

# THE BOOK OF SACRIFICES

## A NETBOOK FOR THE RAVENLOFT AND GOTHIC EARTH SETTINGS

*Edited by the Kargatane:*

**Andrew Cermak ☒ Andrew Hackard ☒ Ryan Naylor  
Chris Nichols ☒ Stuart Turner ☒ Andrew Wyatt**

*Articles Contributed by:*

**Jesse Aviles ☒ Eric “e” Blaine ☒ Scott C. Bourgeois ☒ Eddy Brennan ☒ Eric Dashen  
Dion Fernandez ☒ Mark “Mortavius” Graydon ☒ James Hardie ☒ Andrew Hauptman  
Eric Jean ☒ Jaleigh Johnson ☒ M.T. Kelly ☒ Stefan MAC ☒ Matthew L. Martin  
Christopher Miles ☒ Alex Miranda ☒ Ryan Naylor ☒ Chris D. Nichols ☒ Nathan Okerlund  
Joel Paquin ☒ C.M. Parker ☒ Luiz Eduardo Neves Peret ☒ Blair Perrow  
Alexei Podgouzov ☒ Wes Schneider ☒ Stephen C. Sutton ☒ Brian M. Sylvester  
Stuart Turner ☒ Martijn van Roosmalen ☒ Brandi Weed ☒ Andrew Wyatt**

### **Notes from the Kargatane:**

All submissions have been edited to use Americanized spelling. This was done simply to give **THE BOOK OF SACRIFICES** a more coherent appearance, and should not be meant as a slight against our Anglicized authors.

**THE BOOK OF SACRIFICES** Release Date: January 5, 2002.

**RAVENLOFT®** and **MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH®** are registered trademarks owned by Wizards of the Coast, Inc. This book does not represent a challenge to any Wizards of the Coast-held trademarks. Wizards of the Coast is not officially affiliated with this book in any way. All articles are copyrighted by their respective creators, unless otherwise noted. This netbook may be reproduced for personal use, but may not be used to generate revenue.

Visit the Secrets of the Kargatane at <http://www.kargatane.com>, the Official Home of Ravenloft on the Net!

# RAVENLOFT

## PREFACE

## RUNNING RAVENLOFT

### Prikaza

By Brandi Weed

### ☠ The Head Hunter

By Andrew Hauptman

### Myths of the Mists

By Stuart Turner and friends

## PEOPLE

### ☠ The Illithid God-Brain

By Matthew L. Martin

### Dr. Henry Masham

By Stefan MAC

### The Love-Torn Ghost

By Alex Miranda

### ☠ Addar

By Luiz Eduardo Neves Peret

### The Jacob Garvin Scarecrow

By Scott C. Bourgeois

### ☠ Lars Kerskman

By Nathan Okerlund

### d'Monte

By Brian M. Sylvester

### ☠ Jacques du Almoy

By Martijn van Roosmalen and Walter de Vor

### Tanya

By Alex Miranda

### ☠ Avatar of the Wolf God

By Mark "Mortavius" Graydon

### ☠ Marcos Vedarrak

By Nathan Okerlund

### Valeri Antonin

By Eric Jean

### Morts-qui-dancent

By Joël Paquin

### The Zanango Society

By Blair Perrow

### ☠ Jorhlan Raynor, Kargatane

By Ryan Naylor

## 4. PLACES

### ☠ The Jackal Who Would Not Be a Coward 82.

By Ryan Naylor

### ☠ Saarkaath 89.

By Nathan Okerlund

## 5. Igid Rabi-i 93.

By Dion Fernandez

## 8. Cumbre de Oro 99.

By Nathan Okerlund

## 14. ☠ San Bartolomé 108.

By Jesse Avilés

### ☠ Isle of Ravens 113.

By Nathan Okerlund

### ☠ Locknar Cove 118.

By Stephen C. Sutton

## THINGS

## 31. Upir Lichy 122.

By Eddy Brennan

## 34. ☠ Noises in the Night 125.

By Ryan Naylor

## 39. ☠ Aswang 134.

By Dion Fernandez

## 43. ☠ Creeping Dooms 139.

By Chris D. Nichols

## 46. Phantom Carcass 143.

By Eric Dashen

## 50. Utburd 145.

By Stefan MAC

## 54. ☠ Markovian Broken One 148.

By Andrew Wyatt

## 59. ☠ Executioners 150.

By Wes Schneider

## 62. ☠ Forgotten Horrors 152.

By Andrew Wyatt

## 66. ☠ Felauragoth 155.

By Ryan Naylor

## 73. ☠ Blacker's Automatic Head 159.

By Alexei Podgouzov

## 78. ☠ Knife of the Ghoul 163.

By James Hardie

## 80. ☠ Treasures of the Deep 166.

By Jaleigh Johnson

## PLAYER CHARACTER RULES

### ☠ Anatomist 169.

By C. M. Parker

Articles marked with ☠ utilize DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, Third Edition rules.

## MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH

### PEOPLE

<b>Archangel &amp; Yaba</b>	172.
By Luiz Eduardo Neves Peret	
<b>Leopold of Austria</b>	184.
By Eric “e” Blaine	
☩ <b>Dionysus and Cyzannea</b>	188.
By Luiz Eduardo Neves Peret	
<b>The Count of Monte Cristo</b>	193.
By Christopher Miles	

### PLACES

☩ <b>Sweet Bay Village</b>	197.
By Luiz Eduardo Neves Peret	

<b>The Old Brewery</b>	204.
By M.T. Kelly	
<b>A Guide to Gothic Boma</b>	206.
By Eric Blaine	
<b>Scilly</b>	209.
By Luiz Eduardo Neves Peret	
<b>A Guide to Gothic Vladivostok</b>	211.
By Eric Blaine	

<b>THE MARTYRS (CREDITS)</b>	213.
------------------------------	------

Articles marked with ☩ utilize DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, Third Edition rules.

*I was a child and she was a child,  
 In this kingdom by the sea;  
 But we loved with a love that was more than love—  
 I and my Annabel Lee—  
 With a love that the winged seraphs in Heaven  
 Coveted her and me.  
 And this was the reason that, long ago,  
 In this kingdom by the sea,  
 A wind blew out of a cloud, chilling  
 My beautiful Annabel Lee;*

*So that her high-born kinsmen came  
 And bore her away from me,  
 To shut her up in a sepulchre,  
 In this kingdom by the sea.  
 The angels, not half so happy in Heaven,  
 Went envying her and me—  
 Yes! — that was the reason (as all men know,  
 In this kingdom by the sea)  
 That the wind came out of the cloud by night,  
 Chilling and killing my Annabel Lee.*

—Edgar Allan Poe,  
 “Annabel Lee”

## Requiescat in Pace

Normally, we offer an introductory passage on this page, one to get you in the mood for what is to come. However, with recent events, it seems inappropriate. Rather, the Kargatane would like to take time to honor the sacrifices of all those who place themselves in harm's way so that others may live, and live free.

Additionally, our own family has suffered a loss. Marie Klein-Laplante, whom many of you knew as Eevee on our message boards, discovered earlier this year that she was suffering from cancer. During the final preparation of this nefbook, we learned that she had lost this battle. We salute the courage that kept her fighting until the end. Our community was richer for her presence, and Marie will be sorely missed.

The Kargatane dedicate this year's nefbook to Marie, and to all who sacrifice themselves on the front lines of the battle against evil.

In Memoriam,  
The Kargatane  
October 31, 2001

# PRIKAZA

## REVERSED MEANINGS FOR TAROKKA CARDS

by Brandi Weed

brandi@dcn.davis.ca.us

(Priказа: Rom. ‘bad omen’)



any Ravenloft DMs find Tarokka readings a particularly dramatic way of giving advice to the PCs, and DMs with a flair for acting may enjoy giving impromptu readings (cf. Andrew Hackard’s “Fortune Telling for the Faint of Heart” in *The Book of Secrets*).

Anyone who has ever dabbled in traditional cartomancy, however, knows that most systems have double meanings for the cards—one when upright, the other when reversed. The Tarokka definitions as given in *Forbidden Lore* and the Red Box have omitted reverse meanings for simplicity; however, they can add extra flavor to a reading.

I have detailed a list of inverted meanings for all the cards below. More often than not, a reversed card simply means the opposite of the card’s upright position, but in some cases where a card is completely ominous or benign it may mean only a lessening of the card’s effect.

### THE LESSER DECK

#### Swords

**Master (The Warrior):** The violent conflict suggested by the *Forbidden Lore* meaning will probably not be in the PCs’ favor, or will be a pyrrhic victory. If the Master is meant to represent someone the PCs will meet, that person will be working against them, openly or covertly (this is true for the Master cards of all suits, if it represents an NPC they may encounter).

**One (The Avenger):** Vengeance, in this case, has turned sour; the avenger, be it PC or NPC, has forgotten right and wrong in his need to seek revenge, which in the long run will do more harm than good.

**Two (The Paladin):** Reversed, this represents an affront to paladinhood, be it a setback in a major quest, a lost battle, or even a fall from grace.

**Three (The Soldier):** Chance does not favor the PCs as much as if this card were read upright, but it

does not mean that they are automatically doomed to fail.

**Four (The Mercenary):** This means a breach of contract by a mercenary, which, depending on other cards in the layout, can be in favor of the PCs or a setback. If the card is being read as inner strength or fortitude, it means said strength will fail at a critical point.

**Five (The Myrmidon):** The reversed meaning is similar to the meaning as given for the upright card, though it is not in favor of those who the card is associated with, PC or NPC.

**Six (The Berserker):** Depending on the DM’s taste, this can either mean restraint—perhaps even restraint when action is necessary—or blind frenzy that ends up causing more damage than useful results.

**Seven (The Hooded Man):** This card’s reversed meaning will depend on context; if normally it would mean the PCs would be victimized by mob mentality, the reverse means they will instigate it, or vice versa.

**Eight (The Dictator):** This will mean the overthrow of a dictator, but with negative results ranging from a land plunged into chaos to the absorption of the newly-freed people by an even more dangerous ruler.

**Nine (The Torturer):** Reversed, this card means resisting torture, though it can come at great cost, even retreating into madness rather than giving up the secret the victim is being tortured for.

#### Stars

**Master (The Wizard):** When symbolizing mystery, a reverse meaning means the information may be cryptic or puzzling even after much research—or may simply be wrong, having wasted effort.

**One (The Transmuter):** A reversion here may mean a breaking away from an obsession, or being able to foresee long-term consequences.

**Two (The Diviner):** Quite simply, this means a false divination. A PC may suspect this could even apply to the Vistana giving the reading, but he’d be wise not to accuse her to her face!

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

**Three (The Enchanter):** If reversed, this means the struggle will be harder and the eventual victory less sweet.

**Four (The Abjurer):** The reversed meaning is a more severe version of the standard meaning: the hardship and confusion will be harder to break through.

**Five (The Elementalist):** The elemental forces will not favor the PCs (though it's possible that if this card is being read in connection with an NPC that the PCs are working against that it will end up being favorable to them).

**Six (The Invoker):** The knowledge as signified by the upright Invoker, though dangerous, will ultimately be useful to the PCs. But the cost will be high...

**Seven (The Illusionist):** The focus of the reading may well miss the warnings of deception that would be represented by the upright Illusionist, or perhaps will investigate the wrong person.

**Eight (The Necromancer):** This card tends to have its meaning weakened, rather than reversed; the greed for knowledge may be tempered with understanding risks, or the danger posed by the undead less severe than first thought.

**Nine (The Conjurer):** Again, as with the Necromancer, reversal simply means a lesser danger.

### Coins

**Master (The Rogue):** Interestingly, there is no general meaning for this card outside of its use as a focus card, but I suspect its reversal should indicate a future trouble with material desires, perhaps succumbing to unwise temptation or finding oneself low on resources.

**One (The Swashbuckler):** A reversal of this may mean someone who *is* drawn to money, though he may pretend otherwise. The charismatic con artist comes to mind.

**Two (The Philanthropist):** The inverted version of this card definitely means philanthropy under false pretenses, or may even mean that the recipient of genuine charity holds malice towards the giver.

**Three (The Trader):** A reverse here means that the trader is more likely to try and cheat his customer.

**Four (The Merchant):** Interestingly, this could mean a deception of the merchant as well as the customer; perhaps a item of greater power (and possibly danger) than the merchant had ever suspected falls into the PCs' hands.

**Five (The Guildsman):** Reversed, this indicates a falling-out among a business organization. It's up to the DM whether this will work in the PCs' favor.

**Six (The Beggar):** Financial ruin is far more probable when this card shows up reversed; if its position in a reading would normally show a change from poverty to wealth, the wealth will have some long-term detrimental effect.

**Seven (The Thief):** The degree of loss, or the deceit or risk that accompanies a gain, will be greater than if this card is upright.

**Eight (The Tax Collector):** This card is usually has sinister implications, so a reversal may mean that organizational corruption *benefits* the PCs somehow, ranging from using a bribe to good effect (though this is definitely dubious behavior) to an organization so overloaded and inefficient that the clever PCs may turn it to their favor...

**Nine (The Miser):** This card is more likely to be sinister in its upright reading, so a reversal is more likely to indicate the discovery of a fortune.

### Glyphs

**Master (The Priest):** This may mean an ominous sign from divine origins. PC priests may get a second warning in the form of an omen or premonition.

**One (The Monk):** Reversed, the cloistered life has resulted in an inability to face the outside world, which can take the form of lack of hope to save the outside world or the more egotistical belief that one is too "pure" to mingle with others.

**Two (The Missionary):** The reversal of this card is the classic sign of a false prophet, preaching enlightenment but actually only selfishly strengthening his own base of power.

**Three (The Healer):** Portents of disease or curses are more likely when this card is reversed; it can also mean someone who may be treading into risky territory in the name of trying to preserve life (necromancy, golem animation, etc.).

**Four (The Shepherd):** The inverse of this card signals the exploitation of others by the leader they've put their trust into. In this case, the wolf is in the shepherd's clothing...

**Five (The Druid):** Inverted, it may mean that portents of nature reflecting danger to the PCs are misunderstood, or perhaps that an attempt to restore balance has in itself lost balance (for instance, a druid who tries to save a forest by attacking the nearby town that is over-harvesting it).

**Six (The Anarchist):** The change for change's sake indicated by this card will not result in any good—in fact, it's quite possible that anarchist behavior is being encouraged by someone who has a vested interest in the outcome.

**Seven (The Charlatan):** Reversal here can mean a trickster is tricked himself, or that a potential ally hiding under a dubious facade is overlooked.

**Eight (The Bishop):** The plan or scheme hatched by the one represented by the Bishop will ultimately fail. Depending on who it is, this may be beneficial to the PCs.

**Nine (The Traitor):** This card reversed indicates that the traitor is caught before he can make his betrayal effective.

## THE HIGH DECK

**The Darklord:** This card takes on an even more ominous turn; the important individual may become a long-term foe of the PCs, or even be an especially powerful individual, possibly a true darklord, who will have to be dealt with.

**The Artifact:** The item will still be important but there will be danger associated with it, either in finding it or even just *possessing* it...

**The Horseman:** The calamity normally foretold by this card will be less severe, though still a great deal of trouble for its victim.

**The Marionette:** This indicates the revelation of control, leading to the possibility of freeing a pawn from his entanglement or even discovering a higher level of control.

**The Innocent:** The degree of danger surrounding the innocent will be more severe than normally predicted by the upright card.

**The Temptress:** Temptation will be resisted, or at least made obvious to the one being tempted.

**The Mists:** The mystery concealed by the Mists may not be to the PCs' liking, although it may serve the larger purpose of their mission.

**The Donjon:** This means freedom from imprisonment, perhaps literally, or perhaps in being able to think "outside the box."

**The Hangman:** Reversed, this takes on a more dangerous meaning; even just charges may be a major setback for the PCs.

**The Ghost:** Two possibilities can be read here: either something from the past will be a useful revelation for the PCs, or a potential risk from the past will be shown but not understood by the PCs, to their further hindrance.

**The Broken One:** This card is painful but hopeful when reversed; it may mean the recovery of a literal broken one, or that the attempts to destroy a person will be severe... but not completely successful.

**The Raven:** The hopeful potential will either turn to ashes or unwittingly be the sign of a greater evil on the way (though in the latter case it can still be useful).

**The Beast:** Reversed, this symbolizes repressing the animal savagery. While generally good, this may also represent a case where instinct or gut feelings are ignored when they should be heeded.

**The Esper:** The mind goes awry; this could be madness, abuse of intellect, a false clue or even literally danger from psychic forces.

☒

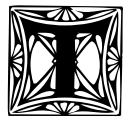
# THE HEAD HUNTER

## A SERIAL MURDERER WITH AN ALIEN AGENDA

by Andrew Hauptman

Quistar@aol.com

### BIOGRAPHY



he cities of the Land of Mists are always a danger to those denizens who dare to brave the streets at night. But a new menace hunts the innocent, a faceless marauder whose macabre purpose cannot be fathomed. It strikes silently, without warning, leaving behind only a headless corpse in its wake. Fear knows a new name, and that name is Head Hunter. No one knows who he is, or what he is. They only know that he walks with Death, and to meet one is to meet the other.

### APPEARANCE

The Head Hunter initially has a yellow-orange body that is bloated, oily and amorphous; as time goes and it fails Dark Powers Checks its body takes on a more orange-red hue, making it appear more demonic. It has dozens of short, writhing tentacles and six crablike legs that allow it to scuttle about. Four large, yellow, bulging eyes and a tooth-filled maw are set in its bulbous head. The head has a number of distinctive lumps, up to twelve for the twelve brains it can house in its cranium.

### Phylactery

The Head Hunter is not a fiend per se, and so does not have a phylactery.

### THE HEAD HUNTER

**Brain Collector:** CR 10+ (usually 22); Large aberration (outsider), HD 10d8+50; hp 100; Init +8 (+4 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 45 ft.; AC 18 (-1 size, +4 Dex, +5 natural); Atk +7 melee (1d10+5, bite); AL CE; SV Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +10; Str 20, Dex 18, Con 20, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 18, OR 7.

*Skills and Feats:* Concentration +10 (14 with Combat Casting feat), Intimidate +8, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Knowledge (anatomy) +8, Listen +4, Move Silently +4, Search +5, Spellcraft +7, Spot +5;

Combat Casting, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (bite).

*Languages:* The Head Hunter understands the native language of its people (Neh-thalggu) and the languages known by any creature whose brain it has swallowed. It usually chooses not to speak unless it is in polymorphed form.

*Possessions:* Set of surgical knives (usually kept in its lair), sacks for carrying heads.

### BACKGROUND

The Head Hunter is a visitor from a far off plane of existence. Its appearance is bloated and monstrous, its thinking totally alien to anything we can conceive, its motives beyond our comprehension. The name by which it and others of its race refer to themselves is Neh-thalggu, but to humanoids of the Prime Material Planes they are known by their function: the brain collector.

A brain collector's only purpose in life appears to be the acquisition and devouring of the brains of intelligent humanoids, which grants it the power to cast spells as sorcerers. They can only reach the Prime Material Plane through gateways near sources of great magical energy, where the fabric of time and space is twisted. After acquiring twelve brains, it then returns to its home plane of existence. The purpose for this harvesting and devouring of brains is unknown to anyone outside the Neh-thalggu race, and they are not likely to communicate this to anyone. They consider all other forms of life to be nothing more than cattle fit for their strange experiments.

The first encounter with the Head Hunter occurs after it has acquired its twelfth brain, and realizes it is trapped in the Demiplane of Dread. It is in a panic, and fear leads to a shift in its attitude and alignment towards chaotic evil. After this initial encounter, when it realizes the new power it wields, the Head Hunter becomes a craftier, scheming hunter, seeking to bolster its arcane powers by seeking out the brains of arcane spellcasters. At this point it will be a master planner, using its spells to acquire power and influence, and of course to find potential victims for brain harvesting.



## PERSONALITY

The Head Hunter's personality will vary depending on when the PCs encounter it. It was a typical specimen of its race until it had the misfortune of straying into the Land of Mists during a routine harvesting trip. Once there, it came to realize that it was trapped in that realm. The creature then learned an emotion that had, until that time, been totally alien to members of its race: fear. Desperate to find a way to return to its home, it has been harvesting more and more brains, hoping to find the power needed to return to its native plane. It lashed out at its victims, alleviating its own fear by causing terror in its victims before taking their brains. To spread more terror, it removed its victims' heads, leaving the headless corpses to be found in the streets, and earned a new title: The Head Hunter.

This change in the creature's alignment and mindset led it down the path of evil, and drew the attention of the Dark Powers. It has failed powers checks and now possesses spell powers beyond those normal for its race. As it adjusts to the new status quo, the Head Hunter will come to embrace its new powers, and seek to use them to find a way to escape the Land of Mists.

## COMBAT

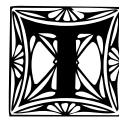
The Head Hunter's methods vary depending upon when it is encountered. Early in its career it goes about ambushing lone humanoid for their brains. Later it will start seeking entrance to society in polymorphed form, using stolen wealth and magic to establish a fake identity and use charmed servants as go-betweens to cover up its social ineptitude. It will rarely seek to engage in combat at this stage of its life, preferring to use charmed servants as fodder for battle while it flees.

**Arcane Spells:** By consuming the brain of an intelligent humanoid, the Head Hunter gains the ability to cast Sorcerer arcane spells. Each brain consumed allows it to gain cast spells as a level of Sorcerer, i.e. 1 brain = Sor1, 2 brains = Sor2, etc. It can hold up to 12 brains at a time. It does not gain hit dice or feats, only spellcasting capacity as a sorcerer. The spell selection will vary depending on which brains the Head Hunter holds at the time (see below). The DM should select spells based upon the needs of the adventure.

Normal brain collectors cannot learn arcane spells higher than 3rd level; use the normal Sorcerer spell tables but ignore any spell slots or spells learned that are higher than 3rd level. However, as a gift from the Dark Powers, the Head Hunter can gain higher-level spells by consuming the brain of an arcane spellcaster. Bardic brains grant the creature access to 4th level spells (5th if the character who "donated" the brain was

5th level or higher in that class); sorcerer and wizard brains grant access to 4th and 5th level spells (6th if the character was at least 7th level, 7th for a 9th level character, 8th for a 11th level character, and 9th for a 13th level or higher character). Additionally, the Head Hunter can switch one brain for another by keeping the excess brains in jars full of preservative liquids. The Head Hunter has just discovered these extra abilities when the PCs first face him, and so he does not take full advantage of it yet.

## HUNT OF THE HEAD HUNTER



This adventure introduces the PCs to the threat of the Head Hunter. Due to the power of this creature, it is recommended that groups of at least 9th level play this adventure (though the first encounter can be modified for a party of at least 5th level if need be). Lower level PCs would never stand a chance against this opponent. Ideally there should be at least one wizard or sorcerer in the group since the continuing plot deals heavily with arcane study.

The initial encounter takes place in any city the Dungeon Master chooses. Subsequent encounters occur either in a city or at an arcane college in a remote wilderness location.

## ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

This adventure is actually a series of encounters that are meant to be played out over a long-term campaign. During this time the Head Hunter will become a bogeyman feared wherever it goes, eventually organizing a magic school as a culling ground for brain consumption.

At the start of this adventure, the Head Hunter has recently arrived in the Demiplane of Dread and is still chaotic neutral in alignment. It is going about its business normally, harvesting brains for consumption. This particular brain collector has developed the habit of cutting off the head of its victims, primarily for ease of transport, since it is easier to carry a head than an entire humanoid. The unintended side effect of this method is to create even more terror among the local populace than mere disappearances of locals.

When the Head Hunter has harvested 12 brains, it will find it is denied the ability to return to its extra-dimensional home. Shock leads to fear, and fear leads to desperation. This is when the Head Hunter goes on a killing spree, and the PCs will have to confront it to save the local populace. The Head Hunter will flee when sufficiently injured, and the fear of dying will

# BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

make it stop killing and take stock of the situation. It will flee the city, never to return.

Later in the campaign, the Head Hunter will return in magical disguise as the headmaster of an arcane academy in the wilderness of one of Ravenloft's domains. The PCs should become involved working for the academy, and eventually discover the true nature of its headmaster, who is secretly their old foe.

## Technique of Terror

Sound effects of slobbering, hulking monsters of otherworldly origins would be a great way to build tension before allowing a first sighting of the creature.

## THE ADVENTURE BEGINS

It is assumed that the heroes may be outlanders or might not be locals. Alternate beginnings could have the heroes involved because they work with the local authorities, or one of the PCs might know one of the Head Hunter's early victims. The following introduction assumes that the PCs know nothing and nobody and have just arrived in town, but can be modified to fit the party's background and situation. Ideally, the PCs should come to town as part of another mission only to discover that there is other trouble here.

The adventure starts in a city or large town of the DM's choice.

The first thing you notice as you enter the city/town of \_\_\_\_\_ is the lack of noise...missing are the cries of hawkers selling their wares, the general loud murmuring of the street crowds talking amongst themselves. Indeed, very few people seem to be out, an unusual occurrence for midday in a cosmopolitan settlement!

The PCs should be allowed to explore the community. Wherever they go, the reaction is fearful and suspicious. It should take them some effort to purchase goods or acquire a room.

Gather Information checks glean the following results:

- ❖ **DC 10:** These are troubled times. Murders have been happening throughout the community and people are scared. Strangers aren't to be trusted. After all, how do we know that you aren't the murderer?
- ❖ **DC 15:** The Head Hunter stalks the streets, seeking heads for his own foul purposes. Six headless bodies have been found already, mostly in the Poor Quarter.
- ❖ **DC 20:** The Head Hunter strikes both at daytime and night (partly false, he only strikes at night). The only thing the murders have in common is that

the victims were all alone at the time they were killed. No one has ever seen the Head Hunter and lived.

Asking questions of the authorities will lead the PCs nowhere, as they are ignorant of the nature of the Head Hunter and (most likely) not interested in talking about official business to a bunch of wandering vigilantes.

## A PLEA FOR AID

This encounter should happen while the PCs are gathering information, working towards completing their other mission, or just going about town.

As you go about your business, you find that the nervous glances of the locals have not abated. Indeed, many passersby go to great lengths to avoid you on the street, crossing the street well out of their way at times. Only one person seems bold enough to approach you, a man whose ragged clothes and dirty countenance mark him as one of the denizens of the streets. "G'day," he begins. "I unnerstand you folk is new hereabouts, an' yer adventurers too, is thet right? Well, me an' the other folk what lives downside here are in bad shape, an' we're needin' yer help if'n yer kin give it. We ain't got much ter pay yers, but we ain't got nowhere else ta turn. Would yers please help us?"

If the PCs refuse, the DM will have to find another way to get them into the adventure, which should not be a problem. If they accept, the man (named Jeremy Blaine) escorts the PCs down a series of winding alleys to a gathering place of other homeless street folk. If asked why he hasn't asked the local constabulary for aid, he tells them that he has asked, but they aren't as interested in protecting street people as they are the wealthy merchants elsewhere in town. Efforts to Sense Motive on him will find that he is honest and sincere, and more than a little scared about what is going on.

**Jeremy Blaine, male human Rog2:** CR 2, Medium-size humanoid (human), HD 2d6+7; hp 16; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+3 Dex, +2 leather armor); Atks +1 melee (1d4+2 [crit 19–20], dagger), or +3 ranged (1d8 [crit 19–20] light crossbow); SA Rog sneak attack +1d6; SQ Rogue evasion; AL NG; SV Fort +2, Ref +8, Will –1, Str 12, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 8, Cha 10. Height 5'5".

*Skills and Feats:* Bluff +6, Hide +7, Jump +3, Listen +2, Move Silently +8, Open Locks +6, Pick Pockets +6, Search +5, Sense Motive +4, Spot +1, Tumble +3; Lightning Reflexes, Toughness.

*Equipment:* leather armor, dagger, light crossbow, nine bolts, pouch containing 15 gp and 40 sp.

Jeremy leads you to an alley where a dozen dirty-looking street people have gathered about a small fire. They huddle together less for warmth than for protection, the fear evident upon their faces. They start when they hear you approach, until Jeremy announces, "It's okay. They're with me. They're gonna help save us from the Head Hunter! Make 'em feel at home!"

As little as these people have, they offer the PCs some crude stew they have made of old vegetables and rainwater they have gathered. They won't be offended if the PCs refuse to eat it, they know that heroes who have money can afford far better, but they make the offer just the same.

The beleaguered street people offer the PCs 50 sp worth of money, mostly in copper pieces, a few silver, and a handful of rare gold. This is all they were able to pool together and it is quite a lot of money to such poor people. If the PCs are nice they will pass on the money, but if they take it the street folk will not mind, they are willing to pay to save their lives.

They know that the first murder happened on Theater Row three weeks ago, when a lone theatergoer was accosted after visiting the opera house. The last five have all occurred since in the poor quarter, about 4 or 5 days apart, all victims known to them. The only thing they had in common is that they were alone when they were killed. Well, *mostly* alone...

"Old Hattie was the last one that devil got. But she wasn't the only one ter see the killer. A pal of ours, Smooth Jack, he wuz a hidin' out in an alley... we figger he wuz lookin' fer an easy mark. Well, he done saw what happened ta her, but it musta taken a fearsome scare outta him! He ain't quite been himself since then. He don't say much, but if ye wanna try, ye kin talk ta him."

Smooth Jack was hiding while looking for a mark to rob when he saw the Head Hunter's attack on Hattie. He is in mental shock from viewing her murder and decapitation by the inhuman creature (the result of a failed Horror Check) and will be difficult to interrogate (though not impossible). If the PCs want to see him, Jeremy brings them to him.

You follow Jeremy to a shadowy corner of the alley where he pushes aside some crates to reveal a cubbyhole. Inside, curled up into a fetal position, is a young man, perhaps 16 winters, whose face and hair are a mess of dirt. He rocks back and forth, his eyes wide opened, looking at something none of you can see... and you are grateful you can't.

Smooth Jack rarely responds to anything the PCs say or do, even if threatened. He will answer some questions after a delay of a minute or two, but never in direct response. The DM should portray him as shell-shocked and barely in touch with reality. He will answer the following questions:

- ❖ What does the Head Hunter look like? "*Huge... yellow... oily... teeth. Teeth!!!!*"
- ❖ Where did the Head Hunter go? *Jack doesn't answer but looks up in fear.*
- ❖ What did the Head Hunter do with *Old Hattie's head*? *Smooth Jack makes a loud gulping sound, which he repeats every three seconds for five minutes without stopping.*

This is all the party can get out of Smooth Jack. If they create an illusion of a creature similar to what he describes, or show him a scene involving a decapitated head, he will scream at the top of his lungs and run away somewhere and hide for a very long time. Doing this is cause for a powers check for torturing an innocent victim (yes, Jack was a thief, but even a thief deserves better treatment than this after what he has gone through!).

If the PCs don't think of it, Jeremy will ask them to patrol the streets at night to find and catch the killer. If they don't the killings will continue. Alternately, the DM could have the PCs encounter the Head Hunter while they are trying to complete another mission.

## HUNTING THE HUNTER

It is up to the DM when they first encounter the Head Hunter. Ideally it should be no more than a few days after meeting Jeremy, Smooth Jack, and the rest of the street people. Other encounters could occur during this time at the DM's pleasure, and other plotlines can be advanced in the days spent hunting the Head Hunter.

Have the PCs make Spot or Listen checks at DC 15 to notice either signs of shadows moving rapidly in an alleyway, or to hear sounds of a struggle. Note if the PCs have any light sources available, though some light will stream in from street lamps.

Entering the alleyway, you see a strange sight. The limp body of a poorly-clad woman lies in the arms of an abomination! It looks like a large, bulbous blob, walking on multiple crab legs, with large red eyes and an enormous jagged-toothed maw! The woman is grasped in writhing tentacles that, like the rest of its body, seem to secrete a thick, oily substance. Noting your presence, the creature hisses menacingly at you!

This scene is cause for Fear and Horror saves. It is unlikely that the PCs have ever seen such a creature

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

before. Remember that those who react appropriately to the scene should not roll these checks.

The Head Hunter will fight until it has lost half of its hit points. If necessary it will abandon its prey to flee the battle, levitating to the rooftops, *reducing* itself and becoming invisible, and otherwise doing whatever it must to escape the party. It has the following spells available at this time (5th-level sorcerer):

**Sorcerer spells (6/7/6/4):** 0–*ghost sound, prestidigitation, detect magic, detect poison, daze, mending*; 1–*color spray, flare, reduce, enlarge, magic missile*; 2–*levitate, invisibility*; 3–*fly*.

### A MURDEROUS RAMPAGE

After the initial encounter with the Head Hunter, the PCs will be unable to find it again for two months or so, though if the DM wishes, she can set up some encounters where the party just misses the creature or finds one of its headless victims too late.

The Head Hunter has learned a healthy respect for the PCs and will actively avoid them, striking only when it feels that it is in a remote enough location to avoid detection. During this time it will acquire its twelfth brain and will make the attempt to return to its native plane.

When it realizes it is trapped on the Demiplane, the Head Hunter goes on a panicked killing spree, trying desperately to get enough brains to fuel its trip home. It strikes throughout the city or town, even in broad daylight! This should draw the PCs' attention and lead them to another encounter with the creature. This time, however, they are facing a brain collector at full power! Its spells are listed below:

**Sorcerer spells (6/7/7/7/7):** 0–*ghost sound, prestidigitation, detect magic, detect poison, daze, mending, ray of frost, read magic*; 1–*grease, color spray, flare, reduce, enlarge, magic missile*; 2–*detect thoughts, Melf's acid arrow, hold person, levitate, invisibility*; 3–*fly, flame arrow, displacement, haste*; 4–*Evard's black tentacles, ice storm, dimension door*.

The creature will flee when reduced to 1/3 of its hit points. It may be in a panic, but it realizes that if it does not flee, it will not live to find a way home!

It is possible that the party may kill the Head Hunter at this point, but more likely it will escape. If the DM wants to continue the plot, she should try to allow the creature to escape alive when it flees (it certainly has the spell power to do so). If it escapes, it flees the city or town and disappears for a very long time. The locals are satisfied that the threat is over, and life returns to normal (or as normal as it gets in the Land of Mists).

The DM should continue with other adventures and plotlines for a while, letting the players forget about the Head Hunter. This will make it that more effective when the PCs find him again in a totally different context, with little warning of his return.

### RECURRENCE: THE HEADMASTER

This part of the adventure is really an outline for a campaign revolving around the Head Hunter's new long-term plan to acquire arcane power.

After fleeing the PCs, the Head Hunter becomes more cautious and changes its strategy. It has (accidentally) discovered the gift of the Dark Powers, the ability to consume the brains of spellcasters to gain higher-level spells that others of its race could normally achieve. It has also learned to use the polymorph self spell to assume humanoid form, and now knows enough about human culture and behavior to be accepted in human society. By studying lore about arcane magic and arcane spellcasters, it has hit upon a plan.

In order to gain greater power with which to escape the Demiplane and return home, it needs to consume the brains of powerful arcane spellcasters. However, wizards and sorcerers rarely congregate in one place, which makes it hard to track them down for brain consumption. Rather than attracting attention with another series of killings, the Head Hunter has used its charm and polymorph spells to assemble a team of charismatic followers who have helped it establish the Academy of the Arcane in one of the less cosmopolitan domains of the Core, Valachan (or another domain of the DM's choice). By having its agents actively recruiting, it has assembled a teaching staff, research facilities, and an extensive library. With these lures in place, it is now recruiting wizards and sorcerers to join the Academy and advance their studies.

Realizing that it needs the most powerful brains in order to have a chance of escaping the Demiplane, the Head Hunter is biding its time, allowing the staff and students to advance in levels of arcane spellcasting in order to gain greater power later on from consuming their brains. It has assumed the identity of the Headmaster of the new academy.

No name has been assigned to this human identity so the DM can create names that no one else will identify if they read this adventure. The DM is free to make up names and personalities for the faculty with the usual rivalries and cliques that will naturally arise in such a setting.

If any PCs are wizards or sorcerers, they might be interested in joining this school, or perhaps working for them in an adventuring capacity. There are any number of messages that need to be delivered, or rare spell components to be sought. An entire campaign could be

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

built around the establishment and advancement of this college, a worthy goal in a high-level campaign.

Eventually, the PCs should notice the odd disappearance among the staff or students... usually after one of them has been sent out on an extended mission or sabbatical (really an ambush set up by the Head Hunter to harvest their brains). The school should also sponsor a “Brain Trust” where the brains of highly acclaimed wizards have been “volunteered” for storage after their deaths to promote arcane study. This Brain Trust, of course, is fodder for the Head Hunter to boost its own spell power, each brain offering a different selection of powerful arcane spells.

Eventually, the PCs should realize that something is rotten in the Academy, and investigate to discover their old foe is up to some new tricks! The resolution of such a grand story is up to the DM and the players. Should the Head Hunter survive this confrontation, it will undoubtedly flee to seek new brains elsewhere. Given sufficient brainpower, it might eventually escape Ravenloft. The Academy might collapse upon the discovery that it was founded only to provide fodder for an otherworldly fiend, or it might try to remain in business despite their corrupt foundations. The PCs might even take over leadership of the Academy, an entirely new challenge in a Ravenloft campaign. Rivalries with wizards in other domains, particularly Hazlik and Azalin, could be fodder for further campaigns.



# MYTHS OF THE MISTS

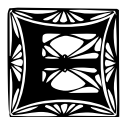
## MANY MYSTERIOUS MISCREANCES OF THE MASSES

by Stuart Turner and the online Ravenloft community

sfu@kargatane.com

### INTRODUCTION

In mid-2001, the Kargatane ran a competition asking for superstitions that might be followed throughout the Land of Mists. A fantastic response was received, with over 170 entries submitted. The Kargatane have diligently studied these, and picked out our favorites to present to you below. Many thanks to everyone for their inspired entries!



Ernst Turagdon's Diary  
27th July, 755

Hello Ernst. I just wanted to leave a special "thank you" note for leaving the milk and cookies on the doorstep for me yesterday! It was a lovely thought, especially after the very long walk back from Krezk! I seemed to fall over a lot just after eating them, but I'm sure that was just my exhaustion! By the way, I couldn't find those chicken teeth you needed from Krezk—in fact, I couldn't even find a chicken hunter! Should I go back and ask again? Bye-bye now! Jorhlan

I simply must order that lock for my diary.

And how will I ever get rid of that most annoying dog from the rowdy bar across the road? Four nights I have left out my special treats for him, and with no success. Instead, I've had to administer antidotes to Mynilar, Wyan and Holder, and now Jorhlan goes and causes his newest body to fall face-first into the fire-place. If that dog doesn't eat the biscuits tonight, I will be most displeased—especially since I have run out of antidote.

Despite our minor problems, Lady Kazandra continues to have faith in us. Ryven tells me that she has very big things in store for us—apparently something momentous is about to happen in our homeland. I can only guess that her lack of communication is a result of the important work she is doing. I do believe I have almost finished my latest research work for Lady Kazandra, which will hopefully remind her of the important research we are doing down here. It's a quaint piece, dealing with the myriad of amusing and laugh-

able beliefs held by the common people of this world. "Never wear blue with green", "don't make me go in there without shoes", "the poker will hurt if you put it there"—I have learnt of many interesting superstitions during my interrogations. These and more are revealed in my new treatise, which I hope to send to Lady Kazandra shortly.

All I need now is some weasel blood to mix with my ink for the final page. I hear it bestows the blessing of the forest-gods when done in years divisible by five...

### ANIMALS AND BEASTS

#### Sri Raji (Chris Nichols)

In the domain of Sri Raji, it is widely believed that those venturing to the jungles should wear a mask on the back of their head. The intended purpose of this is to confuse the man-eating tigers of Sri Raji's jungles, so that they will not be able to tell front from back. The belief is that the tiger, being unable to determine how to attack from behind, will leave the mask-wearer alone.

#### Darkon, Tepesf, Borca, Falkovnia (Chris Nichols)

In the lands that once bordered the G'hennan wastes, this is a belief that the horribly twisted mongrelmen who from time to time escaped the borders of the theocracy cannot abide the presence of willow. Though less common now, some homes may still place willow branches on the thresholds of their homes.

#### Borca (C. Marfin Coulter)

In Borca, poisonous snakes have a way of getting into places they shouldn't be able to get into, resulting in the deaths of numerous Borcans. Many of the domain's citizens attempt to solve this problem by following an age-old belief of placing a bowl of cream on the floor to draw the snakes out of hiding. Those households that don't practice this ritual seem to have a high number of fatalities due to snakebites.

## Borca, Barovia, Gundarak (Brandi Weed)

Among the poorer classes of Borca, a bat that accidentally flies into the house can be the basis of a protective charm against supernatural powers. The bat must be caught alive, then carried three times around the house (clockwise, not widdershins!) before being nailed upside down outside the window.

The better folk of Borca consider this folk charm quite barbaric, and Borcan immigrants in Gundarak and Barovia who persist in this belief are often shunned by their neighbors.

## Kartakass (Christopher W. Dolunt)

Despite the highly musical nature of Kartakass, parents warn their children against whistling at night, claiming that it attracts the many wolves that plague the domain. There is a saying in Kartakass: “Whistling children and cackling hens, at night from the wolves, they shall meet their ends.”

Indeed, a child torn apart by wolves at night generates little anger amongst a community. Most simply assume that the child attracted the wolves by whistling, and thus deserved whatever horrors might follow.

## BIRDS

### Barovia (Alex Miranda)

In Barovia, it is widely believed that the sighting of a raven around a building, or better yet, a raven larger than normal, is a good omen. It means the house is protected by a benevolent spirit. This has resulted in the raven being considered a loved animal, so it is not hunted for any reason. It is considered very good luck to have a raven make its nest on one’s house, or to carry a raven’s feather with oneself. Having a raven in the house as a pet is the best protection one can wish for.

If a raven marks a house with its beak, it is said no evil can ever enter it again.

Amulets of raven claws are an especially bad augury, since it entails the sacrificing of a raven. Killing a raven can banish all protecting spirits, and doom will surely enter the killer’s life.

### Rokushima Taiyoo (Chris Nichols)

Rokuma believe that crows are omens of death. Flocks of crows indicate a battle or great disaster in the near future. Single crows herald the death of an individual. The cawing of the crow tells who will die—one caw for a friend, two for family, three for a lover, and four, the number of death, for the listener.

## Sithicus, Kartakass (Nathan Okerlund)

Superstitions about owls are common in the southern Core; in Sithicus and Kartakass, owls are considered to be inimical to evil spirits, and such spirits will supposedly flee the sound of an owl hooting. In Kartakass owls are encouraged to roost in special “owl-houses” built in trees near the home or on the roof itself.

## Nidala (Chris Nichols)

The people of Nidala believe that whippoorwills are psychopomps, birds from the underworld sent to bring back the souls of the dead, and occasionally steal the souls of the living. Thus, in Nidala, the cries of whippoorwills are omens of death.

## Valachan (Stuart Turner)

All of the Valachani people are familiar with the White Fever—a brief illness that leaves victims bedridden for a number of days. Among the older residents of this domain, the sighting of an owl in the eaves or on the roof of a house, if only for a brief moment, is a sign that the White Fever will soon be visiting that residence. Even worse, if an owl nests anywhere on the structure of a house, the Fever is expected to be particularly debilitating, or even fatal, to a member of the household. Once such a sighting is made, a Valachani family might be avoided for weeks before locals feel they are safe from contracting the Fever from the afflicted household.

Interestingly, this superstition has turned owl hunting into a common sport for hunters and older children.

## CHILDREN AND CHILDBIRTH

### Vorostokov, Borca (Alex Miranda)

In these domains, it is said that the seventh born son will invariably turn into a werewolf unless his first-born brother becomes his godfather. If the first-born brother has died before he can be the godfather, the next in line must take his place. If no other brother is left alive, the seventh son becomes an outcast, for he is surely doomed.

### Barovia, Kartakass (Marie Klein-Laplante)

The people of these domains think that a very young baby’s soul is easy prey for haunting spirits and other ghosts. To protect the young baby’s pure and fragile soul, they keep a lit candle near the crib, night and day, until the baby is at least three months old.

# BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

## Nova Vaasa (Nathan Okerlund)

In Nova Vaasa a newborn child's first drink is always stallion's blood (if male) or mare's milk (if female). This is not really a "drink", of course; it is generally no more than a drop smeared on the child's lips. Wealthy families often have elaborate thimble-sized cups specifically for this purpose.

This is supposed to engender bravery, virility, good health, and horsemanship in the boy, and sweetness, docility, and good health in the girl.

## Falkovnia (Spencer M. Lease)

While every Falkovnian child is branded with Drakov's mark early in their lives, a few have supposedly demonstrated a mysterious resistance to the symbol. According to legend, a handful of children are destined from birth to be free of the oppression their fellows must face. Whenever the sign of the hawk is applied to their skin—whether this is accomplished through branding, tattooing or any other method—it will vanish within the space of a day. Such children, it is said, will be imbued with awesome powers as the years pass—and upon reaching adulthood, they will fulfill their destiny by killing Vlad Drakov and freeing all of Falkovnia.

Publicly, Drakov dismisses this belief as wishful thinking on the part of his less loyal subjects—but nevertheless, he invariably kills any child older than five years who does not bear his symbol somewhere on his body.

## The Nightmare Lands (Wes Schneider)

The Abber Nomads, natives of the twisting and maddened environment of the Nightmare Lands, share a close bond with their chaotic realm. The grudging respect and fear the people have for their homeland has led to the tradition of, as they see it, allowing the land itself to name their children. For the first year after birth, a child is left without a name and rarely referred to directly. After that year, prominent events or common visions that have marked the past seasons are summarized during a tribal ritual, during which the parents and local elders agree on a simple name for the youth such as Burning Fields, Blinding Eyes, or Shadow Man. Parents who name their child before this ritual are believed to be dishonoring the land, tempting it to do its worse to end the child's life prematurely, or daring it to take the youth to become a servant of the land's dark masters.

## Verbrek, Tepest, Sithicus, Nova Vaasa, Kartakass, Invidia (Alex Miranda)

Birthmarks are especially ominous in the above domains. A baby born with a mark in the shape of an ani-

mal, a cross, two horns or something monstrous, even if only remotely suggesting these shapes, is considered to be a monster or to have demonic (or evil) blood in itself. In Verbrek and Kartakass, people say the child will grow to be a man-wolf, and will come to prey upon them in the night. In Tepest, it is a sure sign that the baby is the spawn of a hag. In Invidia, it suggests that the baby is of Vistani blood and of a very evil nature. In Nova Vaasa and Sithicus the significance is not well established, with their beliefs drawing from the surrounding domains.

In Tepest, these children are usually drowned at birth. Other times, the skin is branded with hot iron over the mark, in the belief that it will cleanse the evil it represents.

In other domains, the child is usually brought to the clergy, abandoned in the wilds or outright killed. Many times, the parents keep the mark a secret and live with the child, hoping that the mark will fade or that the child will die of other causes before its true nature becomes evident. If another discovers that the family is hiding such a child, they are usually outcast and their house burnt down.

## Tepest (Alex Miranda)

The folk of Tepest believe in witches, and one of the most terrifying stories told about them is of how they are capable of drying a woman's womb merely by touching her belly.

It is said that if a witch touches the belly of a pregnant woman, the baby inside will immediately wither, and when it is born, it will look like a mummified stillborn. If a witch touches the belly of a young woman that is not pregnant, her womb will dry, and she'll never again be able to bear children.

Some people say the witch must touch the bare skin of the belly for the curse to take effect. Although reassuring, only a minority holds this belief. In fact, the most common belief is that merely touching the clothes will impart the curse.

Since Tepestani generally think of witches as old, haggard crones, it is very common for young women to shun the company of the elder ones, and at all costs avoid contact with them.

## Falkovnia, Tepest (Chris Nichols)

Children in the lands of Falkovnia and Tepest are often told by their parents that they will be snatched up the chimney by flying goblins if they misbehave. The traditional end to the story that accompanies this admonishment is, "The goblins'll gitcha if ya don't watch out!"



## Kartakass (Joe L. Cogan)

In Kartakass, the people believe that a child that is born or conceived on the night of a red moon will be cursed to become a werewolf. Some believe that if the mother wears an amulet made from a silver holy symbol until the child is born into the world, the curse will be prevented.

In the more cultured city of Harmonia, the upper class thinks these superstitions are only peasant fears, and do not affect anyone in reality. However, many aristocratic wives who are with child are seen wearing these “peasant charms” on the streets of Harmonia.

## Falkovnia (Dan Haugen)

Vlad Drakov, though cruel, has always encouraged the birth of children—after all, his armies and workforces are always in need of replenishment. Since the life of a Falkovnian is hard, births of healthy children, let alone children who live out their first year, are rare. As a safeguard against disappointment, and against possibly disappointing their ruler, Falkovnians have developed a sensible superstition. No Falkovnian will ever buy or build a cradle for a child before the child is actually born. To do so is to tempt the fates with the belief that the child will live.

## DEATH

### Kartakass (Marie Klein-Laplante)

When Kartakans bury a relative that lived in the same house, the funeral is long and includes many joyous songs about the deceased person. This is said to remove some of the sadness the spirit might have in leaving its relatives. Also, at the end of the funerals, all of the persons living in the household walk twice backwards around the grave, and then leave the graveyard. It is believed that this confuses the newly dead spirit, who will not find the way to the house and thus will not haunt it. If this wasn't done, and the spirit was to make its way back to the house, it would break all the plates and the glasses of the household in its melancholy.

### Darkon, Necropolis (Brandi Weed—Contest Winner)

Items that have been in contact with the dead are considered holders of dark and sinister powers in this realm. It is said that if one gathers nails from the coffins in a graveyard, they may be used to turn evil away from oneself and even to send it upon an enemy.

A simple ritual to protect from evil involves having the nails cast into a ring; this also protects the wearer from the disease called rheumatism.

To cause harm to one's enemies, one should drive a coffin nail into their footprint or shadow while saying, “Cause harm to \_\_\_\_ until I remove thee.” The curse may only be lifted if the person who hammered the nail in removes it while saying, “I remove thee so that the evil which thou hast caused to \_\_\_\_ will cease.”

### Nova Vaasa, Hazlan, Kartakass (C.M. Parker)

In the lands of Nova Vaasa, Kartakass, and Hazlan it is thought that the rope from around the neck of a hanged criminal has certain powers when worn braided around the neck of a thief. The rope must be fresh (no more than a day old) and must be over two feet long when braided. It must be braided from a single piece of rope otherwise it will be ineffective.

If worn by a thief it is said that the spirit of the hanged man will protect him from discovery, and enhance his skills of stealth. It is sometimes ironic when a thief is caught with such a talisman, and is hung with the very same bit of rope that was supposed to protect him.

### Darkon (Eric Daniel)

Many legends and superstitions exist in Darkon about the rising of the dead to retake the lands of the living. These are codified in the teachings of the Eternal Order, and were reinforced by the catastrophe at Il Aluk. However, outside of the Order's dogma, some other small superstitions remain popular among the common folk. One is that anyone passing by a cemetery gate must tip their hat, or give a small bow or curtsy before moving on. This is supposed to show respect for the dead buried there and let them know that they are remembered.

### Souragne, Nova Vaasa, Hazlan (Eric Daniel)

In the swamps of Souragne, the walking dead are known to lurk within the darkness of the swamps, but sometimes ghosts are said to walk the streets of Port d'Elhour. Some merchants of Souragne have created little clay fetishes, called watchmen, to sell to people. These watchmen supposedly have the ability to ward off spirits when carried. The watchmen are little clay figurines, roughly man-shaped, usually in plain fired clay but sometimes glazed in bright colors.

Most of these watchmen have no power, but occasionally there have been reports of a ghost being driven away from someone with a watchman. Whether this has to do with the watchman or something else is unknown. The fetishes have spread to some of the other domains, notably Nova Vaasa and Hazlan, where they are mostly considered to be curiosities and purchased as a decoration.

# BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

## Shadowborn Cluster (Dion Fernandez)

Many people are obsessed with the idea that the spirits of the dead roam the land, and are fearful of meeting them. In the many settlements of the Shadowlands, the roads leading to burial sites are point directly north, linking to the belief that the dead travel only in straight lines. Houses are arranged in such a way that when someone dies in them, the spirit could travel on this road to the burial site without passing through another house, and thus prevent haunting. It is even forbidden to walk along the straight road to the burial site when no one is at the portal of death, for fear that the person who does so becomes tormented by the dead.

A skeptic from Touraine once defied this taboo; after walking from the burial site, using the forbidden road, he encountered a haggard man with a limp going the opposite direction. When he returned to the town, a funeral was taking place, and the dead person the mourners were standing around was the man he had encountered on the road. On seeing the corpse he went mad with fear that the ghost would return to haunt him.

## Mordent (Leor Blumenthal)

One of the most tragic forms of death is suicide. The depression and loss of hope that drive men and women to take their own lives is so deep in the Lands of the Mists that in many places there are serious taboos against suicide. In Mordent it is forbidden to bury a suicide victim in a communal cemetery. This has been the tradition for centuries, and has been reinforced by the edicts of the Church of Ezra, which believes that by succumbing to the evils of the world a suicide has forfeited the protection of Ezra.

The inhabitants of Mordent believe that a person who is not given a proper burial will be unable to rest on the Other Side, and his ghost will return to torment the living. In order to keep the spirit of a suicide from haunting his loved ones, a wooden stake is driven into the heart of the corpse, much as is done to a vampire. The body is then buried at a crossroads. The belief is that the spirit will be anchored to the crossroads, and will be unable to return home to trouble his kin.

## Tepesf (Leor Blumenthal)

There are very few vampires in the Domain of Tepesf, but over the years a number have appeared. The Tepesfani believe that a vampire is created when a black cat jumps over a fresh corpse. Unless a stake is driven through the corpse immediately, and the cat that caused the vampirism is burned alive, the dead man will rise at sunset as a vampire, and begin to prey on the blood of the living.

## Dementlieu, Mordent, and Richemulof (Dan Haugen)

It is traditional in most domains that, whenever someone dies, their family and friends wear black clothing or a black token in mourning of the deceased. In these three realms, however, this wearing of black does not stop with those people who knew or respected the deceased—it also extends to the plants of the deceased’s garden! Little ribbons or flags are tied to all of the plants on the grounds of the departed’s property. If this is not done, it is believed, their plants will also die in mourning.

The superstition is perpetuated by the fact that the people of Borca do not share this custom, supposedly resulting in the purplish tinge on their plants and fruits. In recent times, however, families have been more practical by simply planting a stake with a black flag in the ground, covering the garden with a large black cloth, or adding mourning ribbons to only the larger plants in the garden.

## Borca (Spencer M. Lease)

In the land of Borca, it is believed that the victims of any unnatural death cannot truly rest unless their murder is somehow negated upon burial. Thus, someone who died of a slit throat would have a line drawn across his grave, near the headstone, and then “stitched together” with sharp rocks. The victim of a bullet through the heart would benefit from someone lying on the grave and firing a gun into the air, symbolically killing the murderer. And so forth.

Ideally, a person who died due to poison (a common problem in this particular land) would have the antidote poured over his headstone, but as the high number of Borcan ghosts might indicate, antidotes can be hard to come by...

## FOOD AND DRINK

### G’Henna (Dan Haugen)

G’Hennans find sustenance through Zhakata’s Dole, a ceremony whereby some of the food that has been produced is returned to the populace after the priests and soldiers of the realm “offer it to Zhakata.” Any other possession of foodstuffs beyond what is given to you through the Dole is seen as withholding from your duty to provide for Zhakata, and as heresy, is punishable by death. As such, G’Hennans have developed a number of superstitions dealing with their food since they often receive little or none through the Dole and it therefore has great value in addition to its religious significance.

The most overpowering belief of G’Hennans is with regards to the dropping of food. Regardless of the

reason why, food dropped is never retrieved and eaten, instead it is collected and burned as a further offering to Zhakata. To drop food shows disrespect to the Devourer, since Zhakata gave it the person's family as a gift in the Dole. Dropping food is, in essence, to deny Zhakata's gift. To deny Zhakata's gift is heresy. A family expects anyone who drops food to fast for as long as possible, oftentimes until death, to regain Zhakata's blessing.

Priests of Zhakata who hear of food being dropped do nothing to stay this belief. Instead, they limit the offender's family's Dole in order to intimate Zhakata's displeasure.

### Hazlan, Nova Vaasa (Chris Nichols)

In the lands where the god Bane is worshipped, there exists a superstition among the farming communities. Grain farmers in Hazlan and Nova Vaasa believe that once a year, to one of the extremely faithful, Bane grants a boon.

For growers of wheat, rye, and other grains, Bane's boon comes in the form a black-cloaked figure who comes in the night to reap the fields of the faithful. By morning, say farmers, a week's work is done, stacked neatly in sheaves and in the center of the field, a small stone marker bearing the mark of Bane is found.

The ghostly scythe-bearer is called the Reaping Angel, and in the harvest season, farmers know not to go into their fields at night lest they disturb him and bring Bane's wrath on their house for interfering with his grim angel.

In Hazlan, a folk story tells of how the folk hero Vosshik began his adventures when he interrupted the Reaping Angel's labors. The Angel blighted Vosshik's field and flew back towards his house. Vosshik pursued the Angel, but returned too late to save his wife, children, and parents. From that day forth, Vosshik wandered the lands where Bane was worshipped in search of the Reaping Angel, and though he fought many night creatures, he never again found the Angel. Vosshik was ancient, but still hale the day he walked into the Mists, still seeking the Reaping Angel.

Nova Vaasans tell a different tale - that of Rhegina Tetrovich. Rhegina was the only daughter of a wealthy farmer named Vassil, who was as faithful to Bane as any man could be, and he had been blessed with a beautiful daughter. Further, Bane's boon had fallen upon his fields each year for the last five years. Now, in the fourth year, Rhegina had first stayed up into the night and caught a glimpse of the mysterious being who worked the fields, for in the years before her curiosity had been piqued. She only caught a glimpse, but it was enough. In the fifth year, she watched the Reaping Angel from the windows of her father's house, and her heart was captured. In the sixth year, the Angel ap-

peared in her father's fields again, and Rhegina was ready. Walking into the fields, Rhegina stood strong and declared her love to the Angel. In the morning, the work was done and Rhegina had vanished. They say that the Angel was so taken with Rhegina that he took her back to Bane's heavenly bastion to be his eternal bride.

### Darkon (dwarven communities) (Chris Nichols)

Dwarves believe that spitting the first mouthful of a bottle or glass of spirits into a fireplace or forge will prevent evil spirits from taking residence in it.

### Borca (Christopher W. Dolunf)

In Borca, a story is told about a man named Kolo, whose mother baked him a cake to commemorate his impending marriage. However, Kolo's mother hated his bride-to-be, and poisoned the cake. On the way to his engagement party, Kolo came across a starving street beggar. Being a good man, Kolo gave him a piece of cake, and the man immediately died.

This lucky event saved the lives of Kolo, his bride, and all the guests at the engagement party. His mother, overcome with grief at what she did, poisoned herself as well.

Ever since, whenever someone in Borca bakes a cake, they always make sure to give a piece of it to a beggar. If they do not, it is said that the person shall be forever haunted by the ghost of Kolo's mother.

### Valachan (Joel Paquin)

To cure a drunkard in Valachan, it is said that you have to wait until he gets the white fever. You must then go to a cemetery, get a bone, burn it and grind it to powder, and then mix it with the drunkard's favorite alcohol. After quaffing this drink, he will hate the taste of alcohol for the rest of his life.

### Falkovnia (C.M. Parker)

In the domain of Falkovnia it is believed that evil spirits will spoil unprotected grain. The millers there have an odd superstition. They believe that such spirits can be frightened away if a living creature is tied to the mill. Often dogs and cats are tied to the center of windmills, or the water wheel of a watermill. Such creatures never live long, and their piteous cries can be heard throughout the mill.

The military has turned this superstition to their advantage. Often they will crucify traitors of other high criminals in the arms of a windmill, or tie them to a water wheel. Each day a soldier will ride past the mill,

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

and if the body is cut down before it has been certified that the criminal is dead, the miller must take his place.

### FORTUNETELLING

#### Tepest (Alex Miranda)

In Tepest, folk believe that the future can be seen by looking at the dim reflections in a bowl of water, at night under a moonless and cloudless sky. Of course, there are not many who try this, for they also say that in doing this, all the hags in the vicinity will feel the would-be diviner. What they might do after is usually not spoken.

#### Various (Chris Nichols)

A superstition held widely throughout the Land of the Mists is that the presence of newts in a well indicates that the water is safe to drink. Some domains have further superstitions based on this. For instance, in Valachan, some believe that the color of the newts found in a bucket of well water predicts the future—white for weddings, black for funerals, red for a fight, green for wealth, blue for bad news, yellow for childbirth, and brown for illness.

#### Tepest (C.M. Parker)

It is well known by the folk of Tepest that the eyes are the windows to the soul; many believe that odd colorations in the eyes can divine the nature of a person's soul. Blindness is seen as a punishment from the gods, while having black eyes is a sign of an evil personality. They also believe that if a person's eyes have no reflection, then that person has no soul.

### HOUSES AND BUILDINGS

#### Vorostokov (Marie Klein-Laplante)

In Vorostokov, when they build a new house, they put something alive in the foundations to make the house stronger and to make it last for centuries. This is usually done by the owner of the house, during the night. Most people use eggs or a small animal, but some persons are known to sacrifice babies in this manner.

In addition, the first shovel of earth dug from the site of a new building should be spread around the trees that surround the future house, so these trees will never fall on the house or its inhabitants.

#### Mordent (Spencer M. Lease)

While the people of Mordentshire believe that creatures from the Other Side are unable to enter their homes, taverns and other public places are quite a different matter. When any given resident of that particular city

plans to be away from home during the night, she will often take a reminder of a deceased ancestor (such as a treasured ring or a lock of hair) with her in the hope that the spirit of that ancestor will protect her. Some even recite a brief incantation or perform a simple ritual to summon the beloved dead.

Many old wives' tales warn, however, that the traveler must be absolutely certain that the ancestor in question was fond of her, and that the departed lived a full and happy life. To summon a spirit filled with malice or regret is to invite disaster.

#### Hazlan (Chris Nichols)

The fields and hills of the Hazlan are studded with ancient windmills, mostly abandoned; even the smallest hamlet is within walking distance of at least two of these structures. Most of the windmills are long abandoned, but they are far from forgotten. The doors, frames, thresholds, and lintels of the windmills are often brightly decorated. The Hazlani believe that the ruined windmills are the homes of many spirits. Many communities work to live in harmony with the local spirits by including them in the activities of the town. In most communities, this means writing or painting about important town events, giving the windmills their cheerful facade. Particularly fortunate events, such as weddings and births, are celebrated by leaving a chicken in or near the windmills, so that the resident spirits may have a feast to celebrate.

### MARRIAGE

#### Kartakass (Dennis Kuester)

When a Kartakan couple marries, the festive event includes musical performances that are believed to foretell the couple's future. During the ceremony, it is expected that both partners take their voices to their limits when singing their marriage pledges. Throughout the following evening, a feast is celebrated where a few selected guests slip into costumes to portray roles symbolic of important events in married life. Early in the evening, children will sing merry children's songs, and just before dawn, one of the village's most renowned bards will step forward with a song of parting.

At this special occasion, the family and guests will stay awake throughout the night, and no one may be turned away or asked to leave. If the singing suffers a minor interruption or an instrument is mistuned, it is judged that at some time in the future the couple's relationship will suffer. If the singing continues afterward, this is only expected to a short term problem. The appearance of strangers at the feast is viewed with grave suspicion, as they signify that the couple's future is uncertain. The appearance of Vistani at a wedding ceremony is read as a sign of doom, warning of passionate

jealousy, disappearance of the firstborn, or even the death of one of the partners. For this reason, no one plays a violin or any other stringed instrument at a wedding, as the sound of a violin is believed to draw the attention of the Vistani.

## Nova Vaasa (Dan Haugen)

A simple good luck charm persists in the land of Nova Vaasa, and like most of their superstitions, deals with horses. Nova Vaasans put great stock in their families. Great families hold political power in the domain, and every other family hopes to join this elite group. One of the ways to move up in society is through alliance by marriage. A Nova Vaasan, then, when leaving the church or altar after a wedding is always met at the end of the aisle or steps by a horseman on their horse, who wishes them well on their marriage. This little meeting takes the place of the wedding kiss as the final act that must be done before a couple is truly married.

## SHIPS AND THE SEA

### Sea of Sorrows (John Tyler)

The name of a ship is a special thing. When a crew hangs their lives on the wood of the hull and the ropes in the rigging, a lot of emotion is expended. The hopes and dreams of the crew, the freedom of the open sea, the camaraderie of crewmates, and the terror when caught in a gale on the open sea all coalesce to form the spirit of the ship. Many old sea dogs believe that that spirit becomes encapsulated in the ship's name. Changing that name is like denying the importance of the spirit of that ship. They say that there's a reason ships are referred to as female, and like a woman scorned, that ship will bear its will against the crew to its fullest. The abnormally high count of ships with changed names that are lost upon the Sea of Sorrows only reinforces the idea that such vessels are cursed.

### Sea of Sorrows, Nocturnal Sea (Leor Blumenthal)

For as long as ships have sailed, there have been sailors anxious to avoid the bosun's whip. Whether the infraction is dereliction of duty, insubordination, or any other misdeed short of outright mutiny, the punishment is almost always a flogging. Old salts will often tell new sailors of tried and true way to master the whip: faith. They tell the younger sailors to get a tattoo of a holy symbol or an icon of a beneficent deity inscribed on their back. Not only would a religious overseer flinch from striking the symbol or icon, but even the whip itself will turn away for fear of offending the gods.

Sailors from Mordent and Dementlieu usually get tattoos of the holy symbol of Ezra, or even icons of

Ezra herself. Less popular in these domains, but still common is the holy symbol of Hala. Sailors from Nova Vaasa usually get tattoos of the holy symbol of the Lawgiver, although the Church officially frowns on this practice. Sailors hailing from Martira Bay usually have the symbol of the Cult of the Overseer, or that of the Eternal Order (although that is declining). Sailors from the Eastern part of Necropolis have either the holy symbol of Ezra (but never the icon), or the holy symbol of Mannann MacLir, a sea god venerated by the elves. Even sailors from Lamordia, not a domain usually given to religious belief, get these tattoos. They usually take one from whichever faith is predominant on the ship.

### Nocturnal Sea (Alex McDonald)

When the Nocturnal Sea first appeared, the inhabitants nearby were dumb-founded. Where before there was a misty border, now there was vast expanse of water. Naturally suspicions were high, especially considering that the domains on the Nocturnal are not as advanced, economically and culturally, as their counterparts on the Sea of Sorrows. Many of the superstitions of the Sea of Sorrows were carried over to these waters, but there were some more primeval, macabre beliefs that took hold in the east.

Perhaps the most barbaric was started by inhabitants of Necropolis, who believed that to ensure the safety of a ship, an animal must be dragged by a rope behind the boat as an offering to the unknown powers of the deep. The more valuable the animal, the more worthy the sacrifice. Most large ships drag deer or small horses, while the small ships may drag a dog or a pig. Even small rowboats aren't exempt as they usually drag a rat or an occasional rabbit. It is very rare that a human is chosen as a sacrifice but its popularity as a form of execution is growing.

### Mordent (Malcolm Harrison)

Every fisherman in Mordentshire has heard the tale of the Drowned Lovers. Some time ago, a wealthy merchant's daughter fell in love with a fisherman, Alexander. However, Matilda's father would not allow his daughter to marry a commoner. He paid Alexander a large sum of money to sail away and never return. As Alexander's boat pulled away from the docks, Matilda appeared shouting for him to return. In desperation, she threw herself into the ocean and swam towards the boat. Alexander could not bear to see his love so miserable and jumped in the icy waters as well. Before the two could reach each other, both lovers drowned.

Sailors believe that their spirits remain and can be seen in the spray as the waves crash against the rocks. If sailors see the lovers together, the voyage will be suc-

# BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RUNNING RAVENLOFT

cessful. If only one lover is visible, searching for the other, the journey will run afoul.

## WAR AND WEAPONS

### Falkovnia (Leor Blumenthal)

The Talons, the elite soldiers of Vlad Drakov, have a number of superstitions which they believe brings them success in battle. One of the most common is the belief that a blade that has never tasted blood should not be used in battle. A soldier who uses such a blade is doomed to die. It is said that a blade that has shed blood develops a taste for it, and will be more eager to kill than an unused one. As a result, many Falkovnians cut themselves (usually on the palm) right before battle. In fact, veteran Falkovnians can be identified by examining their palms for the presence of scars. The more elite Talons believe that the blade must do more than spill a few drops of blood; it must actually taste death. Therefore they will often murder innocent prisoners with their newest swords.

### Falkovnia (Stephen Heath - Runner Up)

The harsh brutality of war is often the birthplace of many superstitions, as soldiers try to bottle the fickle winds of fate and carry them on to the battlefield. In no domain is this truer than in the war-minded land of Falkovnia.

On the eve of any battle, a Falkovnian soldier will never finish his last mug of ale, instead leaving it to rest where he dined with his comrades. It is believed by doing so that he will return (living) following the battle to finish his drink.

Even in times where a battle lasts for days and the soldier's ale has become stale and rancid, the hawk-branded warrior will drink it just the same and rejoice that he can still taste its awful flavor. After all, as the soldiers all toast upon their return, "The dead don't drink!"

However, if a soldier returns and doesn't drink what he left, he is believed to have insulted the gods of war and he will die a coward's death before his next battle. Consequently, a citizen who spills a soldier's glass while he is at war is risking a terrible curse upon himself (not to mention the soldier's wrath).

It is interesting to note that soldiers who know that they are doomed in the coming battle, will instead quietly drink the last of their brew and carry its courage with them to face death head-on.

### Nova Vaasa (Chris Nichols)

In northeastern Nova Vaasa, near the region known as Ehrendton, it is considered extremely unlucky to use whips. Horse-breeders make certain to pray to Bane

after using whips on their animals. Nova Vaasan warriors from this region refuse to use whips in combat, stating that to do so would curse both them and their families.

## MISCELLANEOUS

### Sithicus (Andrew Snow)

In Sithicus, a land built around secrets, secrets carry power. A widely held superstition is that if a friend or loved one uncovers a secret that had previously been hidden from them, they have stolen insight into your soul. It is also believed that it is possible to physically injure someone by knowing his or her secret, similar to the way in which a voodoo doll is used to harm others. There are supposedly only two ways to remedy the situation. The first and easiest way is to proclaim the truth of the secret to the general public. The second, and more difficult, way is for the person who knows the secret, and the person who's secret it was, to each spill a drop of blood at the spot where the secret was discovered.

### Lamordia (Nathan Okerlund)

Lamordians are generally not a superstitious people, but a few odd superstitions remain. For example, many Lamordians believe that if a clock is wound after sundown, something evil will befall the members of the household before the clock strikes midnight.

### Vechor (Joel Paquin)

The smiths of Vechor begin their week by hammering three times on their anvil, to tighten the make believe chain of Easan the Mad to his spired palace in Abdok. "The more he remains in this castle, the better we all are," they say.

### Blaustein, The Core (Chris Nichols)

The jewelers and aristocrats of the Core circulate the legend of a source of unusual and flawless blue gems found on the island of Blaustein. The gems are called, unsurprisingly, blausteins, and few are those who truthfully can claim to have seen one. The blausteins are said to be worth a king's ransom. They are also said, in hushed tones, to be cursed, as the few wealthy nobles known to own one have become recluses, their manors decaying around them, the servants dismissed, and visitors turned away at the gates.

### Nova Vaasa (Stephen Sale)

Tradition holds that on the Night of Dark Deeds, when the Lawgiver turns his eyes from the land, mischief and

lies run rampant over the land, and many a person may be deceived.

But the knowing person may have one resort open to him if he believes he has been duped on this night. If he takes a iron nail and drives it through the shadow of the deceiver with a wooden hammer, the shadow cannot follow its deceitful owner, staying pinned where it is. The deceiver will then be without a shadow, marked as a dishonest trickster, until the Night of Bright Truths where the shadow will return, if he rights the wrongs he did on the darkest of nights.

## Lamordia (Chris Nichols)

The venerable grandmothers and grandfathers of the Lamordians fear the coming of the colder, crueller months after the short Lamordian summer. They believe that the first night of the cold season on which it snows and is below freezing awakens the spirits of misfortune from the Sleeping Beast. Of course, sensible modern Lamordians no longer believe such fairy tales about the so-called “jack frosts.”

## Barovia (Maff Doyle)

The superstitious Barovians are known for their aversion to the dark. Lesser known, however, is their love of daylight. Daytime is when Barovians feel alive, when they feel like they actually have a chance against the darkness that lurks in their hearts and just over the horizon. This is one reason the Cult of the Morninglord has gained influence, however slightly.

For these reasons, it is considered bad luck to sleep late. Barovians rise with the cock’s crow in the morning and quietly go about their days until dusk. But he who sleeps even an hour past dawn is considered bewitched in some way.

Children are encouraged to wake earlier with the threat of a bogeyman named Lazy Bones. Barovian mothers do not tolerate late-waking children, and have been known to take such extreme measures as splashing cold water (or sometimes even holy water) on their children’s faces to wake them.

Lazy Bones is said to be a bodiless spirit that constantly searches for a new healthy body. When he finds one, he takes over, incapacitating the victim while he manifests himself. If successful, he will make the body rigid and immovable. However, he is a jittery spirit, and can be frightened off by the loud banging of pots or perhaps the cool splash of water.

## Hazlan (Leor Blumenthal)

The natives of Hazlan believe in a complex series of demons. The majority of these demons are not the terrible creatures that dwell in the Lower Planes; they are instead mostly tiny, invisible imps, which swarm

around the world causing mischief. If someone wishes to know if they are around, he is advised to take ashes from the fire and scatter them around his bed before he goes to sleep. In the morning he will see tracks in the ashes that resemble the feet of chickens. These are the footprints of demons.

## Sithicus (Chris Nichols)

The residents of Sithicus believe that mirrors are not to be trusted. When not in use, mirrors are turned backward so that no reflection may show. This is done to prevent vengeful ghosts called “fetches” from escaping the confines of the mirror.

## Tepesf (Alex Miranda)

In Tepesf, it is widely believed that milk can be poisoned by leaving it outside on the night of a full moon, in such a position that the moon shines upon it. This belief has extended to bathing in the moonlight, which is thought to be equally dangerous for the person in question, for fear that they will be forever affected by some kind of lunacy.

## Darkon (Dion Fernandez)

The act of pilgrimage is the hallmark of many beliefs, a symbolic form of cleansing, healing and repentance, to leave everything behind, and to be in a place that is everywhere and yet nowhere at the same time. In the domain once known as Darkon, people seeking to cleanse themselves of past sins follow a trail that takes them from the western port of Martira Bay to the city of Nevuchar Springs in the east. Pilgrims who walk the route follow the epic of Rosteval, a fallen paladin who walked the distance between the two cities seeking penance for the sins he had committed, on the way overcoming trials in the form of temptation and evil. When the exhausted Rosteval reached the eastern city, as the story went, his deity forgave him a few moments before he died in grace and honor.

