

# Quoth the Raven



The Unofficial Net Magazine for Ravenloft and Gothic Earth

# Never More

## Greetings!

Welcome to the first issue of Quoth the Raven, the online net magazine for Ravenloft and Gothic Earth. This magazine has been a labor of love, produced by fans of Ravenloft who crave a vehicle for new adventures in the Mist. Fans can expect that Quoth the Raven will be produced one every two months, and perhaps even more frequently when time allows. The magazine shows two different types of articles, both "features" and "departments". The departments are reoccurring articles for the magazine, each issue is guaranteed to contain information on these subjects. As time goes on, expect more departments to be added to the list. Features, on the other hand, are special. These will be nonrecurring articles, offering the reader very specialized information.

In the future, Quoth the Raven will feature fan fiction based upon Ravenloft. There have been several proposals for reviews in movies, books and even CDs. For the moment, this netzine is accepting all adventures written and submitted by fans. Rest assured that Quoth the Raven will always contain at least one adventure for use in Ravenloft. Old fans of Gothic Earth will be happy to know that the Masque of the Red Death will always have a place of honor in this magazine. In the future the Gothic Earth section will be expanded. This section will feature a "Crossroads" section to detail areas of Gothic Earth as well as a Qabal update.

There has been a lot of discussion over the issue of canon information. There are a lot of Ravenloft fans that are hoping to see new canon adventures. Sadly, this magazine is the demented brainchild of a fan, nothing more. This situation does allow the magazine a wider range of freedom however a freedom that the editors intend to explore to the fullest. Readers should be prepared to see a wide variety of non-canon information. Starting in this issue, readers will be exposed to variant rules for playing in Ravenloft as well as alternate versions of well-established domains. This magazine will try to explore these variants and give Ravenloft fans a new look at some of the underused areas of the game.

This magazine is highly experimental and will remain a work in progress. The editors, Jason True and Jonathon aka Thuvasa will be tweaking the magazine. We heartily encourage all readers to contact us with any questions or comments. Submissions are always open and can be sent to either Jason, Jonathon or myself.

Enjoy!

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# Stakes and Sunlight

## The Secret Lives of Vampires

Vampires are a well-loved fixture to gothic horror and to Ravenloft. Players crave the thrill of a classic vampire hunt, silently going over the dozens of vampiric weaknesses and the few known methods of destroying the nocturnal predators. It is one of the cruel facts of the D&D system that vampires are so powerful.

Even in 3<sup>rd</sup> edition vampires are, as some have called them, ridiculously powerful. Even the most minor vampire has the ability to crush the wills of warriors, use their gaseous form to appear and vanish without a trace, and withstand the most vicious assaults from hunters not powerful enough to possess magical weapons.

Even ignoring the amazing power of level draining attacks, the power of a vampire is bewildering and confusing. Questions fly back and forth, questions such as: Why is every vampire so powerful? Why do vampires have the ability to take animal form if they are so much more powerful in human form? The main problem arises when we notice that every vampire seems to have the powers delegated to the most powerful monsters in literature.

Dungeon Masters must wrestle with a terrible problem. Everyone wants to hunt a vampire, but not everyone wants to hunt Dracula. Players want the thrill of fighting a vampire, but not a spell-casting monster that can evade every attack, drain their life with a slam attack and bring the whole

party to its knees with a simple stare.

But what can a Dungeon master do? Need he abandon all hope?

The purpose of this article is to give dungeon masters a new look at vampires. This article will examine weaknesses in vampires, which will help to close the gap between vampires and their hunters. Many of the weaknesses are minor; they are little more than psychological foibles. Others are much more serious weakness, which will help a Dungeon Master explain the weaknesses in vampiric villains.

### Biology

It may seem like a contradiction, but vampires have a complex biological life. A vampire is more than a dead body animated by negative energy; a vampire is much more akin to a living creature. Vampires are invulnerable to poisons and to disease, yet they do require a constant supply of food. Like every other animal, a vampire must feed upon another living creature to survive. Just as their undead state protects them from most of perils of life, their nonliving bodies are susceptible to many phenomena that living creatures take for granted.

### Chemical Vulnerabilities

One of the many misconceptions possessed by vampire hunters is that vampires

cannot be harmed by garlic. This is a fiction that clever vampires have perpetuated by their discretion. Vampires always avoid areas thick with the scent of garlic. This is because garlic acts as a powerful incendiary agent to their undead bodies.

Garlic possesses a special organic chemical that interferes with a vampire's tissues. The chemical responsible for the distinctive garlic aroma enters the vampire's body through the eyes, lungs mouth, nose, and even the skin. Once in the cell the garlic causes the cell to release all of its undigested positive energy. This energy causes the cell burn on contact with oxygen. Effectively the body is being set ablaze on the cellular level.

When a vampire enters an area thick with the garlic scent he begins to feel the burning sensation. At this point the vampire is unharmed but is suffering from an extreme irritation in his tissues exposed to the air. Direct exposure to garlic plants is much more dangerous. If the vampire is contacted with a peeled garlic plant or with water in which garlic was chopped and boiled then he is burned as if by acid. Direct contact with garlic or a one vial of a garlic-water mixture causes 1d6 points of damage.

Different strains of vampirism possess different vulnerabilities. The Chiang-shi strain is completely immune to garlic, though rosemary and myrrh cause the same effect. Vrykolaka

are vulnerable to garlic, but anise has the same incendiary effect.

### **Mist Form**

Of the powers associated with vampires, the ability to take a gaseous form is the most underestimated. This ability allows vampiric hunters to pass through small spaces, to come and go unseen, to become immune to attacks, to evade pursuit and to penetrate the most secure defenses. This ability gives vampires free access to places where no human could go. With this ability a vampire could feasibly travel through a city's water pipes and emerge where ever he desired or burry his coffin in rock, leaving a tiny crack through which he can push his fog form. Vampires can push their way through a phalanx of stake wielding hunters just by assuming this form, never fearing for a moment. Vampires can use this ability to flee from the dangers of holy symbols, laurels and even running water. With such a potent ability it is a wonder how vampires can be destroyed at all. Yet there is a quandary that has puzzled vampire hunters for centuries. For some reason vampires use this powerful ability with a baffling reluctance.

Instead of placing their coffins in places only a gas could reach, they leave them in the open. Vampires rarely travel by gaseous form despite the stealthy implications. The children of the night tend to stand and fight rather than floating away as a cloud. For reasons unknown vampires use this ability to only a fraction of its potential. While the more shortsighted hunters prefer not to look a gift horse in the mouth, the

more wise stalkers have investigated the matter.

Vampires describe the experience of gaseous state as a "oneness" with an unexplained flow of energy. This energy seems to be unique to the land of Ravenloft, for vampires of foreign places describe it as a very new and unsettling sensation. The vampire enters gaseous state by utilizing a portion of his negative energy to push most of his mass slightly out of phase with the rest of the material plane. Scholars of the arcane believe that this extra dimensional holding place is the border ethereal. This place is a cold and misty flux, in which the vampires feel quite at home. All that is left of their corporeal body forms the wet moisture of the mist. Through the border ethereal the vampire floats, dragging with him the remaining particles in the material plane. These particles are tiny, but they are critical to the reformation process. The fog particles make up an anchor or rather; a pathway by which the vampire's remaining mass will reenter the material plane. Once the vampire has reached a satisfactory location, he shunts his matter through the misty pathways, rebuilding his lifeless body.

This experience is described as being a liberating, relaxing sensation for vampires native to the demiplane. However, vampires from foreign worlds describe it as alien and unsettling. Though these outsiders use the same mechanisms on their own worlds, they have perceived a difference. Within the border ethereal there is a gentle current, however within the Demiplane of Dread this current becomes like quicksand. The effects of this

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drain are subtle, but with each use of the mist form a vampire loses a portion of his mass. This mass remains attached to the vampire, but it is trapped in an ethereal state. Slowly, the mass rejoins the body on the material plane, yet with each use of mist form more mass is trapped. As more and more mass remains ethereal, the vampire experiences a sensation of emptiness. As the matter accumulates in the misty border between the material plane and the ethereal plane it becomes more and more difficult to pull that matter back. If the drain is allowed to continue, a vampire risks his very existence

### **Sensitivity**

The transformation into undeath leads to many great changes to both body and mind. Vampires gain a greater auditory and visual acuity than human beings, but they lose important nervous pathways in their tactile senses. Vampires retain their ability to feel heat, cold, pressures and textures but none of these senses are not sent to the conscience mind. The sensory information is sent directly to the short-term memory, completely by passing the consciousness. The only sensations that vampires physically experience are pain, hunger and the satisfaction derived from sating their blood thirst.

By most standards this changes nothing. Vampires do not lose any of their manual dexterity, nor are they ignorant of pain. However they have completely oblivious to the emotional context of the sensation. While this may seem trivial, it has a major impact on vampire psychology. Biology has denied them the ability to feel

comfort or physical pleasures. The only benefit to this state is that it allows vampires to rest in coffins and tombs, which would otherwise have been unbearable.

### **Slumber**

Vampires intake blood just as any other animal take in food. Unlike other animals, vampires convert the living blood tissue into negative energy. This conversion releases a great amount of energy, which in turn powers the vampires amazing abilities. However, this transformation is not immediate. Young vampires require a very long period of time for their cells to assimilate the living tissue and convert it into negative energy for storage and utilization.

Despite even the most thorough research, vampire hunters have yet to realize the true sleep cycle of a vampire. After feeding on blood a vampire becomes drowsy. Though he or she is not physically impaired, they are compelled to rest. The young vampire sleeps for one day for every point of constitution drained. At the end of the slumber period the vampire has assimilated the energy. While the vampire is sleeping, his need for blood is halted. In this manner, a fledgling vampire really only requires 4 constitution points every four days.

During the day the fledgling vampire is comatose, he or she is helpless and cannot be awakened. During the night this sleep is less deep, the vampire is asleep but can be awakened just as any living being can be awakened from sleep. A fledgling vampire is very unlikely to be active in the night while he or she is still digesting blood. Though, nocturnal activity does not require another feeding

until the digestion of the currently stored constitution points is through. In effect, if a vampire forces himself to be awake during his slumber period he can remain awake, though during this period he suffers from 1 negative level, which cannot be removed until the slumber period is over. Most fledgling vampires loath activity during their slumber period, only the threat of danger or the promise of great rewards can force them out of their coffins. Whatever the motivation, no fledgling vampire can force himself to remain awake during the day while in his slumber period.

Fledgling vampires cannot split their digestion time. If they do not drain a total of 4 points of constitution in one night then their tissues cannot begin the digestion process. The blood sits unused in the body until it coagulates and becomes useless. In effect, a fledgling vampire must drain 4 points in one night and then endure a slumber period for eight days. Failure to do this causes the vampire to incur one negative level each day until it drains 4 points and enters its slumber period.

When the living tissue is completely digested, the vampire's tissue begins to crave more living tissue. The feeding cycle continues forcing the vampire to use the assimilated energy to obtain a new dosage of living blood tissue.

As a vampire ages his or her cells become more efficient in their metabolism. Living tissue is broken down at an increased rate and more negative energy can be produced from the same amount of blood. At the second age category a vampire must only sleep for six hours for each constitution point

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drained. At the third age category the vampire requires only three hours for every point. At the fourth age category this time drops to one hour, and at the fifth category the requirement is dropped all together. This increased metabolism allows older vampires to utilize much greater abilities than their younger counterparts. However this is a mixed blessing. A vampire must feed again at the end of the slumber period. In short, older vampires require a constant supply of blood.

Fortunately for older vampires, those who need less than twelve hours of slumber do not go into a comatose state during the day. Though they are not immune to the effects of sunlight they are free to remain awake and active. This little-known fact has led to the untimely demise of many an overconfident vampire hunter.

### **Mist Corruption**

Each week a vampire must make a Mist check. This check allows a vampire an attempt to resist the draining force of the misty border and pull his lost matter back into the material plane. The check is a fortitude save against a DC equal to vampire's mist corruption state plus the total number of times the vampire used the gaseous form that week. If the check succeeds then the vampire has pulled the lost portion of his mass back into reality. If the check fails then that week's portion of his mass becomes firmly trapped in the border ethereal. In such a case the vampire gains one step of mist corruption. If, however, the check succeeds then the vampire has partially broken

the effects of the drain. On a successful check a vampire drops in one stage of mist corruption. All vampires begin at a corruption stage of zero.

When a vampire has reached the first stage of mist corruption the pathways between the material plane and the ethereal plane are strong. A vampire in this state can drain blood while in a gaseous state. The vampire makes an attack roll and gains the benefits of invisibility to this attack. At the second stage of mist corruption the vampire gains the ability to sleep in his or her coffin while in gaseous form. The vampire is invulnerable to attack, though holy water and sunlight still deal damage. Should the coffin be destroyed, the vampire assumes physical form but remains asleep.

When a vampire reaches the third stage in mist corruption he becomes firmly entrapped in the ethereal plane. Many vampires fear this state with the same terror as they do the sun. They view this stage as the beginning of a transformation known as “the vanishing”. A vampire at this stage can only feed or sleep by assuming gaseous form. Naturally, this causes a massive rise in the amount of gaseous forms used every week, which steadily ushers the vampire further into the next stages of mist corruption. At the fourth stage of mist corruption the vampire gains the “mist” subtype and now holds only a tenuous grip on corporeality. The vampire cannot easily assume solid form. Returning to solid form requires a successful fortitude save against a DC of 10. This check can only be attempted at most once per hour. At the fifth stage of corruption the vampire is permanently trapped in

mist form. The vampire must still eat and sleep, but is incapable of any other action. The mist vampire may continue to live for one more week, after which even the tenuous mist pathways are lost and the vampire is swept away into the border ethereal. To where the vampires go from there, no one can even guess.

Naturally, this effect causes wise vampires great pause before using their gaseous form ability. Even younger vampires realize that something is awry. In most cases, a vampire never reaches so much as the second stage of corruption. The vampire becomes filled with trepidation after the first stage of corruption and restricts his use of mist form to a more reasonable amount. Only the most careless and oblivious vampires ever reach “the vanishing” and the wiser children of the night have come to appreciate it as a way of removing the naturally lazy and stupid members of their species. The vanishing remains one of the few things vampires fear, for once a vampire sets upon the path it is difficult to return. Vampires who are in some way bound to the land, such as domain lords, do not suffer from mist corruption. Nonetheless, most of these predators dislike the feeling of mist form and so use it only when under duress or when seriously inconvenienced. Should a vampire be slain in combat and revert to mist form, the transformation will count as a single use of the gaseous form ability. The effects of the spell gaseous form will not bestow mist corruption, even on vampires. Other creatures with the ability to assume a gaseous form have been rumored to be susceptible to this corruption.

## Psychology

### Feeding

Feeding is the only physical pleasure that vampires retain in their undead state. Naturally, this becomes an outlet through which they explore the physical world. While the victim might view vampiric feeding as a purely aggressive assault, the vampire has a slightly different interpretation.

Feeding has three different implications. The first is a simple parasite relationship. This is the most casual and practical view of feeding. The vampire overpowers the victim, drains away a portion of blood, and never gives the victim a second thought. Vampires view the ordinary human victim as a host for their predations, nothing more than an animal to be exploited.

The next aspect of feeding is destructive. The act of killing is cool and emotionless, the vampire is denied the pleasure of feeling an enemy’s bones break within his grasp or flesh tear beneath his claws. However vampires have found a way to circumvent this failing, they use their feeding ability to drain an enemy to a lifeless husk. This form of feeding is akin to great creature swallowing a smaller one whole. The vampire exercises his superiority over his victim by devouring their life force. This manner of killing is extremely satisfying to most vampires, for by devouring their enemy they have completely obliterated the object of their hatred. The most hated enemies of a vampire often meet this fate. At the end of the feeding, the vampire takes precautions to ensure that the victim does not rise

again. More often than not the victim is thrown into a body of water, but if one is not available the body is either decapitated or is staked down in a place that will be exposed to sunlight.

The final aspect is much more intimate to the vampire. Since the nocturnal creature is denied most forms of pleasure, residual sexual desires remain unsatisfied. Vampires gain a great deal of relief from these desires by engaging in feeding. When feeding in this manner the hunter become very selective his victims. Obviously, the vampire seeks out a victim that is sexually attractive. This variety of feeding is the least damaging to the victim and not particularly nurturing to the vampire.

### **Forever Young**

Vampires are naturally immortal; they are free of the ravages of time that so many humans fear. This state elevates vampires above mankind, marking them as superior, at least in their eyes. The more intellectual vampires point to this fact as justification of their feedings, for surely mankind can spare a little blood to support the epitome of evolution. The less academically inclined vampires have a different view.

Newly created vampires experience the ultimate liberties. Through the process of death they have rid themselves of all of their cares and concerns. No longer must they prepare for death or the crippling effect of age. Instead they will forever revel in the pure joys of violence and bloodshed.

Fledgling vampires and vampire spawn are a violent, vibrant people. They revel in

death, violence, drink, drugs and any other pleasure they can wrap their claws around. This unending revel can last for a century for fledgling vampires, but for vampire spawn the celebration never ends.

### **Maturation**

As a vampire ages the initial thrill of immortality disappears. By the end of the first century, a vampire has grown beyond his life of bloodshed and peaceful slumber. The creature spends much more time awake, takes much less enjoyment from killing and is straining against the limitations of his undead body. Furthermore, the vampire finally realizes the truth of immortality; that he is doomed to walk the earth until such time as he dies horribly. Under this stress the nocturnal predator either matures to a more stable existence or else he falls into a death wish.

As a vampire matures he turns away from the base life style of a predator, feeding steadily becomes a chore rather than a joy. Mature vampires begin to pursue much more sophisticated goals than their fledgling kin. These creatures pursue arcane knowledge, artistic perfection, divine grace, philosophical perfection or political power. These vampires take the first steps on the paths that they will follow for centuries to come.

### **Vampiric Mates**

Vampires are incapable of distracting themselves with physical pleasure, no matter how much they might want to be distracted. Whether they enjoy it or not, vampires are forced to seek a deeper intimacy than those

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sought by their mortal kin. Some mature vampires feel the need for companionship and to sate this need they turn to mortal population. Vampires have an inherent distrust of others of their kind, born of the competition between nocturnal predators. Thus vampires prefer to create a mate rather than put their trust in an equal.

Different vampires look for different qualities in their mates, but there are some common themes. Firstly, great beauty is the most common factor. Beauty is determined by more than just physical appearance, but also by grace and confidence. Next, vampires choose mates who are similarly gifted. Intellectual vampires seek out academically inclined mortals, combative vampires woo warriors, and so on.

Most vampires prefer to pick "unspoiled mates". There seems to be a preference for mates who are both chaste and naive. Innocents, as described by the rules for powers checks, are particularly attractive as vampiric mates. Vampire hunters believe that this preference is a residual form of guilt. The vampires believe that being loved by a purely good creature offers them a manner of forgiveness for their crimes against humanity. That the vampire can vicariously gain some of their mate's innocence. Alternately, some of the more pessimistic philosophers believe this preference stems from a aversion to purity and a desire to consume that which is good and innocent. This would then be an extension of a vampire's feeding instincts.



## Patterns

### Competition

As vampires grow into old age, their need for blood increases drastically. These old and powerful vampires find themselves competing with other vampires over the limited resource of human blood. Vampires with many minions require a large pool of human victims. These victims must be carefully exploited, or else permanent damage is inflicted on the population, or even worse, the mortals are roused to action.

Vampires are so dependant upon this limited resource that they refuse to share. While a vampire might allow his underlings to feed on a given population he will not tolerate rivals or rogue vampires to lay claim. Vampires are constantly watching for potential threats to their human cattle, lest a new predator endanger the fragile balance of the feeding system.

Vampiric rulers often keep vassal vampires to do their bidding. These vassals maintain their own vampiric servants, and in some rare cases these servants maintain minions of their own. This vampiric feudal system is highly dependent upon the head vampire, for without this single entity the whole organization would collapse into an all out battle.

Even with the existence of the vampiric ruler, the vassals are at war with one another. Each vassal wants to secure a stable food supply and expand his own power. This results in a secret war between vampire lineages. Vampiric rulers tolerate this behavior for two chief reasons; first being that potential usurpers are held in check by the other

vassals and the second reason being that the vampire ruler does not possess the power to keep so many predators from fighting amongst themselves.

### Death Wish

Vampires who do not evolve into a mature state fall into a spiral of anger and self-hatred. The vampire is terrified of the prospect of eternal life and subconsciously wants to end its existence. After its first century of unlife the vampire becomes obsessed with violence. The nocturnal predator devotes its energies to destruction and death. The loathsome creature despoils the land around it and kills wantonly. The vampire seeks to draw attention to itself by any means. The ultimate goal of the vampire is to be slain and destroy as much as it can.

This philosophy often arouses the wrath of powerful vampires or anyone else who has an interest in keeping the human population alive. Vampires with death wishes don't last very long, though the devastation they produce can be legendary.

### Plots

Vampires are both evil and intelligent, and where these two qualities meet humanity suffers. As a vampire ages he spends more and more time awake, with less and less to do with his time. Vampires are natural schemers; it is part of their nature. These nocturnal predators crave challenges to their mind and to their power. This is part of the aging process, for as a vampire rises in power, the minor challenges of undeath lose their thrill. Old vampires have lost the ability to enjoy the chase; they are

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denied the simple pleasures of killing and feasting. In many cases, old vampires cannot even bring themselves to mate, for they have become too cynical and withdrawn to romance a mate. The only thing that gives purpose to a vampire's existence are the webs of plots and schemes that the fiend weaves.

Vampires are instinctively drawn to long-term plots. These might revolve around the destruction of a powerful enemy, the creation of an artifact, the construction of a dynasty, a crusade in the name of a great god of evil, or some other epic goal. The ambition of a vampire grows with its age and their plots are expanded to fit.

Vampires are enamored with complex plots. The intricacies of manipulation and deception enrapture their minds and bring to them a joy that has long been lost. They are so addicted to intricate plots that vampires will ignore simple, direct solutions in favor of long and elaborate plots. This preference of the indirect to the direct has cost many a vampire its life.

For example, a mature vampire might learn that there is a party of vampire hunters has entered his region, looking for new quarry. Rather than call together a force of its minions and personally ambush the hunters, the vampire might send a minion to infiltrate the group, lead them to an enemies layer, use the party to destroy rivals and then destroy them. To the vampire this plan seems to be pure genius, though he fails to realize that he has only drawn attention that he might have avoided and assisted the party in their endeavors.

## Spawn

As far as the mature vampire is concerned, vampire spawn are a necessary evil. These creatures are trapped in a perpetual youth; they never reach maturity and are locked in bloodlust for eternity. In short, vampire spawn are a constant reminder of what a mature vampire is losing with each passing year.

Vampires avoid creating spawn, both for their own feelings as well as for the conservation of the limitations of human resources. When they do create spawn, they treat them as lowly servants. The spawn are constantly reminded of their inferiority to their vampiric master. Most vampiric masters require their spawn to wake each night, especially during their slumber periods. This makes the spawn very irate, though they are powerless to resist.

Vampire spawn never socialize with mature vampires, though fledgling vampires are less discriminating. Fledglings that spend their first century with vampire spawn tend to have a more lenient view to their lesser comrades and treat them with more respect.

# Tactics and Techniques

## Feats for Vampire Hunters

*Joshua has been staring into the hole for quite some time before he noticed that he wasn't going anywhere. He was gazing into the blackness of the shaft before him, completely motionless. Before him was a simple ladder, leading down into the depths of the catacombs. It should be a simple matter to crouch, grab the ladder and climb down. But it wasn't the physics of the act that was keeping him frozen*

*At the bottom of that shaft was the endless labyrinth of the crypt. It was an ancient maze of stonewalls packed with the mummified corpses piled into the slits cut into the rock. Foul gasses emanated from the rotting bones, forming into a choking green mist that shrouded the floor, concealing the numerous pitfalls and shafts dug into the floor. Yet as much as Joshua tried, he could not convince himself that it was the crypt that held him in fear.*

*Down at the center of that crypt was a spirit. More accurately, a corpse. A corpse that walked and talked, that lived a perverse mockery of life and could drain the life out of the living. It was an inhuman monster, capable of transforming into beasts or even mist. It was a vampire, a plague upon all mankind.*

*The unnatural fiend was nearly invincible, for no mortal blade could cleave its lifeless flesh. Its gaze could break the will of the strongest warrior and even should*

*it be cornered it could vanish in a wave of evil mist. He knew this to be fact, for he had thoroughly read that most trustworthy source of information upon the undead, Van Richten's Guide to Vampires.*

*With great reluctance, Joshua pushed himself closer to the ladder. Silently, he wished that Van Richten had left a few tips on courage.*

### Shot Through the Heart

Staking an active and resisting vampire is nearly impossible, especially with a missile weapon. Even while making a shot with a staking crossbow, immobilizing a vampire is nigh impossible. However, vampire hunters are a stubborn folk, not the type to turn away from a task simply because it is nearly impossible. With this feat a character has learned the technique to placing a flying stake into a vampire's chest such that the creature is immobilized.

**Prerequisites:** Point Plank Shot, base attack bonus +4

**Benefit:** A character with this feat can immobilize a vampire by using a staking crossbow bolt as a stake. The character must use a wooden bolt (or what ever material is needed to paralyze the vampire) and loads it into a staking crossbow (no other crossbow is allowed). If the character makes a successful called shot on the vampire's heart, then the stake

enters the vampire and effectively stakes it.

**Special:** To use this ability the character must be within a maximum range of 30 feet from the target. This ability can feasibly apply to other creatures that must be pierced with a shaft of a particular material in a particular part of their body.

### Suspicious

A suspicious hunter is a long-lived hunter. Vampires have the ability to dominate the wills of others and use them as pawns by which they might strike their foes. A character with this feat gains the ability to sense the magical influence of a vampire's mind control.

**Benefits:** A character with this feat gains a +5 insight bonus to sense motive checks to sense enchantments. Further more, if a successful check succeeds by more than 5 the character can determine whether or not the enchanted character is being controlled by the vampire domination ability, or some other vampiric special ability. However this ability cannot be used to disprove the influence of a vampiric ability.

**Special:** While the bonus to the sense motive check can be applied to discerning the effects of an enchantment spell or some other creature's special abilities. The character with this feat cannot use the secondary effect of this feat to

determine the origin of a nonvampiric enchantment.

the vampire. However, vampire hunters are a hard folk, unfazed by the evil eyes of their quarry. With this feat a character gains a defense against a dominating gaze.

**Prerequisites:** Iron Will

**Benefit:** The character is immune to the effects of a mind influencing gaze attack. This effect covers charm, domination, sleep and all other mind influencing gaze effects.

**Special:** This feat offers no protection to other gaze effects such as prettification or death.

### **Vapor Trail**

Vampires often travel in gaseous form, confident that they are invisible to the eyes of hunters. While they may appear to be harmless fog, an experienced vampire hunter is never fooled. With this feat a vampire hunter gains the ability to spot vampires in gaseous form and even to follow the invisible tracks they leave in gaseous form.

**Prerequisites:** Alertness

**Benefits:** With this feat a character gains the ability to spot creatures in gaseous form. Spotting a creature in gaseous form is made against a base DC 25, though if the vampire is actively hiding while in gaseous form then he may make an opposed hide check against the character with a +10 bonus.

A character with this feat gains the ability to track a creature's movement in gaseous form. The character learns to recognize the scent left in the air traversed by a creature in gaseous shape. Thus, the character can

### **Unblinking Eye**

follow tracks left in places where the creature did not even touch the ground. The wilderness lore check to track a creature in this state suffers a -5 circumstantial penalty.

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The gaze of a vampire is lethal, for if one meets that gaze he or she may fall under the spell of

# Character Development

## A Man with Nothing to Lose

*Max stood in the shadows of the alleyway. He was shivering in the midnight chill, but would stray no closer to the warm light of the oil lantern. Beneath the folds of his coat he checked for the handle of his pistol. Sure enough it hadn't moved since the last time he checked it.*

*His cold eyes never moved from the doorway on the other side of the street. It had taken him a long time to find this building, to track the man who was inside. Exhaustion was tugging at his eyelids, but he wouldn't dare close them. He wasn't alone in the darkness, there were other people waiting in there, inside his head. He stared into the doorway, as if he could see right through it if he looked hard enough. In the back of his head Max could hear the sounds again. He shook his head, tried to throw the memory out of his mind. But the flood had broken the dam inside his mind; soon he was born aloft on the tide of sorrow.*

*"It's your fault, Max." The voice was back again. "You should have been there." It was soft, painfully soft. "You could have saved her," Max felt the misery well up beneath his eyes, a surge of tears that would never escape his eyes, that would just build up and up until he exploded. "You got her into this, Max." He gasped out, his lungs felt empty. "It's your fault."*

*The voice was right. It was his fault. The voice was never*

*going to let him forget that. Every breath he took, every time he closed his eyes, every moment since that horrible night, the voice been in his head. He couldn't eat, he couldn't sleep, and he couldn't bear it anymore. He had to end the pain, before it drove him mad.*

*Across the street the door was opening. A familiar face emerged from the darkness. The man was wearing an arrogant smile, the grin of a guiltless man. Something inside Max burst. With both hands he drew the saber and the pistol. It was time to end the pain. One way or another, he would rest tonight.*

**Character Archetype:** One of the most classic character archetypes there is the "man with nothing to lose". Characters of this variety differ from the ordinary man in the extreme, for where most people are driven to preserve their own life the man with nothing to lose is possessed by a death wish. These characters have been pushed too far by the cruelty of the world. They are not strong willed survivors, nor furious avengers; they are normal people who once were possessed of a mild manner but are driven to acts of violence. Cruel circumstance has drained their life of meaning and filled it with pain; they take no joy from life and crave the peace that only death can bring them. Characters like this are ticking time bombs, doomed to self-destruct. They feel a powerful compulsion to violently

end their lives and while not actually suicidal, they are driven to endanger themselves to the extreme. They do not deliberately kill themselves, but they ignore the most basic common sense and throw caution to the wind.

Characters like this are not driven by revenge or hate, for they cordially entertain the idea that they might be killed and that their sacrifice might be in vain. The idea that their deaths might be meaningless does not trouble these characters in the slightest, for they know that their lives are already pointless. These characters have decided to throw themselves against the tide of evil; they will risk all and die in the attempt to make the world a better place. The only solace that the character can take from his efforts is that he has tried to prevent the same tragedy that claimed his life from consuming another's. Whether the character knows it or not, he subconsciously hopes to die, whether it is in a heroic battle or in some pointless accident. Only death can end the pain and misery that has made him this way

**Background:** Characters like this were once normal people, possessed of a normal personality. They might have been gruff and serious, or joyful and lighthearted. Often this is the result of a great loss, such as the loss of one's family but other circumstances can arise to trigger this transformation. Other causes can include the loss

of livelihood, property, honor, and dignity. Bizarre circumstances can also bring about this character archetype, possible triggers include arising as an undead monster, lycanthropy, being sent forward or backward in time or becoming cursed.

Whatever the individual circumstances, the character is consumed by pain, and often guilt. Each moment of life reminds him or her of what he or she has lost and will never regain. Obviously, the loss or burden must be great and permanent. For a character to take on the traits of a “man with nothing to lose” he must have no hope of recovery from his pain.

**Personality:** These characters are often morose, cynical or reserved. Many of the traits the character possessed in his former life are still present. Gentlemen and ladies still behave politely, humorous people might continue to joke, and reserved people continue to keep their sorrows to themselves. Though they similar, they are changed from the way they were before. These characters become darker and more fatalistic. A man with nothing to lose cannot indulge in happiness, for moments of joy bring back the pain that plagues them. Moments of levity cause them sorrow and a gentle touch brings pain. Where once someone was cheerful, they become bitterly cynical; while once they were gregarious they are now remote. These characters push others away from them, for they do not want to hurt others when they inevitably self-destruct. They are fatalistic and not shy with expressing their growing obsession with death.

**Psychology:** Moments of levity cause this person sorrow, a gentle touch causes pain. These people are most often loners, because they fear to become close to others. Often this is because they do not want to hurt friends or family when they inevitably die. Another important factor is their fear that they might lose their loved ones again, compacting the pain. To them it is much better to be safe and withdrawn, that way they can neither do harm nor be harmed.

Characters like this are not just in pain, they are haunted by guilt. They blame themselves for the tragedy that has transformed them; they hate themselves for living while their loved ones died. A life of violence and adventure is meant to be a form of self-punishment. They hope that the pain of their dark life will atone for the imagined wrong they caused, that the guilt will be expunged and the ghosts of the past be laid to rest. Yet for the most part, pain does not bring them the peace they desire. They become trapped in a vicious cycle of suffering, for no sacrifice seems to be enough. They know that only death can bring them the peace they want, but they are reluctant to escape the pain of living. This reluctance to commit true suicide is based equally on the insuppressible drive for self-preservation and the masochism that drives them. As a form of escape from the guilt, suicide is the last option.

**Patterns:** Characters like this are highly predictable. Drug and alcohol abuse is a common occurrence amongst these characters, both to stave off the pain and guilt and for the compulsion to harm one’s self.

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Characters of this archetype are waiting for an escape; they gravitate to dangerous places and mingle with dangerous people. If a character of this type is given the option between an easy way and a hard way, without hesitation he takes the hard way. At heart, all characters of this type are dreaming of a final stand. There the character will confront the cruelties of life, most often in the form of an evil enemy of great power. The character will fight with all his strength to destroy the foe, but the battle is chosen to be futile. In the final moments the character is slain, hopefully achieving the peace that he has sought.

Adventures are a means by which a character of this type hopes to expunge his pain and guilt. These quests usually involve pain and hardship, but not always. The adventure is a means to distract the character from his sorrows, so the character tends to take them less seriously than others. The character is really looking for his “last stand”, so he might become distracted from an adventure if he thinks that he has found an appropriate challenge to sacrifice himself against.

**Role-playing:** These characters are dark, cynical and fatalistic. They may still be humorous, creative, sensitive or caring, but they are shrouded in darkness. These characters take risks without reason and purposely neglect their own safety. They do not lack common sense, but rather than heed it they contradict it. Characters like this would rather climb by hand than use a rope; he might discard heavy armor to go to battle more quickly. He might

attempt to hold off a vampire with a burning log rather than retreating.

Characters like this are looking for a last stand. Whenever they fail a fear, horror or madness check it is appropriate that they ignore the potential negative effects of the failed save, stand their ground and fight to the finish. Dungeon Masters may view this as an unfair advantage, but it is important to realize that the character is most likely unprepared and under equipped. When in a final stand there is no force that can dissuade the character from combat. A dungeon master is

advised to grant the character a circumstantial bonus to saves against fear, horror, madness and any other mind controlling effects at this point, while at the same time giving the character an equal circumstantial penalty to his armor class.

**Classes and Prestige classes:** The fighter and rogue classes make the best choices for a man with nothing to lose, though monks, rangers, psions and wizards are also acceptable. Barbarians, bards and sorcerers make poor choices, for both classes require confidence and spirit to sue their abilities, two

**Quoth the Raven: Issue #1** things that characters of this archetype lack. Paladins and priests of any kind are inappropriate for this class.

Levels in the avengers prestige class make an excellent choice for characters of this archetype, as does the class witch hunter. Classes that rely upon compassion, innocence, passion or confidence are not appropriate for this archetype.

**Suggested Feats:** Courage, Jaded, Back to the wall, Dead man walking

# Perilous Pursuits

## Hellstalker

By Jason True  
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*Ethan looked up at the high priest with the expression of shock apparent upon his face. Clenching at the burn marks upon his chest, the young priest fell to his knees as pain wracks his body. "Why would you do this? You spread dissent between our followers, and you openly attack me in our own church. Why?"*

*The high priest grins evilly at the wounded youth even as his body shifts and changes. "Not everything is always as it seems, my acolyte..." Pink flesh sloughs away from the high priest's face and arms revealing the red scales beneath it. Black horns sprout from the fiend's forehead. Large, scaly wings, which cast dark shadows around the sanctuary, protrude out from its back.*

*Ethan clenches his fists as he screams in horror. The fiend merely stands and watches the young man scream. As the screams echo throughout the church, the fiend mockingly laughs at the youth. A chorus of screams and laughter fill the alcoves.*

*While the fiend enjoys the irony of the moment before killing the priest, it misses the slight movement in the shadows behind him. A figure lunges out of the darkness and drives a thin blade deeply into the fiend's throat. The creature of evil flails violently and sputters curses, but the stranger finishes off the fiend with a second slash.*

*Ethan, panting for air, slowly rises to his feet. "By Ezra, what was that thing?"*

*The stranger says nothing. He merely pulls his weapon from the dead fiend's throat and begins wiping the black ichor off the blade. Seeing the young priest still standing in shock, the stranger begins walking away. "If you really want to know the truth, then follow me. There is a lot to be learned, and the fiend is not completely destroyed. Not yet at least..."*

While some lands have their paladins to destroy demons and devils, not all places have this luxury. In the Demiplane of Dread, humanity does not always have the divine power or arcane might to back stalwart adventurers, who would destroy these embodiments of evil. These are the times that the Hellstalker becomes an important asset.

