MITE SWARM

Sand mites are some of the few living creatures able to survive in the wastes. Despite the name, they are minuscule insects that feed on scraps of organic matter they find in the sand. In places with abundant food, such as in the tombs, the mites gather into enormous swarms capable of stripping a living creature to the bones within moments. These great heaving masses plunge into the sand and burst free to envelop their prey.

### SAND MITE SWARM

DIFFICULTY 10

*Size 2 animal (swarm)*

**Perception** 10 (+0); sightless

**Defense** 12; **Health** 10

**Strength** 10 (+0), **Agility** 12 (+2), **Intellect** 5 (-5), **Will** 11 (+1)

**Speed** 10; Tunnel

**Immune** blinded, charmed, dazed, deafened, frightened, grabbed, immobilized, prone, slowed, stunned

**Multitude** A swarm takes half damage from attacks that use an attack roll and double damage from effects that require it to make a challenge roll.

**Revulsion** Creatures that are not swarms are impaired while they remain in the swarm's space or within 1 yard of it.

#### ATTACK OPTIONS

**Pincers** (melee) +2 with 1 boon (1d6 plus Overwhelm on attack roll 20+, or just 1d3 if the swarm is injured)

**Overwhelm** If living, the target takes 1d6 extra damage, falls prone, and becomes overwhelmed. While overwhelmed, the target cannot move and attack rolls against it are made with 1 boon. An overwhelmed creature can use an action to make a Strength challenge roll. A success removes the affliction.

#### SPECIAL ACTIONS

**Tunnel** The sand mite swarm moves up to its Speed through earth, sand, or other material of similar consistency. It leaves a 1-yard-diameter tunnel behind it.

#### END OF THE ROUND

**Swarming Mites** Each creature that isn't a swarm that is in the swarm's space or within 1 yard of it must make an Agility challenge roll. On a failure, the creature takes 1d6 damage and becomes slowed for 1 round.

## SEVERED

Bits and pieces of human bodies can be found everywhere in the Desolation, from twitching hands creeping over a sand dune to a severed head perched on a rock overlooking a pool of boiling mud. The same dark magic that animated the corpses of the fallen gives these dismembered parts a semblance of life and wicked purpose, so that even a minor body part can kill.

### SEVERED

DIFFICULTY 1

*Size 1/4 frightening undead*

**Perception** 10 (+0); sightless

**Defense** 11; **Health** 8

**Strength** 8 (-2), **Agility** 11 (+1), **Intellect** 5 (-5), **Will** 9 (-1)

**Speed** 8; climber

**Immune** damage from disease and poison; gaining Insanity; asleep, blinded, charmed, dazed, deafened, diseased, fatigued, frightened, poisoned, stunned

#### ATTACK OPTIONS

**Natural Weapons** (melee) +1 (1d3)

#### SPECIAL ACTIONS

**Springing Attack** When a creature the severed can reach gets a failure on an attack roll against the severed's Defense or Agility, the severed can use a triggered action to attack that creature.

## SKELETAL STEED

The remains of horses, skeletal steeds bear elite champions of the death lords into battle. They have the shape of horses and move like them, but little of their flesh and hide remain.

### SKELETAL STEED

DIFFICULTY 5

*Size 2 frightening undead*

**Perception** 8 (-2); darksight

**Defense** 13; **Health** 10

**Strength** 13 (+3), **Agility** 13 (+3), **Intellect** 5 (-5), **Will** 13 (+3)

**Speed** 14

**Immune** damage from cold, disease, and poison; gaining Insanity; asleep, diseased, fatigued, poisoned

#### ATTACK OPTIONS

**Hooves** (melee) +3 (1d6)

#### SPECIAL ACTIONS

**Gallop** The skeletal steed moves up to three times its Speed.



## VAMPIRE BROOD

A newly made vampire awakens as a slave to its sire. The vampire brood must obey every command given to it and subsist on whatever scraps its maker tosses it. The relationship of brood to sire is rarely healthy; brood come to resent their makers and may go so far as to plot against them.