Pilgrims who wish to follow Rosteval’s route leave all worldly things behind, focusing only on penance, cleansing, and regaining favor with divinity. The pilgrimage, which usually lasts two weeks, takes one through rugged terrain, small villages and wayside altars, reliving Rosteval’s trials. A person who successfully completes the pilgrimage in Nevuchar Springs is believed to be “cleansed,” and has regained favor with the higher powers. Though the route is still walked, unfortunately fewer and fewer people every year take the pilgrimage.



# THE ILLITHID GOD-BRAIN

## A CEREBRAL FOE OF MANKIND

by Matthew L. Marfin

MLMarfin97@aol.com



Deep beneath the mountains of Bluetspur lurks the Illithid God-Brain, darklord of that storm-tossed domain. Though trapped within its pool of briny liquid, the God-Brain is the most powerful psionic creature in all the Land of Mists, and one of the most malevolent.

The true origins of the creature are known only to itself and a handful of Bluetspur's oldest and most cunning mind flayers. These are the only beings in all the Dark Domains who know that the mind of the God-Brain was once that of a man.

### ILLITHID GOD-BRAIN

#### Darklord of Bluetspur

**Elder Brain Psion (Telepath) 20:** CR 23; gargantuan aberration; HD 20d8; hp 99; Init -2 (Dex); Spd swim 10 (can't run); AC 4 (-4 size, -2 Dex); Atk none; SA psionics; SQ psionics; Face/Reach 20 ft. by 20 ft./0 ft.; AL LE; SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +27; Str —, Dex 7, Con 10, Int 36, Wis 40, Cha 30.

*Skills and Feats:* Bluff +33, Concentration +23, Diplomacy +33, Gather Information +33, Intimidate +21, Knowledge (aberration lore)\* +36, Knowledge (arcana) +24, Knowledge (biomancy) +24, Knowledge (Bluetspur) +24, Knowledge (psionics) +36, Knowledge (Ravenloft) +24, Knowledge (Thaan) +24, Psicraft +36, Remote View +36, Sense Motive +38, Spellcraft +24; Enlarge Power, Extend Power, Heighten Power, Hide Power, Maximize Power, Persistent Power, Quicken Power. [If not using the *Psionics Handbook*, replace these with the feats Enlarge Spell, Extend Spell, Heighten Spell, Maximize Spell, Quicken Spell, Empower Spell, and Spell Penetration.]

\* Due to the God-Brain's unique situation, Knowledge (aberration lore) is considered a class skill.

The Illithid God-Brain is a bloated, slimy, violet-black mass about sixty feet across, composed of numerous illithid, human, and other brains melded together into a single grotesque egg-like shape. Short, thin feelers of about a foot in length cover the creature's body allowing the God-Brain to propel itself through

the waters of the breeding pool and achieve some degree of manipulation of nearby objects.

### BACKGROUND

Years ago, on a world now dead, stood the city of Thaan. Though besieged by a powerful empire of illithids, the psionic powers of the city's ruling class provided enough protection against the insidious mind flayers to allow the residents of the city and the land surrounding it to live out their lives in relative peace.

In the last years before Thaan's downfall, the mind flayers reduced their raids and attempts to break through the Thaan defenses. Many rejoiced as the illithid threat began to fade, but had they known what the new peace would lead to, they would have mourned instead.

Seldrid was a member of Thaan's ruling elite, and one of the most powerful mentalists in the city, if not the world. He was renowned for his fierce patriotism and his skill at dealing with the illithid threat. He had led several raids into the mind flayer strongholds beneath Mount Makab, retrieving key information and items from their clutches and undoing many of their most twisted schemes. A few whispered that his determination to push back the illithids verged on obsession. In this, they were more right than they knew.

It has been said that warriors who struggle against one another for years will often come to respect their nemesis even as they strive to destroy him. Seldrid had walked down a similar path in his long struggle to protect Thaan from the mind flayers, but his respect had become a twisted admiration for both their psychic talents and their sense of discipline. Seldrid believed that the humans of Thaan were meant to incorporate the power and talents of the illithids into themselves. His determination to fight the illithids arose not from a desire to obliterate them, but from his hunger to preserve Thaan until he understand their mental and psychic powers. Then, when his knowledge of the mind flayers was complete, illithid nature would be incorporated into his people to create a new race, one possessed of immense mental powers and tremendous self-control. This new race, free from evil within and



able to conquer any threat, would surpass humanity as much as humanity surpassed common beasts. He had already experimented on criminals and vagrants, hoping to unlock their mental gifts and combine illithid elements with them, but his experiments had met with limited success at their best.

Now, as the mind flayers began to withdraw, Seldrid began to fear that his experiments would come to a premature end, and the people of Thaan would be left with the abilities they currently possessed, and lacking the self-discipline necessary to overcome debauchery and wickedness. While most Thaan were satisfied with their innate talents, Seldrid was determined to improve his people, with or without their consent.

On a dark night, Seldrid crept into the bowels of Mount Makab, there to determine the reason for the illithid's cessation of attacks and perhaps find something that could aid in his studies. His mastery of the mental arts impressed the illithids who came across him, and they hesitated long enough for Seldrid to pluck the truth from their minds.

The Illithid Elder Brain was dying.

The Elder Brain, composed of the brains of dead mind flayers, was millennia old, and had strained itself greatly in its attempts to overwhelm the psychic defenses of Thaan. Component brains were burning out, the Elder Brain's focus was deteriorating as individual personalities began to resurface and struggle for control, and the keystone of mind flayer society was on the brink of collapse.

Realizing this, an obscene idea began to form in Seldrid's mind. Coming before the most powerful and influential of the illithids, Seldrid suggested incorporating Thaan brains into the Elder Brain to preserve it. His true agenda, of course, was to achieve his long-sought unity of humans and illithids, but he kept that carefully concealed behind his mental barriers. The illithids, after much discussion and bargaining, agreed, but with one condition—that Seldrid be incorporated into the Elder Brain immediately. Seldrid agreed to this so eagerly that the illithids wondered if they may not be making a mistake, but they followed through, desperate to save their master.

Thus, as the sun rose over Thaan for the last time, Seldrid's brain was removed from his skull and placed at the heart of the decaying Elder Brain.

The treacherous mentalist quickly realized that the state of the Elder Brain had deteriorated far beyond the mind flayer's knowledge. The Brain was all but dead, possessing great mental power but lacking any coherent thought or ability to direct its talents. Within only a few minutes, Seldrid had linked himself to the Elder Brain and remolded the entire psychic gestalt as an extension of his will.

Seldrid had become the God-Brain.

With his newfound ability, it was simple enough for Seldrid to use his knowledge of the Thaan's powers and weaknesses to overcome their defenses. Within a few hours, every telepath in the city had been broken, and the entire population of Thaan marched enthralled through a thick fog into the bowels of Mount Makab.

The brains of the psionics were removed in the same manner as Seldrid's had been, and placed within the brain. Much to the anger of Seldrid, though, every brain that entered into physical contact with the God-Brain shut down almost immediately from the horror. His attempts to incorporate the mentally untalented folk of Thaan into the God-Brain's consciousness, whether physically or telepathically, also failed, as did experiments in granting them illithidic talents.

As Seldrid agreed to betray his beloved city, the Mists of Ravenloft took notice of this terrible act. As Seldrid strengthened his connection with the husk of the Elder Brain, a clammy fog rolled through the streets of Thaan. As the last of Thaan's psychics was brought to the God-Brain, the Mists withdrew, bringing the denizens of Mount Makab with them into Ravenloft.

### CURRENT SKETCH

Seldrid believed that in becoming the Illithid God-Brain, he would become something more than human or illithid, leading the people of Thaan into a new age of power and glory. Instead, the God-Brain finds itself less than either, cut off from all humanity and trapped within its breeding pool.

Seldrid's personality remains the unifying and dominant force of the brain, but the long years of isolation and psionic exertion have worn away at the God-Brain's mind like water at stone. Most of Seldrid's remaining virtues and traits long ago vanished, and the dominant ideal in the collective mind is to create a unity of humans and illithids—starting with providing a body for itself. Indeed, although the brain deceives itself with a twisted idealism, its deepest desire is to regain a true life, as opposed to its bodiless, disconnected existence.

In its desperate attempts to recapture humanity, the God-Brain has spread its psychic tentacles all across the Dark Domains, seeking to find other mentally talented individuals. Those who catch the dire attention of the God-Brain find themselves gradually drawn into Bluetspur, to be incorporated into the composite of brains in hopes of relieving the God-Brain's boredom and providing the key to giving the lord mobility. Each such attempt has managed to provide the Elder Brain some entertainment for a time, but all attempts by the aberration to achieve mobility have failed. Illithid experiments intended to provide a body for the God-Brain likewise proved unsuccessful, perhaps as much due to the God-Brain's insistence on retaining all its

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

psionic powers in a new form as to the intervention of Ravenloft.

To soothe these failures and provide some substitution for its lost humanity, the God-Brain ‘studies’ humans who come to its attention. Most of the victims are those who find themselves in Bluetspur, but the brain has been known to reach out beyond the Mists on rare occasions. Those who fall under the awareness and the influence of the God-Brain find their darkest and most repressed thoughts and desires being drawn out of them. The wiser and more sensitive occasionally become aware that a malign intelligence is monitoring them, but most never realize that their dark sides are being evoked by something from the realms beyond.

Not only does the God-Brain hunger for experiences, it also resents the living, especially those who follow the path of goodness and virtue. Those noble souls who attract the God-Brain’s attention, as well as anyone else who earns its ire, suffer from its psychic assaults, their minds decaying as they are subjected to horrible mental attacks and forced to commit abhorrent actions. Luckily, it is very rare for the God-Brain to extend its power beyond Bluetspur unless something attracts its attention.

### COMBAT

Trapped within Bluetspur’s briny spawning pool, and possessed only of weak feelers as limbs, the God-Brain possesses no abilities in physical combat. It is far from helpless, though, as its psionic powers are second to none.

**Psionics (Sp):** The God-Brain’s status as Lord of Bluetspur has enhanced its already formidable psionic powers. The Lord has access to all psionic powers, regardless of level and ability score limits, save those psychoportive or psychometabolic powers that would allow it to leave its pool. In addition, the God-Brain has unlimited power points, uses its Wisdom as the key ability for powers regardless of discipline, and gains a +10 bonus to all its checks for determining the DC of its psionic powers. This sets the DC for resisting the God-Brain’s psionics to a roll of  $1d20 + 25 +$  the power’s level, and the God-Brain will typically *heighten* any power it uses to 9th level, as well as *maximizing* and *extending* it.

In combat, the God-Brain typically lashes out with *thrall* against single targets, or *mass domination* against groups. If impatient or distracted, it will just force them to turn their weapons on themselves. Usually, though, the God-Brain is more inclined to toy with its victims, forcing them to turn on each other and inflict as much pain and suffering as possible before they finally expire. If something manages to resist this domination, the God-Brain will typically attempt to bring it back under its sway; if the target continues to resist, the God-

Brain will usually use psychokinetic powers to destroy it. Psionic opponents, or those with minds that the God-Brain finds interesting, will be immobilized so that their brains can be extracted and incorporated into the God-Brain’s mass, in hopes of furthering its futile dreams of living.

For those not using the Psionics Handbook, treat the God-Brain as casting spells as a 20th-level sorcerer, but using Wisdom instead of Charisma. The God-Brain can cast an unlimited number of spells per day, and knows all Mind-Affecting and Divination spells, and any other wizard spells the DM deems appropriate, so long as they do not allow the God-Brain to leave the pool.

### SOURCES

Information for this article came from *Forbidden Lore* (specifically, the Ildi’Thaan section in “Cryptic Allegiances”), the *Ravenloft Campaign Setting*, *Domains of Dread*, and *Thoughts of Darkness*. Also, special thanks needs to go to John Mangrum, for his articles “The Realms Beyond” in *The Book of Souls* and “Marcu Vasilis” in *The Forgotten Children*, and his comments and ideas on Bluetspur.



# DR. HENRY MASHAM

PHYSICIAN, HEAL THYSELF

by Stefan MAC

mac\_cosfilow@hotmail.com

*"The healthy, the strong individual, is the one who asks for help when he needs it."*

—Rona Barrett, 1974

## APPEARANCE

When fully dressed, Dr. Masham appears perfectly normal. In spite of his age, his hair is primarily a deep chestnut brown, although it has receded quite a bit. His face often bears a careworn or worried look, and as a result he has developed more lines and wrinkles than a man would normally possess at his age. His blue eyes are usually bloodshot from the long hours he works. Should Dr. Masham disrobe, however, observers will be in for a shock. His torso, abdomen and arms are a patchwork of flesh. Some patches of skin appear healthy, some areas are a sickly yellow hue that reveals the veins beneath, and the rest is composed of dead, gray flesh. Livid scars and raised sutures join the patches, and the skin does not always move in concert with the muscles underneath.

Dr. Masham usually dresses in whatever clothes he can steal, but for his surgeries he dons a well-worn lab coat. Despite his superficially normal appearance, the Doctor wraps himself in rags and keeps to the shadows and alleys as much as possible when forced to go about in public during the day. Even then, he retains his concern over the possibility of infection, and the odor of formaldehyde, iodine and other medical compounds surrounds him at all times.

## BACKGROUND

Dr. Henry Masham was born 59 years ago in Levarkest in Borca. He was a kind-hearted boy, and from his early childhood he wanted to help people, especially those less fortunate than himself. His maternal grandfather on his was a respected doctor in the area, and when Henry grew old enough to be apprenticed, it seemed only natural that he would study under the old man. The elder doted on his grandson, and under his tutelage young Henry found the outlet he needed. Henry and his

## DR. HENRY MASHAM

Self-Created Flesh Golem, Chaotic Good

Armor Class	7	Str	14
Movement	12	Dex	15
Level/Hit Dice	6	Con	20
Hit Points	32	Int	18
THAC0	14	Wis	6
No. Of Attacks	2	Cha	5
Damage/Attack	1d4/1d4		
Special Attacks	See below		
Special Defenses	See below		
Special Vulnerabilities	See below		
Magic Resistance	20%		

grandfather soon became familiar sights in the poorer sections of the city, helping as much as they could and often waiving the fees. Although divine magic was often available, Henry soon grew disgusted by the way that the priests would sell their services and turn away those without the means to pay. For Henry, this disgust eventually developed into a complete rejection of magic, and complete embrace of science.

As Henry studied, he noticed that many of the afflictions and injuries he and his grandfather treated disfigured the patient until long after recovery, occasionally permanently. Sometimes this resulted in mere ugliness, while other times the patient's life was nearly as horrible as when he or she was afflicted with the disease. This greatly concerned Henry, and several times he approached his grandfather with the idea that such people could be helped through surgery. Each time the old man explained that there were no doctors who were skilled enough to even attempt such a feat, and that practical experimentation could only be performed on living patients. Here, as always, Henry's grandfather emphasized that a doctor's responsibility was to avoid harming the patient at all costs. The young man absorbed the old man's words, but continued to study the possibilities. As he reached majority, his grandfather offered him the chance to go out on his own, and helped Henry to establish a practice in Lechberg.

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

As his practice thrived and other doctors joined him, Dr. Masham examined the vast number of injuries among his patients that led to either disfigurement or lameness. He began to catalog these afflictions, and published several books, not only on how to avoid such injuries, but also on how to effectively treat them to minimize the resulting deformity. In private he pioneered research into anatomy and physiology, looking for some way to surgically treat his patients so that they might retain some degree of normalcy. Despite his theories, and despite his research, he drew the line at actual experimentation. He knew that to test his ideas, he would need to perform on living patients, and that failure was more of a possibility than success. His grandfather's lessons had been learned well, and his conscience would not allow him to embark on such a dangerous path.

Eventually, his growing fame as a physician forced him to put his "hobby" aside and concentrate on his practice. The theories lingered in his mind, but as the years passed, he thought less and less about them, and his notebooks gathered dust on the shelves of his study. His practice continued to grow, and all seemed settled until the winter of his fifty-sixth year.

That winter, an especially virulent plague struck Lechberg. Dr. Masham worked tirelessly to curb the disease, and turned his focus to chemistry in an effort to find a cure. One day, while working with an especially vitriolic experiment, the bottle exploded and acid splashed on his arms and upper body. The pain was terrible, but his fellow doctors were able to wash the acid off and dress the wounds. Despite their speed, Henry was forced to retire for the day due to the trauma. Later, in his study, as he examined the damage, he realized that while the resulting scar tissue on his torso could be tolerated, the same on his arms would draw his hands back until they were completely unusable. As his hands were the tools of his trade, he grimly realized that he was now living the situation he had always sought to correct in others, and he knew he had to search for a way to prevent that from happening. Wearily leaning back, his eyes came to rest on his old notebooks, the ones in which he had detailed his research into cosmetic surgery.

Quickly he pulled them down and began thumbing through the pages. The theories were still sound, and he realized that the passage of thirty years had advanced the medical profession sufficiently to make the experiment plausible. Even better, he could experiment on himself, and therefore avoid endangering any of his patients. The pain from his wounds was forgotten in his excitement, and he spent the rest of the night poring over his notes, preparing for the operation.

Early the next morning, he combed through the freshest bodies in his morgue. Soon he found a corpse whose forearm was close enough in size to his own to

serve as a replacement. Moving the body to the surgery, he performed the operation, and grafted the dead skin onto his damaged left hand. As he returned the body to the morgue, the trauma of the previous day and the lack of sleep began to catch up with him. Bandaging his hand, he informed his fellow doctors that he would heed their advice and take a day off; he spent the rest of the afternoon recording the specifics of the operation.

As the days passed, Dr. Masham was able to pronounce his first experiment a partial success. Although the new flesh functioned as well as the old had, for some reason it remained cold and gray, instead of gradually picking up the healthy color he thought it should have. Also, despite his careful stitching, the edge of the transplant had healed into ugly raised sutures instead of the small scars he had aimed for. Dr. Masham was extremely concerned by this development, as all of his research had led him to believe that the transplanted skin would graft as if it was his own. He could not even feel pain in the area, until his probe reached the flesh underneath. Resolving to get to the bottom of the mystery, he was faced with the fact that not only was his own body the only available subject he possessed, but that he had only a limited period of time to work while the burns were still fresh. Considering the extent of his injuries, he knew the other doctors would understand if he wished to seclude himself for a time.

He began with his other arm, replacing a strip of skin on the underside. That operation ended with the same results as the original one, and brought Dr. Masham no closer to the answers he sought. His experiments progressed, but he was always careful to prevent not only his patients but also his colleagues from discovering his work. Part of him reasoned that it would be prudent to have his research complete and successful before bringing it to their attention. A small voice inside him, however, whispered that he was sacrificing something dear to this mad idea, that he should accept his fate with as much grace as possible, and that discovery would mean banishment from the profession to which he had dedicated his life. For three months he walked a line between reason and despair, until one night his world crashed in on him.

It happened quite simply, with one of his temporary nurses accidentally interrupting an operation to replace the flesh over his left ribcage. She screamed and dropped the tray she had been carrying, and Dr. Masham whirled around to face her. For the first time he was faced with the possibility of discovery, and the thought terrified him. He frantically tried to silence her, but she only batted his hands away and continued to scream. Finally he was able to cover her mouth, but he could tell that his pleas were falling on deaf ears. Enraged, he shook her back and forth, desperate to convince her that the horror she was looking at was

necessary to science. He did not even realize she was dead until her body dropped at his feet. Dr. Masham reeled back in shock at what he had done, but the screams had done their work, and he heard footsteps running towards the operating theater. Frantically, he cast about for some manner of escape, and began to gather up tools to take with him and complete the operation later. As the rest of the staff battered down the door, he cast one last look at the ruins of his life and career, and fled into the night.

## CURRENT SKETCH

For the last three years, Dr. Masham has struggled to return himself to some semblance of normalcy. He believes that his public life in Lechberg was ruined when he disappeared, and he is still grappling with the fact that he took the life of another. He also still believes that he can reverse or sidestep whatever it is that keeps his transplanted flesh dead and thereby bring to the medical world a new method of treatment. To that end he has assembled a new lab in Lechberg's slums, stealing what he needs from the various morgues and clinics around the city—including his own. Dr. Masham also retains his sense of compassion, and has nearly been caught by the authorities several times while helping the injured. Many stories are told of the "Angel of the Alleys" who dresses in rags and offers comfort to those who need it. Dr. Masham is aware of these stories, and uses the cover they provide to gain assistance when he is forced to. No matter what the situation, he refuses all compensation and rebuffs all attempts to identify him.

Unfortunately, accidents do happen and there are those who have seen his scars. Another group of stories has begun to circulate about the "Scarred Creeper" of Lechberg, and the tavern gossips whisper of how he snatches passersby at the mouth of alleys and takes them away to his lair for gruesome experiments. The Creeper has become something of a bogeyman to the locals, and the stories grow more embroidered with each telling. They have even been brought to the attention of Ivan Dilisnya himself, and he has authorized the enforcers of Lechberg to use whatever means necessary to investigate the matter. Dr. Masham knows that the police are looking for him, but still believes that it is for the murder of his nurse, and not for the tales told about the Creeper.

Although all of Lechberg is aware of the Scarred Creeper and many have heard of the Angel of the Alleys, only one man knows Dr. Masham's secret. Dr. Christopher Hackle was the first to come through the door that night long ago, and recognized his friend and colleague in the monstrosity that fled from the clinic. It was he that first searched Dr. Masham's study, and found the notebooks that chronicled the research and

experiments that had led to his friend's downfall. For three years he has kept silent, and has continued the research on his own, hoping to someday be able to reverse the operations that destroyed Dr. Masham's career. Each month that passes without success only serves to prick his conscience, increase his frustration and discourage his resolve.

## COMBAT

When in battle, Dr. Masham usually attacks by swinging with his fists or any surgical implements that may be handy. As he has only replaced his outer skin and not his muscles or organs, he has not gained the superior strength of most golems. Therefore, his blows deal only 1d4 damage each, even when he wields a weapon. Likewise, he has not gained any augmentation to his natural dexterity, and so gains no bonuses to his Armor Class. However, the pain and trauma of the surgeries he performed on himself allowed him to develop a superior constitution, and he regenerates 1 hp per hour, even after "death." Dr. Masham can force himself into an enraged state twice per day, which lasts until he has destroyed whatever enraged him. When in this state, he deals 1d12 damage with each blow. Dr. Masham avoids using this unless pressed, and does what he can to help those he injures.

Whenever he deals two successful hits on the same target in one round, he can automatically grasp his opponent around the neck, and will strangle for 1d8 damage until the victim is dead, or he is forced to let go. The victim or an ally may make a Strength check to get free, but Dr. Masham will immediately re-attack his original target. Otherwise, he will not let go until he has suffered at least 10 points of damage. He is also able to cause horror at will by suddenly ripping open his clothing and revealing the patchwork of scars and sutures on his body. Those who witness such a display are forced to make a horror check at a -2 penalty. As with his enraged state, Dr. Masham avoids using this unless there is no other avenue of escape open to him.

As he is both the creator and created, he has no automatic telepathic contact with anyone. Although he continues to require food and respiration, his constant work has rendered him accustomed to long periods without sleep. Poison affects him as normal, but the dead flesh he has grafted onto himself has granted him the resilience of other golems. As such, he can only be hit with a weapon of at least +1 enchantment. Blessed weapons have no special effect on him, and fire affects him normally.

Dr. Masham suffers from two *zeitgebers*. The first is the presence of acid. This reminds him of the accident that started him down the road he now treads, and when presented by acid in any form, he will break off whatever action he is currently involved in and flee.

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

He will, however, remember those who threatened him, and will avoid them at all costs in future. Acid is perhaps the only way he can be truly destroyed, as he cannot regenerate any damage caused by it. His second zeitgeber is the sight of a crippled or deformed person. Such a sight reminds him of the intentions with which he began his career, and he will stand motionless with grief for 1d4 rounds. During this time, he will not respond even to defend himself, but if attacked he will revive in his enraged state.

Finally, Dr. Masham has all of the special abilities of a 5th-level thief. These have been developed over the last three years, as he has had resort to burglary to obtain the surgical supplies he needs.

sized European city, or along the East Coast of the United States.



### ADVENTURE HOOKS

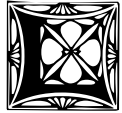
- ❖ Adventurers traveling through Lechberg will doubtless hear tales of the Scarred Creeper, and may choose to investigate the matter. Alternately, as his enforcers have had no luck in tracking Masham down, Ivan himself may commission the PC's to find the Creeper and destroy him. During their investigation they should hear tales of the Angel, and the good doctor may even come to their aid if any get wounded. Once he is cornered, however, and the PC's discover the truth about him, they will be faced with the choice of whether to destroy a possible force for good in the city or risk Ivan's wrath in setting him free.
- ❖ Dr. Hackle has finally discovered the breakthrough he has been looking for, but has no idea where Dr. Masham is. The PC's are hired to find his old friend, and must hunt him through the back streets and alleys of Lechberg. The adventure is further complicated by the fact that they are to bring him back as unharmed as possible, and believing them to be Ivan's enforcers, Dr. Masham will certainly resist any attempts to subdue him. On the other hand, Dr. Hackle may wish to have his friend captured so that he can be studied. Dr. Hackle may have decided to pursue the fame that Dr. Masham sought, and the PC's may well find themselves coming to the aid of their former adversary.
- ❖ Alternately, Dr. Hackle has finally given up all hope of ever helping his friend, and asks the PC's to put the fallen doctor out of his misery. He will supply them with everything he knows, and will be available for further information. Due to the clinic's fame in Lechberg, he will be able to provide police assistance, or block their investigation long enough for the PC's to escape.
- ❖ Due to his dislike of magic, Dr. Masham can easily be inserted into a *Masque of the Red Death* campaign. He would be most at home in middle-

# THE LOVE-TORN GHOST

## PAIN DEEPER THAN DEATH

by Alex Miranda

[alxpinto@netscape.net](mailto:alxpinto@netscape.net)



Love is perhaps the most blessed feeling one can experience in a lifetime. It comes also as one of the last pure and honest forces in the Realm of Dread, so much that all young boys and girls are taught to value it highly. Love may well be the only good thing they will ever be given without a price, and the only prize the lords of these lands cannot truly taint or destroy. They are also taught that love blesses the hearts of all eventually, and that with patience, they too will find their beloved and the joy of romance. Throughout its infancy, love is like a growing tree, withstanding the cold winds and swaying in the light breezes of a merry spring. It is a tree that in time will reach a resplendent summer and proudly bear green leaves and ripe fruit.

But alas, despite the promises, there are those for whom the tree will never bear fruit; those who will see their years passing by, the leaves turning yellow, then withering, then falling. As the years pass, so does the happiness of such souls fade and become sour resignation. In place of a bright hope remain only the sighs of an endless waiting.

To these, love itself becomes a despairing dream, then a discarded hope, and then a hideous and bitter lie. These who were denied their rightful share of joy in life are forever cursed with emptiness in their hearts, and tears that will never run dry.

### BACKGROUND

Dalia was happy in her childhood. She was poor, but she was also one of the prettiest girls in the village. She was well acquainted with the wives' tales about love, and not once did she doubt she'd grow up to find a good husband and live her own love story. And so, during her whole childhood, she dreamt of her first sweetheart, of the others she would have, and then of her wedding. So far away from worries, as children are wont to be, Dalia was happy. But it would not last forever. Nothing good ever does.

One day, Dalia's father had the chance to go abroad on a journey where he could make a sizable sum of gold. Food was scarce; the family was always in need, and this was not an opportunity to be missed. Her

father took his place in the caravan, as Dalia and her mother said farewell with tearful eyes. The days passed and passed, but Dalia's father did not return. They waited long hours with their eyes on the road, but still he did not come. Their hope dwindled with each day that passed. From time to time they heard scattered and conflicting reports of an assault on the caravan: that some people had escaped; that everyone had been slaughtered; the attackers had been werewolves; the attacker had been mere bandits. No certain news ever reached their ears. At last, they gave up hope and mourned for him.

Dalia's mother never recovered from the shock. The loss of her husband had been too great for her, and she eventually fell gravely ill. Probably a sickness of the soul, as the healers said, but nonetheless crippling enough to render her bedridden for life.

Dalia was 13 by this time, and she stayed by her mother's bed ceaselessly following her father's death. In the following years, her mother was her only companion. Dalia seldom left the house. When she did, it was once a week for shopping, or even less frequently. Her mother became demanding and harsh, her mind and soul embittered by disease. Life for poor Dalia became a neverending march of sorrow, as she tended to her mother's needs and tried to alleviate the grief that pained them both. All happiness fled her existence, and never again left her house to spend time with her peers. She only stood at the window of her mother's room, watching others play, grow, and fall in love. And as she too grew older, the loss of her youth weighed upon her, and added to her mourning. She began to long for someone to return some happiness to her life. In time, she forgot her chores and errands, and spent hours in helpless fits of sobbing. If not for the occasional visit from a neighbor, she and her mother would have both died of neglect.

And so, the years passed, and Dalia grew. The child became a youth, and the youth a melancholy woman. As seen from her mother's bedroom window, the landscape too had changed. The green fields now seemed perpetually white and cold to her, even on the brightest summer days. Her friends married and departed: one today, another tomorrow, and her half-

remembered friends vanished one by one. Folk no longer stopped to peer within her house, and those that had to pass by it on their errands seemed to deliberately ignore the structure, especially the window at which Dalia spent most of her time.

At last, her mother died. Dalia was 23. She came out that day, half-expecting to see her forgotten friends, dressed in tears. She found no one. The passersby in the street did not recognize her. She was truly alone.

She was still young, she was still attractive, but from her window, she had seen all her friends depart, one by one, with their husbands and wives. Month after month it went on, year after year, until she alone remained. Somehow, her youth had slipped away. The time of joy was past, and the love that should have come to her had failed to appear. How she wept that day! How she longed to hold her beloved in her arms and whisper in his ear. But no beloved had appeared to hear her words, or her love.

On that day, she wandered the streets, lost in her thoughts. She paid no attention to the strange looks people cast at her, to the women closing the window shutters at her passage, or snatching their children inside. Oblivious to everything, she had not heard the tales told around the village hearths about the lost girl and her crazy mother, about the crone that had them imprisoned, or about the woman charmed and locked away in her home by two witches. She never heard the murmurs about the pale gazing face of a ghostly girl that had died of hunger many years ago; of how her father had fled his wife's viciousness and ugliness, or perhaps from his own daughter's evil charms. Myriad were the tales the people had spun about her in all those years, and Dalia could have spent days listening to them all. But that day, she merely walked among the folk of her village. No one recognized her, and most fled or mocked her, pointing and jeering. She saw none of her old friends. Everyone was gone. Lost in the midst of a crowd, she was truly alone.

A shadow fell upon her heart that day. Dalia became silent and painfully withdrawn. The years passed, but no love came. She remained forever the crazy woman by the window, cut off from human contact. Beyond the glass and shutters, she still harbored some dim hope, but she knew it was a bleak one, drowned in cold, relentless tears.

Dalia died alone, in her bed, weeping as she had done all her life, weeping for a promise that was never fulfilled. Stubborn tears still dangled from her eyes in her bier. But her grief was stronger than death. She felt betrayed, unjustly denied a joy that should have been rightfully hers. Feeling unfulfilled and empty at the end of her days, even in death she had but one aspiration. She became a spirit torn by despair and need, eternally seeking the warmth of the living, the loving caress of another being.

### CURRENT SKETCH

Dalia is now a Ghost. She still craves for love and companionship and hopes yet to find them one day. She dimly realizes how difficult that is now that she is dead, but it is all she can cling to and all that keeps her from rest. Her yearning is eternal and she cannot sleep until she can find someone who returns what love she still has to give. Unfortunately for her, she emanates a sinister aura over which she has no control, a pall both dangerous and unforgiving (see below).

Dalia haunts the same house where she lived and died. The house itself is in ruins, but a permanent phantom shift shows something entirely different. Interlopers will find an open, two-story house, with a large staircase leading upward at the far end of the hall. The second story balcony stretches across the left side of the house, and overlooks the entrance hall. The right side holds the servants' area and the kitchen.

The ground floor is dark and murky. Everything is quiet, nothing moves, no threat is felt. There are no sounds, but for a soft sobbing that comes from the second floor. Everything is just as it was when Dalia died, and the house is swathed only in as much cobwebs and dirt as it was that day. But anyone who walks through the rooms of this phantom house has an unshakable feeling of being tricked by their own eyes. It's as if the shadows sway and stretch longer than they should, as if the lines of the house aren't exactly straight; as if some miasma distorts everything in sight. Everywhere objects are scattered on the floor, memories of lost youth and wasted days: broken toys, withered flowers, ragged books, and smashed dishes. The frustration of a lifetime lies strewn on the floor.

The upper floor is a bit different. The staircase seems slightly illuminated and clearer than the lower floor, almost as an invitation to ascend. This dim light brightens in the direction of the bedchamber, whereas all other rooms fall gradually back into darkness. Almost all rooms on this floor are bedrooms. Their doors stand open, revealing broken windows and trees swaying in the wind outside. The rooms themselves are as dusky as twilight, but unlike below, there is no sense of distortion.

The only lit bedchamber is where Dalia lingers and weeps. It is full of mementos from those that Dalia tried to love, only to die beneath her grasp. These doomed lovers have long since vanished, leaving nothing behind but some personal object. These, Dalia keeps as reminders of past lovers, though they only increase her grief. Dalia is anchored to the second floor of the house. She can go from the bedchamber to the staircase, but she can never descend.



## APPEARANCE

Dalia looks as she did when her mother died and no friends appeared to offer solace and comfort. She has a sorrowful face and long black, disheveled hair falling to just above her shoulders. Her eyes are swollen and reddened from weeping, but her face is unusually pale.

She is dressed in a long skirt that falls to her ankles, and a white, flowing blouse. She is barefooted and wears a kerchief around her neck. She always appears as a flowing, indistinct figure, hovering one foot above the floor, constantly sighing and sobbing.

## DALIA

**Second Magnitude Semi-Corporeal Ghost, Chaotic Neutral**

<b>Armor Class</b>	-1 (6)	<b>Str</b>	10
<b>Movement</b>	12	<b>Dex</b>	13
<b>Level/Hit Dice</b>	5	<b>Con</b>	-
<b>Hit Points</b>	32	<b>Int</b>	12
<b>THAC0</b>	15	<b>Wis</b>	10
<b>No. of Attacks</b>	1	<b>Cha</b>	14
<b>Damage/Attack</b>	1d6		
<b>Special Attacks</b>	Suggestion, emotion, Constitution drain		
<b>Special Defenses</b>	+1 weapon to hit, invisibility at will, immune to biological spells		
<b>Special Abilities</b>	Rejuvenation		
<b>Special Vulnerabilities</b>	Silver Weapons		
<b>Magic Resistance</b>	nil		

**Rejuvenation:** Dalia can recover all of her hit points instantly, but must rest for 45 minutes afterwards.

**Suggestion (Sp):** This ability is similar to the spell *mass suggestion* cast by a 5th-level sorcerer. This is essentially Dalia's sole means to attract the living to her.

**Emotion (Sp):** This ability is similar to a weaker version of the *emotion* spell, as Dalia can only inspire sadness in her targets. She can cast this spell as a 5th-level sorcerer.

**Aura of Sorrow (Su):** Dalia involuntarily emanates an aura that affects both her and the house. The aura is permanent, and she can exert no control over it. Since it tends to act against her own desires, casting people away or endangering them, Dalia would do anything to be free of it. The aura has two effects. The first of these pervades the whole house, and anyone inside is subject to its effects. It acts as the spell *aura of despair* cast by a 3rd-level sorcerer, imparting a heavy feeling of sorrow tinged with fear on anyone who enters the house. It is as if the house itself were breathing sadness. Affected creatures become depressed and act

with less determination. In game terms, this aura imposes a -2 penalty on all rolls, including attacks, damage, and saving throws. Damage dealt is always at least one hit point, however. This effect drives many trespassers away, which leaves Dalia understandably despondent.

The second effect of the aura affects Dalia only. It makes her touch cold to her victims, dealing 1d6 damage and draining a point of Constitution each round from any creature grasped by her. The lost constitution will return at a rate of one point per hour, beginning when the victim leaves the house. This effect makes it dangerous for Dalia to embrace any potential lover for long without killing them, which again makes her own longings harder to attain.

## COMBAT

Since Dalia cannot leave the second floor of the house, she is usually encountered weeping atop the staircase. Her face is marred by tears, but the sight of anyone entering the house brightens her features. Dalia will not attack visitors. Her goal is not to spread death, but to be free from her solitude. She will normally employ her suggestion ability to attract her "guests," but she will not speak. Her mood visibly improves if someone shows intentions of climbing the stairs.

As a visitor approaches, Dalia's tears of sorrow change to tears of joy. She will attempt to embrace that person, forgetting for the moment the pain her touch causes the living. Embraced victims can escape with a successful Dexterity check; Strength is useless against this phantom embrace. If confronted physically, she will attempt to flee the conflict by becoming invisible.

## RESOLVING THE HAUNTING

Dalia can be destroyed through direct confrontation in battle, but that is not the only means of putting her to rest. True love would be a way, but that is probably beyond her reach forever. If, nonetheless, a selfless individual decides to sacrifice himself to her, and willingly allows himself to be held in her arms, Dalia's yearning will finally be quenched and she will vanish forever. However, the victim must return her cold embrace for 1d4+6 rounds, enduring both the damage and the Constitution drain.



# ADDAR

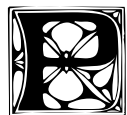
## THE FALLEN GUARDIAN

by Luiz Eduardo Neves Peret

rakshasa2001@hotmail.com

*"... they send to him a pure maiden... she makes him forget his natural ferocity and subdues him... That's the only way hunters can capture an Unicorn alive."*

—Jorge Luiz Borges,  
*The Book of Imaginary Beings*



Perhaps nothing is more horrifying than when a good being is tempted and seduced by evil. But when this creature is a member of a race known for their absolute goodness and purity, charged with the well-being of others, the fall from grace is even fouler. This is the sad tale of one such being, a noble champion of light who fell prey to his own pride and arrogance, ultimately becoming the first of a degenerated race of monsters who now haunt the Demiplane of Dread.

### ADDAR'S TALE

Addar the unicorn was, like others of his kind, the guardian of a wide, lush forest in a distant world. He was noble as all unicorns are, gentle with all creatures of the forest, and a fierce warrior against anyone who would threaten his beloved lands, their fauna and flora. He was fond of the high trees and clear pools and waterfalls, and loved the company of sprites, pixies, dryads and elves, avoiding contact with outsiders as much as possible.

Different from others of his kind, though, Addar would not let any elven maiden ride him, no matter what the situation. He believed unicorns were warriors and champions, and should be praised and respected, not used as riding beasts. Others, older and wiser, advised him against such proud thoughts, telling him that when an unicorn let a maiden ride him, that was not servitude, but rather a prize and honor for both beings, as the maiden would be proving her purity of heart, and the unicorn would be sealing a partnership with

someone truly worthy. However, Addar refused to see such an act as partnership. He saw only servitude and humiliation.

Such bitter thoughts, coming from an average person, would normally be seen as mere prejudices, and might even go unnoticed by most others. But it was no less than an appointed guardian of Goodness and Nature who was spitting those poisoned words, and that was seen with concern by some inhabitants of the forest, and with joy by others. These last were, of course, creatures of darkness and foul spirits, who were barely tolerated by others as part of the natural balance. Even worse, besides those dark creatures, there were others even more dangerous, some who did not even belong to the natural ecosystem, and whose presence meant only ruin and defilement. There are creatures who dwell in other planes of existence, who sometimes come near to the Material Plane to fulfill their dark plans and corrupt others.

One such monster, an evil equine creature with a jet-black coat and an even darker heart, was attracted to Addar's forest in response to his misguided thoughts. The nightmare, unable to physically enter the forest without being properly summoned, visited the troubled unicorn in his dreams. There, she appeared as a common, if beautiful, black mare, appealing to his noble feelings at first, coming as an omen, an enigma to be understood. She would whisper soft words and fragmented murmurings to him, asking for help, from a far-away forest, without unicorns, without any guardians to protect it or its residents. She also told him of how the forest inhabitants would be grateful and willing to follow his lead, eventually worshipping him as a force of nature. She insinuated he would be treated the same way the guardian spirits of his forests were treated.

Addar was confused. At first, he thought it was a vivid dream, nothing more. But the constant recurrence worried him. He started to think he was really receiving an omen, a message that he was to move away from his home forest and find other places to protect. Besides, the idea of being worshipped wooed him. Instead of talking about his dream with the other entities of the

forest, he decided to keep silent and wait, letting the sweet words fester in his once-pure soul.

In the meantime, the elder spirits of the forest felt the change in Addar's core, and they could feel a subtle corruption slowly spreading through his soul. Being unable to detect the presence of the evil entity (which was safely outside their area of guardianship, and would approach Addar only in dreams), they were alarmed, and decided that it was time for Addar to learn a lesson about the virtue of sharing and partnership.

The local elven kingdom was ruled by a wise king and queen. They had an only daughter, an elven princess of charming beauty and unparalleled purity. She was training to be a noble warrior-priestess, and the ancient spirits dictated that Addar should be her steed. So, she was told Addar's name and given permission to tame him. The spirits thought he would finally accept the noble partner and once again become true to his nature, leaving the perverted ideas behind forever.

However, in the next night of the full moon, when the elven maid went deep into the forest and performed the ritual that would summon Addar and bind him to her, he refused to answer. The princess did not understand, and repeated the ancient incantation, afraid that something might have happened to the enchanted animal. The unicorn was incensed, disgusted at the idea of being submissive to someone he perceived as being beneath him. He resisted the spell again and again, despite her best efforts. His obstinacy gave new strength to the nightmare, who was then able to use the summoning spell to briefly come to the grove where the princess waited.

The elven maid immediately recognized the monster for what it was, and prepared for battle. The nightmare, on the other hand, knew that Addar should not see her in such a situation, or her plans would be thwarted. She immediately ignited the trees around her with her magical flaming mane and hooves, and disappeared into the flames. Since she was not the true object of the summoning, she was able to leave at once. The still-inexperienced princess had no chance to strike the creature, and was trapped in the burning grove.

Addar, who was finally losing his powers to resist the enchantment, suddenly felt free once again, when the nightmare took his place. Feeling a sense of gratitude towards the creature, and not knowing her true nature yet, he was taken by aback when he smelled the smoke and heard the screams coming from the grove. He ran there and saw the elven maid surrounded by flames and already suffocating, unable to cast spells to quench the fire and save herself. He knew he should jump into the flames and let the princess climb upon him in order to save her, but his pride was stronger. If she was so pure and good, then surely she would find a way to save herself without him. And there were other creatures in the forest who would be more than glad to

help her, other unicorns who would let her mount them. With this in mind, Addar turned his back on her. He felt the disapproving look of all the forest spirits, could hear their whispers calling him back, asking him to repent, but those whispers fell on deaf ears.

In the smoke and mists that were rising from the burning tree grove, Addar saw the silhouette of the black mare against the moonlight. She beckoned to him, and he entered the mists without a second thought, knowing there was no return from that point. As he turned around one last time to see the princess choking to death, he knew in his corrupted heart that he was never going to allow anyone to ride him, under no circumstances. He would be king of his own forest.

He saw the nightmare in her true shape, but instead of being disgusted, he felt he had lost his place in the natural world he had left behind, and eagerly welcomed her soothing words and gestures. She signaled for him to follow her into the mists and towards the unprotected woods he longed so much to claim for his own. Through the Mists they traveled, finally arriving at a dark, haunted forest somewhere in the Realm of Dread. There, Addar joined with the nightmare in an unholy union, and later on he fathered twins. They were unicorns like their father, but their coat was gray, their hooves the color of scorched earth and their manes and tails utterly jet-black.

Blind to any fatherly feelings, Addar was afraid that his children would someday take his "kingdom" and banished them along with the nightmare, who he blamed for his fall, in his rare moments of awareness about what he had done. Ashamed by his own deeds, unable to leave the misty woods and unwilling to come back home, he remained in that dark place, and the Dark Powers granted him his wish: a forest that was his to protect and command.

However, the forest was devoid of true natural life or beauty. Most trees were dead or sick, and only evil treants, blood willows and death's head trees would thrive in the black, poisoned soil. No elves, dryads or pixies would live in those woods, but baobhan sith, bowray and gremishkas eventually called that forest home. The few normal animals who dared walk among the strangling vines, poisonous leaves and thorny branches, were mostly predators or scavengers. Sometimes, a lost traveler would come into that dark realm, only to discover that Addar, now mad and more bitter than before, still looking for worshippers and subjects, pursuing and killing anyone who does not pay him "the proper tribute".

### ADDAR, CORRUPTED UNICORN

**Large Magical Beast**

**HD:** 6d10+30 (55 hp)

**Initiative:** +3 (Dexterity)

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

**Speed:** 60 ft.

**AC:** 20 (-1 size, +3 Dexterity, +8 natural)

**Attacks:** Horn +11 melee, 2 hooves +5 melee

**Damage:** Horn 1d12+8, hooves 1d8+2

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 10 ft. / 5 ft. (10 ft. with horn)

**Special Qualities:** Magic circle against good/evil, fear, silent hooves, flaming horn, spell-like abilities, immunities

**Saves:** Fort +10, Ref +7, Will +11

**Abilities:** Str 20, Dex 17, Con 21, Int 12, Wis 20, Cha 24

**Skills:** Animal Empathy +11, Knowledge (nature) +10, Listen +11, Move Silently +11, Hide +11, Spot +11, Wilderness Lore +12

**Feats:** Alertness

---

**Organization:** Solitary

**Treasure:** Triple standard

**Alignment:** Neutral evil

Addar looks very much like he did when he dwelt in his forest. He is almost nine feet in length and stands five and a half feet high at the shoulder. His coat, beard, and mane are all pure white. A three-foot ivory-colored horn grows from the center of his forehead. For the unwary, he still looks like a proud guardian of purity and nature. A second, closer look, for those unfortunate enough to come closer, reveals the tiny blood-red stains on his coat, and the malicious, crazed look in his constantly-moving bloodshot eyes. He has become paranoid and distrustful, believing his damned offspring will come back some time in the near future to drive him away from his self-appointed throne, or that his original companions and allies will come after him and blame him for the death of the elven princess.

### COMBAT

Addar has the same abilities of a normal unicorn, enhanced by the Dark Powers to match those of his offspring. His horn is considered a +3 weapon of piercing type. If charging against an opponent, his horn causes 3d12+8 points of damage, but he cannot use his sharpened hooves in the same round.

**Silent Hooves (Ex):** Addar can move in absolute silence at will, imposing a -6 circumstance penalty to his victims' Listen checks. Unlike his descendants, the shadow unicorns (see below), Addar's white coat doesn't allow him to become invisible in shadows.

**Fear (Su):** Although he's able to move in absolute silence, Addar prefers to let himself be heard, for the echo of his hooves thundering in the shadows fills the hearts of all creatures with panic. When Addar uses this approach, he also whines a shrieking wail (a standard action) with the effects of a *fear* spell (DC 23), as if cast by a 9th-level sorcerer.

**Magic Circle against Good/Evil (Su):** Addar continuously projects a *magic circle against good*, which he cannot suppress. Knowing that his offspring are utterly evil, he is prepared to revert the effects to a *magic circle against evil* at will.

**Flaming Horn (Su):** Three times per day, Addar is able to produce dark crimson flames that engulf his horn, as a free action. At this time, its color changes from ivory to ebon. These flames last for eight rounds and cause an additional 2d4 points of damage per hit. With this flaming horn, Addar can carve a *glyph of gloom* on a tree. This *glyph* warns shadow unicorns that they are crossing Addar's territory, and causes a magical gloom to descend over the area in a 200-yard radius centered on the tree. Within this gloomy area, natural light never rises above the level of twilight, and a feeling of melancholy affects all creatures who fail a Will save (DC 15), causing a morale penalty of -2 to all attack rolls, damage rolls, saving throws, and skill checks. A *light* spell temporarily removes both effects, and a *daylight* spell provides a safe oasis within the area. That is, until Addar detects its presence and comes to investigate—and remove—the offensive light source. The lord can carve multiple *glyphs* to cover a larger area and mark his territory, although such measures are futile, since no one disputes his ownership of the forest. This is only another symptom of his paranoia. The trees that bear *glyphs of gloom* die within a year, and the beast must replace the *glyph* with a new one, dooming another tree. In this way, Addar causes the very same destruction he once vowed to fight against.

**Spell-like Abilities:** Addar can *detect chaos* as a free action (in Ravenloft, his normal ability to *detect evil* has been warped, like the spell of the same name). Once per day, he can *teleport without error* to anywhere within his cursed forest. His status as lord of the domain prevents him from leaving the woods. Three times per day, when totally engulfed by the shadows of his forest, Addar can *blink* (as the wizard spell of the same name). He has lost the power to cast curative spells, but he can *inflict light wounds* three times per day and *inflict moderate wounds* once per day, as a 5th-level druid, with a touch of his horn. He can also cast *poison* once per day, as an 8th-level druid, with a touch of his horn.

**Immunities (Ex):** Addar is immune to all poisons, sleep, hold, charm, and life-affecting magic.

### ADDAR'S WOOD

Addar haunts a nameless woodland lost in the Mists. It is a pocket domain on its own, far away from the most traveled trading routes and isolated from other forests. This way, the unicorn will never see his forest properly populated with prospective subjects.

There is one way in and out of his woods: sometimes, a hidden grove of trees, looking healthy, solemn and ancient, come into view somewhere. It may appear within another forest, over an otherwise bald hill, in the high yellow grass of a savanna, or even in a sun-scorched desert.

The first time the grove was reported was during the first invasion of Darkon by Falkovnia. Away from the dead, blackened trees of Drakov's realm and out of reach for the undead legions who marched to drive Drakov's legions away, the grove seemed a sacred heaven for those running from the battle. According to a few reports, a strange, calm stillness covers the area. It looks truly peaceful, a deceiving, sweet trap for the unwary.

More than once, a company of Falkovnian soldiers came running into this place, escaping from the ever-growing army of unliving monsters, and noticed that the creatures would not approach this site. Taken by a feeling of serenity, the soldiers entered the misty grove, only to find themselves magically transported to Addar's wood, and then the hunt began. The only way out of the cursed forest is through another grove, which is very difficult to reach, for the travelers must find their way among pathless woodlands, poisonous plants, evil treants and dark-hearted fey folk, always under the pressure of an invisible presence, a malevolent pair of eyes that looks at them from the shadows. This is the lord, toying with his newly found, would-be subjects.

Sometimes, unwary travelers, most of them escapees from Falkovnia, have also come into this dark realm. Since the first disappearances, however, the unholy grove has been spotted in several other places, indicating that Addar's realm floats in the Mists, briefly attaching itself to other domains. It might be possible that the entrance to his domain can even appear outside the Demiplane, thus bringing unfortunates into the Land of Mists. After a nightmarish hunt through the cursed woods, the would-be escapees would leave that place, only to find themselves trapped in another domain. Of course, the other way around might be also possible, and travelers who survive Addar's hunt could find their way out of Ravenloft—but this is likely just wishful thinking.

The Vistani avoid those patches of forest between Falkovnia and Darkon, and when they must cross them, they sing songs of praise and honor to shadow unicorns, trying to avoid being their quarry. Unfortunately, more than one party of adventurers has paid no heed to their advice, believing that the gypsies are telling tales to protect some hidden treasure in the woods, and has willingly entered Addar's wood through the grove, never to return.

The unicorn king keeps a hidden place in the heart of the forest, where he collects trophies of his prey. Armor, weapons, shields, bags of items and tools,

jewels and coins, and sometimes magical items, are all left as mute witnesses to Addar's evil doings. More than once, fugitives from his incessant pursuits came close to the exiting magical grove, but stopped at the sight of such treasures and tried to carry them, thus dooming themselves. Addar is quite selfish of his trophies, but uses them as bait if he feels he will be collecting more in the end.

Addar's offspring have remained outside his forest, haunting the woods in the frontier between Falkovnia and Darkon where the tree grove was first spotted. Currently, there are few of them—the two original shadow unicorns born of that unholy union with the nightmare, their own children, and further descendants. Like their sire, they tend to pursue and drive away any creature they find in their territory, especially other shadow unicorns. Because of this habit, younger shadow unicorns are slowly changing their territories, marching from forest to forest, and spreading their evil throughout the already gloomy woods of Ravenloft.

## SHADOW UNICORN

### **Large Magical Beast**

**HD:** 6d10+24 (48 hp)

**Initiative:** +3 (Dexterity)

**Speed:** 60 ft.

**AC:** 16 (-1 size, +3 Dexterity, +4 natural)

**Attacks:** Horn +10 melee, 2 hooves +3 melee

**Damage:** Horn 1d12+4, hooves 1d8+2

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 10 ft. / 5 ft. (10 ft. with horn)

**Special Qualities:** Fear, silent hooves, flaming horn, spell-like abilities, immunities

**Saves:** Fort +7, Ref +6, Will +10

**Abilities:** Str 19, Dex 17, Con 18, Int 12, Wis 18, Cha 20

**Skills:** Animal Empathy +8, Knowledge (nature) +10, Listen +10, Move Silently +15, Hide +15, Spot +11, Wilderness Lore +9

**Feats:** Alertness

**Organization:** Solitary

**Challenge Rating:** 5

**Treasure:** Standard

**Alignment:** Always neutral evil

**Advancement:** 7–8 HD (Large)

Shadow unicorns look like darkened versions of true unicorns. Their coats are gray, ranging from the deepest coal to the palest steel. Their long and silky manes and tails are always utterly black. Males also sport a black, tangled beard. All of them have bloodshot eyes, cloven hooves the color of scorched earth and a black horn, varying in length from two to three feet. They are fiercely territorial, and stalk their self-appointed forested territories, hunting down any trespassers and especially other shadow unicorns.

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

Shadow unicorns are omnivores, but prefer to eat sentient plants, which makes them enemies of dread treants. Sometimes, though, an uneasy alliance will be made between these two evil creatures. Such pacts rarely last for long.

The shadow unicorn's powdered horn can be used in the creation of 2d6 applications of alchemist's fire.

Each shadow unicorn will only tolerate the presence of another of the opposite sex during the spring mating season. After a gestation period of fourteen months, they always have twins, which are then taken away and raised by their mother until they reach adolescence. A shadow unicorn will not recognize even a close relative, and will mercilessly attack and try to kill any other member of its own race who trespasses on its territory.

When two shadow unicorns mate, approximately 5% of all births results in one twin being a true unicorn (see the *Monster Manual*). These creatures are born the same color of their dark counterparts, but their hides grow lighter until they cannot be mistaken for shadow unicorns. When a true unicorn survives and escapes his own family's pursuit, the good magical beast will grow up to become a mortal enemy of all shadow unicorns and do its best to revert the deadly effects of a shadow unicorn's presence in the natural areas of the Realm of Dread. The Vistani believe that one day, a true unicorn, a direct descendant of Addar, will enter his forest and clear it of all evil, ultimately confronting his traitorous ancestor.

### COMBAT

The shadow unicorn fights primarily with its horn and sharpened hooves. The horn is considered a +2 magical piercing weapon, causing 3d12+4 points of damage in a charge attack (the beast cannot use its hooves in the same attack).

**Silent Hooves (Ex):** A shadow unicorn can move in absolute silence at will, imposing a -6 circumstance penalty to its victim's Listen check. The gray coat of a shadow unicorn allows the creature to become effectively *invisible* whenever it is covered in shadows.

**Fear (Su):** Although it can move in absolute silence, the shadow unicorn prefers to let itself be heard, for the echo of his hooves thundering in the shadows fills the hearts of all creatures with panic. When the beast uses this special attack, it also whines a shrieking wail (a standard action) with the effects of a *fear* spell (DC 21), as if cast by an 8th-level sorcerer.

**Flaming Horn (Su):** Three times per day, the shadow unicorn is able to produce dark crimson flames that engulf its black horn, as a free action. These flames last for eight rounds and cause an additional 2d4 points of damage per hit. With this flaming horn, the shadow unicorn can carve a personal *glyph of gloom* on a tree.

This *glyph* warns shadow unicorns that they are crossing the monster's territory, and causes a magical gloom to descend over an area in a 100-yard radius centered on the tree. Within this gloomy area, natural light never rises above the level of twilight. A *light* spell temporarily removes this effect, and a *daylight* spell provides a safe oasis within the area. That is, until the unicorn detects its presence and comes to investigate—and remove—the offensive light source. The shadow unicorn can carve multiple *glyphs* to cover a larger area and mark its territory. The trees that bear such *glyphs* die within a year, and the beast must replace the *glyph* with a new one, dooming another tree. In this way, shadow unicorns cause the very same destruction their good relatives fight against.

**Spell-like Abilities:** Three times per day, when totally engulfed by the shadows of the forest, a shadow unicorn can *blink* as an 8th-level sorcerer.

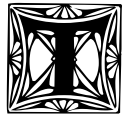
**Immunities (Ex):** Shadow unicorns are immune to all poisons, sleep, hold, charm, and life-affecting magic.

# THE JACOB GARVIN SCARECROW

## A TALE OF ARCANER ANIMATION AND INSANE ISOLATION

By Scott C. Bourgeois

black\_marauder@hotmail.com



The Jacob Garvin Scarecrow is a legend known to everyone around the small farming community of Valden, somewhere in the interior of the domain of Mordent. The legend of the scarecrow is used to scare young children into behaving, and is told in taverns and around campfires to people passing through the region. Few people actually believe this creature still exists, or if it even existed at all; but on lonely nights, deep in the forested farmlands, on dusty roads, people still go missing and sightings of strange things in the fields have terrified the locals for decades.

### JACOB GARVIN SCARECROW

<b>Ravenloft Straw Golem, Chaotic Evil</b>			
<b>Armor Class</b>	4	<b>Str</b>	19
<b>Movement</b>	12	<b>Dex</b>	19
<b>Level/Hit Dice</b>	10	<b>Con</b>	—
<b>Hit Points</b>	47	<b>Int</b>	10
<b>THAC0</b>	10	<b>Wis</b>	5
<b>No. of Attacks</b>	2	<b>Cha</b>	5
<b>Damage/Attack</b>	2d6/2d6	<b>XP</b>	3,500
<b>Special Attacks</b>	Summon Ravens, Cause Despair.		
<b>Special Defenses</b>	Immune to fire, +1 or better magic item to hit, hyper-regeneration.		
<b>Special Vulnerabilities</b>	Magical edged weapons do double damage, water slows (as the wizard spell) for 3 rounds, Garvin farm (see below).		

The Jacob Garvin Scarecrow is said to be made of straw with two wooden arms and a faceless cloth head stuffed with straw. It is said to wear a wide brimmed hat and an old pair of patched and loose coveralls. It is also said that ravens would flock around it.

### BACKGROUND

Fifty years ago, a reclusive farming family, the Garvins, moved into the Valden area during the settlement of the Mordent village. As the forests were carved away into fertile soil, the Garvin family set up a mile away, and quickly began to withdraw from the community activities.

The family consisted of Jacob Garvin and his wife Matilda; and his son and daughter, Dean and Betty. The entire family was seen as strange, and their reclusive nature made the folk of Valden grow uneasy with them. Truth be told, Jacob Garvin was a first rate xenophobe. He hated everyone who wasn't part of his family, and ran them off of his land if he ever found people trespassing. This attitude rubbed off on his family, and none of them were friendly or even pleasant to be around, with the exception of young and friendly Betty. In town one would only ever see Dean, Matilda and Betty. Jacob always loathed leaving his precious farm.

Now some local kids began a risky game, involving trespassing on the Garvin farmlands, and trying to sneak a peak at young Betty Garvin at the pond she liked to bathe in. Betty, good humored, thought the game was cute, and enjoyed the attentions of the town boys. When Jacob found out about this however, he was infuriated. He told Betty that she was forbidden to enter the town anymore, and doubled his efforts to scare people off his land.

Despite his best efforts, Jacob Garvin couldn't be all over his farm at every waking and sleeping moment. As word began to spread amongst the Valden youths that "Old Man Garvin" was off his rocker and trying his best to scare everyone away, the more youths began to try to trespass on his land. This infuriated Jacob, his mental state deteriorating almost daily as he became more convinced that the townsfolk were trying to siege his land.

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

Even his own family began to worry about Jacob. Betty was the first to express concern, but even Dean and Matilda spoke out at last, telling Jacob that he was going too far. Jacob, grudgingly, gave in to his family's plea, and declared that he would build a scarecrow as a warning, and that would be the end of it. Out in the barn that evening, the mad farmer and his son Dean built a scarecrow from straw and wood as a warning of the fate that any trespassers would face on his land. Ravens began to flock around the farmhouse that dark night.

For two weeks the Scarecrow stood at the edge of the Garvin land, and it seemed to be working. Everyone who came close to the land felt a weight of despair fall on their shoulders, and would soon leave. This pleased Jacob greatly, and he went back to his work with a new obsession. He began to spend more and more time on the farm. Jacob and Matilda began fighting, the farm beginning to drive a wedge between them. That's when Matilda began to feel it. She told Jacob that she felt a malicious force when she was at the farm, like she was unwanted. She also told him that she couldn't look at that scarecrow. She swore that it was always looking back at her. Jacob grew angry, convinced that she was just trying to sabotage all the work he'd done for the farm and his family.

Finally, two of the town's boys tried to sneak onto the Garvin farm on a bet. They came to the edge of the land and saw the scarecrow, and began to feel despair as everyone before had. Deciding not to trespass, the two youths decided instead to vandalize the scarecrow. Dean Garvin went to investigate, and was left with a horrid shock that is said to have turned his hair white. There was their scarecrow; its wooden fingers bloody. It was standing over the maimed corpses of the two youths, ravens cawing and circling overhead. Dean ran home and reported to his father what he'd seen, and Jacob rushed out to see. They found the two bodies as they were, but the Scarecrow was back at its regular spot, right where it had been placed at the edge of their land.

Jacob blamed Dean for the murders, and for making up such a ridiculous story. The farmer refused to hand Dean over to the village constable though, and that brought more unwanted attention to his farm. A posse formed of the boys' fathers and some farm hands, and they came to take Dean and string him up. The scarecrow sensed a great threat to his family, and knew that no amount of despair would drive off these men, as it had failed on the boys a few nights earlier. They had reached the edge of the farm when they were met by a large harmony of ravens, and the Jacob Garvin Scarecrow. Despite their best efforts, it is said that the men couldn't keep the monster down for long. "It would pull itself back together and rise anew," was the testimony of the survivors. The scarecrow killed six of the men, including both fathers, before the two

survivors fled into town screaming of the "monster on the Garvin farm."

When Jacob Garvin went to investigate the disturbance, he found more death, but Dean couldn't have done it. He investigated the scarecrow again, and this time it's blood stained wooden claws belied it's macabre nature. Jacob in his madness, felt pride. He had finally created something that would protect his land, and his family. The scarecrow had tasted blood, and now knew what it was expected to do with trespassers.

Arising the next morning, Jacob and Dean found Matilda missing. Jacob and his two children spent a day searching for her, until they found what remained of her horribly brutalized and mutilated corpse in the barn. Jacob, maddened further by sorrow and rage, sent Betty into town for help. He knew what had happened. Matilda had been saying it for weeks, how she'd felt unwanted, and was afraid of the Scarecrow. He had unwittingly made her into a trespasser, and the scarecrow had removed her from his land. Jacob turned up his head to the heavens and swore that he would not rest until he had destroyed the very monster he'd created. He and Dean would find this damnable creature and kill it for good. The ravens clustered thickly that evening.

When Betty returned with a contingent from the town, Dean was found eviscerated and hanging from a hook in the house. Jacob was never found. Neither was the scarecrow.

### CURRENT SKETCH

The people of Valden to this day have settled on the "truth of the matter." The official town record states that Jacob Garvin went insane one night and killed his entire family, save for young Betty who was out and in town that night. Betty herself eventually gave in to this story, out of pressure from the townsfolk. The tale about the scarecrow is now only a legend to scare children at night around the campfire.

Despite having faded into the ghost legends of Valden, the Jacob Garvin Scarecrow is quite real and still stalks the countryside surrounding the village. The creature still dwells on the Garvin farm, which has been abandoned for decades. For some reason, the scarecrow only seems to be active primarily in the nighttime, though there are some instances where it has been reportedly seen during the day. The local populace laughs off most of these reports.

The Jacob Garvin Scarecrow was made of one man's xenophobic obsession for solitude, and has a similar outlook. It reviles and hates all trespassers on what it sees as "its land." The scarecrow has also grown active. It actively keeps an eye out for potential trespassers now, and anyone new who stays in Valden



for more than a few days (sometimes less) is labeled as such.

It was built to serve the Garvin family, but feels that they betrayed it when Jacob declared his intention to destroy it. Thus, even a descendant of the Garvin family is no longer safe from its wrath. However, one member of the family seems to be exempt. Betty Garvin, for three years after the incident, continued to bathe in her favorite pond and nothing ever happened to her. She has mentioned to some that if there is indeed a monster out there that her father built, she feels sorry for it.

For the past fifty years, the ravens have been bad in the area as well. They come in clusters and all flock around the Garvin farm. Most people argue that the area is merely a good location for the scavengers, discounting the rumors of the powers that the Jacob Garvin Scarecrow is reputed have over the carrion birds.

It is also worth noting that the scarecrow is not a demilord or a darklord. It has no domain and can move as it pleases. For some unknown reason though, it has remained to haunt the old Garvin farmland.

### COMBAT

The creature is fierce in combat, but also smart. Followed by ravens everywhere, the scarecrow will often direct its winged thralls to attack first if it feels outnumbered or outclassed by its opponents. The ravens are normal Ravenloft ravens, but fight with mindless fury. They will not cease their onslaught barring death, unless their master, the Jacob Garvin Scarecrow, directs them to.

The scarecrow is immune to fire attacks both magical and non-magical, as well as any poisons and toxins. Like other golems, the scarecrow is also immune to life- or mind-affecting spells, and does not age or breathe. A +1 or greater magical weapon is required to inflict any damage at all on the creature. Its greatest defense lies in its regenerative powers though. Much like a troll, the scarecrow can re-grow itself from even a little bit of straw or wood left from its original form. After its hit points have reached 0 or lower, the creature regenerates at an accelerated rate, an astounding 10 hp per round. It can rise again and fight or escape any time after its hit points rise above 0.

Despite being faceless, the creature can see as though it had eyes, and can wail a terrible dirge that Causes Despair in its foes. Any creature looking upon the scarecrow when it unleashes its sorrowful wail must save vs. death magic or succumb to apathy and despair. Anyone so affected is only able to defend themselves, and move at a rate no faster than a walk for as long as the scarecrow remains in their sight. It can use this power three times a day.

The Jacob Garvin Scarecrow is also considered specialized in all manner of farm tool-like weaponry. It can wield scythes, sickles, knives, hand axes and other such tools with deadly skill. Despite this, the Scarecrow prefers to use its deadly wooden claws against its foes.

The scarecrow enjoys the element of surprise, preferring trickery to outright combat. Its unnatural speed is also an asset in its attacks, as is its supernatural strength.

If the creature picks out a group of trespassers in Valden, it will start by making its intentions obvious by wailing nearby the inn for the first few nights. After several restless nights spent in despair, most folk leave town. If this isn't enough to drive them off, the Scarecrow will attack at night. It directs its ravens to attack them, going so far as to smash windows to get indoors, but remains in the open where the trespassers will see it. This way, it can flee the scene luring the trespassers to the Garvin farm where it has the home advantage. It knows the farm intimately, will knowledge of all the best hiding places and ambush sites. It uses its abilities to their full potential, and can harry a party all night with raven attacks if necessary.

Finally, the creature does have weaknesses. The first of these is that magical edged weapons of +1 enchantment or better will inflict double damage on the scarecrow. Second, if splashed with water, the creature will react as though slowed (as per the wizard spell) for 3 rounds. If every part of the creature is destroyed utterly (through acid perhaps), it cannot regenerate, and will be fully and utterly destroyed. Lastly, and most strangely of all, the Jacob Garvin Scarecrow seems to have some unholy bond with the Garvin farm giving it an indirect weakness to fire. If the fields on the Garvin farm were ever to be burned, the scarecrow would take normal fire damage as though it were the recipient of the attack. It would not be able to regenerate if it were killed in this fashion.

### ADVENTURE HOOKS

- ❖ Betty Garvin is still alive, though 68 years old now. She's now a much-loved grandmother and runs a bakery in the village of Valden, "Betty Letman's Baked Goods." She rarely speaks of the entire scarecrow ordeal, and is quick to change the subject. For about a year after Betty moved in with some friends in the town, several of the local boys were mean to her and each one of them vanished. Locals weren't sure what to make of it, but kept it relatively quiet. Betty's eldest granddaughter, Bernice, is turning 16 this year, and some of the boys have been mean to her. One just went missing in the woods. Is the Jacob Garvin Scarecrow looking out for Betty's progeny?

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

- ❖ Black skies are a nuisance. It was only a matter of time until *someone* got sick of all of those pesky ravens. A farmer from the other side of Valden from the Garvin farm hired a man from Richemulot who claimed to have the power to “seduce pests away from Valden.” Well, the man went to work, and things appeared to be going well. But then the man disappeared in the woods. The farmer is willing to pay handsomely to anyone who finds out what happened to his “raven piper.” For that matter, he’ll also pay for anyone who can get rid of the ravens. What happened to this piper? Is he the piper he claims to be?
- ❖ A few of the locals in Valden believe that the entire Jacob Garvin Scarecrow story is a myth that was fabricated by Betty Garvin to hide a more sinister truth, that she killed her family. Why? These villagers believe that Jacob was an ex-buccaneer who amassed a sizeable fortune over the years and hid it on the farm. No one’s gone to check on this theory though, because everyone in town isn’t quite brave enough to actually *go* to the old Garvin farm and search for treasure. Betty’s close-lipped on the subject, but she’s never seen any financial trouble in all her life. Could there be some truth to this theory?
- ❖ An old hermit that no one likes to talk about lives out in the woods near Valden. The crazy old man’s been there for as long as anyone can remember, but some of the older residents would say it’s been about, “oh, fifty years or so.” This old hermit never enters town, and is only rarely seen out in the woods. Watching. Waiting. Could this old coot be Jacob Garvin, still stalking his errant creation after all this time? Is that why the scarecrow is still stalking the farm, to catch and kill its old creator? If this were true, then Jacob would be at least eighty years old now. Then again, the Dark Powers have played crueler tricks on lesser men.

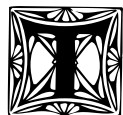
✘

# LARS KERSKMAN

## THE SILKEN STRANGLER

by Nathan Okerlund

sealionii@hotmail.com



he gangly redheaded youth threaded his way through the crowd with the ease of a fish swimming upstream. He was completely oblivious to the screams from the raised platform at the center of the plaza; screams were no more than background noise in the city of Lekar, especially on a Day of Public Penance.

Licking his lips nervously, eyes darting, he settled on a mark: a tall, thin man wearing the latest fashions from Dementlieu—a sure sign of both wealth and taste. He had his back to the young man; the late afternoon sunlight glowed on his bald head, picking out an odd scar running back along the scalp. There was something odd about the gentleman's posture—some subtle twisting of the neck, the head cocked at an unnatural and surely uncomfortable angle—but the young thief took no notice of it, instead focusing his attention on the side-pockets of the suit-coat and what lay within. He was close enough now to overhear the conversation the gentleman was having with the man next to him—a tall, heavysset man in a long cloak.

"...wasteful," the thin gentleman was remarking, gesturing at the officials performing the excruciations on the platform. "So much effort, and to what purpose? Why, the same criminals could furnish materials for years of research. I told Drakov he might..."

At the mention of the tyrant's name the young man's hand, probing gently at the coat's pocket, jerked involuntarily, and the gentleman's hand closed over his wrist. Jerking wildly, the thief momentarily freed himself, only to find his other arm seized in a grip like a vice. The heavysset man had seized him, his cloak falling open to reveal the insignia of the Talons on his breast. Staring up at his captor, the young thief went limp. Gods, a Talon! he whimpered to himself—but then his eyes were drawn inexorably away from the cold, impassive face of the Talon to the face of the thin gentleman, now turned toward him. It was a narrow face, with a cruel, sharp nose and a thin hooked mouth—but the worst thing about it was the eyes. The right eye was gray and cold as a winter morning; the left had been bisected by a hideous scar running the length of the man's face, leaving the eye white and staring with the gaze of a living corpse.

The gentleman smiled, and the glint of his teeth was like the flash of a falling scalpel. "However, this young man shall not go to waste," he said with satisfaction. "Secure him, please, Gormunn. I have an experiment in mind already."

## LARS KERSKMAN, THE SILKEN STRANGLER

**Broken One (spider), 4th level rogue:** Medium-size Humanoid; HD 4d6+12; hp 30; Init +9; Spd 40 ft; AC 19 (+6 Dex, +3 natural); Atks: +7 melee (1d6 + special or by weapon) +9 ranged; SA Sneak attack +2d6, Evasion, Uncanny Dodge; AL CN; SV Fort +4, Ref +10, Will +0; Str 18, Dex 22, Con 17, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 4.

*Skills and Feats:* Climb (as permanent spider climb), Disable Device +4, Escape Artist +10, Hide +10, Intimidate +7, Jump +42 (+7 ranks, +3 Strength, +2 synergy with Tumble, +30 as if affected by a permanent jump spell, no maximum), Listen +4, Move Silently +11, Open Lock +4, Spot +4, Tumble +12, Use Rope +9; Exotic Weapon Proficiency: Garrote, Exotic Weapon Proficiency: Lasso, Improved Initiative.

## BACKGROUND

Lars Kerskman was born in the slums of Lekar and spent his childhood as one of the city's street urchins, growing up unsupervised and uncared for, ignorant of everything but the skills of survival on the street. However, he proved well-adapted to his environment; he was naturally nimble and clever, and he soon found a place as a beggar and pick-pocket among the city's criminal element. He survived and even thrived as a petty criminal until he had the misfortune to be caught in the audacious attempt to pick the pocket of Vjorn Horstman, minister of science to Drakov himself.

Having captured him with the aid of his Talon bodyguard, Horstman lost no time in transporting the unfortunate youth to his laboratory. Horstman had just made a new and, to his mind, especially intriguing

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

version of his primal serum from the effluvia of a giant spider captured and killed by Talons a few days previously, and he wanted to test his new creation as quickly as possible. However, difficulties in bureaucratic processing had left him temporarily without subjects; he was, therefore, enthused about this windfall. After administering the serum, however, he was disappointed to note no immediate effect. Leaving Lars caged, he left for the night, hoping to observe some change in the subject in the morning.