The Hellstalker combines finesse and subtlety in their fight against fiends. The Hellstalkers draw upon a variety of extraordinary skills to help them hunt down and get close to their foes. By intensely studying and training to fight these infernal creatures, a Hellstalker also learns an assortment of abilities to help them slay the fiend.

While a Hellstalker knows that a fiend can come back even from death, the fight to save humanity is forever there driving force. Bringing an end to a fiend's

evil, a Hellstalker knows that the community can rest easier even if they cannot do so themselves.

Most Hellstalkers are bards, rangers, or rogues due to the nature of the society. It is not uncommon for fighters, monks, sorcerers, and wizards to also add their particular skills and abilities to the Hellstalkers' cause. Clerics and paladins typically don't become Hellstalkers due to the differences in ideology, but it is not completely unheard of for one of their number to take on this prestige class.

**Hit Die:** d8.

### Requirements

To qualify to be a Hellstalker (HIs), a character must fulfill all of the following criteria.

**Alignment:** Any non-evil

**Base Attack Bonus:** +4

**Feats:** Blind-fight, Jaded, Track

**Skills:** Knowledge (outsider lore) 6 ranks, Move Silently 4 ranks, Sense Motive 4 ranks.

**Special:** An active member must initiate the character into the Hellstalker society. This initiation typically occurs after the character has some sort of significant encounter with an evil outsider.

### Class Skills

The Hellstalker's class skills (and key ability for each skill) are: Alchemy (Int), Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Disguise (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Gather Information (Cha), Hide (Dex), Innuendo (Wis), Jump



(Str), Knowledge (outsider lore) (Int), Knowledge (planes) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Read Lips (Int), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Spot (Wis), and Wilderness Lore (Wis).

**Skill Points at Each Level:** 6 + Int modifier.

**Class Features**

All of the following are class features of the Hellstalker prestige class.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:**

A Hellstalker gains no proficiency with weapons except for what is listed below. A Hellstalker gains proficiency in light armor. Note that armor check penalties for armor heavier than leather apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Pick Pocket, and Tumble.

**Hellrazor:** When a person is initiated into being a Hellstalker, they are given a special weapon called a Hellrazor [see *Tools of the Trade*]. This weapon is both a tool to combat evil and a sign of membership in this order for good. The Hellstalker is trained in using this weapon and gains the exotic weapon proficiency (Hellrazor) at 1<sup>st</sup> level. The Hellstalker continues to extensively train with this special weapon and therefore gains weapon focus (Hellrazor) at 3<sup>rd</sup>

level and weapon specialization (Hellrazor) at 5<sup>th</sup> level. Finally at 7<sup>th</sup> level, the Hellstalker learns to make the most of each strike with his weapon and gains improved critical (Hellrazor). Any Hellstalker may buy these feats earlier, but they lose the class related versions if they already have them.

**Fiend Hunter:** At 1<sup>st</sup> level, a Hellstalker gains a bonus against evil outsiders due to his extensive study and training in the proper techniques for combating them. The Hellstalker gains a +1 bonus to Bluff, Listen, Sense Motive, Spot, and Wilderness Lore checks when using these skills against evil outsiders. Likewise, he gets the same bonus to weapon damage rolls against evil outsiders. A Hellstalker also gets the damage bonus to ranged weapons, but only against targets within 30 feet (cannot strike with deadly accuracy beyond that range). The bonus does not apply to damage against creatures that are immune to critical hits. The fiend hunter bonus increases by +1 at every additional three levels after the first (i.e. 4<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup>). The bonus from this extraordinary ability stacks with a ranger's favored enemy bonus.

**Hidden Goodness:** At 2<sup>nd</sup> level, the Hellstalker gains the

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ability to sneak attack evil outsiders (see Rogue section in *Player's Handbook*). His attacks gain +1d 6 damage to evil outsiders and an additional 1d 6 every other level thereafter (i.e. 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup>). If the Hellstalker already has the sneak attack ability, then the damage bonuses stack against evil outsiders. If the Hellstalker attacks anything else besides an evil outsider then only the sneak attack has an effect. Hidden Goodness doesn't work against beings that aren't evil outsiders or against creatures that are immune to critical hits.

**Fitting your campaign:**

Depending on the number of evil outsiders you tend use in your campaign, the Hellstalker may either be underpowered or overpowered. If there are a lot of evil outsiders, then you may wish to change the abilities to affect only fiends (i.e. baatezu, gehereleth, tanar'ri, and yugoloths). If you tend to rarely use any sort of evil outsiders, then the Hellstalker might not be of practical use at all. In this case, you may wish to convert all the abilities to cover something more commonly found, such as a type of lycanthrope.

**The Hellstalker**

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special
1 <sup>st</sup>	+0	+0	+2	+2	Exotic weapon proficiency (Hellrazor) Fiend Hunter +1
2 <sup>nd</sup>	+1	+1	+3	+3	Hidden Goodness +1d6
3 <sup>rd</sup>	+2	+1	+3	+3	Weapon focus (Hellrazor)
4 <sup>th</sup>	+3	+1	+4	+4	Fiend Hunter +2 Hidden Goodness +2d6
5 <sup>th</sup>	+3	+2	+4	+4	Weapon specialization (Hellrazor)
6 <sup>th</sup>	+4	+2	+5	+5	Hidden Goodness +3d6

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7 <sup>th</sup>	+5	+2	+5	+5
8 <sup>th</sup>	+6	+3	+6	+6
9 <sup>th</sup>	+6	+3	+6	+6
10 <sup>th</sup>	+7	+3	+7	+7

Fiend Hunter +3 Improved critical (Hellrazor)  
Hidden Goodness +4d6

Fiend Hunter +4 Hidden Goodness +5d6

# Tools of the Trade

## Weapons of the Hellstalkers

By Jason True

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*The stranger walked with Ethan at his side. Neither one of them spoke for several moments, but the silence was finally broken as Ethan coughed. The stranger merely looked at the as he pulled out the short but razor sharp weapon with which he killed the fiend.*

*"I am a Hellstalker, which is a profession dedicated to killing fiends like your previous high priest. From what you went through today, I think that you might want to consider joining our ranks as well. Many of us don't have the divine powers of the clergy or the arcane might of a wizard to help us in our battle. Someone like you might prove to be an asset. You might be able to stop what happened to your church from occurring again.*

*"I want to show you a couple of our tools that we use in our battles."*

*"This will be both your main weapon against fiends as well as your insignia as a member to this organization. We will train you in how to use it, and you will learn how to make this blade a dangerous extension of yourself. Out of all the inventions and tools, this item will be the most valuable one that you will ever possess."*

*A hellrazor is a thin, foot-long blade attached to a six-inch handle. Through the use of specific blacksmithing techniques, the weapon is made with a strong, sharp blade but weighs only a small amount. A*

*hellrazor will be of masterwork quality, but it can also be a magically enhanced version or even just a regular type (if one had to be made in a rush).*

### **Hellrazor (small melee)**

Cost: 30 gp  
 Damage: 1d8  
 Critical: 19-20/x2  
 Weight: 2 lb  
 Type: Slashing  
 Craft: weaponsmith (18)

*"After our numbers began to grow and differentiate, we realized that not all of our members are fond of the up close style of combat. Therefore, a Gnome engineer designed this little contraption for those who prefer to attack from a distance. Hidden underneath your coat sleeve, you can launch darts or other items with just a flick of your wrist."*

*The wristlauncher is a strange amalgamation between a hand crossbow and a buckler. Using a several springs and a couple different pieces of metal, the designer was able to create a pair of six-inch tubes that strap to a person's arm. By moving their wrist in a certain fashion, the wearer can launch one or both of the projectiles. Darts are the typical projectile, but some Hellstalkers tend to use specially made syringes filled with holy water as well.*

### **Wristlauncher (Small ranged)**

Cost: 150 gp

Damage: 1d4  
 Critical: x2  
 Range: 30 ft.  
 Weight: 2 lb  
 Craft: engineering (18)

*"What have you never seen a caltrop before? Yes? Well, these are caltrops just like you've seen before. The only difference is that these are made of silver, which some fiends are particularly vulnerable to. Scoff if you want, but these things can be very valuable when you need to make a quick escape. Just like yourself, fiends tend to underestimate simple things like a caltrop. Throw some in the fiends path, and they'll do the rest if you're lucky."*

*Silver caltrops work the same as regular caltrops (see Players Handbook) except for the material of what it is made. Cold wrought iron can be used as well, but silver is the much more commonly used metal. Due to the unusual metal being used, these caltrops can also be used against other creatures that are vulnerable to silver or cold iron.*

### **Caltrops (silver)**

Cost: 5 gp  
 Weight: 2 lb  
 Craft: blacksmith (15)

*"This is one of my favorite items to use against a fiend. It is called a mist candle due to the vapors that it puts into the air while it burns. We are working on other types, but the two most common are the acid and holy*

water varieties. Both tend to cause a fiend discomfort, but the acid one also tends to affect us as well. Oh, I also want to make mention that some types of fiends seem to be immune to acid. My suggestion is to use the holy water mist candle unless you have no other choice.

Using a special type of wax that is capable of absorbing large amounts of aqueous fluids creates a mist candle. By mixing the liquid into the wax, the candle will then vaporize that liquid as it burns. A mist candle is typical amount a foot in height and three inches in diameter. It burns slowly (8 hours) as it releases the liquid absorbed in the wax. The mist disperses through the air, but it has a concentrated effect within a twenty-foot radius of the candle.

An acid mist candle releases a fine acidic vapor into the air about the candle. While the acid is too dilute to cause any significant damage, it is potent enough to aggravate a creature's skin, eyes, and lungs. Any creature, which is vulnerable to acid, entering the radius around a burning mist candle (acid) gains a -2 penalty to their attacks, AC, and any skill or ability requiring concentration.

A holy mist candle releases a fine water vapor into

the air about the candle. While the holy water is too dilute to cause any significant damage, it is potent enough to aggravate a creature's skin, eyes, and lungs. Any creature, which is vulnerable to holy water, entering the radius around a burning mist candle (holy) gains a -2 penalty to their attacks, AC, and any skill or ability requiring concentration.

#### **Mist Candle (acid)**

Cost: 15 gp

Weight: ½ lb

Craft: candle making (12)

#### **Mist Candle (holy)**

Cost: 30 gp

Weight: ½ lb

Craft: candle making (12)

“Here's one last little item that I want you to see before you decide to run off and get yourself killed. No, there are a lot of other items that we've got in the works. I just don't have the time to show them all to you. This here is what we call a flour bomb. While the name is not very original, it is much more effective than what you might think. By lighting the fuse and giving it a good toss, the small amount of gunpowder in the bomb explodes

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and releases the flour all over the place. You then have a way to temporarily blind opponents and cover invisible foes.”

A flour bomb is composed of three sacks of flour sewn together around a small amount of gunpowder. A fuse burns to the center compartment of gunpowder, which explodes and releases the flour in a large cloud. The size of the cloud depends upon the amount of flour used to create the bomb (DM's discretion), but the effects of the explosion should be treated as a mundane version of the *Glitterdust* spell.

#### **Flour Bomb**

Cost: 5 sp

Weight: 3 lb

Craft: alchemy (15)

“All right, enough talking for now. I need to get back to finding that fiend and finishing it off for good. You need to meet with some of our other members and get properly inducted into your new career.”

Ethan didn't say anything in response. The young priest's head merely spun from all that had occurred that day, and he didn't see things getting any less hectic anytime soon.

# Arkandale

## Where Man is the Beast

### Arkandale

**History:** The year is 785 by the Barovian Calendar and the land of Verbrek has changed. Beginning in the year 760 a series of terrible winters struck the land of Verbrek. The winters brought massive rainstorms that flooded the banks of the Musard and the other rivers that ran through the domain. While the mighty trees of the forest survived the cold and flood, the shrubs and grasses began to wither under the harsh conditions. The deer that once flourished in the domain were starved by the death of their food source. Disease and weakness spread amongst them, and where there is weakness in prey, the predators thrive.

The population of werewolves soared throughout the years, as deer prey rapidly declined. By the year 764 there were nearly two thousand werewolves and not a single deer to be found. The werewolves quickly began to starve, and as they hungered the bitter winters took their toll. The werewolf numbers plummeted and disease spread like wild fire. The werewolves struck hard against the humans in a desperate attempt to feed themselves. The rampage slaughtered the vast majority of the men who still lived in Verbrek, yet even the blood of man was not enough to preserve the ravenous horde of werewolves.

Prey of any kind became scarce and of turned against wolf. The last few natural wolves were slain and devoured by their

werewolf brethren, and from there the cannibalism spread. The packs that once hunted as one now warred with one another, culling the weak and strong alike. Alfred Timothy, high priest of the wolf god, fought to retain order amongst his followers. Yet the wolves of Verbrek were ravenous and had no mind for a faith that could not keep them fed. Timothy turned to force, but found his own pack to weakened to fight. In desperation, he sought out foreign assistance from the lycanthropes beyond his domain. Timothy's call was answered by a small loup garou pack. These lycanthropes were alien to Timothy; they were filled with human ideas and traditions such as the wearing of cloths and the building of homes. Nonetheless, Alfred required soldiers in his war against the rebellious clans. To seal the pact, Timothy took a mate from the loup garou pack and to his Alfred's surprise, produced a son.

Alfred took it to be a good omen sent by the wolf God and became determined to stamp out the rebellious packs. From that point on the war only became worse for the priest. The presence of the loup garous only drew the attentions of the other packs, and while they never stopped fighting and killing one another, every one of them focused their attacks on their former lord. In the winter of 766 the strongest rebel packs joined forces and captured the stone circle. As the Timothy family fled Alfred was devoured by his enemies.

Alfred's wife tried to flee Verbrek, but her progress was slow for she was forced to carry her child while fleeing the relentless trackers on her trail. At every turn she was blocked by the rampaging packs, so she headed west to the Musard River, where she hoped she might build a raft or find some foreign humans to assist her. The woman was overjoyed to find a massive riverboat paddling up the Musard. Though she had thought she had found salvation, she had only brought herself into greater danger. For the master of the boat was none other than Nathan Timothy.

Nathan was mildly amused to find that his weakling son had perished, yet he was much more interested in the widow. Nathan had always had an eye for women and was never one to be discouraged by a lady's objections. Though Nathan was terrible and strong the she wolf resisted. In the end, Nathan was forced to slay the woman. Furious with frustration, Nathan decided to make some sport out of the situation. He took his six-year-old grandson and explained everything to him, right from his father's desertion of the ship and culminating in the death of the boy's mother. As the boy screamed in misery Nathan picked him up and threw him into the river.

Thus Nathan Timothy regained lordship of Arkandale and claimed the lands that were once known as Verbrek. Since that moment Nathan has devoted himself to the conquest

of the lands that were now within his grasp. He has since made contact with Borcan merchants and formed the Musard River Company. This company has invested heavily in the development of the lands of Arkandale, by building villages on the banks of the river and selling land to wealth merchants and noblemen for use as plantations. The land has since been flooded with new human settlements. The human natives of the forests have recovered in their numbers and are no engaged in trade with the newcomers from Borca. Yet at the same time the werewolves have made their own recovery. The heir of Alfred timothy survived the swim to the riverbank and has since grown to manhood. By the year 795 he has grown to manhood and resurrected the religion of his father. He took the name Noah and crusades to rescue his people from the starvation and devastation that destroyed his father's domain. Now the Church of Fenris has unified the packs under a more civilized regime, the wolves now strike a balance between their lives as wolf hunters and their ability as humans to create.

**Cultural Level:** Dark Age (5) to Enlightenment (10). The hamlets and villages of the native population remain at the Dark Age level, with the exception to the common use of firearms. The villages, plantations and docks of the riverbank are at technological level 10. At the enlightenment technological level firearms become commonplace and are treated as martial weapons. Primitive steam powered boats have begun to appear in the colonies, though this technology and the metallurgy required for it

are just barely within the grasp of Arkandale and Borca's most masterful engineers. These advances are impossible to duplicate without the assistance of Nathan Timothy or one of the Company engineers he has personally trained.

**The Landscape:** Full Ecology (temperate and subtropical forests, hills and swamps). Arkandale is a vast wilderness, filled with massive trees. The forests of Arkandale are the thickest in the Core; the land is noticeably warmer and more humid than other lands, even in the winter. The summer months are terribly balmy and mosquitoes plague all forms of life. The winters are cooler, and the occasional cold snap brings snow. More often though the winter brings rains. These cold deluges herald the flooding of the riverbanks and havoc wreaked across the riverside. It is these floods however that makes the land so fertile, with so many nutrients being brought forth from the river bottom. The fall and spring are much more pleasant, a happy medium between the two extremes. The woods of Arkandale are lonely expanses. The trees form a dense canopy, but are sparsely spaced on the ground, creating a cavernous forest floor beneath a ceiling of green. There are thin, worn paths that lead between the farming villages and the river towns, though a nonnative stands a great chance of getting lost on the trail.

The forests of Arkandale team with animal life not found anywhere in the core. Strange marsupials known to the natives as 'possums share the trees with an infamously irritating invader known to the colonists as raccoons, named after the

Lamordian word for burglar. A clever mammal named beaver has been discovered to dam the tributaries of the Musard and Noisette rivers. Tiny creatures called minks stalk the muskrats in the reeds and wetlands that grow by the riverside, while huge deer creatures called moose have emerged from the primal forest to gorge themselves on aquatic plants. Naturally, this massive pool of exotic animals has spawned a trade in furs. Wolves exist in the forests, despite the claims by the natives that no natural animal by that name yet lives. Big cats such as the cougar have immigrated into the forests from Valachan, yet they have not yet migrated far beyond the Noisette. Along with the plethora of mammalian life, there is a vast pool of avian life forms. Owls are common in the forest, as are millions of insectivores such as the blue jay, carrion birds like the crow, seedeaters, fruit eaters and even humming birds.

The mighty Musard River dissects the land of Arkandale. The waters of the river are usually warm, but they run fast and furious during the winter. The rivers host a wide variety of fish life, including the catfish, a popular dish amongst the backwards natives and Borcan restaurants alike. The river bottom is a massive store of natural treasures. Every year a sizable quantity of silver and even a small amount of gold is brought to the river surface.

**Major Settlements:** Arkandale has exploded since 767, after the creation of the Musard River Company. The Company has placed down nearly a dozen villages and ports on the banks of the rivers. The largest settlement is known as New

Levkarest, built on the North East shore of the river delta where the Musard splits in two. It is a growing boomtown built as a service port for the ships of the Musard River Company as they ferry furs, lumber and silver into Borca. New Levkarest is also known as the most lawless city in the core, for it is packed with taverns, gambling houses and brothels. This city of vice is the unofficial base for the Musard River Company, for Nathan insists that all meetings take place on his steamboat that is often in New Levkarest harbor. Aside from New Levkarest are the Company towns of Woken, Freedomton, New Burry and Moonglow. The riverbank also features several plantations owned by wealthy merchants and Borcan nobles. The biggest three plantations are Anderson Farm, the Hammond Plantation, and the Grundy Estate. The natives of Arkandale live in tiny communities. There are three true villages in the woods of Arkandale, known as Stonebrook, Silverwood and Tomestone.

**The Folk:** 1150; humans 99%, other 1% 495; werewolves 99%, lowland loup garou 5%. Languages – Balok, Mordentish

The people of Arkandale are divided up into three distinct groups. The first group is the colonists, the foreigners from Borca, Invidia and other domains. These people live mostly on the villages, plantations and logging camps upon the banks of the Musard River. These people are an impoverished folk, treated little better than slaves by the Company or by the plantation owners. Villages belong to the Musard Company; they are the trading posts through which the Company trades with the

plantations and gathers furs and exotic items collected from the natives of the forests. These people came to the colonies to escape poverty, only to be trapped in debt to the tyranny of the Company. Though it is a harsh life, most colonists still prefer being employees rather than being land bound serfs.

The plantations are manned by peasant laborers who have escaped Borca by signing labor contracts with the owners of plantations. The logging colonies are free and lawless places. These harvesting camps are populated by single men from all corners of the Core and led by a few Company overseers. The men are paid in room, board and a hand full of coppers each week. The lumberjacks spend their pay as quickly as they earn it, in the brothels, gambling houses and taverns of the colony villages. Near to the lumberjack camps are “panning operations”. In these places men pan the river for the small quantities of silver found in the bottom of the Musard River. This silver is traded at the company store and sent up to Borca.

The natives of the domain make up the second group. They are described as a “queer folk”; most of them have dark brown eyes, slightly darker skin than Borcans and always have dark black hair. A fair number of the indigenous people resemble the Richemulot people in appearance and speech and there is a tradition of intermarriage between the two ethnicities making the true origins of any woods person all the more confusing. They are a strange people, dressing in deerskin leather and cloths made from wild cotton. These people are a superstitious folk, they whisper of ghosts and giants and other things

that live in the deep woods. The natives live in scattered hamlets and a few backwards villages, most of which are surrounded by muddy moats. The villagers make their living by trapping rabbits and mink, hunting deer as well as picking berries and farming small vegetables in tiny plots deep within the woods. Each day is a constant struggle to survive, but if pressed they confess that life for their ancestors was much worse. These people profess that they are the survivors of a people who were long ago devoured by evil wolf spirits. This, they say, is a new age, where the wolf spirits are quieter and less voracious. Yet there is nothing that terrifies these people more than the howling of a wolf in the night. They refuse to travel by night, and never go out without their trusty flintlocks. These people still cradle the ancient firearms of their ancestors, though the Musard River Company has made great gains in sales of newer firearms. Every man, woman and child knows the secret of gunpowder and has been taught to forge bullets from the only metal to which they have access, silver.

The final group is made up of the werewolves. The werewolves were once a proud and savage people but their voracious appetite consumed all of the life in the forests. The result was massive starvation, which led to battles between packs and terrible cannibalism. This period of bloodshed claimed the life of Alfred Timothy, the priest of the Wolf God. After a time the werewolves neared extinction and many fled the forests for more fertile ground.

As the werewolves left, new life returned to the domain. A wide variety of animals, never

before seen in the forests emerged to fill the gaps left by the extinct prey. A new leader emerged to lead the remaining werewolves. The heir of Alfred Timothy taught the savage lycanthropes to farm, to build homes and to live in a better harmony with their prey. Under the guidance of the Church of Fenris the werewolves began to rebuild their packs, though now they organized themselves into hamlets and villages. The wolf-people remain in small numbers, they are much too cautious to remake the mistakes that doomed their ancestors. These wolves pick berries, foster small orchards of fruit trees and raise root plants and mushrooms in cellars. They carefully hunt to deer and moose that live in the forests, adding human meat to their diet when they feel that numbers of the human predators have grown too high. The lycanthropes are cautious with their dread disease; they hunt out any infected lycanthropes and exterminate them. The wolf people worship at the Church of Fenris several times a year. A large church has been erected over the standing stones of the circle; it is used as the place of worship where the wolves go to hear the wisdom of "the trinity".

**The Law:** The only authority in Arkandale is the Musard River Company. This is a loose organization of nobles, merchants, and plantation owners led by Nathan Timothy. The Musard River Company has been granted full rights by Ivana Boristi, and a limited sovereignty recognized by the Dukar of Invidia in trade treaties. The villagers of the towns on the riverbanks are all employees of the Musard River Company.

These people work on the docks, maintain the lumbar barges, smith metal, build firearms, run the assay offices, pan for silver in the river and conduct trade with the natives. They are forced to rent property from the Musard River Company, buy food and goods from the Company stores and are forbidden to engage in independent commerce. Employees are forbidden to assemble and are constantly watched by the ruthless Company enforcers. A Company overseer governs each village, maintains a stockade for criminals, and has the authority to assemble a militia of villagers and lumberjacks and equip them with company firearms.

The plantation owners are sovereign over their lands, much like the landed aristocracy of Borca. The owner maintains a number of men as a security force to watch over the laborers. The farm laborers live on the land, pay rent to the landowner and are paid a pittance. In effect, peasants in Borca can escaping the oppression of their nobles by signing on as laborers and living under the slightly different tyranny of plantation owners. The Musard River Company makes a tidy profit arranging contracts between landowners and the laborers, as well as ferrying the people and the goods back and forth. Laborers who want to start their own farms are given an opportunity; by appealing to the owner of the land around the plantation they can be granted a small plot of their own. These laborers are then trapped in a legal arrangement known as sharecropping, under which they rent land from the plantation owner and have no chance of paying off their debts, inevitably placing the burdens upon their

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children while the landowner grows fat from their labor.

The werewolves are governed by the Church of Fenris. The brutal Noah Timothy heads this church, and through it he controls the wolf people of Arkandale. Noah enforces a loose series of guidelines designed to prevent over hunting. His work as a priest has been focused more upon the advisor and leader to the wolf people, rather than the traditional priestly role as a healer. Noah believes that only the strongest of the pack deserve to survive, so healing the wounded is reserved for emergencies. The Church of Fenris is dedicated in striking a balance between the three aspects of werewolf life, man the creator, Fenris the destroyer and Orion the hunter. Noah is locked in a cold war with the Musard River Company. He knows that the over development of Arkandale will lead his people to the same disaster that destroyed his father. Noah despises his Grandfather, for he embodies all of the evil and hypocrisy in civilization. Noah and the Church are slowly undermining the Company, stirring discontent in the Company employees and attacking the villages, plantations and logging camps as often as possible.

Trade and Diplomacy:  
**Resources** – antlers and horns, berries, cotton, exotic furs, exotic meats, firearms, fish, gold, leather, root vegetables, silver, timber, velvet. **Coinage** – nightshade (gp), hemlock (sp), foxglove (cp). Trade has exploded in recent decades. The plantations make huge profits selling cotton to the growing textile industry in Borca and Richemulot. The villages have



boomed on the sale of furs to Borca, especially mink and beaver furs. Firearms are the currency traded to the Arkandale natives, who are too enamored with the power of the modern guns to realize that they trading away fortunes in pelts. Timber is felled in camps on either side of the Musard and shipped up stream by barges to mills in West Borca. All other goods travel back and forth on one of the Company's miraculous steamboats.

The colonies of Arkandale are recognized as under the protection of Borca, and Borca is free to import goods from the colonies without duties. The nation of Invidia enjoys a similarly helpful trade pact, in exchange for their recognition of the Musard River Company and their lawful claim to the lands. Richemulot trades with the colonies as well, though imports come with fees that go directly into the coffers of Borca.

**Characters:** **Classes** – aristocrats, barbarians, commoners, experts, fighters, rangers, rogues. **Skills** – craft (gunsmith), hide, listen, move silently, profession (farmer, fisherman, lumber jack, shipman, trapper) wilderness lore. **Feats** – alertness, skill focus (wilderness lore), weapon focus (any firearm).

**Notes:** Characters from Arkandale may take proficiency in firearms without taking the feat exotic weapon proficiency (firearms). The natives of the forests have been using firearms for hunting for decades and the colonists represent a technological level where firearms are more common than any other missile weapon. Rifles and blunderbusses are considered

martial weapons and pistols of any kind are considered simple weapons.

## Nathan Timothy, Darklord of Arkandale

### Male human werewolf

#### Aristocrat 4, Expert 4

**Hit Dice** 4D8+4D6 +12 in human form (52) +24 hybrid or wolf (64)

**Initiative** +1 human, +6 wolf/hybrid

**Speed** 30 ft; 50 ft, as wolf or hybrid

**AC** 11 (human) 15 (hybrid/wolf)

**Attacks** Human +8/+3 (weapon)

Hybrid +10/+5 (bite)

**Damage** 1D6+2

**Face/Reach** 5ft by 5ft./5ft.

**Special Attacks** Trip, curse of lycanthropy

**Special Quality** Wolf empathy, scent, damage reduction 15/silver as wolf or hybrid, curse, regeneration

**Saves** Fort +5(+7 wolf/hybrid), Ref. +6(+8 wolf/hybrid), Will +12

**Abilities** Str 15 (+17 wolf/hybrid), Dex 12 (16 wolf/hybrid), Con 12 (16 wolf/hybrid), Int 14, Wiz 14, Cha 12

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<b>Skills</b>	Bluff +12
	Diplomacy + 12
	Listen +13 (+17 in wolf/hybrid),
	Navigation +7
	Intimidate +7
	Profession (gambler) +13
	Profession (ship captain) +13
	Sense Motive +13
	Search +6 (+10 in wolf/hybrid), Spo +19 (+23 in wolf/hybrid),
	Swim +9
	Wilderness lore +2 (+6 in wolf/hybrid)
<b>Feats</b>	Alertness, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, weapon focus (bite)
	Alternate form Blind fight Improved initiative, weapon fineness (bite)
<b>Challenge Rating</b>	9
<b>Alignment</b>	Lawful Evil

**Appearance:** Nathan Timothy appears the same as he did when he was first drawn into the demiplane of Dread. Nathan appears to be a man in his late fifties, in excellent health. He is a moderately fat man with a fiercely black beard. His eyes hold a scheming malevolence that cannot be hidden. When he desires, he can be a charming gentleman. When he is confident he reverts to his natural state of mind, a cruel and abusive man, without any respect for the rights or dignity of others. In this state his voice modulates from a self-superior mocking chuckle to a furious roar that rivals the thunder of a winter storm. Nathan wears a finely made blue uniform,

adorned in gold buttons and an ornate trim. He is fond of a wearing a blue hat, though he removes it in the company of ladies or important business partners.

**Background:** Nathan Timothy was born on a world very different from most in the multiverse, though the same world from which one of the domains of Ravenloft was once a part. Nathan was a struggling merchant. He owned a steamship that he had won in a crooked poker match, the *Virago*. From the moment he laid eyes on the magnificent ship he knew he could never let himself be parted from it. Despite Nathan's business savvy, his gambling got the better of him and his business began to fail. The creditors circled, and it looked as though he might lose his beloved *Virago*. Rather than let it be taken from him, he reluctantly sold it under the condition that he would be captain. His partner was Jonathon True, a wealthy but naive gentleman farmer married to a beautiful woman named Annabelle. The moment Nathan saw the woman standing on the bow of the newly christened *Virago*; he knew he must possess them both. Nathan wormed his way into his partner's life; using his knowledge of commerce to supplement the gentleman's own inexperience. At first it was his plan to steal enough of True's money that he could buy his partner out. But while Jonathon was inexperienced, Annabelle was much more wily. She convinced her husband to give his ownership of the boat as a gift, and as a taxation maneuver. Annabelle saw through Nathan's charms and though she had overlooked the attraction Nathan felt for her, she knew that the

bestly man wanted full ownership of the ship and would do anything to seize it. Nathan's hunger for the woman was aroused, so much so that he could no longer bear the existence of her husband; he lured Jonathon and Annabelle onto the *Virago*. The gentleman farmer was slain by Nathan's thugs and dumped overboard while Timothy confronted the widow.

Though Nathan presumed to be a gentleman captain, he was a beast at heart. Though Nathan overpowered her initially, she was able to escape his embrace. In her mind, Nathan's bestial assault was another phase in his plan to seize the *Virago* as his own, to possess her and the object of his murderous obsession. Nathan cornered her near one of the two great paddlewheels and attempted to recapture her, with nowhere to go Annabelle climbed onto the wheel. Her life and her virtue in tatters, she refused to let the monster possess her as well. As the wheel steadily bore her to the green waters she cried out her final words.

"You can have your accursed ship, you wolf!" She screamed, "Keep it forever! May it ferry you to hell!" With that, the paddlewheel pushed her under the dark river waters. With her death, a gray fog emerged from the waters.

Since Annabelle's death, then Nathan has become obsessed with power. The woman defied his will, and he has sworn himself to control everything and everyone in his greedy grasp. True to Annabelle's words, he will possess his boat forever. He can never leave the waters that hold his boat, for if he does he becomes paralyzed with seasickness and is gradually washed back into the *Musard*

River. Nathan was perplexed to find himself within a new land, and he was disappointed by the primitiveness of the people. He has tried to explore further up and down the *Musard*, but naturally shallow waters keep his boat within the confines of his domain. He discovered that he had the ability to become as bestial in form as he was in his black soul, as well that his boat was nigh indestructible.

Nathan operated his steamship for decades before he came to accept his situation. He maintained a small number of thugs to be his crew. Since a real organization was too complex to maintain from his ship, he kidnapped Priscilla, a young woman of fine breeding and intellect and forced himself upon her. She committed suicide not long afterwards, but not before she bore a son. Nathan named him Alfred and set upon instilling obedience in his child. Though Alfred was a weak and cowardly boy, he was indomitable. Nathan could beat the boy within an inch of his life and yet never get the boy to yield. Nathan was not completely beaten, he had a half-vistani woman named Arabella captured and brought to him to be Alfred's nanny. Though Alfred might not fear his own pain, he yielded to Nathan's will to protect the woman who he came to see as his older sister. It was an inspired plan, but Nathan was unable to control his animal lusts. By the time Alfred had become a teenager, Nathan took Arabella as his second wife. After five long, painful years Arabella threw herself under the paddlewheel to escape the torment.

Alfred was shattered by the loss of his only friend. He reviled his father's hypocrisy, to appear to be a man and yet behave like a

loathsome monster. Of all the men Alfred had known, all were as corrupt and beastly as his father. Alfred hated the man inside himself and became dedicated to annihilating it, to elevating his wolf side above man. Alfred fled the boat and became lord of Verbrek. In time, his own evil outshone his fathers and he happily claimed Nathan's domain as his own.

The loss of his domain shook Nathan to the core. He realized how easily his son had taken the river and the land away from him. For years he brooded bitterly on the Virago, wondering how long it would take for his boy to seize the boat as well. Yet that day never came, for Alfred led his wolf people to devastation. With his son's death, the domain was up for the taking. Nathan retook the whole domain by indecently assaulting his daughter-in-law, killing her, mentally torturing his grandson and then throwing the pup into the rivers to die. With that abominable act the mists rose again, bestowing ownership of the lands to him again.

**Current Sketch:** The land was once taken from Nathan and he is set on preventing that from ever occurring again. Nathan sent his minions to make contact with wealthy Borcan nobles and merchants. With these men he formed a conglomeration to build up capital to create colonies in Arkandale. The colonies have succeeded and slowly Nathan is infiltrating the wilderness. Nathan despised that which is wild and free, he seeks to destroy the land and bend it permanently to his will. He is in no small hurry, for he is convinced that his grandson survives. He is deeply paranoid, for he believes that

inevitably he will lose Arkandale to Alfred's heir. In the mean time Nathan busies himself with an empire of oppression and vice. Nathan is the chief executive of the Musard River Company, and through it, the undisputed master of the colonies.

Nathan is a hopeless gambler; he is convinced that ever since Annabelle's death he had been doomed to inevitably lose everything except his beloved boat. Much of the profits he earns from the Musard River Company are invested in casinos, taverns and whorehouses. Almost once a month some individual "hits it big" at Nathan's Casino, which is dubbed "The Annabelle-lee". These big winners are pressured to join Nathan and several of the other partners in the Musard River Company in a private card game on Nathan's boat. These games can last long into the night, but inevitably the game comes down to Nathan and the lucky gambler. Nathan comes close to winning, but the lucky newcomer always wins in the end. If the winner has been respectful, Nathan will let him walk away. If, on the other hand, the gambler has been cheerful or cocky, Nathan forced the gambler to play one more hand, with the Virago as the stakes. No matter what happens, the newcomer is doomed to lose that hand, after which Nathan cheerfully slays him and dumps the body overboard.

**Combat:** In Combat Nathan is nearly indestructible. When faced with a dangerous opponent, he fights to wear the enemy down. Nathan maintains a crew of several laborers and thugs on the Virago; most of them are 3<sup>rd</sup> level warriors armed with clubs and flintlock pistols. The

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Virago is nearly indestructible, any damage taken glances off of its prow. The only way to destroy the Virago is for the steam engine to be destroyed. Once the engine takes fifty points of damage (modified by its hardness of 5), the steam valves become crushed and the pressure build up to the point of exploding. The engine explodes dealing 10D6 points of fire damage in a twenty-foot radius, which obliterates the boat.

**Alternate Form:** Nathan's curse has made him into a natural lycanthrope. He may change between human, hybrid and wolf form at will.