It takes time for vampires to control their dark powers; thus, brood tend to be feral, wild-looking, and monstrous. Slaves to their thirst, they attack living creatures without hesitation, rushing forward to sink their fangs into victims and drain them dry.

### VAMPIRE BROOD

DIFFICULTY 50

#### Size 1 frightening undead

**Perception** 12 (+2); darksight  
**Defense** 18; **Health** 60  
**Strength** 12 (+2), **Agility** 13 (+3), **Intellect** 10 (+0), **Will** 12 (+2)  
**Speed** 14

**Immune** damage from cold, disease, poison; gaining  
 Insanity; asleep, diseased, fatigued, immobilized,  
 poisoned, slowed

**Celestial Vulnerability** A vampire brood takes double  
 damage from Celestial spells and makes challenge rolls  
 to resist Celestial spells with 1 bane.

**Fear of the Gods** A vampire brood makes attack rolls with  
 1 bane against a creature wearing or wielding a holy  
 symbol.

#### ATTACK OPTIONS

**Fangs** (melee) +3 with 1 boon (2d6 + 1)

#### SPECIAL ACTIONS

**Blood Drain** The vampire brood makes a Strength attack  
 roll against the Strength of one target living creature of  
 flesh and blood that it has grabbed. On a success, the  
 target takes 1d6 damage and becomes fatigued until  
 it completes a rest. The vampire brood heals the same  
 amount of damage. If the target is already fatigued in  
 this way, it must get a success on a Will challenge roll or  
 become charmed until it completes a rest.

#### END OF THE ROUND

**Burned by Sunlight** The vampire brood takes 2d6 damage  
 if it is in an area lit by sunlight.

## WHISPER CACTUS

Whisper cacti grow in clumps near the edges of the Desolation, the crimson flowers between their finger-long thorns belying their danger. Should anything move within range of their senses, they eject the thorns with tremendous force, strong enough to punch through steel. As it is loosed, each thorn makes a faint whispering noise, from which the plant takes its name.

### WHISPER CACTUS

DIFFICULTY 1

#### Size 1 plant

**Perception** 11 (+1); sightless  
**Defense** 5; **Health** 10  
**Strength** 5 (-5), **Agility** 5 (-5), **Intellect** 5 (-5), **Will** 15 (+5)  
**Speed** 0

**Immune** gaining Insanity; asleep, blinded, dazed, deafened,  
 fatigued, frightened, stunned

**Sluggish** A whisper cactus can take only slow turns and  
 cannot use triggered actions.

#### ATTACK OPTIONS

**Thorn** (medium range) -5 with 4 boons (1d6)

#### SPECIAL ATTACKS

**Thorn Burst** The whisper cactus looses a spray of thorns  
 from a point within its space. Each creature within  
 short range of that point must make an Agility challenge  
 roll with 1 bane. A creature takes 2d6 damage on a  
 failure, or just half the damage on a success. Once the  
 whisper cactus uses Thorn Burst, it cannot do so again  
 for 1 round.

## OTHER CREATURES

In addition to the new creatures described here, all of the  
 following creatures from *Shadow of the Demon Lord* are  
 appropriate for adventures set in the Desolation.

**Difficulty 1:** animated corpse and tiny monster

**Difficulty 5:** burrowing centipede, gremlin, redcap, small  
 monster, and zombie

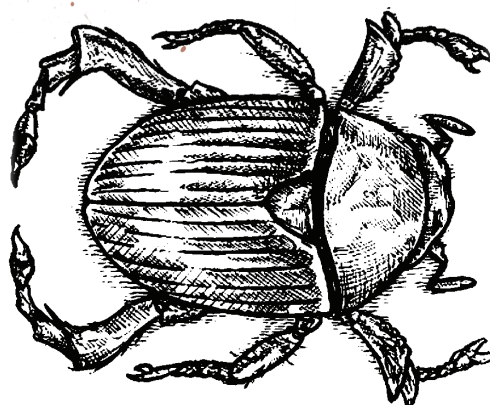
**Difficulty 10:** grave thrall, medium monster, troglodyte, and  
 vampire bat