He had, however, not reckoned with the resourcefulness of the young thief, nor with the unexpected potency of the serum that he had concocted. The lock on the cage was relatively simple, and Lars was able to pick the lock with the aid of a needle that he found in a corner of the cage. He was searching for an exit from the building when a night watchman happened upon him. The watchman raised the alarm immediately; in a panic, Lars struck him down with a single, crushing blow and fled to the roof, pursued by the city's military police. On finding himself trapped there, he made a desperate attempt to leap to the roof of the next house, a broad jump of almost five meters—and, to his surprise, he cleared the jump with several meters to spare. After making his escape across the rooftops of Lekar, he took shelter in the top story of an abandoned tenement, where he lay, panting, and marveling at his newfound strength. Why, with the strength to kill with a single blow and leap ten meters at a bound, he would be invincible! He would be the master thief of all Lekar!

With these bright thoughts the young thief slept—but, on awakening, he realized his new abilities had come at a price. His skin was already becoming a dull, slate gray and his arms and legs were now covered in a dust of fine fur. Stranger still, his hands had become slightly sticky to the touch, constantly exuding a strange gel...

### CURRENT SKETCH

Lars Kerskman no longer dreams of glory as the greatest thief of Lekar; instead, he bemoans the fate which has given him tremendous gifts, yet stolen his humanity. Now, some five years after his injection with the primal serum, he is a horrifying mix of man and spider, bent on taking revenge on those who destroyed him.

Physically, Lars is a monstrosity. He can pass for human if heavily cloaked, but any close examination reveals the truth of his nature. His bone structure is still basically human, and he still walks bipedally, but he is covered from head to toe in a nearly invisible fine gray fur; his nose and ears have largely disappeared, and two dark spots at his temples may indicate the future presence of eyes there. His mouth has become an

uneasy hybrid of the jaw structure of a human and the mandibles of a spider. His fingers and toes have lengthened considerably, and two more finger-nubs have appeared at each hand and foot. He has also grown a set of spinnerets at the base of his spine, which are capable of producing silk just as a spider's do. In fact, he can use these spinnerets to create a *web*; creating a 10-foot cube of web takes a full ten minutes. Changes in his throat have altered his vocal cords, and he can only speak with extreme difficulty—no more than four or five words at a time. His voice has become a high, chirring whine, almost completely inhuman, and chilling to any that hear it.

Lars usually wears only a shirt and pantaloons, leaving his hands and feet bare to better use his spider-like ability to scale walls; his shirt is always short enough that it does not cover his spinnerets. In winter he wears a heavy cloak over his other clothes. He never goes out by daylight and sticks to the shadows as much as possible at night, in order to conceal his very considerable deformities. In addition to his ordinary thief abilities, he acts as if always under the influence of the spells *spider climb* and *jump*.

Lars makes his home in the top story of an abandoned tenement near the river in Lekar; he has covered the story below with webs, while a family of wererats live in the ground floor and basement. They and Lars ignore each other as much as possible. From this central point Lars ventures across the rooftops of the city, stealing what he needs to survive and killing any Talon he can find alone. He aches for vengeance on Horstman and on the Talons; he has searched diligently but unsuccessfully for Horstman since his disappearance, and he has taken out his rage and frustration on the Talons instead. He has accounted for a round score in the five years since his transformation, and stories of the Silken Strangler circulate throughout Lekar and even the whole of Falkovnia; in fact, the Silken Strangler is often depicted in these stories as a sort of folk hero.

Lars gained this colorful nickname by his *modus operandi*: he finds it inconvenient to carry weapons in his nighttime jaunts, so when occasion calls for it he simply fashions a garrote or lasso from his spinnerets and uses the silken thread so created to effect the execution. The murder of a Talon by strangulation, with the silken thread still tight around the neck of the victim, is the hallmark of the Strangler. There are whispers among the Talons that the murders must be the work of a supernatural being; on several occasions a group of Talons have left one of their number alone for only a few minutes, still being within easy earshot of the victim. They return to find the body lying in some place only accessible to something able to fly—or, perhaps, to something able to climb as quickly and easily as a spider.

However, in recent days the Silken Strangler has begun to strike at other targets—at ordinary men-at-arms, military police, or even armed foreigners. Some of those killed appear to be drained, as if their blood had been drunk from their veins, or even as if they had been partially digested while still alive, and the resulting soup ingested by some horrifying being. There is a great deal of speculation as to why the Strangler has begun to attack a wider range of victims and even more about the curious and unsettling appearance of the victims, but the truth is simply this: Lars is degenerating toward spiderhood. He can no longer easily distinguish between one armed man and another, and he is losing his compunction about feeding from humans. Over the last five years, his sanity, already shaken by his transformation, has become only a tattered shred of what it had been, and he is ruled more and more by his animal nature. Unless some sort of cure is forthcoming very soon, he will become nothing more than another predator of the night—a predator of horrifying stealth and cunning.

### COMBAT

The Silken Strangler will never attack unless he has the advantage of surprise and his intended victim is alone—or, at least, at the back of a group. When he judges the moment is right, he strikes with a garrote or a lasso. If the arrangement of buildings favors it, he prefers to use a lasso, striking from above with uncanny accuracy. If he succeeds in hitting with the lasso—a ranged touch attack—he will attempt to hoist his victim in the air and leave him to strangle. The victim begins to suffocate, and takes 1d6 points of subdual damage per round, as long as Lars is able to hold the person suspended in midair. His great strength means that he can hold a person of average weight for about ten rounds, or sixty seconds. A successful blow with a sharp-edged weapon on the silken thread parts it (the thread has AC 15 if the person being strangled is attempting to hit it and AC 10 for anyone else) causing the victim to fall—which may also deal damage. Once the thread is severed the strangulation damage ceases.

If more convenient, the Silken Strangler will strike from behind with a garrote. The garrote deals 2d6 damage on the first round (plus strength and sneak attack bonuses, if any) and has a chance of causing instant death in the person attacked. The person must make a Fortitude save with a DC equal to the number of points inflicted by the person wielding the garrote (maximum DC 20) or die instantly of a snapped neck. If the person does not die immediately, he still takes 2d6 points of strangulation damage every round until he frees himself or dies. He can free himself by making a successful Strength check against Lars' Strength, but

each check is made with a cumulative –2 penalty per round.

In either case, if the Strangler is detected before making his attack, or if he is discovered while attempting to kill someone with the lasso or garrote, the Strangler will use his *jump* and *spider climb* abilities to make good his escape. He will certainly not attempt to enter combat if he encounters or anticipates active resistance. If cornered and desperate, he may bite for 1–6 points of damage, injecting a toxin that paralyzes the victim unless he makes a Fortitude saving throw against DC 20.

### ADVENTURE HOOKS

The adventurers are approached by a member of the Talons in Lekar asking for their help in apprehending the Silken Strangler. The party may, of course, be very reluctant to render any such assistance; they may, in fact, secretly sympathize with or even support the Strangler; but, on the other hand, the consequences of refusing assistance may be harsh, and the benefits very great indeed. Rendering the Talons assistance in such a matter might well insure that the party have no trouble with Drakov's men in the future; refusing them would be certain to draw the eye of authority, and that is a thing which all wise men avoid in Falkovnia.

The adventurers may be approached by Lars Kerskman himself at night in some lonely spot. He will attempt to communicate his story and get their assistance in finding and taking revenge on Vjorn Horstman. This will be complicated by the difficulty Lars has in speaking and the fact that he is completely illiterate. The result of this search will depend on whether Horstman is still alive or not; the adventure featuring him in *Children of the Night: Werebeasts* is ambiguous on this point. If the Dungeon Master wishes, an adventure involving the Silken Strangler could be run as a sequel to that adventure, giving the party a chance to track down and to dispose of him once and for all. Curing Kerskman of his condition will require *limited wish*, *wish*, or a spell of similar magnitude. Such a cure would certainly gain Kerskman's undying loyalty and his assistance in any endeavor the party wishes.

Along simpler lines, the Silken Strangler may simply be the object of a manhunt, as Lekar's most notorious mass murderer, or he may target a party member for death. In his confusion, he believes that the person is a Talon or a collaborator with the Talons and deserves death, and will attack that person until he succeeds in causing his death or he is apprehended.



# WILLIAM D'MONTE

## LIFE IS BRIEF, BUT MUSIC IS ETERNAL

by Brian M. Sylvester

big\_b\_0000@yahoo.com



erfection”  
The music was coming from the stage, odd as it may seem for this time of night. Vlad, the night watchman, could hear the now familiar sounds of the piano being played. The normally silent night had been broken by the haunting tune that echoed through the halls of the empty theatre.

“What in the name of...?” Vlad muttered, as he slowly walked into the stage room. There was indeed a figure seated at the piano on the stage, but he was not a musician in the orchestra. Vlad peered intensely at the figure, listening closely to the music that he played. The pianist was short, with thinning gray hair and a tight fitting formal black suit. He did not look like any of the musicians Vlad had met. At a loss, he left the room as the haunting music echoed strangely through the rafters of the giant room.



Vlad returned later, still hearing the music, this time with Iosef Dyamblen, the conductor of the orchestra.

“Sorry for waking you up, Mr. Dyamblen, but one of your musicians is up there. I can’t figure out for the life of me who it is,” Vlad drawled to the still drowsy conductor as he entered the stage room. Iosef looked up at the stage as the musician completed the piece. He took in a sharp breath as he recognized the music—it was a sonata by the late composer, William d’Monte, which had never been written down. No one knew how to play the piece except the master composer himself, who had been dead for over 11 years.

The musician stood, stiffly turned to face the empty chairs of the audience, and bowed. Iosef’s eyes bulged open, and Vlad looked in shock as he realized the figure was nearly transparent. Iosef’s mouth dropped open, and the only sound was the echo of a single whispered word.

“d’Monte!” At the sound of the whisper the wraith turned his striking green eyes on the intruders in his theatre. His eyes narrowed to slits. He raised one hand into the air, moving his fingers in a complex, but exact, series of movements. Resting in a chair on the stage, a

single violin floated into the air. The bow rose to join it. Iosef and Vlad looked on in amazement when, with a second gesture from the ghost on the stage, the violin began to play itself. A haunting tune issued forth. Overtaken by sheer horror, both men ran from the room, screaming.

Alone once again, d’Monte let his hand drop. The violin floated back to the chair. He turned stiffly again to face the entire stage, and raised both his hands. All the instruments on the stage rose to his command. With a series of gestures, they began to play long into the night.

## WILLIAM D'MONTE

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Magnitude Ghost, Lawful Evil

<b>Armor Class</b>	0	<b>Str</b>	–
<b>Movement</b>	–	<b>Dex</b>	–
<b>Level/Hit Dice</b>	15	<b>Con</b>	–
<b>Hit Points</b>	80	<b>Int</b>	15
<b>THAC0</b>	20	<b>Wis</b>	12
<b>No. of Attacks</b>	Special	<b>Cha</b>	10
<b>Damage/Attack</b>	Special	<b>XP</b>	3,000
<b>Special Attacks</b>	Conduct, release plague		
<b>Special Defenses</b>	Hit only by +1 weapons, incorporeal, spell immunities		
<b>Special Vulnerabilities</b>	See “combat” below		
<b>Magic Resistance</b>	Nil		

## APPEARANCE

William d’Monte is short for a human. He is just under five feet tall, and weighs less than one hundred pounds. His eyes are perhaps his most striking feature, being a very intense green and locked in an almost constant glare. His thinning gray hair is pulled straight back over the top of his head to mask a bald spot, and is tied into a long, thin ponytail that reaches his shoulders.

d’Monte has very muscular arms, in part from his years of conducting. His hands are very dexterous and thin, with long fingers and trimmed nails. Everything about him is clean and orderly. He always appears in

the same, tight fitting black tuxedo with tails, wearing a pair of white leather gloves, which are removed before any performance. As a ghost, d'Monte is partially transparent, but in all other respects he appears to be a normal human.

### BACKGROUND

William d'Monte was born in Dementlieu many years past. Born mute, d'Monte was ostracized as a child, but found solace in music. Possessed of an acute hearing that more than made up for his inability to speak, d'Monte became a masterful musician, learning to play nearly every popular musical instrument by the age of twelve. At the age of fourteen, d'Monte began to write and conduct his own symphonic pieces. Earning money by selling his music to theatres and orchestras, d'Monte soon raised enough money to buy a theatre and form his own symphony. For several years his symphony, named the 'First Elminarin Orchestra' for d'Monte's Mordentish mother Elmina, was called the greatest in the land, and he was hailed as perhaps the greatest conductor ever to walk the lands.

d'Monte was a consummate perfectionist. Unable to speak his desires to the musicians, he formulated a code of complex hand signals with which he 'spoke' to his musicians. Even so, he found himself constrained musically by his inability to adequately explain his desires to the musicians. He became stressed and angry, blaming the musicians of his orchestra for the failures of his music. Perfectionist that he was, he considered everything he ever wrote or played to be flawed in the extreme, despite the reaction of the public to the masterful works he created.

When d'Monte reached the age of 22, he had written nearly 30 symphonic pieces, countless operas, ballets, piano and violin concertos, yet was still unsatisfied. He began work on his life's masterpiece, a tremendous work of art that was to surpass by far everything he had ever written. Night and day he wrote and composed, driving his musicians to the point of death in practice. It had to be perfect. For nearly three years his theatre was closed, and the musicians lived inside with him. No one but the players of his music saw him in those three years. In the final few months of these three years, a plague spread throughout the poor peasants in the city. The area was quarantined, yet d'Monte and his musicians stayed in the theatre, working night and day on his masterpiece.

The plague seemed to die out, and infections became rare. Scarcely a week later the word arrived; d'Monte was finished! The performance was to be at midnight on the Winter Solstice. People came in droves from miles around to hear the latest work of the master, but still he and the musicians who would play remained inside the theatre.

The night of the performance arrived. The theatre was packed to capacity, filled with those rich enough to purchase seats. Even so, the halls and walkways in the seating area were lined with people wherever there was a space. As the curtain rose, the musicians were seen for the first time in over three years. Each was dressed impeccably in black suits, holding their respective instruments at the ready. But something was wrong. Pale and thin, the musicians were in poor health. The deadly plague that had raged outside the theatre in the last months of d'Monte's composing had not died out entirely. And it would spread fantastically quickly in the cramped and crowded theatre.

The evening's performance never took place. When d'Monte took the podium and raised his hands to conduct the opening of his performance, the musicians tried to obey but found their bodies were failing them. They writhed in pain and torment as the plague took effect in the cramped, warm theatre. Instruments fell to the ground as the entire orchestra succumbed to the terrible disease that had lain dormant inside them.

The crowd went berserk in their attempt to leave, stampeding towards the doors and trampling those unfortunates who fell. It is said that not a single person who left those doors did so without first contacting the plague that killed the orchestra. Only d'Monte seemed unaffected. Still he stood at the center of the stage, on a raised podium, arms in the air, waiting for the strains of music to begin. Hundreds would die that night, and countless others in the city would once again catch the plague from those who brought it back from the deadly theatre.

d'Monte died that night, though none have dared to surmise how he ended his own life. Some say it was a hangman's noose, others, a dagger to his heart. Only d'Monte knows for sure the instrument of his death. For 10 years after that disastrous night he wasn't heard from again.

Then the theatre was rebuilt, and a new orchestra moved in. The first night after construction was completed, witnesses say that once again d'Monte took the stage, and the instruments obeyed his commands, though no musicians held them. With but a wave of his hands, he controlled the instruments, and made them play the music he had written those many years ago.

### CURRENT SKETCH

Every night in the theatre, d'Monte appears on the stage. His appearance coincides with the setting of the sun, and he appears exactly as he did in life, though translucent and wraith-like in his movements. Still unable to speak in death, d'Monte continues to command the instruments with his intricate hand code. Some nights he plays the instruments himself, playing the soulful dirges on the piano or violin that he wrote in

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

life. Other nights he will conduct his symphonies, commanding invisible musicians to play their instruments once more.

It is worth noting that the instruments d'Monte is seen playing or conducting are not ghostly in of themselves. They are very real, solid instruments used by the orchestra that rebuilt the theatre, though they were abandoned soon after the appearance of d'Monte. By some unknown ability, d'Monte is able to command the instruments to play themselves. Violins float into the air and are played by the wind, drumsticks hit the drums with no hands to hold them, and trumpets fly across the stage spouting music that does not come from human lips.

d'Monte's only desire is to hear his final symphony played in its entirety. The sheet music for his final work, entitled 'Perfection', can be found in his office, which is located on the second story of the theatre. It was discovered by the men who rebuilt the theatre and placed in a box with his other music. The sheets of music are stained with the blood of the musicians who once tried to play them. If, one night, a symphony is on the stage when d'Monte appears, he will conduct 'Perfection'. If it is played that night, he will disappear forever to whatever fate awaits him.

### COMBAT

d'Monte himself will not engage in hand to hand combat, per-se. If struck, d'Monte will appear to become injured, and will react by doing one of two things – directing his instruments to attack or releasing the dreadful plague that killed his musicians.

When he directs his instruments to attack, d'Monte must be conducting. The nature of the attack is generally musical and can simulate any bardic ability. As a general rule, d'Monte cannot simulate any spell greater than third level, and is unable to create spells from the schools of Invocation/Evocation, Necromancy or Conjunction. Most effects that are suitable for d'Monte are in the schools of Illusion and Alteration. As a secondary rule of thumb, it takes an equal number or rounds to simulate the effect musically as it does for a wizard to cast the spell. For example, d'Monte can *create fear* in those who listen to his music as his action for that round. Conversely, he can also create several spell-like effects by conduction attacks that take more than one round. DM's are encouraged to be creative. Perhaps by conducting for several rounds d'Monte could simulate the effects of a *wall of fog*.

Please note that d'Monte can only direct instruments that are on the stage. If a player character has an instrument on his person, d'Monte can command it to play, but only if it is on the stage. Taking control of an instrument takes one round. Once it is under d'Monte's command floats over to join the other

instruments that fly about the stage and plays in the same manner as the others d'Monte controls. If the instrument is magical in nature, d'Monte can use its abilities as if he were playing it, though he is unable to conduct any other attacks from the instruments when he does so. For example, a character brings a *horn of sounding* onto d'Monte's stage. As a single action, d'Monte brings the horn under his control. On his next turn, d'Monte can use any of the horn's magical abilities instead of directing his orchestra to attack. The player can retrieve his instrument, if he survives the night, after d'Monte disappears.

If d'Monte is severely weakened or angered, he will release a powerful contagion that will kill any character that fails a save vs. poison once it is activated. To release this poison, d'Monte drops his hands to his sides and crunches them tightly into fists, then turns to face the audience and points angrily. When he does so, the instruments begin to fall to the ground, belching clouds of noxious gas onto the stage and transforming into stained, battered versions of their former selves. Witnessing this event may call for a horror check. All characters inside the theatre must immediately save vs. poison or contact the plague, which causes symptoms similar to the bubonic plague in two or three days after it takes effect. It can be cured through the priest spell remove disease or similar wizard spells. This disease is not magical in nature, and characters who have immunities to natural poisons may apply them.

The insidious nature of this plague lies in its ability to lie dormant. In a roll of 1–9 on a d10, this plague remains dormant in the character who contacts it until it is stimulated by being in a very warm, moist environment. This particular plague thrives when the character is surrounded by large crowds of people. When dormant, the victim will not experience any of the major symptoms, though he will become very thin and pale. In game terms, he will lose 1d3 points of Constitution permanently, until cured. If the character is placed in an environment suitable for the plague to begin to manifest itself, it will do so in a matter of hours. The player will suffer symptoms similar to the bubonic plague (although DMs may alter any symptoms as they see fit). In 1d4 days, the victim dies unless cured. The disease can be cured by conventional means through the use of various herbs and with the help of a trained doctor. Any PC with a proficiency in medicine or herbalist can attempt to heal the victim with a 50% chance of success. Once cured, the character regains lost Constitution points at a rate of one per day.

When d'Monte is fighting, every injury he suffers is reflected in his performance. For every single point of damage he is dealt, d'Monte loses control over one instrument. If he loses 10% of his total, he can no longer simulate third level spells. At 20%, he can no



## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

longer simulate second level spells. If he is reduced to below 50% of his hit points, d'Monte cannot direct the instruments to simulate any magical effect. He will at this point attempt to flee. If reduced to within 10% of his total, he will release the contagion. Doing so causes him to disappear until the next night; he heals a proportion of his injuries during the day. Extensive injuries may take as long as a week to be fully healed.



# JACQUES DU ALMOY

## SEARCHING WITHOUT FOR THE ENEMY WITHIN

by Marfijn van Roosmalen and Walter de Vor

maroosmalen@zonnef.nl



Jacques is a resident of Port-a-Lucine's shadier districts. To an outsider he looks just like one of the many rogues that prowl the alleyways. But one who looks deeply into his blue eyes sees a troubled mind, literally.

### APPEARANCE

Jacques is a slender man, 6' tall. He has sleek dark hair at shoulder length. His small face is bleak and bony, carved by his experiences in Port-a-Lucine. But in this rather dull face lay fierce blue eyes, always moving around to monitor his surroundings. He is dressed in brown trousers, a leather belt, a white flamboyant blouse and under this blouse a leather cuirass. He wears leather knee-boots, which make surprisingly little noise. Over his clothing he wears a long cape, which is dull black on one side and shiny marine blue on the other side. Which side is up depends upon circumstances and his mood.

He is armed with a rapier, two pistols and two daggers, of which one is hidden in his right boot. He tries to hide his weapons, especially his pistols, under his cape and blouse.

### JACQUES DU ALMOY

**Male human Rogue3:** HD 3d6; hp 15; Init +7 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft; AC 15; Atk +4 melee (+3 dex bonus Weapon Finesse, 1d6-1/18-20/x2 crit, rapier), +1 melee (1d4-1/19-20/x2 crit, dagger) or +5 ranged (1d4-1/19-20/x2 crit, dagger; 1d10/20/x3 crit, pistol); SA sneak attack +2d6; SQ evasion, uncanny dodge, very resistant to mind control (see Will save); AL CN; SV Fort +2; Ref +6; Will +21 (special, only +1 against the Brain); Str 9; Dex 17; Con 12; Int 15; Wis 11; Cha 10; Height 6'

*Skills and Feats:* Appraise +3, Balance +4, Bluff +2, Climb +5, Craft (gunsmithing) +4, Disable device +4, Gather information +2, Hide +9, Innuendo +1, Jump +5, Listen +6, Move silently +9, Open lock +9, Pick pockets +7, Read lips +4, Search +8, Sense motive

+1, Spot +6; Weapon Finesse (rapier), Exotic Weapon Proficiency (pistols), Improved Initiative.

### BACKGROUND

Jacques was born in the year 717, as the third son of rather wealthy middle class family in Port-a-Lucine. He and his two elder brothers Jean-Paul and Dominique, and his younger sister Lucinda, enjoyed a happy childhood, although their mother died shortly after giving birth to Lucinda. Their father, Hugh du Almoym, was a gunsmith, and taught his sons the basic principles of the art of gunsmithing while also sending them to a school to learn the basics of reading, writing, and other academic pursuits. Jacques, like his brothers, would have followed in his father's footsteps, were it not for the events to come.

On an afternoon in February 735 Jacques was alone with his father in the shop. While he was in the adjacent work-room, he heard his father arguing with some customers. Normally he would have rushed into the shop to help his father, but Jacques found himself totally overcome by a strange sensation. He heard a strange humming sound, seemingly coming from the shop, but it was more than a sound. The humming vibrated throughout his entire body, his vision, his thinking. He panicked, trying to run out of the room, but suddenly there was a cry. It was his father. Seconds later, the door to the shop slammed loudly and the strange humming seemed to fade away. Hesitantly, he walked into to the other room and saw his father lying on the ground, covered with blood. He knelt beside his father and saw several stab wounds. His father was dead.

Jacques sat there, crying over his father's corpse. He believed it was his fault; if only he hadn't panicked, his father would probably be still alive. In his grief, he forgot about the humming that he had heard.

When Jean-Paul and Dominique returned to the shop, they were shocked when they heard what had happened. They blamed Jacques because he had panicked when their father needed him. Jacques didn't try to explain why he had panicked. The brothers

contacted the city-guard, while Jacques went to see his sister, who shared in his grief and comforted him.

A few days after the murder, Jacques' brothers resumed their work, just to drive the loss from their minds, or so they said. Jacques could not bring himself to return to work, so he decided to go to the city-guard, hoping that they would have uncovered some clues concerning the murder. When he drew close to the barracks he noticed the strange humming again. It was not as intense as on the day of the murder, but it was still noticeable. As he walked on, the intensity of the humming seemed to slowly increase. As he walked, he almost stumbled across a guard standing at his post in front of the barracks. Jacques was broken out of his 'humming-trance' and looked up at the guard. When he asked the guard about the investigation into the murder of his father, the humming started again, but this time the intensity increased much more rapidly. Starting to sweat, Jacques looked around frantically, and finally felt an overwhelming urge to run. He ran off blindly, and when the panic subsided he wandered aimlessly around Port-a-Lucine for the rest of the day.

When he returned home his brothers were angry over his long absence, and demanded to know where he had been all day. Embarrassed, Jacques couldn't explain his absence. Later that evening, when he was alone with Lucinda, he told her what happened. He also told her about the humming during the murder on their father. She carefully listened to him, almost as if she believed what he said.

Days went by, but there came no news from the guards. Jean-Paul and Dominique seemed to have forgotten what had happened. Some six days after the murder Lucinda and Jacques decided to ask the guards if they had made any progress. But even more, they wanted to recover their father's corpse so they could give him a decent funeral. When they entered the barracks, the humming started again. Jacques decided to go back, letting his sister handle the inquiries. After her conversation with the guards, she told Jacques that there had been no progress in the case and, worst of all, their father had already been buried by the guards. To their surprise, their brothers seemed understanding of the situation when told.

On an evening a few weeks later, when Jacques was walking with Lucinda, they noticed something in a dark alley. Within lay a man who was mortally wounded. When Jacques bent down to help him, he was overcome by the humming again. He panicked and ran away, deeper into the alley. As he ran he heard a cry, and when he looked back he saw Lucinda lying on the ground, dark silhouettes beside her, but at that very moment the humming intensified to an intolerable level, and once more he could do nothing but run.

When he arrived home he told his brothers the horrible news. Of course they were shocked, but also

angry, because Jacques had abandoned their sister and hadn't even returned to the scene to check on her. Together the three left the house immediately and returned to the alley. Their sister was nowhere to be found, but they did see a large pool of blood and other traces of the struggle. After returning home, Jean-Paul and Dominique continued to blame Jacques. The argument turned into a fight, during which Jacques struck Jean-Paul. The two brothers thereupon ordered Jacques to leave the house forever. He quickly gathered some personal belongings, including two pistols his father had crafted, and walked into Port-a-Lucine.

Jacques slept in a cheap inn the first few nights, and thought about all the things that had happened. He couldn't discern a reason why his father and sister were murdered. He also noticed that there always seemed to be a soft humming around, but at a very low, almost unnoticeable level. Was he going insane?

The humming had erupted into intolerable levels during both murders and when guards were near. The fact that the guards hadn't found any clue about his father's murder made it even stranger. As he thought on the situation, he remembered more stories of strange and unsolved mysteries. After hours spent rationally evaluating the recent events, Jacques came to the conclusion that something terribly wrong was going on in the city. He was determined to find out what was exactly happening, as it was the only way to track down and punish the murderers of his beloved relatives.

The best way to do it, he thought, was to infiltrate the enemy of the guards: the world of thieves. They certainly knew more of the guards and the city than he did. Jacques managed to get into contact with the thieves' guild, and joined a small group of thieves: Rene Lamouche, who became Jacques' closest friend, Alain Doface and Pierre Fillan. Together they robbed lonely travelers and committed other petty crimes. Jacques learned the way of the thief, but also became more and more aware of the evil that lies beneath the veil of illusion that covers Port-a-Lucine.

## PERSONALITY

To survive on his own in this hostile world, Jacques has become very suspicious of other people, especially those who live in the city. It will take a lot of time and patience for someone to gain his trust. When he is confronted with people associated with the guards or the government he becomes almost paranoid. He blames them for the evil that has befallen his father and sister, something that his humming-attacks only aggravate. Above all, he will try to keep a low profile at all times. He has no qualms about stealing, robbing or threatening people. He can be prone to violent outbursts, especially when he's trapped in a difficult position. His favorite tactic is to draw his pistols and

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

point them at his opponents. If this threat is not effective he will shoot and try to escape. Jacques is not an evil person, though; he simply does what he must in order to survive. Although he is very independent, and will not bind himself easily to other people, he can be helpful towards people in need.

Jacques has grown up in a society where rationality is a virtue. Tales of magic and monsters are thought to be superstitions, believed by fools and people from lesser-developed areas of the Core. He will be very haughty and cynical towards people not hailing from the western lands of the Core and will put little stock in any tales they have to tell. This is a paradox, because Jacques knows there's something terribly wrong in Port-a-Lucine, something which he cannot explain with rationality, but nevertheless he will be very stubborn in his refusal to believe stories of magic, monsters and ghosts. Even more so, he will try to rationalize or otherwise ignore any experiences he has with magic of any sort.

Because of his past, Jacques has lost his faith in the goodness in this world. He wasn't very religious before the murder of his father, but now he has totally lost his faith in the gods. If there are gods, they aren't worth worshipping, as they allow the world to be a dark and evil place.

Currently there are a number of things on his mind. First of all, a number of his fellow thieves have gone missing, which worries Jacques very much. He thinks it has something to do with the evil "under the veil." This is all the more frustrating, because he sees the proof of this evil every day, but has absolutely no idea of what is exactly going on. Furthermore, he still hasn't solved the deaths of his father and sister. Obviously, Jacques is becoming more and more desperate. This is expressed in his plans to assassinate Dominic d'Honaire, who he thinks is the man responsible for corrupting the city. On the other hand, he is also more inclined towards finding new allies to aid him in his quest. But, as he trusts virtually no one, this is quite difficult.

### The True Story of Jacques du Almoy

When Dominic d'Honaire was young, he met a beautiful girl, called Eva Candeau. Due to his curse, the more he loved her, the more she became repulsed by his appearance. After only knowing him for a short time, she fled from him and Port-a-Lucine. To her grief she found out she was pregnant, but she decided to raise the child as best as she could, without ever telling the child about his or her father, whom she regarded as a monster. When the child was born she called the boy Jacques Candeau. Jacques spend his youth with his mother and his grandparents, who had taken them both into their home.

Meanwhile, the nefarious being called the Brain had taken residence in Port-a-Lucine. He found a great web of mental domination in the city, all coming forth from d'Honaire. To counter that, he began to build his own network. He was quite successful, although he was continuously hampered by obedient and other persons working for d'Honaire. Because d'Honaire's reach was firm in the city, the Brain wanted to create a minion who could go unnoticed through the city and was unaffected by mental control. After a few unsuccessful attempts, which resulted only in raving lunatics and mindless slaves, he decided he needed someone with a very strong mind. He was alerted to the fact that d'Honaire had an illegitimate child of whom he knew nothing. This was done by Hélène DuSuis, who had witnessed the affair and the flight of Eva Candeau. Thinking the boy would have inherited the willpower of his father, the Brain started one of his longest projects to bring down Dominic d'Honaire.

On a stormy night men broke into the house of Eva and kidnapped Jacques. The local constable never found a trace of the boy. Eva became mad with grief, and was taken to Saulbridge sanatorium, in which she still resides today. Due to her double trauma, the monstrous d'Honaire and the abduction of her child, she has become totally depressed. Although she does sleep and eat normally, she stares out of her barred window all day and says nothing.

The child was brought directly to Schloss Mordenheim, where the Brain forced his own creator, Victor Mordenheim, to conduct operations on the child, tempting him all the while with the promise of a cure for Elise. Mordenheim inserted a piece of the Brain's 'body' into the brain of the child. Instantly, the Brain was aware of all the things the boy experienced, although it was quite taxing for him. Moreover, he could block the boy's mind from mental domination by others, and even create illusions that seemed to be real for the boy. The only thing that testifies to the operation is a small white scar on the back of his head, hidden under his hair.

After that, the boy was brought to Port-a-Lucine, where the Brain erased his childhood memories and created a 'perfect' family for him, calling him Jacques du Almoy. Jacques was raised as normally as possible by people who were minions of the Brain. When Jacques was 18, the Brain set the second part of his plan in motion. He wanted to make Jacques paranoid about the government and lead him to hate his real father, d'Honaire. To accomplish this, he first set up the 'murder' of his 'father'. During the murder, the Brain created a humming, insect-like, noise in the brain of Jacques, which seemed to him to come from people associated with the authorities. After a few weeks his 'sister' was 'murdered' as well, after which his 'brothers' threw him out. Because he heard the

humming during both murders and on several other occasions where people working for the government were involved (even d'Honaire himself), Jacques believes that they are responsible for the murders. Occasionally, he has seen glimpses of insect-like features when he was looking at the guards. As a result, he believes that the city is governed by insect-like creatures disguised as humans, and that he is the only one who can see and hear them. To isolate the boy even more, the Brain arranged for the cell of the thieves' guild (which was in fact a part of his own network) to disappear. Jacques suspects that the city guards are behind this as well.

### CURRENT SKETCH

The Brain has underestimated the willpower of the boy. Combined with the continuous mental intrusions by the Brain, this has made Jacques du Almoy severely unstable. He is almost paranoid, fleeing in terror or resorting to violence when he hears the humming or even sees guards. Lately he is learning to keep his emotions under control. Unknowingly, he is slowly building a barrier to prevent the Brain from accessing his mind. As a side effect, Jacques has experienced some flashbacks from his real childhood (the kidnapping, Dr. Mordenheim, his real mother) now and then, but for now he dismisses them as daydreams. The Brain, afraid that his whole plan will misfire, is trying to drive Jacques to kill d'Honaire. Due to the paranoia of Jacques however, this is hard to accomplish.

Jacques knows the name of the Brain, but has no idea who is behind it or the role it plays. He doesn't know he is carrying a part of it with him in his head. A few weeks ago Jacques saw his murdered father in a crowded street. Before he could get to him, he had vanished. In reality, it was his 'father', who should have been outside the city (just as his 'sister'), but decided he could go to Port-a-Lucine without seeing Jacques.. Jacques, however, thinks it is just a memory from the past and hasn't paid any attention to it.

Recently, Jacques encountered Tomas d'Aloure. If Jacques would get his ring, he would be free from the mental intrusions of the Brain. On the other hand, Jacques doesn't believe in magic, so probably he wouldn't even try the ring.

The only people who could tell Jacques more of his past are Hélène DuSuis, the Brain and some of his minions, Victor Mordenheim, and his mother, if she could return to her senses. Until then, Jacques wanders the streets of Port-a-Lucine, searching for the great evil, which is part of himself.



# TANYA

## A WOMAN MANY TIMES BETRAYED

by Alex Miranda

[alxpinto@netscape.net](mailto:alxpinto@netscape.net)

### INTRODUCTION



reed, vengeance, treason. Three powerful things, not uncommon anywhere, which never yield good results. Greed alone can drive a man against his own values and his most sacred tenets only for some momentary gain in this ephemeral life. But if joined with vengeance, what terrible deed can it not achieve? What dramatic suffering, what most hideous death was not already caused by greed and vengeance together? Vengeance is never soft, never hurried. It is the sweet cold justice of the wronged, meticulously planned, superbly engineered, thought to destroy everything there's left within the enemy. It is devastating.

Imagine what can happen when these are combined with the merciless treason of an innocent who is used merely as a tool for an end and must be sacrificed to the will of others. What crime can be more infamous than this? What punishment would ever be enough for such a monstrosity? And yet, these executioners often go on their way unharmed and remorseless, while their hapless victims turn to dust on the road of their lives.

Hear now the tale of one such poor soul who was damned for no fault of her own.

### BACKGROUND

“Dya-yahg!”

The sudden cry startled the encampment. It had not been the Captain to issue the customary command for leaving the campfire and to begin roaming again. They all looked to the old woman at the door of her vardo, majestic in her many decades, holding onto her staff while raising her right hand. The words still seemed to linger in her lips. When she had the attention of her people, the seer continued.

“Fate is moving. We must follow its path. Our punishment will be served at last.” The Captain directed the breaking of the camp and then approached the old woman.

“Madame Zulmira, where are we going?”

“Invidia, Karina.”

The Captain gasped. “Invidia?!... It is too dangerous!”

“And yet we must. The fate of one who owes us lies there. There, is the first thread of the web the spider will weave. Even with Malocchio Aderre’s armies after us, we have to go there. But worry not, my son. The Mists are our friends”.

They began their journey, and vanished shortly after.



Tanya waited anxiously for Nikolai. Since she had met him two weeks before, her life had changed significantly. She had met him as one of her clients, looking for pleasure and lust for one night only. Nothing out of the ordinary, but he did seem a foreigner, something like a noble. Nikolai came the next night, and this time Tanya gave him a good look, as if ascertaining his stock and personality. He was pleasant, had a frank smile, and seemed genuinely worried about her and the life she had.

In the days that followed, Nikolai came to see her every day, paying her for the whole night, and yet not asking for anything in return. He wanted her to stop selling herself, and promised that he’d find her a job. Meanwhile, she did not have to work after dusk, and could spend her days looking for something else to do.

This night, Nikolai was taking too long. He usually arrived slightly after sunset, but two hours had passed, and more, and he still hadn’t come. Tanya began to worry. What could be delaying him so much?

She was in love with him, and this wait was torture. This was a secret she had told only to her closest friend, a woman named Catlin who shared her misfortunes. And yet, she felt that Nikolai must know it too, as she was certain he felt the same.

Unfortunately for her, Nikolai didn’t feel the same way. He knew her feelings. He even expected them, although his plan didn’t quite require her to fall in love with him. But since she had, it didn’t matter.

Nikolai was married. Although no one will ever know why, he no longer wanted his wife alive, and sought a means to kill her without being accused of it. He needed a scapegoat—someone to take the blame.

A friend of his pointed him Tanya, a wench who lived and worked at “The Rearing Horse”. Immediately, Nikolai found the missing piece in his plan. The exotic beauty that set Tanya completely apart from the others, her dark eyes and long, dark brown hair, all contributed to an outlandish look that was completely foreign to many lands of the Core. This could be used to his profit. Tanya would be the murderer... or better, the supposed murderer.

For the next two weeks, Nikolai approached Tanya. He arranged it so that many people could see them together, while to his friends he said (quite openly, in fact) that he was falling madly in love with her. After one week, though, his speech changed. He now told them he was feeling bewitched and afraid, that Tanya was growing insistent and demanding and even worse, she was threatening to follow him and find any rival she might have. His friends advised him to leave her, of course, but he pretended to be unable to do so, so strong were her charms.

So Tanya kept waiting. One more hour passed, when at last, a note was slipped through her window. It bore no signature, but she recognized Nikolai’s handwriting. It told her to look for him the following night at his house, but that she should be very careful about it. No one should know, for it wouldn’t be proper for her to be seen at his home, and for the sake of their secret, she should burn the note. Unsuspecting, she did so.

The note said nothing else. She wondered what reasons Nikolai could have to want her to go there, but her love and romanticism salved her deepest worries and she eagerly went to the meeting.

The next night, Tanya knocked at his door. Briefly, it opened, and a shadow ushered her inside. It was Nikolai, and his face was grave. He led her upstairs and entered a dark room, locking the door behind them. Tanya was afraid, and screamed, but immediately Nikolai held her and pushed her violently. She fell on a bed, beside a bulge warm and wet. When Nikolai lit up a candle, she screamed as she saw a woman all cut up by her side, blood covering the bedclothes. The shock was so great she fainted. She awoke with her arms tied behind her back, her dress reddened with the woman’s blood. She heard frantic cries outside.

“Where’s the witch?” “Kill the murderer, Kill the murderer.” “Nikolai’s wife is dead.” “The sorcerer killed her.” “Witch! Witch!”

Nikolai himself seemed to sob in distress, and then the door to the room burst wide open. The improvised militia arrested her. Some there wanted to burn Tanya immediately, but at Nikolai’s insistent requests, she was taken before a judge who, perhaps taken by her beauty, decided to exile her from Karina. She still had a chance of living, albeit a slim one indeed. She could take nothing with her, and she’d have to survive for herself.

Tanya felt miserable. She had been exiled from the only home she’d ever known, and now she had nowhere to go. The open road before her seemed endless and dreadful. She had nothing with her: no food, no warm clothes, nothing to build a camp or to defend herself. But she couldn’t stay there. She had been escorted ten miles away from Karina, but now she was alone. She knelt and wept, crying without restraint. What was she going to do? She got up and tried to force herself to find a shelter before dusk. By her reckoning, she had less than five hours of daylight, and she dare not even think of what would happen after that.

She painfully and patiently walked for an hour, and the landscape still didn’t change. She saw no caves she could use to keep her from cold, not a single hut that could harbor her, nor even another kind soul who crossed her way. She walked more and more until she was startled by a noise behind her. Suddenly, without warning, she heard sounds. There were horses and carts... but the voices were muffled, as if hiding, and she couldn’t perceive how many they were. Tanya ran. She wanted to see them first, but she fell before she could leave the road. In a matter of seconds, the sounds were near and she felt trapped, with no escape. They had seen her lying there! Tanya repressed a cry and turned around, when a rough hand fell on her neck. She turned and saw a big, strong man, with a dark curled moustache, curly disheveled hair and golden rings in his ears. He looked her without interest, as if he were merely doing his job. Behind him, a dozen of colorful “huts on wheels” followed. “Gypsies!” she thought at once, and then shuddered.

“Fear not, girl,” said the man, “We won’t harm you, but you’ll be coming with us. I’m sure it will be better than dying on the road.”

Tanya did not resist. She was too surprised to do anything, and before the day was out she welcomed this chance meeting. She was quick to recognize the road would have been her death. At least with the Vistani, she was protected.

The caravan quickly turned south, trying to leave Invidia as soon as possible. The following days flew by as the caravan proceeded to Kartakass through Sithicus. For Tanya, these were happy days that passed too fast. Madame Zulmira, the old seer of the tribe, befriended her and talked to her a lot. She tried to restore her self-confidence and remove her most downhearted thoughts. She was for some days an esteemed companion, an old teacher, a caring master; someone who could show her many things and protect her from many more. But the day came when Tanya was called to her to speak of her departure.

“Tomorrow we’ll be arriving near Skald. We have no business there, and we won’t be staying. This is the farthest we can bring you, child, and you cannot come with us any longer. Still, I don’t wish you to go empty-

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

handed. Remember us if you will, forget us if you wish, but take this. This pouch holds a powder that may yet be useful to you. If ever you have a loathsome guardian and need to escape his grasp, spread this dust over his sleeping body; he'll enter a deep magic sleep that will last for some hours and from which he won't be roused no matter how much noise you make. I don't know your future, but it may yet save you once again."

"Perhaps it would be more useful if I could use it on someone awake..."

"Do not question your gifts, girl. Magic is as magic comes, and you can't change it. Be happy you have this instead of nothing. Now go."

Tanya left the caravan the following day, and entered Skald. She found a job as a waitress at an inn, but that reminded her too much of her past life. No more than two days had passed, however, when a burly man came to the inn and seemed to take an interest in her.

He asked her who she was and soon discovered she was a foreigner, recently arriving at Skald. He promptly invited her to work at his house as a maid and went to talk with the landlord. In a matter of minutes, the deal was done.

This man was Dmitri, the wealthiest merchant in Kartakass. But in his past, a dark stain marked the beginning of his ascension. A night that, even today, made him lose sleep whenever he saw a Vistana. It happened 10 years ago.

He had been with the tribe for 5 days, but that night was the Lunaset. All the tribe vanished into the woods, severely admonishing him not to try to follow them. He didn't. He was young and reckless. His plan was extremely dangerous and audacious, and he wanted to cripple this tribe. He wanted to end their competition to his own trade. Their products were better than his, and although the Kartakans, like everybody else, feared the Vistani, they always made good trade when they came to Skald and Harmonia. Dmitri felt bitterly about that success. He couldn't afford rivals. He knew quite a few things about the Vistani that he had learnt during years spent in Kantora, and now he was going to use all his knowledge.

Several days before, he had approached the tribe with the intent of trading goods. Perhaps out of luck, perhaps because his fate concerned the tribe too closely, the seer couldn't perceive any harmful intentions in Dmitri's heart, and had allowed him to travel with them for a few days. He had stayed until the night of the Lunaset, and now was the time for his daring move.

He proceeded quickly and methodically, poisoning all the horses in the camp. He waited until two hours before dawn, and then ran through the woods back to Skald. Never in his life was he so daring again. Nor luckier. He got home safely, as if protected by some higher power.

The Vistani tribe came never again to Skald, or even Kartakass. Unrivalled, Dmitri's business grew, and he became rich and influential. He was now famous all around Skald and Harmonia, the leading merchant in Kartakass.

Yet, for all his wealth and fame, he still couldn't have complete happiness. The people recognised and respected him, but they didn't like him. Dmitri was cold and brutal, and that was as much known as his success as a merchant. So, Dmitri lived alone. He had neither wife nor children, and at any one time, no more than a maid and a butler at home, but he was so harsh that these people often left at the first opportunity.

He had lost his maid again, and for some time now, only strangers ever accepted the position. Tanya had just appeared at the right time.

Thus began a new stage in Tanya's life. At first, it seemed an improvement. She had house, food and an honest work. She had all the housework to do by herself, but by any account, that was better than her past jobs. Unfortunately for her, even this quiet new life soon ended. As she soon found out, Dmitri had quite a bad temper. Not only that, he was violent and brutal, and he also had no compunction in beating her for no apparent reason. With time, he even began to molest her, and what had once been an abhorrent job for her, was once again part of her working life. This, interspersed with torture both physical and mental, was more than she could endure. To compound the problem, Dmitri always had the house locked. Not even a small window of the second floor was neglected. Always barred and grated, she wouldn't be able to pass through even if she broke the glass. There was no way out of that house.

She felt more miserable than ever before. Fate pursued her and she seemed powerless to escape. But one night, as she tried to sleep in her bed, she recalled the pouch the seer had given her. Dmitri would fall asleep. She knew where he kept his keys, and under such deep a slumber, she'd have time enough to leave and flee! Skald was big enough for her to find something else to do. Tanya mused for a few days upon this last hope of deliverance, of escape from her hitherto dark fate. Surely, the Vistana old woman had wished her well. Certainly, she had seen her future: the pouch, and the powder inside it, was the key for her happiness.

Tanya focused all her thoughts in finding the right time to put the powder to good use. Only this thought eased the pain and suffering she felt through the long despairing days. She didn't have to wait for long. Dmitri had regular habits, and after five days only, she slipped into his room. Dmitri was asleep. He looked deep asleep, but Tanya was afraid he might wake from the sounds of her rummaging through his drawers. This was the time. Concealing her own heartbeat the best she



could, and mustering all her strength, she opened the pouch and threw its contents over Dmitri's frame. His head, his face, the uncovered torso, and the legs, even though beneath the bed sheets, all were sprinkled. She waved the whole contents of the pouch, making sure she left not even a tiny speck of dust behind, scattering it across all of Dmitri's body. She waited to see if she could perceive any change. After a time, she was convinced Dmitri was fast asleep and went to look for the keys. She quickly found them and headed for the street, not even looking behind. She ran out for her first breath of freedom in a long time. She ran aimlessly, and before long, she fell asleep and exhausted by the city gates.

She woke the following day on the bustling street. The gates were open and she was homeless again. People looked suspiciously at her, but none took her for more than a beggar. No one knew her, after all, imprisoned as she had been for all those days. Thus, it was with surprise that, as she wandered, she began to hear someone asking for her name in the street.

That day, Dmitri hadn't shown up at the market, as he was wont to. His employees and acquaintances had become more and more worried with the passing of the hours. Finally, one of them decided to go and look for him at his home. The door was unlocked—surely a strange sign. Entering slowly, suspiciously looking at each corner, the man made his way up to Dmitri's bedroom. There, a ghastly scene awaited him. So strong was the impact of the sight that he was sick on the floor and was dizzy for some minutes.

Dmitri was lying on the bed—but was it Dmitri? His flesh had all dissolved into a gooey, gray substance. It looked wet and spongy, as if the very muscles and fat had melted into liquid while some parts remained solid but malformed.

The man had looked once more at the bed and fainted on the floor. Minutes after, another had come and the alarm was sounded.

Tanya couldn't believe what she heard. She had killed no one, but she was in no position to protest. She would not see her freedom denied her once more. She ran like crazy through the city, looking again for the gates. She fled desperately, never looking back, but her behaviour was too suspect. Soon, stones began to be thrown in her direction, and the whole city was aware of her crime. More violently they hit her, and each time Tanya ran more desperately for the gates, bleeding and crying but with strength she though she didn't have.

No one closed the gates for her. No one went after her. She was outcast once again, but this time severely wounded. Her white robe was battered, leaving more holes than cloth, and what had been white was now bloody red. Tanya had once again been betrayed by fate. She threw herself on the road. She could go on no

longer. She had no more strength, no further will to live.



The old seer rose from her chair with a smile dangling in her lips. She covered her cards, and left her vardo. Looking from her door to the camp around her, she raised her right arm and cried out.

“Vishnadd! The deed is done! The giorgio is dead!”

A joyous celebration erupted at once in the camp, and an improvised prastonata began in no time. Tankards flew from hand to throat, kisses were exchanged and new songs invented. Amidst all the ebullient happiness, silent and circumspect, the raunie approached the seer.

“What of the girl?”

“She'll die tonight. What does it matter?”

## TANYA

### 3rd-Magnitude Incorporeal Ghost, Chaotic Evil

<b>Armor Class</b>	-2 / 4	<b>Str</b>	-
<b>Movement</b>	12	<b>Dex</b>	14
<b>Level/Hit Dice</b>	7	<b>Con</b>	-
<b>Hit Points</b>	32	<b>Int</b>	10
<b>THAC0</b>	14	<b>Wis</b>	14
<b>No. of Attacks</b>	1	<b>Cha</b>	11
<b>Damage/Attack</b>	1d8	<b>XP</b>	6,000
<b>Special Attacks</b>	Disease, spells		
<b>Special Defenses</b>	+2 (+1) weapons to hit; -1 penalty on turning attempts		
<b>Special Vulnerabilities</b>	Holy Water does 1d6 damage on a successful attack roll against AC 4; Can be hit by edged weapons of Vistani make.		
<b>Special Powers:</b>	Insubstantiality, Invisibility at will, Rejuvenation, Immunity, Cause Fear, Cause Wounds, Summoning Wolves		

*Note: numbers in brackets are applicable only when her foes are ethereal.*

**Rejuvenation:** recovers all hit points in one round, but must rest for 30 minutes after that.

**Immunity:** standard undead immunity against all Enchantment/Charm spells, death magic, cold and poison.

**Cause Fear:** Victims must make a fear check with a -2 penalty.

**Cause Wounds:** If she hits, she inflicts 1d8 damage. Plus, each hit has a percentage chance equal to the number of points inflicted to decrease permanently 1 Cha point from the victim. If this value reaches 0, the

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

victim must roll a save vs. death magic. Failure means death, while success means (s)he transforms into a “broken one”, without any will to live.

**Anchor:** the road from Skald to Teufeldorf and beyond.

**Allergen:** Vistani vardos

### Current Sketch

After collapsing on the road, Tanya lingered there until the night came. With the night came the howls, and with the howls came the wolves. She watched them come, but she didn't care. Muttering, she vowed to herself she'd cheat her fate and she wouldn't be destroyed. As one, the wolves sprang at her. Her last cries echoed painfully through the night, and even in Skald, 2 miles away, they chilled many people to the bone. Her body was never found, but the road was red on the following day and all the ones after. Now, only red plants are born in the very place where Tanya died.

She died, but as she vowed, she was not destroyed. She emerged from the road the following night as a 3rd-magnitude ghost, with a commensurate thirst for revenge. Her revenge is not directed at anyone in particular, but against all. She feels she was betrayed by everyone she met, but ultimately, she lays the fault on her fate. She wants to take revenge on it.

Tanya doesn't know how her revenge can be achieved. It is possible that bringing Nikolai before justice would help to redeem her, as would exposing the Vistani for the murder of Dmitri, but it is uncertain if these two actions together are enough. Meanwhile, she vents her fury on all who travel the road between Skald and Teufeldorf, and terrorizes her victims by lingering in plain view for days before launching her final assault.

Tanya always appears dressed in her white tattered gown, full of claw marks and bloody paw prints. Her face is grazed by many scars, as are her arms and all her exposed flesh. She is a fearful sight. Because she was killed on the road, in no man's land, Tanya can never leave the outdoors, no matter how much she may try. She can travel the whole extension of the road, from Skald to even Teufeldorf in Barovia or Levkarest in Borca. As long as the road is the same, she'll be able to travel it. However, she can never enter any building nor get more than 10 yards away from the road.

Although she doesn't understand it, the Vistana seer was her real traitor, and the one who knew her death since the first moment Nikolai met her. Thus, it is puzzling for her that she cannot seem to be able to approach the gypsy vardos. This is a curse to her, because there she lived her happiest days. She often tries to ease a bit of her pain among the Vistani she admired and their music she loved, but she always feels a repulsion when a single vardo comes in her direction,

making it impossible to share anything more with the Vistani. Similarly, she has a special vulnerability to weapons of Vistani make. Even non-magical blades crafted by the Vistani can harm her, although Tanya is not aware of this. The Vistani tend to leave her be and she doesn't persecute them. Aside from Vistani weapons, only magical weapons of the required strength will harm her.

Apart from the normal ghostly powers, Tanya has a few more at her disposal. She can invoke the scene of her death to cause fear among her victims, and she can summon wolves similar to those that killed her. She can also cause wounds with her touch, even when incorporeal.

### Combat

Tanya is an insidious foe. She seeks to torment her victims before harming them, much like a cat does with a mouse. As she was tormented during her whole life with successively shattered hopes, she tries to threaten her prey in a similar fashion. She roams the road by night, and when a person or a group of people pass by her, she marks them as targets and begins her persecution. Half the time, she will be met near the place where she was killed, in the middle of an expanse of reddish plants.

Tanya will never attack on the first meeting. Her favourite strategy is to wear down the nerves of her opponent. She'll always remain a fair distance behind the group, but clearly visible. Even without looking behind, her presence is felt by her targets, and regardless of her invisibility, there is a coldness that extends for some yards around her that stubbornly attests that she's there. She becomes ominous and heavy company, and she continues this for days, usually up to a week or two. If her targets ever try to attack, she will simply disappear and reappear again at their backs, but will not make any offensive move.

Since she cannot enter any house, when her victims are indoors she tries to make herself visible from the interior through windows, thus proving that her menace persists, and that she's still waiting. After the nerves of the group, and their defenses, are worn down, she'll launch her attack. She will summon 2d6+4 wolves, just like the ones that killed her, and set them against the party. She often chooses to instill fear in her victims' hearts at about the same time, with devastating effect.

Tanya's intention is to kill her foes. If the wolves do not succeed, she can call further waves of attack, up to a maximum of 3 summonings per day. At the same time, she'll try to attack the group with her ability to cause wounds. If she is in difficulty, she'll try to become invisible and disappear. All in all, she can be very difficult to destroy.



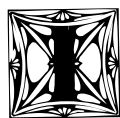
# THE AVATAR OF THE WOLF GOD

## THE ANCIENT DEAD OF A LIVING GOD

by Mark "Mortavius" Graydon

[mortavius@cnx.net](mailto:mortavius@cnx.net)

### BIOGRAPHY



In the small village of Tricco in southern Verbrek, a cult following the Wolf God has crept into the hearts of some of the citizens. But the doctrines of wildness, frenzy, and bloodshed are not all that has entered.

The Avatar of their god has also descended upon the town, and in his wake no one may survive.

### THE AVATAR OF THE WOLF GOD

#### Medium-Size Undead

**Hit Dice:** 4d12+3 (38 hp)

**Initiative:** +1 (Dex)

**Speed:** 40 ft.

**AC:** 20 (+1 Dex, +9 Natural)

**Attacks:** Bite +6 melee

**Damage:** Bite 1d8+4

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

**Special Attacks:** Bleeding Lesions, Charm Animals, Despair, Trip

**Special Qualities:** Damage Reduction 5/+1, Fire Vulnerability, Resistant to Blows, Undead

**Saves:** Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +7

**Abilities:** Str 19, Dex 13, Con –, Int 2, Wis 16, Cha 10

**Skills:** Hide +4, Listen +11, Move Silently +5, Spot +9, Wilderness Lore +4

**Feats:** Alertness, Toughness

---

**Challenge Rating:** 6

**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** Chaotic Evil

### APPEARANCE

According to the classification system of the esteemed late Dr. Rudolph van Richten, the Avatar is an ancient

dead of the second rank (whereas the creature presented on pg. 138 of the *Monster Manual* would be a third rank specimen). It has a dusty withered brown frame, clearly showing its unnatural nature to any who view it. Its eyes glow dimly with a pale red light. The hide is mottled, with patches of fur and bare skin, and even with holes in the flesh showing the yellowed bones inside.

### BACKGROUND

The Avatar actually has nothing supernatural about its former life. The creature was a simple wolf (albeit, a strong, hardy specimen) who captured the eyes of a misguided priest of the Wolf God who dwelt in Tricco long ago.

The priest stalked and watched the creature every day, and when he found it dead in the forest of arrows from hunters, the sorrowful cleric took the body to a secret temple he had created in a cave beneath the town. There he preserved the carcass, and worshipped it as an Avatar of the Wolf God, awaiting eagerly when it would rise with vengeance against the hunters that killed it.

But as all things do, the cleric eventually died and the secret died with him, the only records being his journals, which lay with him in the secret temple.

Many years later, a woman by the name of Kaywen came to Tricco. She too was a servant of the Wolf God, and an infected werewolf. She had made it her mission to bring the glory of the Wolf God to the primitive people of Verbrek, that the god might grow stronger with their worship.

As luck would have it, Kaywen stayed in the very same house that the former hermetic cleric of the Wolf God also lived in. There, underneath the bed, she found hidden a scrap of his journal, a paper speaking vaguely of the great tunnel he had found by the Arden River,

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

and the temple he planned to build there. Determined, the young Kaywen set out to find this branch of her order.

She did find the temple, but of course, by that time, the only worshipper was the bones of the cleric who had created the place. She found his notes, and reading them, she discovered the truth about the mummified wolf that lay before the Altar. Here before her, was an Avatar of her God! But Kaywen reasoned that it was in a dormant state and needed worship. This of course, fit perfectly with her plan to bring the Wolf God to the people of Verbrek.

Thus, Kaywen slowly and quietly began to convert the villagers of Tricco.

Being a resourceful woman she utilized many methods of indoctrination, and it wasn't long before Kaywen had a strong following of approximately half of the population of Tricco. They began to meet in secret in the cave, worshipping the avatar of their god, the mummified wolf.

The power of faith and worship has since taken its toll upon the corpse of the wolf. The creature has been transformed into one of the ancient dead, albeit a dormant one. As long as the worship continues, the Avatar is content to lie in rest. However, should its adoration come to a halt or lessen to any degree, it will wake, and its bestial nature will take control, causing it to rampage upon all living things in the region.

### PERSONALITY

The Avatar is a simple beast, even after its transformation into one of the ancient dead. Although its cunning and force of personality have increased, its knowledge has not. It is, however, possessed of an evil bent, and its thoughts invariably turn to destruction. Ironically, the emotional bond that the cultists have for the Avatar means that they are prime targets for the Avatar's anger. Which of course means a lessening of its worship even further, causing it even more rage and anger.

The creature thrives upon fear as well (even if it actually gains no nourishment from it), and the screams of its victims are like honey to it.

Such sounds awaken memories of its real life, when the wild animals that it hunted screamed in pain as their lifeblood was shed upon the ground. Thus, stalking in the night is a favorite tactic of the Avatar.

### COMBAT

The Avatar attacks as a real wolf would, with a savage bite. However, as one of the ancient dead, it possesses powers that it never had access to in life.

**Bleeding Lesions (Su):** Supernatural Disease—Bite, Fortitude save (DC 12), incubation period 1 day; damage 1d4 temporary Constitution.

This form of mummy rot is unique in that instead of the normal effects, the victim suffers from spontaneous lesions and cuts that bleed profusely, making the victim look as if some beast has savaged him. The disease continues until the victim reaches zero Constitution or until he receives a *remove disease* spell or similar magic. An afflicted creature that dies of these bleeding lesions has all of his blood drain from him and shrivels to nothing more than fetid earth within six rounds, unless both a *remove disease* and a *raise dead* are cast upon him before the six rounds ends. The victim of this disease cannot heal the Constitution damage until the disease itself is cured.

**Charm Animals (Sp):** The Avatar has the ability to *charm* natural creatures of the forest and can control up to 12 HD of such creatures.

Affected animals are allowed a Will save (DC 12) to resist the influence, and if they successfully save, they will immediately notice the Avatar's unnatural nature and flee at the first opportunity. Those successfully charmed by the Avatar become immune to its Despair ability for as long as the charm lasts. The Avatar can make use of its *charm* ability three times per day.

**Despair (Su):** Upon sighting the Avatar, or upon hearing its mournful howl (30 foot radius effect), any living creatures must succeed at a Will saving throw (DC 12) or flee in fear for 1d3 rounds. This is a mind-influencing fear effect, much like the Wizard/Sorcerer spell, *cause fear*. Note that a normal ancient dead *despair* ability causes paralysis; the Avatar's nature however, causes a flight reaction. Whether the save is successful or not, the victim cannot be affected by the Despair for a further twenty-four hours.

**Trip (Ex):** If the Avatar hits with its bite, then it may attempt a trip as a free action without making a touch attack or provoking an attack of opportunity. If the attempt fails, then the victim cannot react to trip the Avatar.

**Fire Vulnerability (Ex):** The Avatar suffers double damage from fire attacks unless a save is allowed for half damage. A successful save halves the damage and a failure doubles it.

**Resistant to Blows (Ex):** Physical attacks from normal weapons only deal half-damage to the Avatar. Apply this effect before Damage Reduction.

Physical attacks from enchanted weapons or those created of silver however, are not subject to the Resistant to Blows ability, and may only be subject to Damage Reduction.

**Undead:** Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and disease. Not

subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

### ADVENTURE SEED

Any adventure involving the Avatar is probably good for an average party of 4th level. As long as there is someone in the party capable of casting *remove disease* the Avatar shouldn't pose too much of a problem.

The players enter the town of Tricco either by being sent there, or more likely, just as a stop-over on their way to somewhere else. Either way, they will probably stay the night there, as travelling through the wilds of Verbrek at night can be especially dangerous.

**Tricco (Hamlet):** Conventional & Monstrous; AL N & LE; 100 gp limit; Assets 900 gp; Population 185; Isolated (human 185).

*Authority Figure:* Dilys\*, male human War5 (sheriff)

*Important Characters:* Lin\*, male human Brd2 (entertainer); Harkin, male human Clr3 (Ezra / healer); Yelda, female human Drd1 (hermit); Xavia\*, female human Rgr1 (woodswoman); Galen\*, male human Rog6 (barkeep of The Battered Tankard); Priadan\*, female human Sor1 (seamstress); Woller, female human Adp1 (wise woman); Hodge\*, male human Com6 (fisherman); Seith, male human Exp10 (hunter).

\* Those NPCs marked with an asterisk are cult members.

At some point, Kaywen (an infected werewolf and 4th level cleric of the Wolf God) will learn of the PCs entrance to the town. She will try and subtly recruit them into the flock of worshippers, but most likely the PCs (if they are of a good bent) will spurn such murderous and bestial philosophies.

Thus spurned, Kaywen will plot the death of the players, ambushing them with a number of cultists. The followers will be normal men and women of the village however (Kaywen has not shared her lycanthropy with anyone), and the players should be more than capable of defeating them. If the cultists are not killed outright, they will commit suicide by ingesting copious amounts of belladonna and hemlock to avoid being captured.

Thus, the actions of players, although most likely completely in self-defense, will diminish the worship of the Wolf God in the town of Tricco. This act will cause the Avatar to rise and begin an orgy of destruction and blood. It will hunt the people of the town after dark, letting loose with its mournful howl, charming other wolves into attacking with it, and breaking into buildings if it has to.

The players will probably suspect either the Cult, Kaywen herself, or some rampaging werebeast (especially if the DM does place this adventure in

Verbrek). Of course, the DM can easily throw away these suspicions by showing some cultists murdered by the Avatar or even Kaywen herself.

Alternatively, Kaywen could learn of the Avatars responsibility in the murders and come to the players for help, fearing for her life.

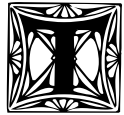
In the end, it will fall on the PCs shoulders to stop the murders from occurring, possibly by hunting the Avatar, setting a trap for it, or simply becoming its next targets.



# MARCOS VEDARRAK

## DISSENTION IN THE RANKS

by Nathan Okerlund  
sealionii@hotmail.com



he popular image of the Talons of Falkovnia is of brutal warriors expert in the arts of war, but nearly as superstitious and backward as the peasants they rule. The truth, as always, is more complex. Many of the Talons are in fact superstitious, fearful of magic, and ignorant, but some are sophisticated, well-educated, and elegant, even by the elevated standards of Richemulot and Dementlieu. Marcos Vedarrak is one such soldier—a Talon combining the iron hand of the Falkovnian army officer with the velvet glove of the diplomat. To that potent combination he adds considerable personal wealth and a rather...unusual...vocation.

### MARCOS VEDARRAK

**Male Human Fgt 6/Wiz 10 (Enchanter):** CR 16; Medium-sized Humanoid (Human); HD 6d10+10d4+16; hp 74; Init +1 (+1 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+1 Dex, *bracers of defense AC 16*); Atk +15/+5 melee (1d8+3 *keen longsword +1*) +12/+2 missile; AL NE; SV Fort +10, Ref +6, Will +9; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 18, Wis 11, Cha 17.

*Skills and Feats:* Diplomacy +13, Sense Motive+8, Bluff+9, Intimidate+11, Spellcraft+12, Knowledge (arcana)+15, Knowledge (Falkovnia)+10, Knowledge (Ravenloft)+13, Concentration+11, Ride +8. Handle Animal +7; Combat Casting, Enlarge Spell, Extend Spell, Improved Critical (longsword), Mounted Combat, Ride-by Attack, Silent Spell, Still Spell, Spell Focus (Enchantment), Spell Mastery (charm person, detect thoughts, clairaudience/clairvoyance, suggestion) Trample, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword)

*Languages:* Falkovnian\*, Mordentish, Lamordian, Darkonese, Balok

*Spells:* 4+1/5+1/5+1/4+1/4+1/2+1 (The extra spell for each level must be selected from the school of enchantment; spells from this school are marked with an asterisk. Vedarrak may not take spells from the school of Conjuraton.)

0 – *dancing lights, daze\*, detect magic, detect poison, flare, ghost sounds, light, mage hand, read*

*magic; 1<sup>st</sup> – change self, charm person\*, color spray, erase, feather fall, hold portal, hypnotism\*, magic missile, message, sleep\*, shield, shocking grasp, silent image; 2<sup>nd</sup> – arcane lock, detect thoughts, invisibility, knock, levitate, magic mouth, rope trick, see invisibility, Tasha’s hideous laughter\*; 3<sup>rd</sup> – clairaudience/clairvoyance, dispel magic, fireball, fly, haste, hold person\*, lightning bolt, suggestion\*; 4<sup>th</sup> – charm monster\*, confusion\*, dimension door, emotion\*, fire trap, polymorph self, shout; 5<sup>th</sup> – cone of cold, dominate person\*, hold monster\*, mind fog\*, prying eyes, teleport*

### BACKGROUND

The turns of fortune that were eventually to make Marcos Vedarrak one of the most powerful men of Falkovnia began with the politics of his father, an extremely wealthy grain merchant of southeastern Dementlieu named Paul Dirac. While most of the Dementlieuse feared and abominated their brutal neighbor to the east, Dirac was an unabashed admirer of Drakov and his style of government. He had traveled extensively in Falkovnia in the course of his business, and noted with approval the rigorous control exerted by Falkovnia’s military government over the common folk—a regime which he believed contributed greatly to the peace and tranquility of the state in general, and trade in particular. He was of the frequently stated opinion that the peasants of Dementlieu were extended far too many freedoms, causing them to dream of bettering their station. He warned that a rising of the common folk against their natural masters must, eventually, be the result.

These sentiments were shared by some of his circle and deplored by others, but all of this would almost certainly have passed without undue comment except for two things. First, Dirac also called for the replacement of the rule by the noble families of Dementlieu with a military “meritocracy” similar to that of Falkovnia, and second, the suspicion that he was actually giving information on Dementlieuse fortifications and forces to contacts in the Falkovnian

military. As these suspicions intensified, Dirac found himself faced with the prospect of being arrested and having his very considerable property seized by the state. Resolving to make the best of the situation, he sold off his properties to a friend and moved himself, his family, and as many of his possessions as were easily portable to Falkovnia.

Dirac, a merchant accustomed to soft living and fine culture, fit poorly into the military culture he so admired; in an attempt to gain a place in his adoptive homeland he did his best to be more Falkovnian than the Falkovnians, quickly purchasing a rank in the army, changing his name from the Dementlieuse “Dirac” to the Falkovnian “Vedarrak”, and joining enthusiastically in what passed in Falkovnia for high society, holding balls, financing theatrical performances, and, of course, developing a healthy interest in the fine art of falconry. His wealth, his enthusiasm for all things Falkovnian, and his (purely nominal) army rank soon brought him into contact with the inner circles of power in Falkovnia.

Unsurprisingly, Drakov and his intimates considered Paul Vedarrak something of a fool, but a useful and wealthy fool eager to please; all of them despised him as a fop who hardly knew which end of the sword was sharp, but many were also slightly in awe of his superior education and awareness of the world. By sheer chutzpah, generous gifts to the right people, and a genuine genius for organization and trade Paul Vedarrak (as he now called himself) made himself accepted, if not respected, in Falkovnian society.

Marcos Vedarrak was only two years old when his father moved their household to Falkovnia; he grew up in an atmosphere of luxury and privilege, but there were strange undercurrents of anxiety and anger in his home which he felt strongly even as a young child. He was aware at a subconscious level that both of his parents were extremely unhappy with their surroundings and with each other. His father, sensitive to the derision of the Talons he hoped so much to impress, did his best to ingratiate himself to the Talons who visited their homes, with indifferent success; his mother resented the loss of Dementlieuse high society and scorned the company of the unsophisticated Falkovnian women of her station, and she lost no opportunity to inform her husband of her feelings. He, in turn, accused her of making the transition more difficult by refusing to support him as he attempted to “break into” Falkovnian society. Marcos became something of a pawn in their power struggle; his father saw to it that he receive the finest weapons training available, while his mother made sure that he was educated to the most rigorous standards of Dementlieuse culture, able to dance, to paint, to write poetry, and command the thousand social graces demanded of a gentleman of Dementlieu. Marcos, caught in the middle, did his best to please

both and, surprisingly, largely succeeded, but the demands his parents placed on him created a young man humorless, a perfectionist, and with a burning need to succeed at everything. He writhed with shame to see his father fawn over the Talons who visited their house and shared his mother’s disdain for his countrymen, but his scorn was mixed with something of his father’s admiration for the harsh warriors who ruled the land and their code of blood and death. As a teenager he had already set his mind to obtaining power at any cost—both to win the respect his father had never had and confirm his superiority as both a warrior and a gentleman to the backward, uncouth Falkovnians.

With that goal in mind he turned to advancement among the Talons as his chief goal in life. Entering the military academy which formed Drakov’s elite corps, he strove diligently to perfect his abilities with the sword, bow, and flail, enduring the forced marches and brutal discipline designed to toughen the young men, and dreaming of his own rise to power over those whom he hated and admired.

However, his course to power was changed by a chance encounter with a former tutor, a fellow Dementlieuse expatriate named Armande Dupin. M. Dupin was an elderly gentleman of very great erudition and Marcos had always admired his learning and eloquence; on meeting him one day in Lekar, Marcos told him at some length of his training as a Talon and even hinted at his ultimate ambitions. He was surprised to see his former tutor shake his head skeptically and reply that true power was not to be found in physical strength, but in mental strength. Somewhat aggrieved, Marcos demanded to know what he meant. With a cryptic smile, Dupin asked Marcos to introduce him to his instructor-at-arms for a demonstration of the point.

Now thoroughly mystified, Marcos took his former tutor back to the barracks where he lived and introduced him to Kalt Mecstros, the grizzled, hard-bitten instructor of swordplay at the academy. Within minutes, Mecstros had, at Dupin’s request, performed a very creditable rendition of the children’s song “I’m a teapot singing,” imitated a chicken to perfection, and given a long and forceful monologue on the deficiencies of Drakov’s strategy in the last invasion of Darkon. Finally, Dupin ordered Mecstros to forget their conversation, and he and Marcos returned to his apartment in the city, where Marcos demanded to know how the reason for Mecstros’ bizarre behavior. Dupin replied that he had used mental strength—amplified by the arcane art of magic—to bend Mecstros’ will to his own, and asked Marcos to consider which of them—he or Mecstros—was truly the stronger. The young man was forced to admit that Dupin’s strength, although less obvious, was equal to or greater than that of the master of arms; seized by the idea that this power over the mind of his fellow man could be his, he demanded that

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

Dupin teach him these arcane arts—a demand to which Dupin was happy to accede. The young warrior became a young mage, as well, and soon his abilities in the arcane arts outstripped his martial talents.

Marcos kept quiet about his magical studies and applied himself diligently to advancement through the ranks of the Falkovnian military; his rise, although hardly meteoric, was steady and sustained. His superior officers all seemed to consider him invaluable, and he received appointments to successively more and more important and prestigious posts, culminating—in a social, if not a military sense—in his marriage to Vlad Drakov's youngest daughter Ilya, and his prestige only augmented on the death of his father and his inheritance of the estate.

Vedarrak is known to be deeply interested in the work of Vjorn Horstman and the mages of the Radiant Tower and is one of the principal supporters of continuing magical and scientific research within Falkovnia. In fact, it was widely considered that without his support the large contingent of the Talons who disapproved of such “nonsense” would have appealed to Drakov to have such institutions of learning abolished. He has also served, at times, as a de facto ambassador to Dementlieu, Richemulot, and Borca to convey unofficial messages between the political leaders of those countries and Drakov.

Vedarrak has continued up to the present day to be an important figure in Falkovnian politics—but it seems likely that his ambitions have not yet been fully realized.

### CURRENT SKETCH

Marcos Vedarrak is now thirty-eight years old. He is of average height but strongly built, with broad shoulders from years spent in training with weapons. He wears his blond hair short and is clean-shaven. His broad face is rather battered from years in the field and his Roman nose has been broken at least twice, but his pale blue eyes and commanding presence give warning that he is a man of intelligence and ability. He is something of a man's man and a natural leader—characteristics which he augments by judicious use of his magical abilities. He is a good judge of character and of interests and will usually play to the prejudices of his audience; if in the company of a Talon, he discusses falconry, weaponry, and war-games; if in a Dementlieuse salon he converses on the latest poetic fad or operatic flop. His deepest interests, however, are in the arcane, and he has amassed a fairly significant library of works on philosophy and magic. His ties to the Radiant Tower, his magical abilities, and his ambition have also lead him to seek membership in the Fraternity of Shadows; he does not hold any high rank in that fellowship, having contributed little as of yet to the understanding

of the Demiplane, but his political influence has been useful at times to his fellow-members.