**Regeneration:** So long as Nathan is on the Virago he has the quality regeneration 2. There is no attack that can by pass the regeneration ability.

**Trip:** If Nathan hits a character with his bite attack he can make a trip attack as a free action.

**Closing the Borders:** When Nathan wants to close the border, no one may pass beyond the forests of Arkandale. If anyone tries to walk through the border the skies become black with a great storm and a massive deluge strikes. The land slopes upwards until it became mountainous, any further progress is blocked by deadly mudslides. The skies become torn with hurricane force winds and any flight is impossible. The ground rises from the river bottom, cutting off the progress of the rivers with a natural barrier of mud and rock.

# Growls in the Night

## Beasts from the Bog

The daylight filtered through the canopy of the fen, sending shafts of yellow light upon the surface of the black water. Birds called from the twisted trees of the bog and were answered by the croaking of frogs on the Lilly pads. Ewan let his hand skim the surface of the water as the raft moved slowly down the waterway.

“Get your hand back up here,” said Dumont. The older man didn’t even look away from the river as he chastised his student. Ewan rolled his eyes as he grudgingly obeyed. The young man was so bored he could not even stand upon the simple raft.

“Tell me again why we’re wasting our time in this stinking fen,” He said aloud. “Are we here to hunt frogs?” The brash youth chuckled. He stopped abruptly when he saw his mentor’s disapproving glare. “Sorry,” He offered. He knew he was lucky to have a teacher like Dumont. If it weren’t for the mysterious man from Dementileu he would probably have been drafted into the Dukkar’s army. Instead of that short and pointless existence, he was seeing the world. Though to be honest, the more he saw of the world outside of Karina, the less he liked. Of all the gloomy places in Verbreak and Valachan, this bog was probably the least frightening. He had wanted to enjoy the respite from cold skies and shadowy forests, but his master had other plans.

“There are things in these swamps,” Said Dumont, his words thick with his flowery

accent. “Vile things that call these waters home. The swamp is an unforgiving environment and its denizens don’t gladly suffer the presence of our kind.”

An inquisitive expression crossed Ewan’s face.

“What kind of things?”

### Bog Wraiths

#### Medium sized Undead (incorporeal)

<b>Hit Dice</b>	3d12 (20)
<b>Initiative</b>	+0
<b>Speed</b>	Flight 30 ft
<b>AC</b>	14 (+4 deflection)
<b>Attacks</b>	+3
<b>Damage</b>	1D8 (corrupting touch)
<b>Face/Reach</b>	5 ft
<b>Special Attacks</b>	Sinkhole
<b>Special Quality</b>	Incorporeal, spell like abilities, telepathy, undead
<b>Saves</b>	Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +5
<b>Abilities</b>	Str 14, Dex 11, Con -, Int 10, Wiz 14, Cha 8
<b>Skills</b>	Bluff +5, hide +8, listen +10, move silently +8, spot +10
<b>Feats</b>	Alertness
<b>Climate/Terrain</b>	Swamps
<b>Organization</b>	Solitary
<b>Challenge Rating</b>	2
<b>Treasure</b>	None
<b>Alignment</b>	Chaotic evil
<b>Advancement</b>	4-6 HD (medium)

Bog wraiths are the undying spirits of those whom drown in the murky waters of a swamp. These malignant ghosts feed from the misery of those who slowly drown within the muddy waters of haunted fens. These wraiths appear as faces figures wrapped in flowing black robes. Their robes constantly drip with the brackish waters of the fen they haunt. Their hands are wickedly clawed, though they are loath to use them. Bog wraiths much greatly prefer to use their abilities to draw victims into the fens and drown them with their sinkhole ability.

Bog wraiths hate the daylight, though it has no power over them. Wherever they go they warp the natural plant life of the swamp, trees die and plants become gray and lifeless. Reeds and grasses thrive in the presence of the wraith, but natural decomposers are absent. After decades of a wraith’s haunting the local marshes become deadly peat bogs.

**Combat:** Bog wraiths prefer not to engage in combat. Instead, they flee their opponents and try to lure them deeper into the swamp.

Whenever something new enters the bog the wraiths use telepathy to learn the creatures intentions and weaknesses. The wraiths then use ventriloquism and the light spell to create the illusion of a human being holding a lantern, calling for assistance. This illusion allows the wraith to make a bluff check against the sense

motive check of the victim. If the bluff is successful the wraith can draw the victim into a natural trap within the bog.

**Incorporeal (su):** Can only be harmed by incorporeal creatures, +1 or better weapons, or magic, with a 50% chance to ignore any damage from a corporeal source. Can pass through solid objects at will, and its own attacks will pass through armor. Bog wraiths always move silently.

**Telepathy (su):** A bog wraith can sense the thoughts of any individual within 100 feet. Wraiths use this ability discern the intentions of intruders in the swamp. Bog wraiths can use this ability at will.

**Sinkhole (su):** A bog wraith can use this ability three times each day to turn normally solid swamp ground into a natural trap. The wet muck of a sinkhole entraps victims and sucks them downward. A bog wraith targets an area no bigger than 10 square feet. Everyone within the area must make a reflex save against a DC 13 or be entrapped. Once entrapped a victim cannot move. Over the course of ten rounds the victim is drawn into the sinkhole. A victim may escape by making a strength check against a DC of 15, or against a DC of 10 if he can grab onto something not already sinking in the mud. If the victim cannot escape the sinkhole before the tenth round he or she is buried alive. The character becomes immobile and begins to drown. Pulling a buried character out of the mud requires a strength check against a DC of 20.

**Spell Like Abilities (su):** At will a bog wraith may cast darkness, ghost sound, light, and ventriloquism.

**Undead (su):** Immune to mind-influencing effects, poisons, sleep, paralysis, stunning and disease. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain or death from massive damage.



## Prince of Frogs

### Medium sized shape changer

<b>Hit Dice</b>	5d8 (24)
<b>Initiative</b>	+3
<b>Speed</b>	30 ft
<b>AC</b>	13 (+3 dex)
<b>Attacks</b>	+4 (rapier)
<b>Damage</b>	1D6+1 (rapier)
<b>Face/Reach</b>	5 ft
<b>Special Attacks</b>	Lies, Kiss
<b>Special Quality</b>	Alternate form
<b>Saves</b>	Fort +3, Ref +7, Will +4
<b>Abilities</b>	Str 12, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 14, Wiz 12, Cha 16
<b>Skills</b>	Bluff +10, diplomacy +10, move silently +5, hide +5, sense motive +10,

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<b>Feats</b>	spot +5 Alertness, weapon finesse
<b>Climate/Terrain</b>	Lake sides, rivers and swamps
<b>Organization</b>	Solitary
<b>Challenge</b>	5
<b>Rating</b>	
<b>Treasure</b>	None
<b>Alignment</b>	Neutral evil
<b>Advancement</b>	By class

All that glitters is not gold, and all that is lovely does not love. Within the fens and swamps of Ravenloft there are all manner of slippery, slimy things but the most dangerous can be those who wear a handsome face. The Prince of Frogs is one such nightmare, a horrible spirit of the land. The creature is born of the collective envy that evil creatures feel towards the race of man. Within the stinking marshlands the jealousy festers until it takes a shape, that of a small frog.

The Prince of Frogs appears to be a tiny species of bullfrog. Its skin is very smooth and its eyes are big and mournful. Upon its head is a horn-like growth that resembles a humble crown. In this form the frog seeks out a human maiden. This is a difficult chore for the tiny creature since few young women venture close to their watery lairs. Once it finds a victim it uses its bluff check to seduce the girl. Over the course of seven days and seven nights, it spins tales of a great kingdom beyond her home, a place of wonder and enchantment. The Prince of Frogs promises her that it is a human prince, transformed into a fell creature and doomed to rule over the cold swamps. It asks that the girl end its curse with a kiss, and in return it will marry her and make her a

princess of the magnificent kingdom. Little does the girl suspect the truth of her reward.

As soon as the girl kisses the Prince of Frogs, he transforms into a human male. He is very handsome in this form and is dressed in princely garb. He then proceeds to escort his new bride further into the swamps of his home. When they are both far from civilization, he bestows a kiss upon her, turning her into a toad. The frog-maid must spend the rest of her life as the wife of the frog prince, serving him in his Castle of Reeds. She will live out the rest of her life in cruel servitude, never to return to her former life. Frog Princes usually keep several wives at a given time.

The frog prince is most vulnerable during the seven days of wooing. In this time the girl might let slip news of her amphibious friend and spoil the Prince's plan.

**Combat:** Princes of Frogs despise combat. They are physically fast and strong in their human form, but they hate fighting creatures that are capable of fighting back. If someone appears to come between a Prince and his prey, he transforms into human form and slays the interloper with a rapier. Once the intruder is dispatched, the Prince eliminates his victim lest she warn other maids. He then does his best to make it appear as though the girl and the intruder killed each other. Though the ruse is primitive, it has proved surprisingly effective.

**Lies:** A prince of frogs relies upon his silver tongue to seduce a victim. A prince of frog makes a bluff check once each day of his wooing. If he makes seven consecutive successes his

victim becomes under the effects of a charm. This is crucial to the Prince, since without the enchantment it is unlikely that he will get the girl to follow him into the center of a swamp.

**Kiss:** If a Prince of Frogs can trick a young woman into following him into the center of a swamp, he can use his vile kiss to transform the young woman into a frog princess. These maids are permanently turned into a tiny female frog with a bony tiara upon her head. These Frog Princesses can speak any language they once knew.

**Alternate Form:** A Prince of Frogs can freely transform himself from a tiny frog to a human male. As a frog he is unable to take any action except speak or move. Princes in frog form have a movement of 30 feet hopping and swimming.

## Snake Lilies

### Large sized aberration

<b>Hit Dice</b>	5d8+10 (34)
<b>Initiative</b>	+1
<b>Speed</b>	Swim 10 ft
<b>AC</b>	14 (+4 natural +1 dexterity - 1 size)
<b>Attacks</b>	4 tentacles +4 melee, bite +3 melee
<b>Damage</b>	1D4+2 snake fangs, 1D8+2 bite
<b>Face/Reach</b>	10 ft by 10 ft/5 ft, 10 ft with snake-tentacles
<b>Special Attacks</b>	Constrict, improved Grab
<b>Special Quality Saves</b>	Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +5
<b>Abilities</b>	Str 15, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 3, Wiz 12,

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	Cha 16
<b>Skills</b>	Move silently +8, hide +8, spot +7
<b>Feats</b>	Alertness, multiattack, multidexterity
<b>Climate/Terrain</b>	Lake sides, riverbeds and swamps
<b>Organization</b>	Solitary
<b>Challenge Rating</b>	5
<b>Treasure</b>	None
<b>Alignment</b>	Chaotic evil
<b>Advancement</b>	By class

Snake lilies are an abominable mutation, spawned by some disgusting magical experiment. These monsters lie on the muddy bottom of some waterway and extend their bait tentacles towards the surface. On the surface of the water the bait tentacles look like lily pads, but in truth they are primitive heat sensors. The feeding tendrils look nearly exactly like serpents, right down to the fangs. Snake lilies are barely intelligent, but they're instinctive strategy is an excellent one. When pulled from the water these aberrations resemble bloated bags of brown skin. In the center of the body is a sucker mouth lined with hard horns.

**Combat:** The strategy of a snake lily is simple. The monster swims to a fertile location and buries itself in the mud. The hidden snake lily watches for some prey to move close and then it launches its snake tentacles. The snakes slash with their fangs until the prey is dead or incapacitated, then they lock around the animal and drag them into the water towards the waiting mouth.

**Improved Grab:** When a snake lily hits a medium sized or

smaller opponent with its snake tentacles it automatically grabs the creature. Every round afterward the snake lily automatically deals constriction damage.

**Constrict:** A snake lily deals automatic tentacle damage to a creature with a successful grapple check.

# Celtic Banshee

## A Pitiful variant of the Groaning Spirit

By Eddy Brennan (The lost Hedgewitch)

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Banshees are commonly the groaning spirits of elf maids that have returned from beyond the grave as malevolent, evil entities and spirits. These creatures sing mournful songs and wail all their days and nights. These wails being able to freeze the heart of any that hear it, killing them instantly.

Celtic Banshees differ from their cousins, being drawn from creatures of any race or kind. They do not cause the death of those that listens in on their painful cries of sorrow, heralding only the coming of another tragic loss among the living. These banshees are commonly women, specifically those that have died in childbirth. However, stillborn children have also marked their presence among these wailing spirits, rare as their appearances may be.

These spirits appear as they did at the moment of death, adult females that become these banshees remain in the throws of labor forever, until they are laid to rest. Children that become these pitiful creatures appear as newborn babes crying for their mothers. When both participants die in childbirth, the spirit comprises of both mother and child, the latter being cradled in the their mother's arms, both spirits sobbing over their loss and those impending to follow soon.

They are said to only appear at night, on the rooftops of those soon die as in the same way they did in a similarly tragic way.

## Creating a Celtic Banshee

"Celtic Banshee" is a template that can be applied to any woman or child from any humanoid or monstrous humanoid race (hereinafter referred to as the "Base Creature") that has perished in childbirth. The creatures type changes to "undead." It uses all of the base creatures statistics and abilities except as noted here.

This template is an extension of the Ghost template found in the Monster Manual (page 212) and lists only the changes between the two types of spirit.

**Hit Dice:** As Ghost.

**Speed:** As Ghost.

**AC:** The base creatures natural armor improves by +5.

**Attacks:** As Ghost.

**Damage:** As Ghost.

**Special Attacks:** A Celtic banshee retains all the special attacks of the base creature, although those relying on physical contact do not affect non-corporeal creatures. The Celtic banshee gains the following abilities as well as plus 1d2 other ghost abilities in addition to being able to Manifest and use its Corrupting Touch. Saves have a DC of 10 + ½ Celtic banshee's HD + Celtic banshee's Charisma modifier unless otherwise noted.

**Mournful Wail (Su):** When Celtic banshees wail, those hearing the sound must make a Will Save, failure resulting in a

feeling of dread and loss, inflicting -4 penalties to all attacks, damages, skill and Will save rolls until the next sunset. If the Celtic banshee causing these feelings is destroyed or laid to rest before this period is over, the victim recovers immediately.

**Dread (Su):** Creatures approaching within 30 ft. of a Celtic banshee must make a Fort Save or be overcome with grief, collapsing into tears. These creatures are unable to defend the selves or carry out any other action until this grief ends and are considered prone. The grief-stricken creature is entitled to a further Fort Save each following round to overcome the grief they are currently wrapped in. If a creature passes the initial save while entering the dread aura about the Celtic banshee, it is rendered immune to the aura's effect until the spirit manifests again or 24 hours, depending on which happens sooner.

**Special Qualities:** As Ghost with the following alterations.

**Damage Reduction:** A Celtic banshee has damage resistance equal to its rank or 10/+1.

**Spell Resistance:** A Celtic banshee receives a spell resistance of 18.

**Saves:** As Ghost.

**Abilities:** As Ghost.

**Skills:** As Ghost.

**Feats:** As Ghost.

**Climate/Terrain:** Any settlement  
**Organization:** Solitary or pair (mother and child)



Challenge rating: Same as the base creature +2  
Treasure: None  
Alignment: Any  
Advancement: Same as the base creature.

## Sample Celtic Banshee

This example uses Miranda, a 5<sup>th</sup> level human female commoner as the base creature.

Miranda carried the bastard son of Harkon Lukas, the Meistersinger of Skald. When his other children attempted to undermine his authority, he began taking extra care in whatever future offspring he may have. Miranda's pregnancy was a surprise to him, which he uncovered shortly before she entered labor. He had her home attacked by dire wolves during the labor and they maliciously slew all present, including his own bastard infant son. Miranda, her soul overcome with grief to great to bear has since risen from her death as a Celtic banshee, spreading her own sorrow and foretelling of more to come.

Currently, Miranda is rumored to haunt the Out Town of Skald, remaining in the area close to where she was killed. She longs to have her child returned to her, but is fearful of all suffering, knowing of it happening or coming causes her to wail in her own sorrows. If detected and approached, she is timid, sometimes defending herself in combat.

**Miranda, Celtic Banshee**  
**Medium-Size Undead**  
**(incorporeal)**

**Hit Dice:** 5d12 (32hp)  
**Initiative:** +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

**Speed:** Fly 30 ft. (perfect)  
**AC:** 16 (+1 Dex, +5 Natural)  
**Attacks:** Incorporeal Touch +2 melee  
**Damage:** Incorporeal touch 1d4  
**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.  
**Special Attacks:** Dread, mournful wail, manifest, corrupting touch, horrific appearance  
**Special Qualities:** Undead, incorporeal, +4 turn resistance, damage reduction 10/+1  
**Spell Resistance:** 18.  
**Saves:** Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +1  
**Abilities:** Str 8, Dex 13, Con -, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 16  
**Skills:** Craft (needlework) +5, Hide +8, Listen +13, Profession (seamstress) +5, Search +8, Spot +13  
**Feats:** Alertness, Improved Initiative.

The Will save against this Celtic banshee's Mournful Wail and Dread has a DC of 16.

**Undead:** Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning and disease. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability drain, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

**Incorporeal:** Can be harmed by other incorporeal creatures, +1 or better weapons, or magic, with a 50% chance to ignore any damage from a corporeal source. Can pass through solid objects at will, and own attacks pass

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through armor. Always moves silently.

**Challenge Rating:** 4

# Dread Nymph

## Corrupting Beauty

By Godbrain

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**Medium-Size Fey (Mists)**

**Hit Dice:** 3d6 (10 hp)

**Initiative:** +1 (Dex)

**Speed:** 30 ft., swim 20 ft.

**AC:** 11 (+1 Dex)

**Attacks:** touch +1 melee

**Damage:** corrupting touch 1d4

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5-ft./5 ft.

**Special Attacks:** Corrupting touch, maddening beauty, fatal beauty

**Special Qualities:** Damage Reduction 10/silver, spell like abilities

**Saves:** Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +8

**Abilities:** Str 10, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 17, Cha 19

**Skills:** Animal Empathy +10, Knowledge (Fey lore) +7, Escape Artist +7, Bluff +10, Hide +7, Listen +11, Move Silently +7, Sense Motive +9, Spot +11

**Feats:** Ability Focus (maddening beauty), Alertness, Dodge, Iron Will

**Climate/Terrain:** Any land

**Organization:** Solitary

**Challenge Rating:** 7

**Treasure:** Standard

**Alignment:** Always chaotic evil

**Advancement:** 4-9 HD (Medium-size)

Throughout the world, myths and legends record the stunning beauty and playful innocence of the fairest of the fey: the nymph. Such tales fall upon skeptical ears in the Lands of Mists, as the perverse nature of that dark land has corrupted even the most pure of nature's children. Dread Nymphs



are twisted and fiendish versions of their more beatific cousins. However, they are no less fair and enchanting in their appearance than regular nymphs, though the playful innocents in their eyes has been subtly replaced with a darker, more insidious look of malevolence and sadism.

Dread Nymphs live alone, luring their victims (usually men) to their deaths. Dread Nymphs don't seem to need victims for sustenance; they are rather drawn to these acts by some darker part of their nature. Powerful spell casters who have found a way to survive their dark powers sometimes capture dread Nymphs. Though such imprisonment will engender the eternal enmity of the foul fey.

## COMBAT

Dread Nymphs avoid combat whenever possible. If they cannot avoid their enemies by use of their powers, they flee.

**Maddening Beauty (Su):**

This ability operates continuously, affecting all humanoid within 60 feet of the dread nymph. Those who look directly at the nymph must succeed at a Will save (DC 15) or be affected as though they had failed a horror save and contracted the **Fascination** horror effect (*RCR*, pg. 60). The fascinations focuses on the dread nymph, and the character affected will likely seek out the fey in order to offer him or her self as a supplicant. Depending on how aesthetically pleasing the victim is, the nymph may keep them around for a while. Otherwise, she usually kills them right away.

**Fatal Beauty (Su):**

The dread nymph can evoke this ability once every 10 minutes. Those within 30 feet of the nymph who

look directly at her must make a Will save (DC 17) or die.

**Corrupting Touch (Su):**

The dread nymph's touch can become toxic to any humanoid she touches, if she wills it. A successful melee-touch attack does 1d4 points of damage.

**Spell-Like Abilities:** Like their more benevolent cousins, dread nymphs can use *dimension door* once per day as cast by a 7<sup>th</sup>-level sorcerer. They can also replicate druid spells as 7<sup>th</sup>-level casters (save DC 13 + spell level).

They cannot cast any druid spells with the Good descriptor.

**Special:** It is rumored that Dread Nymphs will occasionally become impregnated with the child of a comely male (who rarely lives long after the encounter). Female children of this union are always dread nymphs, like their mothers. They stay with their mother until they are about 13 or 14 years of age, then they strike out on their own, often after attempting to kill the nymph that give them life in

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the first place! While rare, male children are not unheard of. Such unfortunate souls are almost always caliban, though those who know the secret ways of the dread fey have heard tell of something else coming into being as a result of this union of man and mists...

Dread Nymphs live almost exclusively in Tepest, though it would not be unlike one of them to relocate to another domain. Some may even go as far as to integrate into human society. A dread nymph's favored class is Druid.

# Tome of the Guardians

## Evil Artifacts of Ravenloff

*Brother Garland collapsed into his chair. The day had been harsh to his aging body; no man should be forced to walk so long a distance with so heavy a burden. It was a difficult task but somehow he managed to sit up, lift his massive pack from his shoulders and drop it upon the floor before falling backwards into the hard embrace of the wooden chair. By no means was it a comfortable piece of furniture, but it was far better than the rocks and tree stumps upon which he had been forced to rest during the few breaks in his trek. Exhaustion welled up from within and threatened to consume his entire body. It was a tempting proposition, but the middle-aged man was too disciplined to allow himself the comfort of rest. He frowned sadly; longing for the days when he was foolish enough to part take in rest. The harsh years had cured him of those weaknesses, as well as the joys that came with them.*

*He sat up again and opened the pack at his feet. Within it were more than a dozen musty books, bound in ancient leather and adorned with peeling gold leaf. These books were his burden to bear, for while they contained a treasure of knowledge they were unable to move themselves. Such was the lot of his life, a beast of burden at the beck and call of a demanding master. Though unlike most of his ilk, he was able to share in the enjoyment of the goods he carried. In all his years*

*as a servant of his noble masters he had learned a great many things. Indeed he was a scholar if there ever was one, a scholar of the arcane. He chose a massive book from his pack. This one was destined for the city of Mortigny in the nation of Richemulot. It was a filthy place, filled with a world of dripping water, starved rats and bookworms. It would be a terrible shame if the hazards of such a place stole the contents of the great tome. Fortunately, the long trek would give him time to peruse the book. If the book be lost to the carelessness of the Richemoulot scholars, then at least one man could carry on the knowledge.*

*The great book gave off the wonderful aroma of a proper library. The scent of cold stone, the dry darkness, and the decades of accumulated dust. The last monastery to claim this book had kept it in a perfect spot. The pages were yellowed, but not yet brittle. Each turn released more of its scholarly must into the air. By the flickering light of the fire, Brother Garland could read the intricate calligraphy scribed upon the pages. He skipped over the pages, turning to the spot where he last left off. He was midway through this tome, well within the most fascinating area of study. The fabled artifacts of the known world were catalogued before him, a long list compiled from the scholars who died centuries before his own birth. These were the objects that gave his masters their purpose, items of unholy power*

*and irrepressible evil. He ran his finger to the top of the next page, and by the orange light of the fireplace read the name of the next entry.*

## The Grim Familiar

The grim familiar is known by different names in different places. The Darkonian scholars tell the tale of the insidious “Imp’s Skull”, while in the land of Kartakass the bards sing the melancholy song of the Jewel-eyed Corrupter, while in the halls of Hazlan there are speculative whispers of a powerful trinket adorned with a single gold ring. The Grim Familiar is a small, jawless skull. It is very light and is no bigger than the palm of a man’s hand. The bone is bleached and smells faintly of dust. The skull comes from no known animal, for it is unusually wide and the teeth are all pointed. The skull features two long fangs that just outward, as well as two small horns that grow from the back of the cranium. The eye sockets of the skull are large and slanted. In the centre of each socket is a sky blue gem. The gems are superbly cut, for they are perfect dodecahedrons. Within the gems even the smallest ambient light is reflected and refracted into a blue nimbus that fills the sockets. Looking into the gems, a viewer may glimpse at strange things beneath the surface of the diamonds. Some say that they have felt the skull watching them.

The very back of the skull is pierced with a simple golden ring.

The history of the Grim Familiar dates back to an unnamed wizard, who was drawn into the land of mists in the year 535. This wizard was known for great power as well as great evil. Like so many of his kind, he drew too much attention upon himself. A party of adventurers penetrated his subterranean lair and slew him. In the process of looting his body, the adventurers discovered the Dread Familiar hanging from the wizard's necklace. The leader of the group, a warrior named Mirkil, took the trinket as his own. The fortress of the wizard was sacked and raised. Though the valiant warriors felt that they had ended the wizard's power, they had only liberated an even more resilient evil. Over the course of a year the adventurers noticed a marked change in their leader. He was far less aggressive and much more brooding. He left his friends, claiming that he was tired of life as a wandering thug. Mirkil invested his fortune in a manor house and sold his prized sword and armor to purchase a huge number of books. Though his old companions looked in on him, he refused to speak with them.

In the years after the discovery of the Familiar, Mirkil devoted himself to arcane pursuits. To the villages around his property Mirkil became known as a wizard of great power and vile temperament. The manor and the forests around it were shunned, and villagers feared to have anything to do with the wizard. After a simple misunderstanding over the price of food Mirkil slew a merchant and transformed him into an abominable monster. The

villagers begged the outside world for help, and after a time Mirkil's own former compatriots came to their rescue. The vile wizard slew many of his former friends, but in the end he was dispatched. The survivors dispersed the valuables amongst themselves and sold what ever they themselves could not use.

From there the Grim Familiar found its way to a curiosity shop in Darkon. A con artist named Yvonne purchased the item, hoping she could use it as a prop in her fortune telling act and con gullible housewives out of their husband's money. In the months afterwards she discovered great magical power within herself and nurtured it. She gave up her job as a fortune-teller and delved deep into the arcane. Instead of inventing elaborate illusions to falsely divine the future, she used enchantments to dominate the minds of others. She created a web of minions and used their influence to gather more and more power for herself. Yvonne looted the treasuries of noblemen to gather more and more magical artifacts. Surely she would have continued to amass power, had she not attracted the attention of the dreaded Kargat.

The secret police of Darkon penetrated her web of deception and sought her out. Yvonne had become a mage of great power, but even she was no match for the assassins of Azalin. She fled into the wilderness hoping to lose her pursuers in the wilderness of Nova Vaasa, but the Kargat were not so easily escaped. They chased her all the way to the outskirts of Kantora, where she was slain with a crossbow bolt. Her body

tumbled in to the waters of the South Dnar and never emerged.

From that point on, the history of the Grim Familiar is lost to conjecture. Rumours circulated amongst the scholars of the Core of a strange skull shaped artifact. The story of the Familiar repeats itself again and again, with an unsuspecting victim taking the Grim Familiar and succumbing to its influence. The Grim Familiar seized the minds of dozens of unsuspecting individuals and twisted them to its ends. No one seems immune to the corrupting power of the Familiar, the good and evil alike are driven away from their former lives. All of the past owners of the Grim Familiar have met with untimely deaths, yet there are plenty of arcane scholars who seek out the Grim Familiar for the power it offers.

The Grim Familiar always attaches itself to an owner after its previous owner dies. This is usually the first person that touches it after the previous owner dies. The effects of the Grim Familiar are great. Anyone who claims possession of the Familiar gains a +10 profane bonus to any checks using the skills decipher script, decipher script or any form of the lore skill. In addition, the owner gains a +10 bonus to checks involved in learning or researching new spells. While the Grim Familiar is on his person, the owner is immune to charm, paralysis, sleep or domination effects. The Grim Familiar acts as a true familiar for the owner, this causes any pre-existing familiar to leave. The owner gain the effects of the alertness feat while the Grim Familiar is on his person. In addition the owner casts spells with a caster level one level higher

than his own. The effective caster level of the Grim Familiar is 8<sup>th</sup> level. Once each day the owner may use the familiar to cast Rary's Mnemonic Enhancer and dispel magic. In addition, once each day the owner may choose to freely use the maximize spell feat on any spell he casts. Spells cast in this manner will only take up slots of the same level as the spell, rather than a slot three levels higher.

The powers granted by the Grim Familiar come with a price. The moment the artifact chooses an owner that person must make a will save against a DC 18 or be compelled to possess the skull and let no one else touch it. Even if the

prospective owner succeeds in his first save, the Grim Familiar will make another attempt to dominate the character each hour until it succeeds. Once it entraps an owner, the Grim Familiar begins to corrupt him. Each month the owner must make a will save against a DC 18 to avoid his alignment being moved one step closer to lawful evil. Once the owner's alignment has become lawful evil he is compelled to begin rising in levels in the wizard character class. The Grim Familiar gives the owner all necessary training in wizardry, though it cannot teach him new spells. The Grim Familiar continues to work

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its corruption on the owner until it is destroyed. The Familiar is completely impervious to harm, and has the ability to teleport without error to the location of its current owner if they are separated for an extended period of time. The Familiar can only be destroyed by crushing the skull beneath a book of arcane spells, dissolving the eye gems in the blood of an illiterate man and then melting the gold ring with the fires of a burning scroll. If any of the three components remain intact the skull can reform in one week.

# Fear and Loathing in Lamordia

## Drugs and Addiction in Ravenloft

*Meander had the shakes again. Leaning against the wall he tried to keep his hand from quivering. In a few hours his whole body would be quaking uncontrollably; he needed his fix soon. The evening chill was spilling through the alleys of Ludendorf. The quivering man held his coat tighter around himself, hoping to bear the cold better. Silently he cursed Fredrick for being late. He wondered how long he would have to wait in the cold before the merchant would arrive.*

*Suddenly a shape moved in front of the mouth of the narrow alley. Meander smiled when he recognized the merchant's face.*

*"Took you long enough," Said the quaking man. He drew forth a leather purse, and eagerly pushed it into Fredrick's hands. "Now give it to me!" He pleaded. Fredrick was much more patient, for he opened the purse and counted the coins by the faint light of the street lanterns.*

*"It's a good haul," He said smiling. "What did you sell?"*

*"The opium sold like hot cakes," Replied Meander, "But the real hit was that Ergot extract. Those artsy types drink it down like it was champagne. Now I sold your goods just like I promised. Give me the stuff." Fredrick laughed and withdrew a glass vial from his coat pocket. It was a thick red liquid, the color of freshly drawn blood. He handed it to Meander, who proceeded to pull the cork out with his teeth and suck*

*the contents down with a horrible thirst. The effects were immediate.*

*His body became very still and his eyes lost their bloodshot veins. Slowly the color of his skin faded into the pale pallor of a fresh corpse. A smile of satisfaction spread upon his bloodless lips. Now he relaxed his grip on his coat and let it fall open, oblivious to the frost.*

*"That's good stuff," Meander sighed contentedly. In the blissful drug haze he pitied Fredrick, who was destined to peddle the precious drug and never to enjoy the embrace of the blessed elixir. He was silent for a while, enjoying the supreme serenity of the moment. He turned to his dealer again. "So, what do you got for me today?"*

### Intoxication

It can be said that the citizenry of all civilizations regularly partake of drugs, whether they be simple alcohol, a form of smokable weed, or other substances. Drugs can come in the form of natural products, brews and mixtures or artificially refined compounds. Drugs are different from regular sources of food or nutrition because they cause two unique conditions: intoxication and addiction. Intoxication is a physical and mental state, where the effects of the drug addle the drug users mind and body. Some forms of intoxication are almost harmless but powerful drugs or large doses of lighter drugs can

raise intoxication to a dangerous degree.

Each use of a drug adds a certain number of "Intoxication Points" to the user's "intoxication score". For each point in a character's "intoxication score" that character will suffer a -1 circumstantial penalty to all skill checks and all saving throws except fear, horror and madness. This reflects the inhibited ability of the character to think or to act. Drugs suppress the mind's ability to feel fear or disgust, and open the individuals mind to even the most bizarre realities. Thus the character gains a circumstantial bonus to his fear, horror and madness checks equal to the character's intoxication score. The intoxication points accumulated from the use of multiple drugs or more than one dose of a single drug stack with each other.

Each drug has a set duration, after which the effects of the drug wear off. At the end of the duration the user loses all intoxication points incurred from that drug. When a drug user uses a particular drug more than once he will retain all of the intoxication points accumulated until the duration of the very last dose taken is over. By taking doses of other drugs a user may continue to suffer the intoxication effects incurred from a completely different drug long after its own duration was supposed to end. Certain drugs have persistent effects. The effects of these drugs last long after the duration of the original dose.

Addiction is the most common persistent effect. These persistent effects are unique to the individual drug, and can last for hours, days and even years.

A living body cannot sustain intoxication for too long a period of time. For every hour that a character is intoxicated the character must make fortitude save against a DC equal to ten plus the character's intoxication score. If the character passes the save he or she can continue to function. If the save fails then the character is rendered unconscious for one hour. Characters whom are extremely intoxicated may remain unconscious in this manner for many hours. If the character fails the fortitude by more than five points he or she suffers 1D8 points of temporary constitution damage.

## Hopping Down

When the duration of a drug is up the user suffers a "hang over". Most often this comes in the form of extreme nausea. When a character's intoxication score drops to zero he or she makes a fortitude saving throw against a DC equal to 10 plus the number of intoxication points just lost. If the check is successful then the character is fine and behaves normally. If the check fails then the character is nauseated for a number of hours equal to the number by which the character failed the check. While the character is nauseated he or she suffers a -1 circumstantial penalty to all actions. The character may not rest and regain hit points, ability damage or spells while thus nauseated.

## Addiction

All drugs carry the risk of addiction. Addictions are both physical and mental afflictions, though resisting the addiction is mostly a mental feat. Whenever a drug intoxicates a character he or she risks becoming addicted to that drug.

Just after a character's intoxication score drops to zero he must make a will save against a DC equal to the number of intoxication points that the character just lost. If the check succeeds the character has shaken off the addictive influence. If the check fails then the character becomes addicted to one of the drugs previously used. The addiction modifier of the drug used modifies the DC of the addiction check. In cases where more than one drug is used the character will become addicted to the drug with the highest modifier to the addiction check.

There are different stages of addiction, and each failed addiction check advances the character to the next rank. In the first rank of addiction the character feels compelled to use the drug whenever it is readily available. Whenever the drug of his addiction confronts the character he or she must make a will save against a DC equal to the DC of the addiction check he failed, modified by his current level of addiction. If the check succeeds, the character can ignore the drug. If the check fails then he or she is compelled to take the drug and use it at his or her earliest convenience.

At the second stage of addiction the character becomes physically dependent on the drug. The character suffers a -1 moral penalty to all actions. This penalty can only be removed by feeding

the addiction with at least one dose. The character must partake of the drug at least once each day or suffer the penalty. At the third stage the penalty increases to -2. The character cannot regain lost hit points with sleep, regain spells, or recover from disease, fear, horror or madness unless he or she uses the drug at least once a day. The character's alignment shifts one step closer to chaotic neutral.

At the fourth stage of addiction the penalty increases to -3 and the character shifts one step closer to chaotic neutral. At the fifth stage the penalty increases to -4 and his or her alignment shifts one step closer to chaotic neutral. A character can only be addicted to one particular drug at a time. If at any time a character possesses two addictions the player loses the addiction to the drug with the lower addiction modifier.

## Recovery

Recovering from addiction is no easy task. A character cannot recover from his or her addiction unless he or she refrains from feeding the addiction for at least one week. At the end of the week the addicted character may make another addiction check, equal to the DC of the one he previously failed, modified by the level of addiction. This check is not influenced by the penalty to actions granted by high levels of addiction. If the check fails then the character remains addicted. If the check succeeds then he or she drops one level of addiction. Once a character drops down below the first level in addiction he or she becomes cured.

## Application



Each drug must be introduced into the body of the user. In many cases, ingestion is all that is necessary. However some drugs require specialized means of application. Smoking weeds must be crafted into cigarettes and pipe doses, morphine and other synthetic drugs must be injected into the blood stream via syringe, and ergot and other extracted liquids must be diluted into a drinkable form. These all require special skill checks to create the proper dose. The average DC for such checks is 10. The skill profession: medicine is used to prepare and apply morphine and synthetic drugs; the skill herbalist is used to brew extracts and fungi and prepare opiates, and the skill craft: tobacconist is used to prepare pipe weed. The specialized skill craft: drug application covers all forms of drug application. This skill is critical to the drug trade, since it allows dealers to prepare doses and clients to administer the drugs.