**Difficulty 25:** amphisbaena, barrow wight, boneguard,  
 cockatrice, ghoul, and tomb scarab swarm

**Difficulty 50:** chainbound, ghastly chorus, large monster,  
 muttering maw, and stone worm

**Difficulty 100:** drake, earth genie, flame genie, huge monster,  
 living tar, and wind genie

**Difficulty 250:** bone machine and vampire



# The Dread of the Desolation

## An Adventure for Master Characters

The strongest dust storm that anyone can remember has ravaged the Crusader States, blasting the strongholds with grit and raining sand onto the farmlands for miles south of the cordon. When the storm cleared, watchers on the walls spotted a new feature at the edge of the wandering dunes: a great black pyramid that must have been unearthed by the terrible winds. Though it is close compared to others in the wastes, it still stands one hundred miles north across the treacherous stone plains. The garrison commanders, fearing some new threat might emerge from the tomb, seek capable explorers willing to venture into the desert and discover what lies within.

You can involve the group in whatever way you choose—they might be hired by the crusaders, investigate on their own, or stumble across the pyramid. The group completes the adventure when they destroy the awakened death lord in the depths of the tomb.

## INTO THE WASTELANDS

The characters face a seven-day journey on foot to reach the tomb, provided they face no complications along the way. Mounts, with sufficient water, can cut down this time considerably, as can a vehicle such as an airship (see *Demon Lord's Companion*). Once every 8 hours the group remains in the stone plains, roll a d20 to see what, if anything, happens.

### STONE PLAINS ENCOUNTERS

Roll	Encounter
20	The characters witness something strange but harmless. They might come upon a toppled obelisk crawling with roaches, an animated finger inching across the rocks, or a column of fire twisting on the horizon. If you need inspiration, you can roll on the <b>Desolation Interesting Features</b> table in <b>chapter 2</b> of this book.
18-19	The weather changes. Roll on the <b>Weather</b> table in <b>chapter 2</b> to determine the weather for the next 8 hours.
14-17	Nothing happens.
8-13	Boiling up from the cracks in the ground are 1d3 <b>tomb scarab swarms</b> attracted by the prospect of fresh meat.
4-7	A <b>forsaken</b> and 1d6 + 2 <b>desiccated ones</b> emerge from cover—a boulder pile, heap of skulls, or a trench in the ground. (See <b>chapter 3</b> .)
2-3	Drawn by vibrations in the ground, 1d3 + 1 <b>stone worms</b> burst up to attack.
1	A team of 2d6 <b>anubin</b> riding <b>skeletal steeds</b> speed out from a cloud of dust to make slaves of the group. (See <b>chapter 3</b> .)

In addition, groups traveling by day are subject to the effects of exposure and maddening heat, as described in **chapter 2**. You should check to see if the group becomes lost (as described in **chapter 9** of the core rulebook) if they aren't using a map or magic to find their destination.

## APPROACHING THE TOMB

Intense heat forms mirages at the edges of the characters' vision, which makes the tomb difficult to spot until they come to within a mile of it. When the group closes to within 3 miles of the pyramid, the rocky ground turns to sand, marking the edge of the wandering dunes.

At some point before the group reaches the tomb, they encounter the death lord's slaves, withered remnants of the Men of Gog: **1 chainbound**, **4 desiccated ones**, and **10 animated corpses**. They attack in an attempt to add the characters to their numbers.

### NECROMANTIC BLIGHT

The unearthed tomb emits a field of dark magic that causes the corpses of living creatures to rise up as undead monsters. Whenever a living creature dies within 1 mile of the tomb, the creature becomes an **animated corpse** 1 minute later.