Marcos is also rather grim and humorless, very much the perfectionist, and highly vindictive; even among the Talons, who are not a particularly forgiving group of men, he is famous for his ability to nurse a grudge. His conviction that he is always in the right, his rapid rise to power, and his championing of unpopular causes (such as the Radiant Tower) have left many of his fellow Talons in his wake, and a fair number of them would be just as glad to see him dead.

### COMBAT

Marcos is rather more accustomed to mounted combat than to fighting on foot, but he is still an extremely dangerous opponent, especially since he is usually accompanied by two Talon bodyguards who are fifth-level fighters. If the situation is delicate or if he can't afford to leave dead bodies behind, he'll often try to talk his way out of a dangerous situation, using his *charm* and *suggestion* spells; if that fails, or if he is attacked outright, he will be happy to use brute force to exterminate any attackers. He wears *bracers of defense armor class 16* and wields a silvered *keen longsword +1*, a present from Drakov himself; he also owns a silver ring capable of casting *darkness 15' radius 1/day* (the symbol of his membership in the Fraternity of Shadows) and a *rod of beguiling* with 20 charges. He favors spells from the schools of enchantment but is certainly capable of producing a *fireball* or *lightning bolt* if hard pressed in combat. He has no spells from the schools of necromancy or conjuration.

### ADVENTURE IDEAS

Vedarrak is attempting to collect a number of books formerly in the possession of the Crimson Arcanus, a lich of Falkovnian origin destroyed by Rudolph van Richten and his associates. The player characters might become aware of this in several ways: they might require information from one of those books, or be hired to retrieve one of them, and be forced to obtain it from Vedarrak by trickery, theft, or bargain for something more valuable. Alternatively, they may discover only that an unknown mage is gathering books written by a former lich and come to the conclusion that the mage is attempting to become a lich himself. Vedarrak actually has no such plans, but an adventure might well center around the PCs attempt to deal with this perceived threat.

(If this scenario is used, the Dungeon Master should play up the fact that the player characters will almost certainly not be expecting that the mage they seek is a Talon. This can be easily be used to focus



suspicion on some other character initially. It may also increase the respect the player characters have for Talons in the future, as they will always be need to ask themselves “Is this Talon really a high level mage, too?”)

Vedarrak might also be encountered in Richemulot engaged in a “diplomatic” mission for Drakov. Drakov hopes to split Richemulot from its traditional alliance with Borca, Dementlieu, and Mordent, and he has sent Vedarrak to support Louise Renier against Jacqueline, with the understanding that Louise will then throw her lot in with Falkovnia as it attempts an invasion of one of its neighbors. Jacqueline is aware that her sister has acquired a new admirer (but not of his political designs) and has sent ruffians to dispose of him on three occasions—a tactic which has led to the death of several useful ruffians. She, therefore, engages the player characters to find out what’s going on.

(The same scenario could play out in Dementlieu between Dominic d’Honaire and the Living Brain, or in Borca between Ivan Dilisnya and Ivana Boritsi.)

As time goes on, Marcos’ awareness grows that Drakov’s rule cannot last forever; Marcos Vedarrak might take an important role in a coup led against Drakov by his son, Vlad II. The PCs might discover that more and more Talon leaders loyal to Drakov Sr. are dying and being replaced by young men with other loyalties. Vedarrak himself might be subverting certain captains of the Talons with his enchantments and causing them to switch allegiance to Vlad II. Vedarrak’s ultimate aim in this scenario would be to topple Drakov, Sr. and become Vlad II’s chief advisor—effectively becoming the power behind the throne. If the PCs expose the plot, they may well gain the favor and respect of Drakov (a startling development for heroes!) If they support it or leave it unexposed, Falkovnia will almost certainly explode into a bloody civil war.

X

# VALERI ANTONIN

## HYMNS OF A HERETIC

by Eric Jean

(with special thanks to Julien Smith, Tammy MacKenzie, Jason Ambrus and Kurt Wilson)

[barbarossabrandy@hotmail.com](mailto:barbarossabrandy@hotmail.com)

*"Only by allowing the Darkness its place can Ezra  
destroy the seed that lurks in all but her sainted  
Apostles."*

—The Book of Rhiannon, XVII–XIX

### BIOGRAPHY



Rhiannon Elysia is a beautiful girl on the verge of womanhood. She believes that she is the mortal coming of Ezra. Physically, she seems the spitting image of Ezra's image, and her mannerisms seem resolute but caring. But even she doesn't understand the role she plays in the Grand Scheme.

She is in fact the host of a man who died over two decades ago, Valeri Antonin, a man remembered for his voice, his music, and his devotion to Ezra's teachings. He is a man who has since risen as an odem—an incorporeal undead—filled with rage and resentment at the very church that made him what he was.

### BACKGROUND

#### First Movement:

#### Rise and Fall of Valeri Antonin

Before he'd ever learned anything else, Valeri Antonin knew how to sing.

His parents were Dimitrius and Vera Antonin, two minor nobles from Levkarest, and Valeri was born on a sunny afternoon late in July of 705. At the time, the Great Cathedral in Levkarest was still about 40 years away from being completed and the church of Ezra was still considered an infant institution. But much was yet to happen to that church and to that little singing boy with the moving soprano voice.

The first twelve years of Valeri's life were by all accounts unexceptional. He learned to perform at

parties, singing before his father's guests, or for their wives when the men would retreat to the smoking room to discuss matters of state. Valeri was Dimitrius and Vera's only child, and though by the standards of the aristocracy the family was poor, the boy never lacked for anything. The truth of it was that Dimitrius owed substantial sums of money and was always alert for any opportunities that might help his financial situation. That opportunity came one day in the form of an anchorite by the name of Sergei Kristovich.

The priest had been a guest of the family's before, and perhaps more so than any other of the household's guests loved to listen to Valeri sing. Time and time again, he would come to the house for supper to hear the boy sing, and over the course of the years he developed a fondness for Valeri and became almost like an uncle to him. Construction was slowing on the Great Cathedral due to a lack of funds, and in order to attract people to the Cathedral Sergei was driven to ensure that it should be filled with a choir's voice singing Ezra's praises. There would be men and women of all ages, forty strong in all, the finest voices from the faithful. But of all these voices, he declared to Dimitrius one night, it was Valeri's he wanted most.

Like most nobles, Dimitrius attended church service out of propriety and to ensure a certain amount of public exposure. The thought of his son spending any part of his life in the service of that institution was, at first, a difficult one. But Sergei assured him that the church was willing to compensate him well for the role his son would play in the new Choir of the Sanctum Voci (the Holy Voice). Dimitrius summoned Valeri into the room and told him what Sergei had offered. Sergei also offered to take Valeri on as his student and to have Valeri stay with him at the church so he could learn the hymns as well as the duties of an anchorite. All this seemed to please Valeri very much and Dimitrius finally gave his assent.

On September 19th, 717, the Choir of the Holy Voice first performed in the cathedral, with Valeri singing several soprano solos. Over the course of the next few months, word of the choir and of its child star spread throughout Borca, attracting several hundred

people to the site of the unfinished church to hear them. Sergei directed the glorious voices at every service and watched as the emptied coffers started to fill again. But he knew it was Valeri they all came to see. The boy's voice was truly amazing, a soprano with more power and emotion than Sergei had ever heard in either man or woman. But he was no fool. He knew that within a year, or two at most, Valeri's voice would break as he hit puberty and his treasured soprano songbird would be ruined. There was only one thing he could think to do.

A few years before, when Sergei was a novice Watcher, he journeyed to Lamordia to bring Ezra's message to those who lived there. His mission was only minorly successful, but it was on those travels that he found his love of music. The nobles of Lamordia, he discovered, were fond of a type of theatrical entertainment called 'opera'. Sergei had the fortune of attending several performances and was astonished to see full-grown men singing soprano with divine force and sublimity. In Lamordia, these men were local celebrities and Sergei was intrigued as to how they could sing soprano well into their twenties and thirties. These men, he was told, were castratti: men stripped of their manhoods before puberty so their voices would not break. Because their frames still grew larger than those of women, their lungs could produce a sound unmatched by any singer.

The castrato, unfortunately, was a thing hitherto unheard of in Borca, but Sergei knew his choir would not be what it should without Valeri's voice at its head. And without the choir and the funds it produced, construction of the cathedral would be slowed again or even halted. He determined to approach the boy, hoping his last few months under his tutelage would make Valeri receptive to what Sergei would say. Valeri already wanted to spend his life in Ezra's service as an anchorite so when Sergei told him he could sing her praises for the rest of his life, it seemed to him almost too much.

The castratti of Lamordia are wasted singing for the nobles, Sergei had said. He was offering Valeri a chance to truly give himself over to Ezra's service. Valeri decided that this was his role in the Grand Scheme and so, before his 13th birthday, Valeri became Borca's first castrato.

To ensure the cooperation of Dimitrius and Vera Antonin, Sergei again dipped into the treasury. Taking their newfound fortune but unable to accept what their son had consented to, they moved to Mordent to try and build their family anew. Valeri never saw them again.

For Sergei and the church, the next few years were prosperous. Valeri continued to sing and as he aged his voice achieved feats beyond anything he could have imagined. Tutored by Sergei himself Valeri became an anchorite by the age of 16. On September 19th, 724, on the 7th anniversary of the choir's creation, Valeri

revealed his first musical mass to the world: two hours of uninterrupted singing prayer. All of 19 years, Valeri was known throughout the core in any place where Ezra was worshipped. The seats were always full and nobles and rich families that had never before been interested in Ezra's message suddenly tithed exorbitant sums to building its most ambitious monument. Converts were made like never before. Money flowed into the church and the church's influence grew by leaps and bounds. And to the church, things seemed only to get better as the years progressed.

But Valeri was not happy, as there was a dark underside to his life. Some people, even within the church or the choir itself, mocked him because of his status. He was the butt of jokes, of endless pranks and humiliation. He felt utterly alone, abandoned by his parents, and friendless. Several times he was even threatened by fanatical purists who claimed an atrocity such as he was did not belong within Ezra's church. Even his fellow anchorites seemed to consider him something less than themselves. Only Sergei ever seemed to care for him.

After the creation of his first mass, the derision seemed to get worse. Valeri would spend all of his time praying, composing music or with Sergei. The more he sang and wrote music, the more the faithful loved him, yet the lonelier he felt. More and more he sought out Sergei's presence, spending several nights being comforted by him because Valeri had no one else to turn to.

One cold February morning in 729, at the age of 23, Valeri Antonin was found dead in his quarters. The story was that his body showed no cuts from blades or bruises from a struggle. Publicly, the church maintained that Valeri Antonin died in his sleep. Privately, they suspected Camille Boritsi, though Praesidia Kristyn Stoyista decided against pressing the issue. After all, the Home Faith remembered too well the events following the poisoning of Praesidius Yakov Dilisnya and did not want to tempt Camille's anger. All inquiry into Valeri's death was abandoned. This action did not go unnoticed by Camille, and she sponsored the funeral to return Praesidia Stoyista's gesture.

A few days after his death, Valeri Antonin was buried at the base of the statue of Yakov Dilisnya before the yet-unfinished Great Cathedral he had been so instrumental in helping build. The Home Faith declared that day, February 14th, to be a religious holiday. Valeri became canonized as St-Valeri and the day was to be a remembrance of his love for Ezra in his singing, his hymns and in all that he had given up to his faith.

The choir continued to sing but it did not draw the crowds it used to in Valeri's time. Sergei handed over his position as choirmaster to Warden Istvan Mikhailovich. One week later, he had announced his

intention to leave the Home Faith and was en route to Port-a-Lucine. When he arrived, he informed Bastion Secousse that he sought to join the anchorites in study and contemplation in the church of Ste-Mere-des-Larmes. He was welcomed into the group and some quarters were found for him within the church.

The truth was that Sergei Kristovich was responsible for Valeri's death and he had fled Levkarest to distance himself from the events that had transpired there. On the night before Valeri was found dead, Sergei had visited Valeri's quarters. That night, Valeri was killed in an accident and left to bleed to death.

Paradoxically, Sergei quickly found that he felt much more at home with the anchorites of Ste-Mere-des-Larmes and he settled into a quiet life, free of politics and rich in culture and study, trying to forget what had happened in the shadows of the Great Cathedral.

### Second Movement: The Planting of the Seed

All has not yet been told of Valeri Antonin's story. Valeri went to the grave with much resentment and anger. He had been humiliated, belittled and betrayed. The ultimate betrayal had been at the hands of Sergei himself, the last man whom he had trusted. His body was enshrined in the monument before the cathedral but his spirit rose as an odem.

Taking one of the cathedral laborers as a host, Valeri was able to discover where Sergei had fled. He drove his host into the ground, never stopping to rest, eat or drink. Several of his hosts died in this way until he reached Port-a-Lucine. Once there, he waited patiently to find a neophyte anchorite, and he slipped himself into her body. He did not exert any influence over her, however, not wanting to risk discovery, and waited for her to enter the church of her own volition.

Once inside, it took no time to find Sergei. He slipped himself into Sergei's body, but did not make his presence felt. He wanted to contemplate precisely how he was going to exact his revenge on Sergei and how he was going to humiliate and demean the Church of Ezra.

He quickly discovered how much information was truly stored beneath the church. He was certain that somewhere there laid the tools he needed. So he waited patiently, learning and reading all that Sergei read. Valeri scarcely exerted his influence and then only lightly and subtly. He might do no more than gently pull Sergei's hand towards a book Valeri thought was more interesting than the choice Sergei had made. When Sergei spoke of the occasional will his arms seem to have of their own to a friend, his friend thought him lucky to have Ezra guiding his choice of reading and his path.

That gave Valeri the idea that he needed. For the next six years, Valeri would quietly ride Sergei's form, using his body to enrich his mind. He read about the nature of Ezra. He taught himself over half a dozen languages. He read books on numerology, on prophecy, on ritual, anything Valeri thought could be of use to know. In all that time he never influenced Sergei more than a nudge of the arm or a tilt of the head. Not once was he ever suspected to exist. Valeri left the monastic sanctuary only at night, when he felt the urge to feed, leaving the church in borrowed bodies, never revealing himself to the priests, never leaving a trail of his passage. In his studies, he also found books about the nature of the Legions of the Night and the powers of evil. He even found tomes on the undead that spoke of such creatures as himself and of how they had been caught in the past. From their mistakes Valeri learned so that he himself made none.

It was early in the spring of 735 when Valeri Antonin, the late castrato from Levkarest, decided he was ready to undertake the project that he had been contemplating for the last six years. But before he left, he finished his business with Sergei. For the first time, Valeri exercised his full control over Sergei's body. Sitting Sergei down at his writing desk in his chambers, Valeri wrote a confession which, allegedly, stated that Sergei Kristovich, after having taken advantage of Valeri, had finally abandoned Valeri Antonin to die in the early hours of the morning on February 10th, 729.

When the anchorites came to find Sergei in the morning, they found him lying face down against the floor, naked. Bastion Secousse advised Praesidius Alexei Raskolka in Levkarest. The news of the letter was never publicized.

By the time Sergei Kristovich's body was found, Valeri had long since departed, his host now a young traveling pistoleer.

Valeri was anxious to begin his plan so he began looking for the first thing he needed—a man. He needed a strong and healthy man, with a pale complexion, dark hair and bright eyes. The man he eventually found was a Richemulot dandy by the name of Arsene Montcalme. He hijacked his body immediately and left to find the second thing he needed. He was now looking for a woman.

Valeri journeyed to Kartakass, under the guise of Arsene Montcalme, for the woman he wanted to find needed to have a beautiful, serene voice. He wanted her to have a radiant smile. He wanted her to have dark hair and bright eyes as well. And he needed her to be beautiful almost beyond compare, to all save Ezra's image itself. The woman he found was called Melodie Elysia.

Arsene was a handsome man and it was not difficult to woo this merchant's daughter. Within two weeks, she was madly in love with him. One night,

under pretense of wanting to see her, he convinced Melodie to help him sneak into her family's home in Harmonia.

When Melodie awoke the next morning, she was lying on her bed. There were ligature marks on her face, and her wrists and ankles felt burnt and sore, though she remembered nothing of why or how. Lying on the floor, next to her bed, was the body of Arsene Montcalme. But Valeri was already in control of Melodie's body. He dressed her in warm clothing and set fire to the house.

He then fled Harmonia, towards the forests of Kartakass.

### Third Movement: The Black Sheep Among the Fold

After wandering the woods for a few days, Valeri eventually found a small cottage. The occupant was not present so Valeri moved into his home. When the trapper who lived there eventually returned, Valeri shot him with the man's own crossbow. The cottage was his.

Valeri taught himself how to use the traps and managed to keep Melodie's body healthy. And after a few months, as he had hoped, she was pregnant.

When her pregnancy came to term, Valeri discovered that he had been more fortunate than he covered possibly have imagined. She had given birth not only to the daughter Valeri had been hoping for, but also to a son. He called the son Andreas Elysia and the daughter Rhiannon.

From the day they were born, Valeri made certain that they were never disturbed. He made sure they grew up hearing only his words through Melodie's voice. He kept them clothed and fed and began to mould them into what he needed from their first breath.

He told them that they were the product of Ezra's will alone. She had been chosen, he told them, to give birth to Ezra's mortal form and to Ezra's champion, the one who would defend Her as She walked through the lands of mortals in these final days before the conclusion of Her Grand Scheme. He told them that Ezra would one day speak through them and that they would forever change Her church. And more than anything, as Melodie Elysia cried in his ears, Valeri told them that they were the product of Ezra's love for this world. He taught them to read and write, and read the three existing books of Ezra to them as bedtime stories.

They quickly matured and shortly before their 11th birthday, Valeri decided it was time for Ezra to speak to Her chosen children, and for Ezra to walk amongst men. Still inside Melodie's body, Valeri woke her in the night. Having anticipated this moment, he reached into a drawer and withdrew a small glass vial of poison

he had prepared for this occasion. Melodie placed it in her mouth, crushed the glass with her teeth then swallowed the mixture.

In the night, he came into each of the children as they slept. With his soft, but rich castrato soprano, he whispered into their ears to wake them. To Andreas he revealed his part in the Grand Scheme, as their mother had promised him Ezra would. He told him he was to be his sister's defender, that she was no longer his sister but Ezra Herself given mortal form. To Rhiannon he also revealed her part in the Grand Scheme: that she was no longer truly Rhiannon, but that Rhiannon was now Ezra's incarnate body. He told her that Ezra would instruct them from here and that their mother would make the journey through the mists to Ezra's blessed afterlife. Valeri's plan was almost completed.

When they awoke the next morning, they calmly walked upstairs, dragged their mother's body outside the house and buried her as Valeri commanded, now through Rhiannon's voice. The burial, of course, was a travesty, as had been all the teachings they had assimilated over the last 11 years, every bit derived from Valeri's extensive knowledge and twisted to his own ends.

From that moment on, he began teaching them the ways of the anchorite, always through Rhiannon, under the guise of Ezra. He taught them how to fight, the rituals, the ecclesiastic knowledge they needed. For the next three years he made them into what he had always wanted them to be: two willing hosts, willing to do anything he asked of them, without his ever needing to exercise his powers of domination over them.

By 751, at the age of 14, Rhiannon had carefully the entirety of the three current Books of Ezra as well as written an additional Book of her own, which was simply called "The Book of Rhiannon". The book was a parody of Ezra's previous messages, but more than that, it was a heralding to judgment, reckoning and apocalypse. The book spoke of the Apostolic Doctrine of the Blessed, where those who opened themselves to the call of Ezra would be able to speak languages they never knew, see places far in the past or in the future, and know things that were realms away. "The disciple of Ezra," the book reads, "must open himself to his sins. Only by allowing the darkness its place can Ezra destroy the seed that lurks in all but her sainted Apostles. Those who accept their sins and allow Ezra's light to shine upon them will be Apostles, blessed by the physical touch of Ezra incarnate, which alone can cleanse the sins and open to revelation." Valeri decides they are ready to go out into the world and spread Ezra's message.

Once out into the world, the news of the development of Teodorus Raine's doctrine and his anchorites' manifestation of the Shield of Ezra only makes the result of Valeri's labors seem sweeter. What

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

makes this all the more frightening is that Rhiannon has managed to manifest Bastion Teodorus Raine's Shield of Ezra (immunity to mind-affecting spells). Rumors persist further, despite their apparent impossibility, of Rhiannon's being capable of manifesting, not one, but all of the Shields.

### VALERI ANTONIN

<b>Activity Cycle</b>	any
<b>Diet</b>	nil
<b>Intelligence</b>	17 (genius)
<b>Alignment</b>	Chaotic Evil
<b>AC</b>	n/a
<b>MV</b>	none
<b>HD</b>	n/a
<b>THAC0</b>	n/a
<b>Number of Attacks</b>	1
<b>Damage/Attack</b>	nil
<b>Special Attacks</b>	Domination
<b>Special Defenses</b>	Immune to physical damage
<b>Magic Resistance</b>	special
<b>Size</b>	n/a
<b>Morale</b>	Fearless (19–20)
<b>XP Value</b>	1,000

### Appearance

Like all odems, Valeri is invisible. People who can see on the ethereal will see him either as a grey mist, if he's outside his host, or as a mist around the nose, mouth, and eyes of the host's face.

### Combat

When outside a body, Valeri is ethereal and immune to any form of physical or magical attack. Any spells designed to force extraplanar creatures to retreat or leave the prime material plane will function normally. In Ravenloft, these spells only drive Valeri from his host and make him flee the region. This will only function if the caster can see the odem's true form. Valeri cannot be turned by priests.

By entering an orifice, Valeri can inhabit any living humanoid creature. Once inside the body, Valeri himself is immune to any spell, save a *wish* or a *magic jar*, which can drive him from the body and repel the wizard's spirit back into the receptacle.

The host gains no physical defenses while Valeri inhabits it, though when Valeri is dominating the host, mind-affecting spells are ineffective. This is what others have confused for the Lawful Evil Shield of Ezra (as detailed in John Mangrum's article "Anchors of Faith" in the *Book of Secrets*), as its effects are identical to this defense. If Valeri's host is killed, he will be forced to find another.

Valeri, when not inside a host, can pass through physical objects but not magical restraints. Spells such as trap the soul, temporal stasis, or imprisonment will trap Valeri in his current host.

Valeri never fights when he is outside Rhiannon or Andreas' bodies. If a fight seems imminent, he prefers to use Andreas' form over Rhiannon's, both because Andreas is stronger and because he is more expendable in Valeri's plan.

If someone were to discover Valeri's true nature, he would enter their body and find a way of silencing them before they could seek someone to destroy him or alert others to his presence. If Valeri feels someone is trying to examine his host for his presence, he immediately flees to another host in the interim, careful not to alert them of his presence by using his domination power.

### Personality

Valeri is driven. Unlike other odems, he has no compulsion against killing any of his hosts save Rhiannon and Andreas. Also, Valeri understands the use of inhabiting bodies but not dominating them. When he does this, the host feels nothing more than a brief sense of *deja vu*, disorientation, or light-headedness, before the feeling passes and the host is free to act. Occasionally, Valeri takes only partial control of a body, moving only a limb, for example. When he does so, the same symptoms manifest themselves. He uses this trick, learned from his time at Ste. Mere des Larmes, very sparingly.

Total domination has become something of a last resort, saved only for when no other options are available to him, or when a simulated possession by Ezra would be appropriate.

He is ruthless and extremely intelligent, and his only true fears are that his plot should be exposed before it can be completed, or that Rhiannon be slain.

### Current Sketch

Valeri has sent his charges out into the world to bring his reformed message to it. For several months, he has been wandering the lands of Kartakass, preaching through Rhiannon to all who would listen. Once he has a captive audience, he dominates Rhiannon and puts on his show. Sometimes, he has her speak in tongues, a mixture of the several languages he knows: Balok, Lamordian, Mordentish, Darkonese, Falkovnian, and Tepestani, though he has also learned a smattering of words from other languages that he slips in at times for the sake of authenticity.

At other times, he will recount stories of the lives of people he has met in his past, people Rhiannon could have never met herself. He might have her speak of the

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

numerological meanings of Ezra's teachings or of prophecies he has read of in Port-a-Lucine. He quotes the Books of Ezra often, all four existing Books, having since studied Theodorus Raines' account of the Book of Ezra in the year since he has left the cottage in the woods. And Valeri shares his vision with the world, the Book of Rhiannon, which he claims is the Fifth and Final Book of Ezra.

He has yet to venture from Kartakass, though the news of Rhiannon's preaching has already reached the Home Faith in Levkarest. Some anchorites are beginning to believe Rhiannon is who she claims, though the majority are skeptical, confused, or simply uncertain as to the significance of these claims. When Valeri feels ready, he wants to march into Levkarest and bring his claims to the Church.

Though the Kartakans seem unreceptive to his message, Valeri has managed to make a convert of Niccolo Torquato, an Invidian traveller of questionable origins, who has heeded the message of the Fifth Book, and now travels with Rhiannon and Andreas.

### RHIANNON ELYSIA

**Human female, Anchorite 6:** AC 10; MV 12; hp 25; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1-2 (fists); SZ M (5'4); ML 20 (fearless); AL CG.

S 10, D 11, C 13, I 14, W 17, Ch 18.

*Personality:* compassionate, indecisive.

### Appearance

Rhiannon looks uncannily like images and icons of Ezra. She has crystal blue eyes, set in serene features, carved into alabaster skin. Her hair is raven black and she wears it straight and loose, down to her shoulders. She carries no weapons and dresses in plain white robes of one of Ezra's faithful followers. A silver symbol of Ezra hangs by a string around her neck.

Her gestures are always calm and flowing and she moves just like a dancer. Her voice is soft and quiet, save for when Valeri talks through her, when it then becomes commanding and enchanting.

### Combat

Rhiannon herself never fights, and would stand firm until Ezra came to her aid or informed her action. If Valeri is dominating her, he will have her flee before she dies. If she is attacked, her brother always comes to her aid.

Valeri's presence in Rhiannon's body has meant that he can, at will, protect her from mind-affecting spells. When he is in Rhiannon's body, and only then, he can also manifest the True Neutral Shield of Ezra, as detailed in *Domains of Dread* (immunity to edged

weapons). Valeri has no idea how he accomplishes this, but believes he will be able to manifest the others by the time he arrives in Levkarest.

Rhiannon's statistics are those of an anchorite for purposes of hit points, saving throws, and THAC0, though she does not receive spells.

### Personality

Rhiannon has full faith in what she is preaching, and believes wholeheartedly that she is Ezra's shell. Without Valeri to guide her actions, she finds it almost impossible to make decisions. Compassion comes easily to her, however, and she prefers to be the patient priestess rather than the driven preacher when she must deal with people without Valeri's intervention.

### ANDREAS ELYSIA

**Human male, fighter 6:** AC 4 (chain mail & shield); MV 12; hp 49; THAC0 15; #AT 3/2 (specialization: horseman's mace); Dmg 1d6+4 (horseman's mace specialization & strength bonus); SZ M (5'11); ML 20 (fearless); AL NG.

S 17, D 13, C 16, I 10, W 14, Ch 11.

*Personality:* dedicated, resolute.

### Appearance

Andreas, even at the age of 15, holds himself like a seasoned warrior. The chainmail, shield, and mace he carries were gifts from Niccolo Torquato when he joined their ranks. He wears a white surcoat over his mail, and also carries a symbol of Ezra at his neck. His features are sharp, but pleasing, and his skin almost as pale as his sister's. His hair is black and his eyes are emerald green.

### Combat

Andreas is confident in his actions and always stands at Rhiannon's side. He tries not to kill, and thus far has managed to disable his opponents instead, though he would kill if the situation demanded it. Andreas does not attack unless provoked, or if his sister is threatened. His priority is to his sister's safety in all situations. He is immune to mind-affecting spells when under Valeri's domination, though Valeri cannot manifest any Shields of Ezra through him. Only rarely does Valeri enter Andreas' body, and that only when he himself is personally threatened. Above all, Andreas fights for defence, and never to attack.

# BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

## Personality

Dedicated and staunch, he is sworn to his sister's protection. He rarely speaks, and will follow Rhiannon's orders to a fault. Only Valeri, as Ezra, commands as much devotion from Andreas.

## NICCOLO TORQUATO

**Human male, Thief 5:** AC 8 (Dexterity); MV 12; hp 21; THAC0 18; # AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (dagger); SZ M (5'8); ML 15; AL NE.

S 9, D 16, C 10, I 14, W 12, C 17

*Personality:* profiteering, fanatical.

PP 75%, OL 35%, F/RT 25%, MS 30%, HS 30%, DN 45%, CW 75%, RL 20%, Backstab Multiplier: x3

Niccolo Torquatto used to be a small-time con man and hustler in Invidia. When one of his scams was discovered, he fled Invidia and began wandering the core, moving from one act to the next. Rhiannon and Andreas seemed like the perfect occasion for a man like himself.

When Niccolo first encountered Rhiannon and Andreas, his first thought was that he could profit from them in some way. In order to earn the warrior's trust, and by extension his sister's, he bought the boy a suit of armour, a shield and a mace as a gift to their cause. Volunteering himself as their personal treasurer and almsman, he joined their group in order to enrich himself. After all, as long as he gave Rhiannon and Andreas some money every so often, he presumed they would be none the wiser for his skimming from their funds. All that changed the first time Valeri dominated his body.

Niccolo had not cared to decide whether he believed that Rhiannon was Ezra or not, but he was forced to believe the first time Valeri, as Ezra, came down into his body and, using Niccolo's own voice, began speaking in a language Niccolo had never heard before. He was suddenly convinced. He confessed to his sins, his thefts, and Rhiannon laid her hand upon his brow. She told him that such things were fine and that Ezra understood the need to sin, that Niccolo should not force himself upon the right path. The darkness has its place in the Grand Scheme. And if darkness has its place in the Grand Scheme, then it is also of Ezra.

Niccolo felt light-headed as he found himself standing to his feet without his willing it so. He felt suddenly blessed and believed himself an Apostle of Ezra, of Rhiannon, willing to follow her to the ends of the world.

Now, he still serves as their treasurer, speaking to the masses on their behalf and begging for any spare coin from passers-by. He no longer takes from their

funds for himself, though he freely supplements the group's income by picking pockets, always to the glory of Ezra.

## Appearance

Niccolo has dark eyes, framed by thick brows. His hair is dark and curly and falls just below his ears. Like Rhiannon, he wears a plain, white robe. He sports a symbol of Ezra as well, though his is made of wood. Otherwise, he carries a dagger at his side, but generally keeps it hidden within the folds of his robes. At all times in Rhiannon's presence his face displays wonder and elation.

## Combat

Niccolo is not much of a fighting man, having come to rely on Andreas for protection. If the need to defend himself arises, he prefers to try and knock his opponents unconscious with the pommel of his dagger. Just like Andreas, only when no other options are available to him does he strike to kill. After all, killing is a sure way of incurring the population's ire. On the rare occasion when Valeri inhabits his body, he becomes undaunted, willing to stand his ground until the very end. In the past, Niccolo was something of a coward. After his first experience at being inhabited by Valeri as Ezra's spirit, he has gained courage he has never had before. Of course, Niccolo is most expendable of all Valeri's hosts and as such Valeri takes scarce precautions to protect him.

When Valeri is inhabiting him, Valeri can make Niccolo immune to mind-affecting spells, just as he can for Andreas and Rhiannon.

## Personality

He is a changed man. No longer a spineless wretch, he has been made bold by the intervention of Valeri. He moves fromn day to day, hoping and praying that Ezra will enter his body again so he can feel her pull. He will go to almost any length, including killing, to add to his party's wealth. Of course, he will only kill when there is no one there to witness the deed, as he does not want to draw negative attention to Rhiannon. Otherwise, his faith is just as true as that of those he follows.

Lately, Niccolo has begun feeling certain urges and hearing whispers in his mind, whispers and urges Valeri has been careful to warn him not to resist. "Allow the darkness its place", he told Niccolo, "for only then can Ezra truly make you more than you are." With each day, Niccolo grows more and more receptive to those impulses.



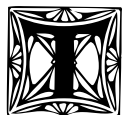


# MORTS-QUI-DANCENT

## DAMNED TROUBADOURS OF THE REALM OF DREAD

by Joël Paquin (Coffen Grabmal)

joekin@hotmail.com



The Morts-Qui-Dancent are a strange and unique group of bardic characters within the Lands of the Mists. These six creatures appear to work towards their own purposes, though for now they follow the laws of man. Their number includes six bards, known by the names Miles Holzman, Michal Wright, Sophia Da Costa, Bernard Urbaniak, Afmit de Karim, and Eznik de Colb.

The Morts-qui-Dancent bards are either villains or champions of good, depending on the needs of a particular Ravenloft campaign. The DM may use these bards as an alternative to the Vistani; they are an excellent way to give the players useful hints and information. As with the Vistani, encounters with the Morts-Qui-Dancent should be shrouded in mystery, and should emphasize the roleplaying aspects of the game.

### DESCRIPTION

Having entertained throughout the Realm of Dread for years, these moderately famous bards are based in the town of Waterford in Mordent. They spend nearly all of their time, however, wandering the various lands of the Core.

They are traveling performers, moving without apparent direction between hamlets and cities, and entertaining the townsfolk before moving on to their next destination. Though rarely encountered in the more remote Islands of Terror, they have made occasional “surprise appearances”.

It seems that a shroud of secrecy surround the Morts-Qui-Dancent, it is perhaps warranted: these bards are in fact undead. Through numerous enchantments and other means, they disguise their true, hideous appearance from others. Their true forms are somewhat skeletal, their faces and limbs covered in dried skin.

### PERFORMANCES

To hide their true nature from their audience, the Morts-Qui-Dancent rely on their mastery of disguise and prestidigitation, as well as magical illusion.

Their profession affords them a certain degree of cover, in that they are frequently garbed in masks and eccentric costumes, and they are seen primarily in darkened inns and taverns, or outdoors at night.

Their stage costumes are often baroque and always colorful, such as oversized masks, hats, and shoes. A favorite outfit with the group is a black suit decorated with the glowing image of a human skeleton.

Their masks sport demonic visages with unsettling smiles, exaggerated eyes, and similar features.

Though the troupe only appears at night, their audience is always taken in by their “undead masquerade”. In more isolated or provincial towns, where other bards seldom make appearances, the group’s trappings are simply seen as bardic eccentricities.

Many audience members are at first surprised by the strange character of the troupe, but soon the music and songs have their spellbinding effect. The bards’ music reflects the old troubadour tradition of Medieval domains; their subjects are heroic deeds, anguished tragedies, and other mythic tales. Few folk have heard their like before.

Their music might be described as repetitive, eerily hypnotic yet somehow lively. The lyrics are always cryptic and poetic. The bards usually start their performance with slow, melancholy songs and lingering instrumentals.

The tempo progressively becomes more rapid throughout the performance, and the final songs impel the audience move to the music’s unrelenting rhythm.

The Morts-Qui-Dancent are also master raconteurs. Their performances are full of profound emotion, and inevitably leave the audience eager to see their next performance.

Some of their instruments are traditional, but they have also adopted some of the more modern instruments found in Renaissance domains. Miles plays the guitar and lute, Michal the guitar, Sophia various percussion instruments, Bernard the lute and wind instruments, Afmit the double bass and harp, and Eznik wind and percussion instruments.

Three members of the troupe take their turn at lead vocals: Miles and Michael have warm and strong

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

baritone voices, while Sophia has a sweet, ethereal voice that can wail as piteously as a banshee when needed. The other bards, with the exception of Bernard, all perform back vocals.

After years of performing together, the musical cohesion among the bards is extraordinarily high. Often, a glance is all that is needed to prompt a switch in the same direction, with perfect unison, either on stage or off.

During the day, the Morts-Qui-Dacent remain in their travel wagon, due to their discomfort in daylight, though the sun's touch does not harm them. The troupe spends its days relaxing, composing, reading books, and practicing their instruments.

### BACKGROUND

The Morts-Qui-Dacent is cursed to play their music for eternity. The origin of this curse is not widely known. The bards themselves politely avoid the subject, except perhaps with their closest friends and allies. This curse might explain the aura of sorrow that seems to follow them at times.

Their story begins with their first public appearance in Mordent in 641 BC. After just a few years of touring, they suddenly disappeared from public view, only to resurface in Kartakass some fifty-five years later.

Among the few folk who know them closely, a popular theory is that the lord of a domain commanded the troupe to roam the lands of the Core and spy on other domains on his or her behalf. In these rumors, the identity of the darklord in question is debated. Some say it is Azalin Rex, dread lord of Darkon, but others speak of Kartakass' lord Harkon Lukas, since he too is a bard, while others believe it is the wizard tyrant Hazlik. Of course, the Morts-Qui-Dacent, being young and strong-headed, would have likely refused such a command. Regardless, the bards are now free of their master's leash, if not his curse.

The truth of the matter is not far from the rumors. Shortly after their career began in 641, the troupe wandered into Gundarak, where they were arrested, brought before Duke Gundar himself, and accused of spying. After a lengthy interrogation, they convinced the Duke that they were not spies, but Gundar nonetheless bade them to stay and play for his amusement. Their antics did not hold his attention for long, however, and within a few weeks he tired of the bards.

The Duke then had an idea that he considered quite clever: why not make the bards his own spies? Though the Morts-Qui-Dacent politely refused Gundar's offer of employment, the Duke was not so easily dismissed. He had them imprisoned out of spite and urged his wizard son Medraut to devise a punishment for them.

"These petty entertainers just want to play. See if you can give them what they want."

Medraut tortured the bards for months without end, and slowly drained the life from their bodies, while keeping them barely alive. In fact, Medraut perfected on the bards the necromantic mastery he had first acquired in experiments on his sister. In those dreadful days, a portal had opened in Castle Hunadora and he managed to keep her alive and bleeding for years (see the novel *Knight of the Black Rose*).

During this period of horrific imprisonment, Medraut sometimes made the bards perform before Duke Gundar. They were punished if they did not please the Duke or if they played the same song more than once. The bards were forced to improvise and compose at a feverish pace and under unimaginable pain. After these performances, Medraut returned them to their confinement months or even years at a time.

Eventually, the troupe was released in their current condition: undead, forever cursed so that their energy wanes if they do not continuously perform for others. The Morts-Qui-Dacent lose one level per week they spend without playing before an audience. These lost levels are regained at a rate of one level per month.

To this day, if the subject of the troupe's long absence from public performance is brought up, the bards answer only with long silence.

### CURRENT SKETCH

Since their reappearance in Kartakass, the Morts-Qui-Dacent have wandered the lands of the Core, from village to village, performing their spellbinding music. Today, only a few allies know that the bards are not really what they seem to be. They keep this secret for now, as the troupe's songs, poems, and stories are an excellent source of information from throughout the Realm of Dread. Most of the troupe's allies are also emphatic with their curse. Similarly, most recognize that though the bards may be undead, they are not evil creatures. Besides, none can deny the performances of the Morts-Qui-Dacent are among the most entertaining in the Land of Mists.

The Morts-Qui-Dacent crave local information, tales and gossip. They are willing to share this information, so the troupe may be a reliable source of knowledge to those who seek to exchange new and unusual information with which the bards are not familiar. After each performance, the troupe meets with local allies to exchange rumors about many topics until dawn. They regale their friends with stories from far-flung domains, but also listen eagerly to tales of exploration, new laws and rumors from particular villages, or any similar topic.

The bards are then well-mannered, curious, and helpful. They do not like to be touched, however, since

any creature that touches their flesh can feel their undead condition. The bards may take offense if a person touches them without permission, and quickly take their leave. None of them age or need to eat or drink. They do like to partake of wine on occasion, simply for the pleasure of it.

The bards will only drop a topic when all its various facets and implications have been fully discussed. They can talk for hours on a subject such as a new Barovian law, Vistani vardos, useful plants found in Darkon, and so forth. Those who have the privilege of participating in one of these discussions is usually amazed by the deep historic, social and geographic knowledge of the bards. However, the Morts-Qui-Dancent will only converse socially with those who have been formally introduced by another ally. If approached by a stranger the bards will firmly but politely decline conversation and explain they have other important business to attend to.

One of the more prominent friends and admirers of the Morts-Qui-Dancent is the night creature Jander Sunstar (if Jander Sunstar is active in your campaign). The vampire elf frequently crosses paths with the bards, and always takes the opportunity to engage them in lively conversation until dawn.

## THE MORTS-QUI-DANCENT

Miles Holzman

**Male human, Bard 10<sup>th</sup>:** AC 5 (no armor worn); MV 12; hp 45; THAC0 16; #AT 2; Dmg claw 1d3/1d3 or weapon; SZ man 6'; AL LN; Str 15, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 16.

*Bard Spells:* 3/3/2/1 (mostly illusion or charm spells)

*Bard Abilities:* CW 60% DN 45% PP 55% RL 80%

*Non-Weapon Proficiencies:* bard's skills, plus disguise, ancient history, etiquette, dancing and modern languages

Born in Mordent, Miles (appearing 30 years old) is the leader of the troupe and manages the day-to-day operation of the group, including finances, repairs, travel arrangements, and so forth. Miles is a man led by emotion and can be hot-tempered without the calming temperament of his companions. He is optimistic and a natural leader, though his temper does hamper this charisma somewhat.

Miles dresses primarily in black and white. Though he has long since lost his hair, he has a short, neatly trimmed beard. He is particularly interested in the social life of the various domains the troupe travels.

Michael Wright

**Male human, Bard 8<sup>th</sup>:** AC 5 (no armor worn); MV 12; hp 35; THAC0 17; #AT 2; Dmg claw 1-3/1-3 or weapon; SZ man 5' 6"; AL LN Str 13 Dex 16 Con 12 Int 16 Wis 15 Cha 17

*Bard Spells:* 3/3/1 (mostly illusion or charm spells)

*Bard Abilities:* CW 55% DN 45% PP 50% RL 60%

*Non-Weapon Proficiencies:* Bard's skills, plus disguise, heraldry, local history, and dancing

Also appearing 30 years old, Michael dresses in baroque, flamboyant clothing. He frequently wears loose shirts and tight pants, both embroidered with a rainbow of exotic colors. His hair is deep black and his blue eyes have a curious sparkle.

Michael is an incorrigible rogue. Charming and silver-tongued, he often goes into the crowd during shows to dance with the most beautiful ladies (always respectfully, of course), or to offer them fresh flowers or sing ballads to them. Also born in Mordent, Michael has strong opinions on Core politics and will speak up to disagree when someone voices a contrary viewpoint, whomever it might be.

Sophia Da Costa

**Female human, Bard 10<sup>th</sup>:** AC 5 (no armor worn); MV 12; hp 44; THAC0 16; #AT 2; Dmg claw 1d3/1d3 or weapon; SZ 5'; AL LN Str 11 Dex 18 Con 12 Int 18 Wis 13 Cha 17.

*Bard Spells:* 3/3/2/1 (mostly illusion or charm spells)

*Bard Abilities:* CW 80% DN 45% PP 80% RL 45%

*Non-Weapon Proficiencies:* Bard's skills, plus disguise, ancient history, etiquette, dancing and rope use.

Also from Mordent, Sophia is slim and elegant. She moves with the grace of a dancer. It is difficult to estimate her age, as she appears anywhere between 25 and 35 years old. She usually wears flowing, white garments. Her long, black hair falls below her knees, braided with white pearls. As she dances, the tiny orbs sometimes seem to create strange patterns. Sophia is a master vocalist and dancer, and always captures the attentions of the men in the audience.

In discussions, Sophia can be quite witty or even caustic, often singling out a different individual for her barbs each day. She is especially fond of legends and superstitions. She is also knowledgeable about plants and their qualities, for good or ill. Her caravan wagon is draped inside and out with plants, many of which are poisonous.

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT PEOPLE

Bernard Urbaniak

**Male human, Bard 7th** : AC 5 (no armor worn); MV 12; hp 28; THAC0 17; #AT 2; Dmg claw 1d3/1d3 or weapon; SZ 6' 6"; AL LN Ste 17 Dex 18 Con 14 Int 17 Wis 14 Cha 15.

*Bard Spells:* 3/2/1 (mostly illusion or charm spells)

*Bard Abilities:* CW 55% DN 40% PP 45% RL 55%

*Non-Weapon Proficiencies:* Bard's skills, plus disguise, dancing, juggling and ancient languages

Bernard Urbaniak rarely speaks and never sings on stage. In conversation, he answers questions with nods or simple gestures. Nonetheless, his opinion is very important to the rest of the troupe. He is not aloof, however, and is perpetually smiling, revealing his missing front tooth. He is very observant, and nothing escapes his gaze.

The mysterious and quiet Bernard is the musical genius of the group. His compositions are innovative and truly mesmerizing to hear performed. Like the others, he is a native of Mordent, though he alone is Sophia's lover. The only topics he will discuss freely are music, song, and related matters.

Afmit de Karim

**Male half-Vistani, Bard 5th**: AC 7 (no armor worn); MV 12; hp 21; THAC0 18; #AT 2; Dmg claw 1d3/1d3 or weapon; SZ 5' 8"; AL LN Str 13 Dex 16 Con 12 Int 15 Wis 17 Cha 17.

*Bard Spells:* 3/1 (mostly illusion or charm spells)

*Bard Abilities:* CW 55% DN 30% PP 35% RL 45%

*Non-Weapon Proficiencies:* Bard's skills, plus disguise, juggling, heraldry and weaving.

Appearing as the youngest member of the troupe in his 20's, Afmit has dark skin and hair from his Vistani heritage. In places where Vistani are reviled, Afmit makes his complexion paler with makeup. On stage and off, he is always whistling, his demeanor joking and playful. He nonetheless has good manners and is exceedingly charming.

Afmit's birthplace is unknown; he met the others in Waterford, where he was traveling. He is the horseman of the group, and he dotes endlessly on the caravan's horses. Animals do not shun him. Afmit knows a great deal about the fauna and monsters of the Core. He also serves as a liaison for the troupe when they encounter Vistani.

Eznik de Colb

**Male human, Bard 8th**: AC 6 (no armor worn); MV 12; hp 37; THAC0 17; #AT 2; Dmg claw 1d3/1d3 or weapon; SZ 6'; AL LN Str 12 Dex 17 Con 11 Int 16 Wis 16 Cha 16

*Bard Spells:* 3/3/1 (mostly illusion or charm spells)

*Bard Abilities:* CW 95% DN 45% PP 25% RL 45%  
*Non-Weapon Proficiencies:* Bard's skills, plus disguise, juggling, dancing and heraldry

Born in Darkon, the energetic Eznik is a fabulous juggler, combining dizzying speed with peerless height. He appears to be in his 30's. Oddly, as a part of his curse, Eznik can remove his head, and sometime does—which the crowd always assumes is a clever illusion—while juggling with it on stage. He also performs a wonderful firebreathing act.

In discussion, Eznik often takes the role of the contrary. He can spend hours debating with Miles on virtually any topic. His particular interests are talented artists throughout history and the ruling families of the Core.

### SHARING THE KNOWLEDGE

Since they spend a great deal of time in gathering lore, the Morts-Qui-Dacent are a very good source of information on countless subjects. Player characters who need to know about a domain, a specific political situation, a geographical feature, the inhabitants of a place, or any other topic usually find the bards to be a font of useful knowledge.

However, in their long conversations with allies with performances, the bards always guide the conversation toward the topic *they* want to discuss. Others can find it frustrating when they are curious about an entirely different topic.

Most of the time, the bards ignore all attempts (whether bold or subtle) to guide the conversation towards another topic. Only 5% of the time will they allow a conversation to change to a subject of another's interest. The rest of the time, they will simply ignore the attempt (50% of the time), or drop a cryptic sentence related to the question, then return to the subject at hand (50% chance).

The bards know their freedom in the Realm of Dread is linked to the darklords' continuing perception that they are amusing bards and not spies. Even though the bards do know vital information about many darklords, they will only pass on the barest hints to others. If they openly shared such secrets, they might never leave a domain again... and they already had their share of unpleasant encounters with a darklord. For this reason, answers to a direct question about a darklord are always cryptic and poetic.

The chance of receiving the answer to a specific question on any given topic is related to the relative secrecy of that information, as per the table below.

For information that is:	% chance
Of popular knowledge	97%
The subject of some gossip	80%

Known to a limited number of persons	60%
Known to less than ten persons	35%
Very secret, like the hidden location of an artifact, weakness of a darklord, etc	20%

The veracity of the information is usually good when the matter concerns the Core (80%–90%) but lower for Clusters or Islands of Terror (60%–70%).

Also, as a bard ability, the Morts-Qui-Dancent can identify the purpose of a magical item (5% per level). If the item is very rare, the whole group will examine it, with a 96% chance that at least one of them will know something on the magical item. Other modifiers can apply, according to the DM's judgment.

Obviously, for their allies (never for something as petty as gold) the troupe can answer almost any question, though the answer is not always as clear as the petitioner would like.

## BOOKING A PERFORMANCE

In the lands of the Core, the Morts-Qui-Dancent typically travel to a particular major village once or twice a year. These annual or semi-annual visits usually happen during the same month of the year. However, a message written by a known ally of the bards and carried by Vistani reduces the time before their next visit by 10%–80%.

The troupe has been known to travel with some Vistani tribes at time, particularly when the need is dire to escape a sealed domain. Most Vistani tribes remain neutral towards these unusual bards, given their cursed undead status, but those led by more open-minded raunies are more empathic to the troupe's plight.

The bards usually do a one-night performance at the village's largest inn, or outdoors in the village square during summertime. They leave the town the next morning, usually just before dawn. In the largest cities, the troupe has been known to linger for up to five days before departing.

The troupe hires local messengers to spread the news of their next performance two weeks or so in advance. The bards' fee is reasonable: 15% of the local inn or tavern's revenues for the night of the performance. They have been known to waive their fee in poor areas, or to make donations to churches or other local benefactors.

The Morts-Qui-Dancent is welcome in the entourage of Isolde's Carnival, where they have many allies. Isolde and the troupers see the bards as helpful informants. Furthermore, their act complements the Carnival nicely, especially in larger cities, where the potential number of clients is large.

The troupe also reports to Isolde on information she is currently seeking (see the *Carnival* accessory). When the bards do travel to Islands of Terror, it is

usually on Larissa Snowmane's boat, as guest performers (see *Champions of the Mists* and the novel *Dance of the Dead*).

It is worth noting again that the Morts-Qui-Dancent avoid the darklords and their agents whenever possible.

## INTRODUCING THE TROUPE

A suggested introduction of the Morts-Qui-Dancent for adventurers is to have the bards arrive in town at a time when players are searching for information on a specific subject. Before the performance, a common friend speaks to the bards about the information the players need. During the performance, the troupe gives the players some hints about their current adventure, in the form of a song. The song is, of course, cryptic, but players should be able to decipher some useful information out of it.

Individual Dungeon Masters are encouraged to roleplay this encounter carefully. Those with some poetry or songwriting skills can use their talents during this encounter to great effect.

The player characters can be also introduced to the bards after the performance by a common friend for a more elaborate, conversational encounter. Depending on the attitude of the PC's and the information exchanged, the Morts-Qui-Dancent could become longtime allies and sources of knowledge.

**Author's Note:** Inspiration for this submission came from the British group "Dead Can Dance", now disbanded. I strongly suggest their albums for a sense of the Morts-Qui-Dancent's musical ambiance. Favorite albums include "Into the Labyrinth", "Serpent's Egg" and "Aions" (medieval music). They will help any DM wishing to utilize the Morts-Qui-Dancent in his or her campaign.

Other inspirations include U2's Bono, Kate Bush, and the novel *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*.



# THE ZANANGO SOCIETY

## DANCING WITH THE DEAD

by Blair Perrow

[bperrow70@hotmail.com](mailto:bperrow70@hotmail.com)

**B**ehind many a legitimate government lies a hidden power, darker and often more influential than the recognized leadership.

Government in Souragne, such as it exists, functions largely to perpetuate the power of Souragne's leading families and appease the will of Anton Misroi. The mayor and council of Port d'Elhour often lack the ability to enforce the law outside the town, where the great planters reign all but unchallenged on their own lands. As most Souragniens work on the plantations, or are small farmers under the thumbs of the planters, the people derive little benefit from their indifferent or ineffective government. Into this power vacuum arose the Zanango Society.

In the early days of Souragne, Phillippe Zanango, an indentured servant bonded for debt escaped from one of the Tarascon estates. Half dead, he staggered through the swamp for several days, until at last he came to Misroi's manor. Overawed by the power of the Lord of the Dead, Phillippe came to believe that true power lay in the worship of this awesome being.

Becoming more and more unhinged, Phillippe remained in Marais d'Tarascon learning what he could from fishers, trappers, Chickenbone, and occasionally Misroi himself, who was amused by his would-be follower. As time passed, Phillippe became versed in the ways of the swamp, learning to hide a pirogue in cover, to make a hut where no one could see, to travel the byways without leaving a trace, and to mix deadly poisons.

Phillippe began recruiting runaway servants, criminals, and malcontents. They in turn recruited others until finally even the doors of the great houses of Souragne were no hindrance to them. Masters died at their dinner tables and then walked off into the swamp. Travelers abroad at night were beaten if they chanced upon the society's gatherings. By extortion and terror, the society enforced its will on planters and citizens alike. With Phillippe's passing, the society was named in his honor, and it remains to this day an instrument of fear.

### MEMBERSHIP

The society stays small to preserve secrecy, having no more than thirty to forty members at any given time. No one can seek to join the society; its members select those who will best serve their needs. No one is allowed to decline. Recruits are blindfolded and taken into the swamp. There they are made to drink a potion of henbane and deadly nightshade, and are sealed in a coffin until the next evening. Those that survive are taught the rules of the society and its secret passwords.

The head of the society is called the General. He is always a *boccoru* (see the *Book of Sorrows*) serving the Lord of the Dead. Next is the Chasseur, the huntsman who tracks down the society's enemies, and the Bourreau, the executioner who administers the next to ultimate punishment. Following them are the Sentinelle, the watcher who guards the society when it is assembled, and the Prophete, who serve as the spymaster. The rank and file are called soldats and assist the officers in the duties of the society.

### RECOGNITION

As most of the society's members know each other, few recognition rituals are necessary. Still, because some new members from different areas may not be well known, passwords and secret handshakes are used to guard against infiltrators passing themselves off as initiates.

Known marks of the society include entwined red and black ribbons, small bundles of feathers, and marks on a doorway or crossroads with flour or graveyard dust. These marks serve to warn off intruders from Zanango Society property or meeting places, and also serve as threats to those who incur the society's displeasure. Anyone receiving a second such token is marked for death.

### ACTIVITIES

Ostensibly created to defend the petit citoyens from the rich and powerful, the society often engages in

smuggling, intimidation, extortion, and assassination. When necessary, it hunts down and harrasses or kills outsiders who pry too deeply into Souragnien affairs. The society's most able members also act as spies and emissaries in other lands. The society's secretive nature serves to heighten the fear it inspires.

Transgressions punished by the society include destroying or burying a corpse before four days have passed, practicing forbidden magic, and mocking the Lord of the Dead. Planters sometimes receive visits from the society when a mistreated servant petitions the society for its favor. If the offense is great enough, even those few who escape Souragne are hunted down. Punishments range from beatings to death by strangulation, poison, machete, or interment alive.

Those who truly displease the society are made into zombies; some are slain and reanimated as undead zombies, while others have their minds and wills stolen and become Voodan zombies (described in the Book of Souls). Either fate is one every Souragnien fears worst than simple death.

While the society is ruthless in dealing its enemies, it does act to prevent outside forces from harming the people of Souragne. In the paternalistic manner of a ward boss, the society has been known to aid those it feels worthy, providing an additional incentive for cooperation.

On nights of the full moon, the sounds of drumming can be heard coming from Maison d'Sablet as the society invokes the Lord of the Dead and petitions his aid. Rum is drunk mixed with strong spices, and the dead dance with the living.

### HEADQUARTERS

The society has no true headquarters. Word of its activities spreads by word of mouth. Its ceremonies are held on an island in the swamp where a pole painted red and black symbolizes the link between the living and the dead.

### ADVENTURE HOOKS

- ❖ A man is found wandering the streets of Port-a-Lucine. His face is empty of expression, and he can be easily led about by any one who tries. In his pocket is a punched ticket for the showboat, *River Dancer*. A witness, who was on the showboat with him, remembers him attempting to avoid a man with an unfamiliar accent wearing a red shirt. The victim has been turned into a Voodan zombie by

the man in the red shirt, who pursued him from Souragne for the crime of spying on the society.

- ❖ While staying in Souragne, one of the adventurers wakes up to find a warning beside him. Depending on his familiarity with Souragne, he may or may not recognize its significance. He could have done something to displease the society, or some non-Souragnien could be playing a joke on him, in which case the society may soon be paying the joker a visit.
- ❖ The society attempts to recruit one of the characters. This character is most likely a native of Souragne, but non-Souragniens with abilities the society desires are occasionally called upon. Rogues and fighters are typical candidates. Refusal is punishable by death. On the other hand, a character who joins is expected to attend the society's ceremonies and will often find himself called upon to commit deeds of questionable morality including worshipping a darklord, acts of violence against those marked by the society, and associating with the undead. This could lead to a number of Ravenloft powers checks.
- ❖ While staying as guests at one of the Tarascon estates, the party is sitting down to dinner when the overseer rushes in. One of the plantation's sugar mills is on fire. Investigation reveals the cause to be sabotage. Suspicion immediately falls on the Zanango society which has a long history of conflict with the Tarascons. The fire, however, was set by one of the Tarascon family's younger sons angry over being disinherited. This sets the stage for conflict between the society and the Tarascons and among the Tarascons themselves, with the characters caught in the middle.
- ❖ Two non-Souragnien body snatchers have recently arrived in Port d'Elhour. They intend to obtain a "special" corpse for a mysterious buyer in Lamordia. Removing the corpse from its resting place is easy enough, as bodies are buried above ground due to the high water table. The characters happen to catch the body snatchers in the act. As the corpse was a former bourreau, the society has secretly placed a watch over his grave. Aided or hindered by the characters, the criminals attempt their escape with the society hot on their heels. Can they get aboard a departing ship in time to escape the society? Will the society blame the characters for aiding the body snatchers? Will an insulted Misroi get involved, possibly animating the corpse? And, what of the buyer in Lamordia? Failure may not be an option.

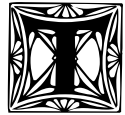


# JORHLAN RAYNOR

## A FACELESS ARRIVAL IN THE VALLAKI BOOKSHOP

by Ryan Naylor

ryan@kargatane.com



he bookshop in Vallaki has always been a place of darkness and misery, cloaked in suspicion and rumor. But a recent arrival has made it all the worse for its degraded inhabitants, an arrival that seems to exist only to spread fear and suffering. Bodiless, it can lurk behind any face. It grows stronger with every pitiful wail and scream for mercy that it can draw from agonized lips. The villagers of Barovia hear its terrible songs at night, shudder and fall into an uneasy sleep.

### APPEARANCE

As an odem, Jorhlan can appear in any number of forms, depending on which body he is ‘wearing’ at the moment. Due to his talent for annoying his fellow Kargatane, and tendency to wander vaguely into death traps, he can go through as many as seven in a single day. Luckily, however, his housemates realized that Jorhlan was too excited about getting a new body to indulge in any of his other hobbies, and too flighty to realize that this present form was simply an undead version of the body he killed yesterday. Although this has kept Jorhlan from depleting the population of Vallaki too much, it also means that he looks upon the other members of his cell as the best friends he’s ever had. The feeling is not reciprocated, of course – the lingering odor of decay and grayish pallor of the newest arrival are the only things about him they can stand.

### JORHLAN RAYNOR

**Male Odem:** CR 5; Medium-sized Undead (Incorporeal), HD 3d12; hp 25; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +2 melee; AL CG; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +4; Str –, Dex 10, Con –, Int 16, Wis 6, Cha 13.

*Skills and Feats:* Alchemy +11, Bluff +3, Decipher Script +11, Heal +6, Knowledge (history) +11, Knowledge (nobility) +11, Read Lips +6, Search +11; Courage, Iron Will.

*Languages:* Languages: Darkonese\*, Balok, Mordentish, Lamordian.

### BACKGROUND

Magnus Raynor, Jorhlan’s father, was a member of the Kargatane’s inner circle in Martira Bay. He was everything a Kargatane should be: ruthless, duplicitous, grasping and a consummate con artist. Due to his illegal contacts, he had built up a huge merchant fleet, trading goods from all over the Sea of Sorrows and from many of the Islands. The money he made he lavished on his family, his mistresses and the Kargatane. He sent his son to the best boarding school in Lamordia. When Jorhlan returned at the end of his education, Magnus naturally assumed he would enter the Kargatane as well, and father and son would help rule the city from the shadows. Unimaginable power and wealth would be theirs for eternity.

Unfortunately, Jorhlan was a kind and gentle young man, who was far more at home nursing baby animals and singing duets with bluebirds than shaking down businesses and spying on people. However, his father had called in every favor he was owed to get the Kargatane to accept him so quickly, and Jorhlan, useless though he was, set out to do him proud.

His first mission was to infiltrate a group of smugglers who were operating out of Martira Bay’s waterfront, and discover if they were being used as a front by the Unholy Order of the Grave. Jorhlan dutifully bought some clothing he believed would allow him to blend invisibly with the smugglers and set off. Unfortunately, they saw past the stuffed parrot and eye-patch almost immediately, savagely beat him to a pulp, and left him to die.

As the life seeped from his broken body, Jorhlan was consumed with guilt at failing the task his father had set him. Through his pain, he swore that he would still make his father proud – he would complete his mission, become a member of the Kargatane, and rule the world! Somehow, he managed to cling to some travesty of life – he became an odem, a hideous undead monster that fed on suffering.

However, despite his new form and his determination to succeed, Jorhlan couldn’t change his basic nature. Although he could possess people at will,



giving him an almost infinite potential for undercover work, he still hated violence, and was a lackluster thief, and unwilling blackmailer and an incompetent spy. Halfway through many of his tasks, the ‘agent’ with the self-endowed codename “Schadenfreude” would become distracted and wander off, or try to convert the ruffians he was infiltrating “because wouldn’t it be so much better if we could all get along?” His undead nature also made it impossible for Kazandra to get rid of him – no matter how many times she tried, he kept popping back up, eager for his next task, as excitable and reliable as a big puppy. Finally, unable to stand it any longer, she sent him to Vallaki to bother her other rejects and forgot about him.

## CURRENT SKETCH

Although he has been undead for nearly two years now, Jorhlan still doesn’t really understand what he is. Of course, when he was alive he barely knew who he was or what he was doing, so undeath hasn’t really offered many problems for him. The only real difference that he noticed was that, when people around him were miserable, he felt better. Upon arriving in Vallaki, he tried to experiment a little with this, wearing a white sheet and haunting the bookshop. Of course, those who were prepared to come into the bookshop in the first place were unlikely to be unnerved by a madman in a mattress cover, so the experiment was largely unsuccessful. It was finally brought to an end when his sheet was destroyed by the Unnerving Thing Beneath the Stove, and the others hid the rest of the bed linen.

Now, Jorhlan simply tries to be himself, away from the pressures of failing his father and Lady Kazandra. To his surprise, it is one of the most enjoyable and liberating experiences of his life. His new friends are always presenting him with new bodies and other presents, and often play games with him. (Hide and seek seems to be their favorite game, and Jorhlan is far to polite to point out how bad they are at it; once, he was hiding for nearly three months before they managed to find him). To celebrate his new found happiness, he tries to gather the Kargatane together once a week for a singsong and a cup of cocoa, and writes thoughtful little cards to them every birthday and public holiday. He was delighted to discover that Mynilar was a bard, and now follows him everywhere, singing folksongs in a wobbly voice and begging the poet to join in on the chorus. Needless to say, Jorhlan’s naivete, innocence and boundless good humor drives the others insane. Much of the ordinary work of the bookshop has been put on hold while they desperately search for some way to get rid of him.

## COMBAT

Being attacked by Jorhlan is as likely as being attacked by a damp tissue, and only marginally more dangerous. Jorhlan hates conflict, and believes that everyone could sort out their differences if they just sat down for a chat over some homemade biscuits. He ignores all damage dealt to him as he leaps from body to body, trying to calm things down (although he rarely thinks to possess the person attacking him). When it becomes truly obvious that there is no hope for a parley, Jorhlan always flees, sobbing with despair at the brutality and ignorance of humanity. This depresses him for a couple of days, but sadly, he always returns to himself eventually.

**Possession (Su):** At will, Jorhlan can attempt to take possession of the nearest sentient being. The victim must make a Will save (DC 16) or have their body dominated by the odem for as long as it wants. This if often until they die from neglect, or until he gets bored or distracted and changes into someone else.

**Mindless (Ex):** Jorhlan’s brain is a world of butterflies and rainbows, of teddy bears and ice cream. Those who make contact with the clouds of pink fluff that make up his consciousness must make a Madness check or be drowned in the sheer vapidness of his character. However, it does grant him immunity to all mind affecting magic.

**Whine (Ex):** There are two types of good people in the world: those who inspire people to greatness through their selflessness and benevolence, and those who make the people around them want to kick them. It is not so much what he says or how he acts, but some indefinable part of Jorhlan makes him a prototypical member of the second class. Those who spend more than a day in his company must make a Will save (DC 17) or be consumed with the desire to kill him.



# THE JACKAL WHO WOULD NOT BE A COWARD

## THE SECRET HISTORY OF JACK KARN

by Ryan Naylor

[ryan@kargafane.com](mailto:ryan@kargafane.com)



*From the Collected Stories of Hans and Jakob Gleam:*

Far, far away, across the Sea of Sorrows and through the Mists, there is a mighty swamp—the home of the biggest, fiercest crocodile in the world. The crocodile is always hungry, and all the other animals live in fear of him. So, to stop from being eaten, all the other animals live on top of a gigantic plateau that rises from the crocodile’s swamp, where the crocodile cannot reach.

On top of the plateau, the animals live as they do elsewhere. Chimpanzees hide in the trees and play tricks on the other animals. Gorillas wrestle and fight for dominance. Tigers and lions make war for the right to hunt the herds that roam the plains, and jackals and vultures fight over the scraps.

As everyone knows, jackals are weak and cowardly creatures, but they see no shame in this. The gods made them to be cowards, and so cowards they must be, the elder jackals teach their pups. As long as all the other animals think the jackals are weak, they will leave them in peace, and the jackals’ bellies will always be full.

One jackal, however, was not afraid of the crocodile who lived in the swamp at the base of the plateau, or the lions and tigers and hyenas who lived on top of it. He ventured into the crocodile’s gloomy swamp. He saw the spirits that stalked the elephants’ graveyard. He loved to lope through the long grass, dangerously close to a hunting lion or tiger, to steal whatever they left of the carcass. He loved the taste of fresh blood and fresh flesh and fresh marrow, and one

day he decided that he was tired of living off others’ scraps.

“Why shouldn’t we hunt?” he told the other jackals. “We have fangs like hyenas, and are as smart as the tigers, and can hide in the long grass like lions. We are jackals, and if we work together we can kill any of the other animals on the plateau.”

So saying, the jackal gathered a pack and went to hunt, ignoring the elder jackals and their doctrine of safety. At first they were unsuccessful, but soon the jackal developed the perfect plan. The other jackals would lure a group of hunters into the path of some other animals. While they were fighting, the jackals would double back and gorge themselves on the neglected offspring. The jackals gulped down the tender flesh, fresher than they had ever tasted before. As he tore savagely at his dead prey, the jackal that would not be a coward swore that he would never again scavenge for the remains of others’ kills.

After his first success, the jackal became bolder and bolder. He led his pack against the mighty herds that roamed the plateau and devoured the young and weak. With every success, more and more of the jackals joined his pack, ignoring the preaching of their elders. When the lionesses were out hunting, he would sneak up on their cubs and gulp them down. Those he couldn’t eat, he killed, for he had come to love killing more than anything else in the world.

At first, the other animals were confused and blamed their missing and half-eaten children on each other or the crocodile. No one believed that the weak and cowardly jackals would dare to sneak into their homes and devour their children, and the jackals were

so careful that none of the animals, apart from the voiceless fly, had seen them. But the aggressive jackal's bloodlust increased with every kill it made, and it became careless. Eventually, the other animals stopped blaming each other and the crocodile, and instead blamed the vicious and brazen jackal.

The tigers were the first to exact their revenge from the jackals. They stalked vengefully through the night to where the jackals were celebrating that day's hunt, their eyes glinting red in the darkness. They waited until the moment was right, and then leaped into the midst of the pack. Their claws gouged the sandy hides of the jackals, and their jaws running with blood. The jackals ran in yelping circles while the tigers struck left and right, until finally all the jackals had fled or been killed.

The next day, gorillas chased the jackals across the length of the plateau, banging their chests and bellowing threats. That night, lions attacked the pack as they were about to fall into an exhausted sleep. The jackals were allowed no rest for seven days and seven nights, until all the animals had exacted revenge for their murdered children and the remaining jackals had been driven to the very edge of the crocodile's swamp.

"Look what you have done!" an elder jackal wailed. "You have abandoned our way of life and led others astray, and it has ruined us! Nine-tenths of our pack have been killed, and King Crocodile will soon kill the rest! We could have lived on the plateau, safe and well-fed, if you had acted properly. Your lust for fresh meat and fresh blood has killed us all."

The jackal that would not be a coward growled at the elder. "You are the one who killed us. If you were all as strong and aggressive as I am, the other animals would never have driven us from the plateau! Your cowardice allowed the other animals to conquer us." The jackal growled again, and saliva began to drip from his black lips. "You are to blame!" he shouted to all the elder jackals. "And you have burdened us for too long!"

With a roar, the jackal leaped upon the nearest elder. His teeth gouged deep wounds across the elder's flanks, but for once it refused to run. One after another, the other jackals joined the biting, barking circle to punish the jackal that had killed them all. Finally, even the aggressive jackal's blood lust gave way before pain and fear, and he fled bleeding into the deepest, darkest part of the swamp, where King Crocodile lived in his eternal hunger.

The other jackals relaxed, confident that they would never see their insanely destructive cousin again, and began licking their wounds. Their victory instilled them with false confidence, and they forgot the terrible danger they were in. But the Wildlands is not a place of gentle reminders. King Crocodile exploded from the water into the jackal pack, drawn by the scent of blood. The jackals that survived the massive crocodile's first

attack fled yelping into the swamp. Even the stupidest jackals knew that this was the beginning of their extinction. Thanks to the aggressive jackal, they could not return to the safety of the plateau, and the malevolent crocodile would find them anywhere in its swamp.

The jackal who would not be a coward laughed to himself as he watched the crocodile devour the few remaining members of his pack, and then he turned and trotted off into the fog. That would teach them to respect his strength, he thought. He had shown that cowardice led to nothing but destruction; he would train other jackals to be aggressive and vicious, and they would rule the plateau. And so the last jackal passed from the Wildlands. As he did so, however, powers dark and mysterious noted his passage, and decided to reward him for his violent betrayals. Unlike all the other animals to have left the Wildlands, the jackal did not lose his intelligence. Indeed, the Mists served only to sharpen his mind into a coil of hunger and rage.

The jackal emerged from the fog to find himself in a snow-bound conifer forest. He stared in amazement, for he had never seen snow or trees of this sort before. A strange smell hung in the air and the jackal decided to follow the trail in the hope it would lead to something he could kill and eat. The trail entered a clearing, where a hunk of meat lay affixed to a spike of metal. The jackal trotted up to it, sniffed the strange meat, and sunk his teeth into it.

Two jaws of iron erupted from the snow around him. He yelped and leaped back, but he was weakened by the jackals' attack. The trap locked around his foot. For hours, the jackal tore at the trap with his teeth, struggling to free himself. His blood stained the snow all around him, and birds mocked him from the trees. Despite his best efforts, he was trapped.

Finally, the jackal heard the sound of singing and metal jingling through the trees, and the strange scent he had detected on the trap. Realizing that he would almost certainly die here without assistance, the jackal swallowed his pride and called for help. After all, once he was free, the jackal could easily overpower whoever came, and he had no hope of getting free by himself. After his harsh life in the Wildlands, the jackal had no hope that his rescuer would help him out of kindness; kindness had long since been eradicated from the crocodile's jungle domain.

The jingling metal stopped. A man—one of the mythical hairless apes that King Crocodile had eradicated from the Wildlands—appeared through the trees. To another human, he was of average height and lean, his muscles wiry and skin weather-beaten by a life of travel. It had been three days since he had bathed or shaved. To a jackal, he was a purple cloud of scent. He could smell the man on the trap. He could smell the badly tanned furs the man was clothed in. He could

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT PLACES

smell the metal and oil by which the man made his living as a roving tinker.

“Hello? Is anyone here?” the man asked. He stared cautiously around the clearing, keeping as far from the wounded jackal as he could. He cupped a hand to his mouth and shouted to the trees. “Are you injured?”

“Help me!” wailed the jackal. He snarled and tore at the trap. “Release me!” The man spun and stared in shock at the talking jackal.

“Did you speak, beast? What kind of monster are you?” The man made a sign of protection. The jackal howled in frustration—the crocodile had been right to kill the stupid creatures—and begged for help once more. It galled him to do it, but the jackal had no other option. Even if the man intended to kill him, the jackal would have to be freed, which would give him a chance to attack or flee.

“I will be back in a moment,” said the man. “Do not trouble yourself.” He ran back to his cart on the snow-bound road, and returned a moment later with the tools of his trade. “I will have you free in a moment, dog. I am truly sorry to have caught such a marvelous beast in my trap. Accept my humblest apologies.” He cranked open the jaws of the trap. The jackal withdrew his foot. He licked the blood from the wound, and tested his weight upon it gingerly. It held. Then, he snarled and hurled himself at the man.

The man, not entirely naïve, fell away from the leaping jackal. It landed in the snow with a yelp, and the wounded foot gave out beneath him. The scent of his blood in the snow drove the jackal into a frenzy. Saliva frothed from his black lips, and it barked and snarled furiously. He tried to get to his feet, his black eyes rolling with blood lust, but the limb was too badly injured. The jackal could do nothing as the man got to his feet, picked a heavy bar from his toolkit, and stepped warily towards the snapping jaws. The bar fell. The jackal sank into unconsciousness.

When he awoke, the jackal found himself muzzled, collared and chained to a tiny cart labeled ‘Jack Karn: Tinker’. His foot was bandaged. Pots and pans clanked above his head, and the wagon wheels creaked below him. He could smell oil, metal and treated wood. For the first time, surrounded by unnatural smells and sounds, the jackal felt his bloodlust give way to an icy prickle of fear. He tore the bandage from his leg, and began barking and howling furiously.