The correct application of drugs and the creation of doses is an important skill for dealers and users. Improper application may result in an overdose. The exact consequences of an overdose depend upon the drug used. When a skill check to craft a dosage or apply the drug fails by more than five points an overdose occurs.

## Natural Drugs

**Alcohol:** Alcohol is one of the most popular drugs in existence. Alcohol comes in hundred of different forms and is served just about everywhere in Ravenloft. Each dose of alcohol bestows one intoxication point, and the duration is one hour. Alcohol is less

addictive than most drugs; it is its massive quantity and availability that makes alcoholism so widespread. Alcohol modifies the DC to addiction checks by -2. Alcohol is not prepared like other drugs, indeed the brewing process is a fine art governed by its own skill. In the event of a faulty brew, an overdose causes 1D6 temporary wisdom damage.

The above statistics represent “Hard” liquor. Some forms of alcohol are much less intense. In such cases, intoxication only occurs when more than one dose is taken in a given hour.

**Ergot:** Ergot is a rust colored mould that grows upon wheat grains. This mould thrives in cold and wet conditions, polluting breads and cereal crops with its toxins. Ergot can be cultivated and purposely ingested to obtain the effects of this hallucinogen. Ergot has a weak intoxication effect; each use only bestows 1 intoxication point. The duration of an ergot high is only half an hour. The persistent effects of ergot are much more insidious. For one hour after ingestion of the drug the user suffers from the effects of hallucinations as described in Ravenloft Core Rules. Ergot is not very addictive; it bestows no modifier to the DC of the addiction check. Ergot is a dangerous neurotoxin and an overdose can be seriously disabling. On an overdose the user must make a fortitude save against a DC 15 or suffer 1D8 points of temporary wisdom damage.

**Mad Caps:** The dank forests of Tepest are a perfect breeding ground for mushrooms and other fungi. Most of these growths are

without any value, but a select few are known for their toxicity. Mad Caps are one such fungus. The red and white spotted mushroom grows in damp, lightly shaded areas. Consuming the cap of the mushroom produces a powerful psychedelic high.

Raw Mad Cap is toxic to humans; it must be prepared by leaching out some of the toxins in boiling water. These mind warping funguses are extremely intoxicating and addictive. Mad Caps bestow three intoxication points for each cap consumed. The duration of a Mad Cap is two hours, and Mad Caps modify the DC of the addiction check by +1. The persistent effects of the Mad Cap are identical to the madness effect paranoia. These persistent effects last only for twenty-four hours, though if the user is confronted with a horror check as per the rules of paranoia he will suffer the effects of that horror check until he can recover from that failed horror check.

An improperly brewed Mad Cap is toxic. On an overdose a character must make a fortitude save against a DC 15 or take 1D8 points of temporary wisdom damage.

## Synthetic Drugs

**Morphine:** Morphine is a powerful anesthetic developed by physicians in Lamordia. Doctors in that domain noticed that anesthetics caused patients to recover from surgery at a fairly slow rate, thus they began experimenting with less harsh methods of protecting patients from the pain of surgery. Morphine has been the most widely accepted replacement for

general anesthetics. This unnatural compound completely overwhelms the user with a feeling of well-being. The user can still feel sensations inflicted upon his body but due to the drug the patient does not feel pain. The drug has since been exported into other advanced domains.

Morphine proved so successful that it was administered to any patient feeling pain or discomfort. This practice led many individuals to become addicted to the drug. Each use of morphine requires a syringe with which to inject the drug directly into the blood stream. The patient suffers 2 intoxication points for each use of the drug. The duration of a single dose is 2 hours. Morphine is highly addictive; it imposes a +3 modifier to the DC of the addiction save. The persistent effects of the drug are finely tailored to prevent pain and discomfort. For as long as the user is suffering from intoxication points from the use of morphine the character is incapable of feeling pain. The character suffers only half of any subdual damage inflicted and is immune to stun effects. The character has ability to gauge his physical condition, and may behave recklessly. While under the effects of morphine high a character is completely immune to fear, horror and madness.

Morphine cannot be synthesized without a full alchemical or pharmaceutical laboratory, eight hours of time and raw materials costing no less than 10 gold pieces. The check to synthesize morphine is made with the skill craft: pharmaceutical or an alchemy check. In either case the DC is 20. If the synthesis check fails by more than 5 an overdose

will occur in the user. The administration of morphine requires a profession: medicine check against a DC 10 and the use of a syringe. An overdose of morphine causes 1D8 points of temporary constitution damage.

**Opium:** Opium is one of the most popular drugs available in the Core. It is a refined substance, taken from poppies and carefully prepared. Over the years opium dealers have turned the refining process into a science, and now the final product scarcely resembles the original organic compound. The opium trade is one the most prosperous industries in Nova Vaasa and it is rapidly expanding into the other domains of the Core. Merchants from Pharazia introduced opiates to the Core and immediately found a market. Opiates have since been outlawed within Pharazia, though the merchant cartels have found other lands in which to grow their crop. The duration of opium is 2 hours and each use bestows two intoxication points. Opium is highly addictive and so it applies a +2 modifier to the DC of an addiction check. The persistent effects of opium is drowsiness. Each dose requires the user to make a fortitude save against a DC 10 to avoid falling asleep. An overdose of opium results in the user suffering from 1D6 points of constitution damage.

## Magical Drugs

**Black Lotus:** The black lotus is a strange plant; to the botanists of the Core it is more myth than plant. Some who claim to see it liken it to an opium producing poppy. Others say that it no plant

at all but rather some other form of life, neither plant nor fungus it is the sole product of a primal kingdom of life, as different from plant as animals are from fungus. What ever it is, the black lotus is an enigma to the scientific community.

Cities in Darkon were the first market for the black lotus, followed by Hazlan, Nova Vasaa and then Lamordia. The Lotus is sold by a mysterious cartel. These drug merchants never reveal their faces and wear gloves of black leather, thus their species has never been discerned. These merchants sell only one product, and they choose their customers carefully. These creatures are unusually proficient in detecting a lie. The black lotus is a simple plant made up of petals more delicate than silk and darker than a winter night. The lotus can be eaten or brewed into a tea.

The black lotus bestows one intoxication point for every dose and the duration of the drug is one hour. Black lotus is mildly addictive and increases the DC of the addition check by +1. The persistent effects of the drug are strange and terrifying. Secondhand testimony states that the drug “throws open the gates of perception”. The user becomes aware of the multiverse that permeates all known reality. Users report the ability to sense magic, see through illusions and even perceive the hidden nature of the world around them. The persistent effects of the drug last for the duration of the dose. While under the influence the user experiences the effects of the spell True Seeing. The user also gains insight into the nature of multiverse around him. While under the influence the user

gains a +4 circumstantial bonus to skills knowledge (planes) and knowledge (Ravenloft).

The effects of the drug are not always pleasant. As the users perceptions expand he runs the risk of detecting something sinister. Every hour that the user is under the influence he must make a madness check against a DC of ten plus the number of hours that he has spent intoxicated with the lotus.

An overdose of black lotus is generally not possible since the drug is so simple to use. If for some reason a character swallows three or more plants in the space of a few minutes, or brews the leaves of three or more plants into tea, then an overdose will occur. The user must make a fortitude save against a DC of 15 plus 1 for every plant used above the first two. If the check fails then the character is struck with 1D8 temporary wisdom damage and the character is immediately struck with the hallucination madness effect and the appropriate ability damage from a failed madness check.

**Horstman's Brew:** Each year endless wagon trains leave Falconovia and enter the lands Drakov's enemies selling grain. The vicious tyrant grudgingly sells his nations ample grain in exchange for gold and raw materials. This trade between enemies is a dangerous gambit for both sides, since neither side is assured of the most advantage in

the trade. At Drakov's request his scientists have developed a special export that will help tip the balance of the increased trade into Drakov's favor.

Horstman's brew is the general term used by the Talons to describe the wide variety of synthetic drugs secretly exported by Falconovia into the surrounding domains. These drugs are actually a diluted version of the experimental formula known as the "Primal Serum". As hoped, these drugs are becoming extremely popular in the domains surrounding Falconovia. The increased trade between Drakov and his enemies helps spread the illicit trade in these drugs, undermining the nations who accept Drakov's gifts of cheap grain.

There are three popular versions of the drug, known on the streets as Black Rager, Howling Madness and Night Flier. All versions of the drug perform the same benefit to the user, an extreme sensation of freedom. Under the effects of any of the three a user loses all inhibitions. The user is liberated from constraint and concern; he is overwhelmed with animalistic desires. Users describe the experience as "unleashing the beast within". Originally the drugs were confined to syringes but with development the drugs have been transformed into simple dry tablets. The tablets are dissolved in water or alcohol and imbued.

Liquids thus contaminated become thicker and emit a faint green luminescence in the dark.

Each use of one of these drugs bestows 1 intoxication point on the user. The duration of the drug is three hours. The effects of Horstman's Brew are designed to be extremely addictive. They modify the DC to addiction checks by +5. Horstman's brew is prepared in Falconovia and is designed to be foolproof. Thus, overdoses are not possible while using this drug. The persistent effects of the drug are insidious. While under the effects of either of the three a user's alignment temporarily shifts to chaotic neutral. The effects of the drug build up inside of a user's body, breaking down the body's resistance to the primal serum. When a user reaches the third level of addiction he or she becomes an infected lycanthrope. The trigger for this form of lycanthropy is a dose of one of the three drugs of Horstman's brew. The user transforms into a werewolf if using Black Rager, a lowland loup garou if using Howling Madness and a wererat if using Night Flier. In all cases the user becomes the hybrid form of the appropriate lycanthrope. Transformed lycanthropes differ from other infected lycanthropes in that they have an affinity for beings under the effects of Horstman's brew. While transformed the infected lycanthropes will not harm other users.



<b>Drug</b>	<b>Intoxication Points</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>DC mod.</b>	<b>Persistent effects</b>
Alcohol	1	1 hour	-2	None
Ergot	1	½ hour	0	Hallucination
Mad Caps	3	2 hours	+1	Paranoia
Opium	2	2 hours	+2	Sleep
Morphine	2	2 hours	+3	Painlessness, immunities
Black Lotus	1	1 hour	+1	True seeing, planar perception
Horstman's Brew	1	3 hours	+5	Alignment change, lycanthropy

# From the Lab

## Active Ladies Affire

*"I don't know how you found this place," Said the tattooed ruffian, "But you won't be leaving." Marx coughed up a glob of blood and phlegm. The huge thug grinned sadistically and drove his fist deep into the man's stomach, eliciting another choking gasp. "You're a nosy little bugger aren't you?" Sneered the bruiser. He reached into his vest and retrieves a wickedly curved hunting knife. "Maybe I should cut it off?" The huge man pressed the cutting edge against the base of Marx's nose, drawing a steady drip of crimson from the growing wound. Suddenly the knife withdrew.*

*"I think you should release him," said a woman's voice. Standing at the mouth of the alleyway was a lady. The woman was quite out of place in the dreary slum, she was dressed in the extravagant fashions of Dementlieu, the very model of a delicate lady of proper breeding. The thug was barely able to keep from drooling, his eyes glazed over and his primitive brain became drowned in bestial thoughts. The massive hand released the beaten rogue, letting Marx drop painfully to the cobblestone ground.*

*"Well, well, well," Oozed the brute. "Aren't you something sweet. Ol' Grumbal hasn't ever had a fancy one like you." Old Grumbal licked his lips, an act as distasteful as a peach rotting under the noon sun*

*"Perhaps you should try your luck?" Replied the lady. Though Grumbal was in no state of mind to notice, the woman's voice betrayed not the tiniest shred of emotion. With the eyes of a viper she watched the thug saunter towards her.*

*"Well, bird," said Grumbal, "What you've got for me," There was no reply. With a deft swipe of her hand she plucked an ornate fan from her surcoat pocket, opened it and plunged it into the throat of the greasy brute.*

*Grumbal's eyes opened wide and his jaw dropped in shock. The razor spines concealed within the fan had dug deep into the vital arteries in his neck, releasing a torrent of crimson in his throat. The disgusting thug gurgled as his eyes rolled back into their sockets. The lady had not done so much as bating an eyelash as Grumbal collapsed into a bloodless, crumpled heap.*

*In the meantime, Marx had pulled himself up. He wiped his own blood from his mouth with his sleeve and knelt down by the body of his attacker.*

*"Nice of you to show up, 'Talia" He said sarcastically. He dug into the dead man's pockets and retrieved a yellowed envelope. As he rose from the crouch, Marx noticed the fineness of his colleague's strike. The artery must have been severed and directed inwards in a single nimble motion of the fan-spines. No simple trick.*

*"If your finished..." Said Natalia. She waited by the side door of the building.*

*"Its not locked," replied her bruised confederate. Natalia responded by folding her arms and raising her right eyebrow ever so slightly. Her irritated expression didn't fade in the slightest until Marx walked over, opened the door and held it open for her while she walked through.*

## Fake Pearls

An old Borcan proverb that states, "There is no poison deadlier than one in a pleasant disguise". Surely this belief motivated the master druggists of Borca to invent the fake pearl. Unlike the harmless forgeries of jewellery, these fake pearls are quite lethal. Fake pearls are made of powdered drugs. These drugs can be narcotics, poisons or harmless tranquilizers. The powdered drug is compressed into a white sphere and contained in a glaze of sugar and pigments. The pigments give the fake pearl the appearance of a real specimen while the sugar glaze gives it structural strength. The glaze is designed to withstand the heat and moisture generated by a living body. Once the pearl is completely immersed in a liquid it immediately dissolves. This releases the drug concealed within the glaze into the liquid.

Fake pears are built with special detachable mounts. The mounts are indistinguishable from the pear, but the allow the owner to

pluck the fake pear from a necklace or an earring with only a partial action. From a distance fake pearls are indistinguishable from real pearls. Only careful inspection by a trained jeweller can reveal the insidious nature of a fake pearl. By taking a full round action and making a craft: jeweller check against a DC 15 a character may discern that a fake pearl is not a genuine pearl. Such a check does not reveal the dangerous nature of the fake pearl.

Any kind of poison, drug or tranquilizer can be synthesized in a fake pearl. The construction of a fake pearl requires a profession: chemist or alchemy check against a DC 15. This check allows the creator to turn a liquid drug into a powder, form it into a sphere, and concoct the sugar glaze and the detachable mount for the pearl. To disguise the fake pearl the builder must make a successful craft: jeweler check against a DC 15. A single fake pearl costs roughly ten gold pieces. The cultural level of a fake pear is 9.

## Fan Blade

The fan blade is an exotic weapon, first pioneered in the treacherous arena of conspiracies known as Dementlieu. This item was invented as a tool to protect ladies of repute against assassination. The fan blade is a delicate fan, identical to the hundreds of varieties used by ladies throughout the civilized core. Concealed beneath the folds of the fan are ten spines made of tempered steel and sharpened to a razor point. Designed to be invisible even in plain view, this weapon is undetectable by anything less than a spot check

against a DC of 20. The spines are completely concealed while the fan is closed, so the weapon must be opened to strike. The spines are thrust forward where they open numerous wounds, compensating for the shallowness of the slash.

Each successful attack with a fan blade deals 1D4 points of piercing damage. The fan blade threatens a critical range of 18-20 and deals triple damage on a critical hit. The weapon is nearly impossible to use without proper training, it counts as an exotic weapon. The fan blade is extremely light for it weighs only half a pound. The fan blade is built of tempered steel alloys that allow the thin spines to withstand the force of a strike. The cultural level of the fan blade is 9. Every fan blade is a masterwork item. The base cost of such a weapon is 1000 gold pieces.

The fan blade is like no other weapon available. The wielder of such a weapon cannot apply the damage modifier from strength to the damage rolls. The delicate design of the blade compensates for the draw back; the weapon finesse feat is automatically applied to strikes from the fan blade whether or not the user possesses the feat.

## Iron Parasol

Necessity is the mother of invention and for the lady adventurers of the Core there was no shortage of needs. While their male counterparts could bear civilized weapons in public, armed females remained socially unacceptable by any standards. This placed women at a great risk when they went about their social duties in the urban areas of the

Core. To address the problem a female marksman named Madame Pelloire commissioned the creation of the iron parasol.

The iron parasol is made of a skeleton of steel alloys comprised mostly of iron and a relatively new element known as "aluminium". Indeed, these advanced alloys are critical to the device since they offer great strength with extremely little weight. The careful design of this item makes it indistinguishable from a normal shading device. The skeleton of parasol supports a web of aluminium strands, which in turn supports the fabric making up the parasol's shade. This mesh is strong enough to hold up the material but collapses around anything that strikes it.

The holder of the iron parasol may use it in the same manner as a shield. The parasol does not confer a bonus to the users armour class, but it does bestow a similar benefit. Whenever an attacker hits the user but only succeeded in the attack roll by 2 points or less then the parasol has stopped the attack from hitting. The parasol collapses upon the weapon or projectile. Projectiles are stopped dead but melee weapons are entrapped. The owner of the parasol may attempt to disarm the attacker as a free action. The owner of the parasol gains a +4 circumstantial bonus to this attempt and does not incur a disarm attempt from the attacker. After entrapping a weapon the parasol is useless. Repairing an iron parasol requires a blacksmith and a skill check against a DC of 20 to reshape the metal. After that, the material of the shade must be reapplied, but any skilled craftsman can accomplish this with minimal fuss.

The iron parasol was designed to conceal weapons as well as defences. The handle of the parasol is hollow and conceals a long stiletto dagger. The curved grip of the parasol fits over the hilt of the dagger, so the iron parasol can be used to conceal a particular dagger that the owner would rather have close at hand.

## Silenced Sting

There is no sound more telling than the report of a pistol. There is no other weapon that so loudly articulates the intent of one person to harm another. Assassins and thieves have ignored pistols for a firearm can shatter silence as easily as flesh and bone. This situation has placed a huge amount of pressure upon gunsmiths to create a pistol whose report is silent or at least muffled. The master gun makers of Lamordia have responded to this pressure by creating a specially built pistol that masks both the sound and the flash of gunpowder.

The silenced sting is a small pistol no larger than a woman's hand. The pistol is comprised of two parts, a tiny handle and a box like barrel. The barrel is encased in a rectangular box of metal, fluted with numerous holes cut into the box at precise angles. The silenced sting utilizes cutting edge theories in the physics of sound; the air holes allow the sound of the gunshot to exit at multiple locations, where the sound waves are knocked slightly out of phase. Instead of adding together and creating the familiar sound of a gunshot the sound waves cancel one another out. The resulting sound of the gunshot requires a listen check against a DC 15 to

detect. Even when it is detected the sound is so soft that it is often overlooked as a gunshot and explained as some benign thumping.

The silenced sting deals 1D8 points of damage and threatens a critical range of 20/\*3. The silenced sting has no barrel to speak of and so it is terribly inaccurate. The silenced sting has a range increment of 5 feet. The silenced sting cannot be reloaded like other pistols since the whole barrel must be disassembled before the powder can be inserted. Reloading the silenced sting requires at least five minutes and a gunsmith check against a DC 12. Failure on this check indicated that the gun would not fire until the gun is successfully loaded.

The silenced sting was specially designed to be used as a concealed weapon. The gun is easily hidden beneath a hat or within the folds of a coat. The quiet firearm is an ideal assassination tool since it is concealable, stealthy, deals great damage in a single strike and completely unsuspected. The common tactic is for the assassin wielding the weapon to use the silenced sting close to the victim in a crowded location in the outdoors. After the ensuing chaos the soundless gunshot remains a mystery. The only believable explanation available to investigators is that the assassin fired from a very distant location.

Gunsmiths cannot normally create a silenced sting. Even in a domain of cultural level 9 the silenced sting is a specimen of cutting edge technology. A silenced sting cannot be bought at any price, though one can be commissioned from one of the few

master gunsmiths capable of creating such a device. The theory that the silenced sting is based upon is found in the 72<sup>nd</sup> volume of the Lamordian Scientific Journal under the title "Destructive Interference and the Wave Nature of Sound". Gunsmiths without access to this paper must make a knowledge: mechanical physics check against a DC of 25 to develop the proper theory. With this theory a gunsmith may create the schematics for the gun. Drawing the blue prints for a silenced sting requires a gunsmith check against a DC 25. With the blue prints in hand, a gunsmith is ready to build the weapon. The construction of a silenced sting requires a gunsmith check against a DC 25 as well as raw materials and the proper tools.

# Corners of the Core

## The Living Bayou

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### Maison d'Sablet

They say, in the town of h'Ombres in the domain of Souragne, that one should avoid the Maison d'Sablet if one intends to live a long life. Indeed, they may have a good point as the murky depths of the swamp is said to have come alive years ago to crush the greedy hand of man. The Maison d'Sablet grows on the North Eastern corner of the island, feeding from the rivers that flow from Lake Noir. The sole settlement of the area is the small town of h'Ombres. This village is a sleepy little town, made of a mishmash of the ethnicities of Scrounge. The people speak a colorful variation of the local language, adding a slow drawl to their speech. These settlers came from Port d'Elhour, looking for an easier life beyond the reach of the plantation owners. For the most part they have found peace, though they remain impoverished and poor. Like most villages on the Island of Scrounge, a mayor elected from the ranks of the farmers every two years leads h'Ombres. This election is more of a formality than a real institution; the villagers prefer to leave each man to his own business. Though they have never secured a steady trade with the other villages of Scrounge, life in h'Ombres is peaceful and safe. The simple farmers fish and grow their crops, though they are never too busy to stop and chat amongst themselves. There is only one

subject that gives them pause, "La Maison d'Sablet", the living bayou.

The mighty swamp grew around a network of shallow rivers issuing from the center of the domain. The forest of the Maison d'Sablet is thick with ancient trees. The plants are twisted with unfathomable age and are completely covered in vines and mosses. In the night, beneath the pale light of the moon, the trees are like gnarled skeletons. The moss like a funeral shroud and the vines like spectral chains tying the spirits to the earth. The branches are twisted towards the sunlight, like fiendish claws reaching towards the sun to snuff out the light. The canopy absorbs the rays of the sun just as a weed greedily leaches water from the soil. Beneath the canopy the swamp is frozen in perpetual twilight. The air is always humid and the wind blows through the underside of the canopy, sending the lower branches swaying to the whistle of the breeze. Those who walk through the swamp feel as though they are descending deep into a living, breathing body.

The ground of Maison d'Sablet is always moist and soft. Each step taken sinks a traveler into the mud. The lower branches of the trees fill the gaps between the plants, blocking the path of anyone who would pass. The ground is covered with sickly green shrubs but by far the majority of the plant life hangs from the trees. Flowers of all

shapes and sizes blossom upon the branches of the trees. Vines of all sizes snake around the trunks of the trees, as do a plethora of fungi and moulds. Birds and black squirrels thrive in the canopy, feeding off of the flowers, fruits and nuts. Opossums and raccoons live solitary lives in the green maze of branches, feeding on insects and unguarded eggs. Snakes and lizards are more rare in Maison d'Sablet than they would be in other areas of Scrounge, but they are not absent.

### History

The legend of the Living Bayou is fairly well known in the town of h'Ombres, and everyone from the oldest resident to the youngest child can tell it with colorful imagery and great detail. Some names, and smaller details vary, but for the most part the legend is identical each time it is told. It goes something like this:

A long time ago, a young woman had a home on an island deep in the bog known as Maison d'Sablet. She loved the swamp and had a garden lush with exotic and strange plants that she tended to and dotted over like a loving mother. She lived in solitude for many years but was at home in the nature of the swamp. All this would change years later when a plantation was built at the nearest edge of the swamp. The landowner wanted to expand his property and began felling trees and forging further and further into the bayou. Indeed, he soon



small hoard in the ruins of the druid's old cabin.

## The Living Bayou

Living Bayou is a terrifying foe to face. It is perfectly at home in the swamp and any who challenge it in the Maison d'Sablet will be at a terrible disadvantage. As it rarely leaves the bayou that spawned it, the creature is hard to catch off guard. Its first advantage is its stealth. Any natural shambling mound is a dangerous stalker of its prey, and Living Bayou is smarter and faster than any of its leafy brethren. In any wooded environment the Living Bayou has an effective +15 to its Hide skill. It receives an automatic +5 bonus to Listen, Hide and Move Silently, whether in a wooded area or not. It likes to catch its prey flatfooted and strike from a concealed location.

The Living Bayou is immune to all electrical effects, has fire resistance of 35, and has all special abilities natural to all Plant creatures. These include immunity to mind affecting spells, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning and polymorphing. Besides its crushing tendrils the Living Bayou has a number of unique powers. Its vines are lined with thorns, allowing it to inflict 2d8+7 damage with its Slam attack. These thorns also increase its constriction damage to 2d8+9. On a successful attack using its thorns, the Living Bayou injects poison. A Fort save at DC 18 must be made or the poisoned being will suffer 1d6 points of temporary constitution damage. These poisons are the result of the flowers and plants that wove together to form its impressive hulk.

Living Bayou prefers stealth to direct conflict. It lurks

discovered that the wood was fetching a fine price and encouraged a lumber town to grow near his land. At first, the woman knew nothing of this exploitation but soon she found the lumberjacks slowly cutting their way into the swamp. Enraged, the woman ran back to her home and demanded that the loa to kill the offending woodcutters. The very next morning, her garden began to grow uncontrollably. She tried to rein it in but it would not stop. She watched, awed and terrified, as the vines and plants grew together into a manlike form, and crept out of her garden, and into the swamp.

Thus, the Living Bayou arose. The creature began preying on the woodsmen, killing them day and night. The monster drove them back from the swamp with such ferocity that the lumberjacks refused to enter the Maison d'Sablet at all. Terrified survivors claimed that the bayou itself had come alive to punish them for their greed. The landowner scoffed at these stories, calling the lumberjacks cowards. To prove to them that they were full of nonsense he himself took up an axe. As the woodsmen and townsfolk, even his family and servants, watched he hefted his axe and felled a tree. Then, as he stood laughing, the Living Bayou surged up from the edge of the woods, grabbed him in a massive hand of vines and dragged him into the darkness of the swamp. He was never seen again.

The town, now cowed into fear of the forest, was no longer a threat. The woman prayed to her loa with thanks for their gift but forgot that a creature like the Living Bayou comes at a high price. Indeed, the creature came

to her that night and swallowed her in one massive bite. Her body and her soul were bound to the bayou as punishment for the arrogance of commanding the loa. Since then the monster has lurked in the Maison d'Sablet, feeding on the creatures who live there and anyone foolish enough to stumble into its domain.

## The Present

The people of h'Ombres laugh after they tell the tale of Living Bayou, because they have come to see it as a legend, little more than a fairy tale. The last actual sighting of the creature was nearly fifteen years ago and no one believed the children who claimed to have seen it. Despite the veneer of confidence the people of the town are cautious about setting so much as a foot into the swamp. To outsiders they say it is filled with natural hazards but will wink knowingly. The lumber industry that once thrived has never recovered.

Living Bayou is terrifyingly real, but mostly territorial. It doesn't leave its domain within the southeastern area of the Maison d'Sablet. It rarely ventures outside of the swamp. It emerges from the shadows of the bog only when food is scarce in the bayou and even then only in the cover of night. The creature is, in fact, a shambling mound of unusual intelligence, speed, and composition. Unique amongst its species the Living Bayou was born of the hatred and spiritual power of a reclusive houngan druid. It is fiercely territorial, violent against offenders, and usually hungry. The Living Bayou, unlike other shambling mounds, has some very individual traits to its personality. In particular it collects shiny things from its victims. It has amassed a

in the deep swamp waters or in the underbrush; waiting to catch its prey flatfooted. Upon capturing food, it carries it back its cabin lair and devours it slowly. It keeps all of the possessions its meal may have had in a pile in the rear of the hut. Despite all its unique abilities and defenses the Living Bayou is as vulnerable as any other shambling mound. A well-armed posse could probably draw out and slay the beast, assuming the villagers could be convinced of its factual existence.

### Adventure Hooks

- Traiscon Lumber Inc. has just set up shop in h'Ombres, looking

at the town as ripe for the pickings. With so much wilderness, and so much underdeveloped land, it's a veritable gold mine for a lumber company. However, the company's woodcutters have started to vanish in the bayou. Traiscon Lumber Inc. is willing to pay top dollar to anyone who can find out what is preying on their men in the swamp.

- Local youths have been claiming for a few days now that they found a stash of "neat stuff" in an old shack deep in the swamp. Despite the warning of their parents this old shack became a popular meeting place. The youths kept their meeting place secret until a young boy

didn't return home after going to meet some friends there. His friends are adamant that he never arrived at the shack. The local authorities are looking for someone to investigate the shack and see if they can find the missing boy.

- Cows have been slaughtered at a farm just outside of town for a few weeks now. Most of the cattle have died of broken necks but others look as though they died of a powerful toxin. Some have even disappeared all together, leaving neither tracks nor corpses. The farmer is worried that an animal is preying on his herd.

# Tainted Love

## A Ravenloft Adventure for 2-4 Characters of level 1-4

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This adventure is set in a small village along the eastern border of Ravenloft domain Kartakass. The village in the adventure is called Bourge, but it can bear any name in your campaign. In fact, it can be another settlement altogether. The names of major NPCs are given in the adventure, but, again, they are purely optional. The party should include at least one character with skills devoted to social interaction. Bards, clerics, paladins and even rogues can fill this role.

### Background Information

In late January of 756 B.C. a child of one of Harmonia's minor nobles was kidnapped. The city watch didn't find any traces of the child, so the unfortunate father asked the local bounty hunter, a well known cutthroat and sword-for-hire for assistance in the matter. The warrior, known as Yuri, set to work immediately. Alas for nobleman's son, Yuri was as unscrupulous as he was lazy. As soon as the bounty hunter understood it would take weeks of chasing the kidnappers (who, as it he discovered were Vistani mortu, working for Hazlik in search of subjects for his cruel experiments) through Kartakass' thick woods and through half a Hazlan as well, Yuri decided to take another, safer course of action.

After wandering along the Kartakass eastern border, he came upon a small village of Bourge, nestled in a picturesque valley nestled between the western slopes of Balinoks and forested shores of upper Musarde River. One thing stood out amongst the population, a small child named Victor, son of Marina the local groves' caretaker and Igor, the best hunter and trapper of Bourge. The lad looked so similar to the kidnapped child that even his mother would have a hard time guessing her son. Yuri made up his mind in a moment: the child was only recently born and didn't understand the things happening around him, so it would be of no problem to persuade him he was indeed the nobleman's missing son. The only problem left was the abduction from parents. Villagers rarely visited the local church but, as the growing's child health demands constant attention Marina regularly attended father Nikon, priest of Hala. The bounty hunter disguised himself as a Vistana and stole into the church. He tried to wrest the child from his mother, but in the ensuing fight his disguise was revealed and, fearful of public accusations, Yuri decided to kill both Marina and Nikon. Hiding the bodies and covering the signs of battle, he spirited the child and left for Harmonia, not paying attention to the dying woman's vow to see her son returned and her death avenged. Yet while the woman's curses had failed to faze the

scoundrel, her misery arose the attention of something dark and powerful.

When Igor returned home he found the house empty, so he checked out the church. The signs of battle were not so easily concealed from the eyes of an experienced hunter. The evidence told him the tale of murder, so he set on the chase of Yuri immediately. He found him several miles due west of Bourge in a small clearing in the forest. Though experienced woodsman he was, Igor's skills did him no good in the quick and brutal fight. When he lay dying on the cold winter ground the last thing he saw were Victor's largely open eyes, filled with the terror of the scene before him.

That night Marina's spirit rose into unlife. She now haunted the very church that was supposed to protect her and her child, desperate for the return of her most beloved spouse and child. The unnatural aura of Marina's spirit scared away those few who cared of gods enough to pay them homage. And when several days later the disappearance of five people became apparent, people started talks about evil that lurked under the church, in catacombs long forgotten. The elder's son, Luca, volunteered to investigate the church, and managed to retrieve the church archives, which he hoped would shed a light on the mystery. Later that day it was decided on the village's meeting

that a messenger should be sent to Harmonia with a request for help. The winter was fiercely cold and wolves were becoming bolder and bolder, so being the bravest man remaining in the village after Igor's disappearance, Luca left Bourge for Harmonia. Unfortunately, he was attacked and killed by wolves. The ravenous beasts ate what they could and left the frozen corpse to thaw out in the coming spring. It is here where the players enter the story.

## Plot Synopsis

The adventure begins with PCs heading to some location on the road in Kartakass. Along the road they find a document lying in the snow. The document leads them to a small village of two scores of people, desperate for help. Here they get acquainted with the folk and with a hedge witch who keeps an eye on Bourge. By the time the interrogation of the villagers is complete, the players should be convinced that the villain responsible is a werebeast, a fiend, a vampire or something other murderous creature. This is intended to lure the PCs' attentions away and to thus enrich the true terror of situation, when the party comes ready for a fight a lycanthrope only to be confronted with a ghost.

After the initial encounter with Marina's ghost, PCs will most certainly try to conduct some additional research; during they should find out how to put the ghost to rest (since this is the purpose of this adventure). Obviously, even the most thick-headed party will come to a conclusion that no amount of killing puts a ghost to rest, so they'll come to an understanding of the necessity of background

research eventually. With the necessary steps that should be taken to pacify the ghost discovered, our party travels back to Harmonia. There they must find and face the abomination not worthy of being called human, Yuri. The adventure ends with the corpses of Marina and Igor buried on a graveyard behind the church and the child Victor either turned over to the village hedge witch or to the town elder.

### Important considerations

An important idea in this adventure is that the PCs are ignorant of the nature of their enemy. Thus the PCs will have their attention divided and, hopefully, will not be prepared for their first encounter with the ghost. Hence the wolf should not be described as "a wolf", but described as intelligent and thoughtful, maybe even adding a reference to an "almost human cunning in his blazing eyes". It is strongly advised to instill the sense of lycanthropic danger as much as it is possible. By the very same reason it is better to assume the villagers forgot the stranger's appearance or were inattentive when he came, so as not to give up his description early in the game.

## To Bourge

*Kartakass, early spring. The air is still chilly, but the snow has started to melt already and here and there small springs merrily flow to join the confluences of river Musarde. Your travel along the country has gone uneventful, since the only thing that changed was the temperature of the air around you, from chill of the morning to the welcome warmth of the noon. Here and there the frozen dirt and small puddles of water begin to*

*thaw, revealing different secrets of the past fall and winter: be it someone's lost die or a wooden cup or a piece rotten rope or lost boot... Your eyes shift toward what you perceive as a rather big snowdrift that only recently started to thaw. It's strange, but the snow drifts down to form small recesses that, the more you look at it, resemble human's form. In fact, it is a human! Caught in a snow blizzard or something and buried on the side of a nameless track in the endless Kartakan wilderness.*

The person is a man in his mid years, physically strong and (if anyone cares to check) with no sign of any disease or illness. His features are distorted due to the agony of death, rotting and his being encompassed in the snow prison and than the thawing. Apparently he had light hair, strong chin and elegant ears, but nothing more specific can be learned from the first glance. This is Luc, the Bourge elder's son, though this shouldn't be revealed just now.

The closer examination reveals several facts: first, the person didn't freeze to death. Some beast with big claws or fangs killed the man. His throat is torn open and his hands lie in a position as if he tried to protect his face. There is a silver dagger in one of his hands, stained with an old blood; the weapon is ruined because of rust. The poor man carried some kind of message, kept in a waterproof cloth near his heart. The message reads:

*"Milord Meistersinger Denthor! The hamlet Bourge is paralyzed with fear: several of our fellow villagers have disappeared. I humbly ask you to appoint some representative of*

*yours to investigate the matter before it is too late!"*

It may be necessary for the PCs to point it out, if they do not deduce it themselves, that the hamlet mentioned in the letter is a well-known, quiet place, where decent and proper people live their small lives. Surely it should not stand to let the uncertainty and fear plague the folk of Bourge. If it does not suit the campaign, maybe it is prudent to let the characters continue on their previous assignment or even blind stumbling through the countryside, until a young man (a child, really) catches up with them and gives them an order from Meistersinger to investigate the matter. In this case a handsome reward is promised.

What ever the reason the party should soon find itself on its way to Bourge. The journey is comparatively long and takes 6 hours on foot and 3 on horses. On their way the PCs encounter a single starving wolf. The desperate beast instantly attacks the party and fights to the death.