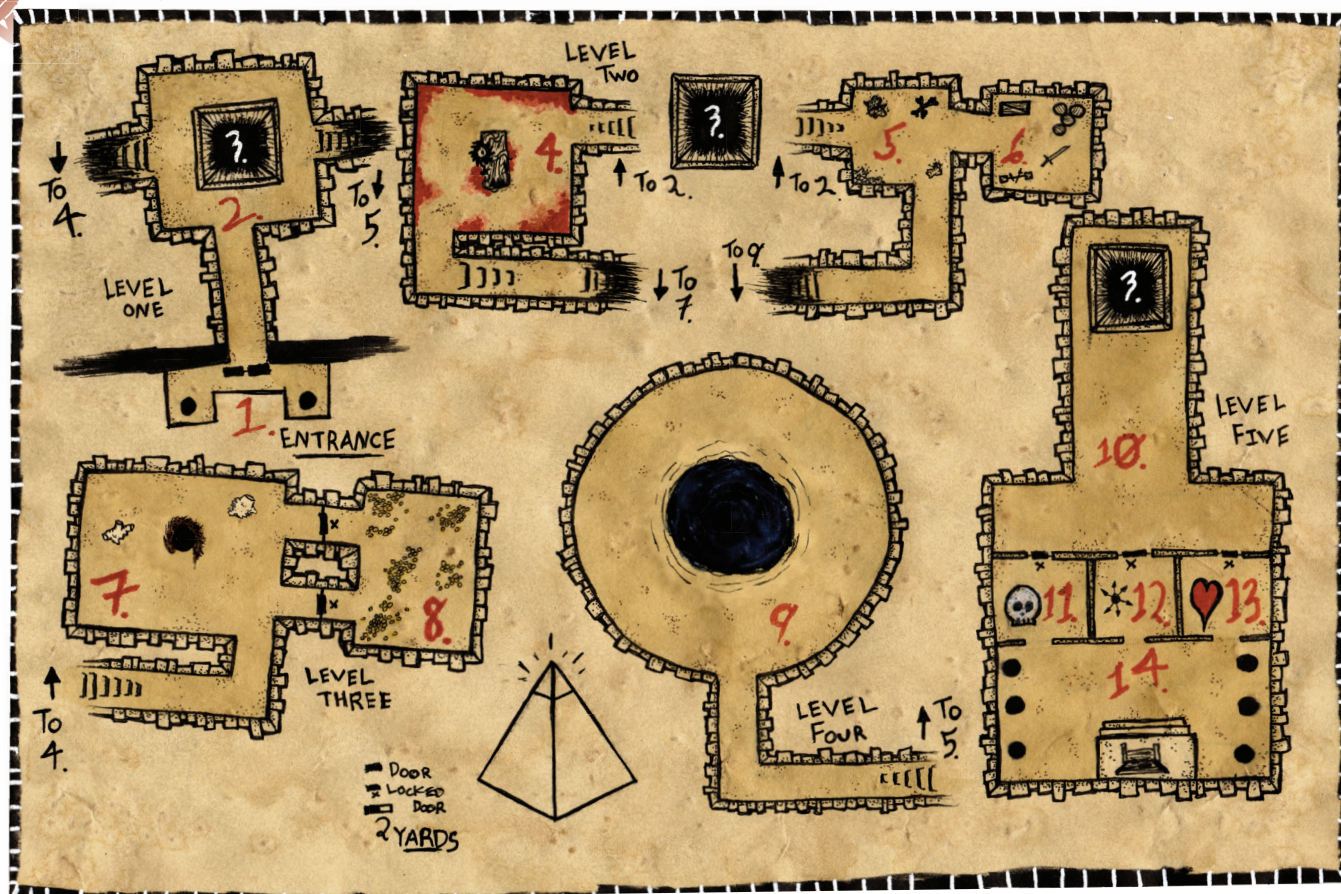
## THE HARROWER'S TOMB

In the last days of the Witch-King's reign, a powerful necromancer named the Harrower raised an army to overthrow the tyrant. The effort failed, and the Witch-King imprisoned the Harrower in a grand tomb and sank it beneath the sands. For centuries, the Harrower has plotted his revenge, biding his time until his eventual release. Now that release has been engineered by some stroke of fate, and the Harrower gathers power to have his revenge.