The wagon stopped. “What is all this racket?” came the voice of the hated man. A moment later, he appeared at the back of the wagon. Immediately, the jackal hurled himself at the man once again, but the chain jerked him to a halt. Despite this, the man still stepped away, and the jackal felt a thrill of pleasure at the fear he caused in the larger creature.

“What is wrong with you, dog? You have a gift unlike any animal I have ever heard of, but still you

seem to exist only to attack. I mean you no harm. Here, eat this meat and we shall talk further.”

“How can I eat this filth?” snarled the jackal. “Jackals hunt and kill, and feast upon fresh blood and fresh meat and fresh marrow, not this garbage. And even if I wanted to, I couldn’t eat with this cage on me.” He scratched at the muzzle.

“When I stand before the creators, I hope that they honor me by calling me a kind and considerate man,” said Jack. “But I will not hurry myself to them by adding stupidity to my sins. If you get hungry enough, you will find a way to eat this. I don’t want to starve you, beast, but I will not endanger my life by freeing you. Restrain yourself, and I will let you loose.”

“I promise not to hurt you,” said the jackal. “Release me, and I swear that I will let you live.” He chuckled to himself. The human must be truly stupid, if he imagined that the jackal would betray everything he believed in by obeying this weak creature.

Unfortunately, the man was not as gullible as the jackal hoped. Reading the vicious animal’s intent in his black eyes, he placed the meat carefully on the lip of the cart and returned to the driver’s seat without removing the muzzle from his captive.

For many weeks, the unwilling pair was bound together. The tinker never gave up his hopes of reforming the animal. He understood, as the elder jackals had, that the jackal’s blood lust was unnatural and destructive, and constantly begged him to let them work together. “You have a gift unlike any other animal,” Jack would say. “And, gods help me, you have been placed in my path. Together, we can unravel the mysteries of nature. Every day, animals are killed out of greed and stupidity. Trees are felled when there is no need. Wasteful processes rape the natural world, and if an advocate—someone to speak out against this destruction—cannot be found, the world will die. You can be that advocate; you can save the world as we know it! Why will you not help me?” The jackal’s only reply was to snarl and try to bite the human, or to ignore him in silence.

Despite his frustration, the tinker never mistreated the jackal, and always handled him with respect. Whenever he could, the jackal would bark and charge at the people the tinker depended upon for survival, nipping the fingers of the terminally unwary and terrifying children. More than once, the jackal spoke to insult the humans, and the pair was chased from the town as demons. Jack grew leaner as fewer and fewer of his customers braved the aggressive dog to have their pots repaired and knives sharpened.

Finally, with a heavy heart, Jack decided that his hopes of taming the jackal were useless. He resolved to give the jackal to the only people who would take him, even if it meant that the jackal would spend the rest of

his life exhibited as ‘the Amazing Talking Dog’. He went in search for a troupe of Vistani.

Eventually, he found a clan of Naiat Vistani who were prepared to accept the vicious jackal. They already had a large number of dogs, and taking another, especially one with the unique ability to talk, did not seem a burden. The tinker warned them solemnly about the jackal’s viciousness, then handed over the chain.

“You must have had the heart of a titan and the patience of the dead to have kept him for as long as you did,” said the troupe’s captain solemnly. “It is a pleasant surprise to find a giorgio like that. Please, stay by our fire for this evening.” Jack thanked the Vistani and joined the joyful crowd at the center of the camp, although regret still hung heavy from his shoulders.

Unfortunately, even the Vistani can be careless at times. The gypsies had not reckoned on the terrible cunning that the jackal could employ. After the Vistani had returned to their vardos or fallen asleep by the fire, he called to their dogs. The dumb animals found themselves unable to resist the jackal’s commands, and began gnawing at his collar. Finally, as dawn broke, the jackal was free.

His first action was to attack the sleeping Vistani. The dogs, driven by the jackal’s relentless domination, turned on their owners. The gypsies awoke to find their pets savaging their children and aged. The jackal, driven by bloodlust after his long imprisonment, darted to and fro, seemingly immune to the Vistani’s evil eye. The other dogs were not so lucky, however, and the tide of the battle soon turned against the animals.

Realizing that he had lost this battle, the jackal turned to flee once again. Then, a familiar and hated scent reached him. His black nostrils flared, and blood thundered venomously through his head. Snarling and barking as though possessed, the jackal leaped through the campsite. Jack cried out once, then the terrible jackal was upon him.

By the time the Vistani reached the frenzied jackal, the tinker had been mauled beyond recognition. The gypsies dragged the dog away, revealing a face that was a mass of wounds, and two bloodied mitts that were barely recognizable as hands. But when he spoke, the dying tinker’s voice was still strong.

“I offered you kindness where you showed none. I gave you a chance to avert a terrible crime against nature, but you refused. You believe that jackals are stronger and better than all other creatures, but with the gods as my witness, I will see you damned for your arrogance. You will become the thing you and I despise most, and then you will see them destroy you.” The tinker’s head fell back, and his eyes dimmed.

An old woman stepped in front of the jackal. She raised a twisted hand and proclaimed, “The tinker has spoken! Release this abomination that a dying curse may take root! The senseless murder of our children

will be avenged!” The raunie raised her arms, and a terrible energy crackled around her. The jackal fled into the night mist, curses ringing in his ears.

And so, the jackal that would not be a coward passed from these lands, cursed to wear the form of that which he hated most—humanity. In the purgatory in which he found himself, he was forced to watch as humanity spread and prospered, beating back the forest and taming the wilderness. Surrounded only by dumb animals and unable to harm his unsuspecting nemeses, he plots, and fumes, and dreams of a time when jackals will rule the world. He also dreams of the time when the humans will find him, and kill him, and fulfill Jack Karn’s curse.

The moral of this story is, of course, to rebel against your destiny and nature is futile and will only to invite sorrow upon yourself and those around you. Go to sleep now children, and consider this lesson.

But rest easy in the knowledge that it is only a story, and monsters like this jackal don’t really exist.

### JACK KARN

#### Lord of Farelle

**Male Jackalwere:** CR 6; Medium-sized/Small Shapechanger; HD 6d8+12; hp 51; Init +2/+3/+3 (+2/+3/+3 Dex); Spd 40 ft/40 ft/50 ft; AC 12 (+2 Dex)/15 (+3 Dex, +2 natural)/16 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +2 natural); Atk +6 melee (by weapon +3/Bite 2d4+3/Bite 1d4+3); SA Sleep gaze; SQ Alternate forms, canine empathy, scent, spell immunities, weapon immunities; AL CE; SV Fort +7, Ref +7/+8/+8, Will +6; Str 16, Dex 15/17/17, Con 15, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 10.

*Skills and Feats:* Balance +4, Bluff +2, Climb +4, Hide +4, Intimidate +7, Listen +6, Move Silently +4, Profession (tinker) +3, Spot +4, Wilderness Lore +3 (+11 when tracking by scent); Alertness, Cleave, Power Attack.

*(Where Jack’s statistics are separated by slashes, the first number represents him in human form, the second as a hybrid, and the third in jackal form)*

Although most of Hans Gleam’s story is accurate, the ending is more wishful thinking than fact. The jackal continues to live out his thrice-cursed life as a jackalwere and a tinker. As lord of Farelle, Jack has found great power. He is able to command any dog, wolf, fox or other jackal-like animal in the domain (although their limited intelligence greatly frustrates him), and seems immune to old age. Of course, these benefits are not without their price—he is only able to escape back to his natural form for a few minutes each day, and crippling nausea strikes him whenever he attempts to indulge his bloodlust.

## THE DOMAIN

Farelle is one of the Islands of Terror that float in Ravenloft's misty confines. Unlike many domains, it is relatively easy to navigate the Mists to Farelle, and many merchants from Ghastria to Pharazia do just that. The twin villages of Kaynis and Mortilis (home to around a thousand people each) welcome travelers readily, and many merchants choose to end their days here. In a land where strife and xenophobia are disturbingly common, the genuine warmth of the Farelleans is justly appreciated. However, like their land and their lord, they are passionate and run to extremes. Many take offense at simple mistakes, and will pursue their enemies to the grave. Their sensitivity to insult only fades towards a roving tinker named Jack Karn. Although he is surly and aggressive, and seems always to be ill, the Farelleans are extraordinarily fond of him, and often seek him out.

Farelle is wild and thickly wooded, although civilization and agriculture claims more and more terrain every day. The land is rich, although extreme—summers are hot and winters are frigid—and full of animal life. Packs of dogs and jackals are quite common, and seem unusually vicious; many careless humans are killed every year. This is both a blessing and a curse from the animals' point of view. Animal attacks serve to reduce the ever-increasing numbers of humans (Farellean women commonly bear up to thirteen children, and many merchants and travelers feel compelled to settle there), but each attack is followed by an increase in the number of hunts and traps laid.

In fact, many Farelleans are hunters, although a disproportionate number of sages and scientists live in the villages. Because of the ready contact with advanced domains like Mordent, Paridon and Nosos, Farellean technology advances at an astounding rate.

Unnatural beasts are quite common amongst the simple folk of Farelle. Dogs and jackal packs, as already stated, are the most common dangers, although other aggressive animals, jackalweres and other shapechangers are not uncommon. The strange force that draws humans to Farelle has also led to growing numbers of wolfweres, lycanthropes, red widows and undead. Due to the terrible temper of the lord, however, only jackalweres feel free enough to hunt in the towns.

## APPEARANCE

In his most common form, Jack appears as his namesake, the tinker. He is a lean man of average height, with oily black hair. His skin is weather-beaten by a life outdoors, and his hands are rough and callused. Unlike the first Jack Karn, his body is criss-crossed with hundreds of faint scars attained through his long

and vicious life. He wears badly tanned hides thrown haphazardly over his form and bound together with string. He is not particularly attractive by anyone's standards, and the gleam of insane aggression in his eyes undermines his appearance further. Although he can take on the appearance of a human of any age, gender and ethnic group, including mimicking specific individuals, he tends to lapse back into this form when he loses interest or concentration. Strangely, the natives of Farelle are able to recognize Karn regardless of his appearance whenever he is in human form. To them, Jack has always looked that way.

Jack's natural form is that of a jackal—a small fox-like dog with sandy fur that is streaked with silver and black, and covered in scars. However, because of his curse, he can maintain this form for only a limited time each day. Each minute that he remains in jackal form, Jack must make a Will save, or be returned to human form. The DC of this save is equal to the number of minutes that he has remained as a jackal, and once he fails, he is unable to change for a full day. He greatly prefers this form to any other, and greedily indulges himself in it for as long as possible.

Jack's final form is a monstrous hybrid of jackal and human. This nightmarish shape seems twisted and hunched, but it is preternaturally strong and nimble. Despite the many advantages of this form over his jackal shape, Jack is almost as loathe to assume it as he is to appear human. In his eyes, the hybrid is an offensive adulteration of the pinnacle of nature—the jackal. For every ten minutes that he remains in hybrid form, Jack must make a Will save as described above.

## CURRENT SKETCH

Although Jack himself has changed little during his long imprisonment, Farelle is barely recognizable as the domain that appeared to confound him in 597 BC. Originally, Farelle was a wilderness, completely untouched by civilization. The few humans that lived there slept under the stars and subsisted as hunters and gatherers. Jack's first contact with these people was as confusing as it was distressing. They called him by name, and seemed overjoyed to see him. Laughing to himself despite his unease at the unfamiliar form he found himself trapped in, Jack allowed them to welcome him and then attacked. Instantly, he found himself crippled with nausea. Desperately, he tried to overcome the queasiness and maul the screaming child he held, but the nausea increased. Finally, he fled, bellowing with anguish, and the nausea faded. When he returned to the humans, they welcomed him joyfully—apparently forgetting the near-murder of one of their children. When Jack attacked again, the nausea returned.

Since then, Jack has been forced to watch the humans prosper and multiply. Within the space of a prolific generation, they had founded the town of Kaynis. Within ten years they had mastered ironcraft, agriculture and the alphabet. Within fifty, the villages councils of Kaynis and Mortilis has cleared the land of trees for some miles around their homes, laid roads between them, and begun steady trade with similarly simple folk through the Mists. By the Grand Conjunction, the Farelleans had progressed to an Early Medieval cultural level, and tamed much of the wilderness. They continue to hail Jack Karn as a friend, and are apparently unaware of the wandering tinker's unaging nature or the stupendous rate of their own technological advance.

For 250 years, Jack Karn has been forced to watch the humans he loathes slowly spread to every corner of his domain, while he is unable to attack them. For a creature as vicious as the jackalwere, to be so close to his succulent prey—to be welcomed into their homes as a friend and confidant, and sought out for advice—and be unable to satisfy himself is an unbearable agony. Although such close contact would be expected to breed sympathy between the humans and the jackalwere, this is not the case. His bloodlust has only increased during its long repression, and Jack is still firmly convinced in his delusion that jackals will one day overcome humanity and rule the world. If anything, he is more vicious, embittered and insane than the night he killed his namesake.

Ultimately, Jack Karn is a misanthropic, aggressive bully. Unable to express himself through violence, he has learned to provoke others with lewd, offensive and aggressive behavior. If his insults and posturing can lead them to physical violence, the jackalwere is free to release all his pent-up frustration upon these poor souls. Of course, this relief comes rarely, as the native Farelleans take his remarks with good humor and refuse to rise to his bait.

Jack's only relief is provided by his interaction with the jackals and other canines that populate the diminishing Farellean wilderness. Unlike the jackals of the Wildlands, however, Farellean jackals are normal animals, driven by instinct not rationality. They are frustratingly dense to talk to and literal in carrying out his instructions. As such, they are poor subjects for the self-styled king of creation, but he still prefers their company to that of humans. His few experiments have revealed that any offspring he has with them are jackalweres like himself. He either banishes or kills these abominations. Finally, Karn has discovered that watching his minions tear apart a human is almost as satisfying as mauling them himself. On his command, the dogs of Farelle have become renowned for their unusually vicious natures, although Jack has killed more than one in a jealous rage.

## CLOSING THE BORDERS

Unlike many other lords, Jack Karn has no way of magically closing Farelle's borders. He can, however, command his canine minions to mass at the edges of the Mists, and attack any who try to pass. Their keen senses and aggression make it almost impossible to escape, although anyone attempting to pass from the other direction can enter Farelle freely. No matter how often the frustrated jackalwere punishes and berates his minions, they remain unable to stem the tide of humanity that is gradually overtaking Farelle.

## COMBAT

Jack can *dominate* any canine creature, such as foxes, jackals, dogs and wolves, while they remain in Farelle. The poor animals do not get a saving throw against their lord's commands, although dog-like monsters, such as jackalweres, familiars, the animal companions of druids and rangers, and winter wolves can make a Will save to resist Jack's commands. The DC is 17.

Although jackalweres are typically terrible and savage creatures, Jack Karn is truly monstrous. The only thing that has prevented him from destroying the simple folk of Farelle is a crippling nausea that overcomes him whenever he tries to attack. This terrible condition makes him unable to do anything more than weakly threaten and stagger about (reducing him to one partial action a round, and giving him a -10 to all attack rolls), but vanishes in an instant should his victim respond in anger. Then, Jack is free to vent his fury upon them. He is unable to attack those who simply defend themselves. Jack remains free at all times to attack dogs, jackals and other canines, and unnatural menaces like jackalweres and undead. He becomes nauseous when confronting human-like monsters, such as red widows and lycanthropes, but the aggressive natures of these monsters ensure that his nausea rarely troubles him for long. Karn is particularly relentless towards werewolves and werejackals, which he regards as hideous parodies of himself.

Once he is engaged in battle, Jack is a fearsome opponent. Even in human form, his jaws are unnaturally strong, and biting remains his favorite attack form—he enjoys the fear and disgust this provokes in those around him. His gaze can send those who fail a Will save (DC 14) to sleep, as the spell cast by a 6th-level sorcerer. He is immune to all mind-influencing magic, and to the Vistani's evil eye. Karn's magical nature makes him totally immune to all weapons that do not represent "civilized man". Thus, unarmed attacks, clubs, and arrows (i.e. any weapon available in a Savage culture) do him no damage, while crossbows, forged weapons, and pistols (i.e. any weapon that only

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT PLACES

appears in Bronze Age cultures and later) are lethal. Despite his pretensions, the jackalwere is more than willing to flee or use underhanded techniques should the battle go against him.

Even if he is killed, the tinker's curse prevents him from resting peacefully. Within a week, the jackalwere reforms at his tinker's wagon. Jack can only be killed permanently when the tinker's vision of devastation has been actualized. As a jackal, Jack preferred to lead a life of bloodshed and destruction, in defiance of the normal ecology. Only when that ecology has been totally upset by the frantically advancing civilization of Farelle will Jack die for the last time, the victim of a species he continues to belittle.

X-9



# SAARKAATH

## A LAND CURSED THROUGH BIRTH AND BLOOD

by Nathan Okerlund  
sealionii@hotmail.com

### THE LAND



Saarkaath is a very mountainous and heavily forested domain; the forest is only broken by the occasional homestead or small village and the few peaks which rise above the timberline. Winter is bitterly harsh, with heavy snowfall; the beauty of the short summer is marred by plagues of midges, mosquitoes, horseflies, and other biting insects. Spring and fall, on the other hand, are quite pleasant, if rather cool by most standards. The forest is mostly dense, old growth pine forest, with relatively little undergrowth; the shadow of the massive trees cloaks the domain in gloom, despite the clarity of the mountain air. The Mists surround the domain borders; strangely, the size of the domain seems to vary from day to day, and estimates of its size range from fifty to more than one hundred miles in diameter.

Much of the domain's population actually live in the caves and tunnels honeycombing the mountains of the domain; many of the tunnels existed when Hakaan and his followers first came to the domain, but they have since enlarged and expanded them. These tunnels often open in unexpected places and furnish a route for raids to the surface.

### The Folk

The population of Saarkaath is divided into two parts, those living in the underground tunnels and those living above ground. Those living underground show their orcish heritage more strongly; those who are human or near-human in appearance are abused and enslaved, forced to dig the tunnels and work the mines of the domain, while those who are more orcish in appearance act as slavemasters, overseers, administrators, and raiders. They often raid the surface communities for foodstuffs and slaves.

Many of these more human folk have escaped to the surface, where they have formed small villages among the mountains. Although more human, their orcish heritage can still be noted in their odd pug noses, muddy complexions, and stooped gait. Visitors from

other places have often described these surface-dwelling natives as degenerate humans, or humans marked by some ancient curse. (Only those who have encountered orcs outside Ravenloft have any chance to perceive the mixed race of the inhabitants, and even then the traces are slight enough to be difficult to interpret correctly.)

The surface-dwelling natives themselves have contributed to this confusion by their own legends and their rather muddled understanding of their own history; the human women taken by force by the orcs, half-orcs, and humans of Hakaan's army considered both themselves and their captors to be cursed by the gods, and the idea of a "curse" placed by inimical gods has endured strongly to this day, giving rise to Saarkaath's macabre native religion. The surface-dwelling natives still consider themselves to be in the grasp of unnamed gods of evil, represented by the "goblins" who emerge from the mountain tunnels to plunder and kidnap, and their religion combines the less savory aspects of the druidical religion of the original human inhabitants with a mélange of equally unpleasant orcish beliefs and the belief that only blood sacrifice can appease gods of such obvious malice. Every village observes rituals of human sacrifice at both solstices, in addition to special sacrifices for special pleas. The villagers use foreigners when possible, but it is certain that the low population density of the domain, despite the natural fecundity of the inhabitants, is mainly maintained by these grisly rituals. The priests of the religion are usually among those of the inhabitants who are entirely human in appearance—often retaining the striking beauty and charisma of the original inhabitants.

### The Law

Beneath the surface Hakaan's word is final. He maintains his authority by terror, relying on a few fanatically loyal cadres of elite troops to assure the obedience of the raiders and overseers, who in turn assure the obedience of the slaves. Children are taken from their parents at birth and raised in creches, in the orcish manner; at puberty they are examined and the

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT PLACES

more human are branded and forced to work as miners, diggers, and farmers of the strange subterranean fungi on which most of the population subsists; the most fortunate take places as clerks and administrators, while the most cutthroat gain special privileges by informing on their fellows. The more orcish are divided into groups according to their size, strength, agility, and “orcishness” and trained as elite troops, raiders and overseers accordingly. The largest, strongest, and most orc-like are taken as elite troops, the quickest as raiders, and the rest become overseers.

Among the surface dwellers, the situation is reversed; the most human of the escapees are most respected in society, and it is they who form the priesthood of the strange native religion. The word of the village priest (or the most charismatic and powerful of them, if there is more than one) is final within that village; in the event of conflict between villages the priests meet and attempt to come to some reconciliation. If they can come to no agreement the issue is often settled by single combat to the death, the winner being assumed to be in the right; if less sanguinary heads prevail, a priest from a third village is sometimes brought in to adjudicate the dispute. The surface communities rarely, if ever, battle each other; each wishes to conserve its strength to repel the raids from below the surface.

### Native Player Characters

PCs of Saarkaath must be rogues, barbarians, fighters, or rangers, with barbarians and fighters predominating in the more orcish, underground population and barbarians and rangers predominating among the more human above-ground population. The natives of the domain are inured to scenes of terror and bloodshed and gain +2 to checks to fear and horror checks; however, their society is one which is always at the edge of hysteria and they are highly susceptible to mental instability, taking a –2 on madness checks. In addition, all are effectively of half-orcish race, with the appropriate modifiers for that race.

### Encounters

On the surface the player characters are likely to encounter a group of natives or a native village; if the party seems weak, the natives may attempt to overwhelm them and take them prisoner; if they seem strong, the natives will avoid them or attempt to win their confidence in an attempt to capture them later, when they are unsuspecting. Encounters with bears, dire wolves, and winter wolves are also fairly common. Rumors persist of yeti in the high peaks. At night the party might also encounter a raiding party from the underground.

Underground the most likely encounters are with Hakaan’s troops and raiders; encounters with overseers and the slaves they supervise are also very possible. Encounters with other subterranean creatures are also possible, and such creatures as umber hulks, cloaklers, and various oozes and slimes are commonly to be found. There has, however, been no evidence up to the present of drow, kuo-toa, dwarves, svirfneblin, illithids, or other civilized subterranean creatures in the domain.

## HAKAAN NA URUK

### Lord of Saarkaath

**Half-orc Male Ftr12:** Medium-sized Humanoid (half-orc), HD 12d10+24; hp 100; Init +4; Spd 20 ft.; AC 15 (+5, chainmail); Atk +18/+13/+8 melee (2d6+8), +12/+7/+2 missile; AL NE; SV Fort +10, Ref +4, Will +8; Str 16, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 17, Wis 15, Cha 11 (18 to orcs and half-orcs).

*Skills and Feats:* Balance +6, Climb +10, Intuit Direction +8, Jump +11, Listen +8, Search +9, Spot +8. (–5 Armor Check Penalty to Climb and Jump when dressed in chainmail); Blind-fight, Cleave, Expertise, Great Cleave, Improved Critical (greatsword), Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greatsword), Weapon Specialization (greatsword),

### Background

Hakaan na Uruk was born to a human woman enslaved by the orcs of Dark Fork Holding, child of an unknown orcish father; his mother died in childbirth, and he was discovered wailing by her body and placed in an orcish crèche, where he lived among the orcish children for the next four years. When Dark Fork Holding was overrun by the Storm Templars, a paladin order, the orcish women and children were forced to flee however they could; Hakaan was left behind and discovered by Leith Kelbar, a member of the Templars. At that time he could pass for a human child of seven, as he was big for his age and more human than orcish in appearance; Kelbar, known for his eccentric notions, took the child to be his dog robber, putting him to various menial tasks, making sure he was clothed and fed and giving him an undemonstrative but very real affection. Hakaan quickly came to hero-worship Kelbar, who, in turn, came to have something of a father’s feeling for Hakaan, even giving him the weapons training and something of the courtly learning of a knight’s page. As the boy’s orcish heritage became apparent as he went through puberty, the other knights of the order began to encourage Kelbar to find a more suitable servant; Kelbar, stubborn and idiosyncratic, flatly refused, and made Hakaan his squire when Hakaan was only

fourteen. (As a half-orc, he was already very near his adult height of 6'4" and was stronger than most of the knights of the order). Hakaan dreamed of becoming a Storm Templar under Kelbar's patronage—but he knew his half-orc heritage would weigh strongly against him in the eyes of the fathers of the order. Still, he hoped his mastery of arms and virtuous intent would overcome any such objections.

The orc-human wars still raged on; in a climactic battle at Shadow Mountain the Storm Templars and their allies were thrown back and Leith Kelbar was killed. As his final instructions, he had told Hakaan not to let his sword, a Holy Avenger, or his armor fall into the hands of the enemy; Hakaan survived the battle and made his way four hundred miles to the home of the Order, bearing the sword and armor of his master. He expected something of a hero's welcome and even dared to hope that he would be accepted into the order as a knight, but the fathers of the order were astonished and dismayed by the appearance of a half-orc wearing the vesture of the Templars. He was coldly received and censured sharply for wearing the armor and weapon of a full knight as a squire, with many members hinting that even his squirehood ought to be considered suspect. His bearing and obvious abilities won him the support of a few members of the Order, who argued in his favor; as a compromise, he was offered a chance to "prove himself", beginning his completed training as a squire over again, with vague promises of future consideration for full knighthood.

Hakaan's pride was outraged; he deeply resented the implication of unworthiness due to his parentage and the casual dismissal of his immense efforts to comply with the wishes of his dead master. Refusing the order's offer of an "official" squirehood, he attempted to gain a place in other elite martial units. Despite his admittedly superior ability at arms, all denied him membership on the basis of his half-orc blood. Embittered and angry, he offered his services to a mercenary company, where he was received with open arms. At first the monetary emphasis and neutral (at best) morality of the mercenary life distressed him, but he soon became accustomed to and even approving of it. He rapidly rose to prominence, becoming Captain-General of a mercenary army at the age of thirty. Despite his success and wealth, however, he never forgot the slight done to him by the Storm Templars and the other human military orders which had denied him entrance, and the rancor of his thoughts lead him to an inveterate hatred—carefully concealed—of those warrior elites and all they stood for.

When the human kingdom of his residence became embroiled in a war with hobgoblins from the south, Hakaan's army was hired by the king to support an offensive into the hobgoblin territories—an offensive which would be spearheaded by the Storm Templars.

Hakaan's feelings were an uneasy mix of his old hatred for the order and his still older desire to be approved of by the Templars, but his ambivalence became cold rage when he was not invited to the meetings held by the various generals of the royal army and the order. Offended beyond reason by this final slight, Hakaan resolved to take his revenge on the order which had wronged him. He began communicating plans of march, secret signals, and the location of supply depots to the hobgoblin army; the Templars and their fellow armies suffered reverse after reverse. Finally the generals, faced with the prospect of their steady loss, decided to risk all in one climactic battle. Hakaan arranged to place his army as the reserve forces supporting the Storm Templars in their place in the center of battle; when battle was joined the hobgoblin forces, informed of Hakaan's plans during the night, put all their effort into an attempt to break the Storm Templars' line. When the general of the Templars signaled for Hakaan's reserve forces, he pretended to misunderstand the command and fell back instead; the hobgoblins smashed the center, enveloped the wings and won a crushing victory. Hakaan, his army intact, promptly surrendered and offered his services to the hobgoblins, who accepted gladly. Those few who refused to serve under the hobgoblins were promised safe passage to the lines and paid off; that night they were gathered and turned over to the hobgoblins' officers of correction. His army was bolstered with several hundred orcish conscripts eager to serve under "one of their own".

Hakaan soon fell out with the hobgoblins as well and attempted treachery again, but the hobgoblins were not as trusting as the Templars had been. They succeeded in staving off his attempt to turn their flank and leave them defenseless against the human forces and he and the remains of his army—less than a thousand now—were left cut off behind the hobgoblin lines and forced to retreat into the mountains, pursued on every side by hobgoblins, goblins and worgs. As the hobgoblin forces closed in he led his army into a heavy mountain fog, attempting to lose them in the murk of the night mist. Soon the sounds of the pursuing hobgoblins died away, and Hakaan and his followers breathed a sigh of relief.

Their relief became apprehension when the fog cleared and they found themselves completely lost, entirely unable to identify the mountains around them. As they wandered, his followers discovered a massive complex of tunnels and caverns within these unknown mountains; at the encouragement of his orcish followers Hakaan began to use it as a base of operations for exploring and conquering the surrounding territory, sweeping down on the small human villages and taking them by force of arms, enslaving the men and using the women as concubines, forming an essentially orcish

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT PLACES

society led by Hakaan. Despite months of subsequent searching, Hakaan was never able to discover a path out of these strange mountains; he began to spend more and more time in his underground fortress, brooding over his failure and enlarging the underground areas under his control, using the captured humans as slaves. Many human and part-human slaves escaped, forming communities on the surface; Hakaan let them do so, keeping them as sources of foodstuffs and slaves and as a way to provide an outlet for the energies of his troops, and this conflict between surface and subterranean became a way of life as Hakaan continued to search for a way to leave his domain and take his revenge on his human and hobgoblin foes alike. He has spent the last seventy years searching in vain.

### Current Sketch

Hakaan na Uruk is now over one hundred years old, but the Dark Powers have slowed his aging so that he appears to be no more than fifty. Fifty is, however, a considerable age for a half-orc, and he is neither so strong nor so tough as he once was. As he has aged he has become more orc-like and is now indistinguishable from an aged orc, with the snout, hairy pelt and green-tinted skin of his orcish forebears. He has gone completely bald in old age, and his ropy veins and wrinkled skin reflect his age as well, but he is still heavily muscled and stronger than many younger men. He commonly dresses in chainmail and always carries his greatsword, which he calls Hate, at his back. He is extremely proud, quick to take offense and will nurse a grudge for decades, but he can, when he pleases, call up the courtly manners he learned as a page and a squire. He has an absolute and inveterate hatred of human fighters, especially paladins; when his patrols find human fighters they are ordered to take as many prisoner as possible to provide amusement for Hakaan—diversions which range from crucifixions to hanging in irons, but which always provide a long and excruciating death. When he successfully captures a paladin—which has only happened twice in seventy years—he exerts himself to obtain weeks of entertainment from them.

Like all darklords, Hakaan labors under a curse. He had wished all of his life to be a pure-blooded human, but the Dark Powers have twisted his features to those of a pure-blooded orc. In addition, he suffers from the weaknesses of an orc to an unusual degree; he finds sunlight terribly painful (taking a  $-4$  to attack rolls if in true sunlight and suffering 1 hit point of damage per hour from the sun) and he has come to suffer from severe agoraphobia when aboveground, which means that he can no longer engage in projects of conquest or even take part in raids on the surface communities. In resentment and rage he wishes to punish those humans

he finds; he enslaves his more human subjects and will cheerfully enslave or kill any other humans who fall into his hands, as well. He surrounds himself with his most orcish subjects in an attempt to disguise what he feels is his deformity.

### Combat

In combat Hakaan is still a terrible opponent; his intelligence and experience render him an extremely dangerous opponent, able to out-think most of his enemies; he will usually allow his bodyguards (5–10 5th level half-orcish fighters) to fight for him, directing their actions from a distance. If he personally engages in combat with a human fighter or fighters, he will fly into a berserk rage, taking a  $-2$  penalty to armor class but gaining  $+2$  to hit and dealing double damage with each successful blow. If his opponent is a paladin, he gets  $+3$  to hit and deals triple damage for ever blow that falls. In addition, he can pinpoint the location of any paladin in his domain to within 50 feet at any time, and identify a paladin on sight, no matter what magic he might use to disguise himself. His greatsword Hate is a  $+2$  weapon and he wears a *ring of regeneration*; he owns no other magic items.

### Closing the Borders

When Hakaan closes the borders a forest of spears and swords appear at the domain borders; although they are not mobile, anyone attempting to force his way through the thickets of weaponry will take 1–10 hit points of damage per round until he desists. Magical healing will not cure damage done in this manner; only natural recuperation can heal it. Persons attempting to fly over the closed domain border will plummet like a stone.



# IGID RABI-I

## SORROW WOVEN OF PAGAN CLOTH: THE HOLY EMPIRE'S NEW BASTION

by Dion Fernandez

souragne@pufanginamo.com

**Author's Note:** The domain presented below is rooted in the Holy Empire, introduced by Ryan Naylor in the *Book of Shadows* article describing the domain of Mictlan.

### Portent of Bones



As the brazen sun called Aldaw started to sink beneath the waves of the Great Western Sea, the fishermen readied their nets and lit their torches, pushing their boats to the wine-dark waters ahead. The silvery moon, Bulan, had not yet reached her full brightness, leaving only a pale crescent bow that hung in the darkening sky.

From rocky shores, six children waved to their fathers, hoping that the night's catch would be bountiful. As the boats faded into the distant dusk, and the torches became mere pinpoints of light, the children ran along the bay to a small cave. Within this little grotto resided the Diviner, revered throughout the land.

"Apo Lakay!" they shouted as one, their voices magnified in the echoes that bounced about the cave walls. From within, the old man's bonfire illuminated his wrinkled face. For three sunsets now the bones he held dear had foretold the same portent, and he longed for an audience to listen to what the bones had to say. Hearing the children laugh as they approached, he gathered up the pattern of bones on the dry earth.

"Apo," one of the children said again as they sat down by the fire, "what does tomorrow say?"

The Diviner just smiled. *Mother Angarab bless these children*, he thought to himself. With a flick of his wrist, he let loose the little bones as the children watched in awe. The message was as before. For a few brief moments only the flicker of the fire and the hollow sound of the evening tide could be heard. The six children awaited the answer.

"We will have visitors, my children. Visitors from a faraway land."

For a few more moments, all were silent. Then, from a distance, a fisherman's seahorn sounded. The children ran outside, but one of them came back to pull the Diviner along.

"Maykayo, Apo, come! Come with us!"

As fast as his weak frame allowed him, the Diviner trailed along. Outside, the children lined the rocky beach, their eyes fixed towards the dimming red horizon. They were so amazed at the sight that as the old man joined them and asked about the seahorn, they could only point to the horizon.

Alongside the fisherman's boats were four huge ships, each with masts much taller than three people standing one on top of the other. Above these ships were square cloth-sails, silhouetted black against the setting sun.

The old man, understanding the situation, just closed his eyes and retired back to the cave. The bones had told him everything he needed to know: these visitors in huge ships would come, the simplicity of this land would be no more, and life as they know it would never be the same again.

### East of the Empire

The golden imperial capital of Turon, seat of the Holy Empire, was thrown into confusion. Briefly after the glorious conquest of the jungle lands beyond the high Sierra Acora, messengers arrived bringing news of its abrupt disappearance. The Emperor, the Emperatriz and the Consejo Grande deliberated on the situation: Mictlan had vanished, along with the great general Mouriros. The pride and dignity of the Empire was at stake, and something must be done to restore the trust of the people not only in the Empire, but in the Faith as well.

But the Emperor was wise: he would not waste more funds and more lives to send another expedition west to a land that may never reappear again. He ordered the ancient maps to be opened, to look for more lands to conquer in the name of Matherion; the Holy Empire's crusades must continue at all costs. Before dawn on the third day of the council the most ancient map was unrolled. It showed the world as it was even before the Holy Empire came to be. To the east lay a wide, seemingly endless, expanse of ocean named the Mare Orientales.

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT PLACES

And at the easternmost edge of the map was a large island. The cartographer had drawn pearls, porcelain, spices and silk beside the island. Obviously these were the realm's chief sources of wealth, and, in the eyes of the Emperor, exotic riches to add to the Empire's glory. It was settled then and there: the Mare Orientales had to be crossed, and the unknown eastern island be conquered for the Empire.

As the sun rose over Turon, the people rejoiced as the Emperor decreed another Holy Quest, this one to the mysterious land across the Eastern Ocean. Nine massive galleys were fitted and strengthened in hopes that they might survive the long voyage ahead. Two thousand soldiers and a thousand more priests were chosen to go on the Holy Quest. Miguel Agustin, Arcapatos (high priest) of Turon, was personally selected by the Emperor to lead the Quest due to his unwavering faith and swift judgment, traits that would help him survive the long journey. Without question he accepted the offer.

The day of the voyage finally arrived. Thousands of people stood in awe as a throng of soldiers and priests, led by the Arcapatos, chanted and sang as they boarded the nine galleys. The flagship *Ciudad Fernandina* set off first, its ivory sails unfurled as a great west wind blew through. By sunset all the ships were beyond the horizon.

The journey took eleven months, and had its own share of troubles. By the end of the voyage five ships and seven hundred people were lost. But Agustin persevered, and it was because of him that, through all the trouble those torturous months brought the expedition, they finally reached the legendary Eastern Lands. With land in sight the priests gave praise to Matherion. Even in the darkening night they saw a land rich with vegetation and splendor.

### Island at the Edge of Night

Native people lined the bay, resplendent in their silk clothing twined in tribal themes, bringing gifts of food, colored silk, porcelain and semi-precious metals, awed by the sight of white men in brown robes and golden armor emerging from gigantic ships. A small oared boat carrying Agustin landed on the white beach first. Agustin, kissing the sand and being the first person in ages to reach the Eastern Lands, claimed it for the glory of Matherion and the Holy Empire.

Through scholars who came along on the Quest the visitors learned that this land was named "Igid Rabi-i," or the Edge of Night, for the natives believed that this remote island marked the eastern border of the world.

The Arcapatos, however, wasted no time converting the people to Matherion. When the guests were brought to the capital Tagudin, the Place of Weaving, he and his priests used the Sacred

Legerdemain to convert seven thousand people to Matherion. Within five months the sacred groves of the ancient faith swiftly gave way to structures of marble and adobe. A project was planned to construct the huge Vestibulo, a temple to Matherion. "Destroy the past," Agustin proclaimed, "for history shall begin with me." The savage city of Tagudin was transformed into a small, tropical incarnation of Turon. Truly, it seemed, the conquest of the island was a complete success, with nary a drop of blood shed. The old ways of the ancient gods were quickly forgotten, save for a few who still kept the sacred groves intact.

### Portent of the Great Fear

Then came the day when the huge Vestibulo, the temple to Matherion, was completed. Thronged people gathered for the celebration as the Arcapatos himself led the rituals of thanksgiving and praise. Then, in the middle of the solemnities, a scream echoed from high atop the massive structure. The people turned to see an old man in tattered robes, standing behind one of the high arched windows, holding a staff in his right hand and what seemed like tiny shark bones in his left. A few recognized him as the old Diviner of the Bay, all but forgotten.

"Mangibaba-in kayo! Woe to you, people who have forgotten the ancient ways!" he shrieked. "You rejoice while the spirit that has served you for generations dies! Heed well my last words: when the Ancient One speaks of sorrow woven on cloth, return to the old ways, or you and the land will be taken by the Great Fear!"

To the horror of the assembly, the Diviner then threw himself from the window. But his body, if he ever died, was never found, and he was never seen or heard from again. The bones of portent littered the Plaza, leaving one final message to the people who had forgotten the ways of yore.

Nevertheless, the Vestibulo was sanctified. Igid Rabi-i and its capital Tagudin, the Place of Weaving, were taken for Matherion, and both worldly and spiritual progress were seen as unstoppable. No one could ever imagine that because of this victory that hidden powers would later claim the sorrowed land as their own.

### IGIB RABI-I

#### The Land

Just as it was before the Mists came, the island domain of Igid Rabi-i is remote and rarely visited by outsiders. It has a subtropical climate, with warm ocean winds blowing in from the west at all times of the year.

Violent typhoons occasionally blow over Igid Rabi-i,

and its white sandy beaches are risky places to be in during these stormy periods.

Though more than sixty miles wide, the domain is a simple place. The western portion of the island is almost entirely composed of hilly rice fields, irregularly spaced with coconut and bamboo groves, fruit-tree forests and thatched roof houses. To the east lies a mountain range, where temperatures drop dramatically by about twenty to thirty degrees. Though the climate is still hospitable, the landscape to the east is mainly tropical grassland, with thick pine forests and high rock cliffs. Cutting through the domain is the mighty Sudipen River, snaking its way from east to west until it empties its banks into the beautiful Parola Bay.

There are several towns and villages scattered across Igid Rabi-i, the largest of which is the city of Tagudin, home to about 8,000 people. At the southernmost tip of the island lies the resort town of Bauan, with a population of 2,000 people. Hidden in the mountain range to the east, nestled on a plateau, lies Ibaloi, the nexus from local warlike mountain tribes.

## The Folk

The people of Igid Rabi-i call themselves Igitan, or Folk of Night's Edge. The people of the domain are diverse. In the rural areas the inhabitants are mainly farmers, herders and fishermen. To the east, the highland peoples have managed to eke out a living by hunting and by planting rice on splendid mountain terraces. In the cities of Tagudin and Bauan, an urban lifestyle has emerged, founded on craftsmen who weave beautiful clothes and tapestries.

The predominant race is human. Elves and half-elves, both called "Kibaan," are reclusive and choose to live away from the human population, although they are treated as equals among the mountain tribes and thus roam freely among them in that area.

Regardless of belief, all of the domain's inhabitants are deeply religious. Their spiritual life is deeply entwined with their everyday lives.

## Cultural Level

In the cities of Tagudin and Bauan, culture is at a Chivalric level. The mountain tribes of the east function at a Classical level. The rest of the domain roughly corresponds to a Dark Ages level.

## The Law

The spiritual and political leader of the land is Arcapatos Agustin. Since the military order of the church outnumbers the civil military, Agustin is most influential in decision-making. All laws created by the Colonial Council have to be ratified by him, and all

citizens expected to follow these laws or face penalties, primarily indulgences to the Church.

The eastern mountain tribes, however, are independent of this political system. These people still follow the old ways, before the Turonites arrived. Each tribe is a nation unto itself, ruled over by a chief, usually the oldest man or woman in the tribe. In times of war or distress, such as the destruction of the rice terraces, these chiefs converge in Ibaloi to create a Council of Elders to solve the problems at hand.

## Native Player Characters

Player characters from Igid Rabi-i are varied, though clerics in service to Matherion, called Patos, are common. These can be of any lawful alignment, and can cast spells from the spheres of charm, combat, healing, and protection. They get one additional spell from the charm sphere (called the Sacred Legerdemain) for each level they attain, and have Appraising as a bonus nonweapon proficiency. Other allowable character classes include artistes, fighters, rangers, and thieves. These four classes receive the nonweapon proficiency Weaving as a bonus.

There are also the reclusive Tagasirip, diviners who have become outcasts from mainstream society. These are normal magic users studying the major school of Divination. Player characters Tagasirip cannot have Charisma scores above 8.

Characters from the mountain tribes are primarily warriors of neutral good alignment who can only wear leather armor and may choose a spear, battleaxe or blowgun as a starting weapon proficiency. Player can also opt to play one of the Mambunong, shamanic clerics of any good alignment who have major access to the spheres of animal, astral, healing, and plant. These characters have a minimum Strength score of 10 and a minimum Dexterity score of 14. Players who choose to play Igid Rabi-i elves and half-elves can choose only the classes listed for mountain tribe characters.

All other player classes and races are unheard of in Igid Rabi-i.

## Encounters

Daytime encounters in Igid Rabi-i are typical for a tropical setting (farmers, water buffalo, monkeys etc.). This changes after nightfall, however, when encounters with supernatural creatures become possible. There is a 25% chance per hour every night of encountering 1d4 undead (any except vampires), bamboo spirit folk, or rakshasas. In Tagudin and Bauan, the chance is decreased to 10% but creatures such as gargoyles and golems can be encountered.

There is also a 10% chance per hour of encountering mummies in the mountains. These are

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT PLACES

similar to the typical mummies except they do not have bandages, and instead have tattoos all over their bodies. Also unlike conventional mummies, these mummies do not inflict mummy rot but a form of scabies, which can be healed normally.

### ARCAPATOS MIGUEL AGUSTIN

#### Lord of Igid Rabi-i

**14th-level Human Cleric, Lawful Evil**

<b>Armor Class</b>	10	<b>Str</b>	14
<b>Movement</b>	12	<b>Dex</b>	10
<b>Level/Hit Dice</b>	14	<b>Con</b>	16
<b>Hit Points</b>	59	<b>Int</b>	15
<b>THAC0</b>	12	<b>Wis</b>	15
<b>No. of Attacks</b>	2	<b>Cha</b>	17
<b>Damage/Attack</b>	1d6		
<b>Special Attacks</b>	Inflict weakness		
<b>Special Defenses</b>	Immune to charm, aura of fear		
<b>Magic Resistance</b>	Nil		

#### Appearance

Agustin has the appearance of a balding, bespectacled priest of fifty years, dressed in long, flowing white robes with gold trim.

#### Background

Miguel Agustin was born to nobility in Turon. Even during his childhood, he harbored a fascination with the exotic and the unique. He collected uniquely-designed objects and, eventually, items from distant lands. But his longing for objects could not be satiated, and it was not long before he joined the priesthood, which promised travel to faraway conquered lands. Agustin did well in the eyes of the Empire, ascending through the hierarchy of Matherion's priesthood to become an Arcapatos. When he was called to lead the Quest across the Mare Orientales, Agustin saw this as an opportunity to expand his collection of exotic artifacts. Aboard the *Ciudad Fernandina* was his collection, occupying one entire cabin compartment.

When Igid Rabi-i was finally converted, Agustin faced his fate as absolute ruler of a meek and humble people. He viewed himself as a hero sent from divinity to rescue the savage folk from strange, pagan gods. But all that was to change one dawn, when the seas that delivered him and his entourage gave up another of its wondrous secrets.

It was a year after the Temple was sanctified, and Tagudin was seen as a mirror to faraway Turon. Far from the city, along a remote beach, the Bacani family

had lived by fishing, the secrets of a good catch passed down from generation to generation.

One unusually cold morning, four of the Bacani children were playing along the white beach. As the low waves of the Great Western Sea broke upon the white shore and the soft wind blew through their silk clothes, one of the children noticed something floating on the waters, like a tattered sail. Following their instincts, the children waded through the waters and headed for it.

What they got from the ocean stunned them: it was an old cloth, yellowed by time and seawater, woven with extremely fine fibers. But what really caught their attention was the design on the cloth. The oldest member of the Bacani clan had recognized the imprint as a figure of Angarab, the Great Mother Goddess of ancient times, calling the people back to her forgotten love. They framed the cloth in their simple hut, and worshipped the Mother from the Seas.

Word of the Bacani's prized relic spread from village to village, bringing fame to the clan. When news of the cloth came to Tagudin and the Arcapatos, he decided to see the cloth for himself. By the *Ciudad Fernandina* he reached the remote beach, and met the Bacani for the first time.

Arcapatos Agustin was eventually presented to the gift from the sea, and he stood in awe as he bore witness to the woman of the cloth: it was the image of Matherion in the lesser-known Holy Mother Aspect, there was no mistaking it, as described in all of the Holy Empire's sacred texts. The Bacani, of course, insisted the woman was undoubtedly Angarab. Agustin's lust for precious artifacts overcame, and he demanded that the cloth be taken back to Tagudin as a "sacred relic," and the Bacani would be paid more than the bargain prescribed. The clan refused the offer, a move which deeply angered Agustin. Leaving the house he thought of his possession of that cloth, of what fame and glory it would bring him, and what the Emperor himself might bestow upon him for its acquisition, maybe even the highest holy post of Patos Supremis. On his return to Tagudin, Agustin immediately convened his Council on matters of obtaining the cloth that bore Matherion's image. The Council had agreed that negotiations with the Bacani clan would continue.

Days turned to weeks, but the Bacani were adamant. No amount of persuasion would make them surrender the cloth. Even if the whole clan had to die defending their beliefs and safeguarding their possession, then they would do so. This defiant stand reached Agustin's ears. Outwardly, of course, he showed how he regretted this position. Deep inside his greed finally got the best of him. If the Bacani were to die for the cloth, then so be it.

One night, the advent of a typhoon's arrival, seven men in black garb emerged from the darkness, entering



the Bacani house, armed with vicious knives and krisblades. Within a few minutes, as the howling winds came forth, everything was all over. From far beyond, through the torrents and the wail of winds, the mighty bells of the Vestibulo could be heard echoing throughout the island.

Inside the Vestibulo itself, a few devotees of Matherion gathered, sheltering themselves from the wrath of the typhoon. When the bells rung, they wondered why the Arcapatos wanted to call for worship at such an inopportune time of the night and under such inclement weather. Just then seven priests barged through the main entrance, carrying with them the Cloth of Matherion. Standing by the Grand Altar was Agustin himself, welcoming the Cloth's arrival with open arms like a father reunited with his prodigal son.

For the first time since the Turonites' arrival, the native folk who were gathered under the Vestibulo felt a deep sense of dread and fear. Agustin, Igid Rabi-i's most powerful ruler, the Cloth in his hands, instilled in them the fact that he would do anything just to get what he desired. Under the winds and the rain, with incense wafting throughout the temple, he started the ritual of celebration. The scent of incense, it was said, spread throughout Igid Rabi-i that stormy night.

For three days the typhoon surged. Angry waves washed away the blood that had been spilt. When finally the storm had passed, the people sensed they were no longer in the world they once knew. The clearing skies seemed much darker. The brazen sun, Aldaw, had lost his luster, and the moon Bulan and her twinkling servants had turned from her silvery hue to a sickly gray. Strange and horrific creatures of a new night had appeared out of nowhere. The Diviner's prophecy had come true: the Great Fear had finally overwhelmed them. The land at the Edge of Night had been claimed by some dark power for the Land of Dreaded Night.

But none held more anger and frustration than the Arcapatos himself. As the typhoon receded, the Cloth of Matherion had mysteriously disappeared from the Grand Altar under a cloud of frankincense smoke. Soon rumors were spreading throughout Tagudin that the Cloth was in the possession of another family. Agustin took a silent vow that, as absolute ruler of Igid Rabi-i, he would not rest until the Sacred Cloth was recovered.

### Current Sketch

When the Mists claimed Igid Rabi-i, Agustin ceased to age. And ever since that fateful night, he has rarely been seen outside the Vestibulo. He has left the day-to-day duties of the temple to the other lesser priests, and spends most of his time gathering information on the Cloth of Matherion's location.

Confusion now rocks the Colonial Council. With their lord delegating sacred duties to others, the truly good members of the Council are seeking reform, while the rest still follow the orders of the Arcapatos. So far no progress has been made on the situation.

The Cloth of Matherion itself is rarely seen in public; it mysteriously travels from family to family, clan to clan. Each time the Cloth is discovered the family taking custody of it falls victim to Agustin's priestly assassins. Each time this happens, however, the Cloth disappears and emerges in another family's possession.

### Closing the Borders

The domain has two borders: one around Tagudin and the other around the domain itself. When Agustin wants to seal off the capital, everyone in Tagudin is overtaken by an indescribable sense of dread, and an urgent longing to stay indoors. Everyone in the city will try their best to keep themselves secure, closing every window and locking every door. When Agustin wants to seal off Igid Rabi-i itself, a dense wall of frankincense smoke envelopes the domain. Anyone who tries to push through the wall becomes nauseated and falls unconscious in one turn. When the victim awakes, he finds himself back in the domain.

### Combat

In combat, Agustin acts as a normal 14th-level cleric. He always has with him a krisblade, a weapon with a crooked blade which functions just like a scimitar. In addition to this, the Sacred Legerdemain of his priestly order has rendered him immune to any charm spells or spell-like abilities.

The dark powers have also given him new abilities. When a person is touched by him or is hit by his weapon, the victim must save vs. poison or be unable to do anything for two rounds. The unfortunate victim simply collapses to the ground in an ecstatic trance.

The Arcapatos also has a 20-foot radius aura of fear around him, which acts just like the spell of the same name. The clergy of Matherion are, however, immune to this aura.

At will he can also call upon his priestly assassins, who are dual-class lawful evil priest-thieves ranging from 4th-level to 10th-level. These hired guards come in groups of 2d8.

### The Cloth of Matherion

This contested Cloth is made of a mysterious fabric, though it looks old and yellowed due to seawater. Its origins are entirely unknown. On it is an imprint of a woman surrounded by archetypal themes. Depending

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT PLACES

on the faiths of the people, this imprint is either that of the ancient goddess Angarab or Matherion as the Holy Mother. Regardless of beliefs, its power is so strong that whosoever has possession of it will be granted one *wish*, provided that the person has good intentions and is humble of word and deed.

However, the Cloth carries with it a hefty price: the possessor and his immediate family has a 30% chance per day of being tracked down by the Arcapatos' priestly assassins. This is reduced to 10% if the family is in hiding or on the run.

### The Feast of Nine Nights

This holiday is celebrated all over Igid Rabi-i on the nine nights before the winter solstice. This celebration predates even the domain's distant history, and was celebrated as a thanksgiving to Aldaw, Bulan, Kabunian, Angarab and the other ancient gods. Now it is celebrated as a thanksgiving to Matherion and her undying generosity, as well as a collective prayer to deliver the folk from the Great Fear. During the Feast numerous lanterns of all shapes and sizes are hung on trees, posts and houses, and are left to burn for the whole duration of the holiday.

The Feast of Nine Nights has a magical effect throughout the domain. Mysteriously, during this period, there are no encounters with evil creatures. Also, neither the Cloth nor the Arcapatos (nor even his assassins) are seen. This may be related to the holiday's deep religious (and pre-historical) significance. Player characters in Igid Rabi-i during the Feast do not need to roll for fear, horror or madness checks when circumstances warrant them. During the holiday, the borders remain open.

✕

# CUMBRE DE ORO

## A PLACE OF UNEXPLORED WEALTH AND INEXORABLE EVIL

by Nathan Okerlund  
 sealionii@hotmail.com

*"The love of money is the root of all evil."*

— 1 Tim. 6:10



any adventurers of the Holy Empire attempted to pierce the Sierra Acora and explore the lands beyond for hundreds of years before Hernan Mouriros began his ill-fated adventure to conquer Mictlan. All who returned swore that the mountains were impassable—but not all returned. One of the more famous adventurers who attempted to find a passage through the mountains was a man named Anibal Coronado, who lived some hundred and fifty years before Mouriros. He and a party of about fifty men, financed by the Emperor himself, left Turon at midsummer, vowing to return by winter with news of a trade route through the mountains. None of them were ever heard from again.

Coronado and his men did, indeed, succeed in reaching the other side, but instead of returning Coronado pressed forward, drawn onward by the native stories of the city they called Cumbre de Oro, the treasure city of the ancient emperor Maxaantii. Indeed, he had fallen under its spell, the spell which whispers that gold is sweeter than food and drink, jewels more precious than breath. He, like Maxaantii himself, was willing to die to obtain that treasure—and to continue the struggle beyond death itself to gain it for his own.

### THE LAND

The domain of Cumbre de Oro rests within the domain of Mictlan; its exact location has never been determined, although most native accounts place it in the mountainous north. Despite searching, Hernando Mouriros and his soldiers have never discovered the place and dismisses it as a native myth; it is, however, very real. The domain consists of a ruined city about a mile square and a strip of mountainous jungle about three miles wide surrounding the city. The jungle is exceptionally dense and lush, more well-watered than most of the domain but even more difficult to battle through, and in many places it has overrun the city.

Trees grow through the deserted buildings and break up the streets with their roots, making the broad paved roads broken and uneven. The entire city is constructed of worked stone, centering around a step pyramid similar to that at the center of the city of Huanquite. Massive statues line the wide streets, mostly of squat men dressed in elaborate headdresses and holding massive maces. The work of wind and rain has had less effect on these statues than on the city of the whole, and their stern expressions can still be read clearly. The surrounding jungle and most of the city are alive with animals, but some areas are oddly still and quiet, devoid of animal and sometimes even of plant life.

### Cultural Level

Presently Cumbre de Oro has no culture to speak of, but most of the original construction of the city was made by an iron age culture highly advanced in the working of stone and metal. Anibal Coronado and his men left the Holy Empire when it was at a medieval cultural level, and their arms and armor reflect that.

### The Folk

Cumbre de Oro has no human population, but the city teems with life, death, and magical constructs. Most of the city and all of the surrounding jungle are inhabited by wild animals, ranging from the harmless to the horrifying. Anibal Coronado and his undead followers also wander the city, and certain places are still protected by the magical guardians created by the builders of the city many centuries ago. Additionally, the dead emperor Maxaantii, now a 5th rank mummy, still controls those of his many servants who followed him into undeath; they have been raised as 2nd and 3rd rank mummies under his control.

### The Law

The undead population of Cumbre de Oro are divided into two groups; the avaricios and other undead under the control of Anibal Coronado, and the mummies under the control of Maxaantii, the city's original ruler.

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT PLACES

Ordinarily Coronado leaves his servants to wander the city as they will, but when he calls they must obey absolutely. He can telepathically direct them to come to him or to patrol the border of the city, killing any they meet; more complicated instructions must be transmitted verbally.

Maxaantii, on the other hand, can and does exert complete telepathic control over his undead servitors as long as they are within the step pyramid at the city's center. However, if they leave the pyramid he can no longer control them directly, although they are still absolutely obedient to any instructions they received while in contact with him.

The magical constructs left by the builders of Cumbre de Oro to protect the city obey the instructions the builders gave them. Neither Coronado nor Maxaantii have any control over their actions, as Coronado does not know the command words used to control them and Maxaantii has forgotten them.

### Native PCs

None

### Encounters

When the builders of Cumbre de Oro constructed their treasure city they left numerous magical guardians in place to defend the place; most common are stone guardians and stone golems, and juggernauts, although other similar constructs can also be found. Additionally, Maxaantii often sends his servants into the city to reconnoiter, to take captives, and to find whether any of the treasure houses of the city have been violated.

Anibal Coronado, the men who followed him on his ill-fated expedition, and those unfortunate adventurers who have since left their bones in the city wander the city as undead under the control of Coronado. The vast majority of them are avaricios, a kind of corporeal ghost common to Cumbre de Oro. They will almost certainly attack any living human they see, although they will not actively search for trespassers unless Coronado commands it. If the servants of Maxaantii and Coronado come across each other they will engage each other in combat; these skirmishes are usually inconclusive, unless one group massively outnumbers the other.

In addition to the undead inhabitants, the city and surrounding jungle contain many fell creatures; jaguars, anaconda, and giant spiders are common, and even such magical creatures as naga, spark snakes, and basilisks are occasionally found. However, perhaps the most profound danger posed by the city to adventurers will result from they themselves. The city of Cumbre de Oro is saturated with a spirit of greed, which may take effect on even the most altruistic adventurers, creating in them

an unnatural obsession with the wealth of the city. Two curses are associated with the treasure of Cumbre de Oro: First, for every day which the player characters spend in the city, they must make a save against spell or begin to come under the influence of the city's spirit of avarice.

This influence has four levels:

- ❖ After failing the saving throw for the first time, the player character is attracted to the city's treasure. He will spend spare moments handling his share of the treasure, admiring the workmanship of the jewelry and calculating its value and making plans for the future disposal of his wealth. The character himself will notice nothing unusual in his behavior; his companions may or may not consider his interest unusual. The character takes a -2 penalty to Intelligence and Wisdom checks, since his thoughts are caught up in the treasure. This level of influence can be removed if the player gives up the treasure of the city and receives a remove curse spell.
- ❖ If a character attracted to the treasure fails his saving throw, he becomes obsessed by the treasure. His waking moments will be dedicated to handling and talking of the treasure; by night he will dream only of his new-found wealth. He may begin to become suspicious in the presence of the other player characters, questioning their motives and assuming that they are attempting to gain part of his share of the loot. The character will, again, not realize that there is anything unusual in his behavior, but the other PCs will certainly note that something is amiss. The character's Wisdom effectively drops by two points. This level of influence can be removed by giving up the treasure and receiving an atonement spell.
- ❖ If a character obsessed by the treasure fails his saving throw, he becomes fascinated by the treasure. The mere sight of it will distract him from the task at hand. On seeing any object of value unattended—even seeing a few silver pieces fall to the ground—the character must make a save against spell or stop whatever he is doing and attempt to retrieve the desired object for his own. If attacked or made the target of a spell, the fascinated player character will respond appropriately, but he would almost certainly ignore an attack on his fellows until it affected him personally. The fascinated character will become increasingly paranoid and distrustful of his fellows. Only atonement and heal will cure this level of affliction, and then only if the character gives up the treasure taken from the city.
- ❖ If a fascinated character fails his daily saving throw, he becomes overwhelmed by greed. Any

time any division of treasure is made, he must save against spell or behave as if under the influence of a symbol of discord, demanding that all of the treasure be handed over to him and violently abusing anyone who opposes this demand. If two or more characters are afflicted in this manner, they will almost certainly come to blows. The character is effectively afflicted with madness, as if he had failed a madness check, with paranoia and/or megalomania being the two most common forms of madness seen. Only wish or a similar magic will suffice to cure one who suffers from this affliction, although limited wish and heal might also suffice.

It must also be noted that the treasure taken from the city is infected with the same disease of avarice which pervades the city itself; the PCs must continue to make saving throws every day as long as they have any part of the treasure of Cumbre de Oro in their possession.

The second curse is more insidious, but possibly just as dangerous: The party leaving the city of Cumbre de Oro with its treasure will find that the tale of their exploit has gone before them and attracted all those who heard it, each of them hoping to gain a share of the treasure by trickery, seduction, double-dealing, or force. No matter where they go or how they get there, the news that they have taken the treasure of Cumbre de Oro will arrive before them. Only wish or a spell of similar magnitude will remove these two curses from treasure taken from the city, and then only to the degree (or amount) permitted by the Dungeon Master.

## ANIBAL CORONADO

### Lord of Cumbre de Oro

#### Unique corporeal undead 14th level fighter

##### Chaotic Evil

<b>Armor Class</b>	0	<b>Str</b>	18/00
<b>Movement</b>	12	<b>Dex</b>	12
<b>Level/Hit Dice</b>	14	<b>Con</b>	—
<b>Hit Points</b>	91	<b>Int</b>	14
<b>THAC0</b>	2	<b>Wis</b>	7
<b>No. of Attacks</b>	2	<b>Cha</b>	7
<b>Damage/Attack</b>	By weapon (9–16)		
<b>Special Attacks</b>	See below		
<b>Special Defenses</b>	Hit only by +1 weapons, see below		
<b>Magic Resistance</b>	75%		

### Background

Some one hundred and seventy years ago, the Holy Empire, freed at last from the grip of a series of civil wars, began an aggressive attempt to project its power

on surrounding nations and to explore hitherto unknown areas at the fringes of civilization. One of the principal goals of the many explorers and adventurers who went abroad in search of new lands and new treasures was to traverse the Sierra Acora and discover what lay on the other side. A series of attempts, more or less well-funded and manned, were made, but every attempt at crossing the mountain passes came to naught—until a notorious adventurer by the name of Anibal Coronado came forward with a new and ambitious plan to cross the uncrossable mountains at last.

Coronado had first made a name for himself as a mercenary captain in the civil wars, a strong and canny fighter who was a natural leader of men, if of somewhat flexible personal morality. It was generally agreed that he operated for no higher cause than personal gain and his treatment of captured prisoners was brutal at best, but his contribution to the war effort was undeniable. Under his direction his forces turned the tide in several important battles, and his conduct came to the attention of the Emperor himself.

After the wars ended, Coronado turned his hand to exploration, leading small groups of men into little-known foreign lands and returning with stories of strange peoples and marvelous sites: of lands where men who worshiped jeweled crocodiles, whom they believed to be their ancestors, of women so beautiful that a man might die seeing their faces, of black water which burned like pitch, of fakirs who used the powers of the mind to see through walls and lift themselves in the air, and of a thousand other marvels. The strange, rich treasures which he brought with him only enhanced the exotic aura surrounding his exploits, and the name “Coronado” became synonymous with exotic lands, strange adventures and the wealth of far cultures. Some of his fellow-travelers complained bitterly that he was much too willing to distort the accounts of his voyages to continually give himself the hero’s role; many more grumbled that his policy of taking two-thirds of any wealth gained on these voyages for himself was mere avarice and in no way commensurate to his relative contribution to the voyages; and a very few told tales of horrifying brutality practiced on those foreigners who, for one reason or another, failed to accede to Coronado’s demands. Still, such accounts were generally disregarded or considered simply slanders from disappointed enemies jealous of his success, and Coronado grew to become one of the Empire’s great heroes.

Coronado’s head was turned by the adulation his adventures commanded, and he became ever more eager to outdo himself, to add to his reputation and to his growing wealth. He therefore decided to attempt the greatest challenge known to the explorers of the Holy Empire: the crossing of the Sierra Acora. He knew that

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT PLACES

to succeed where so many others had failed would require a high degree of preparation, the finest equipment, and the pick of the Empire's men; accordingly, he approached the Emperor with a bold new plan. Previous expeditions had departed from Turon in the early spring, in an attempt to cross the mountains by midsummer and return across the mountains before the winter snows would make entering the mountain passes mere suicide, but the passes were hardly usable until midsummer, meaning that the expeditions wasted most of their energy and supplies attempting to make the outward trip and had to turn back with their mission unaccomplished. Coronado proposed leaving Turon at midsummer, when the passes would be clear, crossing by fall, spending the winter and spring months on the other side of the mountains, and returning the next year at midsummer.

At first the Emperor was reluctant to support a plan so unusual and so fraught with the possibility of disaster, but at length Coronado prevailed upon the Emperor to supply him with the funds necessary for the journey and, more importantly, official sanction for the exploit. As word spread, men flocked to Coronado, hoping for a place in his expedition. On Midsummer's Day Coronado and his fifty-six handpicked followers set into the mountains, vowing to return the next year with news of what lay beyond the Sierra Acora.

Using the information provided by previous expeditions, Coronado's group managed to successfully cross the mountain range in three months' time with minimal loss of life, exiting the mountains just before the winter snows began in earnest. They found themselves in a strange land of dense undergrowth and massive trees towering up to block the sun, a place of horrible heat and humidity by day, chilly and damp by night. Soon they encountered natives of the place, with whom they traded glass beads and bright cloth for foodstuffs.

It was in one of these meetings that Coronado made a fascinating discovery; one of the men with whom they traded, a chief named Jucataan, wore a torc of gold with a massive emerald the size of a man's palm fixed in it. Ever eager for a chance to increase his wealth and reputation, Coronado asked where he had obtained so magnificent a necklace. Jucataan replied, through signs and gestures, that an distant ancestor had visited a city of gold hidden in the mountains, a city full of jewelry and ornaments just such as this, except finer and more elegant. When pressed for details, the chief refused to describe the place any further, saying that it was of exceedingly evil reputation and was no longer visited—in fact, that it was taboo to visit it, and that he and his men would certainly preserve the taboo inviolate and prevent any attempt to reach it.

His cupidity aroused by the chief's account, Coronado attempted to use both threats and

blandishments to convince the chief to reveal the city's location, but he steadfastly refused. Finally, Coronado resolved to try another tack; dropping the matter, he gave a casual invitation for a banquet in the honor of Jucataan and his men, which was gladly accepted; Coronado then instructed his men in the role they would have at the banquet and ensured that every adult male of the native tribe would be present. At the festivity, Coronado plied his guests with brandy brought from the Holy Empire and by degrees brought the conversation back to the treasure city in the mountains. His tongue loosened by the alcohol, the chief informed Coronado that the city was said to be some three weeks' travel to the east through difficult terrain, ascending high into the mountains; after passing through a narrow canyon, "a canyon such that a man might touch both sides at once," as the chief described it, the city lay in view, its buildings of worked stones and streets paved in precious metals shining like fire, directly beneath a mountain peak which itself glittered as brightly as gold in the sun.

Armed with this information, Coronado resolved to find the city and plunder it; to prevent any possible opposition to his scheme from Jucataan and his men, he ordered that they be slaughtered—instructions which were all too easy to carry out, as most, unaccustomed to strong liquor, were drunken to the point of being comatose. What little resistance they made was quickly overpowered, and they were killed to the last man. After the massacre was completed, Coronado took the torc from Jucataan's headless body and placed it on his own shoulders, swearing that every man of the company should have one just as rich when they discovered and plundered the treasure city.

The next morning, Coronado and his men set into the jungle in search of "Cumbre de Oro", or "Gold Peak," as his men had christened the city after hearing the chief's description of it. At first spirits were high and enthusiasm for the journey; after all, he and his men had eight months before they would be able to return through the mountains, so they would certainly have time to find the city, take the treasure from it, and return in good time. However, the expedition soon began to encounter reversals. They had not reckoned with the climate, the difficulty of finding food, and the possibility of disease, and soon they found themselves in desperate straits. The cornmeal was soon found to be infested with grubs, the dried meat with maggots; in desperation, the men began to eat the fruit and fungi of the jungle, but enthusiasm for such fare dropped sharply after two men died screaming in hallucinatory fevers after eating an innocuous-looking mushroom. Other men were carried off by strange tropical diseases which caused bleeding from the eyes, eruptions of black putrescent pustules, or convulsions so strong that men's bones broke under the strain. What little water

could be found was filthy and infested with leeches and the larvae of biting flies. There began to be talk of turning back, of attempting to return to the relatively clean air and water of the mountains, but Coronado would hear nothing of it. He urged the men forward, telling them to think of the riches that awaited them in Cumbre de Oro, the streets of gold and buildings of silver, jewels the size of a man's head, the sort of wealth which was a thing of fairy tales and legends. Such tales had an effect for a time; the men were eager to distract themselves from their misery by tales of how they would spend their wealth when they returned to the empire, and their spirits were buoyed by Coronado's confidence and his reputation as a heroic adventurer. However, weeks passed without any sign of the city and murmurs of mutiny began to circulate among those remaining of the company. Coronado cajoled and threatened; he promised wealth and fame and hinted darkly that those in favor of turning back were mere cowards, unworthy to be called men. But the tide was turning against him. Knowing it, he determined to make an example of those whom he considered the ringleaders of those in favoring of returning. Inviting them to a meeting to discuss turning back, he poisoned their wine, then brought the remainder of the men to see their dead bodies. Screaming and blaspheming, he promised the same fate to every man who refused to press on, then ordered that the bodies be chopped into pieces and cooked for that evening's meal. Driven by hunger and fear, not a single one of the men objected to the grisly feast.

After that incident the men's will to return was broken; beyond exhaustion, beyond despair, they went forward like automata, with Cumbre de Oro and the Empire both seeming equally mythical and unattainable. Coronado himself was consumed with only one thought: he must gain the city and make its treasure his own. Such an exploit would give him fame and glory that would never die, would make him the wealthiest man of the Empire. At first, he too dreamed of what the money would buy—power, women, fame, fine food and drink—but as time went by the gold of Cumbre de Oro became an end in itself, until he no longer dreamed of buying anything with it, nor even of returning to the Empire with it, but only of running his hands through it and admiring the play of light on the gold and jewels.

At last, with only Coronado and two others still alive, they discovered the city. Entering it, they found it was all they had dreamed of and more—but even so it was not enough for Coronado, who killed his companions to prevent them from taking their share of the treasure. The emperor Maxaantii, roused from his millennium-long sleep by the theft taking place, emerged from his resting place in the step pyramid at the city's center and attempted to detain Coronado, but

he underestimated the latter's manic strength and desperation. Coronado succeeded in striking him down and fleeing, but as he did so the mummy cursed him that he would never succeed in leaving the city with the treasure.

Weakened by the long months of wandering, the excitement of the discovery, and the strain of carrying the treasure, Coronado collapsed near the edge of the city, feverish and dehydrated. He no longer had strength to carry the treasure, but he refused to leave it behind; he could hear a brook just out of sight and might have reached it by leaving the bag of gold and jewels and crawling to it, but instead he attempted to drag the bag to the stream, unwilling to let it out of his grasp for a moment, however short. His failing strength gave out; dying and delirious, he cursed the gods which taunted him with such wealth only to take it from him at the last moment, then, raging and weeping, he begged any power which would hear him to give him another chance to make the treasure of the city his.

As he lay unconscious, slipping toward death, his head pillowed on the treasure he had given his life to win, the valley was enveloped in a mountain fog and the Mists wrenched the city of Cumbre de Oro into Ravenloft, leaving no trace of it in its own plane. At the moment of his death, the dark powers converted Anibal Coronado from mortality to undeath and gave him the lordship of Cumbre de Oro. On arising, he discovered that the men who had set out with him to gain the treasure of the city had been brought to the city by some means, and were under his absolute control. He has never fully realized that both he and they are now undead, cursed to wander Cumbre de Oro for eternity; indeed, he dismisses his memories of the Holy Empire and his human origins as foolish and irrelevant. His whole being is consumed with the desire to gain control of the gold of Cumbre de Oro, and he thinks of little else.

### Current Sketch

Anibal Coronado appears to be a man just over six feet in height but horribly emaciated; his skin is yellowed and drawn close against the bone, as if he suffers from some wasting disease. He wears the helmet and breastplate of a soldier of the Holy Empire over a tattered tunic and pantaloons, with a gold torc bearing a large emerald placed around his neck over his clothes and armor. His hair is short and black, and he wears the sharp goatee and clean-shaven upper lip popular in the Holy Empire some hundred and fifty years ago. His eyes are brown, but curiously blank and empty; the irises are yellowed and bloodshot. His undead nature is not necessarily immediately apparent, but will certainly be noted on any more than casual examination.

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT PLACES

On his death the Dark Powers converted Anibal Coronado into a unique undead creature retaining his fighter abilities and combining them with many spell-like abilities based on his ties to his domain. Coronado has 75% magic resistance, and any spell targeting him has a 10% chance of being reflected on the caster; he can only be struck by enchanted weapons and he generates fear in a five-foot radius continually. He can cast detect magic and detect invisibility at will; dispel magic, harm (as the opposite of heal), and wall of thorns twice a day; and creeping doom and symbol of discord once per day.

### Closing the Borders

When Coronado mentally commands it, his undead servants move to the perimeter of the city and patrol it, killing or capturing any they find. A party able to break through the patrols will be pursued through the jungle by the undead, but if they succeed in moving more than three miles beyond the outside of the city they will have escaped. This is NOT an easy task; movement through the heavy jungle is often nearly impossible and the party will be obliged to cut their way through, being lucky to move a mile in an hour, while the tree branches and undergrowth seem to move aside of their own accord to allow the passage of their undead pursuers.

### Combat

In combat Coronado will usually summon his undead minions to him, then use wall of thorns and creeping doom to entrap and slaughter his opponents. If brought to combat personally he strikes with his longsword *Corrupción*, a +2 weapon which causes disease with each successful hit unless the person struck makes a saving throw against spell. A person failing this saving throw instantly begins to feel light-headed and nauseous, taking a +2 penalty to armor class and –2 penalty to hit; these penalties are cumulative with each failed save. Within twenty-four hours the victim will then fall ill, with a raging fever, convulsions, and internal bleeding; unless magical aid is forthcoming he will die within 1–4 days. Coronado can strike twice in a round with this sword. In the unlikely event that he finds himself outmatched, he will flee, scribing the symbol of discord to cover his retreat and ordering his undead minions to attack the party while they are under its influence.