*Covered with frozen pools of water, the road runs among the furs and spruces of the wood, disappearing somewhere in its heart. A couple of hours later the sight doesn't change much – the very same forest, awakening from its winter sleep, the very same sound of spring purling somewhere off the trail, only the ice covering the puddles at your feet begins to thaw under the sun. The sound of ice cracking under your weight and the squelch of mud where the sun melted the ground.*

*Suddenly a growl full of threat reaches your ears: near the trail, about 30 feet from you to the right, under the overhanging fur branches, you notice an obviously underfed and sick wolf,*

*its fur is thin and torn out completely in some places, and its eyes shining from the fur's gloom with almost human cunning and malice. Even the most brave-hearted of you shudder from this thought. For a fleeting moment the beast seems to study you, then, as if it came to some decision, the wolf leaps at you, maw opened and claws thrust at your faces.*

Wolf (1). MM 204. hp 13.

After the beast is dealt with, the party finishes their journey without further delays, unless the DM decides to enrich their travel with further encounters. What they decide to do in the hamlet is left for them to decide. Every keyed house description includes a possible plot development. All in all, the matter of PCs' understanding of their actions of events reasons and consequences depends on the party's research and their role-playing interaction with Bourge's residents.

*The trees move aside and a quiet valley comes into your view. In the north it comes right to the feet of snow-capped mountains covered with spruces. From where you stand, a small hamlet is visible, situated near the center of the valley, close to a river's bend. It consists of several dozen of log houses and a church and a graveyard on a small knoll near the bend. The smoke from the fireplaces rises up in curling clouds, dissolving in the fresh, full of the new life born smell and shining inner light air. Hens' clacking, dogs' barking, peasants' jovial talk, as well as other sounds of rural life merge into a bizarre cacophony, the one that can only be pleasant for a person who had recently spent long and silent hours in the heart of a forest.*

## Bourge Confidential

Bourge, hamlet, pop.92, gp limit 100. Bourge is a small farming community, the likes of which may be found anywhere in the Land of Mists. The folk live off their land, selling crops and bread mainly to Harmonia. It does not import anything of particular interest. The hamlet "works for itself" with its mill, blacksmith, general store, brewery and even church. The only things it lacks are those that it doesn't need. The village has no need for a constabulary for the people tend to be trusting and helpful to one another, though they are less accommodating to strangers. Any problems of considerable importance are solved on the communal meetings on the central "square" in front of the General Store, while the hamlet's elder (Saramon, Luc's father, now) conducts day-to-day government and solves disputes. The only tavern in the settlement, "Pechka" is run by Mark.

The places PCs are likely to visit in Bourge include:

- 1) "Pechka", Bourge's only tavern.
- 2) Church.
- 3) Graveyard.
- 4) The elder's house.
- 5) General store.
- 6) HedgeWitch's adobe.
- 7) Marina's and Igor's house.
- 8) The house of Lutece, Marina's mother.
- 9) Blacksmith.

The details of the rest of the town are left for the DM. As NPC's reaction play major role in this adventure, several assumptions have been made to ease PCs' progress on their quest (or make it more difficult, it depends).

All villagers, except the hedge witch, initially have unfriendly attitudes towards the PCs. So long as their attitude is unchanged, any of the character's questions will be answered with stern "Get lost! It's no good talking ta strangers like ya in this land!" Making a successful Charisma or Diplomacy check, as described in "Influencing NPC Attitude" table in DMG p.149, can change the attitude of any NPC. A result indicating neutral or a friendly NPC provides the players with the following rumors (1d6):

1) There have been 5 disappearances: marina and her son, Victor vanished first, then the village priest and Igor, Marina's husband. Finally the elder's son didn't return from his errand.

2) The fiend responsible for the disappearances is a stranger who passed the village the day before it all began. In actuality, Yuri didn't pass the village, but stayed at "Pechka" for a night. That is one of the reasons Mark dislikes stranger of lately, he blames the troubles on himself but he won't admit it to the PCs.

3)The fiend resides in the church, in catacombs built and sealed long before the coming of the first settlers. This is false conjecture.

4) The hedge witch is responsible for the fiend's summoning, but she is too powerful for the villagers to take on themselves. This is false. The witch secretly venerates Hala and considers it her task to help and protect people.

5)No fiend is responsible for the disappearances, but a cult of lycanthropes and the stranger is their leader. False.

6) A Vistani chased away in the early fall last year laid an evil

eye on the village and now the decent folk suffer because of these bastards' hatred. This is false. Blaming one's problems on passing Vistana is common in the Land of Mists.

Also, if asked, they can tell the Marina's and Igor's surname: Fedotov. It can become a valuable clue in investigation.

## Village Locations

1."Pechka". The local tavern is the largest building in the Bourge. Built from perfect spruce logs, the house can boast expertly cut horse heads on its roof and animal motifs on its shutters. The latters are very sturdy, capable of withstanding severe punishment, which, by no doubt, should be appreciated by visitors.

The building has only one floor, divided into:

- A) Commoners room. Where the bar stands and the residents of the hamlet usually congregate in the early evenings.
- B) Mark's apartments. Mark (NG Com2/Ftr1), tavern's proprietor, lives here.
- C) Kitchen. Food is cooked and stored in here.
- D) Cellar. Local beverage and long-stored supplies are kept here.

Visitors to hamlet are free to stay in the Commoners room if they pay Mark 1gp/night each. Of notable interest is the local ale. It is a bitter, dark mead-like substance that slowly (and very pleasantly!) slides down your throat after a gulp. The price is 2 cp/mug.

If Mark's attitude is changed to neutral, he may advice them to question the elder about the recent disappearances, and to stay clear of the witch who lives

on the outskirts. If friendly, Mark may even go as far as "spill his soul out" to the PCs, telling them the truth: that the stranger stopped for a night in his tavern, asked different questions about Marina and her child and about church and father Nikon. He still claims the stranger to be some manner of a fiend, perhaps even calling him the "Gentleman Caller".

He may even tell the tale of his wife and daughter's demise, if the party cares enough to ask or listen. A long time ago (he doesn't remember exactly for since then time has lost its meaning to him), during an especially cold and harsh winter, wolves came into the valley. The villagers were not prepared for this eventuality, so they were naively going about their business, when a chilling howling sounded not afar. In the surprise attack Mark was severely injured while trying to usher the villagers into easily defended tavern. His wife and daughter, who were returning from the General Store, never made it to the safety of walls. Both were lost under a dozen of wolves less than thirty feet from the door. Mad with fear for his beloved, Mark grabbed his musket and charged forward. The thunderous roar of the shot scared the wolves long enough for him to get the remnants inside.

If accused of being a lycanthrope (and only if he is friendly), Mark admits that he has been bitten by wolves, but the divination spells of the witch and father Nikon showed no sign of the disease. If he is neutral or unfriendly, he is too infuriated to talk to the party and tells them to get lost and never ever to step over the threshold of this house.

2. Church. If visited during the day:

Built of limestone, the church sports a belfry and a holy symbol of Hala under the doorway. Large wooden doors, reinforced with iron bands, stand slightly ajar, so a ray of light enters the hall. With a squeak, the doors slowly open inside a hall with altar at the back wall. Dust slowly circles in the air and settles on the tiles covering the floor. A single stained glass window beyond the altar depicts a matronly woman in brown robe, her eyes shedding warm yellow light on the believers gathered at her feet and her smile – the smile of comfort. An uneasy silence hangs in the air – as if someone asked a question in the hall a long time ago and still waits for an answer, you ken. Making your way inside the hall, you continue to experience an uneasy feeling of suspended question, but when you near the altar another feeling crushes over you – that of sudden interest in your presence. As if somebody...some **THING** suddenly became aware of your entrance and you now take all the attention of this entity. Still, nothing happens...yet.

By day, it is relatively safe to explore the building, since Marina's ghost manifests only at night (see below).

At night, the church takes on more sinister appearance:

The silhouette of the church's belfry is vaguely seen on the dark, cloud-shrouded sky. The rolling mists rising from the river hide the ground under your feet from your eyes. Slowly and uneasy you make your way up the knoll and out of the mists towards the looming building. Huge double doors, long ago left open by someone, who no doubt left in a hurry, slowly come closer and closer. Then you hear a sob. First, it is as hushed as a mouse's

run but the closer you get, the louder it becomes. Standing next to the doors to this dark and forlorn building, you can't help but wonder: what manner of fiend hides behind the doors? The sobs continue in a waterfall of loud, so loud sobs, you believe the whole village wide-awake already. However, no sound is coming from the hamlet – not even a dog's bark. Whole valley is coated with silence, as thick and material as your cloak.

Based on the DM's judgment, this may be a good time for a Fear check – say, DC 8. Of course, if the PC is role-playing a frightened character there's no need for the check.

In the dim darkness beyond the doors there's nothing – nothing of what you expected to find. An altar, a couple of doors beyond it – and a stained glass window with a woman in dark priestly robes looking straight at you. Her eyes are like the whirlpools of darkness, the endless wells of pure evil and hatred... The green-gray fire is flowing from her hands to consume the unfortunate souls at her feet. Suddenly the sobs cease – and at the same moment a wave of melancholy and despair rushes over you. An image coalesces over an altar – that of a young woman with large brown eyes full of sorrow, her gossamer gown flying on the wind you do not ascertain. You feel suddenly fascinated by this morbid evidence of afterlife, while the woman – or what is left of her – slowly drifts toward you, her eyes as deep and sorrowful as ever, only now there's a sparkle of unforgiving malevolence in their corners...

Each PC must make a Horror check (DC 10), then Will saves DC 13 against Marina's

*Aura of Despair* and *Entrancing Appearance* abilities. Note that if the party cannot damage Marina, they should make a Fear check DC 11.

Her death, the abduction of her child and the slow realization of her current state drive Marina completely insane. She attacks in silence, but if any of the PCs try to talk to her (some in such situation cry “Why do you attack us, we did nothing wrong to you?!”), she immediately responds – in her chaotic manner, of course. She should be played as if she suffered from the constant change in the apprehension of her surroundings:

1) “How dare you, murderers, talk to me? Bow before me for I'm death incarnate!”

2) “My son, where's my son? What has HE done to him? Why do YOU cover HIM?!”

3) “Igor! Come to me, my love!”

4) “Now that I'm dead, who's gonna take care for you?”

Note that the only way for her to know eternal rest is either for her and her husband's bodies are given a decent burial and Victor is turned over to her mother, or the dagger Yuri used in slaying Marina is used to slay Marina's Ghost. Else she might rest if Victor is brought before her. In this case she'll attempt to hug him and eventually he'll collapse dead on the floor, thus joining his mother for the final time. The last two options are subjects for the power check, however.

A successful Search check (DC 15) on the altar or near it reveals bloodstains, as well as marks of some kind of weapon (or very strong claws, comes to your mind). The altar still holds the remnants of an unfinished

service: a liturgy to Hala, a vial of holy water and an incense.

Doors to the left and right from the altar lead to the Nikon's apartments and church cellar respectively. In the apartments the party may find several of liturgy books, as well as Nikon's last breakfast left uneaten (Marina came in a hush for she worried for her baby's health). In the cellar the first thing PCs notice is a horrible stench of rotted bodies. The second is the sight of Marina's and Nikon's decomposed remnants. The whole scene is a sight for a Horror check DC 8. The Nikon is still dressed in his clerical vestment, while Marina had a blouse, leather trousers and boots on her. Both bodies bear the marks of the claws of some large beast (actually, Yuri used claw bracers to throw any would-be pursuers off the trail). The only thing of interest on the bodies is a small locket with expertly painted Igor's portrait – his token of love from distant past. It may be used to provide a +2 circumstance bonus on turn undead attempts against Marina due to its obvious significance to her. Elsewhere in the cellar, be it in shelves or chests or wherever, PCs may find a wooden stake, some wolfsbane, scroll of *protection from evil*, 1<sup>st</sup> lvl and 3 potions of *cure light wounds*. Hopefully, the discovery may still lead them to presume their enemy is either a lycanthrope or a vampire.

If the party defeated Marina in the encounter, they may be awarded XP as if they defeated a monster of half her CR (she is temporary incapacitated, after all) – note that in this case they will gain the same amount at the end of the adventure.

3. Graveyard. Most of the gravestones possess only the name

and casual RIP, since none of those who buried their relatives here thought of preserving the dates of birth and death since the Barovian Calendar is not well-known in Kartakass. However several gravestones do have the dates inscribed on them: one is of particular interest to the party, since Konstantin Fedotov, Marina's father, is buried beneath it. The inscription reads: "To the loving father and husband. RIP. 701-754." There are several more graves of Fedotovs on the graveyard, but this one is obviously the one most recently made. Detailed information on Fedotovs is presented in the Elder's house entry and can be come upon during the archives research (see below). At night, several dire rats sneak to and fro on the graveyard, so the PCs may be attacked by "monstrous rats the size of a long sword, with evil eyes gleaming red in the darkness".

Dire Rats (3). *MM* 56. hp 5 each.

4. Elder's house. Hamlet's elder (let's call him Stephan LG Com5) is an elderly man with small, well-kept gray beard, balding head and a little stooping bearing. His only concerns for the past years were his son, Luca, and the community's welfare. Now, with his son presumably dead because of an evil fiend's schemes or evil lycanthropes, the only reason Stephan is still alive is Bourge, his beloved hamlet.

If neutral Stephan, in addition to the listed rumors, might point out that the witch is quiet harmless. The only reason for people's fear is the usual desire to find a scapegoat. He advises the party to check her abode and ask her about the unfolding events. He may point out the necessity of the

investigation of the church, if the PCs haven't come up with this idea yet.

If friendly Stephan might tell the PCs of his sons' heroic venture into the church, when he recovered the village's archives. If the PCs desire, they can rummage through them until sunset. A Search check DC 10 may be required for each clue – the archives are organized very well, so finding the necessary info is not difficult.

Archives' clues:

A) Date of the church's founding. It happened simultaneously with the settler's coming to the valley.

B) Absence of any labyrinths or catacombs under the church and/or graveyard. The church floor plans are included, however.

C) Mark's wife and daughter have been killed by wolves during a cold winter a long time ago. He was severely injured in the attack.

D) Marina's and Igor's surnames are Fedotov.

E) Joshua's grandfather, Konstantin Fedotov, who died in 754, is buried on the graveyard beyond the church, while his grandmother, Lutece, still lives in Bourge.

D) The last entry to be made was of Joshua's illness, which father Nikon explains with the child's fragile health due to his birth in spring. Marina's frequent visits are mentioned.

5. General store. Gnezhik (LN Exp2), the store's owner, is a fat jovial-looking man in his mid years (of course, he may not be looking jovial to PCs). He loves his family, his shop, his simple life – and he doesn't want any changes with it. Anything corresponding to the Kartakass' CL requirements and costing no greater than 100 gp is available at the store.



If made friendly, he may suggest that the PCs buy a silvered rapier for half its price (50 gp) from him. He sincerely fears the lycanthropes and believes they stand behind the event, that's why he offers the weapon.

6. Hedge witch's abode. The only person in this hamlet to be neutral towards the party initially, the hedgewitch Nora (NG Sor1/Clr 5 of Hala) is a perfect source of information for the party too slow-witted or not willing enough to role-play. If inquired, Nora confirms the stranger's passing through the village. More than that, she actually believes him to have stayed at "Pechka", since she usually walks in the forests after dark – gathering magical plants and the like, and she saw two figures move in Mark's tavern and heard the voices talking. The exact words she didn't hear, but the conversation was long indeed. If Mark didn't confess it himself, she advises not to press the matter – she knows he blames himself for the happening. However, she asks that the PCs investigate the church during the daylight and then at night – if there is any evil inside, the first expedition might ready them for the second.

In the event the party has already ventured into the church at night and came to some conclusions (whatever they may be), Nora proposes her help in the form of a scroll with *Speak with Dead* on it. She advises not to resort to violence, if it can be avoided – the ghost cannot be banished from the Land of Mists forever unless a specific condition is met or a specific method is used. She proposes either to learn a condition or a method, using the scroll and carefully phrased questions.

Concerning the stranger, she never saw him leave, but then again she is absolutely sure no one in the village hides him. She suggests searching the nearby woods.

If Nora is friendly to the PCs, she even proposes to question the spirit herself, as well as provides the party with a +1 short sword, a scroll of *Protection from Evil* and 2 potions of *Cure Light Wounds*. Also, she may take a student in clerical or arcane arts later in the campaign (since she is a sorceress, she can train a character willing to embark on this path).

7. Marina's and Igor's house. This empty house stands on the bank of a river, opposite to the church. Inside, the house looks, not surprisingly, deserted – cobwebs hanging from corners, covering most dishes and plates, chair thrown against the wall, petrified food on the table – as if it was left in a hurry. Of personal belongings, nothing worth mentioning remains – several wooden toys, "magical lamp" (a tin lamp with phantasmal images cut into its sides, rotates around a candle inside it and projects moving images on the walls), cloths, foodstuffs, flowers and plants in pots (Marina adorned them).

8. The house of Lutece, Marina's mother. Lutece behaves just like any other villager would, unless the PCs persuade her they know she's Joshua's grandmother (or, at least, Marina's relative). Then, if she is either neutral or friendly, Lutece will bury the party under the endless stream of cries and tears, intermitted with remarks of how she "knew something bad was going to happen, I felt it with my aching heart!" If informed of the discovery of her daughter's

corpse, after another quarter-an-hour of crying, she'll beg the party to find the missing Igor and her grandchild, so that she be given solace in the fact that her little Joshua is raised by loving and caring people. Obviously, if PCs voice the doubt of Igor's well being, she agrees to take care for Joshua for herself (which is exactly the thing Marina wants).

9. Blacksmith. The smithy stands opposite the "Pechka" and a neutral smith (CG Exp1) may even confirm that the stranger stayed at night in the tavern. He will also point out that the matter was resolved when Mark publicly blamed himself for the things that came and asked for as severe punishment as it was possible, but was considered innocent by community.

Otherwise, he may suggest repairing any non-magical weapon or armor and may even craft one for the correct price.

Continuing the adventure

Hopefully, the PCs uncovered as much of a plot as it suits them, found out the steps necessary to be taken if the ghost is to be laid to rest and are still missing 3 persons or their remnants: Luca, Igor and Joshua. The obvious solution with Luca is to backtrack and recover his thawing corpse in the forest. The problem with Igor and Joshua will, hopefully, be solved in the next chapter. The idea is to make PCs to role-play, to make people trust them, so it is deemed necessary to allow an influence check only to those, who role-play it. Any of the PCs who actively took part in role-playing during their investigation in Bourge should be awarded with 50 XP per level, while any who personally participated in people's interrogations, should be

awarded with XP as if he vanquished a CR 1 foe.

## Harmonia

As soon as the party managed to uncover all the info necessary and is getting bored, a boy from one of the outlying farms runs down the street towards the elder's house, crying "Dead man! Dead man!" He explains to the elder or to the PCs, if they catch him before he makes to the house, that he was walking in the forest having fled his farm chores, when he saw several crows feasting on dead man's body about 20-30 feet in front of him. He saw the dead man's face and cried out from fear for it was Igor! The cry put the scavengers into the sky and they chased him away. He can take them where the body lies or the elder retells the story and sends a boy with party, if they wish.

An hour's walk west towards Harmonia, the party comes upon a small clearing with a rotted body lying in its center, all covered with hungry birds. The animals consider the prize theirs, so they attack any intruders, but will NOT fight to death, preferring to withdraw if a quarter of their number is slain.

Crows (12). As Raven, *MM 201*. hp 1 each.

The half-eaten corpse is indeed Igor, as anyone in the village will justify, if the body is brought in Bourge. A gaping wound in his stomach tells everyone that the hunter died a long and agonizing death. He still clutches his masterwork long sword, rusty now after a month under the snow. A small silver amulet in the form of wolf's paw can be found on his neck (it doesn't offers any protection whatsoever from lycanthropy,

because Marina unwittingly bought it from the charlatan), while dark brown hair can be found stuck under his nails (Search DC 20). The hair is Yuri's, torn from him during the fight.

When the body is brought to Bourge, it is attended by Lutece, for Igor's family lives in Invidia. If the PCs do not approach the hedgewitch, she offers to use her *speak with dead* spell on Igor herself. This she will do alone although, if DM deems it just, the PCs may be present. The questioning yields a stranger's description and two additional facts:

- 1) He still had Joshua alive when Igor caught up with him.
- 2) He was going in the direction of Harmonia.

The description is as follows: tall, thin man with long, strong arms, long brown hair, caught in a pony-tail behind, cold, dark eyes and hawk nose. Cleanly shaven. Anyone who makes Bardic Knowledge or Knowledge (Kartakass local) check DC 15 may recognize the person as Yuri the Cold Heart, a bounty-hunter famous in these parts for his unscrupulous contracts. If all the PCs fail their checks, then the elder, who is instantly informed by the hedgewitch of such drastic revelations, asks the PCs to travel back to Harmonia and investigate the matter.

As with the travel to Bourge, the travel back to Harmonia takes 3 hours on horse and 6 on foot.

For details on the city, refer to the *Feast of Goblins* adventure. For the sake of convenience, suffice it to say that it is a city of approximately 1,500 people in southern Kartakass, the entrance fee is about 2 gp for

Quoth the Raven: Issue 1  
armed and mounted, 1 gp for mounted or armed and +10 gp if the visitor doesn't know the pledge of Harmonia:

*Oh Harmony, oh Harmony,  
A city grand and truly free.*

*Oh Harmony, oh Harmony,  
Tis thee I always long to see.*

*To Harmony, to Harmony,  
I pledge eternal loyalty.*

At this moment, the PCs should come up with some means of locating Yuri. This may be a bribe (reasonably large sum) to a local official, an interrogation at docks and other seedy places of the city (possibly also including a bribe), or a Gather Information Check DC 20. Presumably, the party will spend the whole day searching the city for any clue on Yuri's whereabouts. It is possible to drop a few side-tracks or campaign background information at this moment as the PCs are likely to hear many rumors, not all of which concern their quest. It is possible even to include an encounter with local thugs, if the PCs seem to snuff out for too long in one place.

Thugs(3). NE War1. hp 8 each.

These guys are not particularly brave, so after one of them is down, the rest run for their lives.

Assuming the party locates Yuri before the nightfall, he is spending his time (and money) in a tavern with an unassuming name "Weeping willow." The place is a favorite among local thugs, harlots and all manner of rogues. The commoner's room is full of roaring and laughing patrons, with billowing clouds of smoke obscuring the far corners. Yuri sits in one of the corners with his back to the wall and his eyes trained on the entrance – by then

he is aware of heroes' search for him and decides to dispose of them during a typical bar brawl that he orchestrated.

*You enter into the tavern's crowded Commoner's room. The smoke vapors of tobacco and the cheap ale aroma make a strange cocktail that slowly drifts in your face and through your nostrils. Then you distinguish the smell of a large number of unwashed human bodies and sweat, tingled with a fleeting smell of cheap perfume, favorite among local wenches.*

*Nobody seems to pay you any attention as the crowd continues its business: playing cards and dice, toasting, slapping serving wenches, choosing among harlots, conducting shady business in low voices in the corners. The one you came here for sits just in one of them. As you notice him, he fixes you with a gaze devoid of any emotion, only pure hatred. Then a cry "He stole my pouch" comes from your left and a mug of ale hits you on a head. The ensuing ruckus hides Yuri for some time.*

Give the PCs several rounds of pure swashbuckling as the tavern explodes in a fight. There are around 30 patrons in the Commoners room, but obviously, only few of them will be interested in taking on the PCs. Note that these use their fists and mugs to deal subdual damage, rather than kill an opponent. Also, a PC who kills an opponent in this fight, deserves a power check. If any of the brawlers is killed, the rest stop playing games and draw knives.

Brawlers (6). As thugs above. hp 8 each.

After several rounds of combat, Yuri positions himself behind one of the PCs (he may make a Spot check as opposed by

Yuri's Hide check). He then attempts to perform a sneak attack on an opponent, then continues to fight until either he or the party is dead.

By the nightfall, if the PCs haven't found him yet, Yuri decides to make the first and final strike. The PCs are most likely to cease their investigation for the night, so he tries to sneak into their rooms and to take them out one-by-one. Otherwise he strikes on some cold and deserted street with no lights to reveal the evil doing. Hopefully, the party is alert and doesn't fall prey to the murderer. However, if the party is sleeping like in innocent baby and it all points to the fact of their sudden and bloody demise, DM should warn the PCs of the stranger in their room – either by a squeak of a floor or a meow of a cat. Mayhap, Yuri was not so careful and actually broke the window a little more noisily than it should have been done.

If the PCs managed to knock Yuri unconscious – so much the better, but if they were not so careful – have no fear. The key in his pocket opens a certain room in certain port tavern (not many taverns in 1,500 town), where he decided keep Joshua until "things get low" and his "customer" got more agitated and agreed to pay a more handsome sum. In his room the party may also find a pretty sum of money Yuri earned recently (about 500 gp). Alternatively, the PCs might find only map that shows the location of the money chest and may lead them on a treasure-hunt adventure.

## Concluding the adventure

The PCs are now likely to return to Bourge with Joshua and, considering they have all the means to destroy the ghost, it is up to them to decide which way to choose. If the party hands the Joshua over to his grandmother, Marina's ghost silently disappears (it is likely that no one will be present when this happens) and the church, once re-consecrated, may be used for the services one again provided the willing priest is found. This outcome nets 1.5 times the XP for defeating Marina, as well as bonuses for good role-play if appropriate.

If the party brings the Joshua before Marina on one cold, snowy night, then read the following:

*You stand before the altar. The cold winds outside howl and rise to an alarming cry, blowing clouds of snow through open doors and empty windows. The sound of the storm outside muffles the sounds of your feet shuffling over the stone tiles or Joshua's sobbing... A cold blue light appears and begins to coalesce over the altar once again. Slowly and soundlessly it takes the shape of a young woman known to you as Marina, her face wet with tears and her hair and dress flying furiously on the chilling wind that rushes in the church through now largely open doors. She looks around, taking in the scene. Then she seems to notice Joshua and, after a moment's hesitation, stretches her arm to him. The child, shocked though he is by the sight of his mother hovering above, starts to cry. The spirit's face distorts as Marina frowns. But then she gently flies off the altar and drifts up to the character carrying the baby here, her arms stretch as if she is about to embrace her child.*

*She gently takes the baby from your hands, taking his body to her breast and caressing him with her hand. Child's cries sound progressively quieter, while Marina's spirit seems to slowly fade out of existence. Then the moment comes, when you can hear no cries at all. In fact, no sound at all: no wind howling, no doors or shutters squeaking. Nothing at all. And you see nobody in the church except your awed companions.*

The party should gain an XP as if they defeated the spirit, but no more.

Lastly, the PCs could decide to make it the old way – to lay Marina to rest through killing her by Yuri's dagger.

In this case, the scene proceeds as described under the church entry in Bourge, only that when the ghost is finally defeated, it will not rejuvenate. The outcome is certainly better in this case, so the party could be awarded with XP for the defeat of the spirit, as well as for good role-play (if appropriate).

Of course, the plot may be extrapolated so that the PCs could be asked to find the noble's missing child, or the party cleric may be asked to substitute for father Nikon or find the some one capable to perform a similar role.

## Monsters and NPCs

**Wolf** CR 1; Medium-size animal; HD 4d8 + 4; hp 13; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 50 ft.; AC 14 (+2 Dex, +2 natural); Atk +3 melee (1d6+1, bite); Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5ft./5ft. AL N; SA: Trip; SQ: Scent; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +1; Str 13; Dex 15; Con 15; Int 2; Wis 12; Cha 6.

*Skills and Feats:* Hide +3; Listen +6; Move Silently +4; Spot +4; Wilderness Lore +1; Weapon Finesse (bite);

**Dire Rat** CR 1/3; Small animal; HD 1d8 + 1; hp 5; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 40 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 15 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +1 natural); Atk +4 melee (1d4, bite); Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5ft./5ft. AL N; SA: Disease; SQ: Scent; SV Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +3; Str 10; Dex 17; Con 12; Int 1; Wis 12; Cha 4.

*Skills and Feats:* Climb +11; Hide + 11; Move Silently +6;

Weapon Finesse (bite);  
Disease (Ex): Filth fever – bite, Fortitude save DC 12, incubation period 1d3 days, damage 1d3 temporary Dexterity and 1d3 temporary Constitution.

**Crow** CR 1/6; Tiny animal; HD 1/4d8; hp 1; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 10 ft., fly 40 ft. (average); AC 14 (+2 size, +2 Dex); Atk +4 melee (1d2-5, claws); Face/Reach:

2 ½ ft. by 2 ½ ft./0 ft. AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +2; Str 1; Dex 15; Con 10; Int 2; Wis 14; Cha 6.

*Skills and Feats:* Listen +6; Spot +6; Weapon Finesse (claws);

**Marina** CR 3; Ghost (rank 2) Drd1; HD 1d12+1 (9 hp); Init +7 (Dex); Spd fly 30 ft. (perfect); AC 13 (10 while ethereal); Atk +3 melee (1d4, corrupting touch); Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./ 5 ft.; AL NE; SA: Manifestation, Aura of Despair, Corrupting Touch, Entrancing Appearance, spells; SQ: Undead, Incorporeal, turn resistance +5, Rejuvenation; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +5; Str 11; Dex 16; Con -; Int 11; Wis 16; Cha 16.

*Skills and Feats:* Concentration +4, Knowledge (Religion) +4, Spell craft +4; Improved Initiative;

**Manifestation (Su):** When the ghost manifests, it becomes visible, but remain incorporeal. However, the ghost can strike with its touch attack or a ghost touch weapon. A manifested ghost remains on the Ethereal Plane but can be attacked by opponents on both the Material and Ethereal planes. When a spell-casting ghost is on the Ethereal Plane, its spells cannot affect targets on the Material Plane, but they work normally against ethereal targets. When a spell casting ghost manifests, its spells continue to affect ethereal targets and can affect targets on the Material Plane normally unless the spell rely on touch. A manifested ghost's touch spells don't work on material targets. The dark powers granted Marina the ability to manifested only at night, thus making the hours of the day more painful for her, since she cannot interact with anyone who comes to the church during the day.

**Aura of Despair (Su):** Those near the ghost are afflicted with a deep apathy and melancholia that makes action difficult. All those within 50 feet of the ghost must make a Will save (DC 13). Those who fail suffer a morale penalty, equal to the ghost's rank, to all attack rolls, skill checks, and saves. The negative modifier lasts until the victim leaves the radius of this power. Those who pass their saves cannot be affected by this particular ghost's Aura of Despair for 24 hours.

**Corrupting touch (Su):** A ghost that hits a living target with its incorporeal attack deals 1d4 points of damage. Against ethereal opponents, it adds its Strength modifier to attack and damage rolls. Against material

opponents, it adds its Dexterity modifier to attack rolls only.

**Entrancing Appearance (Su):** The ghost taps into the fascination living creatures have with death, and all who look at it risk falling victim to it. This ability is treated as a gaze attack with a range of 30 feet. Targets must make a Will save DC 13. Those who fail are unable to take any action while the ghost remains in view. Victims can make subsequent Will saves to throw off the effects. The number of rounds a victim must wait before making another save is equal to the ghost's rank.

**Incorporeal:** The dagger Yuri used to murder Marina possesses the ability to hit and damage Marina (and only this ghost!) due to its role in her becoming an undead. Hits made with this dagger are still subjects to 50% miss chance, though.

**Rejuvenation (Su):** The destroyed ghost will reform in 2d4 days. The only way to get rid of Marina's ghost is to perform one of the following:

1) Give her and her husband a proper funeral and return Joshua to his grandmother;

2) Return Joshua to the ghost, so that they can be reunited in death;

3) Kill the ghost with the dagger that Yuri used to slid Marina's throat.

Spells (DC = 13+lvl): *detect magic*, *light*, *resistance*; *obscuring Mist*;

**Yuri** Human male  
Ftr2/Rog2; HD 2d10+2 plus 2d6+2 (25 hp); Init +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+3 studded leather, +3 Dex), 17 with Dodge; Atk +6

melee (1d8+2, masterwork long sword), +6 ranged (1d8, light crossbow); Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./ 5 ft.; AL LE; SA: Sneak Attack +1d6; SQ: Evasion; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +2; Str 14; Dex 16; Con 12; Int 15; Wis 10; Cha 12.

*Skills and Feats:* Climb +5, Gather Information +6, Jump +5, Hide + 17, Move Silently +7, Search +7; Swim +5; Iron Will, Weapon Focus (long sword), Improved Initiative, Dodge;

*Possessions:* masterwork long sword, dagger\*, studded leather armor, light crossbow (10 bolts with bloodroot poison), *cloak of elvenkind*, *potion of cure light wounds*.

\* this is a dagger used in Marina's murder, so it possesses an ability to actually damage the spirit, though the weapon itself is not magical. Marina's dried-out blood forever marks this weapon as a tool of lowly murder (another joke of the Dark Powers and a hint to PCs).

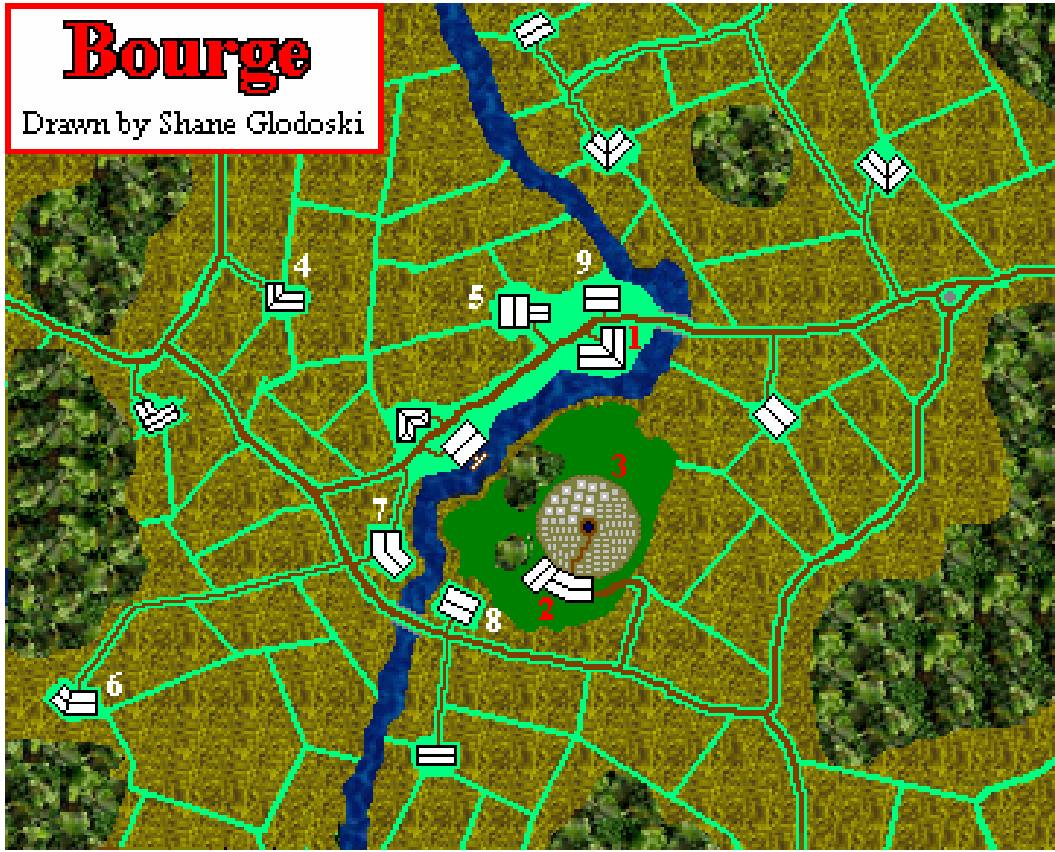
**Thugs** Human males War1; HD 1d8+4 (8 hp); Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+3 studded leather); Atk +3 melee (1d6+2, short sword or 1d4+2, knife or dagger), +2 ranged (1d4, knife); Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./ 5 ft.; AL CN; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 14; Dex 12; Con 12; Int 13; Wis 11; Cha 9.

*Skills and Feats:* Climb +4, Jump +4, toughness

*Possessions:* short sword, 2 daggers or knives, studded leather armor, 1d6 gp and 3d6 sp each.

# Bourge

Drawn by Shane Glodoski



# Children of the Night

## Kestrel

Hags are terrible predators but they remain dependent upon secrecy. Typically hags group themselves in groups of three for mutual protection, allowing each member of the covey to assist one another reach a common goal. Though a covey is much more dangerous than a single hag, it is also much more noticeable. The ravenous appetites of three such creatures quickly draw the attention of the human prey. The insidious magic of a covey has little affect upon an angry mob. The claws of a hag may slash deeper than a pitchfork but what humans lack in strength they more than compensate in numbers. To survive, a hag must never draw attention to herself. It is a lesson that a hag named Kestrel learned with great expense.