The Harrower's tomb is a glossy black pyramid, 300 yards long on each of its sides. The smooth slopes meet at a polished bronze capstone, about 100 yards from the bottom, that catches the sunlight, casting dazzling rays in all directions. Just under the capstone, on the southern side, is an alcove flanked by huge obsidian statues of jackal-headed humanoids. Characters can reach the alcove by climbing up the slopes; it's an easy climb, granting 1 boon on challenge rolls if required.

The lands for 3 miles around the tomb are rolling dunes that creep about with the wind and crawl with risen corpses, hungry for flesh. Each hour the characters spend outside the tomb in this area, **1d6 animated corpses** clamber out of the sand and attack.





## KEY AREAS

All areas of the tomb are normally dark, floors dusty but otherwise free of debris, with a chill in the air and redolent of weird spices. The structure is made from black, glossy stone that looks like obsidian but is much stronger. Ceilings are 3 yards high unless otherwise noted.

### 1. ENTRANCE

Plenty of handholds on the outer wall make reaching the entrance relatively easy. There, a pair of closed black stone doors grant access to the tomb's interior. They push open easily.

Two 5-yard-tall obsidian statues of jackal-headed, muscled humanoids wielding scimitars flank the doors. The statues are **huge constructs**. If a character moves into either construct's reach, both statues attack, likely with surprise.

### 2. PASSAGE TO THE UNDERWORLD

This chamber is about 10 yards square, with archways leading to descending staircases in the east and west walls. A great square pit in the center of the room drops into darkness. Hieroglyphs showing evil rites, sacrifices, and acts of terrible cruelty cover all surfaces in the chamber except around the archways and pit. The walls around the arches have been painted to look like screaming faces, the openings forming their mouths. The edge of the pit is festooned with skulls to form a low, 1-foot-tall barrier.

The killing mist in the pit (see area 3) rises up and spreads through this room to attack the characters 1 minute after they arrive. It lingers here, blocking escape.

### 3. THE PIT

This 4-yard-square shaft drops 30 yards to the floor below (see area 10. The Antechamber and Three Gates). The walls are sheer and smooth, painted with scenes of people falling all the way down. On a hook hanging from a chain set into the ceiling above the pit is a large bronze key. The key is 2 yards away from all edges.

The key is cursed. Any creature that attacks the key's bearer makes the attack roll with 1 boon and the bearer makes any challenge rolls to resist the attack with 1 bane.

A hungry **killing mist** lurks in the shaft.

### 4. ANOINTMENT CHAMBER

The western stairs descend to a square chamber, 8 yards on each side. A **contraption** commands the center, consisting of a bloodstained table under a tangle of tubes, bladders filled with brown liquid, and a collection of needles and saw blades. The whole thing fills a space 2 yards wide and 4 yards long, and reaches all the way up to the ceiling.

The contraption activates and attacks when a living creature moves to within 1 yard of it. The triggering creature must make an Agility challenge roll with 2 banes. On a failure, it is pulled onto the table where it becomes immobilized until the contraption is destroyed. The contraption counts as an object with Defense 5 and Health 50.

The immobilized creature or another creature that can reach it can attempt to remove the affliction by using an action to make a Strength challenge roll with 2 banes. A success removes the affliction and pulls the creature into an open space within 1 yard of the contraption.

At the end of each round until the contraption is destroyed, it either attacks one target creature it has immobilized or attempts to immobilize a creature within 1 yard of it, as described above. If it attacks a creature it has immobilized, the target must make an Agility challenge roll with 2 banes. On a failure, it takes 3d6 damage from the needles and blades and becomes poisoned for 1 hour from the chemicals pumped into its body. If the target is already poisoned in this way, it instead takes 3d6 extra damage. A target incapacitated by this damage dies instantly and rises as an **animated corpse** at the end of the next round.