The one thing Coronado dreads is the loss of “his” treasure; he is obsessed by the idea that someone, somewhere in the city, is making away with his beloved gold. He prowls the city unceasingly, always on the lookout for “thieves” and always afraid that some cache which he is leaving unguarded is being ransacked. He himself is cursed to be unable to even touch the treasure

he coveted so desperately; neither he nor his minions can move the treasure, nor defeat the ancient guardians left to protect it.

If Coronado is defeated in combat he dissolves into mist and reforms in 2–5 days; during this time the undead under his control will make no concerted effort to kill the party and he cannot close the borders. Of course, player characters intent on making away with the gold of Cumbre de Oro must still deal with Maxaanti and his minions, the stone golems guarding the treasure, and the beasts of the jungle—not to mention Hernando Mouriros, Cuxi Yapanaque, and the other inhabitants of Mictlan, who will certainly hear of the adventurers’ exploit and desire the treasure for their own.

## AVARICIO

<b>Climate/Terrain</b>	Any
<b>Frequency</b>	Common (Cumbre de Oro)
<b>Activity Cycle</b>	Any
<b>Diet</b>	None
<b>Intelligence</b>	Low to Average (5–10)
<b>Treasure</b>	Mx5
<b>Alignment</b>	Neutral Evil
<b>No. Appearing</b>	2-12 (Cumbre de Oro only)
<b>Armor Class</b>	2
<b>Movement</b>	12
<b>Hit Dice</b>	8
<b>THAC0</b>	11
<b>No. Attacks</b>	1 or 3
<b>Damage/Attack</b>	By weapon+2 or 1d6/1d6/1d6 + special
<b>Special Attacks</b>	Drain wisdom
<b>Special Defenses</b>	See below
<b>Special Vulnerability</b>	See below
<b>Size</b>	M (5–6’ tall)
<b>Morale</b>	Fearless (19)
<b>XP Value</b>	4,000

Avaricios are the ghosts of persons who died violently while seeking to gain or protect wealth; a merchant slain by thieves while attempting to protect his life savings or a thief struck down by a wizard while trying to divest him of some precious gem are two examples of circumstances which might form an avaricio. In order to charge the death with enough emotion for the Dark Powers to grant the gift of unlife to the dying person, however, the desire to get wealth must be stronger in the person dying than any other desire held in the moment of death. Only under such circumstances can an avaricio be formed. Understandably, in most places they are quite rare, but in Cumbre de Oro it is so common for a person to die dreaming of wealth that they are actually quite numerous. In unlife avaricios have the same unreasoning desire for riches than they had in the moment of death, without the planning ability to amass wealth for themselves.



Avaricios appear as humans with dry, desiccated skin, with their hair often falling away in clumps; they may not appear undead to casual inspection in dim light or at a distance, but at close range their staring, hollow eyes and fixity of expression will alert the wary that they are not truly alive. They speak and understand speech in the languages they spoke when alive, but their native intelligence has been replaced with something lower and more cunning. Although not very intelligent in most respects, this cunning is often put to brutal use in combat or in making traps for the unwary. The avaricios of Cumbre de Oro are all fully corporeal ghosts, incapable of taking non-corporeal form; avaricios encountered in other places are likely, like most ghosts, to be incorporeal or semi-corporeal. The information following applies specifically to the avaricios of Eldorado, most of whom are second and third magnitude ghosts.

### Combat

In combat those avaricios who have retained their weapons (usually swords) will attack with their weapons (about half of any given group will probably be armed). Those who wield weapons deal weapon damage +2, as they have uncanny physical strength (count as 18 strength), but avaricios may also utilize another, more dangerous attack form. They may claw with both hands and bite, rather than attacking with a weapon; although these attacks deal relatively little damage, (1d6/1d6 for the claws, 1d6 for the bite) each successful hit drains the attacked person of 1 point of wisdom. If the victim's wisdom reaches 3 or below, he will be fascinated by anything shiny, attempting to collect and play with as many bright things as possible; if it reaches 0, he dies and will rise within 1 week as an avaricio (although he will not be under the control of the avaricio who killed him, but under the control of Anibal Coronado). This only occurs if the victim dies due to Wisdom loss; any other cause of death will not have this effect. Wisdom points are regained at the rate of one per day.

The flesh of avaricios is extremely dense and tough, more like wood than anything else; they take only 1/4 damage from any weapon made of steel or iron, enchanted or not. Silver weapons inflict half damage, while gold weapons inflict normal damage. (Weapons of other exotic materials—copper, flint, or whatever—deal only 1/4 damage). Additionally, avaricios may be fascinated by wealth. If an adventurer offers the avaricio a few coins or drops a few “accidentally”, the undead must save against spell (at –2, if they are gold coins) or be fascinated by the coins, handling them and playing with them for 2–5 rounds. Attempting to attack or cast a spell on the avaricio immediately breaks this fascination, but nearly any

other activity will be ignored as the creature fondles its newfound wealth. Avaricios nearly always carry a bag of gold coins on their person, caressing them at odd moments. Avaricios may be turned as 2nd magnitude ghosts; if a gold holy symbol is used, the turn attempt gets a +1 bonus. Holy water deals 1–6 damage per vial which strikes them.

### Habitat / Society

Avaricios roam the streets of Cumbre de Oro in disorganized bands, moving haphazardly from treasure site to treasure site, splitting into smaller groups or forming larger ones apparently at random. It is unusual to find an avaricio alone; for some reason they seem to prefer to move in groups of five or six, although smaller or larger groups are possible. Their tendency to wander in small bands may have something to do with instructions given them by Anibal Coronado sometime in the past. The avaricios of Cumbre de Oro are absolutely obedient to Coronado, and when he is present to drive them forward they cannot be turned.

### Ecology

The interaction of the avaricios with the natural world is minimal; they take no interest whatsoever in the living creatures of Cumbre de Oro, most of which ignore them, as well. Their only desires seem to be to admire the treasure piles of Cumbre de Oro, obey Coronado, and kill or capture anyone who might possibly remove their treasure. Captured victims will be taken to Coronado, who usually strips them of their possessions and leaves them to his followers.

The statistics given above are for a 2nd magnitude avaricio; a 3rd magnitude avaricio, might, for example, gain two hit dice, have an armor class of 0, be more difficult to turn, drain two points of wisdom per hit, and return to un-life if not slain with a gold weapon. A few avaricios might have other salient abilities, from *Van Richten's Guide to Ghosts*, to keep the player characters off balance.

Avaricios formed in other circumstances are likely to be quite different in behavior and to have rather different weakness and strengths than those found in Eldorado, although drain wisdom seems to be a near-universal ability. Most avaricios found elsewhere will be solitary, incorporeal spirits, as is more common for ghosts, and their weakness is likely to be whatever kind of wealth they coveted in life; exotic spices for a spice merchant, gems for a jeweler, and so forth. Such a spirit can be easily be created using the information given in *Van Richten's Guide to Ghosts*.

## INSPIRING GREED

Although provision is given for the game mechanics of the curse of greed inherent to Eldorado in terms of dice rolls and saving throws, it will often be possible to achieve the same effect without DM coercion of that type. One of player characters' chief motivations in D&D generally (although perhaps not so much in Ravenloft) is the desire for treasure. Play on this desire and it will greatly enhance the overall atmosphere of this domain.

A few possible ways to inspire greed—and uneasiness—in the PCs follow.

**1. Easy Money:** You might want to have the PCs come across a massive treasure trove early in the adventure—unguarded, or minimally guarded. So much treasure will probably dazzle a few and worry most. What's wrong with the treasure? Is it an illusion? Is it cursed? However, only the strongest-willed PCs will refuse such a gift horse. If they do so, give them a stiffer challenge, then present them with another trove; chances are excellent they will soon throw caution to the winds and fill their sacks to the brim.

**2. Why Does Everybody Want What's In This Suitcase?:** Now, begin to present them with more challenging encounters—as if the treasure is attracting more dangerous opponents. One possibility would be to stage an encounter with a large number of avaricios; as the PCs flee, one treasure bag breaks open and the PCs see the avaricios, entranced by the rolling coins, break off the pursuit in order to collect the treasure. What hold does the treasure have over these creatures? Might it gain the same hold over the PCs? Will the treasure draw still more dangerous opponents? Do your best to maintain a balance of playing on these fears while simultaneously reminding the players that the treasure in their hands will buy them lives of ease and luxury if they can retain it.

**3. Inside Help:** Get the aid of a PC willing to roleplay; take him aside and inform him of the consequences of the money's curse, and have him begin to roleplay his greed, demanding a larger share of the treasure and perhaps even pilfering the treasure of others. The group may soon begin to splinter, each more concerned for what's he's got than for the others. Subtle hints that other players have found treasure which they aren't revealing may very well help here. (Note: Do not encourage this to the point where the players no longer trust each other as people (as opposed to trusting each other as characters), as too much success may be detrimental to the group in the long run!)

**4. Combinations:** Combine the previous two points with the gradual build-up of the curse on the treasure of Cumbre de Oro. You might, for example,

wait for one person to leave the room and then inform the rest of them that that character has been acting a little strangely—in fact, that he seems obsessed by the treasure. You might then take that character aside, alone, and inform him that the other party members have been giving him strange looks and seem a little too interested in his share of the treasure. Soon, everyone in the party may become convinced that the other party members are a little off their rockers and only he is still in his right mind! Another possibility would be to play a scene, as above, in which the party drops a handful of coins to distract the avaricios—only to see one of their party members join the scramble for the money. Moments such as this can be used to create the feeling that something about this treasure is creating an unhealthy obsession with the city's wealth.

**5. Gradual Dawning:** Attempt to convey gradually that the darklords and denizens of the city are those most affected by the curse. The scene with the avaricios, mentioned above, might be a good one; a chance remark by Coronado might reveal his own fixation on the treasure and the greed that drove he and his men forward to their deaths; the players might discover a stele or monument describing Maxaantii's obsession with getting wealth. Attempt to convey subtly that there is something unnatural about their intense desire for the treasure that combines all of the callousness of “natural” greed with an additional, unholy element, and attempt to relate this to the party's own growing obsession with the wealth of the city.

Hopefully, these strategies, combined with the player's roleplaying and the DM's judicious management, will be able to create a sensation of growing greed and disunity in the party, to be replaced at the end with the realization of the curse attendant on the money and, hopefully, a willingness to set aside the treasure, if needs be, to avoid its curse. When the curse is revealed, some may be wise enough to refuse the wealth; others may attempt (with more or less success) to cleanse it of its taint and keep it for their own. Both provide role-playing opportunities.

However, it is recommended that the DM not send the players away empty-handed; the domain is intended to be deadly to all but the most experienced and canny characters, and to go through such an adventure with no material gain to show for it will be regarded as unfair by many groups. It might be possible, for example, to cleanse a part of the treasure of the taint by contributing most of it to a church or charitable institution or something similar. (N.B. If the characters cast remove curse or a similar spell on the treasure, keep in mind their ultimate goals. If it is merely an attempt to clean the treasure of its taint so that they can enjoy it freely, they are still acting under the spirit of greed exemplified in Cumbre de Oro, and, accordingly, the

spell will almost certainly fail. Only if they give up much of the treasure with no thought of personal gain should the party get any benefit from the treasure of Cumbre de Oro.)

The PCs should certainly be rewarded; however, do not send them away with enough treasure to devalue the currency of the entire Core. If they escape the city with more than you intended to give them, encounters with those drawn by the treasure's secondary curse, either in Mictlan or in other domains, can be used to lighten their pockets.

Given the nature of this secondary curse, a whole series of adventures might result from a visit to Cumbre de Oro, as greed for the treasure of Cumbre de Oro spreads throughout the land, bringing deceit, treachery, and even war in its wake, and leaving the party responsible for tracking down the treasure and undoing the damage they have unwittingly caused.



# SAN BARTOLOMÉ

## BITTER FRUSTRATION IN THE LAND OF THE SOUL-FORGERS

by Jesse Avilés

monk@coqui.net



San Bartolomé is a wedge shaped island that is 200 miles long and 57 miles wide at its biggest. The island has a warm climate and is quite rugged and mountainous. Its highest peak is a little bit above 2,000 feet. Forests cover most of the area with the largest one, Toro Negro, located in the southwest of the island. In the center and south of the island is a hot spring; to the east of that is marshy valley. Lots of rivers crisscross the island and six natural lakes of various sizes exist. Although it rains during the whole year, the south is considered the driest part of the island. Also, hurricanes are common during the later half of the year. The island's shores are home to many mangrove swamps, although four coves are well known as natural harbors. The capitol, Villa de la Aguada, has a population of approximately 2,000 people, and is built on one of these harbors.

### Cultural Level

Middle Ages

### The Folk

People that live in San Bartolomé generally have brown skin, dark hair and dark eyes although black-skinned and white-skinned people are not unknown. Men wear their hair at shoulders' length and keep their beard trimmed. Women let their hair grow to the middle of their back. They generally braid it and use flowers, colorful pebbles and other assortments to enliven their hair. Women rarely use skirts since many insects will readily crawl up their legs.

Bartolomeans make a living mainly by agricultural means. Harvests consist mainly of roots, grains and vegetables that they boil, bake, BBQ and fry. They complement this with fish, small game hunting and farm birds. Their main trade good is coffee, which is considered a delicacy in the island.

A third of the people in Villa de la Aguada make a living as sailors. The Mouth of the harbor is protected by Porta Coeli fortress. Porta Coeli is also the main monastery of the Catalina Church and it houses the *benedici mortale*. In it live roughly 500 people (monks,

priests and some spellcasters). Catapults and ballestae line the walls to protect the city. At the closest point to the sea, within the fortress, is a lighthouse. Porta Coeli can house most of the population of Villa de la Aguada if the need ever rises. Unknown to many people, Porta Coeli possess an extensive tunnel network that connects to different parts of the city and inland.

Various other towns exist on the island, with Guadalupe to the east and Asis on the mountains, with similar numbers of inhabitants as Villa de la Aguada. Most of these towns are built around monasteries that serve both their spiritual need and emergency shelter.

Strangers, spellcasters, psionics and non-humans are eyed suspiciously. Most people won't readily trade or talk with them unless the visitor takes the first step.

Orcs are the main inhabitants of the island after the humans. These form tribes that roam the island, skirmishing amongst themselves and with human settlements.

Elves have been seen on the island but if they have established a community here is unknown. A dwarf encampment is built on the mountains. They mine iron and trade it for supplies that are not readily available to them.

### The Law

San Bartolomé's government is a theocracy. The Father/Mother Abad reigns with 13 other Abadi as counselors. This group, known as the *benedici mortale*, create laws for the island to live by. The main doctrine is that every person is responsible for his or her actions even when the full consequences are not known. Every person will be tempted everyday but they must have the will to hold off the temptation, as every deed, good or bad, is watched by the Njelx [n-yell-ecks], and their memories are eternal. Njelx are entities, resembling extremely beautiful winged humans that watch after a person's soul when that person dies. Njelx can be loosely translated as "soul keepers" or "soul forgers", and that has been their job since the beginning of time. According to the Abadi, Njelx are the next step in "evolution", since after your soul is "purified" it will become a Njelx. Purification process occurs while the

person lives. As some people have sinned greatly, it might take several lives to purify them completely. It is not exactly known what is needed to purify a soul but the church has lots of rules and canon teachings to guide the Bartolomeans. Njelx are thought to live in Coeli, to receive souls as they come into the afterlife and decide if they are ready for the next step. They watch over mortal people's lives from Coeli, helping those on the righteous path and straightening those who are stranded. Still, not all Njelx are good. Care must be taken, as some will use a soul for their personal gain.

Religious services are offered twice a week and everyone is expected to attend at least one of the services. If someone fails to comply, inquisitors will visit this person and pass judgement whether or not the person had a valid reason not to attend the service. If the person didn't have a valid reason, a week in prison is the default punishment. All prisoners are used to carry out repair work in the town, church or in the fields. Prisoners may also be used as "protectors" of the city. When the city is stalked by one of the many magical beasts that abound on the island, a hunting party is made from the prisoners available. These are then sent with someone from the church to patrol the area and hunt the beast(s).

### Native Player Characters

All characters are available for play on San Bartolomé with the following notes.

#### Barbarian

PC's from this class will come mainly from the farthest towns in which disciplined units are not established.

#### Bard

A good entertainer is needed everywhere and if a bard is good, he can find warm food and a comfortable stack of hay to stay in. The guitar, flute and bongos are popular.

#### Cleric

A position of power is held by the cleric in this society. Traveling clerics are given the best food and board that their host can provide. In return, the cleric will provide advice (*auguries*), healing (*cure minor wounds*) and a strong arm in the field. Their word will settle disputes between neighbors and it as good as law (although clerics will have to defend their actions to their superiors if what they decreed brought ill luck).

#### Druid

Held in esteem by the society but they are not recognized as the "real" authority. The Watchers of the Wilderness are not part of the island hierarchy and a

cleric's decision or opinion will almost always be heard above the druid's.

#### Fighter

Units of fighters protect the cities from the various beasts of the island. Fighters don't use heavy armor since the island's heat and humidity will kill them before their enemy does. Chainmail, chainshirt and breastplate are the most they will risk using.

#### Monk

Their position is the same as the druid. The following weapon list replaces the one offered in the PHB: bow (short or long), club, dagger, kama, nunchaku, quarterstaff, shuriken, spear, three-section staff\* and war fan<sup>1</sup>.

#### Paladin

As holy knights, they will undertake the most important missions the church has or they will be leaders for the units of fighters and peasants that may be called to arms in times of troubles. See armor note on fighter entry.

#### Psion

Same as Sorcerers. Psions readily go to monasteries to meditate and harness their inner power.

#### Psychic Warrior

Same as Sorcerers. In addition to having the tranquility to meditate, the warrior tradition of many monasteries allow them to hone their martial prowess.

#### Ranger

The scouts of the population, rangers keep the forest trails safe for humans and animals. When a beast threatens the area, they might become the leaders of the hunting parties sent to pacify the intruder. See armor note on fighter entry.

#### Rogue

Characters that turn to theft as a way of life risk the most - the law is pretty harsh for those caught thieving. They also serve as scouts and special agents (even assassins) for the ruling class.

#### Sorcerer

Sorcerers will always find their way to the monasteries, either by their own will or that of others. Magic-users must be registered for future reference and monasteries provide training grounds for them to hone their skills.

---

<sup>1</sup> See "Sword and Fist: A guidebook to fighters and monks".

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT PLACES

They are allowed to wander as long as they report in to the authorities on a regular basis.

### Wizard

Same as sorcerers. Wizards readily go into a monastery since monasteries hold the best libraries on the island.

### Encounters

Within 10 miles of the biggest cities, most encounters will be with other humans. Further away (or around smaller settlements), there is a 25% chance of encounter with an orc scouting party or with the beasts (any animal, beast, magical beast or p[lant that the DM thinks is appropriate) of the island (equal chance of any). Check twice during the day and check four times at night. During the hours of darkness, the encounter chance rises to 30%.

### Deities

In San Bartolomé, two entities, Homme and Femme, are worshipped. In the sacred language of priests, Homme means god and Femme means goddess. The priests teach that humans were created in their image; Homme created men and Femme created women. Homme represents the cycle of life, birth and death, pain and healing. He is a strong protector, caring for the creatures that he and Femme have birthed. Homme's alignment is Lawful Neutral and his clerics can be LG, LN, NG and N. His domains are Healing, Destruction, Protection and Knowledge.

Femme represents everything between life and death, the changing aspects of life, the sustenance needed to live and the succor that is provided when you die. She is the separate parts that make the whole. She is the energy needed to live. Femme's alignment is Chaotic Neutral and her priests can be NG, N, CG and CN. Her domains are Air, Earth, Fire, Water, Plant, Animal and Sun.

There is just one holy symbol for both entities, as it is believed that neither can exist without the other. It is called the Cambiux and its layout is just like the Ying-Yang. The line that divides the two halves of the Cambiux is gray with the outside circle showing the colors of the rainbow.

Ezimele (LE) and the other Njelix were the first creatures birthed by Homme and Femme. These powerful beings live in Coeli and are entrusted to the care of the souls. Since the beginning of time, the Njelix have been responsible for the process that will guide a soul to become a Njelix. However, Ezimele wanted to decide who should become one of them and who should not. He was not alone in his thoughts and soon the Coeli was divided into two factions. One faction was led by Azuzeth (LG), who said that every creature must

decide, by the way they live, what will become of their soul, and that decision was theirs alone. Ezimele's point was that they should select the best souls, to his way of thinking, to become Njelix and let the others fade to nothingness. This dispute erupted into civil war. It ended when Ezimele and his legion were thrown from Coeli. Ezimele and his legion settled far from Coeli in a place now known as Nove Circulae. It is said that it is a place of strife, deception, hunger and despair. Still, they keep together because their hatred to their othertime brethren is stronger.

Ezimele is very powerful Njelix but he's not a god. He maintains a strict code of obedience on his Circula Negrus, which is comprised of 13 of the original Njelix. In turn, these Njelix maintain order within their own battalions. It is almost impossible to keep order in the lower ranks. Ezimele and his legion try to lure souls to Nove Circulae to increase their numbers and power and one day have vengeance on Azuzeth and her followers. Priest that pray to Ezimele do not receive spells from him. They receive it through the combined power of the damonica, as Ezimele and his group are collectively known. Only Ezimele is aware that he needs the collective power of his supporters to grant spells. Clerics that follow Ezimele can be LN, LE, NE, CN and CE. The domains to which they have access are Trickery, War, Evil, Strength and Destruction. Ezimele's weapon is Crepusculo, a spear. The symbol used by these clerics is a circle that is mostly black with a white crescent shape on the lower side.

Azuzeth is the leader of the benedici and the sworn enemies of the damonica. She is also the leader of the Circula Bianca, which is comprised of the other 13 original Njelix. She is always accompanied by Aurora, her longsword. Clerics of Homme and Femme usually become proficient in the longsword out of respect for Azuzeth.

An important point is that Homme and Femme don't take part in the struggle between the two factions. There is a lot of speculation in the church as to why Homme and Femme haven't just wiped the damonica. No one knows why and it may be that no one will ever know.

For game effects, Njelix are treated as celestials. The 28 original Njelix are the equivalent of Solars. Each is unique, with different powers and personalities. Azuzeth and Ezimele are the most powerful. The ranks of their legion are comprised of the other types of celestials. Unlike the description of Celestials in the MM, all Njelix resemble winged humans; otherwise they have the same abilities described in the MM. The one aspect that differentiates the damonica from the pure Njelix is that their nails are black. The exception, of course, are lantern celestials. They still appear as balls of light, but those under the damonica lanterns don't throw a shadow.

## ISABEL DE SARGAS

### Lord of San Bartolomé

**Female harpy Brd 10:** CR 18; Medium-sized Monstrous Humanoid; HD 7d8+10d6+17; hp 83; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30', fly 80' (average); AC 16 (+1 Dex, +5 natural); Atk Melee +14/+9/+4, or 2 claws melee +9 (1d3 + wounding); SA Captivating song, bardic music, spell use, alter self; SQ Immune to life/soul trapping, death and electricity, bardic knowledge, regenerates 1 hp per 4 points of electricity damage dealt to her, create spawn; SV Fort +6, Ref +13, Will +15; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 15, Wis 16, Cha 18.

*Skills and Feats:* Bluff +16, Escape Artist +10, Hide +10, Listen +15, Move Silently +10, Perform (ballad, dirge, flute, epic, ode) +19, Sense Motive +12, Spot +10; Alertness, Dodge, Fly-by Attack, Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (perform)

*Spells:* 3/4/4/3/1; *Known* 6/4/4/4/2; 0—*Daze, Detect Magic, Flare, Ghost sound, Light, Mage Hand*; 1st—*Cure light wounds, Protection from good, Sleep, Summon Monster I*; 2nd—*Enthrall, Soundburst, Summon Monster II, Tongues*; 3rd—*Confusion, Emotion, Lesser Geas, Summon Monster III*; 4th—*Dominare, Shout*.

*Possessions:* Isabel owns several magical items that she has collected from would-be hunters or kept from her previous life. These include a *longsword +1, shock spear, crossbow of frost* and 2 *daggers +2 of feebleness*. (On a successful hit, the victim must make a Fortitude save or lose 1 point of strength. Lost points return at the rate of 1 per hour). She also possesses a *flute of lamentation*. Once per day, all creatures within 60 feet of Isabel must make a Will save or fall subject to the magic in the music. The effects are identical to *symbols of discord* or *hopelessness*; Isabel can choose which. This spell functions as if cast by an 18th level wizard.

### Background

The true power of the island is held by Isabel de Sargas. She is 31 years old now, a bard by nature and a beast by choice. Isabel was beautiful and talented since she was a little girl. She charmed her way into other people's affections and always got what she wanted. She had suitors a plenty, which she saw as mere toys, tools to obtain the luxuries of life. Until she met Fernando. Fernando was a monk in Porta Coeli and wouldn't offer anything but spiritual advice. None of the charms that worked with everyone else seemed to work with Fernando. His only goal was to attain self-perfection to enable his soul to become a Njelx. Isabel's was obsessed with trying to make Fernando reciprocate the

feelings she felt for him. It occurred to her that if she made Fernando believe that she was a Njelx, he would love her as she loved him.

Ezime! heard her plea. During her dreams, the dark Njelx whispered to her that, for a price, he could make her into a Njelx. Isabel refused his bargain at first. She didn't know what consequences or price she would end up paying. As time passed and Fernando continued to spurn her, she finally decided to become a Njelx. Ezime! taught her a magical ritual that he said would transform her. The ritual took many months to prepare, but it seemed to be a complete success. When the transformation was completed Isabel saw a creature of pure beauty, a creature that made her cry with pure joy. Pearly white wings grew from the unblemished skin on her back, her voice was like the sound of a nightingale and her smell that of orchids in bloom. She flew to Fernando, to her love, to a life of happiness and joy. Instead she found damnation.

When she got to Fernando's room she told him that she had been sent to test him, that all of her advancements on him had been to judge his soul so that he could become a Njelx. She also told him that she had fallen in love with him during that time and that they will be together in Coeli for eternity. The delighted priest yielded to her embrace. As the sun rose, the two lovers opened their eyes, and Isabel felt as if her body became suddenly lighter. When Fernando looked at Isabel, she saw the horror in his face. As her hand raised to his cheek to ask what was happening, she saw a reflection of herself. Her hands were now wicked claws and her wings had become batlike. Her lower half was a nightmare come true. What she had thought were loving strokes on Fernando's cheek, were actually her talons ripping his flesh apart. For a moment she saw everything from above, as though her spirit had ascended from her body, and then a strange mist covered San Bartolomé and dragged her back to reality.

### Current Sketch

Since that day Isabel has hated the church, the organization that didn't let her attain happiness. She also knows that her gift is her curse. She will be hunted if seen by anyone. Even worse is the fact that she won't be able to use men as she had previously, to get food, clothing, and all the things to which she was accustomed. The fact that she could summon an image of her former self for a few minutes at a time chafes her more than it provides comfort.

Isabel obtained a house close to the sea in Villa de la Aguada. She manages a fishing boat from the house and by using other harpies to harass the competition, has managed to make a decent living. Her reputation as a short-tempered loner are legendary so most people leave her alone. At night she prowls the city, hunting

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT PLACES

lovers that are secretly trysting. If she catches them, the man will be scarred for life and the woman may be transformed into a harpy. She is using the profits from her company to try to overthrow the church from the seat of power. Of course, her curse is that she will never be able to do so. Such is the fate of the damned!

### Closing the Borders

Isabel's influence is carried five miles from the shores of the island. When she wishes to seal the borders, a storm breaks, making sea travel and flight impossible.

### Combat

Isabel dislikes melee and will use her abilities (spells, bardic music) to make her enemies turn away. If she is forced into combat, she will take to the sky. By using the fly-by feat she can attack and fly away before her enemy has time to react. When she carries her spear, her dive attack counts as a charge.

Isabel is immune to *Trap the Soul* and similar spells or psionic powers, as well as any Death Spell or psionic power. Unknown to Isabel, the price she paid to become a "Njelx" was her own soul and as such, this magic is harmless to her. She can be overcome in battle but her body will regenerate within the ten day no matter what actions are taken to destroy it.

The only way to destroy her is to find her soul (hidden somewhere in Nove Circulae) and return it to her body. Also, Isabel will only age to be forty-five years old. After that age she will not accrue the age based penalties on Str, Dex and Con. She will obtain the benefits of age accrual at the rate of an elf.

**Alter Self (Sp):** This functions exactly as the spell cast by a 20th level wizard with one exception: the light of sunrise or sunset will dispel the magic. Isabel uses this spell to run her business. However, a week before the anniversary of Fernando's death, Isabel finds a man that looks like Fernando. She is driven to seduce him, and on the anniversary night, she replays the scene again. Such men are either left dead or terribly scarred and traumatized for the rest of their lives. The unwelcome memories are not pleasant for Isabel either.

**Create Spawn (Su):** Women disabled (-1 to -9 hp) by Isabel's natural attacks, will change into harpies (1d12 hours) under her control (if they don't die first). She can create up to twice her level (as a bard) plus her Charisma modifier in Hit Die of harpies (i.e. 24 HD, or 3 slightly above-average harpies). If she surpasses her limit, the oldest harpy becomes disabled and turns to her original form and then die in 1d4 days.

#### Options:

- ❖ Magic wielding characters might determine their spell DC using the following formula: 10 + spell level + ability modifier + 1/4 caster level (rounded down) + any miscellaneous modifiers. The reason for this is that the stronger (meaning higher level) the caster is the more difficult it becomes to resist their magic.
- ❖ Racial weapons are treated as martial weapons for members of the relevant race. For example, the dwarven waraxe is a martial weapon for dwarves and an exotic weapon for all other races.
- ❖ If psionics are allowed in your campaign use a similar DC as the one for the spell casters: 10 + power level + ability modifier + 1/4 manifester level (rounded down) + miscellaneous modifier.





# ISLE OF RAVENS

## A DOMAIN OF DARK-WINGED SKIES

by Nathan Okerlund  
sealionii@hotmail.com



*where is my lover  
Who went to the battle?  
O where is my lover  
Who went to the war?  
The ravens have found him;  
They feast on his sweet eyes,  
And bathe in the pool  
Of his sword-spilt gore.*

The young woman singing sat at the window of the tower, staring out at the sea raging against the cliffs at the tower's foot. Flakes of snow drifted through the window on the eddying air, spangling the lady's white arms and black hair, where they clung for long minutes before melting.

She paid no attention to the snow, despite the fact that she was clad only in a simple, sleeveless black gown clasped at the shoulders; her face was as blank as the tower walls as she stared out at the ravens playing in the storm. They swooped and dove, at times coming so close to the tower that it seemed inevitable they would strike it headlong—but catching themselves at the last moment, they whirled away to form battalions and divisions and engage in mock combat in the air.

At last one of their number swooped to the window and alighted, cocking a bright eye at the lady—an eye glittering with more than avian intelligence. The woman leaned forward, her attention fixed on the bird; from their expressions, an observer might almost believe that the bird was about to convey some message to the woman in black. Opening its mouth, the raven cawed hoarsely; the woman leaned back, her face growing slack, as if in some deep disappointment. Smiling sadly, she held out her hand to the great black bird; it stepped forward onto the outstretched hand and seemed to bow to her.

“I know, my dear,” the lady said quietly. “Men approaching from the south-east, isn't that what you were about to tell me?”

The raven clapped its beak and cawed again, then took wing and flew across the chamber. Coming to rest on a bust of Athena set above the door of the chamber, it turned its attention to preening itself.

The woman followed it with her eyes, her hands gripping at her gown; standing, she addressed it again, her face distorted by some inner despair.

“Speak!” she whispered harshly. “Why don't you speak to me?”

The raven gave her a disinterested glance, then turned back to a careful rearranging of a few feathers strayed out place. Satisfied at last, the bird took wing from its perch above the door and darted through the window to join its fellows outside.

For a moment the woman stood, shaking, her hands grasping aimlessly; then she composed herself, a blank mask of impassivity falling over her countenance. Without another word she passed through the chamber door and began to descend the stair, going to receive her visitors.

## ISLE OF RAVENS

### The Land

The Isle of Ravens is a small island, only about a mile square, set in the Nocturnal Sea. The island is heavily forested; the undergrowth is dense, and broken only by a few clearings and numerous small streams.

The only sign of human habitation is the single tower which dominates the island—a tower made entirely of flint, towering some four hundred feet into the air, whose top is hidden in the almost continual shroud of fog which lies over the island. The climate is extremely damp and cool, with rain falling almost daily in all seasons, occasionally turning to snow in winter months.

### Cultural Level

Classical

### The Folk

The Isle of Ravens apparently has only one human inhabitant—a petite young woman with a pale complexion and black hair and eyes. The most visible inhabitants are the thousands of ravens which swarm

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT PLACES

the island, generally clustered around the tower, but ranging several miles out to sea as the whimsy takes them.

The island is also haunted by fey spirits and elemental creatures, but they have been seen only by a few of those who have visited the island and their existence is not widely known.

### The Law

The Isle of Ravens is ruled at the whim of the nameless lady in black; the ravens and her summoned minions obey any instruction she may give them.

In addition to the elemental and fey creatures currently bound to the service of the Lady of Ravens, several similar creatures have escaped her service and roam the island. These creatures are free-willed and do as they please, but they too live in mortal fear of the woman in black.

### Native Player Characters

There are no native player characters from the Isle of Ravens.

### Encounters

Encounters with the ubiquitous ravens are certain to occur (100% chance) during the daytime; the ravens will almost never attack directly (1% chance), but will make nuisances of themselves by stealing food and small items. (However, if the adventurers tire of the ravens' games and try to kill them off, they may provoke an attack en masse.)

Encounters with the creatures summoned by the Lady of Ravens may occur both day and night (20% chance, checking four times per day).

## THE LADY OF RAVENS

### Lord of the Isle of Ravens

**Human Female Sor18:** CR 18; Medium-sized Humanoid (human), HD 18d4+36; hp 81; Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Atk +7/+2 melee, +10/+5 missile; AL NE; SV Fort +7, Ref +6, Will +13; Str 7, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 22.

*Skills and Feats:* Bluff +11, Concentration +23, Diplomacy +10, Intimidate +11, Knowledge (outsiders) +5, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Knowledge (fey) +5, Knowledge (folklore) +9, Knowledge (Ravenloft) +5, Knowledge (nobility) +9, Spellcraft +16; Extend Spell, Heighten Spell, Improved Initiative, Quicken Spell, Still Spell, Silent Spell, Spell Focus (Enchantment), Spell Penetration.

*Spells:* (6/8/8/7/7/7/6/5/3)

*Spells known:* (9/5/5/4/4/4/3/3/2/1) 0—*dancing lights, detect magic, flare, ghost sounds, light, mage hand, prestidigitation, read magic, resistance*; 1<sup>st</sup>—*charm person, comprehend languages, enlarge, shield, summon monster I*; 2<sup>nd</sup>—*detect thoughts, invisibility, rope trick, summon monster II, summon swarm*; 3<sup>rd</sup>—*fly, hold person, suggestion, summon monster III*; 4<sup>th</sup>—*charm monster, improved invisibility, polymorph other, summon monster IV*; 5<sup>th</sup>—*conjure elemental, dominate person, teleport, telekinesis*; 6<sup>th</sup>—*disintegrate, geas, monster summoning VI*; 7<sup>th</sup>—*power word, stun, summon monster VII, vanish*; 8<sup>th</sup>—*maze, symbol*; 9<sup>th</sup>—*power word, kill*.

### Background

The Lady of Ravens was born into a noble family on an unknown Prime Material world, only child of a degenerate line whom inbreeding and isolation had brought to the point of madness. Her home was a massive, decaying castle, most of it no longer maintained, abandoned to the ghosts of past generations and the ravages of time. She grew up alone and mostly in silence; her mother had died before she could speak and her father rarely spoke to her or to anyone else, wandering the halls of the castles in silence like his ghostly ancestors or dreaming the days away in narcotic-induced visions. The servants who fed and clothed her spoke to her but little as well; the social gulf between them forbade casual conversation, and the young girl was aloof and disdainful by nature. Her experience and her personality both taught her that those around her were not her equals, and she largely ignored them except when giving orders.

In this intense isolation her only real companions were the ravens who made their home in the Tower of Flint, a towering structure dominating the center of the castle. She, like all of her house, was gifted with the ability to speak with the birds of the tower, and they became her friends and confidantes. Even as a child she would steal away to the tower and spend hours telling the ravens stories she had read in books and hearing their stories in return.

Under such circumstances it is, perhaps, not so surprising that she came to believe that her world was literally constructed to please her whims. Her father's servants did all in their power to comply with her wishes; the ravens believed her stories implicitly; her father seemed to live in a world of his own making; and she herself knew so little of the world outside the castle that she took the fairy tales of her childhood to be unvarnished truth. She was hardly surprised at all when she discovered that she could summon playmates from nothing and dismiss them when she tired of their company, or bend the servants' will to her own, or change a disliked meal into something more palatable;

she took it as natural that the world should conform to her wishes, and perhaps that faith made her strange power over the world around her all the greater.

It is also, perhaps, not so surprising that she should come to feel that she must, necessarily, have anything she desired to have or be the best at anything she desired to do. When she was only eleven years old, she heard the beauty of one of the servant girls compared favorably to her own; determined that no one in her domain should be more beautiful than she herself, she laid a trap for the girl so exalted above herself. Climbing among the towers and roofs of the castle was a principle pastime of the children of the castle, and the young girl she had marked for revenge was among the most agile of the climbers; one day, the Lady of Ravens joined the games of the rest of the castle's children and challenged her rival to walk the parapet of one of the towers of the keep. The challenge was accepted and the girl walked most of the length of the parapet quickly and nimbly; but just as she reached the far end two ravens leapt into the air at her very feet, startling her so that she fell into the courtyard some fifty feet below and died. It soon became understood in the castle that any criticism of its future mistress would be punished in strange and unforeseen ways, and the servants of the castle grew eager to avoid any contact with their strange and vengeful charge.

After the death of her father when she was in her late teenage years, the Lady became even more reclusive, retiring to the Tower of Flint (which had been unoccupied, save by the ravens, for generations) to live in the company of the ravens. At first, her visits to the castle outside were only sporadic, but on one of these rare excursions through the castle that the Lady saw one of the children she had despised so long ago, now grown into a young man; he was just of her own age and of extraordinary grace and bearing, cheerful and well-spoken, admired by everyone in the castle.

The Lady of Ravens, isolated from any real human contact for so long, promptly fell desperately in love with him; more and more often she left her sanctuary in the tower, hoping to catch a glimpse of him and following him covertly when she found him. Narcissistic as she was, she imagined that he must love her, and his apparent indifference she put down to shyness or reserve.

Not long afterwards the young man was called away to war, and for two years the Lady of Ravens suffered, imagining her loved one would never return, or engrossed in bittersweet daydreams of him dying on some foreign field of battle with her name on his lips. When castle gossip confirmed he would return, she fainted away from nervous excitement. Convinced he was returning to make her his, she awaited his coming with anticipation so intense that she could neither eat nor sleep for three days prior to his arrival.

On the day he arrived, she took a place where she could see the returning soldiers; immediately, she picked him out, and her heart thrilled to see him well and handsome as ever. Her excitement was chilled, however, when she saw him leap from his horse and take a serving girl into his arms. Her suspicions roused, she followed the happy couple as they sought a secluded spot, where she heard them exchange vows of undying love and plan their marriage.

On hearing this, the Lady of Ravens knew her love was unrequited, and she was consumed by the desire to destroy the woman who had stolen her love and the man who had been unworthy of her. Returning to the tower, she whipped the ravens into a murderous frenzy and sent them forth to kill the young man and his lover; she watched from the tower as the deed was done, then hid herself in the depths of the tower, weeping and raging over the betrayal of her love.

When she emerged days later, she found the Tower of Flint set on an island in the middle of the sea; the surrounding castle and servants had disappeared, and she was absolutely alone. She saw the ravens of the Tower around her; she called to them, but they made no reply. Soon she learned that she could control them by an act of will, but no longer did they speak with her or tell her their stories. Stranger still, she could no longer remember her name or the name of the castle of which she had been mistress.

The Mists of Ravenloft had claimed another for their own.

### Current Sketch

The Lady of Ravens is a small woman, no more than five feet in height and petite; her hair and eyes are black, her skin white as milk. She always dresses in a simple, sleeveless black gown clasped at both shoulders; she usually wears her long hair caught up in combs on her head. Her features are regular and even beautiful, her expression and demeanor regal and aloof. She almost never expresses emotion in the presence of other human beings, displaying a complete and unnerving indifference to others more frightening in its way than rage or malice would be. When she does show her emotions, they are of almost superhuman intensity; her anger is terrifying, her smile entrancing, her despair unnerving. Her charisma is such that she can dominate almost any group by sheer force of personality; attacking her or even disobeying her orders is well-nigh inconceivable for most people. She is absolutely indifferent to other humans, regarding them as nuisances or tools, depending on the circumstances.

Her deep and impartial callousness is only broken when she is in the presence of the ravens of the island. She regards them as her true family and her only pleasure is to watch them at play in the air above her

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT PLACES

island. However, even this pleasure is turned has been made bitter by the curse of the Dark Powers: she can no longer communicate with the ravens in any way. The ravens are under her absolute control; she can see through their eyes and speak with their mouths—but the ravens are now part of herself, and she can no more communicate with them than she could with her hand or her eye. The Lady of Ravens is desperately isolated without the contact of the only friends she has ever accepted, and she strives ceaselessly to break the barrier between herself and the ravens and communicate with them as friends and equals again.

The Lady of Ravens believes that the key to her inability to talk with the ravens stems from having forgotten her name; since the ability to communicate with the ravens was a legacy of her ancestors, if she can re-establish her ancestry she will learn how to speak with the birds again. Whether this is true or not, no one in Ravenloft knows anything of her family, so she is destined to search in vain.

If the Lady of Ravens encounters a person or group of people whom she regards as well-read or capable of accessing unusual sources of information, she may decide to send them out to search for her name rather than transforming them to avian form. She will usually lay a *geas* on the individual or the party; if she feels some extra inducement is needed for a group of searchers, she may polymorph one of the group to raven form and hold him as a hostage, making an agreement to change him back if the rest of the group will search for her name for a set period of time (usually a year and a day).

Despite her alignment she takes such an agreement very seriously and will hold to the letter of any bargain she makes. Past searchers have brought her a bewildering variety of tomes, parchments, and papers which she has pored over meticulously; from this library (now quite extensive) she has learned more than most about the Demiplane of Dread, most particularly its folklore and its noble families. (She has concentrated her reading on those topics since she believes they have the greatest chance of giving some clue to her identity).

In addition to the ravens, the Lady of Ravens has, at times, summoned various elemental and fey creatures to her service. Some of these creatures are still in her service; others have escaped, had their term of indenture expire, or have been forgotten, and these creatures, unable to return to their planes of origin, still wander the island. Three invisible stalkers and one grave elemental roam the Tower of Flint, obedient to the whims of the Lady; the island is also home to several corrupted elemental kin. Mist sylphs (from the Book of Shadows) are often encountered; corrupted naiads and dryads also lurk in the streams and forests of the island.

Even though these creatures are no longer bound by magical ties to the Lady of Ravens, they fear her and will certainly not act directly against her.

In addition to these creatures, the Tower of Flint is also home to several ghosts bound to the Tower, all of whom predate the Tower's arrival in Ravenloft; they recognize the Lady of Ravens as one of their own, a rightful inhabitant, and will take a dim view of interlopers attacking her.

### Combat

The Lady of Ravens has no interest in combat; if she doesn't want to deal with a group or believes they have no relevant information she will use her mass polymorph ability to turn them into ravens, only leaving one of their number in human form and sending him to warn others away from her island. This ability is quite simple: once per day she may cause any and all persons she can see to make a Will saving throw at DC 25 or be transformed into a raven. There is no maximum number that can be affected, and she may elect to have the spell affect some people and not others. If she is unaware of a person (for example, due to invisibility) this ability does not affect that person. Persons transformed to ravens in this fashion instantly fall under the control of the Lady of Ravens.

If her polymorph is not completely effective and the rest of her opponents continue to attack she will teleport away and send her summoned minions to deal with the player characters, possibly engaging in combat from long distance with spell abilities. If actually forced to engage in hand-to-hand combat she will employ a final ability: the ability to transform others into ravens by touch. This requires a successful role to hit and counts as a touch attack; a Will saving throw against DC 25 will prevent the transformation.

If slain in combat the Lady of Ravens will disappear; one week later at sunrise one of the ravens circling the tower will swoop to the floor of the highest room in the tower and transform into a petite woman with black hair and eyes and white skin. During that week the border will remain open and the Lady's summoned minions will be under no authority; they may attack, flee, or ignore the party as circumstances seem to warrant.

### Closing the Borders

When the Lady of Ravens closes the borders of her domain, the ravens will flock to the domain border, about one mile out to sea, and attack without mercy any creature crossing the border of the domain. There are so many of the ravens that no effective defense can be made; players caught in the frenzied attack of the birds

will take 5–20 hit points of damage each round unless they turn back.

### Further Reading

*Domains of Dread* contains a brief description of the Isle of Ravens and its darklord.

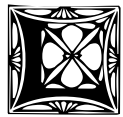


# LOCKNAR COVE

## A LAND OF UNREACHABLE RICHES

by Stephen C. Suffon  
stephencsuffon@hotmail.com

### THE LAND



Locknar Cove lies on the coast of the Nocturnal Sea, nestled between the borders of Nova Vassa, Necropolis and the western border of Liffe. Locknar Cove emerged in the border ethereal more than a century ago, though it only attached itself to the Core in the year 753, two years after the Nocturnal Sea appeared. The cove itself is a semi-circular gouge where the ocean has eroded the land into a sandy beach. The land slopes into the ocean at a sharp decline, making the entire area into a natural harbour. The domain is mostly ocean, extending into the sea to encompass a scattering of sizable islands. The deep waters are cold all year round, but are stocked with a wide variety of fish.

The weather of Locknar Cove is cold all year long, with short springs and summers, and mild winters. The skies above the domain are almost always clouded over, perpetually shrouded by the brewing storm that only occasionally yields an icy deluge in the winter months. A thin layer of mist blankets the seas in the evening and early morning before being boiled away by the thin rays of the noon sun. Nights are long and cold, often leaving a layer of frost on every surface, even in the summer months. The weather has spawned the growth of a significant cottage industry in the domain, based on quilting and clothing of surprising quality.

The vast majority of the population of the domain is situated in the village of Rutledge, the domain's only settlement. Rutledge has grown around the fishing port that supplies the village with the majority of its food and a base for trade. The buildings are built out of stone and mortar, most of which date back to before the formation of the domain.

The western border of the domain is made of thick, old growth forest. The woods are nearly impenetrable and are thinly stocked with game, thus they have remained unfamiliar to the majority of villagers. Less than half a dozen woodsmen and hermits have any familiarity with the forests, most villagers avoid the woods with an unusual amount of concern. The forest is trisected by two ancient roads, each of which lead to

one of the two neighboring domains. The roads date back far beyond the creation of the domain, their origins lost to the passage of time.

From the fog-shrouded ocean rise the Dismal Four, four islands that loom on the edge of the domain like portents of disaster. Of the Dismal Four, none have been populated since the formation of the domain. The smallest island is less than half a mile from the shore, only two hundred yards in diameter. The remains of an abandoned lighthouse towers over the little island, taking up most of its surface. Two other islands lie several miles off of the coast, though they are little more than barren rocks jutting out from the sea. The fourth and biggest island is two miles in diameter and thickly forested. The island had a natural beach on its western side and slopes into the sea at a sharp angle, making it fit for landing all manner of boats. This island's forest hides the remains of a settlement upon the island.

### Cultural Level

Renaissance.

### The Folk

The inhabitants of Locknar Cove are of light skin, dark hair and medium build. The local tongue is similar to that spoken on Graben Island, with a great many words taken from the languages of Nova Vaasa and Necropolis. The villagers are more sophisticated than most other peasants, but they are also very conservative and superstitious. The men of Locknar Cove follow the old tradition of their forefathers, fishing the chilling waters. The women are mostly housewives, but it is they who are responsible for the village's most important trading goods. The little domain has become known as the source for some of the highest quality clothing and quilting in the Core. Half a dozen merchants from Liffe, Nova Vaasa and Necropolis import the goods into their own domains, where they fetch high prices.

Rutledge has a population of two hundred and fifty men, women and children. The villagers live long lives

but the birthrate is low. Most of the villagers of Rutledge are 1st level commoners; there are thirty experts between first and fourth levels and two adepts of first and second level. One in ten men have trained sufficiently to gain a single level in the warrior class.

## Native Player Characters

The population of Locknar Cove is completely made up of humans, many of who have never seen a member of a different race. Player characters native to Locknar Cove can use smoke-powder weapons as though they were martial weapons due to their familiarity with such weapons. Characters from Locknar Cove should possess some ranks in Rope Use, Craft (ship-maker), or in some nautical profession, such as Fisherman or Ship-hand.

## Personalities of Note

Eward Durkins

**Male Human Expert level 5:** CR 5; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 5d6+5 (23); Init +0; Spd 30ft; AC 10; Atk +3; AL LG; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +6; Str 12, Dex 11, Con 13, Int 13, Wiz 15, Chr 14. Height 5 ft. 5 in.

*Skills and Feats:* Appraise +6, Bluff +10, Craft (brewer) +7, Craft (cook) +7, Diplomacy +10, Gather Information +7, Innuendo +7, Knowledge (local) +8, Listen +8, Profession (fisherman) +7, Profession (innkeeper) +7, Sense Motive +7; Iron Will, Martial Weapon Proficiency (Musket), Skill Focus (Diplomacy).

*Possessions:* Musket, 20 bullets.

Eward Durkins is the current mayor of Rutledge, the fifty-year-old owner of the village's only inn and tavern. Durkins is a retired fisherman and has been mayor for fifteen years running. He is respected for his wisdom, though many of the younger generation dislike his slow and conservative approach to government.

Francis Stewart

**Male Human Fighter level 6:** CR 6; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 6d10+12 (45); Init +2; Spd 30ft; AC 14 (touch 12, flatfooted 12); Atk +9/+3 melee (1D8+3/19–20, +1 sabre) or +8/+2 ranged (1D12/\*3, musket) or +8/+2 ranged (1D10/\*3, pistol); AL LG; SV Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +3; Str 14, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 12, Wiz 13, Chr 12. Height 5 ft. 11 in.

*Skills and Feats:* Climb +11, Ride +11, Search +5, Spot +5; Dodge, Expertise, Leadership, Mobility, Mounted Combat, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Ride by Attack.

*Possessions:* Leather armour, *Sabre +1*, Musket, pistol, 35 bullets, 10 silver bullets, whalebone dagger.

Francis Stewart is the head of the Rutledge Militia. A retired Necropolian soldier who moved his family from Nevuchar Springs to Locknar Cove for reasons he has yet to share. Stewart is otherwise open with the other villagers and has their full trust; having proved himself in the few crises the village has befallen since its relocation to Ravenloft. Stewart has trained his fellow villagers in the use of firearms and other weapons.

William Copperplate

**Male Human Rogue level 6:** CR 6; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 6d6+6 (30); Init +0; Spd 30ft; AC 10; Atk +4 melee (1d6/18–20 +1 rapier) or +5 ranged (1D8/19–20 crossbow); SA Sneak Attack +3d6; SQ Evasion, Detect Traps, Uncanny Dodge; AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +4; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 15, Wiz 14, Chr 10. Height 5 ft. 3 in.

*Skills and Feats:* Move Silently +8, Hide +8, Climb +7, Disable Device +10, Listen +12, Open Lock +10, Search +10, Spot +12, Pickpocket 10, Bluff +7, Decipher script +8; Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Lightning Reflexes.

*Possessions:* Rapier, dagger, light crossbow (20 bolts).

William Copperplate is a hermit who lives on the Northern edge of the Cove. The old man is more than a century old, yet he only appears to in his sixties. Despite his unnatural longevity, Copperplate is well beyond his prime; pink, wrinkled skin, a round body and a stooped posture have characterized him to the locals for as long as the domain has existed. In a time long past, Copperplate served as a crewman onboard the privateer ship *The Grasping Claw*. On his occasional forays into town, Copperplate attempts to recruit groups of adventurers to explore the largest island of the Dismal Four. He has only succeed once, collecting a group of travelers and departing into the fog of the Nocturnal Sea, only to return alone and empty handed. The laws of Locknar Cove protect Copperplate from the accusations of the villagers, though none of them will have anything to do with the old man or anyone he recruits for the next foray into the mists.

## The Law

Locknar Cove is ruled by direct democracy. Each male villager over the age of sixteen has a vote in the village assembly. Laws are written into the town charter, which dates back to the time just shortly after the formation of the domain. Each year, the assembly elects a mayor

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT PLACES

from one of their number. It is the mayor's job to act as the executive for the village, though this is in effect a part-time job. The mayor also acts as judge of the village's court, mediating disputes and keeping the peace. A militia made up of all males of voting age is all that protects Locknar Cove from danger. The militia is far from a pushover for its members are well trained and are armed with a large store of firearms and other assorted weapons.

### Encounters

The land around the cove is sparsely populated, with only a single pack of wolves and a handful of assorted game animals to fill the forest. The coast is populated with a variety of coldwater fishes and crustaceans. Orca whales migrate through the area during the period between fall and winter. During this time sharks have been known to follow the whales through the cove. The remains of the lighthouse on the smallest island of the Dismal Four is known to be haunted by a malevolent spirit of unknown origin.

Once each year, on the last day of the first month of spring, the ghostly crew of *The Grasping Claw* rise from their graves and seek out their hidden treasure on the largest island of the Dismal Four. During this time the ghosts search for living souls near to their island, hoping to ease the pain of eternal death with the anguish of living victims.

## CAPTAIN ANTON DUSARD

### Lord of Locknar Cove

**Male human, Ftr 10:** CR 12 Medium-sized Undead (Incorporeal, Ghost); HD 10D12 (85); Init +6, Spd 30 feet (fly); AC 12 ethereal, or 16 manifestation; Atk +14/+9 melee (1d8+5/17–20, +1 ghost touch sabre) or +12/+7 (1D4, incorporeal corrupting touch); SA Manifestation, Corrupting Touch, Horrific Appearance, Telekinesis, Base DC 19; SQ Undead, ethereal, rejuvenation, +4 turn resistance; AL LE; SV Fort NA, Ref +3, Will +3; Str 15, Dex 14, Con –, Int 14, Wiz 14, Chr 19. Height 6 ft. 4 in.

*Skills and Feats:* Bluff +10 Climb +8, Craft (Sailor) +10, Craft (Trap Maker) +8, Listen +6, Hide +10, Search +14, Spot +10; Cleave, Dodge, Great Cleave, Improved Initiative, Improved Critical (sabre), Leadership, Mobility, Power attack, Spring Attack, Weapon Focus (sabre), Weapon Specialization (sabre).

The ghost of Captain Anton Dusard has existed for more than one hundred years, trapped within the misty confines of his domain. He appears as a putrefied body, similar to the condition of his physical remains at the time of the domain's formation.

Empty eye-sockets gape from his bloated grey flesh; his face has decayed so that his lips have been twisted away from the skull in a sickening grin. Dusard is clothed in the same garb as he was at the time of his death, the high-collared coat and trousers of a ship captain, torn and frayed with age.

### Background

Anton Dusard grew up in the slums of a busy port, raised in the filthy underbelly of a wealthy kingdom. Living on the verge of starvation, Dusard learned to treasure gold over everything, including human life. When he reached the age of sixteen, Dusard betrayed his parents to their creditors and used the bounty to invest in a merchant ship.

Using murder and extortion, Dusard eliminated his partners and made himself captain of the ship, taking all of the profits for himself. The outbreak of war threatened to ruin his business, but Dusard was quick to convert his vessel into a privateer ship, rechristened under the name *Grasping Claw*. Through out the war, Dusard carved a bloody swath through the wealthy merchant ships of the rival kingdoms.

Over the years, Dusard accumulated a significant fortune, though his thirst for gold never slackened. As his nation's coffers emptied, Dusard's patron monarch sent tax collectors to siphon the flow of gold to the mercenary pirate. Dusard refused and became a renegade rather than yield his precious gold. Before fleeing for a foreign coast, Dusard bombarded and looted his homeport, sacking the very slums in which he was raised.

Captain Dusard sailed to his hidden strong hold in Locknar Cove, where he built a massive complex of traps inside the caves that riddled the largest Island of the Dismal Four. Dusard and his crew continued to prey on the hapless merchant ships of his home world's oceans, amassing a fabulous horde of treasure.

Before long, the disease of greed spread through his crew, and they began to plot against him. As the *Grasping Claw* sailed into Locknar Cove one misty night, the crew mutinied. The Captain had few supporters and the battle was short. Dusard fought with the fury of a devil, and in refusing to concede his riches, he ignited the ships powder magazine and blasted the *Grasping Claw* into splinters.

Dusard was thrown by the blast into the ocean, where his broken body floated amongst the burnt wreckage in the black seas. As the cold tide of death closed in, he watched helplessly as a single lifeboat sailed past him, carrying the sole survivor of the blast. At that moment Dusard called upon every ounce of his being, swearing to keep his treasure from beyond the grave. The mists slowly closed around his sinking body, even as his anguished cried echoed over the black sea.



## Current Sketch

Captain Dusard waits in the depths of his labyrinth, surrounded his countless riches and innumerable traps made from the remains of his betrayers and would be thieves. Though his fortress is nearly impenetrable, he can never rest his vigil. The dark powers have granted him the opportunity to guard his treasure from beyond the grave, though he will never be free from the threat of thieves. He is loath to leave his fortress, and only does so when someone has stolen from his horde.

Dusard is tortured with the threat that the secret of his treasure will be revealed. He is instantly aware of anyone in his domain that is aware of his treasure, though he does not know his or her location.

William Copperplate, the soul survivor of the Grasping Claw, has been trapped within the domain since its formation. Gifted with an unnatural lifespan, his own greed fuels his unending campaign for the hidden treasure within the island fortress. Captain Dusard has repelled three attempts by Copperplate and has sought him out several more times, but he has never been able to catch the aging thief.

Once a year, the Dark Powers allow the mutinous crew of The Grasping Claw to rise from their watery grave and seek out the gold that they were denied in life. Though they can penetrate the island fortress with ease, Dusard can banish each of them back to sea with but a single touch. They serve only as reminders to Dusard of his bloody past, and to spread misery across the misty cove.

## Closing the Borders

When Captain Dusard wills it, he can close the borders of his domain. The seas become dangerously turbulent and choked in impenetrable mists. Ships are thrown back by massive waves and flyers are forced into the ocean by gale-force winds. The forests that border the western border become twisted walls of gnarled wood and the roads twist upon themselves, leading back to the village of Rutledge.

## Combat

Dusard is brutal in combat, attacking with his sabre, relishing in the deaths of the intruders in his layer. He maintains the traps within his stronghold, utilizing his telekinesis and human remains to maintain a gauntlet of grizzly deathtraps and unholy puzzles. As a last resort, Dusard uses his horrific appearance ability, though manifesting this ability allows the spirits of his crew to rise from their graves, regardless of the time of year. These spirits race to his horde, hoping to plunder it in Dusard's absence. Thus he is loath to use the ability, unless his treasure is in true danger.

The only way to permanently destroy Dusard is to plunder the entirety of his horde, though this is no easy task. The treasure is well hidden in a plethora of vaults beneath the island. If even a single coin remains, Dusard can close the boarder and reform himself in a single night.



# UPIR LICHY

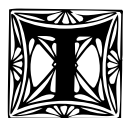
## A FROSTBITTEN VAMPIRE FROM THE FROZEN REACHES

by Eddy Brennan (The Lost Wiccan)

demongod@elhazard.net

### UPIR LICHY

<b>Climate/Terrain</b>	Vorostokov
<b>Frequency</b>	Very Rare
<b>Organization</b>	Solitary
<b>Activity Cycle</b>	Night
<b>Diet</b>	Heat
<b>Intelligence</b>	High (13–14)
<b>Treasure</b>	Ox4 or Z
<b>Alignment</b>	Chaotic Evil
<b>No. Appearing</b>	1
<b>Armor Class</b>	1
<b>Movement</b>	15, Burrow 9
<b>Hit Dice</b>	9+3
<b>THAC0</b>	11
<b>No. Attacks</b>	2
<b>Damage/Attack</b>	1d3+5
<b>Special Attacks</b>	Drain heat
<b>Special Defenses</b>	See below
<b>Magic Resistance</b>	See below
<b>Size</b>	M (6' tall)
<b>Morale</b>	Champion (15–16)
<b>XP Value</b>	9,000



he upir lichy is a feral, despicable looking man or woman with long talons and fangs. Wild hair sprouts from its head, back, shoulders and forearms and wrapped in ancient remains of clothing. Its eyes show intelligence, but no remorse or pity as it drains the life from its hapless victims. These corpses are left drained of all their body heat in the icy wastes of Vorostokov, a land caught in an eternal winter. Upir lichies are physically lean, malnourished and pale beyond that of any living thing.

### Combat

The wicked claws of the upir lichy are terrible even without the enhanced strength bestowed upon the beast by its close link to the Negative Energy plane. It attacks with these claws each round, inflicting 1d3+5 damage with each blow. Despite its weakness in life, undeath grants the upir lichy strength of 18/91. This modifies its attack rolls as well as damage, and has been factored

into the beast's statistics. In addition to the damage inflicted by its claws, a saving throw vs. paralyzation must be made or the victim suffers the loss a level of life energy. This draining is temporary, lost levels returning at the rate of one per day of complete rest. The drain also leaves the victim more exposed to the harsh climate, moving them up one category along the exposure and frostbite rules outlined in the Ravenloft module *Dark of the Moon* (see below).

The upir lichy is also able to perform a gaze attack with a range of fifteen feet up to three times each day, though this gaze does not charm, like that of a vampire. Instead, it causes paralyzing fear. A saving throw vs. paralyzation avoids this effect. Failure results in 1d4 rounds of paralysis. Luckily for its victims, the paralyzation inflicted by the upir lichy is not complete. The victim is still able to defend himself, albeit with a +4 penalty to his Armour Class and the loss of any bonus from a high Dexterity.

If the upir lichy is burrowing (movement rate of 9), it may detect the movements of those above the surface, allowing it to attack from underground with a –2 penalty. This inflicts a +2 penalty to its opponents' surprise rolls, and is cause for a Fear check. The upir lichy has many of the defenses possessed by vampires. It can be struck by silver, weapons forged from freshly heated iron, or weapons that are magically enchanted. If an upir lichy is impaled with an icicle, it is immobilized. Upir lichies are immune to all charm, sleep, hold, and all other mind- and life-affecting spells. They are also immune to all cold, ice, and frost related attacks.

Flame and heat spells captivate them for 2d4 rounds or for the duration of the spell, whichever is shorter, and inflict +1 damage per die. Upir lichies regenerate three hit points of damage per round unless the damage is inflicted by sunlight. Only half the damage they sustain from heat or fire may be regenerated.

Direct sunlight drains a Hit Die from upir lichies for each round they remain within it. If their Hit Dice are reduced to zero, they disintegrate into a chill mist that sinks into the snow. An upir lichy must then spend a week regenerating within its lair before rising once

more. Holy symbols of any good or neutral faith will inflict 1d6 damage to a upir lichy upon contact, as do holy water and other holy vestments. This derives from the creatures' incisive hatred for life and all that dwell within its warm embrace. Unholy water and symbols have an opposite effect, curing an upir lichy of 1d6 points of damage.

Standard mirrors will not hold an upir lichy at bay, but those composed of silver or ice will do so for 2d4 rounds. Also, any natural animal will distract an upir lichy, forcing it to give chase, though the creature will never risk its existence by doing so.

In addition to its primary, humanoid form, the upir lichy is able to take on other form of a winter wolf and frigid cloud of mist. The transformation has the effects of a *fear* spell upon those who witness it, and takes one minute to complete. During the transformation, all attacks against the upir lichy are made with a +4 bonus. The upir lichy's additional forms have the same statistics as its humanoid form, except where noted below:

**Winter Wolf:** MV 15; #AT 1,Dmg 4d8, SZ L.

**Chill Mist:** AC 3, MV 12, #AT Nil, Dmg Nil, SZ M.

The upir lichy may assume its mist form if it is reduced to zero hit points or less, or needs to return to its buried lair. Though the mist feels cold, it is harmless to creatures that pass through it. If it is injured while in mist form, the upir lichy is destroyed forever. In mist form, the creature's primary goal is to escape to its lair. If the lair is underground and within 100 feet, the upir lichy's mist form can seep through the snow and into its lair. Unlike vampires, no small cracks and spaces are required for the mist to pass through the earth, so long as the area is frozen.

An upir lichy may summon 2d4 winter wolves to come to its aid, which arrive in 1d10 rounds so long as any are within one mile. The wolves remain under the upir lichy's control for 2d4 rounds as long as they remain within fifty yards. After this period is over, they flee in terror from the upir lichy, frightened by its unnatural aura.

## Habitat/Society

The upir lichy is encountered only in the island domain of Vorostokov. The creature wanders the chill wastes and forests consumed with the thirst for warmth. This thirst may only be quenched if the upir lichy drains the body heat from living creatures, preferably deer, wolves, and other large prey.

These unusual vampires dwell in caves, buried deep in the snow or behind ancient avalanches, though

more accessible lairs are not unheard of. Upir lichies are not social creatures; they never enter human settlements if they can help it, preferring the deep wilderness.

## Ecology

The upir lichy is created when one of its humanoid victims is drained of its experience levels or dies from a loss of body heat. Even in these cases, however, the creature rises as an upir lichy only 15% of the time. Given this factor, the upir lichy remains a relatively rare strain of vampire.

Only several dozen of these creatures are known to be currently active or hibernating. How many others remain dormant and undiscovered is unknown.

Unlike other vampires that feed on blood or other physical parts of a victim's body, the upir lichy feeds on heat, requiring one experience level or Hit Die each day. If it is unable to obtain this energy, the upir lichy suffers a loss of 1d4 hit points, which cannot be recovered until the creature feeds again. This loss escalates by one hit point each consecutive day, until the upir lichy feeds or until its hit points reach zero, at which point it is forever destroyed.

Each upir lichy has unique weaknesses and allergens in addition to those already mentioned. One, for instance, may be paralyzed if impaled on a pine stake, while another may flee from the skull of one of its victims. A curious weakness has been described in an upir lichy known as Red Eye, named for its single, balefully glowing eye. The creature seems unable to remain in the presence of frozen animal meat. Though tracked on several occasions, its lair has yet to be found, but is said to be within days travel of Torgov. Red Eye is also said to be more powerful than its common kin, and is able to use its drain attack in any form.

The upir lichy shares a delicate relationship with another heat-draining breed of undead that dwells in Vorostokov, the dreaded arayashka. Though these creatures hold little or no respect for one another, they are known to band together on rare occasions to hunt prey that could be too powerful to face independently. These pacts are fragile at best and easy dissolve once a battle begins. An allied upir lichy and arayashka have a cumulative 10% chance of turning on one another each round of combat, beginning on the second round. Once a pact does dissolve, the undead will begin to attack each other, ignoring their true quarry as their greedy natures overtake them.

## Exposure and Frostbite

Any creature struck by an upir lichy may suffer more than a simple wound and loss of life energy. These

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT THINGS

creatures drain the body heat of their victims to feed. Any creature encountering an upir lichy, starts with an exposure of Protected, as described in the adventure *\_Dark of the Moon\_*. When a creature loses an experience level to the upir lichy's drain, they move up a category to Unprotected and suffer an additional 1d6 points of cold damage.

Unprotected creatures suffers 1d6 cumulative points of cold damage every six hours until they get indoors and warm, to a maximum of 3d6 damage every six hours. If another experience level is lost, the victim becomes Exposed and suffers another 1d6 cold damage and 2d6 cumulative cold damage every six hours, to a maximum of 6d6.

Creatures that lose additional experience levels after they become Exposed begin to suffer from Frostbite immediately. Frostbite inflicts 1d3 hit points of cold damage each hour, beginning at the end of the first hour of the affliction. Furthermore, Frostbitten creatures suffer a loss of 25% of their movement rate and a -2 penalty to their attack rolls and Armor Class.

At the end of each hour, the victim must make saving throw vs. breath weapon, or the damage they suffer each hour increases by 1d3 and the penalties by another 25% and -1 respectively.

Damage from exposure and frostbite may be healed through rest, but magical healing only restores one hit point per die in the case of effects inflicted by an upir lichy. All damage inflicted by exposure and frostbite may only be healed through rest at a rate of one point per hour for exposure and one point for every eight hours with frostbite. Twelve hours of rest in a warm environment, such as a building with a roaring hearth, will remove the effects of exposure or frostbite. Such an environment will also reduce the damage inflicted every six hours by exposure by 1d6. However, if a creature leaves such an environment before the effects of exposure or frostbite are removed, the effects return until the creature spends another twelve consecutive hours in a warm environment.

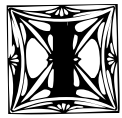


# NOISES IN THE NIGHT

## THE BOGEYMAN OF THE REALM OF DREAD

by Ryan Naylor

[ryan@kargafane.com](mailto:ryan@kargafane.com)



In many cultures across the Material Plane, the natural world is referred to as a single living consciousness—Mother Nature, Brahman or the Spirit of the Land. Although this great mind relies on druids, who gain their spells from it, to protect and nurture it as it protects and nurtures everything else, it is also served by a wide variety of servants conjured wholly from itself. The fey are tiny copies of an aspect of nature, and protect the things that they are formed from—objects like rivers or forests, or natural cycles like the balance of life and death. Dryads, nixies and the Wild Hunt are all embodiments of this natural consciousness.

The Demiplane of Dread is a copy of these worlds, but it is imperfect and unnatural. Although the Land is alive, here too, it is not a benevolent Mother Nature watching over the seasons, or a distant rhythm pervading everything. In the Mists, the Land is like a vast, slumbering carnivore, steeped in blood and terror. What, then, are the embodiments of this land's desires?

Although Ravenloft has its share of benevolent or neutral fey like feu follets and nymphs, the vast majority are viciously, unrelentingly evil. The Wild Hunt, conjured by the druids of Forlorn, is a hideous parody of the true Hunt, brutally murdering every sentient being in its path. Bodiless spirits roam Nosos, searching for a suitably putrescent mound of garbage they can animate and use to sow fear and disease amongst the citizens. Feyrs move through crowded cities, feeding off the terror they inspire, while Ravenloft sirens inhabit the wilderness, hungry for the more tangible prizes of blood and flesh.

All of these creatures are horrific, living as they do upon humanity's pettiness and misery. But there is a group of fey even more disturbing than these, in that they prey almost exclusively upon those too weak and innocent to defend themselves. They comb darkened streets, hospitals, playgrounds and asylums, secure in the knowledge that they will never be discovered by those powerful enough to stop them. Their very name strikes fear into the hearts of children: *bogeymen*.

### THE CONCISE BOGEYMAN

Being creatures of darkness, secrecy and terror, it is naturally quite difficult to define what precisely a bogeyman *is*. It is perhaps easier to define what they are not. Like fiends, they are creatures composed of solid evil, but they are products of the diseased imaginations of the Dark Powers, not agents of the Lower Planes. They don't create a reality wrinkle or require a phylactery. They are not undead, having never truly been alive, and unlike the Bloody Cobbler or the Three Hags, they are not tied to any particular domain or darklord. Unlike the Arak, bogeymen are rarely vulnerable only to weapons of unusual materials, but can rise from the grave again and again for as long as stories about them are told. They are a hideously diverse group of murderous fey; beyond that, it is difficult to generalize about them.

It is unclear how the first bogeymen originated. It is possible that they appeared, fully formed, from the Mists when their home domain was created. Perhaps they were pulled from the stories parents told their children to make them behave; perhaps the Dark Powers rewarded a murderer of children by transforming them into a creature of myth. Who can say? In any event, bogeymen now occur throughout the Core and in many of the Islands of Terror. They are limited in some ways by only being able to enter communities where stories concerning them are common, but they are also able to move from village to village with ease, making even the longest journey in a single night. Only the Vistani move more quickly.

Once a bogeyman arrives in a particular domain, they are likely to stay for as long as possible without attracting too much attention. In tiny villages, where the loss of even a few children will be noticed, this may be a matter of days. In cities where there are many potential victims and kidnapping and brutality are common, bogeymen may stay for months or even years, growing bloated on the fear and pain they inspire. Even then, bogeymen are not stupid, and will do nothing that will endanger their food supply or themselves. Despite

their near-immortality—or perhaps because of it—bogeymen are terrified of death. Rather than drawing too much attention to themselves by slaughtering whole villages, most bogeymen restrict themselves to a few victims a month, and survive for centuries.

Bogeymen are protected from discovery by the fact that those in a position of power are often unable to see them, unless the bogeyman desires. Only the imaginative and pure of heart—the prey of these murderous fey—are able to see them clearly, and recognize them as the inhuman monsters they are. These include most children, of course, but also adults who have never been called upon to make a powers check or who are suffering from hallucinations or fever. Whether any player characters are able to see these fiends is obviously left to the Dungeon Master. Even if an adult sees a bogeyman, finding and destroying the menace can be almost impossible. Attempting to mentally contact the bogeyman or its missing victims places the mentalist in direct contact with the pure evil of Ravenloft, provoking a Madness save. Psychics who touch the corpses of victims must similarly make a Madness save as the innocent's last moments are experienced first-hand. Even when the authorities are alerted, they are more likely to treat the event as the work of a lone psychopath than a supernatural force, and the bogeyman of course will probably have long since moved on.

If the worst should occur, and a bogeyman is discovered, they will stop at nothing to ensure that all witnesses are silenced. A boy who sees the Scissorman kidnap his sister will be 'silenced' a few days later. A hero who recalls a mysterious woman in the park on the day a child disappears will suffer a midnight visit from her husband. Because bogeymen see time differently than the mortal races, this kind of revenge can occur months or years after the actual event, but it almost always happens eventually.

Should escape be impossible and the bogeyman killed, its body dissolves into putrescent fluids and sickeningly-colored light, which is quickly absorbed into the ground. The "dead" bogeyman must lurk in this dispersed form for an entire generation before it can reform. If, during the week after the bogeyman reforms, its name is not invoked in a story or warning, the fey is permanently destroyed, its essence dispersed back into the foul soil that birthed it. If its name is invoked, the monster reforms at full health and makes the unfortunates who told the story its first victims.

**Bogeyman Vulnerabilities (Ex):** As well as their individual vulnerabilities, all bogeymen are unable to harm those protected by *bleed* spells or the relevant *protection* or *magic circle* spells. They all take 2d4 damage from holy water, and can be turned by clerics of good deities as undead.