### Appearance

Kestrel is a cautious hag. She keeps her true form hidden except to those she is about to devour. Most often she is in the disguise as Goodwife Williams, a middle-aged widow. In this guise she appears to be a plain woman of average height and build. She dresses in drab cloths and rarely speaks.

In her natural state she is terrible to behold. Her skin is the scaly green color of a serpent and it is covered with warts. Her nose is long and curved like the beak of an ungodly vulture. Her hair, claws and fangs are darker than the night themselves and her eyes are yellow slits that burn with vengeful hatred. When she is

performing a dark ritual or meeting with one of her monstrous servants she tends to wear black. Her favored clothing is a black dress and cape as well as a wide brimmed pointed hat. When in her true form Kestrel allows her familiar to be seen. Her familiar is a black female cat named Imp.

Whether she is in disguise or in her natural form she is never without two precious items. The first is a corn broom and the second is a simple bronze ring. Both these items serve as receptacles for the energy of her departed sisters.

### Kestrel

**Hag, age category 2  
Monstrous Humanoid,  
sorceress 5<sup>th</sup> level**

<b>Hit Dice</b>	5D8+10 (40)
<b>Initiative</b>	+1
<b>Speed</b>	30 feet
<b>AC</b>	17 (+1 dex, +6 natural)
<b>Attacks</b>	2 claws +8
<b>Damage</b>	1D4+4
<b>Face/Reach</b>	5 ft./ 5 ft.
<b>Special Attacks</b>	Foci, Hag magic, Spells,
<b>Special Quality</b>	Spells, Spell resistance, spell like abilities
<b>Saves</b>	Fort +3, ref +4, will +8
<b>Abilities</b>	Str 18, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 14, Wiz 15, Cha 15
<b>Skills</b>	Bluff +10, concentration +8, diplomacy +5, gather information +6,

hide +6, knowledge: arcane +5, listen +8, move silently +4, search +6, spot +8

### Feats

Alertness, combat casting, silent spell, still spell, enlarge spell

### Challenge Rating

7

### Alignment

Chaotic evil

Spells memorized: 0 level: daze \* 2, detect magic, ghost sound, resistance. 1<sup>st</sup> level: mage armor, charm person \*2, sleep, cause fear. 2<sup>nd</sup> level: hypnotic patter\*2, invisibility\*2.

Spells Known: 0 level: daze, detect magic, ghost sound, light, resistance. 1<sup>st</sup> level: mage armor, charm person, sleep, and cause fear. 2<sup>nd</sup> level: hypnotic patter, invisibility.

Hag Magic: 3 minor abilities: Charm person, sleep, ray of enfeeblement.

### Background

Kestrel was born upon a world far away from the land of mists. She lived like a typical hag, devouring humans and worshiping the dark forces that haunt the night. She, her mother and her mother's mother traveled together across the land. They were a powerful covey for they bore a bloodline thick with wicked magic. They were brazen in their predations and actively sought to establish cults dedicated

to the forces of evil and murder. It was the ideal life for a young hag.

It was roughly one hundred and fifty years after her birth that a mist on the road enveloped Kestrels covey. When the fog lifted the three hags were surprised to discover that they had been swept away to a dark land. The cold ground was permeated with the perfume of evil. The plants, the animals, even the weak rays of the sun were somehow corrupted by a cold malignance. The hags found the people to be naive and unprotected and so the three feasted. Village after village was despoiled. Families were brought to ruin and the greatest of the generations were slain or corrupted. The hags reveled in the evil they wove and the destruction they wrought. Yet as they spread bedlam they gave no thought to the signs of their presence that they left with every act.

Within a decade of their arrival in the land of mists the hags were targeted by a band of adventurers. Led by a hallowed witch the hunters followed the trail of misery. In only a few months they overtook their quarries. The party caught up to Kestrel's covey in a small town named Waywand, where the covey was at work corrupting the youth of the village and quietly eliminating everyone who stood in their way. The wisdom of the hallowed witch allowed the adventurers to divine those folk unaffected by the hags' corruption as well as the secret identities of the hags. The adventurers rallied the people of Waywand and lured the unholy witches into a trap. The preparations were nearly perfect, for while they successfully lured

the elder two, Kestrel ignored the bait and remained in her lair.

The witch of Hala and her friends may have been no match for the powerful hags on their own, but the tide of pitchforks wielding village folk turned the balance. The two hags were stabbed, burned and bludgeoned into submission. Finally they were dragged to the town square where, according to legal tradition, the condemned were tired and convicted. By that time the commotion had aroused Kestrels attention. She watched through the eyes of her familiar as her mother and grandmother slowly died on the gallows.

Afraid, for the first time in her life, she fled. Kestrel ran deep into the wilderness, running for days on end. She lived on animals and hid in caves, trying desperately to contain her dread. Her covey was annihilated and with it went her powers. Her magic was terribly weakened and without her relatives to protect her she feared for her life. For almost ten years she huddled in the gloom. As the years past fear turned to guilt, guilt to resentment and resentment to hatred. Slowly she emerged and began preying upon humans once more. In time she began building up her power. Kestrel has returned to the village of Waywand, where she prepares to finish that which she started so many years ago.

### Current Sketch

Kestrel is deliberately slow and methodical in her actions. She has plotted her revenge for years, cautiously building up her fiendish powers and drawing minions from the area. Kestrel has since had the bodies of her mother and grandmother exhumed. Using a powerful black ritual she has gleaned

residual mystical power from the bones and transferred it into her ring and her broom foci.

Kestrel does not rely on pure magic to work her will. She has enslaved half a dozen ogres she found in the mountains of Darkon. These ogres now lie in wait in the wilderness. Over time she has insinuated herself into the community of Waywand, posing as the wife of a local farmer, Michael Williams. Michael is a human being under Kestrels charms. Since the moment she seduced him he has been a willing participant of the hag's schemes. Despite his corrupted nature, Michael remains a simple man. When he has served his purpose, Kestrel intends to devour him.

Since she emerged from the wilderness Kestrel has been pushed by three goals. She wishes to resurrect the members of her covey, slay the adventurers who destroyed them and destroy the town of Waywand. She has sought the council of other hags and learned of a way to resurrect her mother and grandmother as undying spirits. To accomplish this end Kestrel must perform a bloody sacrifice and harvest the life force of a powerful spell-caster. She is hatching a plot to entrap the adventurers who slew the members of her covey, including their leader, a hallowed witch of Hala. Once they are sacrificed the spirits of the two hags will be raised from the grave. Reunited, the three will wreak unfathomable evil across the countryside.

### Combat

Kestrel intends to draw as little attention to herself as possible. When she is forcefully confronted, she evades. She uses her enchantments to create a network of friends in the community. These charmed



individuals are convinced that she is exactly what she appears to be, a simple farmwife. She relies upon these charmed individuals to come to her aid while in town, for she will not resort to using magic until it is obvious that her identity is revealed. She never changes her form in the presence of humans, even when she is sure that there is no one else to witness the transformation. Kestrel never

attacks a foe directly. She sends her minions to invade farmsteads and set fires.

When she is endangered she uses her magic and flees. She attempts to wear down resistance with liberal applications of the cause fear, charm and sleep spells as well as her ray of enfeeblement ability.

**Foci:** Kestrel's ring and broom are imbued with mystical

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power gleaned from the bodies of her mother and grandmother. While she possesses the broom she has the ability to cast the spell fly at will. While Kestrel wears her ring she gains the ability to rebuke undead as an evil cleric of 8<sup>th</sup> level.

**Spell Like Abilities:**  
Kestrel can cast change self at will.

# Shuraz'tun Kir

## Mansion of the Ghoul Queen

By Shane Glodoski

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*"I suppose you believe this to be a welcoming from me; you have entered my abode after all. Sit, rest, you still have a few more minutes to live. What is this place you ask, ah yes; your mind does betray such simple thoughts. Why do I not see that you are ignorant of such facts, very well, you have come to the Necropolis Shuraz'tun Kir. Of course in your tongue, you may know of it as The Last Rest."*

*"That is all you need to know at this time, you'll become more familiar with its secrets when you are better suited as my slave. What I ask of you however is quite simple; tell me everything that you know of this land. Stubbornness, well then, let me put it to you thus, the more that you divulge, the more you shall keep of your past when you are my slave. Displease me, and you shall not even have that luxury,*

*I do like the occasional art upon my walls, or should I say as my walls..."*

### Shuraz'tun Kir

**Cultural Level:** Classical (4)

**Landscape:** Sparse ecology  
Shuraz'tun Kir is a city of graves. Beyond its walls are lifeless sands the color of ash. There are no plants in Shuraz'tun Kir and no animals can survive within the confines of the walls. The temperature remains as warm as the desert though within the shade of the tombs the air is cool and humid. Shuraz'tun Kir is located in the extreme south of Phazasia,

on the border between the sweltering desert and the roaring sandstorm that makes up the misty border. The borders of the pocket domain are made up of the gray stonewalls of the dead city. The walls surrounding the necropolis are carved with images of everyday life from a small city or town. Ruins of such a settlement are strangely absent from the area. The craftsmanship shows no sign of any wear from weather, though scratches and gouges can be found in the stone, the remnants of battles. These gouges offer many places to gain a handhold for those wishing to climb into the compound. The surface of the interior side of the wall is perfectly smooth and impossible to climb by any means.

The only entrance to the compound is the massive gate that dominates the front of the fortifications. These bronze and copper gates possess no sigil or design; it is a simple frame around a series of bars. The bars are comprised of alternating bars of bronze and copper intertwined about each other. The gate can be opened from the outside but once a person enters he cannot force the gates open by any means.

The area beyond the gates is comprised of numerous house-like tombs. The mausoleums are connected by vaulted extensions. These complexes consist either of a series of long and narrow parallel chambers within a single rectangular building or a group of square and oblong "rooms" within

a single building. The walls of each tomb are packed with bodies. Ancient skeletons are stacked between horizontal shelves cut into the walls. Within each tomb is a single alcove holding an arrangement of human bones. In a few rare instances there are lavishly decorated shrines. The centerpieces of these shrines are heavy stone coffins.

Beyond the maze of stone tombs stands the temple. The simple building is cube shaped, decorated with columns carved into the stone. Between the columns are holes cut into the wall where once were windows. The windows have long since been replaced with gray bricks. The temple is devoid of any religious icons and motifs, but it is undeniably a place of great importance. The temple is made of a stone slightly darker in coloration than the rest of the tombs.

Beyond the temple lies a maze of tombs and the rear gates of Shuraz'tun Kir. These gates are indistinguishable from the front gates. Like the entrance, the rear gate cannot be opened by any means. Beyond the exit is a swirling vortex of mist and choking smoke. This vortex is a mist way that links the pocket domain to Hazlan. Travelers who enter the mistway from Hazlan may open the rear gates, but these gates will slam shut no matter how it is propped open.

**Major Settlements:** None.

**The Folk:** The only beings within Shuraz'tun Kir are the

undying slaves of the darklord. Their numbers are kept in a constant flux since Mirogola's hunger and her impatience claim many.

**The Law:** The only law within Shuraz'tun Kir is the will of Mirogola, the darklord of the domain.

**Trade and Diplomacy:** There is no trade or diplomacy within Shuraz'tun Kir. All who go in to the necropolis are enslaved or devoured by Mirogola.

**Characters:** There are no native characters within Shuraz'tun Kir. None of Mirogola's slaves have ever escaped the necropolis.

## Mirogola the Living Ghoul

CR 7; Size M Monstrous Humanoid; HD 6d8+6; hp 42; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+2 armor, Dex); Attack +8/+3 melee (1d4+1, bite), or +5/+0 melee (1d4+1[x2], claws); SA create spawn, miasma, paralysis, summon ghouls; SQ immune to paralysis; AL CE; SV Fort +3, Ref +7, Will +7; Str 13, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 15, Cha 16.

Skills: Climb +5, Escape Artist +6, Hide +6, Intuit Direction +4, Jump +15, Listen +6, Move Silently +6, Search +5, Spot +6. Feats: Alertness, Multiattack, Weapon Finesse (bite).

Possessions: Cursed ring of sustenance, death shrouds, ghoulish skin leather armor, boots of striding and springing, periapt of health.

Mirogola resembles an emaciated human near to death from starvation. Her limbs are twisted and knobby at the joints, while her skin is a putrid green spotted with marks of deep violet

bruises. Her hair is a tangled web of white fiber and her eyes are black pools of shadow sunken within the withered sockets. Wherever she goes, Mirogola spreads the stench of a century of death. The lady of Shuraz'tun Kir wears armor made from the skin of one of her former ghoulish minions. Despite her hideous face, Mirogola is an imposing figure. Her voice is deep and booming and her skeletal frame is never slouched. She is the lady of the necropolis and every blink of her eye expresses that fact.

### Background

Mirogola was a once priestess to a god of death worshiped by the citizens of a declining city-state. It was her solemn duty to protect the graveyard of her city from the ravages of necromancers and the undead. Mirogola followed her duty diligently, but she became bored and careless. One night she followed a band of ghouls into a crypt and slew the pack. One of the ghouls proved immune to turning and holy water, though it bled profusely when it died. The creature possessed a band of tarnished copper upon its finger, which Mirogola claimed as her own. Little did she suspect that she had doomed herself.

The ring was a cursed item, it leached the energy from her body and deformed her body. Mirogola tried desperately to remove the ring but within a night it had worked its evil upon her. It warped her mind with hunger and malignance, turning her into a creature similar to the very vermin she hunted. Mirogola found to her chagrin that though starvation was excruciating she could not die from lack of nourishment. The priests became a cannibal, neither alive nor dead she feasted upon the bodies she

had once sworn to protect. The bodies of the dead sustained her decaying body, reducing the pain of her hunger.

The priesthood of Mirogola's god had long since lost power. The hierarchy of the death church had begun an exodus of the failing city long before Mirogola's transformation. By the time she succumbed to the ring there was no one powerful enough to harm her. The city abandoned the graveyard and left it to the ghoul queen. Bodies were thrown into the unused buildings and temples and left to rot. In turn, Mirogola organized a network of ghoulish minions. These minions scoured the city of the dead, which were in no short supply. At the center of her necropolis she cruelly consolidated power over the ghouls. The numbers of these cannibals dwindled under the painful leadership of Mirogola. Soon the undying ghouls joined their living kin in a flight from the city. Mirogola was left alone in her mansion of graves, with nothing left to devour but the bones of ancient bodies.

In time, Mirogola lost her connection to her god and was damned for her weakness in the face of suffering. One day the few remaining denizens of the city were mildly shocked to see that the graveyard had vanished.

### Current Sketch

Since her banishment to Shuraz'tun Kir Mirogola has become sadistic and irrational. Whenever the living trespass in her domain they are mercilessly slain and transformed into ghouls. These ghouls live short lives, for Mirogola has little use for servants except to torment them and inevitably devour them. Mirogola cannot be reasoned

with, she wants nothing but to inflict harm upon other beings.

## Combat

When faced with intruders, Mirogola allows the interlopers to explore the necropolis. Since the borders are closed they cannot escape. Inevitably they will enter the temple and she will confront them. When faced with a real challenge Mirogola flees her thrown room and summons wave after wave of ghoulish beetles to devour the interlopers.

**Create Spawn:** Any creature killed by Mirogola's fangs or claws rises as a ghoul in 1D10 hours.

**Miasma (su):** Mirogola is constantly surrounded with an aura of pure evil. Any good aligned creature within 60 feet of Mirogola must make a will save against a DC 15 or suffer a -4 moral penalty to all attack rolls, skill checks and saving throws. This supernatural fear effect ends when the creature leaves the sixty-foot radius.

**Paralysis (su):** Anyone hit by Mirogola's bite or claw attack must make a fortitude save against a DC 17 or be paralyzed for 1d6+6 minutes.

**Summon Ghoulish Beetles (su):** Every four rounds Mirogola may summon 1D4+2 ghoulish beetles. These beetles arrive in one round and attack anything they come across except Mirogola.

## Closing the Borders

The borders of Shuraz'tun Kir are perpetually closed. No flight is possible within the walls of Shuraz'tun Kir and the ground is too firm for tunneling. The walls are too steep and perfectly smooth so no method of climbing can circumvent the walls. The gates cannot be forced open from

the inside nor can they be propped open.

## Ghoul Beetles

Small Vermin	
Hit Dice	1d8 (4 hp)
Initiative	+0
Speed	30 ft
Armor Class	16 (+1 size, +5 natural)
Attacks	Bite +1 melee
Damage	Bite 1d4 plus 1d3 acid damage
Face/Reach	5 ft by 5 ft/5 ft
Special Attacks	Acidic bite, paralysis Vermin
Special Qualities	
Saves	Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +0
Abilities	Str 7, Dex 11, Con 11, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 7
Skills	Climb +4, Listen +4, Spot +4
Climate/Terrain	Any warm land and underground
Organization	Cluster (2-5) or Swarm (6-20)
Challenge Rating	1
Treasure	None
Alignment	Always neutral

Ghoul beetles are seen as both as beneficial and as pests, for they consume any organic matter, preferring that found in necropolises and other sites of death. With many seeking to preserve the dead, these vermin can wipe out any chance of raising the corpse; even the spell gentle repose does not prevent these beetles from making a meal of the deceased. Ghoul beetles

Quoth the Raven: Issue 1 resemble molted gray beetles; some claim some even give off a foul odor, though it is usually the environment upon which these vermin are encountered that causes such a claim.

**Combat:** Ghoul beetles live off the readily available food source found in graves and places of death. Their weak acid helps to break down calcium in bones and other organic materials, allowing them to digest it. When there isn't a source of food readily available, they have been known to attack those still living. The filth of their food that they have eaten helps to produce a paralyzing effect to those bitten.

**Acidic Bite (Ex):** Anyone bitten suffers 1d3 points of acid damage.

**Paralysis (Ex):** Those bitten by a ghoulish beetle must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 12) or be paralyzed for 1d6+2 minutes. Elves are not immune to a ghoulish beetle's paralysis.

**Vermin:** Immune to all mind-influencing effects.

# An Unwelcome Respite

## The road is the only dangerous place to Sleep

By Shane Clodoski  
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*The last rays of sunshine began to creep away from the horizon; the game itself wasn't over yet. Isella lit the wick of the candle, setting the shard of flint and steel beside it, and then gently set the candle on the table next to the game board. The room was illuminated, leaving only the dancing of shadows off in the distance. Isella's freckled face stared down at the ivory and black opal tiled board, its colored wooden figurines standing in eerie silence.*

*The game was known as Kings and Queens; she had played it often in these parts. Studying the game carefully, her large rust colored eyes traced moves about the board. Sitting up in the chair, she moved the jester, its mocking grin an equal to Isella's own, as she took away the knight. She giggled as she sat back down, staring off at the chair opposite her, then glancing to the board once more. The other chair was empty, as it always was. Turning the board around, she went back to strategizing the next move.*

*A clomp of metal upon stone brought her attention from the game. She knew who it was; mother had brought another man home. The front door creaked as it opened; her mother strode in the room, with her long red hair cast wildly about her back and shoulders. With his arm slung about her waist, the man, adorned*

*in fur cloak and tall black riding boots closed the door behind them.*

*"Who's this one mother?" She nearly spat the words. This was the second one this week.*

*"Drevas, meet my so inquisitive daughter Isella." The man simply nodded, probably to drunk to even care. "Darling, why don't you take your game and go outside and play."*

*With a sigh she took her candle, leaving the game as it was, they wouldn't disturb it anyhow. The door closed quickly behind her as she stepped out into the waning daylight, muffled laughter faded into the house. The man's steed greeted her with a snort, "If you only knew, you'd not wait for your master."*

*She turned to face the house, what was laughter was replaced by the distant screams of horror. Furniture splintered, as a crash and thud reverberated within the house, then in the silence faint trickling thumps brought her head up and the candle splattering upon the door in rage.*

*"There shall be other games, far better than that one." She kept her eyes on the door, thankful for the assurance, and for the flame not catching the door on fire.*

*"As long as mother plays, and is the first to lose."*

*The sounds of the house fell silent, the horse exhaled nearby, the only thing to break the*

*unnatural quietness. "Yes my dear, she will."*

## Background

Sleep, a luxury we all take for granted. The comfort of a feather down mattress and wool blankets is an inviting invitation to many that have slept on cold dirt and only their cloaks to keep themselves warm. The road is a harsh place, though sometimes it is best just to keep moving, letting no thought of ale or smell of fresh baked bread to pull you away from your travels. And least of all the aforementioned bed of a nice cozy inn or farm house; inviting as ever when a storm approaches. Ideal for a place to stay and wait it out, if only you knew about those that came before you, and where they now rest.

This adventure details the thorp of Kretewood and is designed to challenge a party of four characters; levels 5th to 7th. The thorp and wilderness area surrounding it can be transplanted easily into any existing campaign.

## History

The small thorp of Kretewood survives quite nicely with its logging and farms. What few merchants it sees pass through; barter their goods without a care for being shorted. Horses are an important commodity in the town, and only Janna the widow seems

apt to finding them. Of course she has a gift, many believe it to be magic; they dare not learn the truth.

Janna has lived in Kretewood nearly all her life, always on the look out for a husband; she seeks only their affection, and then their blood. Course she is not one of the undead, her true form is that of a red widow spider.

Those who have lived in the thorp as long as her have turned a blind eye to the oddity of her having no fitting husband, and not piecing together the rare missing stranger. Few travelers stay in Kretewood long anyhow. The town continues its simple life, and Janna keeps her identity secret, all that is about to change.

Janna's daughter Isella, the only surviving 'child' is further removed from her mother's plots and feeding habits. Instead Isella goes about her own plots, rarely aiding in her mother's cover-ups. Of course, like Janna, Isella must feed and is as secretive.

While Janna is the laid back preservationist, Isella schemes, seeking to be more than a simple, overlooked daughter. There shall come a day when all is corrected in Isella's eyes, unfortunately she draws the unknowing group of adventurers into her web.

## For the DM

Before running this adventure, the DM should read it through carefully to gain a familiarity with its layout and various features. A copy of *Denizens of Darkness* by Arthaus is helpful in understanding the Red Widows found in the adventure, but is not required to play it.

## Prelude

### The Night Hunters (EL 7)

This encounter takes place in a wooded grove, when the party has traveled on the road for a few days, and is still another day from any other town or roadside inn. Allow the PCs to set up camp, set watches and do all the chores they wish before they begin to fall asleep. Should the players wish to continue traveling through the night then adjust the encounter as detailed in the notes below.

During the night, when nearly all the PCs are asleep, they are visited by a group of silent hunters. This colony of spiders is lead by one with intelligence. They drop from the trees on strands of webbing, seeking to debilitate the party's horses, failing that they attack the PC that is furthest from the camp.

Those that have traveled through the night are instead stalked by these vermin, which have set up a few of their near invisible strands along the road way to hamper the horses or party members themselves.

For those awake or traveling the road, have them roll Spot (DC d20 +18), due to the darkness, to notice either the spiders or their webbing. Those awake may also hear the spiders, Listen (DC d 20 +11) for those dropping down from the trees, or (DC d20 +3) for those following the party from within the forest.

### Large Fey (treat as Fiendish)

**Monstrous Spider:** CR 5; Size L Vermin; HD 8d8+8; hp 54; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 14 (-1 size, Dex, +2 natural); Attack +4 Melee (1d8+3 plus poison, bite); SA poison, smite good, web; SQ cold/fire resistance

## Quoth the Raven: Issue 1

15, DR 5/+2, vermin, SR 16; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +1; AL NE; Str 15, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 3, Wis 10, Cha 2.

Skills: Climb +14, Hide +6, Jump +2, Spot +7; Feats: None.

Note: Monstrous spiders gain a +8 competence bonus to Hide and Move Silently checks when using their webs.

**Poison (Ex):** (DC 16) Initial and Secondary 1d6 Strength damage.

**Smite Good (Su):** Once per day the spider can make a normal attack to deal an additional 8 points of damage against a good foe.

**Web (Ex):** Spiders often wait in their webs and lower themselves silently on silk strands and leap onto prey passing beneath. A single strand is strong enough to support the spider and one creature of the same size.

Web-spinning spiders can cast a web eight times per day. This is similar to an attack with a net but has a maximum range of 50 feet, with a range increment of 10 feet, and is effective against targets up to one size smaller than the spider.

The web anchors the target in place, allowing no movement. An entangled creature can escape with a successful Escape Artist check (DC 26) or burst it with a Strength check (DC 32). Web-spinning spiders often create sheets of sticky webbing from 5 to 60 feet square, depending on the size of the spider. They usually position these sheets to snare flying creatures but can also try to trap prey on the ground. Approaching creatures must succeed at a Spot check (DC 20) to notice a web; otherwise they stumble into it and become trapped as though by a successful web attack.

Attempts to escape or burst the webbing gain a +5 bonus if the trapped creature has something to walk on or grab while pulling free. Each 5-foot section has 12 hit points, and sheet webs have damage reduction 5/fire. A monstrous spider can move across its own sheet web at its climb speed and can determine the exact location of any creature touching the web.

**Vermin:** Immune to mind-influencing effects

**Large Monstrous Spiders (3):** CR 2; Size L Vermin; HD 4d8+4; hp 22; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 14 (-1 size, Dex, +2 natural); Attack +4 Melee (1d8+3 plus poison, bite); SA poison, web; SQ vermin; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +1; AL N; Str 15, Dex 17, Con 12, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 2.  
Skills: Climb +14, Hide +6, Jump +2, Spot +7; Feats: None.  
Note: Monstrous spiders gain a +8 competence bonus to Hide and Move Silently checks when using their webs.

See Large Fey Monstrous Spider above for all related special attacks and qualities.

The spiders try to take a few horses down with their poison and escape into the canopy hoping their poison does its work, or failing that, grab hold of a humanoid and bringing the meal back to their home.

Should the Fey Spider be reduced to half of its hit points, it attempts to flee, using the other spiders to slow down any pursuit.

When the party continues on after their ordeal with the spiders the next day, they come to the

Thorp of Kretewood during the early evening, while the skies overhead brew with the beginnings of an afternoon storm. With no Inn and a tavern that only serves drinks, they may enquire as to a place to sleep and wait out the storm, only Janna the Widow gladly accepts them to her home.

## Kretewood

Kretewood (Thorp): Nonstandard; AL NG; 40-gp limit; Assets 106 gp; Population 53; Isolated (human 96%, elf 2%, other 2%).

Authority Figures: Frimund the Wise, human male Com7.

Important Characters: Janna the Widow, female red widow; Isella, female red widow Exp2; Nayell Omrithe, female elf Adp1; Kalfred Ranger, male human Clr2 (god here / Air-Sun); Twin brothers Tornis and Glenum Meare, male humans Clr1 (god here / Air-Plant); Svatt, male human Exp4; Aun, female human Exp2.

Others: Exp 1 (x4), Com5 (x2), Com3 (x4), Com 1 (x35).

Kretewood's farms grow barley and wheat, some of which for brewing. A few orchards around the thorp's perimeter provide the populace with apples, pears, lemons and different types of nuts. While those that do hunt bring back small game and a few wild pheasants.

## The Rumor Mill

The following are rumors that can be learned from a successful Gather Information or Bardic Lore, or even from good role-playing when talking to the local residents.

DC15: *"We do well 'er in these parts, what wit fine woods, finer grain, and a sturdy barred front door, yessir, just fine."*

DC20: *"Dose hairy hunting spiders; roam about the forests, and roads dey does. Seen um chase down the merchants and deir pack animals. Tis best to stay out of dem woods at night if you know what's good for ya."*

DC25: *"Kretewood does quite nicely with its logging and farms. We get plenty of merchants pass through; bartering their goods without a care for being shorted they do. Now as to our rich crop, that be the horses."*

DC30: Detail one of the residents, being as vague and untruthful as you deem necessary.

DC35: *"Only Janna seems apt at finding them horses. Of course she has a gift I tell ya. Few here have seen magic, but she got it."*

[END BOX]



**1) The Forked Barrel Tavern:** This tavern is owned by Nayell Omrithe (female elf Adp1, NG), who is an elf that has lived in the area, and set up her business, at first a brewery, it eventually became the tavern it is today. Its use is mostly as a place to hold town meetings and large festivals. Nayell does not like to talk much about herself to others, providing no gossip if sought from her.

The two barmaids, who have rooms in the back, Teresa (female human, Com3, CG) a farmer's daughter, and Jullana (female human, Exp1, N) a poor merchant's daughter, are both tough cold-hearted women towards those they serve. They have had countless merchants try to swoon them, but always leave with a knee to their groin and advice to stay away.

Any common liquor is twice that of the PHB, while the local drink; the Lightning Brew is only a few coppers, though only for the truly daring.

**2) Farm House:** This is the residence of Frimund the Wise (human male, Com7, LN), the thorp's elder and decision maker. He still tends to his land, though many do find an excuse to come over and help him with chores.

**3) Farm House:** A family of 5, of which the Aunt is a (female human, Com3, N), lives here. They grow mostly wheat, and harvest apples and pears from the trees around their property.

**4) Farm House:** This house of 7 people consists of a father and mother (humans, Com3, NG each) and their five adopted sons, all tend the barley fields, selling the majority of their crop to Nayell's tavern.

**5) Farm House:** This despondent group of men, (3 male humans, one Exp1, 2 Com1, LE) are former convicts that have fled their imprisonment in Barovia, hoping to hide out in this thorp till they can find someplace safer and more profitable. They get by with growing wheat and pick what they can from the forest.

**6) Farm House:** This small family is home to a father, wife and daughter, (humans, Com1, NG) with their other daughter Teresa, working and living at the tavern.

**7) Woodcarver's House:** This three story wooden house is home to the largest family in Kretewood, 16 members strong. The grandparents (Com5 each) their son and daughter's spouses, and family living on the second floor; while the grandfather's brother and his son live on the third floor. The family came from another town, hoping to find a better life here; they are all woodcarvers, cutters and foresters.

The children of the house are 19-year-old daughter, and two boys, 13 and 7 years old belonging to the son's family, with the daughter's family consisting of a son 16, twin daughters 10, and youngest boys 5 and 3 years old. The twin daughters have actually taken up the art of wood sculpture, and seem quite good at it. The grand parents are avid woodcarvers and can produce masterwork quality staves and spears, while the rest of the family gathers and chops the wood from the forest.

Staves, clubs, and spears are readily available, with lavishly carved versions sold for extra gold.

**8) The Temple Abode:** This part residence, part shrine, part crematorium is a popular destination for farmers wishing to pray for better harvests. The three priests that reside here; Kalfred Ranger (male human, Clr2, NG), and the twins Tornis and Glenum Meare (male humans, Clr1, NG)

tend to all religious duties around town, from marriages to tending the sick.

**9) Tinker's House:** This is the shop and storage place for all things to be fixed within town. The proprietor is one Svatt (male human, Exp4, LN) who tries his best at repairs, but tends to be quite slow at fixing things.

General items can be found here, though as to their condition it is anyone's guess should they wish to buy something.

**10) Farm House:** This family of 4, the father (male human, Exp1, LG), wife and their sons (humans, Com1, LG) try to sell wheat baked bread to travelers passing along the main road through Kretewood.

**11) The Widow House:** This is the house of Janna and Isella; it is detailed under The Widow House section below.

**11a) Barn:** This is where Janna stables the horses of her victims, and has grown an assassin vine to guard her property.

**Assassin Vine:** CR 5; SZ H Plant; HD 8d8+40; hp 76; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 0 ft.; AC 16 (Dex, -2 size, +9 natural); Atk +13 melee (1d8+11, slam); SA Entangle, improved grab, constrict 1d8+11; SQ Camouflage, electricity immunity, cold and fire resistance 20, blind sight; AL N; SV Fort +9, Ref +0, Will +2; Str 28, Dex 8, Con 20, Int -, Wis 13, Cha 9.

**Entangle (Su):** An assassin vine can animate plants within 30 feet of itself as a free action. The effect lasts until the vine dies or decides to end it (also a free action). The ability is otherwise



similar to entangle as cast by a 4th-level druid (save DC 13).

**Improved Grab (Ex):** To use this ability, the assassin vine must hit with its slam attack.

**Constrict (Ex):** An assassin vine deals 1d8+11 points of damage with a successful grapple check against Medium-size or smaller creatures.

**Blind sight (Ex):** Assassin vines have no visual organs but can ascertain all foes within 30 feet using sound, scent, and vibration.

**Camouflage (Ex):** Since an assassin vine looks like a normal plant when at rest, it takes a successful Spot check (DC 20) to notice it before it attacks. Anyone with Wilderness Lore or Knowledge (plants or herbs) can use those skills instead of Spot to notice the plant.

**12) Furrier's House:** Aun (female human, Exp2, NG) is the maker and mender of clothes, furs, and leather. While her husband (male human, Exp1, N) a former cloth merchant, deals the wares at market with their son (male human, Com1, LN) who wishes to follow in his father's shoes and become a merchant, so he can see the world. Their oldest daughter helps her mother, and the youngest is still only a child.

All the townsmen and families trade their furs and skins to her, in return for clothes and leather goods, while she keeps a portion for herself to trade.

#### Story Events

These short events, which need to be further fleshed out, can be used while the party is in Kretewood. How many of them the PCs discover is up to you, add and delete to this list as needed. Keep

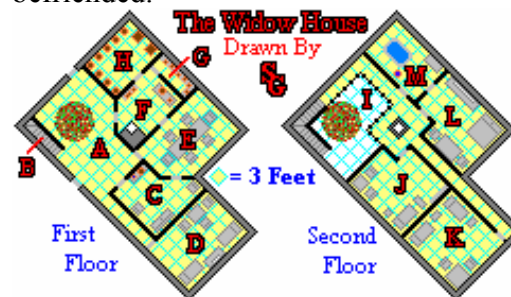
in mind that Isella tries to paint her mother as evil and dangerous to the party.

\*The PCs find clues left by old travelers to Janna's home, which Isella has not cleaned up despite what she told her mother.

\*The party may find the old skeleton of the previous owner in the garden room, which Isella had dug up and placed there.

\*One or more of the PC's horses, animal companions or even familiars are attacked in the night by monstrous spiders. Use the statistics as found in The Night Hunters.

\*The party may discover that Janna's barn houses not only equines, but also spiders that have been charmed by Isella, including another Fey arachnid that she has befriended.



The Widow House First Floor

**A) Entry (EL 6):** This room has been cleared of all furniture save for a large, round, reddish molded rug-dominating part of the floor. Janna and Isella stay clear of the rug, a deterrent for snooping thieves.

This rug has been taken over by a scarlet mold. Evidence of its acidic spores can be seen along the walls and doors of this room with a Spot check (DC 15) to notice the acid stains.

**Scarlet Mold (CR 6):** A patch of this mold bursts forth with a

cloud of acidic spores when disturbed. All organic matter within 10 feet of the mold when it releases its spores, takes 1d6 points of acid damage a round. The area around the mold appears misty; the acidic cloud is how the mold survives. Organic matter is broken down by the acid, which then collects towards the mold, causing it to grow in time. Fire or vinegar poured over it destroys scarlet mold.

**B) Stairwell:** In the corner of the Entry room is this stairway leading up the Landing.

**C) Sitting Room:** This room is taken up by a crude couch of stone backing and bronze frame, two chairs complement the couch, as well as a table with crystal pitcher and oxidized copper tray. The pitcher is the only object of value, though very fragile, worth 50 gp if carefully packed away; otherwise the shards of crystal only bring a value of 5 gp.

**D) Guest Bedroom:** This bedroom houses the simple furnishings; two low beds, small table with three chairs, and a smoky paned mirror and stand. The furnishings are all dilapidated and tarnished with nothing of value in the room.

**E) Dining Room:** This room is dominated by a long marble topped table and six plush chairs with gold backing. The backing is actually copper with gilding, which has prevented them from tarnishing. The chairs are quite heavy and bulky, weighing 20 pounds each, and worth only 15 gp.

**F) Kitchen:** Standing in one corner of this room is a crude fireplace. Across from it, stands a small table piled with pottery and copper cookware. A shelf of even more utensils and pottery lies upon the opposite side of the room. Everything in the room appears to be relatively unused.

**G) Pantry:** This room's shelves are stacked with clay ware; all look untouched and covered in dust. The foodstuffs inside have long ago been eaten away by mold, which has left them all full of filth.

**H) Garden Room:** Around the perimeter of this room are small and large clay pottery urns; each containing dried dirt. Lying hunched over one of the large pots is the dirt caked yellowish bones of an ancient skeleton.

The small and large clay urns once housed vegetables and other plants; the dirt is all that remains now. The skeleton was once the household's original owner.