## 5. BARRACKS

Standing at attention here are 5 **boneguards**. They attack intruders and pursue enemies beyond this chamber. Bones, scraps of linen, and other detritus litter the floor.

A passage in the southeast corner leads down to area 9.

## 6. ARMORY

Racks holding weapons and armor fill this room, though most of them are junk. Sifting through the contents reveals three suits of hard leather armor, one suit of mail, eight small shields, four scimitars, six longbows, and a barrel filled with 120 arrows. As well, there's an **enchanted sword** wrought from green steel.

*Enchanted Sword:* Whenever a creature attacks with the sword and the total of its attack roll is 20 or higher, the attack's target becomes poisoned for 1 minute. However, if the total of the attack roll is 0 or less, the attacker takes 1d6 damage and becomes poisoned for 1 minute.

## 7. GUARDIAN OF THE VAULT

A wide pillar stands at the center of a large chamber littered with broken pieces of statuary. Coiled around the pillar is a **basilisk** that guards the false treasure vault (see area 8. False Treasure Vault) and attacks intruders.

## 8. FALSE TREASURE VAULT

The doors to this room are locked; the key from area 3 opens them. A successful Strength challenge roll with 3 banes forces a door open.

Beyond the doors is a chamber whose floor is covered in 10,000 gold crowns. Any creature that touches a coin becomes cursed and cannot heal damage until the curse is lifted. The curse persists until all the coins taken by the creature are returned to this room.

If the characters entered the room using the key, the Harrower (see area 14) is immediately alerted to the group's presence in the tomb and might move toward them.

## 9. DARK POWER

A great pillar of darkness hangs in the air at the center of this round room. Gathered around it are 2 **forsaken**, 10 **desiccated ones**, and 20 **animated corpses**, all of

whom attack intruders.

The pillar of darkness is a window to the Void. Any creature that visually inspects it glimpses hideous forms in the darkness and must get a success on a Will challenge roll with 2 banes or gain 1d3 **Insanity**. At the base of the pillar is the Harrower's phylactery (see the *liche* spell in **chapter 1** for rules). If the phylactery is destroyed, the pillar of darkness disappears.

## 10. THE ANTECHAMBER AND THREE GATES

Three circular bronze doors stand shut against the south wall of this chamber, each bearing a keyhole in the center. Guarding the area are 3 **chainbound**, one standing before each door. A chainbound attacks only if a creature moves into its reach.

The doors can be opened only with the bronze key from area 3. They are otherwise impervious to all damage and cannot be forced.

## 11. CHAMBER OF DEATH

An invisible field of dark energy flows through this chamber. Any creature that enters must make a Strength challenge roll with 2 banes, taking 8d6 damage on a failure or half the damage on a success.

## 12. CHAMBER OF MADNESS

An invisible field of psychic energy flows through this chamber. Any creature that enters must get a success on a Will challenge roll with 2 banes or gain 2d6 **Insanity** as a barrage of unwholesome and disturbing visions assails its mind.

## 13. CHAMBER OF DESIRE

Soft red light fills this chamber, emanating from the glowing forms of humans writhing on the walls in agony. Any creature that enters must get a success on an Intellect challenge roll with 2 banes or gain 1d3 **Corruption**.

## 14. LAIR OF THE DEATH LORD

Each of the three chambers opens into this room. A semicircular dais stands against the southern wall, holding a high-backed chair made from human bones. Three columns stand against each of the east and west walls.

This is the most likely place where the characters will encounter the Harrower (a **death lord**). The liche is arrogant and confident in its ability to destroy the group, mocking them throughout the fight. The Harrower fights until destroyed, knowing it will return (only destroying its phylactery can prevent its revival). It wears the *Mantle of the Harrower* (see that entry in "Relics of the Desolation" in **chapter 3** of this book).

In addition to the death lord, this room contains a chest filled with gemstones worth 1,000 gc and 3 enchanted objects of the GM's choice, in addition to the *Mantle of the Harrower*.



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