### THE SCISSORMAN

*Mamma said, "Peter my dear,*

*I must go out and leave you here.*

*But mind you now what I say*

*Don't suck your thumb while I'm away.*

*The great tall tailor always comes*

*To children who suck their thumbs!"*

*Mamma had scarcely turned her back,*

*The thumb was in, alas, alack!*

*The door flew open, in he ran*

*The horrid, red-coated Scissorman!*

*Peter cried out in pain and fear*

*But Mamma was out, and did not hear.*

—Paridoner nursery rhyme

**Bogeyman:** CR 7; Medium-sized Fey (Bogeyman); HD 9d6+9; hp 48; Init +4 (+4 Dex); Spd 40 ft.; AC 16 (+4 Dex, +2 deflection); Atk +8 melee (1d4+4 scissors); SA Scissors; SQ Passwall, healing, isolation, eyes of innocence, vulnerabilities; AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +10, Will +7; Str 15, Dex 19, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 13.

*Skills and Feats:* Balance +5, Bluff +7, Intimidate +7, Jump +6, Listen +6, Move Silently +5, Spot +5; Dodge, Power Attack, Weapon Finesse (scissors).

In many ways, the Scissorman looks like a cross between a well-to-do tailor from Mordent or Paridon and a gigantic praying mantis. He is easily seven feet tall, with big eyes and exceptionally long legs. His hard, dry skin, which is strangely like the carapace of a beetle, enhances his insectoid appearance. Flakes of dusty skin fall away from him with every movement. He is thin but muscular, and always dressed in a fine crimson and black pinstriped suit, complete with gaiters, cane and top hat. He occasionally appears with his mouth sewn shut, but this is unusual—those few who have met him and survived describe him as a

pleasant conversationalist, often engaging in witty banter. He is a polite, urbane gentleman in every respect—except one.

The Scissorman uses a huge pair of shiny silver shears to attack and mutilate his victims. Children who disobey their parents, suck their thumbs or are otherwise “naughty” sometimes attract a midnight visit from this fiend. He appears silently in one corner of the room, seemingly materializing out of the shadows. Occasionally, this macabre visitation is heralded by the “snip-snip” of scissors. The Scissorman toys with his victim, indulging in games of cat-and-mouse, before finally moving in for the kill. Once he has finished, his victims are often beyond recognition, but not always dead. Some are left alive, driven insane by pain and terror, with their tongues cut from their heads. Somehow, these wounds normally seem to be self-inflicted—leaving the insectoid tailor free to pursue his endless search for materials to make his clothes.

## Combat

**Scissors (Ex):** The shining silver blades that give this bogeyman his name are unnaturally sharp. They have the combat abilities of a *keen dagger* +2.

**Healing (Su):** Once per day, the Scissorman can use his tailoring abilities to heal his wounds by sewing them shut. This requires a full round action, after which he is restored to full hit points. Unlike a ghost, he needn’t rest afterwards, and can return immediately to his games. However, while sewing, the Scissorman loses his Dexterity bonus to his Armor Class, and if he is hit, the healing attempt is ruined for that day.

**Isolation (Sp):** The helpless victims of this terrifying madman often spend their last few minutes screaming vainly in fear and agony, while those outside the room are unable to hear a thing. Once per day, the Scissorman is able to isolate his victim’s bedchamber (or similar room) from its surroundings. In effect, any sounds are *silenced*, and all the door and windows are affected by *hold portal* spells. Both these abilities take effect as though cast by a 9th-level sorcerer.

**Passwall (Su):** At will, the Scissorman is able to move through solid walls. This is how he gains access to his victims, and how he escapes again after he has finished.

**Eyes of Innocence (Su):** Adults are completely unable to see the Scissorman, unless he wishes them to. Unlike other bogeymen, children also become unable to see him in the presence of adults. To them, the terrifying shape looming out of the closet simply becomes a trick of the shadows or a pile of clothes when an adult is summoned and a candle is lit. Once they are gone, of course, the Scissorman returns.

**Vulnerabilities (Ex):** Despite his many powerful abilities, the Scissorman is easily dealt with. Water eats

into his dry and dusty skin like acid, rusting his shears and dissolving his features. A single cup of water thrown into his face is enough to send him fleeing into the night in agony, while a liter of water can immediately destroy him. Note, however, that other fluids—like blood—don’t affect him in this fashion.

## FANTON GRISWOLD

*You'd better watch out,*

*You'd better not cry.*

—Lines from a popular Borcan song

**Bogeyman:** CR 7; Medium-sized Fey (Bogeyman); HD 6d6+6; hp 27; Init +2 (+2 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+2 Dex, +2 deflection); Atk +5 melee (1d4+2 slam); SA Improved grab, remove face; SQ Blind, turn resistance +5, eyes of innocence, vulnerabilities; AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +7 Will +8; Str 14, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 16, Cha 12.

*Skills and Feats:* Balance +7, Climb +7, Concentration +5, Escape Artist +7, Jump +7, Move Silently +7, Wilderness Lore +8; Power Attack, Cleave.

Tales of a faceless bogeyman that steals the faces of any children it comes across are told throughout the Balinoks. This horrific creature is one of the most widely known and feared bogeymen in Ravenloft. Its actions are inscrutable even by the standards of other fey. It journeys out from its secret lair—the Castle of Bones, hidden in the most inhospitable part of the Balinoks—only once or twice a year, dragging a huge sack behind it. In many ways it seems a festive figure, dressed in the green, brown and red garb of a minstrel, a long-nosed mask, and broad-brimmed, feathered hat. The creature ignores all other creatures on its long journeys, responding with a sudden, vicious attack only if others interfere with its sack or mask.

No matter how long the journey, Fanton Griswold always reaches his target village just before midnight on the night of the full moon. Once there, he searches for a suitable house, full of laughter and happiness. If the house has not been ringed with salt, the bogeyman moves up to the front door, still dragging his enormous sack behind him. He raps loudly on the door three times. If the people inside the house don’t quickly respond with three long and two short knocks, Griswold is free to enter. Otherwise, he moves to the chimney, quickly scaling down it if it hasn’t been blocked. Once inside, Griswold strides over to any children present, ignoring anyone else, and tears off his mask—revealing the terrible, faceless form beneath it. He steals the face

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT THINGS

of the nearest child and slaps it across his own head like a rubber mask. Then he tears away the faces of any other children present, throws them into his sack, and vanishes into the night.

### Combat

**Improved Grab (Ex):** If Fanton Griswold manages to hit with a slam attack, he deals normal damage and may attempt to start a grapple as a free action, without provoking an attack of opportunity. This ability may be used against Medium-sized or smaller creatures.

**Remove Faces (Su):** Victims grappled by Fanton Griswold must make a Fortitude save (DC 15) each round the grapple is maintained or have their faces torn away by the bogeyman. Needless to say, this usually causes the death of the victim. Griswold is able to ‘wear’ the stolen face like a mask. While doing so, he gains the physical abilities of the stolen face, such as darkvision, breath weapons, or the Scent quality. This may add new racial bonuses to Spot, Listen, or other skills. To use this ability, the bogeyman must first reveal his naked, faceless head to his victim. Sightless creatures are therefore immune to this fiendish ability.

**Blind (Ex):** As Fanton Griswold has no facial features, he is completely immune to illusions (except shadow illusions) and effects that target sighted creatures. He detects his prey using an ability similar to tremorsense. This quality does not apply when Griswold wears another’s face.

**Eyes of Innocence (Su):** Fanton Griswold makes no effort to hide from adults. His only concession to his unnatural nature is his mask, which he removes only to steal faces. Why he makes himself so obvious is as inscrutable as any of his other behavior.

**Vulnerabilities (Ex):** Fanton Griswold is completely unable to cross a line of salt. He is not afraid of it and ignores it just as he ignores everything else, but it seems to present a physical barrier to him. Throwing a pinch of salt into his naked face makes him shrivel into dissolution.

## MONSIEUR CROQUEMITAINE

*Jack Sprat could eat no fat;*

*His wife could eat no lean;*

*And so between them both you see*

*They licked the platter clean.*

**Bogeyman:** CR 4; Medium-sized Fey (Bogeyman); HD 5d6+10; hp 33; Init +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved

Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+2 Dex, +2 deflection); Atk +4 melee (1d4+3 slam); SA Improved Grab, strangle; SQ Spider climb, weapon resistance, eyes of innocence, vulnerabilities; AL CE; SV Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +5; Str 16, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 8.

*Skills and Feats:* Balance +5, Escape Artist +5, Listen +6, Move Silently +6, Open Lock +6, Search +5, Spot +6; Ambidexterity, Improved Initiative.

Although Monsieur Croquemitaine is of average height, he appears much taller due to his painful slimness. He is cadaverously thin; his cheeks are hollow and his eyes narrow and black, the dirty and sun-burnt skin falling around them in folds due to the lack of muscle beneath. The laborer’s clothes he wears hang on his emaciated frame like rags on a scarecrow. These clothes were once as fine as any working man could afford, but long, hard wear has made them filthy and ragged. The only parts of his body that appear well nourished are his wiry arms, inhumanly long fingers, and his teeth, which are huge, yellow and gray tombstones like horses’ teeth. Despite his emaciation, Monsieur Croquemitaine possesses incredible wiry strength. He can effortlessly climb walls to reach his prey, and is perfectly capable of wringing someone’s neck, or dragging them bodily away.

Monsieur Croquemitaine is usually only encountered at night. He is a bogeyman that haunts dark alleys, windowsills and bedchambers, waiting to kidnap his prey. He is able to unlock even the tightest window, his long, white fingers wriggling between the cracks of the shutters to reach the latch. Occasionally, he hangs just below the windowsill, and drops things into the street beneath. When someone opens the window to investigate, he grabs them by the throat and drags them outside. Some of his victims are strangled in their sleep and left for their families to discover, while others simply vanish—bundled into a sack and dragged back to his wagon. This rickety old farm cart is drawn by a ragged, unhealthy looking ox. When it moves, its wheels leave tracks of fresh blood for a few meters, when it suddenly vanishes. No one has ever discovered what happen to those he kidnaps in this gory cart.

### Combat

**Improved Grab (Ex):** If Monsieur Croquemitaine manages to hit with his slam attack, he deals normal damage and may attempt to start a grapple as a free action, without provoking an attack of opportunity. This ability may be used against Medium-size or smaller creatures.

**Strangle (Ex):** While grappling with an opponent, Monsieur Croquemitaine can strangle them for an additional 1d4+3 damage. If the attack that allowed the



bogeyman to gain a hold was also a critical hit, the victim immediately begins suffocating.

**Spider Climb (Sp):** Once per day, Monsieur Croquemitaine may *spider climb* as a fourth level sorcerer.

**Weapon Resistance (Ex):** Monsieur Croquemitaine's emaciated body is almost entirely free of bone, supported instead by a network of cartilage. This gives him his unnatural ability to slither through narrow windows and unlock shutters from the inside, and also means he takes only half damage from bludgeoning weapons.

**Eyes of Innocence (Su):** To adults, Monsieur Croquemitaine seems to be a simple farmer or other laborer. A strange fog seems to descend over their minds; even if a farm hand would seem out of place in a given situation (such as sitting outside Chateau Delanuit on the night of a ball). Only in extreme circumstances, when he is engaged in something that cannot be ignored, will they act against him. Children and other innocents, however, are always able to see the fiendish potential for evil contained in his emaciated frame.

**Vulnerability (Ex):** Like a vampire, Monsieur Croquemitaine feasts upon human suffering. Although their methods and abilities differ in many ways, they both share a vulnerability towards sunlight. While he is able to move about during the day, he is unable, or perhaps unwilling, to hunt. Likewise, if confronted with bright light while attempting to kidnap a child, he must make a Will save (DC 17) or flee. If he is somehow trapped in a beam of sunlight for one full minute after night has fallen, the murderous fey is destroyed—forced back into his dispersed state for another generation.

## MADAME CROQUEMITAINE

*'He ought to be home,' said the old man.*

*'Without there's something amiss.*

*'He only went to the park to play;*

*He ought to be back by this.*

*'Did he talk to Madame Croquemitaine?*

*Did she lure him back to her dray?*

*'And here, he's not back by sundown.*

*And what will his mother say?*

—“Lost”, a popular Dementlieuse poem

**Bogeyman:** CR 4; Medium-sized Fey (Bogeyman); HD 5d6+23; hp 48; Init +3 (–1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (–1 Dex, +2 natural, +2 deflection); Atk +3 melee (1d4+2 slam); SA Charm; SQ Weapon resistance, eyes of innocence, vulnerabilities; AL CE; SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +5; Str 14, Dex 8, Con 18, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 14.

*Skills and Feats:* Bluff +7, Diplomacy +7, Knowledge (local) +7, Listen +7, Spot +7; Improved Initiative, Toughness.

Madame Croquemitaine is the opposite of her husband in almost every way. Where he is taciturn, she is jolly and talkative. While he drives their wagon during the day and hunts at night, she kidnaps her victims during the day. He lurks in dark streets and bedrooms, she in playgrounds, parks and other ‘safe’ areas where children play. Monsieur Croquemitaine is thin; his wife is grotesquely fat. Curtains of flab hang from her body. Her head is separated from her mounded shoulders by rolls of chins rather than a neck. She is always eating, and food stains her fine but well-worn clothing. Her mole-ridden skin glistens with oil and sweat.

Madame Croquemitaine is never seen without a bag of sweets, which she uses to capture her victims. She sits in parks throughout the western Core, munching on a roast chicken or sandwich, and eagerly engaging anyone who passes in conversation. Children and other innocents are offered a sweet from her bag. In some cases, this makes her victim vulnerable to the murderess’ suggestions, and they are lured into a nearby alley where Monsieur Croquemitaine waits with their wagon. In others, the child is instantly struck dead or paralyzed, bundled up in Madame Croquemitaine’s voluminous skirts and dragged away. Her husband whips the tired ox, the wagon creaks slowly away, and the only clue for the distraught parents and other authorities is a seldom-noticed trail of drying blood.

## Combat

**Charm (Sp):** Despite her hideous appearance, Madame Croquemitaine is strangely attractive to children, who often seem to be attracted to the grotesque anyway. Once per day, Madame Croquemitaine can use *charm* on a potential victim, as a 4th-level sorcerer. Those who eat one of her sweets and are also *charmed* will obey any reasonable suggestion the bogeyman makes (such as “Follow me to the wagon and I’ll give you some more.”). Madame Croquemitaine creates this charm herself, acting through the sweets. By themselves, they are not magical.

**Weapon Resistance (Ex):** Because of the huge amounts of fat surrounding her body, weapons that rely on pure force to injure opponents are less effective against Madame Croquemitaine. As such, she takes half damage from all bludgeoning attacks.

**Eyes of Innocence (Su):** To an adult, Madame Croquemitaine appears to be a normal, slightly overweight, woman. Most people do not seem to notice her, and even those she engages in conversation are unable to describe her. She is perfectly capable of kidnapping an innocent in full view of a group of oblivious adults. Only the imaginative and innocent—her prey—are able to see her in her corpulent evil.

**Vulnerability (Ex):** Despite her ravenous appetite, Madame Croquemitaine is unable to stomach even one of the sweets she offers to her victims. If one of her sweets should ever pass her lips, she is instantly struck down in incredible pain, and forced to disperse.

### THE BAD THING

*Morgan hated the cellar. Somehow the cellar seemed worse than anything else in the whole wide world. Here, even the darkness had a body and a voice. It saw and heard all, it tittered and beckoned, it begged and cajoled, it slithered its way into her brain like black, slimy worms. Morgan knew that if she listened to it, she'd be lost - the Bad Thing would have her, and she'd never see the light again. But it was so hard not to listen, down in the cellar.*

—Folktale from Staunton Bluffs

**Bogeyman:** CR 2; Small Fey (Bogeyman); HD 3d6+3; hp 17; Init +3 (+3 Dex); Spd 40 ft.; AC 16 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +2 deflection); Atk +5 melee (1d3+1 slam); SA Spell-like abilities; SQ Eyes of innocence, vulnerabilities; AL LE; SV Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +6; Str 12, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 17, Cha 14.

**Skills and Feats:** Bluff +11, Climb +6, Hide +15, Intimidate +12, Sense Motive +9, Spot +6; Dodge, Mobility, Weapon Focus (slam).

The Bad Thing is a wicked creature that wields terror and intimidation like an artist, painting the rural villages it haunts with misery and evil. At three feet tall, it is no bigger than the children it torments, but its form is nightmarish and broken. Its ape-like body is covered in bristling black fur. Its arms are long and thin, the gnarled fingers resembling nothing so much as tree branches. Jutting from behind it is a bulbous spider's abdomen. The front pair of its four legs are short and bandy; the back pair are the long and delicate legs of a giant spider. Most horrifying of all is its face: that of a horrifyingly distorted child. Features that may once have been soft and innocent are now leathery and creased with malice; instead of carefree pleasure, its tiny black eyes glow with vicious joy, and more than a hint of fear.

Although all bogeymen are cowards, the Bad Thing is almost crippled by fear and inadequacy. It never appears when adults are present, and only targets the young and infirm. Even then, it rarely emerges from the shadows. Simply put, the Bad Thing is a petty bully. It attacks innocents from the shadows, trying to bend them to its will, in the vain attempt to give itself a feeling of power. Out of all the bogeymen in Ravenloft, the Bad Thing is possibly both the most repulsive and the most pathetic.

The Bad Thing enjoys spreading fear and evil. It does not often kill its victims. Instead, it steals their innocence and leaves them emotionally disturbed. Sometimes, it does no more than scratch as their windowpanes with its twig-like fingers, or make loud noises just outside their bedchambers, and feed off the fear this inspires. Sometimes, it speaks to its victims in its grating voice, threatening them with any number of unsavory acts if they do not obey it. Refusal pricks the Bad Thing's already tender pride, and in its vengeful rage it will mutilate pets, break precious objects, soil food and even dart out of its protective shadows to pull their hair or viciously claw them. It maintains this relentless victimization until it is driven away or the child gives in. Eventually, victims are either driven insane from the constant harassment, or begin to perform evil acts willingly, anticipating the Bad Thing's next demand. Once this is achieved, or if the victim refuses to be intimidated, the Bad Thing moves on.

### Combat

**Spell-like Abilities (Sp):** 2/day— *cause fear, charm person, deeper darkness, ghost sound, ventriloquism*; 1/day—*scare*. These abilities are as the spells cast by a 3rd-level sorcerer. The save DC, where applicable, is 12 + spell level.

**Eyes of Innocence (Su):** The Bad Thing is such a coward that it never emerges from its hiding places

when adults are present. How it might avoid their attention, if it has any supernatural way of doing so, is unknown.

**Vulnerabilities (Ex):** The Bad Thing is revolted by innocence and crippled with feelings of inadequacy. As such, it cannot stand the sounds of happiness and carefree play. The very sound of laughter sickens it, and is the key to its destruction. Laughing at it strikes a terrible blow into the Bad Thing's tender heart. It is forced to acknowledge its own pettiness, and dissolves into the ground.

## ALLIGATOR LENNY

*Whisper sounds behind you,*

*Gurgle underfoot.*

*No one ever finds you,*

*No one dares to look.*

*Alligator Lenny*

*Goes you with his stink,*

*Plucks your every penny,*

*Drowns you in the drink.*

### —Children's jumprope rhyme

**Bogeyman:** CR 5; Medium-sized Fey (Bogeyman); HD 6d6+24; hp 45; Init +2 (+2 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+2 Dex, +2 natural, +2 deflection); Atk +8 melee (1d4+5 slam); SA Cause disease, putrescent aura; SQ Eyes of innocence, vulnerabilities; AL CE; SV Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +7; Str 20, Dex 13, Con 18, Int 11, Wis 14, Cha 8.

*Skills and Feats:* Balance +7, Climb +7, Hide +7, Jump +10, Listen +7, Move Silently +7, Spot +7, Swim +10; Great Fortitude, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (fists).

In Darkon, a terrifying brute stalks the sewers, drains and waterways. This hulking figure—perhaps created from stories told to protect children from drowning or becoming lost—prowls the tunnels in search of innocents to maim and kill. Stories of his glowing red eyes, peering malevolently from sewer gratings or benighted lakes, are common in Richemulot. In Nosos, his scaled hand brings illness to those who play in the street with the poor, and death to those who travel abroad in the rain. He is driven by an almost insatiable lust for blood and for coins and other valuables. He is

Alligator Lenny, the bogeyman created by children who drowned in wells or died, lost and alone, beneath the city.

Alligator Lenny is a massive creature. In the eternal gloom of his watery home, he could easily be mistaken for a particularly muscular laborer, possibly even an ogre. He is more than six feet tall, with powerful shoulders nearly two thirds as wide. His hands are callused spades. Tendons and rippling muscles stand out all over his brawny frame. On closer inspection, however, it is clear Alligator Lenny is no natural creature. His nose and mouth jut forwards into a short, blunt snout, and the irises of his eyes glow red in the darkness. A terrible stench of decay seems to emanate from every pore in his cracked and broken skin. Most of his teeth are covered in rot, and the whites of his eyes are yellow with jaundice. The only aspects of his appearance kept in good order are the necklaces of coins and other pieces of jewelry he always carries with him.

Despite his brutish appearance, Alligator Lenny is a canny creature, able to plan his subtle attacks and move with surprising speed to carry them out. He enjoys stalking his victims slowly, glaring out at them from darkened openings, creeping up on them until his stench is almost overpowering, before falling back again, deliberately giving away his presence with a scuffed footstep or a splash of water. Not until his victim flees, sobbing in terror from the thing behind them, does he pounce—leaping out in front of them, and letting them run into his arms. Of course, he has also been known to surge out of a river or well, or stretch a massive arm through a storm water drain and dragging the poor child in. He is strong enough to tear them apart if they are not physically capable of fitting through the gap, but this quick death is perhaps preferable to what lies in wait for his smaller victims. Those who are dragged into his dark underworld are slowly and sadistically murdered (often held under the water until they pass out, then revived and held down again, until they finally die), stripped of their valuables, and abandoned to the vermin.

## Combat

**Putrescent Aura (Ex):** A terrible, nauseating stench emanates from every pore on Alligator Lenny's corrupt body, fouling the air around him and polluting any area that he lingers in. This hideous aura extends for 10 feet around him, although it can be detected at far greater distances, and is enough to turn the stomach of even the most jaded necromancer. No natural animal or beast will willingly enter Alligator Lenny's aura, and any living being that does so must make a Fortitude save (DC 15) or become nauseated. The DC rises to 20 for creatures with the Scent quality.

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT THINGS

**Cause Disease (Ex):** Alligator Lenny's cracked and jaundiced hide is not simply a horrifying cosmetic effect. He is literally crawling with disease. Simply entering the bogeyman's putrescent aura is enough to infect someone with filth fever (Fortitude save DC 10). People who drink from water that has been in contact with him for some time (such as a well or lake where he has lurked) must save as well, at the same DC. Those who are unlucky enough to touch or be touched by him can be afflicted with one of any number of diseases. The DM should choose a disease based on the strength of the victim; particularly appropriate diseases include filth fever, slimy doom or devil chills.

**Eyes of Innocence (Su):** Adults are unable to see Alligator Lenny, detecting only a faint, lingering smell. He seems to fade into the background. The sound of his footsteps becomes the scurrying of rats or the yowling of a stray cat. His victims seem to have been mauled by some kind of animal, or to have perished from natural causes, such as drowning. There always seems to be another, more rational explanation for his deeds. Of course, children and other innocents are always able to see and hear him.

**Vulnerability (Ex):** As a creature of corruption and decay, Alligator Lenny is affected by symbols of purity and health, such as posies, rose petals or lavender. He is unable to directly harm anyone carrying these or similar items, and pressing one of these flowers against his snout is enough to kill him. He is also immune to turning, unless one of these medicinal items is used in addition to the cleric's holy symbol, or if the cleric has access to the Healing domain.

### THE GENTLEMEN

*Can't call out, can't even cry.*

*The Gentlemen are coming by.*

*Banging on shutters, trying all the doors.*

*Mister Book needs seven hearts,*

*And he wants yours!*

—Children's skipping rhyme

**Bogeyman:** CR 2; Medium-sized Fey (Bogeyman); HD 2d6+3; hp 14; Init +2 (+2 Dex); Spd Fly 30 ft (perfect); AC 14 (+2 Dex, +2 deflection); Atk +2 melee (1d4+2 slam); SQ Damage reduction 15/+2, steal voices, eyes of innocence, vulnerabilities; AL LE; SV Fort +0, Ref +5, Will +7; Str 14, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 15, Cha 13.

*Skills and Feats:* Alchemy +8, Decipher Script +8, Hide +7, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (any one, usually arcane) +8, Listen +7, Open Locks +7, Search +8, Spot +7, Use Magic Device +6; Iron Will, Toughness.

The perpetually grinning Gentlemen are a group of almost identical bogeymen, horrifying in their uniformity. They are all tall and thin, with dead white skin, black ringed eyes that glitter with malice, and shiny silver teeth. They typically wear long black cloaks, sometimes with a broad-brimmed hat. Their clothes are never disturbed by their graceful flight through the air; the strongest winds cannot rustle the cloak of a Gentleman unless it wishes. They are completely silent, communicating with each other through telepathy. When they wish to speak to a mortal, they convey what they can with intricate bows, hand signals, and nods. It is unknown whether the Gentlemen are true individuals or not. They do respond to individual names, such as Mister Book or Mister Hand, but there is no way to be sure whether it is the same Gentleman responding each time. All the Gentlemen are named after mundane objects—there is no Mister Lightning or Mister Elf.

The Gentlemen are unusual bogeymen in many ways, not the least of which is their multiplicity. They also tend to stalk asylums more than houses, and prefer adult prey to children. They still only attack the imaginative, the innocent and those too weak to defend themselves, however, which is presumably why they prefer to stalk the insane. They also allow themselves to be summoned by wizards and priests (using the *summon monster* or *summon nature's ally* spells), although they are in no way bound to serve their summoners. In this case, a single Gentleman replies to the spell, and the others usually arrive some time later. For a time, the Gentleman seems to obey its summoner, waiting until its fellows have arrived. Then, they drop all pretense of obedience, and embark upon an orgy of murder and destruction. The madman who summons them is often their first victim.

The Gentlemen reflect the common fear of wizardry and insanity. They often appear on strange, inscrutable quests, such as harvesting hearts or kidnapping people of a particular hair color. Those who are kidnapped or killed by the Gentlemen are often brought back from the dead in weird rituals to serve them. These unfortunates, called the Gentlemen's "hounds", appear just as they did at the moment of their deaths, albeit muzzled. Because of their masters' predilection for the insane, most hounds also wear straight jackets or orderlies' robes. In combat, these hounds can be treated as zombies. If their muzzles are removed, the hounds immediately collapse into decay.

## Combat

**Steal Voices (Sp):** A Gentleman is able to steal the voices of those he touches. If the bogeyman succeeds in a touch attack, his opponent must make a Fortitude save (DC 14). If the save fails, the victim becomes mute. The captured voice is locked carefully in a large trunk or birdcage, where it remains until a mortal manages to smash the lock. If the Gentlemen move on before the voices are freed, the victims must remain voiceless forever.

**Eyes of Innocence (Su):** When it chooses—in the early stages of an invasion, or when they are still pretending to obey their summoner—a Gentleman is able to escape notice by assuming shadowform. Adults see nothing unusual about these lurking shadows, while children are able to sense the chill that hangs in the air around them, quieting all sound. However, once their rampage begins, the Gentlemen drop this protective illusion, preferring to spread terror with their natural form.

**Vulnerabilities (Ex):** The silence that cloaks the Gentlemen is not simply another way of instilling a sense of powerlessness into their victims; it is actually vital to their survival. Any noise above a normal speaking volume causes them considerable pain, and a scream will instantly kill all Gentlemen within earshot. Note, however, that the hounds are not vulnerable to noise, so the Gentlemen's revenge on their tormentors is often swift and messy.

## Acknowledgements

The Wild Hunt was introduced in *Castles Forlorn*, and Ravenloft sirens in the *Requiem* boxed set. The Gentlemen were inspired by “Hush”, an episode of *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer*, while their naming conventions come from the movie *Dark City*. Alligator Lenny was inspired by a poem from *Children of the Night: Vampires*, and Fanton Griswold from JorGLEach's entry for the *Book of Secrets* holiday competition.

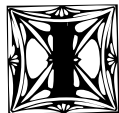


# THE ASWANG

## CREATURES AT THE EDGE OF NIGHT

by Dion Fernandez

souragne@pufanginamo.com



*t was midnight when I felt the bed move. At my side I could see my wife Zeni's shadow twist horribly as she silently crept out of the room. She momentarily looked back at me, but I quickly shut my eyes and held my breath, pretending to remain asleep. I could hear the bamboo floor creak under her footsteps, as she walked out the door. It slammed shut with such force, like it had been pushed by a great gust of wind. Then it was as if the house shook.*

*"I got up, lit a torch, and ran out of the house before I lost track of her. I looked around in the dark, but I could not find a trace of Zeni anywhere. Behind me I could feel something watching me from the bushes. I wanted to turn around and see for myself what Zeni had become, but I was too overwhelmed with fear. I returned to the house; there was nothing for me to do but wait for her to return in the morning."*

—Apo Semyong Lucnab, Tagudin, Igid Rabi-i

### ASWANG, GENERAL

The aswang is a new form of undead, born from Igid Rabi-i's entrance into Ravenloft. Though this creature is encountered most frequently in the island domain, it has somehow spread beyond Igid Rabi-i's borders and could now be found anywhere in the Demiplane. In the daytime, the aswang acts and appears just like any other normal person, albeit in a reclusive manner. As an undead creature the aswang is evil, but in its daytime form the creature retains its normal alignment. The true nature of this undead creature is only revealed at night. The transformation begins just after sunset, when the aswang reverts into a ghoulish form that the creature uses to terrify its prey.

### Lore of the Aswang: The Inaswang Disease

Although all native scholars agree that the aswang has existed even before the Turonites arrived, there is much speculation as to how the creature ever came to be. No one has ever successfully studied a specimen, since all

aswang burn up or dissolve into powder form after true death overcomes them. Igid Rabi-i's history, however, has provided a few clues to how the aswang originated. Ancient records of native shamanic lore mention a rare mental disorder called "inaswang":

*"The victim of the inaswang disorder acquires his affliction from eating the liver of a human, probably sacrificed to some vile deity. He may not even know that he has been fed the organ; such are the ways of sadistic tricksters who find pleasure in another's suffering. Three days after his meal, the liver begins to affect the victim's mind. His eyesight becomes clearer, his sense of smells sharper. In exchange for these "gifts", however, he will begin to suffer occasional convulsions and a perverse fascination with butchery, blood, and death.*

*"He will begin to harbor delusions. He will think he has the ability to fly, to decapitate himself, to bleed profusely or such other horrific impossibilities. During these fits, it is advised that the victim be closely monitored by others to prevent self-inflicted injury.*

*"It is a sad fact that we have not found a way to heal this disorder of the mind. Though the disease in itself is not life-threatening, the people around the victim must live with the fact that this illness is permanent."*

—“On the Inaswang”,  
Journal by Shamaness Apo Ining Madarang

Details indicate that at the time, the aswang was not a separate creature but a debilitating mental illness that spawned gory hallucinations in its victims.

Some time in the past, though, a kind of “evolution” occurred, making these hallucinations reality. Reports began circulating of people who had died with the inaswang disease rising from the dead, living out their hallucinations by feeding upon the living. These undead became the first aswang, who initially kept their distance from civilization, entering populated areas only occasionally to feed once the urge had set in. Over time, however, when the island was pulled into a darker realm, some greater power

evidently saw the potential in these creatures allowed them to spread across the land.

## Facts and Fallacies

Island folklorists have “identified” three ways in which a person can become an aswang. The first is through contamination, when one becomes a victim of an aswang’s tongue attack. The second is through a transferring of essence, known as the Pact of Transference (see below), used only by the most powerful of aswang.

The third method rests more in superstition rather than fact, and purportedly allows one to become an aswang without contact with another aswang. When word of the aswang’s existence spread throughout the island, inquisitions similar to witch hunts became prevalent, and innocent people were falsely accused of being undead. One old maid, who claimed to be a “former aswang,” even detailed false accounts of how folk allegedly used spells and signed pacts with evil powers to become aswang:

*“The minion holds a fertilized duck egg steadily on his stomach. Then he binds it in place with a red cloth wrapped around his waist. After a period of three hours under the light of the moon Bulan, the duckling will pass through its shell, through his navel and into the stomach. At this point the minion would soon crow or chirp like a bird. The eggshell, now empty, is then put into a vial mixed with coconut oil and seawater.*

*“Another way one can become an aswang is to stand in the middle of a cemetery with two fertilized duck eggs on the midnight before the first of the Nine Nights. While staring at the grave of someone who was accused of being an aswang, he must then place each egg under an armpit while reciting the prayer that finalizes his pact with the diabolical. The eggs will eventually disappear, and after the Ninth Night the metamorphosis will be complete.”*

—“**Inquiry on the Vile Aswang**” by Ula Marasigan

More practical and serious arcane scholars from Igid Rabi-i have already identified numerous subspecies of aswang, which closely resemble other forms of undead. Only two are fully detailed below, namely the lesser aswang and the greater aswang, or Manananggal.

The aswang can be used as a substitute for vampires in the domain of Igid Rabi-i, though it could also be used anywhere in the Demiplane.

## Creating an Aswang

“Aswang” is a template that can be added to any humanoid creature (referred hereafter as the “base creature”). The creature’s type changes to “undead.”

**Hit Dice:** Increased to d12.

**Speed:** Same as the base creature, but also gains a climb speed of 30 ft.

**Armor Class:** The base creature’s natural armor increases by +4.

**Attacks:** The aswang retains all attacks of the base creature, and also gains a tongue attack.

**Damage:** The aswang’s tongue attack deals 2d4 damage.

**Special Attacks:** The aswang retains all the special attacks of the base creature, and also gains those listed below. All saves have a DC of 12.

*Fluid Drain (Ex):* An aswang can drain the body fluids of a living being with its tongue, inflicting 3 points of permanent Constitution drain per round from a helpless victim as a full-round action.

*Create Spawn (Su):* Any humanoid slain by an aswang’s fluid drain attack rises as an aswang 2d6 hours after death. The new aswang is not under its creator’s control.

*Twilight Scream (Su):* Once a day, and only after nightfall, an aswang can let loose a malevolent scream that starts from a low moan and rises to a shrieking crescendo. This lasts one round, and affects all living creatures within 60 feet, who must make a Fear save. This is a mind-affecting fear ability.

*Aswang’s Feast (Su):* An aswang can turn any corpse in its early stages of decomposition into a suspicious meatlike substance it considers edible. This works just like the *polymorph any object* spell cast by a 12th-level sorcerer.

**Special Qualities:** The aswang retains all the special qualities of the base creature, gains those listed below, and also gains the undead type.

*Alternate Form (Su):* An aswang can assume the shape of a white dog or a black owl as a standard action. This ability is similar to a *polymorph self* spell cast by a 12th-level sorcerer. In these forms the aswang will avoid combat. An aswang can only use this ability at night.

*Turn Resistance (Su):* An aswang has +4 turn resistance.

*Fast Healing (Ex):* An aswang heals 3 points of damage each round as long as it has at least 1 hit point. If reduced to 0 hit points or lower an aswang automatically assumes *gaseous form* and attempts to escape. It must reach its lair within two hours or it is destroyed. Once at its lair, it heals at a rate of 3 hit points a round.

**Abilities:** Adjust from the base creature as follows: Str +2, Dex +2, Int –1, Wis +3, Cha –3. As undead creatures, aswang have no Constitution score.

**Feats:** An aswang gains Alertness, Lightning Reflexes and Multiattack, assuming the base creature

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT THINGS

meets the prerequisites and doesn't already have these feats.

**Saves:** Same as the base creature.

**Skills:** Aswang receive a +4 racial bonus to Hide, Listen, Move Silently, Open Lock and Search checks. Otherwise, same as the base creature.

---

**Climate/Terrain:** Any land and underground

**Organization:** Solitary

**Challenge Rating:** As the base creature +1

**Treasure:** Standard

**Alignment:** Usually neutral evil

**Advancement:** By character class

### Aswang Weaknesses

#### Identifying an Aswang

To identify an aswang in daylight, one must look at one's reflection in the suspected aswang's eyes. If the reflection is inverted, then that person is an aswang.

#### Repelling an Aswang

Aswang recoil from a strongly presented holy symbol. Aswang also resist approaching within ten feet of living bamboo or living pine. They cannot cross a clear line of salt, saltwater, frankincense or cinnamon. They also have a fear of cats, turtles and large lizards.

#### Slaying an Aswang

Aswang are not adversely affected by sunlight, though they conceal their ghoulish forms during the daytime. Simply reducing an aswang's hit points to 0 or below does not destroy it. There are two standard ways to destroy an aswang: one is staking its torso with a large shaft of freshly cut bamboo or pine with a burning tip. However, the aswang returns to life if the shaft is removed, unless the body, still staked, is thrown into the ocean for the fish to consume.

The second way is to fool the aswang into coming into sunlight in its ghoulish form. When hit by sunlight, the aswang in ghoulish form crumbles to dust in two rounds.

### Aswang Characters

The aswang, being neutral evil in nature, causes characters of certain classes to lose their class abilities. They are, however, able to maintain activities (skills) similar to their pre-aswang lives. In addition, certain classes suffer additional penalties:

**Clerics:** Lose the ability to turn undead, but gain the ability to rebuke undead.

**Sorcerers and Wizards:** Lose the link between character and her familiar. The new aswang can no longer summon a new familiar.

*"We encountered the malevolent creature a few moments after golden Mitra, the sun, sank in the west. Its scream heralded the beast's arrival, a gnarled, twisted, winged abomination bent on devouring our ward Chandrika, who was then expecting. Her husband Khumbhali and I aimed our spears at the creature, and in one swift movement our weapons flew true, and tore into its leathery wings. It screamed again, its huge tongue swirling around its decaying face.*

*"Our spears, we knew, could not kill the creature. We wasted no time by our diversion and ran, deep into the jungle where we thought we were safe. But what it could not do without legs, it compensated for with its wings. Even if it was injured it skidded around the damp trunks, hungry for Chandrika's flesh. It mattered not that the jungle itself was filled with other vile monsters; we had to take our chances there or become like the creature we ran from.*

*"All night we ran, fallen trunks and filthy bogs hindering our escape. From behind, the shrieking followed us. But we ran. So it was until the dawn broke again, by Mitra's grace, and we were safe from the flying creature."*

—Harjinder Sandhu, Rajian Priest of Mitra

### ASWANG, MANANANGGAL

The manananggal is the so-called "greater aswang" due to its control over many aswang in a given location. The creature is always female, and unlike basic aswang, the manananggal has the ability to fly. When it is ready to hunt, the creature's torso detaches from the rest of its body and grows gigantic, leathery bat wings. The manananggal functions just like the basic aswang, but with a few modifications.

**Speed:** Same as the base creature, but also gains a climb speed of 30 feet and a fly speed of 60 feet with poor maneuverability.

**Armor Class:** The base creature's natural armor improves by +6.

**Special Attacks:** As the aswang, but with the additional attacks listed below.

*Aura of Fear (Su):* The mere sighting of a manananggal causes all creatures within a 40-foot radius to succeed at a Will save at DC 13 or flee in fear, as the spell of the same name.

*Pact of Transference (Su):* The manananggal is able to pass on a fragment of its essence through touch to a living humanoid, willing or otherwise. The victim then becomes a manananggal herself. The original creature can use this ability three times in its undead existence before its body disintegrates. The victim must make a Fortitude save (DC 15) or be permanently drained of all Constitution and transformed into a manananggal in a single round.

**Alignment:** Always neutral evil



### Manananggal Weaknesses

#### Slaying a Manananggal

The most effective way to slay a manananggal is to enter its lair while it is in flight somewhere else, find the lower half of its body, and sprinkle holy salt on the open cavity. This prevents the creature from reuniting with the rest of its body and resuming humanoid form. With this method the manananggal is eventually destroyed when day breaks, crumbling to dust in two rounds of exposure to sunlight. However, once a creature bent on destroying the manananggal is within 20 feet of its torso, the creature immediately knows of the intrusion and will do its best to stop the trespasser.

### Manananggal Characters

Same as the base aswang, but wizards and sorcerers can summon evil familiars, usually small supernatural creatures.

## ASWANG ON GOTHIC EARTH

The aswang are native undead creatures of the Capiz and Ilocos prefectures of the Philippines. Though once confined to these islands, increased trade and contact with other countries have broadened the creatures' range. They are most frequent in the European-controlled islands of Southeast Asia and Indochina, although rumors of monsters that act very much like the aswang have filtered out of India, Japan, and even the Middle East.

The aswang has yet to acquire infamy in Europe and the Americas, though one of the creatures, named Crisostomo "Simoun" Ibarra, has been sighted wandering in Spain, France, Portugal and England by some qabals.

*"It was around nine-thirty in the evening when I was rattled by a most unusual event. I was organizing manuscripts when, from the corner of my eye, something caught my attention. I turned around, and by the window I could see a huge white dog with glowing blue eyes staring back at me from outside the house. I was so startled that I accidentally dropped a pile of papers on the floor. I quickly bent down and picked them up, but when I looked out through the window again, the dog was gone.*

*"It was foolish to be going out alone after dark, but I was so intrigued with what I had seen. I lit a lamp, and then took a silver dagger and some wolfsbane, tucking them in my pouch. I feared that the creature may have been a werewolf, but now I am doubtful that it was. It had drizzled that afternoon, and I had expected the dog's footprints in the mud, but there was*

*no trace of anything at all, footprints or otherwise, leading from the premises.*

*"For the time being, I will confine my unusual experience to this diary. Lately I have heard from the others of a new large island floating in the seas. Here, they say, lives a new breed of the unliving, hungry for flesh, and equipped with the ability to change into ivory-white dogs with terrifying blue eyes. Have they finally found a new pasture in this place? That is a question I will have to answer in time. After all, it could have merely been a stray dog. Then again, the absence of tracks suggests otherwise."*

—Diary of Maegan Rumwall,  
The Midway Haven Alchemical Observatory,  
Lake Zarovich, Barovia

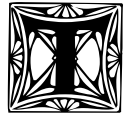


# CREEPING DOOMS

## A COLLECTION OF CRAWLING CREATURES

by Chris Nichols

chris@kargafane.com



he crumbling castle, the lurking vampire, and the cackling madman are all clear and present dangers. After all, these are the very threats heroes are supposed to face. Big, straightforward terrors that people with hail them as mighty saviors for defeating.

But sometimes the things we should fear aren't big, aren't straightforward.

Aren't immediately *obvious*.

Instead, sometime the horror is in the little things. The crawling things. Who hasn't heard the old urban legend of the earwig the crawled into a woman's ear and ate its way to the other side? Think of arachnophobia, the fear of spiders, of clutching hairy legs, of venom-dripped fangs, and of clusters of eggs, waiting to spew swarms of tiny, hungry spiders onto your unsuspecting hand as to reach into a dark place.

They out-number us. They've been here longer than us. They're alien to us. They don't know compassion, and don't know mercy.

They arm themselves with stingers and claws. They are living factories of strange chemicals and the most deadly toxins on Earth.

They are the little monstrosities of our own world.

Here are four representatives of Ravenloft's etymological menagerie. Strange and lethal venoms and ancient, merciless, mindless hunger await, among these creeping dooms...

### SKULL BEETLE

*"Inside a pale beetle scabbled at the glass. Dark blotches marked its waxy carapace, suggesting a grinning human skull. The beetle gnashed sharp mandibles, as if trying to bite through the glass."*

—*Tower of Doom*, pg. 165

#### Fine Vermin

**Hit Dice:** 1/2 d8 (2 hp)

**Initiative:** +1 (Dex)

**Speed:** 20 ft., climb 10 ft.

**AC:** 19 (+8 size, +1 Dex)

**Attacks:** Bite +1 melee

**Damage:** Bite 1d2

**Face/Reach:** 1/2 ft. by 1/2 ft. / 0 ft.

**Special Attacks:** Poison, Acid Spray

**Special Qualities:** Vermin

**Saves:** Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +0

**Abilities:** Str 1, Dex 13, Con 10, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 2

**Skills:** Spot +10, Hide +5

**Feats:** Weapon Finesse (bite)

---

**Climate/Terrain:** Temperate forests, underground, and urban

**Organization:** Solitary

**Challenge Rating:** 1/3

**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** Always neutral

**Advancement:** 1d8 HD (Diminutive)

Skull beetles are disgusting creatures found in the damp forests and cities of the Northern Core.

Bloated mockeries of normal beetles, skull beetles are nearly six inches long from head to abdomen. Loosely resembling rhinoceros beetles, skull beetles are fat-bodied and almost totally white, with only their backs marked with dark splotches that form a pattern resembling a human skull.

Unlike most beetles, the skull beetle's carapace is waxy, with a softness and flexibility more akin to waxed leather than chitin. The skull beetle has wings beneath its carapace, but they are insufficient to lift the beetle's bulk. The skull beetle's mouth sports a large set of spiny mandibles with which it delivers its deadly bite.

Skull beetles are greatly feared throughout the Northern Core. These loathsome and deadly vermin can be found from Darkon to Borca, though their greatest concentration appears to be in and around the city of Nartok in Darkon. The skull beetle thrives in damp conditions, and is frequently found in marshes, bogs

and swamps, forest undergrowth, sewers, catacombs, and other underground structures.

The skull beetle is a stupidly aggressive creature, attacking any other living thing it stumbles across, including other skull beetles. Skull beetles will even attack creatures hundreds of times their size, simply because they can. Unfortunately, the virulence of the skull beetle's toxin often means that they stand a good chance of slaying whatever they encounter.

Because skull beetles will attack each other at all times, skull beetles never make face to face contact to mate. Rather, the female skull beetle will drop a froth of eggs in a sheltered place. Pheromones given off by the egg froth attracts any male beetles in the vicinity, who will then fight each other to fertilize the eggs.

Due to the horrible qualities of skull beetles, the people of Darkon believe that they are unnatural creatures. Popular lore has it that skull beetles were created by the Nightmage as a means to punish his enemies from afar. Another rumor claims that darklings, goblins, and other evil beings know recipes that make skull beetles edible and find them delicious.

## Combat

Skull beetles attack any living creature they sense, scuttling at their target and attempting to bite or spit acid. Fortunately, skull beetles are deeply stupid and will continue to press their attack even if it fails to harm their target or even results in harm to themselves.

**Poison (Ex):** The bite of the skull beetle carries one of the most virulent poison known. Anyone bitten by a skull beetle must make a Fortitude save at DC 20 or die within 1d4 rounds, literally popping open and melting into a puddle of thick, noxious yellow slime. Those who make the initial saving throw must make a second Fortitude save at DC 15 or lose the bitten limb in 1d4 rounds.

The affected limb dissolves into a puddle of slime as described above. If the affected character was not bitten on a limb, they take 1d6 Con and 1d6 Str for initial and secondary damage. Those who make the second saving throw take 1d3 Con and 1d3 Str for initial and secondary damage. Any character who falls to 0 in an ability score from a skull beetle's bite dies of heart failure, but does not burst into a puddle of slime.

**Acid Spray (Ex):** Instead of their typical bite attack, skull beetles may spit a stream of acid from their mouths. This acid does 5d6 damage to a target within 2 feet. A successful Reflex save at DC 9 allows the target to dodge out of the path of the acid.

## ILSABET'S KISS

*"As Ilsabet studied it, she had to admit it was a marvelous creature. Silver gray with white crisscross markings on its body and white bracelets at the end of each leg, it would practically disappear on a background of old wood or rotting fabric."*

—*Baroness of Blood*, pg. 56

### Fine Vermin

**Hit Dice:** 1/4 d8 (1 hp)

**Initiative:** +4 (Dex)

**Speed:** 20 ft., climb 20 ft.

**AC:** 22 (+8 size, +4 Dex)

**Attacks:** Bite +1 melee

**Damage:** Bite 1d3–2

**Face/Reach:** 1/12 ft. by 1/12 ft. / 0 ft.

**Special Attacks:** Poison, Toxic Web, Numbing Touch, Tainted Air

**Special Qualities:** Vermin

**Saves:** Fort +0, Ref +4, Will +0

**Abilities:** Str 1, Dex 18, Con 10, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 3

**Skills:** Hide +20, Climb +15

**Feats:** Weapon Finesse (bite)

---

**Climate/Terrain:** Temperate land and underground

**Organization:** Solitary

**Challenge Rating:** 2

**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** Always neutral

**Advancement:** 1/2 HD (Diminutive); 1 HD (Tiny)

This tiny white spider hails from the land of Kislova. There it is known as 'shroud web,' but in other lands it has another name: Ilsabet's kiss.

Ilsabet's kiss is the size and shape of a black widow, but its coloration is a glossy silver-gray. Each of the spider's legs has a white bracelet two-thirds of the way toward the end.

The markings of Ilsabet's kiss come in two distinct varieties. The kisses found in the domain of Kislova bear a white cross pattern marks its back, made of a single large cross with arms of equal length, and the arms each crossed by a single shorter bar.

However, those spiders that travel beyond the borders of Kislova develop a new marking in about a week. The white cross of these kisses fades back into the silver-gray of the body, and a rusty red mark the color of dried blood appears. The mark is in the shape of a miniature lipstick kiss mark.

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT THINGS

Ilsabet's kiss is a lazy creature, preferring to avoid moving if it can. This makes it easy for would-be alchemists and poisoners to keep. So long as it is sufficiently fed, an Ilsabet's kiss will sit idly in whatever container it is placed in. However, after two to three days without feeding, a kiss will venture out to seek food, leave a trail of webbing behind it and making the area around it a deathtrap.

Ilsabet's kisses are among the most toxic living creatures known to man. Their bites are lethal, their webbings poisonous, and the very air around them is toxic. Additionally, Ilsabet's kisses spin their webbing near continuously. This causes their nests to be cloaked in heavy layer of webbing, and also means that the spiders spin a line of web behind them as they crawl about, making surfaces they have passed across poisonous to the touch. There is no antidote to the venom of an Ilsabet's kiss.

Ilsabet's kisses can be found as prized and feared centerpieces in the collections of alchemists, wizards, and aristocrats with a penchant for the poisonous. The Obour family is known to have cultivated these spiders before their lands were conquered by the neighboring barony of Casse. Currently, rumors state that the mysterious procurers of the Red Vardo traffic in Ilsabet's kiss, but only the most powerful rulers of the Lands of the Mists traffic with them.

### Combat

Ilsabet's kisses rarely enter combat situations, preferring to sit in its web and wait for supper to fly in. Those kisses heroes might enter into combat are typically those who have escape from their owners out of hunger. Hungry Ilsabet's kisses are not picky about their food; people they happen across suit them fine.

The only tactic kisses use is to drop on to their victims from above and bite the first area of exposed skin they come across.

**Poison (Ex):** The bite of an Ilsabet's kiss carries a virulent poison. Those bitten by an Ilsabet's kiss must make a Fortitude saving throw with a DC of 30 or die as the five-part poison causes brain function to cease, blood to coagulate in the vein, heart fibrillation, asphyxiation to set in as the throat constricts, and bleeding in the digestive tract, followed by vomiting, which hastens asphyxiation.

**Toxic Web (Ex):** The Ilsabet's kiss' spinnerettes double are auxiliary poison glands, creating webbing that shares the spider's toxicity. The venom from a kiss' web can take effect in two ways.

**Contact:** Touching the webbing of an Ilsabet's kiss requires a Fortitude save at DC 15 or suffer 2d6 damage from poison, followed by an illness marked by fever, vomiting, and heart palpitations that lasts 1d10+6 days. A successful save reduces the result to 1d6 damage

from the poison, and illness lasting only 1d4 days. No natural healing takes place during the illness.

**Ingestion (less than 1 mg):** Should the webbing of an Ilsabet's kiss be ingested, doses of less than one milligram require a Fortitude save of DC 20 or suffer 2d6 poison damage. Further, the victim temporarily loses 2d6 Wis, suffering extreme mental confusion and basic sensory hallucinations (hearing noises, flashing lights, phantom touches, and so on), as well as raging fever and a 60% chance each hour of convulsions. Convulsions cause an additional 2d4 damage and require a Fortitude save with a DC of 10 to prevent the character from choking on his own tongue, although the aid of another character negates the damage and the need for a Fortitude save. The fever, mental confusion, hallucinations and convulsions last 1d10+6 days. Those who make the initial Fortitude save only lose 1d6 Wis temporarily and their convulsions do 1d4 damage. They still suffer mental confusion, hallucinations, fever, and the possibility of choking on their tongue. No natural healing takes place during the illness.

**Ingestion (1 mg or more):** Ingesting a milligram or more of Ilsabet's kiss webbing imposes all the effects of a least amount, plus the victim must make a second Fortitude save of DC 15. Failing the save means that the victim falls into a coma, losing 1 point of Constitution per day until they reach 0 and die. Successfully saving means that the victim falls into a coma, this time losing 1 point of Constitution every other day until they reach 0 and die. No natural healing takes place during the illness.

**Numbing Touch (Ex):** The legs of an Ilsabet's kiss rub against the tainted strands for its webbing every time the spider moves. As a result, the touch of a kisses legs carry a diluted form of their poison. Those who are touched by an Ilsabet's kiss make a Fortitude save at DC 10 or temporarily lose 1d3 Dex. Those who pass this save suffer no penalty from this form of the spider's toxins.

**Tainted Air (Ex):** The power of the Ilsabet's kiss' toxin is so great that the very air around its nest becomes tainted with the traces of its venom. Those who breath the air within a 2 foot radius of a kiss' nest must make a Fortitude save at DC 10 to shrug off this taint. Those who fail are paralyzed for the next 1d4+1 rounds.

## CAVE ANTS

*"... Deep inside this urn is a colony of cave ants. These creatures never see the light. When they do, they become frantic, confused. They secrete a drug that rubs off on the sand. . ."*

—*Baroness of Blood*, pg. 57

### Fine Vermin

**Hit Dice:** 1/8 d8 (1 hp)

**Initiative:** +2 (Dex)

**Speed:** 20 ft.

**AC:** 18 (+8 size)

**Attacks:** None

**Damage:** None

**Face/Reach:** 1/12 ft. by 1/12 ft. / 0 ft.

**Special Attacks:** Secret Drug, Dig

**Special Qualities:** Vermin

**Saves:** Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0

**Abilities:** Str 1, Dex 10, Con 10, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 2

**Skills:** Hide +15

---

**Climate/Terrain:** Underground

**Organization:** Colony (20–100)

**Challenge Rating:** 1/8

**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** Always neutral

**Advancement:** 1/4 d8 HD (Fine)

Originally found in mountainous caves in the barony of Kislova, cave ants have since been found in caverns beneath a number of realms. These creatures are inoffensive, but are capable of producing a by-product that many mages, alchemists, and doctors are interested in.

Cave ants are small ants with vibrant green, translucent bodies and large blind white eyes. The cave ants have no sting and their mouths are useless for biting. The ants live by harvesting molds and other inoffensive growths from cave walls. Cave ants fill one of the lowest niches in the underground ecosystem.

Cave ants live only in lightless, sandy-floored underground chambers. Colonies tunnel under the sand and construct small cities with their cement-like spittle.

The most useful aspect of cave ants is that when they are exposed to light of any kind, the ants panic, secreting large amounts of psychotropic chemicals into the sand around them. This sand, when ground with the bodies of a few cave ants, creates a powerful psychoactive chemical called ‘battle wind,’ once used by the Obour family on the battlefield, which acts as an

altered form of the confusion spell with the results as seen on the table below.

### 1d10 Behaviour

- |     |   |
|-----|---|
| 1   | Wander about babbling for 1 round                             |
| 2–3 | Stare at hallucinatory lights, colors, and sounds for 1 round |
| 4–9 | Attack nearest creature for 1 round                           |
| 10  | Sit and weep for 1 round                                      |

This effect is completely chemical and is not affected by dispel magic or similar effects.

It is possible that cave ants could be used to produce magic items with similar effects. Civil authorities in Darkon, Dementlieu and Nova Vaasa have recently been attempting to halt the trade in a new drug called ‘green sand,’ that is believed to be derived from ‘battle wind.’

## Combat

Cave ants have no means of attack. They are merely inoffensive creatures that produce an unusual by-product. If attacked, they will take one of two actions.

**Secrete Drug:** When panicked, either by attack or by light, cave ants will secrete the psychoactive chemical that is the primary ingredient of ‘battle wind’ and ‘green sand.’ This has no effect on characters attempting to combat cave ants.

**Dig:** Cave ants may attempt to escape by digging into the sand in which they may their home. Cave ants can travel at their full movement rate in any direction through sand.

## FUMEWOOD TERMITE

*"Much of the growth here was old pine, blighted and misshapen. The trunks crawled with some sort of termite that devoured flesh as readily as it did wood."*

—*Spectre of the Black Rose*, pg. 169

### Fine Vermin

**Hit Dice:** 1/4 d8 (1 hp)

**Initiative:** +2 (Dex)

**Speed:** 20 ft., climb 20 ft.

**AC:** 20 (+8 size, +2 Dex)

**Attacks:** Bite +3 melee

**Damage:** Bite 1d3–2

**Face/Reach:** 1/12 ft. by 1/12 ft. / 0 ft.

**Special Attacks:** Bore, Poison, Under Your Skin

**Special Qualities:** Vermin

**Saves:** Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +0

**Abilities:** Str 5, Dex 14, Con 10, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 2

**Skills:** Spot +10, Climb +1, Hide +20

**Feats:** Weapon Finesse (bite)

**Climate/Terrain:** Temperate forest

**Organization:** Swarm (20–50), or colony (200–500)

**Challenge Rating:** 1/6

**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** Always neutral

**Advancement:** 1/2 d8 HD (Fine); 1d8 HD (Diminutive)

The region of Sithicus houses a species of omnivorous termites that devour flesh and wood with equal appetite. Fumewood termites are plump gray ant-like insects with jagged, oversized mandibles. Unlike other breeds, Fumewood termites do not fly, though some still retain twisted vestigial wings. Like ants, Fumewood termites can carry hundreds of times their own weight.

Fumewood termites build colonies in and beneath the twisted pines of Sithicus' Fumewood. Like standard termite colonies, the colonies of Fumewood termites revolve around protecting and supporting the queen termite and her young.

The major difference between Fumewood termites and their normal kin is that Fumewood termites live not only on wood pulp, but also on flesh. Small swarms of termites scour the woodland surrounding the colony for prey, typically other insects or small woodland mammals. The termites descend on their prey enmasse, like a horde of army ants, and begin boring through its

flesh at an incredible rate, much as normal termites bore through wood.

After killing their prey with their horrible bites, Fumewood termites will divide it into manageable loads and carry it back to the nest. Fumewood termites that are not part of a hunting swarm will also attack other living creatures, should they come in contact with them.

An average colony of Fumewood termites needs 2 pounds of meat, and a similar amount of wood, per day to survive.

Sithicans are well aware of this danger of the Fumewood, and those unfortunate enough to live near its borders keep a sharp eye out for infestations. Stories of loved ones slain by these ravenous pests, stripped to the bone before the eyes of friends and family, are common amongst the thors found in the Sithican wilds. In most villages, the remedy to an infestation of Fumewood termites is to pour boiling water down the colony's holes, burn the trees within the area of infestation, and finally, pour hot tar down the holes left behind.

## Combat

Either as a swarm or individually, once a Fumewood termite comes in contact with flesh, it will automatically attempt to bite with its wicked mandibles. A success allows the termite an attack of opportunity, during which it uses its Bore attack.

**Bore (Ex):** A Fumewood termite that lands a successful bite attack begins boring through the flesh as though it were wood. An acidic venom allows the termite to tunnel through its prey's flesh, doing 1d6+2 damage per turn. Every round after the first Bore attack, the termite receives an automatically successful Bore.

**Poison (Ex):** A successful Bore attack indicates that a Fumewood termite is secreting acidic venom from glands along its underside as it eats tunnels through the flesh of its victim. This poison requires a Fortitude save at DC 11. The poison does 1d2 Dex and 1d2 Str initial and secondary damage.

**Under Your Skin (Ex):** Once the termite has burrowed beneath one's skin, it is extremely difficult to get out. Removal requires that the insect, identifiable by the small moving lump beneath the victim's skin, be cut out. This procedure requires one round and does 1d4 damage to the victim. Further, cutting the termite out only has a 50% chance of killing the insect.



# PHANTOM CARCASS

## DUALITY IN DEATH

by Eric Dashen (Malcolm Harrison)

stagemanager27@hotmail.com

**Author's Note:** This monster is inspired by Margaret Weiss' and Tracy Hickman's lazar in the Death Gate Cycle's *Fire Sea*.



elinda, for Ezra's sake, sit down. You're driving me crazy with your pacing."  
"You crazy?!? I'm going crazy. It's my husband they're trying to revive over there."

She stopped pacing for a moment to point out the window at the church. Jacob ran his fingers through his hair and sighed. Melinda continued to pace in front of the fire, the light reflecting off her tears.

"Look," Jacob began. He stood and crossed to her. "Everything will be fine. The priests are doing their best."

"They'd better do better than their best. I don't think I could stand loosing him again." Melinda sobbed and dug her face into Jacob's chest.

"It'll be alright," Jacob wrapped his arms around his sister. Someone knocked at the door. Melinda lifted her head, a smile growing on her face. "It's him, I know it. It worked." She pulled away from Jacob and ran to the door, swinging it open wide. Melinda threw her arms around her husband.

Melinda went white, paralyzed with fear. His skin was cold to the touch, grayish in appearance. A scent of decay lingered about him. The knife wound in his back still bled. His eyes sat motionless in their sockets. Melinda screamed and stepped back towards Jacob. Suddenly the body shifted, wavered, dissolved. A second, ethereal form emerged. The phantom reached out his hand to touch his wife. The carcass did the same.

"Melinda," it said. "I've come back."

"...come back," echoed the carcass.

## PHANTOM CARCASS

<b>Climate/Terrain</b>	Any Land
<b>Frequency</b>	Rare
<b>Organization</b>	Solitary
<b>Activity Cycle</b>	Night
<b>Diet</b>	None
<b>Intelligence</b>	Average (8 - 10)
<b>Treasure</b>	P
<b>Alignment</b>	Lawful Evil
<b>No. Appearing</b>	1-3
<b>Armor Class</b>	8 or as armor
<b>Movement</b>	10
<b>Hit Dice</b>	6
<b>THAC0</b>	14
<b>No. Attacks</b>	1
<b>Damage/Attack</b>	as weapon
<b>Special Attacks</b>	See below
<b>Special Defenses</b>	See below
<b>Magic Resistance</b>	See below
<b>Size</b>	M (6' tall)
<b>Morale</b>	Elite (13)
<b>XP Value</b>	6,000

A Phantom Carcass can best be described as a disconnection of the soul from the body. A rare result of a Raise Dead spell, the two facets of the living, the corporal and the spiritual, fail to completely fuse into a living being. Instead, they remain separated in form, but are shackled together psychologically.

Retaining its living qualities, the phantom component thinks, plans, desires and communicates with the living and dead. It is not a pawn of the living. However, due to its ethereal nature, it cannot interact with the physical world. For that, it must rely on its solid counterpart, the carcass.

The carcass has become an empty shell. It is void of all life. It does not eat, drink or breathe. Instead, it mimics the actions of the phantom, giving the creature a strange duality. When the phantom speaks, the carcass echoes it. When the phantom walks, the carcass follows closely on its heels. If the carcass is tackled to the ground, the same appears to happen to the phantom. Such is the nature of the duality.

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT THINGS

Although they were once two halves of the same person, the two facets can never again become one. However, the phantom often tries to reunite itself with its body, dissipating into the carcass. The result is always immediate failure; the carcass rejects the phantom almost instantly. Therefore, a Phantom Carcass' appearance constantly shifts. One moment the withering phantom is visible, only to dissolve into the rotting carcass, and then emerge once more.. Even seasoned veterans find the sight of this creature terrifying.

A phantom carcass may be created when a priest attempts a *raise dead* spell. This will happen for one of two reasons. Firstly, the body may have been dead for too long for the *raise dead* spell to be effective. (A priest may only raise a body that has been dead for a number of days equal to or less than the priest's experience level.) If this is the case, the soul has left the body and cannot be fully raised. For every day past this time, there is a 3% chance (with a maximum of 15%) that the priest will raise a phantom carcass. This may only be attempted once.

The second way is for the dark powers to taint the priest's magic. For every powers check the priest has failed and not redeemed, there is a 5% (maximum 30%) chance that his or her spell will be corrupted and a Phantom Carcass will be created. When both of these conditions occur, use the sum of the two percentages.

### Combat

Whatever skills or knowledge it learned while living, the Phantom Carcass retains. It can cast spells and wield weapons as it did in life. However, because the carcass must imitate the phantom's actions, the creature is slow, suffering a +1 penalty to initiative.

Additionally, like most undead, a Phantom Carcass exists in the Negative Material plane. It can therefore drain one experience level on a successful roll to hit. If the carcass is wielding weapons, the undead creature cannot use this ability.

Furthermore, on the annual anniversary of its creation, a Phantom Carcass can recast the spell that created it. In game terms, the undead creature can raise 1d4 additional Phantom Carcasses from recent corpses (3 to 5 days old.) The newly created Phantom Carcasses will act of their own free will and are not subject to the demands of their creator.

Any weapon without magical enchantments can only wound the physical carcass, not the phantom. While wounds do appear on the carcass, it is magically held together and cannot be destroyed or dismembered. However, if struck by magical weapons, the phantom aspect of the creature will suffer the full damage. When the phantom is merged with the carcass, both aspects can be attacked as normal. Once a Phantom Carcass

reaches zero hit points, the body collapses to the ground. The phantom, freed from its torment, briefly resembles its living self before entering the afterlife.

A Phantom Carcass is immune to sleep, charm, hold, death magic, poisons and cold based spells. A Phantom Carcass is treated as a wraith on the Turning Undead table.

### Habitat / Society

Phantom Carcasses usually dwell near where they did in life. They hope to gain a new sense of existence. However, this is impossible in their current condition and only feeds their hate of the living. Because of this jealousy, Phantom Carcasses are Lawful Evil with regards to alignment. Their ultimate goal is to cease their suffering or force everyone to suffer along with them.

### Ecology

Due to their rarity, Phantom Carcasses are solitary creatures. However, if two should meet, they will most likely stick together. It allows them a chance to interact and reminisce about when they were living.





# UTBURD

## A TINY BUNDLE OF HATRED

by Stefan MAC

mac\_cosfilow@hotmail.com



o most people, the death of a child is the greatest tragedy a family can experience. Unfortunately, life is hard in many lands, and sometimes, if there is not enough food to keep it alive, a baby is abandoned to the wilds. As dreadful as it is to sacrifice one so that the rest of the family can live, sometimes, in the depths of the night, something answers the tiny wail, and the result is much, much worse...

### UTBURD

<b>Climate/Terrain</b>	Any
<b>Frequency</b>	Rare
<b>Organization</b>	Solitary
<b>Activity Cycle</b>	Night
<b>Diet</b>	Nil
<b>Intelligence</b>	Semi (3)
<b>Treasure</b>	Nil
<b>Alignment</b>	Chaotic Evil
<hr/>	
<b>No. Appearing</b>	1
<b>Armor Class</b>	0
<b>Movement</b>	4, Fl 16 (C)
<b>Hit Dice</b>	5
<b>THAC0</b>	16
<b>Attacks</b>	2
<b>Damage</b>	See below
<b>Special Attacks</b>	See below
<b>Special Defenses</b>	See below
<b>Size</b>	T (infant human)
<b>Morale</b>	Fearless (20)
<b>Magic Resistance</b>	15%
<b>XP Value</b>	950

The utburd is the spirit of an infant that was abandoned to the elements because the parents could not afford or would not make the effort to keep it alive. The creature's wails can be heard for up to a mile away. Strangely, regardless how close one gets to the spirit, its cries still seem to come from far away, making it somewhat difficult to track. It spends the majority of its time invisible, but when visible or seen via magical means, it looks like an infant suffering from an advanced case of the exposure that killed it, and may also have obvious wounds, inflicted on its body by

scavengers. The spirit is always wrapped in a dirty blanket of some sort. It has solid white eyes and tightly clenched fists; despite its apparent blindness, the utburd seems to be able to see quite well.

### Combat

The utburd does not usually engage in combat until it has gained sufficient strength to do so. It gains that strength by draining it from those it encounters, or the area surrounding the place where it died. When a potential victim comes by, it will reveal itself and begin wailing to attract their attention. Those who meet the utburd's gaze must make an immediate save vs. paralyzation. Those who fail are petrified with fear, but are allowed a new check each round to shake it off. The utburd will crawl or fly to those who have succumbed to its gaze and wrap its tiny arms around them. Each round that it remains in contact it drains 1d4 points of strength from them, and for each two points drained, the spirit gains one. At the DM's option, this may call for a horror check as well. Once it has drained the victim to half of his original strength score, it will either move to the next target or fly away. Lost strength is regained at a rate of 1 point per day. On the other hand, if none of those that see it succumb to its attack, it will immediately return to its invisible state and attempt to escape. If the spirit is unable to find any victims in its area, however, it will gain one point of strength for each three nights that pass.

Once the utburd has reached a strength score of 10 it becomes solid and is able to deal damage in combat, although it will often continue draining strength until it reaches a score of 18, a desire that possibly hearkens back to its helplessness in life. When in combat, each of its fists can strike for 1d6 points of damage, plus whatever bonuses to hit and damage it may have gained. In addition to its basic damage, the touch of an utburd deals 1d4 points of damage with each hit due to some aspect of its death. If a character loses 25% of his original hit points due to this attack, he must make another save vs. paralyzation or experience a small portion of the spirit's constant anguish, leading to a

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT THINGS

special effect based on the type of utburd attacking (see below).

When physically fighting, the utburd will stay in flight as much as possible, and will use its ability to turn invisible in order to sow confusion and fear in its enemies. If both of its fists make a successful hit in the same round, it will latch on to its victim and spend the next round attacking one of his senses or extremities. If the victim fails a save vs. spell the target is destroyed, and the victim immediately suffers all the appropriate penalties. For instance, if an utburd were to attack the victim's eyes and the victim fails his save, the eyes are destroyed and the victim suffers all the effects of blindness. During this round any attacks made to the creature will automatically hit, but the victim will suffer half damage. The utburd will only use this if its victim is alone or if its is exacting revenge, as if the attack is successful, it will immediately lose all strength it may have drained, and be unable to use its paralysis gaze until the next night.

As the utburd are undead creatures, they share all of the basic immunities with the exception that any spell dealing with the type of exposure that killed it will slow the spirit for one round per level of the caster. Holy symbols and holy water are ineffectual against the spirit, but the utburd cannot cross a line of powdered charcoal, and is repelled by milk, either fresh or sour, being unable to approach within 10 feet. In fact, fresh milk is most effective against the spirit, as it will take 4d6 damage if splashed by the liquid. The spirit is normally corporeal, and can be hit with normal weapons when in that state. It can, however, assume the form of a glowing mist at will. When in that form, the creature can be hit only by magical or cold-forged iron weapons. Should the spirit be reduced to 0 hit points but not laid to rest it will dissipate until the next anniversary of its death.

To appease the spirit and end its existence, its bones must be found and blessed (bathing them in holy water will suffice; only the spirit is immune to holy water). Every bone must be found and treated for this to be effective, which can lead to problems if a great deal of time has passed or scavengers have been at work in the area. Small villages will often be forced to live with the spirit for a long time, as the local priests rarely have spellcasting powers or access to holy water.

### Habitat/Society

Utburd are found in poor societies and harsh climates. The majority of them are encountered near small villages, although crowded cities very occasionally spawn one of these creatures. A haunting will begin on the first anniversary of the spirit's death, and will continue until the utburd is laid to rest. During that time, it will fly to its village each night and move

among the houses, drawing strength from the surroundings and those foolish enough to be outside after dark. Crawling around the buildings and flitting across open spaces, it moves from shelter to shelter, wailing constantly. Occasionally, it will even peer into windows and rap on walls in an attempt to add to the terror it is causing. Once it has reached its full strength, it will fall silent and make for the house of its parents to exact revenge. A crack or keyhole is enough to permit entry of its mist form and once there, it will viciously attack whichever parent was most responsible for its abandonment until it has maimed them somehow. Once that is accomplished, the spirit loses its stolen strength and dissipates until the next night, when the process begins again. As time progresses, it will attack its other parent and siblings, and will also target any family that befriends its original family. If they are driven away due to its actions, the spirit will shift its focus to the closest neighbors and begin again.

The utburd will not purposely kill anyone from its village and will never kill a member of its family. Its hatred is such that it gains much more pleasure from the misery its nightly visits cause. To those from outside its family, however, it feels no such restraint, and will kill them without mercy. Despite its infant intelligence, the creature possesses a high degree of cunning, and will use its knowledge of the village and the shadows between houses to full effect. It is worth noting that the spirit is unable or unwilling to travel more than a mile from the boundaries of its village, and so escape is possible to those who can evade it.

### Ecology

As it does not usually kill its victims, the utburd has no significant impact of the ecology of an area. On the rare occasions that someone does die from its attacks and is not buried, the local scavengers are able to take care of the body. On the other hand, the utburd's actions will eventually empty the village as people flee from its wrath. When everyone is gone, it will haunt the abandoned buildings, waiting for travelers. It is also believed that the essence of the creature can be used as an important ingredient in a chime of hunger.

Some sages suspect that the utburd is only created when it is maliciously left to die, regardless of the causes. For some reason, if the family honestly cannot manage to keep the child, or if one goes back after the death and buries the tiny corpse, the creature will not form. On the other hand, if a child is abandoned through simple carelessness or because it would be an inconvenience to the family, it almost always forms one of these spirits.

## Subtypes

### Arctic

The arctic utburd is the most common of types, and is found in polar regions, mountain ranges and forested areas where the winters are especially harsh. It will appear blue and shivering and deals cold damage to its victims. Those who suffer from its attack will be wracked with chills, and will be slowed for 1d6 rounds.

### City

The city utburd is the most rare of all the types, appearing with filthy, smeared skin and almost always with some sort of wound. Its blows force the victim to save vs. poison or be nauseated for 1d6 rounds, taking a -2 penalty to all attacks and saves.

### Desert

Those created in desert or plains areas appear as shriveled and brown, much like tiny mummies. The desert utburd does not have the ability to fly, and will rather burrow under the sand to suddenly appear under its opponents. Desert utburd drain water with each hit, the victim damaged in this fashion suffering from painful dehydration, forcing him to take a -2 penalty to all attacks and saves until he can replenish the lost water.

### Forest

Should the child be abandoned in a region that would normally spawn an arctic version, but during a warm season, a different version is instead formed. This kind is also often found in badlands or hilly regions, and appears emaciated and stiff. Its attack causes the victim to suffer the effects of a confusion spell, and it will often try to draw its victims deeper into the forest until they collapse from hunger or exhaustion.

### Tropical

Tropical utburd are found in jungle or swampy areas and are often bloated from the surrounding moisture. They force a victim to make a save vs. poison with each hit, failure meaning that a virulent tropical disease of the DM's choice has infected the victim. This may be as severe as the DM wishes, but should not be easy to recover from.