#### The Widow House Second Floor

**I) Landing:** This partially broken railed landing winds along the walls of this open area. Characters making a Spot check (DC 15); can notice portions of the landing are weakened. These portions cause only a slight creaking when stepped upon, allowing +2 to those making Listen checks; otherwise they are safe to cross.

**J) Isella's Bedroom:** The door to this room is locked (DC 35). This bedroom houses Janna's daughter, within lies her bed, with nightstand, a small square table, two chairs, barren shelves along

one wall, and a long stone 'toy' chest.

**Treasure:** The toy chest is anything but; here stuffed in the box is "N'ygma", a bronze bladed +1 *short sword* with gold plated hilt and alabaster pommel. The sheath had rotted away along time ago. The weapon was one of Isella's own previous victims, stashed here until she could discover its abilities.

**K) Guest Bedroom:** This bedroom contains two beds, each with a chest of drawers, and a table with two chairs. The chest of drawers farthest from the door is the only thing of interest within the room; its three drawers contain personal items from a previous guest.

Tarnished copper comb, bone hairpins, set of clothes for both a man and woman, and a folded piece of velum tucked in the back of the center drawer beneath all the clutter.

The parchment is a crude letter or map, which maybe used to direct your players to another adventure you have planned.

**L) Janna's Bedroom:** The door to this room is locked (DC 30). Along on wall stands a long table with a large mirror. Beside it sits a doublewide bed, across from that lies a table and two chairs.

**Treasure:** The table has some coins or jewelry upon it. Items of value upon the table include some brittle parchment texts, green tarnished copper dagger, bronze helmet, brass metallic disks engraved with scenes of regions long ago passed away into history (these are ancient decorative plates.)

**M) Washroom:** The dominant feature of this room is a wide brass tub. Resting upon the floor before it is a large clay urn and against a nearby wall is a small marble cabinet, with four folded wool blankets resting atop.

The blankets are preserved due to a permanent *prestiditation* spell upon the top of the cabinet. Anyone touching a blanket notices they are slightly warm, and may even catch the faint scent of flowers emitting from them. The washtub holds filthy water. The clay urn is actually a *decanter of endless water* that only has the stream function command words, Ayut for scalding water, Blyz for cold, etched upon it.

## NPCs

### Janna the Widow

CR 6; Size M Shapechanger (Red Widow); HD 6d8+12; hp 45; Init +6 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; 30 ft., climb 20 ft. as spider; AC 12 (Dex); 18 (Dex, +6 natural) as spider; Attack +6 melee (1d3+2, unarmed strike), or +6 melee as spider (1d4+2, bite plus poison); SA web, poison, fluid drain, infest; SQ alternate form, darkvision 60 ft.; AL NE; SV Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +6; Str 14, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 17.

Skills: Bluff +14, Climb +10, Diplomacy +12, Hide +6\*, Jump +4 (+10\*), Listen +3, Move Silently +6\*, Sense Motive +10, Spot +3 (+11\*). Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Bluff).

Note: Janna receives a +4 racial bonus to Bluff, Diplomacy and Sense Motive checks. \*When in spider form, she receives a +6 racial bonus to jump checks and a

+8 racial bonus to Spot checks. In addition, she gains a +8 competence bonus to hide and Move Silently checks when using their webs.

**Possessions:** Masterwork tailored dresses, various breakaway silver necklaces and bracelets.

Janna has long flowing bright red hair, and skin that is a bronzed tan. Janna carries herself with pose, and add to that her charismatic looks, it is no wonder men are often seen entering her home.

### **Background**

Janna never knew her mother, living in the forest with her siblings until she could assume her alternate human form. Her sisters all went their separate ways, while Janna came upon the thorp of Kretewood and quickly wove her way into the populace. Her marriage to Ammeran, a local hunter who had lost his wife not two summers before, secured her a home and the convenience of his frequent trips away from home. It wasn't long until she ensnared traveling merchants and lone adventurous types into her embrace, stashing their wealth away, and always greeting her husband when he returned home. People began to take notice of Janna's 'guests', and spread rumours of adultery and the oddity of how the men went missing.

Ammeran was outraged at the accusations when he was told. He came home early one winter from a trip just to see that they were lies. Janna had known of the rumours, though hadn't expected Ammeran's barging into the house so soon while she was infesting a hapless halfling minstrel. She simply used his outburst of fear and shock to alert the neighbours.

The townspeople that came to inspect the noise never saw what really happened in the house.

Bloodied and distraught; Janna spoke of her husband's brutal jealousy and how he restricted her to a life of solitude. She told all assembled of her suspicions that he murdered all of those men to whom she had so much as spoken. The current town elder took pity on her, and assured her that everything would be better from now on, and bore away the two bodies to the crematorium. The last of the townsfolk to leave the house that night whispered the house must be cursed, and it has forever become known as the Widow House.

### **Current Sketch**

Janna tries to keep everything running as it has for her in this small town. She takes no undo risks, though tends to be ignorant of her own daughters dealings.

She gladly opens up her home as a place to rest, though knows better then to use her abilities on such a well armed party, unless of course they just happen to look weak or unorganized. At her home Janna will gladly sell the party members a horse or two if they lost some in the spider raid, even going along with the notion that yes she is skilled in talking to horses.

### **Combat**

While not afraid of running, Janna does wish to keep her secret safe, and is not afraid of fighting to keep it so. She knows however that there will eventually be a time when she must flee and move onto a new town. She does so if ever reduced to 10 hit points or less.

**Web (Ex):** Janna in spider form can cast webs as effectively as Medium-size monstrous spiders (see Appendix Three in the

*Monster Manuel*). If she succeeds at an opposed Strength check with a creature caught in her web, then as a standard action she can pull the victim 10 feet closer to herself.

**Poison (Ex):** Bite, Fortitude save (DC 15); initial damage 1d6 temporary Strength, secondary damage 2d6 temporary Strength.

**Fluid Drain (Ex):** Janna in spider form can drain blood and bodily fluids from a living victim with its fangs by making a successful grapple check. If she pins her foe, she can drain its fluids, inflicting 1d4 points of temporary Constitution damage each round the pin is maintained. Each point of Constitution Janna devours sustains her for one day.

**Infest (Ex):** Red widows are instinctually compelled to breed about once a year. After seeking out a charismatic male, she paralyzes her mate with her venom, but does not drain his blood. Instead, she implants 2d4 eggs into his abdomen and cocoons him in a web in her lair. Unless removed, the eggs hatch in 1d6 days. Red Widows reach maturity (and gain the ability to assume humanoid form) after one year; treat immature red widows as monstrous spiders. Red widow young are always red widows, but their apparent race in humanoid form is inherited from their father.

**Alternate Form (Su):** Janna's natural form is that of a medium-size monstrous spider. As a standard action, Janna can assume a specific humanoid form as if using the *polymorph self* spell (though her gear does not change). When slain, she will revert to spider form. She can use her special attacks only while in spider form. If grappling, she can shift

from one shape to another while maintaining a pin.

## Isella

CR 7; Size S Shapechanger (Red Widow) Exp2; HD 6d8+6 plus 2d6+2; hp 41; Init +8 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 20 ft.; 30 ft., climb 20 ft. as spider; AC 14 (Dex); 20 (Dex, +6 natural) as spider; Attack +5 melee (1d3, unarmed strike), or +5 melee as spider (1d4, bite plus poison); SA web, poison, fluid drain; SQ alternate form, arachnid companions, darkvision 60 ft.; AL NE; SV Fort +6, Ref +8, Will +11; Str 10, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 16.

Skills: Alchemy +4, Appraise +7, Bluff +14, Climb +10, Diplomacy +12, Disguise +7, Escape Artist +4, Handle Animal +5, Hide +11\*, Jump +4 (+8\*), Knowledge (Games) +7, Listen +9, Move Silently +11\*, Sense Motive +10, Spot +3 (+11\*), Use Magic Device +6, Use Rope +5. Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Bluff).

Note: Isella receives a +4 racial bonus to Bluff, Diplomacy and Sense Motive checks. \*When in spider form, she receives a +6 racial bonus to jump checks and a +8 racial bonus to Spot checks. In addition, she gains a +8 competence bonus to hide and Move Silently checks when using their webs.

Possessions: Baggy peasants garb, with little to no adornments, save for a pouch of newly acquired wood carved game pieces.

Isella has her red hair braided, and often darkens it into a rustic reddish brown. Her rust colored eyes are ever watchful as they stare out from her freckled face. She hides much of herself, emotionally

and physically, but many young lads have not taken to that clue and left her alone.

### Background

Isella was never meant to have been born, for she was only narrowly spared the fate of immolation inside the corpse of her father. Fortunately for Isella the halfling's body never made it to the Temple House, nor did Ammeran's, nor did those who carried either cadaver.

The red widow was rescued by a mysterious entity that introduced itself as her "benefactor". The creature spoke to mind of the infant arachnid and instructed her to destroy her emerging siblings. It was simple enough for the young shapechanger to destroy the tiny creatures. As each sister escaped from the halfling's corpse they were crushed and buried beneath the snow until the next sister came forth.

The benefactor told Isella of her mother and how the woman let the humans carry her off to die in a funeral pyre. It was a long year of anger as story after story was spoken of Janna. The benefactor taught Isella to observe her mother's habits, to learn her weaknesses. When the red widow could assume her alternate form, she was told to stay away from the town and avoid the revenge she so badly desired. The benefactor spoke the words directly into her mind, so as to burn them forever into her memory.

"Your mother shall give birth to another brood; I shall show you how to weave your way into her care when it comes to be. But for now, you must know the powers of your mind to better your chances in this world."

With that, the red widow spent another year learning to manipulate to world around her around her, insuring that when the time came to meet her mother, Isella would have her revenge. Janna's next brood came, and each was slaughtered in the barn before they had a chance to emerge. When Janna came to check on her young, she saw only one daughter. Isella dropped from a web, quite pleased with the bewildered expression on her mother's face.

It would only be one more year, Isella thought, enough time to learn Janna's weaknesses, to lure her into false security. Since that moment she has done nothing more aggressive than destroying the broods of her mother. She is a master player, slowly destroying her enemy's game pieces and building her strength for the final strike.

### Current Sketch

Isella has many plans for the future, slowly working on each while constantly deriving others. What isn't known however is who also aids her in those goals. She is watched and aided by some mysterious being with a deep connection to the mists of the land.

### Combat

Isella avoids combat whenever she can; using her ability to befriend the spiders of the forest at all times when facing danger. She claims as her main defense to be the adopted daughter of Janna. Even going so far as to show her true halfling heritage, and saying she suspected her mother was 'demon cursed' and forced her to disguise her looks to that of Janna's own, ala red hair.

See Janna above for description of all abilities except as noted below:

Isella disguises herself as a child, though in all respects she has the natural form of a halfling. Her spider form is that of a Small Monstrous Spider, and also cannot infest others, an ability she is quite fond of being without.

**Arachnid Companions (Su):** Isella can charm arachnids like the spell *animal friendship*, though only those with no intelligence.

#### Conclusion

If the PCs are successful in thwarting Isella and her mother, forcing both to reveal their true forms, and either killing or driving them off, then Kretewood shall always call the adventurers as friends. Despite the outcome, Janna won't make it to another town, and Isella's plots continue to run their course by her shadowy

benefactor. The party may not have yet faced the true evil.

Should Isella be successful in having her mother killed by the party, she then tries to play upon the sympathy of the townspeople, eventually being adopted by one of the families and slowly corrupting them to her whims. The Thorp of Kretewood shall know a dark time, and while the PCs may think they did Isella a good service, might come to realize, they are nothing but pawns in her game.

#### Magic Items

##### **N'ygma**

This short sword appears as a bronze bladed sword with gold plated hilt and alabaster pommel. The sword is just as its name means in draconic, a mystery.

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**Powers:** This sword acts in all ways as a +1 sword, though seems to possess more, as a slight tingle is felt when the weapon is held. This tingle is from the mild magical effect bestowed by the blade. Any blind individual who holds this blade gains the ability to see once more, though only in black and white and only for so long as the sword is kept on the character's person. Crafted by Eldgrim; a wizard that had his eyes removed by a rival, it allowed him to read his spell books, and continue his studies in the art of magic.

Caster Level: 5th; Weight: 3 lb. Creation of this weapon requires Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *darkvision*, and the crafter must have the Blight-Fighting feat.

# Heinrich's Curiosities

## Arcane Items for the Modern Gentleman

*The shop was filled with the smoky scent of tobacco and the air was uncomfortably warm. The only light came from an iron candelabra sitting upon the shopkeeper counter. The gentleman negotiated his way through the aisle between crowded shelves. The simple shopkeeper was hunched over his counter, staring into a dusty book. As the customer approached he lifted his head revealing the thick spectacles that sat precariously upon his nose. Every inch of the old man was wrinkled; his body was speckled in spots. From his modest garb it was clear that he was Borcan. He was by no means out of place in Dementlieu, since the harsh taxes of that land forced small businesses to emigrate.*

*"Vat do you vant?" Said the old man, blowing smoke from his lips. His thick accent confirmed his heritage. An aged ivory pipe was firmly held in his mouth, puffing a bluish smoke into the air.*

*"Madame DeMaer sent me," he said, "She said you could help me with a problem." With the mention of the lady DeMaer the old man started to chortle. He pointed his finger at the gentleman before he could contain himself.*

*"So you are the gentleman friend," he laughed in his breathless chuckle, "The one who cannot...."*

*"Now see here," he blurted out. An expression of shock and humiliation exploded on the customer's face. His cheeks were already horribly red. He couldn't*

*believe that Lady DeMaer told a simple shopkeeper such scandalous secrets. Was it not enough to say that his scorned wife had cursed him? That for some insane reason the curse had come true? Why was she compelled to humiliate him by giving away the details?*

*"Calm yourself," said the ancient shopkeeper, "I have many things to help gentlemen in situations not unlike your own."*

### Cane of Vitality

This gentleman's walking stick is made of a single piece of ivory, polished down to a perfectly smooth texture. The cane is composed of a perfectly straight shaft and a decorated handle. These handles are always carved into the shapes of exotic animals. Common themes are a cobra, an elephant or a pouncing lion. This cane is a precious commodity to aged scholars of the arcane. Possession of such a cane can help men recapture the energy of youth and live lives much more active than the ravages of time would have allowed. The owner of the cane is infused with the primal energy stored within the cane. The true owner of the cane becomes energetic and virile. The physical effects of age are alleviated from the owner so long as he possesses the cane. Owners who have been hobbled by old wounds are freed of their injuries and weak bones become strong once more. To gain the effects of ownership, the owner

must take a short walk with the cane in hand every morning. Owners usually explain this daily habit as the secret of their health.

The cane is a solid piece of workmanship. It can be used as a medium sized weapon that can deal 1D4 points of damage and threatens a critical range of 20. The cane strikes creatures as a +1 weapon, though it cannot confer an enhancement bonus to hit and damage rolls. The cane has a hardness of 5 and can stand 25 points of damage before being broken.

*Caster level 6<sup>th</sup> level Prerequisites:* Craft wondrous item, craft: ivory work 5 ranks, Bull's Strength, Endurance, Magic Weapon.

### Hypnotic Watch

Portable timepieces are rare and expensive yet they are one of the most prestigious items a gentleman can own. The hypnotic watch is an enchanted timepiece that allows the owner to mesmerize other individuals in a fraction of the regular time. The original hypnotic watch was a tool used by a spell-casting alienist. The watch was mostly an investigative tool; it was used to put witnesses into a trance so that they could be interrogated without leaving them aware that they had been questioned.

The hypnotic watch is a masterwork timepiece. The watch is encased in gold and is protected by a thick glass lens. The face of the watch is made of polished

silver and the hands are made of black iron. The watch has no winding knob, for it is in perpetual motion. The only adornment on the watch is a long gold chain. Activating the watch requires the owner to hold out the watch by the chain and gently rock it back and forth like a pendulum. This activation requires a full round action and provokes an attack of opportunity. Anyone who can see the watch must make a will save against an opposed hypnotism check by the owner of the watch. Should the will save fail the target becomes entranced. While in a trance a victim cannot move, attack or defend himself. The owner of the watch may then make hypnosis checks to extract information from the target. There is no limit to the number of victims that can be entranced in this manner. However, victims entranced by the watch will automatically awaken after ten minutes.

*Caster level 6<sup>th</sup> level Prerequisites:* Craft wondrous item, craft: clockwork 8 ranks, hypnotism 5 ranks, Hypnotism

## Spectacles of Anonymity

There are few things as recognizable about a gentleman than a pair of spectacles. The owner of these particular glasses, however, need never be recognized. The spectacles of anonymity were designed to allow the wearer's identity to be kept completely secret. The spectacles generate an aura surrounding the wearer. Anyone who spots the wearer of the spectacles must make a will save against a DC of 15. If the save fails then the subject will

completely forget any detail surrounding the appearance or identity of the wearer of these spectacles. The effects of anonymity are so thorough that victims of the aura cannot even recall whether or not the wearer was wearing spectacles.

The spectacles of anonymity are made of golden frames supporting two smoked lenses. These lenses work both as reading spectacles and far seeing spectacles for myopic wearers.

*Caster level 8<sup>th</sup> level Prerequisites:* Craft wondrous item, craft: glasswork 5 ranks, craft: goldsmith 5 ranks, Modify Memory

## Whipping Boy

When a noble child is caught in the wrong, his caretakers find difficulty in punishing him. Rather than strike a child of noble blood, disciplinarians punish the playmates of the noble child, vicariously punishing the offended. Thus this procedure protects spoiled children from pain. But what happens when such a nobleman grows to manhood and has not yet learned to behave? The whipping boy statue protects the owner from the effects of curses by drawing the curse upon itself. Much like the living equivalent, the whipping boy suffers in the place of its owner.

The whipping boy is a small statute, roughly twelve inches high. The statue is made of smooth gray stone, depicting a child with his head bowed into folded arms. The statue looks fragile, but it is surprisingly resistant to blows. The whipping boy is nearly indestructible. The effects of the whipping boy are not immediately noticeable. The item

protects the owner from the effects of curses. When the true owner of the statue is cursed by the rules for cursing, the curse is immediately lifted.

The curse is temporarily transferred to the statue. Should the statue be harmed in anyway, it immediately crumbles to dust and is blown to the far corners of the world. Once gone, any curses stored in the statue fall upon the former owner of the whipping boy. A whipping boy statue can bear any number of curses. As soon as it suffers from a single curse a minor transformation occurs. Each night at midnight the whipping boy begins to emit the sound of quiet weeping. No matter where the owner is, he or she can perceive the pitiful weeping. This weeping lasts for one hour, and during this hour the owner suffers the symptoms of the horror effect depression. The only way to end this effect is to either perform the action required to remove the curse or destroying the statue.

The whipping boy cannot remove curses that have already been inflicted upon the owner, nor can it store the effects of a failed powers check. Self-induced curses can be stored within the whipping boy. Curses that have no built in method of atonement or that were unjustly bestowed are not bestowed upon the owner should the whipping boy be destroyed. The magic of the statue is strong enough to sweep away such unjust and unforgiving curses. Creatures that are somehow immune to the effects of depression cannot be considered the owner of a whipping boy. Should a whipping boy be stolen from an owner while it is storing a curse the statue is immediately destroyed. The stored

curses then befall the thief of the statue. Should an owner die, the curses stored in the statue are dissipated and the statue awaits a new individual to claim it.

*Caster level 8<sup>th</sup> level Prerequisites:*  
Craft wondrous item, craft:  
sculpture, nondetection



# Whispers in the Darkness

## Magic and Madness

*“Historical Catalogue Item 578 B; Book.” The innocent label was belied the malignance of the item. Professor Farnsworth regarded the weathered tome with wary eyes. As curator to the museum he was privilege to knowledge that could not be entrusted to the public, knowledge such as the true origins of the book that now lay upon his desk. The scholar frowned sadly as he began to write the rest of the record for the book. “Author: Unknown.” It was a downright lie. He knew very well who wrote it. Ormolus Declare, a vile enchanter and scholar of black magic wrote the book. It was none other than his book of spells, the repository of all his arcane knowledge. And what vile knowledge that was, thought the professor.*

Ormolus had turned his intellect to the study of the mind, more specifically the study of insane minds. For more than five years the enchanter had delved into the secrets of madness. In that time he had mastered the ability to unravel the delicate weave that bound the fabric of the human brain. From that point it took him only a little time to expand his power. The wizard used his spells to sunder the minds of his enemies and rebuild them again as slaves. With a growing army of madmen at his command, he has turned his eyes towards conquest.

*“Donor: Anonymous collectors.” It was another lie. The curator knew the donor of the*

*book quite well. The mad wizard had made a critical mistake; he drew the attention of the Fraternity of Shadows. Though Ormolus was great in power he was careless with his own security, the assassins dispatched by the Fraternity easily circumvented the guards. Ormolus was buried in an unmarked grave somewhere near his lab, his spell book was taken to the Museum and just recently it was laid on Farnsworth’s desk.*

*“Subject: Fiction, fantasy.” That brought a smile to the curators face. There were only a few people in all of Dementlieu who wouldn’t regard such a spell book as pure fantasy. It was all for the best really, since the secrets in Ormolus’ book were far too dangerous to let out of the hands of the Fraternity. The professor signed his name on the index card. He called for a servant, who took the book and brought it to the museum’s steadily growing collection of fantasy literature.*

### Contrariness

Enchantment  
**Level:** Sor/Wiz 1  
**Components:** V, S  
**Casting Time:** 1 action  
**Range:** Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)  
**Target:** One living creature  
**Duration:** One hour plus 10 minutes/level  
**Saving Throw:** Will negates  
**Spell Resistance:** Yes

Mind control is a subtle art not a bludgeoning tool. Spell casters can spread discontent and confusion amongst their enemies without resorting to mental domination. This spell allows an enchanter to temporarily warp the mind of a victim. The effects of this manipulation are that everything the victim hears sounds totally unreasonable and even insulting. With a single application of this spell a caster can break the most tightly knit groups and sow discontent amongst his enemies.

This is an extreme variation on the charm spell. Anything that anyone else says to the target sounds like either a lie, pure nonsense and even a little obscene. Naturally, the target of this spell is very resistant to any suggestion. Persuading a target to take any action requires a diplomacy check against a DC 10 plus the spell casters level. While it might seem like an easy solution, asking the opposite of what is wanted from a victim of this spell does not guarantee compliance. To trick a target of this spell into doing what is wanted a bluff check against a DC of 10 plus the spell caster level.

When the spell duration ends, the contrariness effect ends. The target does not change his or her opinion about the former requests, though he or she is no longer unreasonable.

## Delusions

Enchantment

**Level:** Sor/Wiz 4

**Components:** V, S

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

**Target:** One living creature

**Duration:** One hour/level

**Saving Throw:** Will negates

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

With the successful casting of this spell the victim becomes delusional as though he or she suffered the madness effect of the same name. The victim suffers none of the ability loss from madness and completely recovers at the end of the spell's duration. The victim can still suffer from horror checks incurred by committing actions that should be impossible in the context of the delusion. At the time of the casting the caster determines what kind of delusion the victim suffers from. The caster cannot make the target believe that something different happened in the past; instead the target ignores the obvious contradictions between past memories and the delusional identity. In truth, the caster can only make the target believe that he or she is a different person or creature. If the caster picks a more probable delusion, the target suffers a -2 penalty to the will save to resist. At the end of the spell the victim is unaware of his or her past state. He or she remembers the actions committed, but cannot understand why he or she thought that such acts were appropriate.

## Hallucinations

Enchantment

**Level:** Sor/Wiz 5

**Components:** V, S

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**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

**Target:** One living creature

**Duration:** One hour/level

**Saving Throw:** Will negates

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

Perception never reaches the conscious mind without passing through the gauntlet of the subconscious. An experienced spell caster can manipulate the mind of a victim and implant hallucinations within the brain. Once set these hallucinations wait for a trigger, after which they cause the victim to suffer from the symptoms of the madness effect of the same name.

At the time of the casting the spell caster chooses a trigger. This trigger can be a word in a language the target understands, a specific sound, a smell, an image or the presence of a person. The caster chooses a type of audio and visual hallucinations. This can be something small such as the buzzing of bees or be something more obvious such as a horde of ghosts rising from the floor. Once chosen, this hallucination cannot be changed. The hallucination itself does not last longer than half an hour at the longest, though it can end on its own sooner.

Menacing hallucinations can provoke fear or even horror checks. Hallucinations that are especially plausible can impose a -2 penalty to the targets save to disbelieve during the actual hallucination.

## Paranoia

Enchantment

**Level:** Sor/Wiz 2

**Components:** V, S

**Casting Time:** 1 action

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**Range:** Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

**Target:** One living creature

**Duration:** One day plus 1 hour/level

**Saving Throw:** Will negates

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

Trust is earned but paranoia is the gift one gives himself. With this spell a spell caster can sew mistrust into the minds of his victims. When this spell is cast the victim begins to suffer the symptoms of the paranoia madness effect. The character cannot trust other individuals, no matter how close their relationship. The victim becomes convinced that everyone around him is part of a clandestine plot against him. Any action that would require the character to trust his life, his health or his equipment to another person requires a successful wisdom check against a DC equal to 10 plus the spell caster level. On a successful check the character grudgingly trusts his good sense and follows through. On a failed check the character either flatly refuses or pretends to go along with the plan and then escapes at the earliest opportunity.

For the duration of the spell a victim is no longer subject to charm spells, though he or she is still subject to suggestions or domination. The victim recovers from the madness at the end of the spell. Should the victim come upon evidence that others are conspiring against him, while under the effects of this spell, he must make a horror check. This check is made against a DC of 12 plus the victim's wisdom modifier. Horror effects incurred in this manner remain with the character until the character recovers naturally.

## Phobia

Enchantment

**Level:** Sor/Wiz 3

**Components:** V, S

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

**Target:** One living creature

**Duration:** One hour plus ten minutes/level

**Saving Throw:** Will negates

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

Fear is a powerful force; it drives men to violence, keeps them cowed before dictators and allows a clever spell caster to manipulate them. With the casting of this spell the caster chooses a phobia for the character. This can be any person, place, thing or a given situation. Common phobias are fear of certain animals, heights, or crowds. For the duration of the spell the victim is deathly afraid of the object of the phobia. If he or she is ever confronted with the object of the phobia he or she must make a fear check against a DC of 10 plus the caster level. If the victim is ever forcefully attacked by the object of the phobia he or she must make a horror save against a DC of 10 plus the caster level.

The phobia ends at the end of the spell duration but fear effects and horror effects incurred by failed saves remain in effect until the target recovers naturally.

## Programmed Rage

Enchantment

**Level:** Sor/Wiz 3

**Components:** V, S

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

**Target:** One living creature

**Duration:** One day plus one hour/level

**Saving Throw:** Will negates

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

There is nothing as dangerous as the unexpected and no assassin more lethal than a trusted friend. This spell allows a caster to implant a dangerous seed of madness within a target. The seed lies dormant within the victims mind until the target senses a programmed stimulus. At that time the seed explodes, filling the victims brain with animalistic fury. The target becomes a wild berserker, attacking anything within reach.

With the casting of this spell the caster designates a trigger for the rage. This trigger can be a specific person, a type of creature an object, or a particular location. When the target is confronted with this trigger he or she loses consciousness. While in this unconscious state the character's body is controlled by the spell. The character goes completely berserk, shrieking and shouting like a man possessed. The target uses any melee weapon and throwing weapon available to attempt to destroy, kill and maul everything he or she can see. The berserker gains a temporary bonus of +4 to both strength and constitution scores, but cannot use any skill or feat. The rage lasts for a number of minutes equal to his constitution score, or until he or she is subdued.

At the end of the rage the character regains consciousness. He or she cannot recall anything that happened since entering the rage. The character is fatigued for as many rounds as the character spent in the rage. Once the rage is over the spell is spent. The

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character will not go berserk again unless there is another application of this spell.

While in a rage the berserker prioritizes living beings as targets. The enraged assassins prefer to attack the most intimidating target, descending down the ranks to the weakest looking victim. Berserkers cannot be programmed to attack a specific person; they can only be programmed to go berserk in the presence of that person. For the spell caster, this is at best a crapshoot.

# Extraordinary Expertise

## Vincintiari's Instruments

By Scott C. Bourgeois

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Nicholai Vincintiari was widely regarded throughout the core as the greatest crafter of musical instruments in the entire world. His recent death was mourned by many of the domains' greatest bards and minstrels, as no man had ever loved his craft as he had, and it was that passion that gave life to some of the most beautiful and haunting melodies ever heard by mortal ears.

### Life of a Master

Vincintiari was born, unsurprisingly, in Kartakass. He grew up the son of a carpenter living in Harmonia, and every year his father would take him to the Meistersinger's competition. There he bore witness to some of the premier bards of his day, singing for the honor of guiding the people of Harmonia for another year. From a very young age Nicholai was interested in music, however it quickly became apparent that he himself was not a naturally talented musician by any means. This did not deter the boy, however, and he decided to focus his carpentry skills into trying to make musical instruments. After all, if he could not make music himself, he would help others to do so. It was here that he found his calling.

At ten years old, Vincintiari crafted his first instrument, a simple wooden violin of impressive quality. His father was

proud, and it managed to fetch a fine price at the market, so Nicholai continued to craft them. His natural talent and love of the craft was obvious, and through the years he began refining his techniques and expanding into more and more families of instruments. By the age of thirty, Nicholai Vincintiari had surpassed the level of mastery of every other craftsman of musical instruments in Kartakass and the surrounding domains. His instruments were fetching huge prices, and bards from across the core were scrambling for the privilege of playing one. Many of the names associated with Vincintiari are musicians of great renown throughout the Core. They include such names as Andres Duvall and Harkon Lucas, who is said to keep a Vincintiari original harp under glass in his home.

Through it all, Nicholai remained a relatively simple man. He married young to lovely girl from Harmonia and the two of them lived in a fairly simple home with their four children. Vincintiari was a loving husband and father, despite his time spent in the workshop, and lived to ripe old age. Nicholai passed away at the age of sixty-three, while away in Nova Vaasa completing construction on a pipe organ with his two sons for the church of the Lawgiver. Though he didn't live to see the completed organ, it is

considered the last Vincintiari original.

### The Instruments

All of the instruments crafted by Vincintiari are considered of masterwork quality, with all of the benefits that entails. They cost a great deal more than usual, usually up to two or three times the normal cost. Then there are the originals. The Vincintiari originals are all unique musical instruments of a quality that surpasses that of any other. No two sounds the same, but all create music so beautiful that none can deny the skill of the craftsman who hand built them. When Vincintiari lived, originals needed to be custom ordered through him, and would cost vast sums of money, up to ten times the normal cost of the instrument. This cost went into the materials and time needed to craft the instrument, and few who could afford it would complain.

Nowadays an original is priceless, as Vincintiari was the only man who could create them. It is said that there are supposedly forty in existence; including at least ten violins, six lutes, three cellos, three clarinets, two flutes, two harps, an oboe, a lyre, a harpsichord, and a pipe organ. Their color (Vincintiari preferred to create white instruments), and their markings can identify all originals as such. Forgeries are quickly revealed, either by

incorrect markings or by the sound they make after a prolonged period of time. The benefits of owning a Vincintiari original are notable. They are far superior to even a masterwork quality instrument, granting an astounding +4 masterwork bonus to any skill check required to play one. Moreover, they are very durable and hold their sound for nearly three times longer than a conventional instrument of the same type before needing to be tuned. The originals also are of such fine quality as to have special properties to their music, though what these properties are is up to a creative dungeon master. Finally, they are also a mark of real prestige amongst the bards of the Core, and any bard playing or carrying one in the company of his or her peers is going to turn heads.

However, items created with such passion come with a small price. No matter how pure a soul Nicholai Vincintiari might have been, his passion for music is a part of every original he made. They are therefore far more susceptible to evil. Any curse check made against the owner of a Vincintiari original (or the instrument itself) receives a +4 passion bonus to the roll. Tragedy also has a tendency to follow such items wherever they go, but that is a tale best left for another to tell.

## Vincintiari and Sons

Vincintiari and Sons is located on a quaint, out-of-the-way street in Harmonia. Vincintiari's two sons Markus and Petros (Human Males Exp10) run it, both in their early thirties. Both men are friendly and outgoing, and well versed in the craft of constructing

musical instruments. They are both masters of the art, but are not yet able to muster the skill to create a musical instrument that surpasses masterwork quality. Their instruments are still of excellent quality, cost around twice normal market value, and are all masterwork. They do have three originals on display, two violins and a flute, but they are not for sale.

## Vincintiari Originals

There are nearly forty originals in all, but several of them are particularly well known. Here are the tales of only a few of them...

### The Lyre of Laszlo Taskar

Laszlo Taskar was the son of a Harmonian laborer who was born with an amazing musical aptitude. His father was proud of him, and also happened to be a friend of Nicholai Vincintiari. When Vincintiari saw the boy's skill, he offered to make him a Lyre for free. Laszlo's father was thrilled, and gifted it to Laszlo on his fourteenth birthday, shortly before his own death. Laszlo grew to be an excellent minstrel, eventually settling in Pont-a-Museau, where he became something of a local celebrity. He became such a known figure in fact, that it was a shock to the entire populace when he committed suicide after a concert.

Though many suspected that his friend, Pierre DeLacroix, or his lover Beatrice LeFils, might have had some part in his death, the case was quickly dropped due to lack of evidence. Laszlo's possessions were auctioned off and each fetched a high price, but the

highest price of all was paid for the Vincintiari original. Pierre DeLacroix purchased it, but he sold it a week later to a local music shop for a single gold piece, no explanation given. Since then it has sat in the window of the music shop, a collector's piece... but some say the angry spirit of a great bard haunts it.

The Lyre itself is beyond comparison in quality. It grants a +4 masterwork bonus to the Performance (Lyre) skill of anyone playing it. Also, any bard playing the Lyre in conjunction with their *Fascinate* ability may maintain its effect for 2 rounds per level, rather than the usual one.

However, the ghost of Laszlo Taskar haunts the Lyre. Laszlo himself is a second magnitude ghost who can only manifest at night, and only communicate through his music. He plays a ghostly version of his Lyre as he manifests, but the actual Lyre itself plays in concert with him. Laszlo is seeking out his killer, and anyone willing to help Laszlo will find his spirit willing to allow him or her to utilize the bonuses of the Lyre. Any evil being attempting to play the instrument will find his ghost less receptive.

Evil beings playing the Lyre without first dealing with Laszlo's spirit will have their fingers pricked (1 hp per round of playing) by the strings, and will automatically fail their Performance (Lyre) check regardless of their roll as the Lyre plays discordant music.

### The Nightingale's Flute

There once was a musician from Chateaufaux who was known only as Nightingale. It is said that a celebrated local flutist who was

awed by her talent for the instrument had instructed her, and that he gave her the very flute he had commissioned for himself. She took her name from the only decoration on it, a single Nightingale. Nightingale had a tumultuous career, involving a number of romantic scandals. Somehow, however, she came through it all with her reputation and her skills intact, and near the end of her career she was the most popular musician in Dementlieu.

Her disappearance remains shrouded in mystery, and there are many rumours as to what may have happened to her. Some say she left with one of her many lovers, but others suggest much darker theories. The Flute itself was found in her dressing room, and put on permanent display at the University of Dementlieu. The Flute itself was fairly simple, but of the highest quality. It was said to have an uplifting quality to it, and made music like those of songbirds. Indeed, small songbirds tended to gather wherever Nightingale played.

The Flute is of fantastic quality and tone. It grants a +4 masterwork bonus to the Performance (Flute) skill of anyone playing it. Also, any bard playing the flute acts as though affected by a paladin's *Aura of Courage*. Though it is not a

magical effect, nearby songbirds are attracted to the sound of the Flute.

The Flute comes with its own unique drawback however. The Flute randomly affects people listening to it with a *Charm Person* spell-like effect (will save, DC 20), making them amorous towards the performer. Indeed, someone playing the Flute might find themselves suddenly very popular with the opposite sex.

### **The Pipes of Law**

Considered the last of the Vincintiar originals, the Pipes of Law are a truly awesome sight to behold. It was commissioned by the Aerkebiskop Grecko Vistin of Nova Vaasa at considerable cost and took two years to construct from scratch. Nicholai, his two sons Markus and Petros, several of the Lawgiver's clerics, and a legion of apprentices who worked diligently for months to create what is considered a true wonder of the church.

The Pipes of Law are a massive pipe organ, set into the north wall of what was once a fairly minor church in a town near Arbora. In the past year since their completion, this church has seen a major influx of pilgrims, most of them faithful of the Lawgiver, flocking to see the Pipes and hear their legendary melody.

The Pipes create a haunting sound with their melody, so deep, full and resonating that some say it is like hearing the voice of the Lawgiver himself.

The Pipes of Law are possibly the finest crafted pipe organ in the Core. They grant a +4 masterwork bonus to the Performance (Pipe Organ) skill of anyone playing them. The Lawgiver has blessed the Pipes, and their melody strikes a non-magical *Fear* (will save, DC 30) into the hearts of any non-lawful beings who hear them. Finally, any cleric of the Lawgiver who plays the Pipes and makes a successful Performance (Pipe Organ) check at DC 30 may create a *Mass Suggestion* spell-like effect as a cleric one level higher than themselves.

There are some darker aspects to the Pipes. Any person who hears their melody must make a will save, DC 25, or have their alignment shift one step towards lawful. This shift in alignment only lasts for twenty-four hours, or until the Pipes is heard again. The Pipes of Law are not to be trifled with. Any non-lawful being whom attempts to play the Pipes will find themselves instantly struck deaf by the first sound the Pipes create by their hand. This deafness is not permanent, and wears off after only a day or two.

# Sword, Fist and Mist

## Prestige Classes of Sword and Fist in the Dread Realms

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### Cavalier

The Cavaliers are the most common in the domains of Hazlan, Nova Vassa, Pharazia, and Sithicus. In Nova Vassa the Cavaliers are the corrupt enforcers of Prince Othmar's illegal rule. These horsemen ride the fastest horses in the Core and bear the finest armor forged. In Hazlan the Cavaliers are often Mulan who have become bored with a decadent lifestyle and decided to pursue a life of excitement and adventure. Occasionally the Mulans accept Rashemi warriors of renown, strength and favor. Hazlan Cavaliers are distinguished from other horsemen by their tendency to possess minor magical items or even arcane spell casting abilities. Pharazian Cavaliers do not fit the mold of the traditional Cavaliers, but Cavaliers they are. These warriors are always equipped with banded mail as it is the heaviest form of armor they can wear in the hot desert sun. Pharazian Cavaliers are usually much more religious than other Cavaliers, they are enforcing Diamabel's holy edicts with their righteous acts in his service. Clad in shining elf-mail Sithican Cavaliers are indeed an awe-inspiring sight. Instead of horses, these elves ride upon giant stag beetles, combing through their rough forests with a much greater ease than a horse could ever do. Cavaliers can also be found in

Falkovnia, Richemulot, and Rokushima Taiyoo.

### Devoted Defender

Due to the broadness of their focus, Devoted Defenders can be found almost anywhere in the Dread Realms. They are most common in the domain of Richemulot but they have also been begun to appear in Barovia, Borca, G'Henna, Har'Akir, Invidia, Lamordia, Nidala, Odiare, Paridon, Pharazia, and Tepest. The Devoted Defenders of Richemulot are unique amongst the defenders of the Demiplane. Not only are the Defenders protectors of the body, but they also protect their charges from the vicious slander that might be released by other nobles against them. These Defenders are as skilled at the art of bluffing as they are with a sword.

### Drunken Master

Drunken Masters are very rare in the Demiplane. Of all domains they are most likely to be found in Borca, Sithicus, Vechor, Verbrek, and the islands of the Sea of Sorrows and the Nocturnal Sea.

**Drunken Rage (Ex):** When the Drunken Master enters the Drunken Rage, he gets a +4 bonus to Fear, Horror, and Madness checks, just like a normal Barbarian does when he or she enters a rage.

### Duelist

The Duelist is most commonly found on the shores or islands of the Nocturnal Sea. These maritime Duelists are sailors of great skill, for the Sea is harsh mistress to those who are unprepared for her. Following the Nocturnal coasts, they are most commonly found in Dementlieu, Kartakass, the islands of the Sea of Sorrows, and Souragne.

**Alterations:** The Duelists special attack options functions only with a one-handed piercing melee weapon. Thus, a pistol could not be used in this attack option.

### Fist of the Lawgiver (aka Fist of Hextor)

Almost all Fists of the Lawgiver are found in the domains of Nova Vassa and Tepest. In Nova Vassa they are some of the temple's most favored servants. In Tepest, they are some of the most powerful guards of the Lawgiver's temples, and must regularly push back the Inquisitors of the Fey. Otherwise, they can be found on the shores and islands of the Nocturnal Sea or in Hazlan.

### Ghostwalker

Ghostwalkers commonly originate from Falkovnia, G'Henna, or Tepest. In Falkovnia, many Ghostwalkers were former

Hazlan, Richemulot, Rokushima Taiyoo, and Sri Raji.

guards in the military. These characters are disillusioned with military service, so they take up the life of the wanderer. In G'Henna, the Ghostwalkers are usually painfully thin and many are fervently believe in Zhakata even though they have taken up the life of the outcast. Tepestani Ghostwalkers are lone warriors, often out to destroy the Fey wherever they can find them. Ghostwalkers may also be found in Lamordia, Nova Vassa, Vechor, and Vorostokov.

**Etherealness (Sp):** The Etherealness ability of the Ghostwalker suffers the same changes as the Ethereal Jaunt spell in the Ravenloft 3E Rulebook.

**Shadow Walk (Sp):** The Shadow Walk ability is similarly restricted as the spell of the same name, detailed again in the Ravenloft 3E Rulebook.

## Gladiator

The Gladiator is a dichotomy of sorts. On the one hand the requirements to pursue the calling are not hard to reach, and indeed many domains possess the resources to produce Gladiators. On the other hand, Gladiatorial arenas are far and few between in the Dread Realms. There is at least one in Falkovnia, though whether it is still in use is in question. Rumors persist of a land far into the Mists, a desert realm populated by a savage folk who fight in gladiatorial arenas on a daily basis. So far such tales are little more than the conjecture of drunks spoken only in whispers deep into the night. The domains that are most likely to spawn a Gladiator are Borca, Darkon, Dementlieu, Falkovnia, Invidia,

Kartakass, Nidala, Nova Vassa, Rokushima Taiyoo, Sanguinia, Vechor and Vorostokov.

## Halfling Outrider

The Halfling Outriders are even more rare than the Drunken Masters, although in a few domains the conditions are right for them to be active. Particularly in Hazlan and Nova Vassa. In these domains (particularly Nova Vassa) the Outriders are known for the quality of animals they ride. Since the Halfling people usually live apart from the humans in the Dread Realms there is not much change from the prestige class as presented.

## Knight Protector (aka Knight Protector of the Great Kingdom)

The Knight Protectors are people who have devoted their very lives to an ancient code of knightly honor and chivalry. The difference between these Knights and Paladins is that the code comes first for the Knights. Goodness remains secondary to their oath. Knight Protectors are most common in Nova Vassa and Pharazia. In Nova Vassa some of the Knight Protectors are in the service of Sir Tristen Hiregaard, for his house is one of the five noble families and remains a staunch supporter of the old Knightly code. In Pharazia the Knight Protectors have twisted the code slightly to include Diamabel's influence and reign, and so they have become the servants of that angelic being. Knight Protectors may also be found in Dementlieu, Har'Akir,

## Lasher

The way of the Lasher is a rare calling. The requirements of a lasher are common skills for the denizens of Ravenloft but most Lashers come from the Frozen Wastes. Specifically, they come from the domain of Sanguinia where the natives are skilled in both leatherworking and the use of ropes to aid them in climbing. Strangely, G'Henna is devoid of lashers despite the common occurrence of whips. This is due mostly to the rarity of the leatherworking and Use Rope skills. Lashers may also come from Barovia, Borca, Hazlan, Lamordia, Mordent, The Nocturnal Sea, Nova Vassa, Rokushima Taiyoo, The Sea of Sorrows, Souragne, Tepest, and Vorostokov.

## Master of Chains

These sinister characters are rare in the demiplane. They may be found in a scattering of domains but they are no more likely to appear in any one place over another. They may be found in Borca, Falkovnia, G'Henna, Invidia, Kartakass, Nidala, The Nocturnal Sea, Nova Vassa, Pharazia, Richemulot, Rokushima Taiyoo, Sithicus, Sri Raji, Tepest, and Vechor. Sailors tell stories of a ship on the Nocturnal Sea named the Chained Captain, a mighty vessel that sports iron chains where rigging should have been. The accursed ship is said to emanate the unearthly sound of clanking over the waves, and those who encounter it are rarely heard from again.



## Master Samurai

As with many horse-related prestige classes, Master Samurai are found mostly in Nova Vassa in the Core and in Rokushima Taiyoo where the class originated. The appearance of the Master Samurai in the Core dates back to a disgraced Ronin who left Rokushima Taiyoo and through his teachings brought the skills and ideals of the samurai to the “barbarians” of the Core. Master Samurai can also be found in Borca, Hazlan, Invidia, Nidala, and Sithicus. It is said that the Ronin who taught the secrets of the Samurai to the foreigners of the Core has become a ghost that vengefully seeks out those who abuse the Master Samurai code. He performs this penance for his part in revealing the sacred tenets of the samurai to uncivilized foreigners.

## Ninja of the Crescent Moon

These shadowy assassins originally hail from Rokushima Taiyoo, much like the Master Samurai. They too have branched out to other domains to increase their holdings and power. So far they have had most success in the domain of Paridon. These shadowy assassins have created a small guild in that domain and some of their members are former celebrants of the Temple of the Divinity of Mankind. Beyond the streets of Paridon they may be found in Falkovnia and Valachan.

**Ethereal Jaunt (Sp):** The Ethereal Jaunt ability of the Ninja is limited as the spell of the same name, as given in the Ravenloft Campaign Setting book.

## Order of the Bow Initiate

The Order of the Bow Initiate is most commonly found in the domains of Sithicus, Sri Raji, Valachan, and Verbrek. The reclusive woodsmen of Valachan and Verbrek are particularly taken with this class as the skills it offers serve them well against the forest predators of their domains.

## Ravager

Some of those who follow the Wolf God of Verbrek have taken up the path of the Ravager. The wolf god fills the role usually reserved for Erythnul. Although the human natives of Verbrek are not prone to taking this class there are other domains with more accepting people. Ironically, the most commonly found domains with Ravagers are those religious domains, Nidala and Tepest. The inhabitants turn their natural knowledge of religion to dark ends and embrace the wildness of the Wolf God into their hearts. In Tepest these people often turn their backs upon civilization and become wild and savage like the goblins of their homeland. In Nidala the Ravagers are much more religious in bent although they still live wildly in the woods in the east of the domain, far from Elena Faith-Hold’s reach. Other domains with likely candidates for the Ravagers are Falkovnia, G’Henna, Har’Akir, Invidia, Nova Vassa, Sanguinia, Sithicus, Vechor, and Vorostokov.

**Cruellest Cut & Pain Touch (Su):** The Cruellest Cut & Pain Touch abilities of the Ravager are evil acts. Whenever a ravager uses

them he must make a Powers Check. The value of the check is determined using the same chance of failure as a grievous assault.

## Red Avenger

Red Avengers come almost exclusively from the domains of Paridon, Rokushima Taiyoo, and Sri Raji. The philosophy of the Red Avenger dictates that his abilities and vital energy is derived from the mystical force of Ki. This school of thought is firmly entrenched in Rokushima Taiyoo and Sri Raji. In Paridon, some of those who have studied at the Temple of the Divine Form have taken this belief and incorporated it into their religious dogma. Whilst Red Avengers in Rokushima Taiyoo and Sri Raji are prominent individuals they are usually very covert and unremarkable in Paridon, at least until they reveal their abilities.

## Tribal Protector

The Tribal Protector is unique among the other classes because it is available only to nonhuman creatures of the demiplane. Of the standard PC races, only Calibans may take this class and they must also fit the role-playing requirement by becoming a member of a tribe. As to domains, Tribal Protectors are most likely to hail from Sanguinia or Vorostokov. Only such harsh domains have the necessary brutality to forge the Protectors. Otherwise, they may be found amongst the Goblins of Forlorn or the Goblins of Tepest.

**Alterations:** The Tribal Enemy choice may be one type of racial inhabitant of a domain. Examples would be all Humans in Barovia or

all Elves in Sithicus. The Homeland choice should be the Tribal Protector's home domain.

hone their abilities so that combat can be avoided rather than joined.

Rokushima Taiyoo, Tepest, and Sri Raji.

## Warmaster

The Warmasters hail from a variety of domains; principally Dementlieu, Pharazia, Richemulot, Rokushima Taiyoo, and Sri Raji. In Dementlieu and Richemulot the Warmasters are usually eminent members of the military. These men are high-ranking officers in charge of the Mutual Defense Pact that Borca, Dementlieu, Mordent & Richemulot have against Falkovnia. Surprisingly, there are few Warmasters in Falkovnia. The brutality of Vlad Drakov's rule precludes many from choosing this class in that land. In Pharazia the Warmasters are elite warriors in charge of eliminating the nomads of the desert who evade Diamabel's rule. Within Rokushima Taiyoo and Sri Raji the Warmasters are much more meditative and sedate, preferring to

## Weapon Master

The Weapon Masters are as varied as the domains they come from. Primarily found in the lands of Borca, Invidia, the Nocturnal Sea, Pharazia, the Sea of Sorrows, Sithicus and Vechor, each specializes in a single weapon. In Borca & Invidia, Dagger Masters and Pistol Masters are the most common. The weapon masters of the Nocturnal Sea and the Sea of Sorrows are predominantly masters of the rapier. Pharazia features its famed dancing Scimitar masters, particularly among the Nomads of the desert. The elven land of Sithicus has Long Sword Masters and Composite Longbow Masters. Finally, the exotic island of Vechor has Kukri Masters, a weapon not often seen in other lands of the Core. Other lands that may have Weapon Masters are Falkovnia, G'Henna, Kartakass, Nidala, Nova Vassa, Odiare, Richemulot,

## Sword & Fist Weapon CL's

**CL 1:** Fukimi-Bari, Halfling Skiprock, Orcish Shotgun, and Two-Ball Bolas

**CL 2:** Bladed Gauntlet, Harpoon, Stump Knife, Three-Section Staff, Triple Dagger, Ward Cestus, and Whip Dagger

**CL 3:** Duom, Manti, Spinning Javelin, Spring-Loaded Gauntlet, and Warfan

**CL 4:** Alchemist's Arrow

**CL 5:** Chain-and-Dagger

**CL 6:** Gnomish Battlepick, Fullblade, Great Crossbow, Gyrspike, Mercurial Long Sword, Mercurial Great sword, and Tumbling Bolt

# Those Who Delve the Dark

## Character classes for Masque and the Red Death

### Adept

Despite the influence of the Red Death, the forces of magic still infuse the world of Gothic Earth. The magical energies are both chaotic and powerful, and yet a select few humans seem to have gained a kind of mastery over it. These rare individuals are known as adepts, and they are the conductors in the symphony of magic. These individuals have the unique ability to command the forces of magic through sheer personality. The powers of an adept manifest develop at adolescence, though these blossoming powers are often ignored. Many potential adepts never realize their potential, dismissing the manifestation of their power as tricks of the mind. Few adepts realize their potential and begin to explore their powers. Adepts are historically regarded as sorcerers, witches or even charlatans. There are few who truly understand the nature of adepts, though there are many who desire to exploit them. Adepts can be found working as members of qabals, as stage magicians, or as adventurers seeking hidden answers.

#### Abilities of the Adept:

Adepts are to Gothic Earth what sorcerers are to most prime material worlds. Adepts gain hit dice as sorcerers, cast spells and gain spells as sorcerers, and advance in skill points, save bonuses and attack bonuses as sorcerers. The class skills of an

adept are alchemy, bluff, concentration, craft (any), diplomacy, hide, knowledge (any), mesmerism, move silently, mysticism, profession (any), spell craft. Adepts are proficient with all pistols and simple weapons, and are not proficient in any form of armor. Adepts learn spells from the same list that sorcerers use to gain spells. Adepts may use magical items as sorcerers and adepts may cast bonus spells appropriate to their charisma scores. Adepts may summon familiars as sorcerers. Such familiars will be dread familiars.

**The Command:** Adepts have the ability to cast a certain number of spells each day. This represents the limitation of the adept's force of personality. When an adept expends all spells within a twenty-four hour period, the adept is drained and cannot cast any more spells. An adept regains his forceful personality only through eight hours of rest. When casting a spell, the adept must make a charisma check equal to 10 plus the level of the spell cast. This checks represent the force of the adepts personality placed against the resistance of the natural world. If the check succeeds, the spell is cast as normal. If the check fails, the adept has failed to command the energies of the universe and the spell is not cast. The failed spell does not count against the total number of spells that an adept can cast each day. An adept has several options available when casting a

spell. An adept can cast any spell known to him, and may spontaneously decide to sacrifice a spell of higher level to cast a spell of a lower level. An adept can apply any spell casting feat known to any spell cast, without preparation.

**The Drain:** Though the energies of magic are bountiful, the presence of the Red Death creates an energy vacuum that constantly drains magical energy from spell casters. For an adept the energies of magic are too closely linked to his own personality. Thus each time an adept successfully casts a spell there is the possibility that his body succumbs to the energy vacuum and the adept loses a portion of his force of personality. Whenever a spell is successfully cast, the adept must make a fortitude save against a DC of 10 plus the level of the spell. If the save is successful, then the adept's body has withstood the vacuum and suffers no adverse effects. If the save is failed, the adept's personality is drained. An adept thus drained loses the ability cast any more spells of the level of the spell just cast. An adept retains the ability to sacrifice spells of a higher level to cast spells of the level just lost, so an adept that lost all second level spells may sacrifice a third level spell to cast a second level spell. The effects of the drain last until the adept rests for eight hours.

### Aristocrat

Aristocrats represent the wealthy elite of gothic earth. These men and women are well educated but they focus their efforts on mastering the social graces. Aristocrats can be wealthy businessmen, nobles or pampered dandies. A person who has become a celebrity, or is a fixture of higher social circles may take levels as an aristocrat.

Aristocrats advance in base attack bonus as clerics of the same level, and advance in saving throws as wizards of the same level. Characters of the aristocrat class use the D6 as their hit dice. Aristocrats are proficient with all pistols and simple weapons. Characters of the aristocrat class gain skill points equal to six plus their intelligence modifier at every level, and four times that amount at first level. The class skills of an aristocrat are appraise, bluff, diplomacy, disguise, forgery, gather information, handle animal, innuendo, intimidate, knowledge (any), listen, perform, read lips, ride, sense motive, speak languages, spot.

**Discretion:** The world of the aristocrat is woven together with equal parts of truth and lies. To succeed in that world an aristocrat must be able to separate the two. Aristocrats train themselves to notice the hidden elements of any interaction. An aristocrat takes nothing at face value, but instead scrutinizes everything. At second level an aristocrat gains a +1 insight bonus to all sense motive checks. This bonus increases to +2 at fifth level and increases by +1 every three levels afterward. Thus, an eighth level aristocrat would possess a +3 insight bonus to sense motive checks.

**Expertise:** At fourth level an aristocrat may take skill focus as a bonus feat. This bonus feat must be applied to one of the aristocrat's class skills. The aristocrat receives another bonus skill focus feat at eighth level, twelfth level, sixteenth level and twentieth level.

**Noble Tongue:** Just as a successful aristocrat must be able to discern the truth, he must also be able to speak lies. Aristocrats become experienced in disguising their motivations, at misdirection and weaving intricate webs of falsehoods. At second level an aristocrat gains a +1 insight bonus to bluff checks. At sixth level and every four levels afterward the insight bonus increases by +1.

**Power is Knowledge:** On Gothic Earth there are many individuals who are willing to trade knowledge for favors. As people of power aristocrats are often privileged to knowledge that is hidden from others. Often this information is little better than gossip, but occasionally important tidbits filter their way to an aristocrat's ears. As an aristocrat gains influence he accumulates more and more information, eventually becoming a font of knowledge. An aristocrat may attempt a special Gossip check to determine if he knows some relevant information about a given person, place or thing. This check is made with a bonus equal to his level in the aristocrat class plus his intelligence modifier. The difficulty class of the check increases with the obscurity of the information. Knowledge that would be commonly known amongst nobility will carry a DC of ten. For example; recalling the name of the Czar of Russia requires a DC of 10.

Knowledge that is not commonly discussed carries a DC of 15. For example, recalling that the youngest son of Czar Nicholas is gripped by hemophilia would require a DC of fifteen. Anything that would commonly be known to a commoner also fits under this category. Knowledge that is unusually obscure or kept tightly secret carries a DC of twenty. For example, knowing the name of the British Ambassador to Siam would carry a DC of 20.

The Gossip check carries certain modifiers. Checks made to recall knowledge regarding persons, places or things within the same nation from which the aristocrat owes allegiance carries a bonus of +2 to the Gossip check. Checks made regarding all other nations on that same continent carry a modifier of zero. Gossip checks regarding persons, places or things in other nations on other continents carry a penalty of -2 to the check. Checks regarding nations that are currently at war with the aristocrat's nation of allegiance carry a penalty of -5.

**Renown:** In the age before cinema the adventures and misadventures of the world's nobility were a topic of great discussion amongst people from all walks of life. The very power and wealth that defines an aristocrat draws the attention of all members of society. As an aristocrat gains experience he cannot help but gain a celebrity status. his status gives an aristocrat a powerful edge in social interaction of any kind. At first level an aristocrat gains a +1 renowned bonus to all diplomacy checks. At third level and every third level afterwards the bonus increases by 1. Thus, a fifteenth level aristocrat would possess a +6

renowned bonus to diplomacy checks. This bonus only applies when used in negotiations with characters that could feasibly have been exposed to the reputation of the aristocrat character. For example, a British general could apply his bonus to discussions with experienced German officers but not with a band of green American conscripts.

**Stiff Upper Lip:** An aristocrat that loses his composure is no aristocrat at all. While not normally courageous, an aristocrat would rather die than lose his dignity. At first level an aristocrat gains a +1 moral bonus to resist fear effects and fear checks. This bonus increases by +1 at fourth level and every four levels afterward.

## Criminal

The criminal class represents those in society who live outside the law. While these men and women are reviled as evil parasites their skills are overlooked. Criminals hone skills that are unpracticed by most members in society, they specialize in deception, burglary and stealth. Most criminals are not evil by nature, but rather they are people who have resorted to crime to make ends meet. Others are thugs or cold-blooded assassins. The criminal class applies to anyone who supports themselves by breaking laws. Criminals use the D6 as a hit dice and progress in saving throws and base attack bonus as rogues of the same level. At each level the rogue gains a number of skill points equal to 8 plus the intelligence modifier, except at first level when the rogue gains four times that amount.

The class skills of a criminal are appraise, balance, bluff, climb, craft (any), decipher script, diplomacy, disable device, disguise, escape artist, forgery, gather information, hide, innuendo, intimidate, intuit direction, jump, listen, move silently, open lock, perform, pick pockets, profession, read lips, search, sense motive, spot, swim, tumble and use rope.

A criminal is proficient in the use of any firearm and all simple weapons. A criminal is not proficient in any form of armor or shields. Whenever a criminal attacks a character that is denied his dexterity bonus to armor class he may deal extra damage with a “sneak attack”. A criminal’s sneak attack bonus advances as a rogue’s attack. At second level the criminal gains the evasion ability. At third level the criminal gains the uncanny dodge ability and does not lose his dexterity bonus even when flat-footed. At sixth level this uncanny dodge increases such that the criminal can no longer be flanked in combat. At eleventh level the uncanny dodge ability grants the criminal a +1 bonus to his armor class to attacks made by traps. This AC bonus increases with the same rate as a rogue. The criminal may choose one special ability from the rogue list at levels 10, 13, 16 and 19.

## Expert

The expert class represents the professionals of Gothic Earth. These men and women are different from trained laborers, for they represent hard working, self-motivated people who strive to improve themselves rather than just make a living. Experts include architects, businessmen, detectives,

doctors, engineers, explorers, lawyers, mechanics, merchants, nurses, policemen, politicians, seamen, scientists and teachers. These people are found all over the world and are the heart of civilization. Experts use the D6 as their hit dice. They advance in saving throws and base attack bonus as rogues of the same level.

At first level an expert chooses six skills to be class skills. All craft, knowledge or profession skills are considered to be class skills for experts. At third level and every four levels afterwards the expert may choose one other skill to be a class skill. At first level, fourth level, seventh level and every three levels afterwards the expert gains a bonus skill focus feat for use in one of his class skills.

Experts are proficient in all simple weapons, pistols and one other weapon of their choice. Experts are not proficient in any forms of armor or shields.

## Mystic

Not since the fall of the Roman Empire have true priests walked the earth. The Red Death systematically destroyed the connections between deities and humanity, replacing religions with impotent ritualistic cults. Even the earth loving druids have been driven into hiding by the minions of the Red Death. Mystics represent a different breed of divine spell casters, they are empowered by spirits native to Gothic Earth, rather than the extraplanar beings known as gods. Mystics are chosen by the “Earth Spirits” to represent them. Most earth spirits are good or neutral, mystics are their agents on the

Earth. The ultimate purpose of the mystics is to rescue mankind from the dread designs of the Red Death, though this goal is pursued in a manner beyond the comprehension of limited mortal minds.

Mystics advance in spell casting ability as druids, though they may choose their spells from any on the divine spell list. Mystics may turn undead as clerics of equal level, but they may not sacrifice spells to cast cure spells. Mystics use the D8 as their hit dice and they advance in skill points, saving throws and base attack bonus as clerics of the same level. Mystics are proficient in pistols, and simple weapons.

**Revelations:** The earth spirits grant magic to their followers by revealing to their followers a minute but profound truth. The mystic's mind is flooded with a profound understanding of the nature of the universe, and through it he or she temporarily gains the knowledge needed to manipulate reality into the desired effect. This knowledge is far too complex to remain in the human mind for long, for once the spell is cast it is forgotten. Each mourning the mystic may commune with the earth spirits to gain this knowledge. The knowledge is left in the back of the character's mind, up until the point where he or she decides to contemplate it and reveal the truth. Revealing the truth requires a successful wisdom check against a DC of 10 plus the spell's level. If the check succeeds the spell may be cast, if the check fails then the character cannot cast that spell. Spells that are not successfully cast are not forgotten.

**The Drain:** The Red Death has found to its chagrin that the Earth Spirits are indestructible. Fortunately for the dread entity the magic of the spirits is not infallible. Each time a mystic successfully casts a spell there is the possibility that his mind succumbs to the Red Death's corrupting whispers and loses a portion of the revealed truth given to him by the spirits. Whenever a spell is successfully cast, the mystic must make a will save against a DC of 10 plus the level of the spell. If the save is successful, then the mystic's mind has withstood the intrusive lies of the Red Death and thus suffers no adverse effects. If the save is failed, the mystic is distracted and loses part of the revealed truth. A mystic thus distracted loses the ability to cast any more spells of the level of the spell just cast.

## Qabalist

The influence of the Red Death has greatly retarded mankind's understanding of

magic. As a result, there have existed no true wizards for millennia. Nonetheless, the study of magic is not impossible. The qabals exist like a lifeline between the ignorant present and the ancient past, allowing members of their organization to master the ancient art of magic. To master arcane magic, it is necessary to be apprenticed to an experienced qabalist. Without such training, it is impossible to cast arcane magic. The life of a qabalist is consumed by the search for more arcane lore. Unlike the adept, the qabalist is unlimited in the number of spells he may know. The ultimate measure of a qabalist is the number

of spells he possesses in his spell book. The qabalist cast spells as a wizard, meaning that the qabalist may memorize the same maximum number of spells each day as a wizard of the same level. A qabalist may specialize in one school of magic, as a wizard. Qabalists gain hit dice as wizards, improves in attack bonus and saving throw bonuses and gain skill points each level as wizards. The class skills of a qabalist are alchemy, concentration, craft (any), diplomacy, hide, knowledge (any), mesmerism, mysticism, profession (any), spell craft.

Qabalists gain bonus feats as wizards, including the free scribe scroll feat, and must select these feats from the same list as wizards. Qabalists may not summon a familiar; such a skill has been buried by the sands of time. Qabalists are proficient with all pistols and simple weapons and are not proficient in any forms of armor. Qabalists must keep spell books as wizards, and may learn spells and copy spells as wizards as well. Qabalists may cast the spell read magic directly from memory. Qabalists use magical items such as scrolls as wizards, and may gain bonus spells appropriate to their intelligence score.

**Memorizing Magic:** Each day, after a restful sleep, a qabalist may memorize spells for use in that day. To do this, a qabalist must study his or her book of spells. This memorization process involves more than just committing the components of a spell to memory, it also involves rituals to gather enough magical power to prime each spell for later casting. A qabalist can only memorize spells after at least six hours (more or less) of rest, and

only once in a twenty-four hour period. The casting of a spell requires the qabalist to successfully recall and perform the exact procedure for the spell. This requires an intelligence check of DC equal to ten plus the level of the spell. If the check passes then it is successfully cast, but if the spell fails the qabalist has made a mistake in the casting and the spell is not cast. The spell might be cast at a latter time, without penalty.

**The Drain:** The presence of the Red Death creates a vacuum throughout Gothic Earth. Each time a spell is cast, there is the possibility that magical energy is drained from the spell caster, and further castings are made impossible. Each time a qabalist successfully casts a spell; he or she must make a fortitude check against a DC of 10 plus the level of the spell. If the check succeeds, then the qabalist is unaffected. However, if the check fails then the qabalist has been drained of a portion of the magical energy collected during the memorization process. When a caster is thus drained, they lose the ability to cast spells of that same level of the spell just cast. The effects of the drain last until the next time the qabalist memorizes spells.

## Soldier

The soldier class can be taken by anyone who has been specially trained for combat. Soldiers are the fighters of society; they are trained to respond to challenges with force. Soldiers are most often trained by an official military, but characters with the soldier class can also be bandits, mountain men, police officers, prizefighters, sailors or veterans.

Soldiers accumulate their base attack bonus and their saving throw bonuses as fighters of the same level. Soldiers use the D10 as their hit dice and are proficient in all simple and martial weapons. Soldiers are not proficient in any form of armor or shields; this skill has been lost to modern advances. Soldiers gain skill points equal to two plus their intelligence modifier at each level. Soldiers also gain four times that amount of skill points at first level. The class skills of a soldier are climb, concentration, handle animal, hide, intimidate, knowledge (military), move silently, navigation, profession (seaman), ride, search, spot, and swim.

Soldiers are versatile fighters and quick learners. At first level, second level and every two levels afterwards a soldier gains one bonus feat. This bonus feat must be applied to one of the following feats: Alertness, ambidexterity, back to the wall, blind fight, cleave, combat reflexes, courage, dead man walking, dodge, endurance, exotic weapon proficiency, expertise, far shot, great fortitude, great cleave, improved bull rush, improved critical, improved disarm, improved trip, improved unarmed strike, iron will, jaded, lightening reflexes, mobility, mounted combat, mounted missile fire, point blank shot, power attack, precise shot, quick draw, rapid shot, ride-by-attack, run, shot on the run, skill focus (soldier class skills only), spirited charge, and spring attack.

# Denizens of Gothic Earth

## If looks could kill....

Zorin, Dmitri

MalVil@rambler.ru

### Viy

<b>Large Giant</b>	
<b>Hit Dice</b>	6d8+30 (58hp)
<b>Initiative</b>	-1(Dex)
<b>Speed</b>	20 ft.
<b>AC</b>	14 (-1 size, -1 Dex, +6 natural)
<b>Attacks</b>	2 slam +6 melee
<b>Damage</b>	Slam 1d6+2
<b>Face/Reach</b>	5ft.x5ft. /10ft.
<b>Special Attacks</b>	Death Gaze
<b>Special Qualities</b>	Blindness
<b>Saves</b>	Fort +10, Ref +1, Will +3
<b>Abilities</b>	Str 15, Dex 9, Con 20, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 5
<b>Skills</b>	Spot +7*, Listen +5
<b>Feats</b>	Alertness, Power Attack
<b>Climate/Terrain</b>	Temperate Hills/Forests
<b>Organization</b>	Solitary or 1 viy plus 1d6 ghouls
<b>CR</b>	6
<b>Alignment</b>	Usually CE
<b>Advancement</b>	7-10 HD (Large)

large and monstrous creature characterized by huge eyelids. The creature has a thick gray hide and strong, disproportionally long arms. Typical a viy stands from 8 to 12 feet high and is at least three quarters as wide as it is tall. Despite its strength its eyelids are too heavy for viy to open himself. Unable to provide for themselves in their blind state they live in secluded caves or forest dens. These grossly fat creatures are capable of hibernating for years without food. They remain in their slumber until they are summoned by an evil spell caster at which point they wreak havoc on the countryside. In return for the mayhem they spread, their masters appease the Viy with huge amounts of foodstuffs. Once sated, the viy returns to its icy abode to slumber. Although there are male and female Viys found in the depths of arcane history there is no known instance of Viys mating. It is believed that they can only be summoned from a mystical realm where these creatures are the dominant life form. The deformities to the creature's eyes are believed to be an effect of the summoning process.

### Combat

Viys prefer using their Death gaze to its devastating effect rather than get embroiled in hand-to-hand combat. Should combat occur they do not flee. Rather, they rely on their strength and the threat of their lethal gaze.

**Death Gaze (Su):** The eyes of a Viy contain powerful death magic. Should anyone meet the gaze of the monster they must make a will save against a DC 10 or be slain. This gaze attack extends only thirty feet, beyond that the horrible gaze has no effect.

**Blindness (Ex):** A viy's eyelids are too heavy for it to open himself. Unless two people assist the creature it is considered blinded. These helpers must do nothing but follow the creature on either side, holding up the blubbery eyelids. While blinded the Viy suffers a 50% chance to miss in combat due to opponents' total concealment, it moves only at half speed, suffers -4 penalty on most Strength and Dexterity based skills and opponents get a +2 bonus to their attack rolls. Unless the eyelids are open, viy have a skill bonus of +0 on their Listen checks

The Viy, pronounced *veey*, is a



# Credits

## Contributors

**Bobby Storey,** bobby\_s\_123@hotmail.com. Artist of the Bog Wraith. My name is Bobby Storey, or that evil son of a b\*#\$h! GM to my close and personal friends, I live in the UK and have been brought up in a world of fantasy since my youth. I have been able to draw since I can remember, and began drawing pictures of fantasy beasts and people from my early teens. Since then I've been working on getting better, but I know I still have a long way to go. All I can say is that I hope you like my pictures and I was glad to help out in the making of the netzine.

**Eddy Brennan aka Hedgewitch.** Creator of the Celtic Banshee. A professional animator/illustrator that has far too much time on their hands can sometimes be a dangerous thing, especially if you are a Ravenloft DM. In the past couple of years, I have had some success with appearing in several netbooks and co-editing another (the editors of the netzine have my sympathies, heheh); also, I just love to write. In the future, I plan and hope to submit more to the netzine and wish it every success.

**Fred Voetsch.** Front-page photograph, 2001.

**God Brain.** The creator of the Dread Nymph.

**Scott C. Bourgeois.** Creator of the Living Bayou and Vincintiar's Instruments. Thanks goes out to my Ravenloft players (both past and present) for putting up with my 'seat-of-the-pants' DM style, and surviving many of my ideas. A special thanks to Diego for really bringing the Lyre of Laszlo Taskar to life.

**Shane Glodoski.** Creator of An Unwelcome Respite and Shuraz'tun Kir. I have always been a fan of Ravenloft, ever since the black box set fell in my hands; I was forever drawn to the lands of mist. When not working in a most vile domain known as the real world, I am an avid reader and writer of fantasy and especially gothic horror. Course I would greatly like to dedicate this to my brother Aaron, who bought me the basic red box set and showed me that I didn't have to take the dice out of the family board games to play games of my own creation, there already was something like that. Thanks Aaron.

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**Zorin, Dmitri,** Creator of the Viy and author of Tainted Love. Born in 1983, Moscow, Russia. Student of Moscow Institute of Radio, Electronics and Automatics (MIREA). Been playing D&D since approximately 1996-97, entered the mists in 1998. Enjoy

gothic fiction, movies... jungle music and aggressive skating. Favourite writers: J.R.R. Tolkien, H.P. Lovecraft, B. Stoker, and Ed Greenwood (yes, I play Forgotten Realms too).

## Editors

**Jason True:** aka Javier. Creator of the Hellstalker and tools of the trade. With the possible exception of Planescape, Ravenloft has been my favorite setting to both play in and DM. These particular tastes in campaign settings probably explain why I have a tendency to use various fiends in Ravenloft and have a gothic mood in many of my Planescape adventures. When I'm not brainstorming for new adventure ideas, my time is typically spent between finishing my medical degree and helping plan my wedding. In fact, I would like to dedicate this to my fiancée, Renee, who has been both patient and understanding of all my role-playing interests.

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