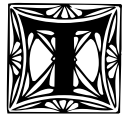
✖

# MARKOVIAN BROKEN ONE

## WHAT IS THE LAW?

by Andrew Wyaff

wyaff@kargafane.com



he Realm of Dread is home to many men that can claim an astonishing understanding of medicine and natural philosophy. However, in one field no sage or physician—whether renowned and respected or obscure and disreputable—is the equal of the madman Frantisek Markov: the anatomy and physiology of animals.

Through decades of observation, dissection, vivisection and arduous experimentation, Frantisek Markov has nearly perfected an abominable procedure for the transformation of an animal into an appalling creature with a suggestion of humanity. This procedure involves no arcane or divine magic, but the agonizing reconstruction of an entire organism's morphology through surgical and alchemical techniques. It demands the technical genius of a craftsman, the diligence and patience of a physician, and the cold detachment of a hog slaughterer. Unfortunately, Markov possesses all of these traits in spades.

*Denizens of Darkness* presents the broken one, a monster that can be used to represent the horrid offspring of Markov's procedure. Alternatively, DM's may wish to use the template presented here to create unique broken ones based on the animals in the *Monster Manual*. This template represents a typical Markovian broken one, whose animal origins are readily apparent. From time to time, Markov has managed to produce creatures that are very nearly human. These wretched souls are best represented by normal human characters, though their type remains "aberration". Unfortunately, these nearly flawless experiments degenerate into normal Markovian broken ones in 6d10 days, as their feral physical traits gradually reemerge. To Markov's supreme frustration, he has not yet found halt this regression entirely, though he can reverse it by subjecting the creature to another cycle of surgeries (see *Secrets of the Dread Realms*).

Markovian broken ones are humanoid creatures with the attributes of an animal blended in an awful

fashion with those of a man. Unlike some broken ones, those created by Markov always have the characteristics of a single animal. Their flesh is covered in fur or scales, and their overall appearance echoes their original shape in a most disturbing fashion. They tend to be less malformed than other broken ones, though their morphology always reflects the limits of their animal origins placed on the humanoid frame. Thus, a boar broken one has short, awkward limbs, a massive torso, and rudimentary fingers that suggest cloven hooves. Though their appearance reflects a tireless attempt at symmetry on Markov's part, hideous surgical scars always mar the flesh of his broken ones.

Markovian broken ones speak a horrifying pidgin of Balok and pained animal sounds. Their intelligibility is not assisted by their puffy, makeshift lips, or by tongues, vocal cords and nasal passages rendered raw and misshapen by surgery.

## CREATING A MARKOVIAN BROKEN ONE

"Markovian broken one" is a template that can be added to any animal of Small through Large size that has limbs and an internal skeleton (referred to hereafter as the "base animal"). The creature's type changes to "aberration" and its size changes to Medium-size. A Markovian broken one uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

**Speed:** The base animal's speed changes to 30 ft. If the base animal does not have a normal land speed (i.e. it only has a burrow, climb, fly, and/or swim speed), it gains a land speed of 30 ft. If the base animal has a burrow, climb, or swim speed, that speed is changed to half its normal value. If the base animal has a fly speed, it loses that form of movement.

**Attacks:** The broken one retains the natural attacks of the base animal, though the damage dealt by those attacks may be changed. Additionally, the broken one may now wield weapons as a humanoid would. A broken one that attacks with its natural weapons and wielded weapons in the same round suffers the normal –5 penalty, as if the wielded weapon were a secondary natural weapon. This penalty is reduced to –2 if the broken one has the Multiattack feat, which can be taken even if the broken one has less than three natural weapons. Obviously, a broken one that is carrying or wielding items cannot use its claw attacks or certain slam attacks. Broken ones are automatically proficient in the following weapons: dagger, sickle, club, halfspear, quarterstaff, shortspear, dart, sling, javelin, throwing axe, handaxe, greatclub, and shortbow.

**Damage:** The base damage dealt by a broken one's natural weapons changes to the values described in the table below:

Attack Type	Damage
Bite	1d4
Claw	1d4
Gore	1d6
Slam, Butt, Tail Slap, Hoof	1d3

**Face/Reach:** Changes to 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

**Special Attacks:** The broken one retains any special attacks possessed by the base animal. Rake attacks use the altered claw damage listed above.

**Special Qualities:** The broken one retains any special qualities possessed by the base animal, and also gains those listed below.

*Fast Healing (Su):* Broken ones have fast healing 1.

**Abilities:** Increase from the base animal as follows: Str +4, Dex –2, Con +8, Int +6, Cha +6.

**Skills:** Broken ones receive 12 extra skill points due to the awakening of their sentient minds. Any skills listed in the base animal's statistics may be purchased as class skills with these extra skill points. The following skills may also be purchased as class skills if they are not already listed in the base animal's entry: Animal Empathy, Balance, Climb, Craft, Handle Animal, Heal, Hide, Intimidate, Jump, Knowledge (nature), Listen, Move Silently, Spot, Swim, and Wilderness Lore. All other skills are considered cross-class skills of the purpose of spending these extra skill points. If the broken one later advances in a character class, its purchases skills as a normal character of that class would.

**Feats:** Broken ones gain the Alertness, Endurance, and Improved Initiative feats if they do not already possess them.

**Climate/Terrain:** Warm forest, hills, and mountains

**Organization:** Solitary, pair, gang (3–6), band (7–12 plus 1 petty chief of 2nd–4th level), or tribe (20–30 plus 2 petty chiefs of 2nd–4th level and 1 chief of 5th–7th level)

**Challenge Rating:** As the base animal +1

**Treasure:** No coins; 50% goods (no metal objects); 50% items (no metal objects)

**Alignment:** Usually neutral evil

**Advancement:** By character class

## MARKOVIAN BROKEN ONE CHARACTERS

A Markovian broken one's favored class is barbarian. Nearly all Markovian broken ones that advance in a character class are barbarians, though adepts, druids, and rangers have been known to occur. Other classes are virtually unheard of.

## SAMPLE MARKOVIAN BROKEN ONE

The example uses a cheetah as the base animal.

### Cheetah Markovian Broken One Medium-Size Aberration

**Hit Dice:** 3d8+18 (31 hp)

**Initiative:** +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

**Speed:** 30 ft.

**AC:** 14 (+3 Dex, +1 natural)

**Attacks:** Bite +7 melee, 2 claws +2 melee; or stone handaxe +7 melee; or stone shortbow +5 ranged

**Damage:** Bite 1d4+5, claw 1d4+2; stone handaxe 1d6+4; stone shortbow 1d6–1

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

**Special Attacks:** Trip

**Special Qualities:** Sprint, fast healing 1

**Saves:** Fort +9, Dex +6, Will +2

**Abilities:** Str 20, Dex 17, Con 23, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 12

**Skills:** Climb +10, Hide +6, Jump +10, Listen +7, Move Silently +7, Spot +7, Wilderness Lore +5

**Feats:** Alertness, Endurance, Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse (bite, claw)

**Sprint (Ex):** A cheetah broken one's sprint speed is 300 feet.

**Challenge Rating:** 3



# EXECUTIONERS

## FACES OF JUSTICE

by Wes Schneider  
dendread@home.com

### EXECUTIONER TREE

**Huge Plant**

**Hit Dice:** 9d10 +35 (90 hp)

**Initiative:** -2 (Dex)

**Speed:** 20 ft.

**AC:** 21 (-2 size, -2 Dex, +15 natural)

**Attacks:** 2 slams +12

**Damage:** Slam 2d6+9

**Face/Reach:** 10 ft. by 10 ft. / 15 ft.

**Special Attacks:** Executed grab, Execute

**Special Qualities:** Plant, fire vulnerability, half damage from piercing

**Saves:** Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +6

**Abilities:** Str 28, Dex 6, Con 21, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 11

**Climate/Terrain:** Any

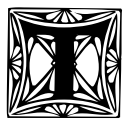
**Organization:** Solitary or grove (2-6)

**Challenge Rating:** 8

**Treasure:** Standard

**Alignment:** Chaotic evil

**Advancement Range:** 12-15 HD (Huge), 16-19 (Gargantuan)



he executioner tree is the dead gray husk of a once proud oak, birch, or yew, bent under the strain of countless nooses. From gnarled, claw-like branches dangle the remnants of past executions, moldering ropes suspending the broken-necked bodies of the executed. The passing of dozens of strangled souls under its bows imbues the tree with a wicked sentience and the deranged hatred of the living felt by all executed.

The futile thrashes and gurgling screams of the strangling have left their mark upon the tree, impressing its surface with the tortured images of their final moments. These subtle images seem to be pressing outwards, as if trying to escape the tree, and are noticed on a Spot check (DC 18). The bodies of the executed swing unnaturally in the twisted tree's branches, waiting for their host to drag the living near so they might have their own revenge.

### Combat

An executioner tree exists to sate the desire for vengeance of all those that died under its lifeless branches. It will usually seek to ambush enemies, remaining motionless until it may brutally strike an opponent. After the initial surprise a group is forced to face not just a vengeance-maddened giant, but also the undead things suspended from it, possibly while their companions slowly strangle.

**Executed Grab (Ex):** From a common executioner tree dangles 1d4 zombies. Every time the tree makes a successful strike against an opponent of up to medium-size, two zombies may attempt to grapple an enemy. If either succeeds they pull the victim into the tree with them and on the next round attempt to execute them. A turning attempt on the tree will affect only the undead in the tree, forcing them to drop grappled opponents and remain inactive. The death of the executioner tree destroys its resident zombies as well.

**Execute (Ex):** Once grappled, victims must make a successful Strength or Escape Artist roll (DC 17) to escape the grasping claws, ropes, and branches. If the victim fails they are fitted with a noose and dropped, where they begin to suffocate. Strangling victims may escape on a successful Escape Artist check (DC 20). If the executioner tree is defeated a strangling victim may be removed in one round.

**Plant:** Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and polymorphing. Not subject to critical hits.

## EXECUTED

### Medium-size Undead

**Hit Dice:** 3d12 (19 hp)

**Initiative:** +4 (Improved Initiative)

**Speed:** 30 ft.

**AC:** 12 (+2 natural)

**Attacks:** Death weapon +1 melee

**Damage:** As per death weapon

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

**Special Qualities:** Turn resistance +2, undead

**Saves:** Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +3

**Abilities:** Str 16, Dex 10, Con –, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 10

**Skills:** Intuit Direction +5 Listen +5, Move Silently + 5, Spot +5,

**Feats:** Exotic Weapon Proficiency, Improved Initiative

**Climate/Terrain:** Any

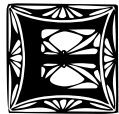
**Organization:** Solitary

**Challenge Rating:** 1

**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** Always chaotic

**Advancement Range:** 3–5 HD (Medium-size)



Executed are those who have faced the gallows, the headsman's axe, the pike, or countless other means of execution only to have their bodies reanimated by the hatred and lust for vengeance that they feel in their last moments.

These brutalized corpses appear as they did after their execution: headless, impaled, or strangled, but always reflecting the means of their extinction. In their hatred for the living they return to repay the favor, justly or unjustly, upon not only their executioners, but the entire world that ended their lives.

To aid them in their unholy crusades they employ the same methods that their slayers did. Most often, executed will drag behind them the same stained nooses or axes that ended their lives, but other weapons are possibilities. Those who died through torture ambush their victims and drag them back to their lair where foul devices await to claim more lives.

## Combat

Executed will attack any sentient creature, their hatred for the living knowing no bounds. They do gravitate towards those they feel are responsible for ending their lives, such as executioners, guardsmen and magistrates.

Though bloodthirsty, they are intelligent enough to avoid dangerous situations that may deny them their revenge. They attack with and are proficient users of the weapons and tools that directly caused their own death, commonly a headsman's axe or noose.

**Death Weapon:** Executed using a headsman's axe should be treated as using as great axe (1d12 damage). An impaling spike is used as a long spear (1d8 damage). Use of a noose should be considered a grappling attack at a –2 penalty. If the executed accomplishes and maintains a grapple the noose is closed and the victim is treated as if drowning. Each round following, a victim may attempt to escape with an Escape Artist check (DC 18), or by trying to break the grapple at a –2 penalty.

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



# FORGOTTEN HORRORS

## THREE NEW CREATURES TO EMERGE FROM THE MISTS

by Andrew Wyaff

wyaff@kargafane.com

### POLUDNICA

#### Medium-Size Fey

**Hit Dice:** 4d6+8 (22 hp)

**Initiative:** +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

**Speed:** 30 ft.

**AC:** 14 (+1 Dex, +3 natural)

**Attacks:** Sickle +5 melee

**Damage:** Sickle 1d6+3

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

**Special Attacks:** Gruesome harvest, gaze of madness, autumn breeze

**Special Qualities:** Through the rows, SR 21, low-light vision

**Saves:** Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +7

**Abilities:** Str 14, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 15, Wis 16, Cha 16

**Skills:** Hide +8, Knowledge (nature) +8, Listen +10, Move Silently +8, Spot +9

**Feats:** Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (sickle)

---

**Climate/Terrain:** Temperate plains

**Organization:** Solitary or sheaf (2–5)

**Challenge Rating:** 3

**Treasure:** No coins; 50% goods; 50% items

**Alignment:** Always neutral evil

**Advancement:** 5–8 HD (Medium-size)

Also known as *harvest maidens*, poludnicas are beautiful fey that lurk on the fringes of farms and orchards. Unfortunately, their comeliness conceals an unspeakable bloodlust, and their very gaze can drive men to madness.

Poludnicas appear as statuesque young women of extraordinary beauty. Their alabaster skin is flawless and their raven tresses luxurious and wild. They shroud themselves heavy folds of coarse white cloth, and carry razor-sharp sickles encrusted with dried blood. A poludnica's expression never seems to change, set permanently in a thin, crooked smile.

Polunicas have few interests other than wanton murder. They spend most of their time lounging idly near stream beds or in small copses of trees, primping

themselves and mutilating the remains of their victims for amusement. Polunicas generally prefer solitude, but occasionally a small group of the creatures will begin cooperating, hunting as a pack and glorying in their slaughter together. Rarely, they have been known to serve hags or evil druids in return for a steady supply of victims.

Though Poludnicas understand Sylvan, they appear to be mute, or least unwilling to speak. They communicate with one another through simple gestures and pantomime.

### Combat

Polunicas are skilled stalkers and assassins, observing their opponents for some time before claiming them quickly and silently, one at a time. They prefer to use their gaze attack to render their opponents confused and distracted, then close in for a fatal blow to the neck.

**Gruesome Harvest (Su):** Poludnicas attack opponents with sickles, which act as *+1 keen vorpal sickles* in their hands. In the hands of any other creature, these sickles are merely masterwork sickles.

**Gaze of Madness (Su):** Insanity, 30 feet, Madness save (DC 15).

**Autumn Breeze (Sp):** Poludnicas can use *wind wall* at will, as the spell cast by a 5th-level sorcerer. The save DC is 15.

**Through the Rows (Su):** Poludnicas can move through plains terrain, including agricultural areas, as though affected by the spell *pass without trace*.



## NOCNITSA

### Medium-Size Aberration (Shadow)

**Hit Dice:** 6d8+6 (33 hp)

**Initiative:** +2 (+2 Dex)

**Speed:** Fly 40 ft. (good)

**AC:** 18 (+2 Dex, +6 natural)

**Attacks:** 2 claws +8 melee, bite +3 melee

**Damage:** Claw 1d4+4, bite 2d4+2

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

**Special Attacks:** Gaze of slumber, blood drain

**Special Qualities:** Alternate form, immunities, unnatural, damage reduction 10/+1, darkvision 60 ft.

**Saves:** Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +8

**Abilities:** Str 19, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 16, Cha 15

**Skills:** Hide +9\*, Listen +10, Move Silently +9, Search +9, Spot +10

**Feats:** Flyby Attack, Power Attack

**Climate/Terrain:** Any temperate land and underground

**Organization:** Solitary or pack (2–5)

**Challenge Rating:** 5

**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** Always chaotic evil

**Advancement:** 6–12 HD (Medium-size)

Nocnitsas, or *night terrors* are eerie predators, not quite shadow but not quite flesh. Slinking under cover of darkness, they seek living blood. Unlike the dreaded vampire, nocnitsas are not undead, but something decidedly unnatural nonetheless.

A nocnitsa appears to be a stooped shadowy humanoid, vaguely suggestive of an old, withered crone—albeit the height of a formidable man. Though a head and arms are easily discerned, the nocnitsa’s lower half trails off into wisps of darkness, like a tattered skirt. The creature’s fingers end in wicked claws, and its only facial features are two white spots that serve as eyes and a mouth filled with crooked fangs.

Like vampires, nocnitsas survive on the blood of living creatures, swooping about the countryside each night in search of such sustenance. They often develop a taste for feeding from the same creature each night, which makes their predations relatively easy to detect. The Vistani word for nocnitsa translates loosely as “visiting grandmother” and the gypsies are thought to be protected against the feedings of such creatures. The Vistani have been known to claim from time to time that nocnitsas are born from *giorgios’* fears of the dark and the night.

Nocnitsas speak Abyssal. They often emit terrible, wheezing yowls when attacking.

## Combat

Though powerful and cunning, nocnitsas usually prefer to flee if they are facing more than one opponent.

Barring this, they will use their gaze to eliminate the strongest combatants, and then close in on physically weaker opponents to drain their blood.

**Gaze of Slumber (Su):** Sleep for 1d4+4 minutes, 30 feet, Will save (DC 15). This ability can affect creatures with any number of Hit Dice. The nocnitsa’s blood drain ability (see below) never awakens a creature affected by its gaze. The effects of this ability are otherwise as the *sleep* spell.

**Blood Drain (Ex):** A nocnitsa can suck blood from a helpless living opponent as a full-round action, or from any living opponent by making a successful grapple check. If it pins the foe, it drains blood, inflicting 1d4 points of permanent Constitution drain each round the pin is maintained. This blood drain does not awaken an opponent affected by a nocnitsa’s gaze of slumber ability (see above).

**Alternate Form (Su):** A nocnitsa can assume the form of a raven as a standard action. This ability is similar to the spell *polymorph self* cast by a 7th-level sorcerer. The nocnitsa can remain in this form for as long as it wishes, and returning to its normal form is a standard action.

**Immunities (Ex):** Nocnitsas are immune to poison, disease, sleep, paralysis, and stunning. They are not subject to critical hits or subdual damage.

**Unnatural (Ex):** Nocnitsas can be turned (though not rebuked or commanded) as if their creature type was “undead”. They cannot attack a creature holding a cold iron dagger that is affected by the spell *bleed weapon*; this effect is similar to the spell *sanctuary*. Nocnitsas cannot cross a line of iron filings, and cannot act to break such a line directly.

**Skills:** Nocnitsas receive a +8 racial bonus to Hide checks in shadowy surroundings.

## SRAT

### Tiny Magical Beast

**Hit Dice:** 1d10+1 (5 hp)

**Initiative:** +4 (+4 Dex)

**Speed:** 10 ft., fly 60 ft. (good)

**AC:** 18 (+2 size, +4 Dex, +2 natural)

**Attacks:** Claws +1 melee

**Damage:** Claws 1d4–1

**Face/Reach:** 2 ½ ft. by 2 ½ ft./0 ft.

**Special Attacks:** Flame bolts, rapacious gaze

**Special Qualities:** Immunities, damage reduction 10/+1, low-light vision, darkvision 60 ft.

**Saves:** Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +2

**Abilities:** Str 8, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 7, Wis 14, Cha 11

**Skills:** Hide +13, Listen +7, Move Silently +7, Spot +5

**Feats:** Weapon Finesse (claws)

---

**Climate/Terrain:** Any temperate land

**Organization:** Solitary

**Challenge Rating:** 1

**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** Always neutral evil

**Advancement:** 2 HD (Tiny)

Srats, also known as *Croesian falcons*, are strange magical companions, created by evil spellcasters to serve as thieves and spies. Though less powerful than a true familiar, a srat has sinister abilities that allow it to prey upon those its master envies and hates.

Srats resemble the peregrine falcons from which they are created, save that their feathers are uniformly slate blue and their beak and talons oily black. Their eyes glitter with malign intelligence. When attacking, a srat becomes wreathed in pearly phantom flames.

Though the process of creating srats is thought to have originated in Barovia or Gundarak, the secret has spread throughout the Core. It is relatively simple procedure, and one that often appeals to evil spellcasters swollen with revenge or avarice. Some legends say that srats are heralds of a forgotten god of greed. They are utterly evil, though they often conceal their foul intentions well. Frequently, they filch items from their master's enemies and loved ones alike without orders to do so.

Srats cannot speak, but at their creation they gain the ability to understand one language known by their creator.

## Combat

Srats rarely engage other creatures in battle, save when their masters explicitly order them to do so. Such occurrences are rare, however, as srats excel principally at theft and reconnaissance. If threatened, a srat will unleash a flame bolt or two, then beat a hasty retreat.

**Flame Bolts (Su):** Once every three rounds, a srat can create a fiery bolt as the spell *flame arrow* cast by a 5th-level sorcerer. The Reflex save DC is 12.

**Rapacious Gaze (Su):** Teleport an object in creature's possession, 60 feet, Will save (DC 10 + ½ srat's master's HD). This ability summons an item currently worn or carried by the srat's opponent into the hands of the srat's master. The ability functions as if the object were affected by *Drawmij's instant summons*, and is similar to that spell cast by a 15th-level sorcerer in all other respects. Whether or not the save is successful, that creature cannot be affected again by that srat's rapacious gaze ability for one day.

**Immunities (Su):** A srat has fire immunity.

## Creating a Srat

**Requirements:** To create a srat, a spellcaster must use *summon monster I* to summon a hawk at midnight on a moonless night. He must then cast *flame arrow* and *resist elements* on the hawk, the former functioning as if the hawk were a projectile weapon. The caster must then feed the hawk a garnet worth at least 500 gp. Immediately thereafter, the hawk transforms into a srat. The creature will not disappear once the duration of *summon monster I* expires, and from then on radiates faint alteration magic. A spellcaster can only create or possess one srat companion at a time. A srat is not a familiar, cohort, or follower; a spellcaster may have both a familiar and a srat companion at the same time. For all practical purposes, a srat functions as an animal companion, such as those gained through *animal friendship*. It is a special companion, however, and does not count against a spellcaster's HD limit for animal companions. Creating a srat is an evil act and requires a powers check with a 3% chance of failure.



# FELAURAGOTH

## SWORD OF HUMANITY'S ROT

by Ryan Naylor

[ryan@kargafane.com](mailto:ryan@kargafane.com)



he witch waved her hand, and an invisible force dragged my paralyzed body into the air. The cacophony of ravens' calls was deafening. She stared at me, her face as beautiful and remote as the moon. I wanted to scream and wail, to beg for my life and forgiveness from this terrifying sorceress, but her fell magic prevented me from moving so much as a muscle. Still, she somehow sensed my unspoken thoughts.

"I consider abusing my hospitality a grave offense, mademoiselle. I requested that you remain in your rooms, but your captain chose to ignore that request." Here, she turned to the raven perched on her shoulder and stroked its beak lovingly. Trapped within my own body, I screamed. Holy Ezra, let that not happen to me. "Animals are so much... nobler than humans, are they not? Simple, unconditional love. They never break laws or tell lies." Her hard tone changed suddenly. "Or steal. Do they, Babette?"

She looked up from the raven on her shoulder to stare directly into my face, and the blood froze in my veins. In that one look, I saw her insanity, her callousness—her evil. Her beautiful black eyes forecast my death as surely as any oracle. She smiled, and waved a hand. Every raven in the room—the remains of my shipmates—rose up, and flew towards the windows. The glass burst from its frames, and the birds flapped ponderously out to join the raucous cloud surrounding the tower.

Then, the force holding my body in the air seized me again, and hurled me through the shattered glass.

I plunged towards the ground from the very top of the bleak tower. If I had been able, I would have screamed or filled my pants, but the witch's paralysis still held me. The freezing wind stung my eyes and roared in my ears as I fell towards my death, but the calls of the ravens and the dark flashes of their odious bodies around me was still more overpowering.

Just a few meters from the ground, my descent abruptly stopped. For a moment, I thought that I had been smashed against the lifeless rocks; colored lights burst before my eyes and my entire body ached from the sudden stop. Before I could regain my composure

the force seized me again. This time, the gray breakers of the Nocturnal Sea seemed to promise my death.

"Theft is a symptom of the malaise that plagues humanity," came the sourceless voice of the wizardess. "A betrayal of trust, a filthy example of the degeneracy of 'the masters of Creation', and an action that must be purged from our race. Still, I like you, Babette. You were the only one to protest against the captain's plan to take advantage of my kindness. So I have prepared a special fate for you." My heart trembled, and I almost hoped it would give out.

At the edge of the island, the force dropped me. I landed heavily in a tiny skiff, barely suitable for traveling a lake, let alone the fierce Nocturnal Sea. I groaned—the first noise I had been able to make since reaching for that hideous sword in her tower. Finding that my aching body had returned to my control, I lifted my head. Immediately, I was transfixed by those black eyes. She stood on the shore next to the skiff, her long hair and cloak streaming in the wind.

"Return to Egertus, and the adventuring life that you led. Fight the evil that lurks in the hearts of humanity. But let all know of the Mistress of the Isle of Ravens and the penalties for trespassing on my time." Tears formed in my eyes, but I was unable to look away from her unforgiving gaze. This was no reprieve she was offering me; my fate had been sealed the moment I touched the sword in her sanctum.

She nodded, as though satisfied with some answer I had offered her, and the skiff began to float out to sea in defiance of the tide. I watched in mindless terror as she raised her hood and began to walk back to her tower. Ravens settled all over her.

I remained cowering on the floor of the tiny boat long after she had disappeared from sight, and the sound of beating wings and birdcalls had faded from my ears. Only then did my pulse slow, and was I able to sit up and take stock of my situation.

"I have decided that you may keep Felauragoth," came her voice from behind me. I leaped to my feet with a scream, and almost tumbled into the sea. A raven was perched on the bow of the skiff. It ruffled its feathers, and cocked its head. When its ugly bill opened, the words of its terrible mistress emerged.

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT THINGS

“After all, you seemed so attached to it in the tower, and I think it will be of much more use to you than I. Humans are beasts at heart, Babette, and my little present will prove this to you. Good bye, Babette. I wish you luck in finding some innate value to mankind.”

There was a metallic thunk from behind me, and the pommel of a sword brushed my ankle. Immediately, a wave of anger rushed over me. *How dare she treat me like this?* I thought furiously. *How dare she?* I stepped towards the raven, hoping to catch it and tear it apart, to show the witch what I thought of her arrogant predictions.

As soon as my foot broke contact with the sword, my insane rage faded. The raven spread its wings and flapped ponderously away, cawing continuously. It sounded like it was laughing at me.

I crouched at the bow of the skiff until we reached Egertus, as far away from the hideous sword as possible. I was too afraid to touch it again, and when I returned to the skiff after a night of trying to forget, it was gone.

—Excerpt from the journal of Babette l’Jeunese, Dementlieuse explorer, 750 BC

### APPEARANCE

Felauragoth the Devourer is an unattractive weapon by any standard. It is made of a single lump of dull gray iron, beaten into the rough shape of a sword by magic. If the handle was ever fitted with a grip to make it more comfortable for the wielder, it has long since been removed, leaving only a rod of bare metal. The blade is thick, and has no sharp edge; only its magic gives Felauragoth its keenness and allows it to be wielded as anything but a heavy, unwieldy club.

Felauragoth’s unnerving effect lies in its numerous carvings more than its unusual design. Even a cursory glance at the sword leaves one with the impression a powerfully evil artifact. The edges of the blade are decorated with flying ravens, and the center rises up into an elaborate spine of screaming, tortured faces. The pommel bears the leering visage of a horned fiend, with eyes of crystal. These appear to change color, and the carvings of the blade seem to shift and change expression, depending on the sword’s mood and degree of hunger.

The Devourer’s huge size and weight—when uncharged it is almost impossibly heavy to wield—forces its possessor to wield it as a bastard sword. It also, perhaps, suggests something of the size and strength of the creatures hidden on the Isle of Ravens. After all, the island’s lord must have forged it for someone, and they must be strong enough to use it. In any event, it should come as no surprise that

Felauragoth was originally intended as some variety of life-stealing sword, drawing upon the life energy it steals to power its evil magic. Every time the Devourer kills an opponent, their spirit is drawn into the sword. The victim’s life energy is slowly siphoned away, until only a tiny kernel of agonized soul remains. This, of course, prevents Felauragoth’s victims from being raised, which would be fiendish enough even without the additional cruelties woven into the sword’s design. Somehow—perhaps through a miscast *permanency* spell, or perhaps through conscious malice—this energy constantly leaks away from the sword, making it necessary to perpetually “recharge” it.

### POWERS

Whenever Felauragoth inflicts a critical hit (which imposes one negative level on the victim) or deals a death blow, the sword absorbs a fraction of its victim’s life force, gaining one charge. Obviously, the Devourer can only draw life energy from creatures that are alive; constructs and undead are immune. At the DM’s discretion, creatures that have a soul but no life force (such as ghosts) or those with a life force but no soul (like oozes) may or may not be affected. If a single blow inflicts both a critical hit and a deathblow, Felauragoth gains two charges. The sword loses one charge every week as it consumes the energy trapped within itself.

Felauragoth’s wielder may use the Combat Reflexes feat as long as he wields the sword. Indeed, the Devourer is so thirsty for life force to ease its eternal hunger that it almost pulls itself towards vital areas.

Life energy constantly radiates from Felauragoth due to its unusual construction. This allows the wielder and those able to perceive this energy—undead, fey, and those with the Ghostsight feat, for example—to see by this energy as though it were broad daylight. The radius of this effect varies on how powerful the sword’s magic is at that point, but the ability costs no charges.

The wielder can also drain some of Felauragoth’s stored energy to heal herself. Expending two charges heals the wielder of 1d6+3 hp. However, this ability inflicts a great deal of pain on the Devourer, and it is loath to give up its energy. The wielder must make a Will save to overcome the sword’s will; the Difficulty Class is 17 (Felauragoth’s ego when uncharged).

Felauragoth is most tractable when it is moderately full; when it is either desperate for or bloated with life energy, it becomes more difficult to bend the sword to the will of the wielder.

No. Charge	Attack Bonus	Damage	Critical	Light Radius	Ego
0	+0	1d6	x2	0 ft	17
1–5	+1	1d10+1	19–20/ x2	20 ft	16
6–12	+2	1d10+2	19–20/ x2	40 ft	15
13–22	+3	1d10+3	19–20/ x2	60 ft	15
23+	+4	1d10+4	19–20/ x3	80 ft	16

## CURSES

Like any magic item in Ravenloft, Felauragoth's considerable power is offset by a horrific side effect. Those brave enough to wield Felauragoth must make a powers check every week the sword is carried, as well as whenever its vampiric healing is used, and those who are not chaotic evil receive one negative level as long as it is in their possession. Worse yet, if the wielder is killed, the Devourer instantly absorbs their spirit, condemning them to an eternity of anguish.

Felauragoth's magic is powered entirely by the energy of living creatures, and those who are slain by the sword are trapped forever within it. This is obviously a cruelly evil thing to knowingly inflict upon someone, and any paladin or good or neutral cleric who uses Felauragoth will find that their divine powers desert them. Similarly, being trapped inside the sword for eternity removes the victim's soul from the cycle of life—a deeply unnatural fate. For this reason, druids and rangers who wield Felauragoth also suffer the loss of their divine powers. Felauragoth was designed to corrupt and defile everything it touches, and those who serve higher powers are particularly vulnerable to this terrible purpose.

Felauragoth is intelligent; it is a gestalt of the powerless spirits trapped within it. However, it is almost entirely insane from its constant pain and hunger. This madness slowly bleeds into the mind of its wielder through empathic communication. Each week Felauragoth is carried, the wielder must make a Madness save (DC 13). Direct mental contact with the sword, through spells like *speaking with dead* or *detect thoughts*, is even more dangerous, as the spellcaster is assaulted with a babble of desperate, tormented voices. In this case, the Difficulty Class rises to 17. Any sort of destructive insanity, such as paranoia, nightmares of being trapped in the sword, increased aggression, outright psychopathic tendencies, or delusions of invulnerability, are all possible madness effects. Thus, anyone who holds Felauragoth is gradually driven to a destructive rampage by the babble of souls, which only

ends when they are slain and their soul joins the tormented throng. Then, Felauragoth is left to languish, slowly starving, until some other unfortunate stumbles across it.

## ADVENTURE IDEAS

It is relatively easy to introduce Felauragoth into a campaign. Perhaps the heroes are called to investigate some random murders around their hometown. Each victim has been hacked savagely to pieces, and the wounds all seem to have been made with an unnaturally sharp sword wielded by a madman. Alternatively, the heroes might be approached to help an ex-adventurer ally who recently seems to have plunged into madness. When they arrive, of course, the friend has been completely overpowered by Felauragoth's malign intelligence, and the heroes must track down their friend before he kills again.

As Felauragoth is quite a powerful weapon and most heroes are nothing if not sure of themselves, it is quite likely that one of them will decide to keep the sword. This is sure to attract some attention. Anyone who openly carries a weapon as hideous as Felauragoth is likely to be treated warily by almost everyone they encounter—which will only make the paranoia that the Devourer instills in its wielders all the more severe.

Felauragoth is also a useful way to introduce elements such as the Order of Guardians or the Fraternity of Shadows into the campaign. Both of these secret societies would be eager to get their hands on an evil artifact like this sword, although they would use very different tactics to obtain it from the heroes. The conflict between the Order and the Fraternity over Felauragoth, with the heroes caught in the middle, could easily form the basis of a mini-campaign.

Additionally, Babette l'Jeunese, the unlucky adventurer who brought the sword from the Isle of Ravens, relentlessly pursues the Devourer. Although this 10th-level fighter has a good heart, she has been embittered by the long trail of evil she has encountered in her pursuit of the evil item. Being true neutral, she will use almost any tactic to capture Felauragoth so that she can destroy it, and can easily come into conflict with the heroes over her obsession.

Unfortunately, not even Babette knows for certain how to destroy Felauragoth. The Devourer was entrusted to Babette to demonstrate that humans are selfish, violent monsters at heart. It is possible that proving this wrong with selfless sacrifice could be the key to the sword's destruction. A paladin or other noble character hurling himself in the sword's way to protect an innocent would certainly qualify for this.

Another possibility is returning the sword to the Isle of Ravens. It has been noted by many that the crystals in Felauragoth's pommel seem to be the

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT THINGS

repositories of Felauragoth's energy. Prying them out and feeding them to one of the transformed sailors from Babette's first journey to the island would likely disrupt the Devourer's terrible magic. Finding the correct raven and avoiding the island's mistress could make this very difficult, however.

Finally, breaking the sword across Ferran Shadowborn's coffin could free the spirits imprisoned within it, leaving the sword's evil contained within the corpse of the lodestone paladin. However, taking the sword into Shadowborn Manor—or even finding and entering that dread estate—carries its own considerable risks.

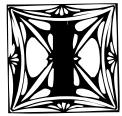
✕

# BLACKER'S AUTOMATIC HEAD

## THE DARK BREED OF SCIENCE IN RAVENLOFT

by Alexei Podgouzov (Igor the Henchman)

[archloner@hotmail.com](mailto:archloner@hotmail.com)



*walked through the illuminated halls of the manor, filled with awe by the colorful curtains, the enchanting sound of violins and the thousands of shadows that twinkled and twirled across the walls. Even though the masquerade ball had only just begun, already was I hypnotized by its splendor, as though magically enchanted by this winter night I knew I would never forget. As it came out, I proved to be horribly right, although now I wish nothing more than to forget that dreadful, accursed night and the horrors I witnessed. Unfortunately for me, I did not, could not suspect all this, as I walked through the crowded rooms, bewitched as I was.*

*My first suspicions were aroused near midnight. One by one, we suddenly realized that the master of the manor, Jacques Dufaux himself, was strangely absent during the whole evening. Where could he possibly be on his 50th anniversary? None of us knew where he was. Did he simply want to surprise us with another one of his famous tricks? Intrigued, we began to discretely look all over the manor, trying perhaps to spot our host among the many guests that filled the house...*

—From the papers of Sieur Pierre Valier

From within the shadows that fill the Demiplane, comes the enigmatic horror called *Blacker's automatic head*. Created by desperate hands of a madman, this abomination of science has been infused with a relentless hatred for all that lives.

There is hardly anything in the *head's* shape that marks it as the wondrous device it actually is. To any common observer, it seems to be nothing more than a hollowed pumpkin about a size of a human head. A twisted parody of a face is engraved on its surface, locked in an expression of hatred and anger. The item indeed bears a striking resemblance to those clever toy-lanterns the children of Ravenloft often use to play

tricks on passerby. In truth, however, a very intricate mechanism is hidden within it, all but unseen from the outside. When it uses its fiendish abilities, a faint red glow seems to come from within it, adding more to its horrid appearance.

The *head* is crafted in such a manner that it can be worn as a grisly helmet by any human-sized creature. Its "face" is in fact a set of openings allowing the wearer to breathe and see normally, though the device completely hides all it's wearer's features beneath it. Woe to anyone who would don the item in such a fashion, however, for it is a sure way to become one of the *head's* many unfortunate victims. Indeed, this evil device cares nothing more than to expand its dark influence and to enslave all it encounters.

### BACKGROUND

Great precision was needed to produce this relic of science and evil, as well as great insanity. Unfortunately, the man who created it had both those qualities. The twisted device that is the *head* began its existence on the worktable of none other than Jack Blacker, the infamous tinker of Darkon. Though greatly known for his wondrous inventions, he ended his existence in the depths of utter madness. Delirious, he believed that everyone was set against him, even his closest friends. He spent many sleepless nights producing diabolical devices that, he was certain, would protect him against those enemies no one ever saw. In truth, his efforts ended creating many of the Mists' favorite toys.

For more of Blacker's twisted biography, consult the Ravenloft game accessory *Forged of Darkness*, which also contains the accursed *hook* that bears his name to this day.

It is unknown for what purpose Blacker made the *head*. It is certain, though, that in doing so, he infused it

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT THINGS

with powers he did not then comprehend. Eventually, the item's fiendish intellect led it to abandon its creator, and today it freely travels throughout Ravenloft. Though fiendishly clever, it is whatsoever devoid of any human virtue. Never will it comprehend us completely, nor will any human ever be able to conceive what alien thoughts stream through its dark psyche in its travels across the Land of the Mists...

### POWERS

Though the *head* in itself is little more than a clever mechanical device, its mad creator infused it with an artificial intelligence of its own. Far from being content to serve man, as it was intended, this wretched creation instead uses its powers to bend mankind to its demands. As such, it is best considered a unique creature of its own, although the *head* is not actually alive.

Certainly the most feared ability of the item is its ability to possess those who wear it. To employ this power, the *head* must be worn by an intelligent humanoid creature. The victim must have an intelligence score of 5 or more, and have a skull about the size of human's. The victim need not don the item purposely, and may be forced, charmed, etc. Once it is in place, however, the device will grip its new host from within, making it nearly impossible to get it off (Strength check DC 25). The *head* then infiltrates the victim's mind, taking control of his body and spirit. The victim is allowed to make a Will save (DC 15) each round to resist the *head's* mental demands. Once that check is failed, however, the *head* completely dominates the host's mind, and by doing so, gained a new slave.

While it is worn in this fashion, the device totally controls the body of its host, and has access to all the character's skills, spells and special abilities. A few exceptions are detailed below:

- ❖ **Barbarian:** The *head* is unable to reproduce the barbarian's rage and the uncanny dodge abilities. The savage spirit that drives these warriors eludes it completely.
- ❖ **Bard:** The *head* totally lacks the bard's artistic view on the world. As such, it is unable to reproduce the bardic music ability.
- ❖ **Cleric:** The faith that drives these followers of gods is totally alien to the *head*. As such, it cannot use any of the cleric's spells, nor turn or rebuke undead.
- ❖ **Druid:** By its nature, the *head* is an artificial construct, whose nature is completely opposite to the druid's philosophy. Thus, it is unable to reproduce the druid's spells, nature sense, woodland stride, trackless step, wild shape, and a thousand faces abilities. All the other traits

function normally. It has no power over the druid's animal companion (if any).

- ❖ **Fighter:** No changes.
- ❖ **Monk:** No changes.
- ❖ **Paladin:** The holy strength that drives those holy champions is repulsive to the evil *head*. It thus cannot manifest any of the paladin's special abilities.
- ❖ **Ranger:** The *head* is a wholly unnatural and alien thing. As such, it has no power over the ranger's spells, although it can imitate some of them by itself.
- ❖ **Rogue:** No changes.
- ❖ **Sorcerer/Wizard:** These students of the arcane doubtlessly make the *head's* favorite victims. It can assume control of all their abilities, although it may not control its host's familiar, if one exists.

### THE HOSTS

Once the *head* takes hold of a new victim, that character becomes an Obedient (see the *Ravenloft Monstrous Compendium Appendix III*—if the product is not available, treat as normal humans whose alignment shifts to lawful evil whenever the *head* calls them to action) under the control of the artifact. When the *head* comes in possession of a new mind, the artifact creates a psychic bond, by which it steals a portion of the victim's intellect, adding it to its own grand "whole". From the moment the *head* gains a new servant, the latter effectively loses one point of intelligence, which is in turn added to the device's own total. It is the total number of such hosts that determine the *head's* final intelligence score (maximum 20). If the *head* ever runs out of hosts (reducing its intelligence to zero), it automatically "shuts down", until such time as it gains at least one new victim.

When worn by one of its hosts, the *head* effectively dominates that person, and may manifest the following spell-like abilities:

- ❖ *daze* (3 times/day)
- ❖ *hypnotism* (3 times/day)
- ❖ *cause fear* (3 times/day)
- ❖ *detect thoughts* (at will)
- ❖ *see invisibility* (at will)
- ❖ *suggestion* (1 time/day)
- ❖ *mass suggestion* (3 times/week)
- ❖ *Aura of Terror* (at will, Will save DC 15, 20 feet radius - this is an unique ability)

With the exception of the last one, all abilities function as spells of the same name at 10th caster level. The effect is not limited to the *head's* host; it can affect those around it with its fiendish magic.



Even if not worn by any of its hosts, the *head* can affect any of its slaves with the following effects (at will, no saving throw, the host must be within 3 miles of the *head*):

- ❖ *suggestion*
- ❖ *emotion*
- ❖ forget (treat as AD&D 2nd edition spell of the same name, save that it may erase up to two hours of memory from the victim's mind—indeed, many of the artifact's hosts don't realize their sad condition, and this power allows the *head* to maintain this illusion)

If a host receives no orders for a whole month (25+1d6 days) from the *head*, he may be considered free from servitude, regaining the lost Intelligence point. Though the *head* may take possession of that character's willpower again later, it will have to subdue the victim again first, as detailed above.

To continue to operate successfully, the *head* needs fresh blood to fuel it. When it first drew birth on Blacker's worktable, the inventor intended to feed it with the blood of small animals. The Demiplane has since twisted the device, however, and today the *head* is all but addicted to the vital fluids of humans and other humanoids. No other fuel will do. Though the *head* requires but 5 hit points of this liquid per day, it will gladly take more. Every additional hit point is considered "stored" away indefinitely, until such time as the *head* uses this extra energy in the future. It can store as much as 20 hit points in this way. Whenever the *head* fails to feed properly, its powers begin to weaken. For every hit point of blood it fails to receive, a cumulative +1 bonus is added to its victims' saving throws against all its special powers. Whenever it reaches -10 hp, the *head* shuts down, releasing all its hosts.

### CURRENT SKETCH

Today, the *head* travels all across Ravenloft, causing havoc wherever it goes. Though it works in secrecy and silence, it did leave a few signs of its passing in some parts of the Core. The latest and best-known case involving it occurred in the Ste Ronges, house of Jacques Dufaux, during one of the dandy's numerous masquerade balls. That evening proved disastrous to many, and dark rumors of it still linger in Richemulot to this day.

*...It was then that I noticed that the people around me all began to gaze in the one direction, towards the corner of the ballroom. Looking myself, I almost gasped with surprise. Among the surrounding guests, I saw a most macabre figure standing by the window. The man*

*was towering and broad-shouldered, dressed entirely in black, with silver and golden patterns decorating his vest and cloak. The newcomer's face cover, however, was a striking contrast with the rest of his vestment. Instead of a fine mask of porcelain, the man wore what seemed to be a vulgar hollowed pumpkin, with a mocking face engraved on its surface! And the expression of this mask was so wretched, hateful and... evil, that even here, as I pen these lines, I cannot possibly find words that would express the dread that filled me then! Never! So repulsive was the stranger's appearance, that the whole room felt instantly silent. All conversation ceased, and the music stopped. And in this new silence, the aura of terror around the dark figure seemed to grow even denser than before.*

*I tried to move my legs, only to realize that as long as I would stare at this wretched face, my body would fail to assist me. I wanted to move my gaze away from the cloaked man, and to my horror I found I was unable. I watched helplessly as the figure in black wordlessly walked through the room, its heavy steps echoing through the whole house. The lifeless gaze of his mask seemed to stare at each of us in turn, and I watched in horror as all color faded away from the faces of all that were thus contemplated, and several women even fainted of terror! As came my turn to feel upon me the eyes of the mysterious guest, I felt blood turn to ice in my veins. My most primitive instincts came to life within me, and for a moment I felt that I too would be stricken unconscious by those dead eyes! But the stranger's gaze turned away, as he kept walking towards the other side of the room. Finally, the guest reached the other end of the hall. He finally turned his back to us, disappearing in the hallway.*

*In an instant, I felt as though released! Without losing a second, I turned around and ran forward, seeking to get as far as possible from the accursed place. In less than a moment, I had run down the stairs, then wordlessly raced outside. The last thing I heard from the manor was a terrible screaming from upstairs, where the dark stranger had first appeared. Not caring what disaster might have befallen the other guests, I raced even faster, finally reaching the open air. The winter cold savagely bit my skin, but I paid no notice. I was focused only on one idea: put as much distance between me and that accursed manor where, I was sure, still remained the terrible stranger. I fled into the night.*

*Unfortunately for me, that horrible face remained in my memory, in its profoundest details. And it will, I am sure, ever haunt my restless nights.*

—From the papers of **Sieur Pierre Valier**

Indeed, the dark figure Valier describes is but another unfortunate slave of the *head*, though the author of this text certainly had no idea that the "mask" that so

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT THINGS

terrified him was the true villain, as well as the mastermind of the whole disaster.

So, now that the *head* has its freedom, incredible powers and plenty of human minds to fuel upon, one might ask what goals animate its days now? What causes it to constantly travel through human settlements, spreading misery and terror? Be not mistaken. Though the artifact is but an intricate mechanical construct, it is keenly aware of the world it dwells in. And, like many other foul things that hide in the shadows of Ravenloft, it too has its ambitions. The first (and most important) is to preserve its wretched existence from harm. Though it is doubtlessly one of the most successful mechanical devices known to man, its mechanism is very delicate and fragile. As such, each month there is a cumulative 5% chance for it to malfunction for one reason or another. Whenever this happens, the *head* loses control over one (or even a few) of its powers. It is ever careful to avoid such instances, and always goes to great lengths to locate a scientifically capable host, one that might prevent or repair such malfunctions.

The *head* has a second obsession as well. Though it has no real intelligence of its own (only that of its numerous hosts), this device nonetheless is fascinated by the incredibly profound potential of the human mind. As such, it is ever focused on locating and dominating the most intelligent and knowledgeable characters around. Wizards, scholars and such are all but irresistible to the *head*, and it always moves in search of new minds to feed upon. Sadly, none have, as of yet, managed to sate this incredible hunger, and so the artifact continues its never-ending journey across the Demiplane. On some occasions, though, when especially intriguing hosts present themselves, the *head* will play an even more dangerous game. Sure of its victim's capabilities, and its own fiendish intelligence, it will set to execute some grandiose project, as if to prove its own superiority to all of mankind. It even seems that the artifact has the habit to seize its host's most dark and fiendish fantasies, and set to make them reality. Although brilliant, those schemes are almost always greatly harmful to people around it. As an example, if in possession of a powerful wizard, the *head* might set up a diabolical magical experiment. If it comes to control some great detective, the device will try and execute a "perfect crime", one that is way above the scope of even the greatest investigators. In order to succeed, the *head* will go as far as to deplete all the resources available to its hosts, commit the most heinous actions, even willing to take great risks to see the task to its end.

Whether or not successful in its schemes, however, the *head* quickly grows bored with its victims. No matter how grandiose the potential of any mind it may possess, the device may never claim it as part of itself.

Indeed, the *head* quickly abandons its prey after some time, often eliminating it in the process out of some alien feeling akin to jealousy and frustration...

### FINAL WORDS

What led a genius like Jack Blacker to create such an evil device will perhaps remain a mystery for all time. Some of his work notes, however, were found and restored after his disappearance by people who sought to exploit his discoveries. Curiously, some of these papers seem to refer to another device Blacker designed to better control the *head*. What exactly is that device, if it was ever constructed, is anybody's guess. Perhaps it was stolen shortly after Blacker's final disappearance, or the *head* itself destroyed it to ensure its own safety. Or, perhaps, Blacker simply hid it away from prying eyes, and it may still be discovered through careful investigation. As of this writing, no one seems to know anything about this mysterious creation, however, if it truly exists.



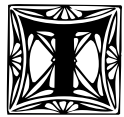
# KNIFE OF THE GHOUL

## THE SPICE OF UNLIFE

by James Hardie

confiscator@hotmail.com

### APPEARANCE



The knife of the ghoul is a large carving knife, approximately 18 inches long. Its handle is made out of bone and is covered in tiny glyphs and symbols that are almost impossible to make out. The blade is black and glistens slightly in the light, as if wet.

### BACKGROUND

Exactly when and how the knife was created is unknown, but the most well known tale involving it starts in Dementlieu. Remiel Delaroe was born to a poor family in Port-a-Lucine. His family was heavily in debt to a local nobleman so he was apprenticed to the noble's chef, which pleased him greatly for he had a great interest in food. Unfortunately he had no skill at this profession and was constantly being yelled at by his master despite all his efforts to please him.

It eventually became clear that he would never become a good cook. As his family was still in debt to the noble, he was given another job. The noble was a picky man demanding that his food be better than any other's, and thus accepted only the best and freshest of everything. He made Remiel become a butcher, ensuring that only the best meat reached his table. So Remiel spent his youth carving and slaughtering animals, still dreaming of becoming a master chef and escaping the bloody drudgery of his life. He consoled himself with the fact that his family always ate well, for it was easy for him to get meat for them. He cooked for his family as practice, experimenting with various spices and doing all he could to bring out that last drop of flavor from the meat.

All this ended one day when he was traveling to Levkarest to buy some rare spices, for his lord was holding an extravagant party and was sparing no expense to ensure that the meal would be the talk of the city for months to come. As he was nearing the city he saw a lone vistani man sitting by a wagon cooking some meat that Remiel could not identify. The smell rising from the meal was incredibly enticing so Remiel

approached the man to see if he could learn his secrets. The vistani replied that it was his own recipe but he could give away its secret for a price. Remiel was so desperate to have the vistani's secret that without thinking he handed over the money pouch he had been given to buy spices for his lord's party. The darkling went into his wagon and returned with a small black wooden box.

"Within this box is the secret to my cookery," the darkling said, "though why anyone would want it is beyond me." Remiel took the box and hurried to an inn for it was getting dark, and he was eager to read the recipes he believed were in the box. When he opened it, however, he found that it only contained an ornate butcher's knife. He resolved to return the knife to the vistani, get his money back and explain that what he was seeking was his recipes, not his cooking utensils. Unfortunately when he went back to where he met the vistani he found the gypsy had already left.

Remiel couldn't tell his lord he had spent all the money on a knife for himself, so when he was travelling back to Dementlieu he snuck into a farm and stole a pig. He killed it, pouring blood over his clothes. He rolled in the dirt and bruised himself making it look like he had been beaten and robbed.

His deception fooled his lord, but he was so tired from the journey home that for the first time in years he did not have time to specially prepare his family's meal. Instead, he just giving them the meat from the pig he had stolen. That night when his family had dinner, they marvelled at the quality of the food claiming that Remiel had finally developed the perfect meal. He tasted the meat and agreed—somehow he had managed to cook an almost perfect meal! Clearly the knife he had bought from the vistani was magical, for there was no other way that the meat could have been flavored without him knowing.

Confident that he could now prepare a meal fit for the lord mayor himself he approached his lord and asked to be reinstated to the kitchen, offering a large steak as proof of his cooking skill. His lord was overwhelmed and had Remiel promoted to head cook. Thanks to his lord's big parties, his cooking became the talk of town. He continued to slaughter the meat

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT THINGS

himself for he found the meat tasted better if no blade save the knife ever touched it. He even overcame his loathing of slaughter, beginning to revel in the killing.

Other cooks desperately sought his secrets, offering all they had as bribes to learn how to cook such delicacies as he did. He refused them all, seeking to keep the knife a secret. But one cook, his former master, would not take no for an answer. Desperate to find out how such a poor cook became a master chef overnight, he spied on Remiel one day and saw the knife. He confronted Remiel, accusing him of using witchcraft to make his food taste the way it did. Desperate to keep his secret, for fear that his knife might be stolen, he killed his former master, stabbing him repeatedly with the knife.

When he had finished and was deciding where to hide the corpse, he smelt a truly delicious scent coming from the corpse. Had the knife worked its magic on this body too? He bent down, licked the corpse and discovered the final secret to the darkling's cookery. Unable to help himself he gorged on the corpse, carving up what little remained and serving it in the stew he cooked up that night. His family marvelled at this new taste explosion, shocked that he could possibly have made improvements on his previous recipes.

Soon Remiel had a craving to try such fair again, so he slunk down to the docks and killed again. Carrying the body off to the slaughterhouse for preparation he was shocked to discover how light it felt. A week later he found the craving returning and that his extraordinary strength had disappeared, so he went out and killed again.

Meanwhile, the news of this master chef reached the living brain, who set out to control this chef and spread his influence over the city's nobles, but all its subtle attempts at mind control failed. Intrigued, the Brain had him followed and soon discovered his grisly secret. Sensing the power in the knife, it arranged for a guest to accidentally walk in on his food preparation during a party when the police were walking by on the rounds. Remiel was executed, but the minion who was to bring the knife to the Brain mysteriously disappeared. The location of the knife is unknown to this day.

### KNOWN POWERS

The Knife of the Ghoul automatically spices all meat it cuts, giving a +4 bonus to all Craft (cooking) skill checks when it is used. As a weapon it does 1d4 damage, and the victim must roll 2 Fortitude saves (DC 14). If the first save is failed the victim is paralysed for 1d4+2 rounds. If the second save is failed the victim takes an additional 4 points of poison damage from the burning of the spices, and the wound will not heal

naturally unless cleaned (requiring a Healing check at DC 12).

Every time a victim suffers the poison damage the wielder must pass a Will save at a DC of 8 + the amount of damage done to the victim by the knife (cumulative) or be overcome with a desire to feast on the victim. If the save fails by 5 points or more the wielder will not even stop to cook his victim going so far as to try and bite him during combat (even if the victim is still alive).

If the wielder of the knife eats his victim raw he receives the following benefit for the following 24 hours: a +2 circumstance bonus to Strength and a +2 circumstance bonus to Fortitude and Will saves. (The Will save bonus does not apply to saves against the effects of the knife.) When the bonus wears off the wielder must succeed at a Will save (DC 16) or become addicted to eating raw flesh and must consume more (preferably sentient) meat killed by the knife as soon as possible.

The knife has 15 hit points and a hardness of 12. It regenerates all damage at a rate of 2 hit points a day. Losing the knife does not remove the cannibalistic urges and the victim will desperately hunt down the current wielder of the knife so as to regain the item.

There is a 25% chance that anyone still under the knife's curse when they die will rise up as a ghoul retaining all their memories and intelligence. Possibly the worst part of the knife's curse is its contagious nature. Anyone who has eaten meat prepared by the knife must roll a Will save (DC 10) or become desperate to discover the secret to the great meal, going to extreme lengths to discover the secret. Anyone entranced by the cooking who discovers the knife's magical nature gets another save (DC 12) or they will go to any lengths to ensure that the knife prepares all their future meals.

The knife's history is full of people who have been so desperate to own the knife they have grabbed it and stabbed the current owner only to immediately fall victim to its curse and feast on the still cooling corpse. Removing the knife's curse from someone requires a remove curse spell and an atonement spell if the victim has eaten the flesh of another sentient creature. A remove curse spell is sufficient if he is merely entranced by the knife.

### MEANS OF DESTRUCTION

If the knife is used by a master chef who has never eaten meat or spilt blood to prepare an immense vegetarian feast, it will lose all its power.

## ADVENTURE IDEAS

- ❖ Recently a lot of people have been found dead with their flesh covered in bite marks from that appear to have been human teeth. The PCs are asked to track down the cannibal and bring him to justice. If the PCs kill the murderer and take the knife his ghoul is sure to chase them to get it back when it rises
- ❖ A wizard has found a ritual using the knife to prepare a dish from both human and undead flesh that will turn all that consume it into ghouls. He will use this ritual at a local festival to turn an entire town into his undead slaves if the PCs don't discover and thwart his plans.

☠

# TREASURES OF THE DEEP

## YOU WILL REMEMBER

by Jaleigh Johnson

jaleigh@atwood-il.com



Rhys silently congratulated himself on his twice—good fortune, the double stroke of luck that had put him on the most direct path to Megaern’s bed.

The couple sat together on a strip of rock rising from the sand near the shoreline, the gray mists stealing sinuously up to brush at Megaern’s skirts and bare toes. Taking care to stay clear of the frigid waters, they fixed their eyes on a certain spot on the horizon, where the sun had managed to burn a thin path through the ever-present mist, and was now rising quietly from the sea.

In the tiny village—and for as far north and south along the shore as one cared to walk—true sunrises were rare, especially in the cold season. One did not miss such a chance to see them when given the opportunity, and Rhys knew Megaern would jump at the chance if he offered to escort her.

That had been the first stroke of luck. The second had come as a gift from the sea herself. The bright shell had washed ashore almost at his feet as they walked, a pretty thing of sparkling colors, attached to a fine chain. Megaern had been delighted by it.

“Doesn’t it look fine, Rhys?” she asked for what might have been the third time. She swung round to face him; the shell winked its colors at him in the dying light, dangling and swaying just above the bodice of Megaern’s dress.

“Very fine, Meg,” he agreed, allowing his gaze to dip a bit lower than was necessary to appreciate the necklace’s beauty. “Give us a closer look, will you?”

They shared a laugh as he bent his head, brushing a kiss across her bared shoulder.

His lips came away rimmed with a thin line of blood.

“Fool!” Meg cursed as she glimpsed the small wound. “You’ve bit too hard, Rhys...papa will see it!” She looked up at him, her eyes flashing angrily, but he was staring, openmouthed like a fish, at her face. He had not even bothered to wipe the blood from his mouth.

She winced then, and reached up a hand to touch the side of her face. She felt the bruised flesh, and Rhys saw the skin purpling along her cheekbone as if she’d been stuck a hard blow.

“R-Rhys...” she whispered, standing up uncertainly—and cringed as she felt another dribble of blood trailing down her calf. She lifted her skirt and saw the cut, deep enough that it burned and bled freely.

“Rhys!” she shrieked this time, clawing at his shirt, but the fearful sound was muffled by the swelling of another bruise around her mouth. Rhys leapt forward, just in time to catch her as she fell, sobbing, to her knees.

Hands trembling, he grabbed the shell and jerked it free of her neck, the chain snapping easily when pitted against his strength. Heaving, he cast the shell—still winking its colors brightly back at him—into the cold waves and turned to cradle the sobbing, battered woman in his arms.

## INTRODUCTION

The treasures of Ruathon Silafthane—those items of power or personal significance to the young warrior—may be found anywhere along the coast of the Nocturnal Sea, washed ashore in the sand or floating in the shallow waters. Three of these cursed items are described in detail below, as is the history of Ruathon. The Dungeon Master is encouraged to alter these items or create additional ones to suit his or her own campaign.

## BACKGROUND

Long ago, the small fishing village of Burnwin sat nestled against a rocky arm of coastline stretching out into the cold Nocturnal Sea. A legend grew out of the small seaside town—one that has spread far and is passed on with fervor to children and grandchildren—of a beautiful monster, a phantom cursed to wander the seashore somewhere between the land and the cold depths of the sea. It is said that the monster leaves gifts for those who walk along the shore and look with careful eyes. It is also said that anyone who accepts such gifts will be cursed as well, doomed to die or be driven mad by them. Only those who live in the village

of Burnwin are aware of the truth of the curse, and are compelled to pass along the tale as best they can.

The slaving ship *Bloody Havens* entered the mists of Ravenloft as it fled pursuit from authorities—both land dwelling and sea dwelling. A small band of sea elves, in pursuit of their captured comrade—a young sea elf warrior by the name of Ruathon Silafthane—trailed the ship underwater until it literally vanished from their sight as it entered the mists that mysteriously gathered above the waves.

The ship reappeared in the unfamiliar waters of the Nocturnal Sea, where it soon ran aground on rocks jutting out far from the coast near the village of Burnwin. All of the few hands and slaves on board were lost, except for Ruathon. The sea elf managed to escape, but was battered by the treatment of the slavers and severely weakened as a result of being kept away from the water for so long a stretch of time. Disoriented, and unable to find any familiar landmarks, the young elf swam to shore, hoping to find his bearings quickly.

Several villagers—fishermen from Burnwin—witnessed the destruction of the ship, and, seeing only one human form emerging in the distance from the water, came out to help the survivor.

When they beheld Ruathon—a sea elf warrior with long, silky hair of deepest blue and mottled skin of green and brown, with webbing between fingers and toes—they shrank from him in fear. When he approached them, and they saw his body, covered in blood from wounds he'd suffered at slaver's hands, they called him a monster, a bloodthirsty devil from the sea, and attacked. Weak and unable to properly defend himself, Ruathon was quickly overcome by the mob, which wielded rocks and crude weapons against him.

Just before he died, the young elf cursed those who had so misjudged him. He cried out in a harsh, broken common tongue,

“May you live always with the memory of what you have done, of the pain and suffering you have inflicted wrongly.”

The villagers burned Ruathon's body, and all items found on his person were cast into the sea, tied into a thick bundle and weighted down with stones so they would never rise from the depths. The people of Burnwin banished all trace of the strange creature's existence from them, hoping to banish also the nagging sense of guilt felt that many felt (although they would never admit to such feelings, of course).

But as much as they would have liked to forget what had happened, Ruathon's curse would not allow them to. The Dark Powers had heard his words and granted his wish, placing the curse of memory upon the villagers.

The items that had belonged to Ruathon in life began appearing again, washed up on the shores all

along the coast of the Nocturnal Sea for others to find. When the villagers of Burnwin found such items, they cast them back into the waves, or had them destroyed out of fear—only to find them again a day or so later, pristine and half-buried in the sand at their feet.

At night, a ghostly image of the sea elf can be seen walking along the shore or among the jagged rocks, a strangely beautiful, exotic phantom with mottled green and brown skin, and hair of deepest blue. If approached, the phantom will not speak or acknowledge the presence of others, but will simply vanish, sometimes leaving behind an item, one of the personal possessions Ruathon valued in life, which now carries a dangerous curse.

Out of fear, and guilt, and the compelling force of the curse, the villagers of Burnwin have passed on the tale of the beautiful monster, and the manner of his death, to their children and grandchildren, and to travelers who happen upon the treasures of Ruathon, hoping to appease his ever-present spirit, and fulfilling the curse of memory laid upon them.

### Powers

The treasures that belonged to Ruathon in life now bear a curse that has two parts. The items themselves are valuable, but not magical, and can be destroyed as easily as any man-made object of their type. However, as the first part of the curse, any such action taken to destroy or conceal the items will only result in them appearing again, taken from their places of concealment, or reformed beneath the waves, to be washed upon the shore again in a random location. Anyone attempting to use the items when they find them will be subject to the second part of the curse, which is unique to each individual item.

### CURSES

#### Ruathon's Dagger

A sharpened piece of thick whalebone, carved with elvish script and bearing the name of a female elf: *Ayalunrae*. The dagger was perhaps a token given to Ruathon by a lover long ago in his homeland. Though faded, the carving and name are recognizable to any hero who is able to read the elvish language. For combat purposes, the dagger is identical to the simple weapon description of the dagger found in the *Player's Handbook* (2 gp value). If taken and used in combat, the wielder triggers the curse. The wielder is enveloped with a feeling of despair, mimicking the effects of the 4th level Sorcerer/Wizard spell: *emotion*. The wielder suffers a –2 morale penalty to saving throws, attack rolls, ability checks, skill checks and weapon damage

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: RAVENLOFT THINGS

rolls. The effects persist until the dagger is destroyed or cast back into the sea at the place where it was found.

### Opal Ring

The curse of memory is most keenly felt by the one who finds and wears Ruathon's ring. At a glance it appears to be nothing more than a simple but finely crafted gold band set with a small, glittering opal (50 gp value). Upon closer inspection, the colors in the stone seem to swirl hypnotically before the viewer's eyes. If left on when the wearer goes to sleep at night, the curse is triggered. For 1–10 nights, the wearer of Ruathon's ring will dream of the final, tortured moments of the sea elf's life, seen through his own eyes. When describing the scene as detailed above, the Dungeon Master is encouraged to add any extra details he feels appropriate and describe vividly the pain and torment felt by the dreamer as she is attacked by the mob of villagers upon an unfamiliar shore. Nothing the dreamer says or does will have any effect upon the mob, and if the dreamer glimpses some sort of reflective surface (such as the water or even the eyes of the villagers near her) she will see Ruathon's visage, not her own. The dreams continue for 1d10 days, after which time they will cease if the ring is removed and either destroyed or cast back into the sea at the place where it was found.

### Abalone Shell

This small, bowl-shaped shell is approximately 2" in diameter, with an interior of unblemished abalone—a swirl of iridescent colors in green, blue and even pinkish hues. Attached to it is a fine silver chain (10 gp value). It is possible that the shell was once a holy item, a symbol of Deep Sashelas, the elven god worshipped by Ruathon. Any such power it may have had was lost when Ruathon's curse was laid, and now it is perhaps the most dangerous of the three cursed treasures. If the shell is placed around the neck of any living creature, the curse is triggered. The effect is equal to that of an *inflict minor wounds* spell. The victim suffers one point of damage, which will manifest itself as a discolored bruise, sore, laceration or other small wound at a random location on the person's body. This effect is repeated once every minute (10 rounds) with a different corresponding wound appearing every time damage is taken, mimicking—though at a much slower pace—the manner in which Ruathon was killed. If the necklace is not removed, the victim will eventually be reduced to 0 hit points, at which time he will lose consciousness, and, at –10 hit points, will die. Removing the necklace, or applying some time of magical healing, (*cure minor wounds* or stronger) will cause the wounds to cease appearing—for the moment. The following day, at the exact time the necklace was put on the day before, the curse will trigger again. This time, the effect is doubled, inflicting two points of damage on the victim every

minute. Each day the curse is allowed to continue, the wounds and the pain suffered from them will grow worse, until the victim is finally overwhelmed by it. The curse can be broken if the shell is either destroyed or cast back into the sea at the place where it was found.

## AFTEREFFECTS

In addition to the ways described above, each curse may be removed with a *break enchantment*, *limited wish*, *miracle*, *remove curse*, or *wish* spell. Note that this does not remove the curse from the items themselves, only from the victims affected. None of the cursed items leaves lasting physical effects upon their recipients, once the individual curse is removed. However, as was intended, the victims will not soon forget Ruathon or his pain and suffering, and may even be moved to learn about the young elf and his fate as the Dungeon Master allows.





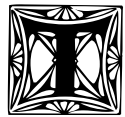
# THE ANATOMIST

## THE KNEEBONES CONNECTED TO THE THIGHBONE

by C.M. Parker

saraphim43@hotmail.com

### DESCRIPTION



The Anatomist devotes himself to the scientific study of the secrets of life and healing. Their skills mingle medicine with mad obsession. As a practitioner of the healer's art, the Anatomist is surpassed only by the most devout of priests. But an Anatomist cannot stop there; he is driven by more than the need to heal – the need to conquer death itself.

Druids and rangers tend to become Anatomists to learn how best to help wounded animals, while priests and paladins often become Anatomists to augment their healing skills. Fighters often become field surgeons out of necessity; those that excel at it tend to become Anatomists. Sorcerers and wizards who take this class are often those with a fascination with healing and with unraveling the secrets of life. Bards and arcanists are often drawn to the Anatomist class for the forbidden knowledge that their studies reveal. Barbarian anatomists are often village healers who have become obsessed with improving their craft. Thieves that take the Anatomist class often have a morbid fascination with the injured and the dead, or are seeking an honest way to build a better life. Monks and Avengers rarely become Anatomists, though it is possible that they might choose to do so for reasons of their own.

### DOMAINS

Anatomists are as comfortable studying in great universities as they are hidden away in dark basement laboratories, but some domains tend have better foundations and more resources for the prospective Anatomist to work from. Anatomists are most likely to come from domains with cultural level of Chivalric or higher. Other lands (such as the Amber Wastes) may breed them as well.

### PERSONALITY

Their obsession with perfecting their art tends to cause Anatomists to be slightly arrogant. Often they are troubled, and some are even driven mad.

Often Anatomists lead double lives, posing as a respected healer, but working and consorting with society's outcasts. The minions of an Anatomist tend to come from this later group. They tend to be grave robbers and cutthroats, men and women willing to do anything for money.

### REQUIREMENTS

- ❖ **Heal:** 8 ranks
- ❖ **Knowledge (anatomy):** 5 ranks
- ❖ **Profession (herbalist):** 5 ranks
- ❖ **Feats:** Skill Focus (Heal)
- ❖ **Special:** Anatomists gain their knowledge from a number of sources, but eventually, as the sources of socially acceptable knowledge dwindle, they turn to the systematic dissection of cadavers. While any corpse will do, fresh human corpses are preferred, often causing the Anatomist to plunder fresh graves for subjects of his ghoulish study.

### CLASS FEATURES

**Spells per Day:** The Anatomist gains a +1 level to a single chosen spell casting class of his choice that he already possesses each time he advances in level. Those that do not possess a spell casting class gain spells as though they were a sorcerer of equal level to their Anatomist level. As well as the usual sorcerer spell lists, the Anatomist can learn spells from the cleric domain of Healing.

**Skill Points Per level:** 3 + Wisdom modifier

**Weapon and Armor proficiency:** The Anatomist gains no Armor Proficiency, but does gain weapon focus and weapon specialization in knives as bonus feats.

The Anatomist					
Level	Atk	Fort	Ref	Will	Special
1 <sup>st</sup>	+0	+2	+0	+2	Weapon Focus & Specialization (knife), Surgery, Improved Healing, Accelerated Healing, Autopsy, Cure Disease, Gain Henchman
2 <sup>nd</sup>	+1	+3	+0	+3	Gain Henchman
3 <sup>rd</sup>	+1	+3	+1	+3	Graft Body Part
4 <sup>th</sup>	+2	+4	+1	+4	Gain Henchman
5 <sup>th</sup>	+2	+4	+1	+4	Organ Transplant
6 <sup>th</sup>	+3	+5	+2	+5	Create Lesser Flesh Golem, Gain Henchman
7 <sup>th</sup>	+3	+5	+2	+5	Surgical Alteration
8 <sup>th</sup>	+4	+6	+2	+6	Create Flesh Golem, Gain Henchman
9 <sup>th</sup>	+4	+6	+3	+6	Create Zombie Golem
10 <sup>th</sup>	+5	+7	+3	+7	Create Bone Golem, Gain Henchman

**Surgery (Ex):** The Anatomist may heal up to 2hp + 1/level per day through the use of surgery. Such surgery requires the proper tools, and the surgeon must be undisturbed for 10 rounds/hp that must be healed. Such healing may leave scars at the DM's option.

**Improved and Accelerated Healing (Ex):** Patients under the anatomist's care recover hit points faster than they would otherwise. They gain half as much again as they normally would have gained for that day. (I.e. for every 10 hp regained through natural healing, an Anatomist's patient would regain an additional 5.) In addition, patients under the Anatomist's care gain a +4 circumstance bonus to Fort saves vs. poisons and diseases that have already been treated by the Anatomist.

**Autopsy (Ex):** By studying a reasonably complete corpse, the Anatomist may attempt to discern the deceased's time and manner of death. Such examinations are time consuming, and require a skill check at a base of DC 10, modified by the factors below:

- ❖ Per each possible cause for death: +2
- ❖ Body has been picked upon by scavengers: +2
- ❖ Body is undead: +5
- ❖ Partial remains: +5
- ❖ Corpse has been preserved: -2
- ❖ Has proper equipment: -1
- ❖ Has masterwork equipment: -3
- ❖ Body has suffered extreme decomposition due to age or environmental conditions: +5

**Cure Disease (Ex):** The Anatomist may attempt to cure both naturally occurring diseases and magical ailments. He may make one attempt per level per disease. All checks are made at a +4.

**Gain Henchman (Ex):** At 1st, 2nd, 4th, 6th, 8th, and 10th levels the Anatomist may gain a loyal follower. Such a follower may be a former patient, those hoping that the Anatomist will be able to heal them one day, an aspiring healer, or even a non-human minion such as a goblin or broken one. These are in

addition to any followers that he may already have or may normally gain. Such henchmen will have half the hit dice/level as the Anatomist they follow, and usually are of a nonplayer class.

**Graft Body Part (Su):** An anatomist of third level or higher may attempt to replace a damaged (or undamaged) body part with any similarly appropriate member. The body part need not be of the same species (an elf's hand to replace a dwarf's), or even humanoid or animal (a tiger's paw to replace a human hand). It must however be of the appropriate size (a pixie's hand cannot replace an ogre's.) and member (a snake's head may not replace a gnome's hand). The Anatomist may perform such surgery on himself if an assistant is present. Such surgery is time consuming, taking 8 hrs–1hr/level of the anatomist, to a minimum of 1 hour. The DC for such operations is 20.

**Organ Transplant (Ex):** The Anatomist may transplant organs in a manner similar to his ability to transplant body parts. The same rules apply. The DC for such operations is 25. Skill check failure could mean death in cases involving nonsensory organs, and sensory impairment in other cases.

**Create Golem (Su):** The Anatomist has become so obsessed with his surgical studies, that he has learned the dark secrets of creating pseudo life. Such creations may have as many hit dice as its creator has class levels in that Anatomist class. Such a golem is always made from spare body parts. Creation of a golem requires a lab, and proper materials as dictated by the DM. The DC of the procedure is 13. Lesser flesh golems are simply smaller constructs, usually composed out of animal parts, parts of a small demihuman or even children. These creations drain 500 XP from the creator for lesser flesh golems, and 1000 XP for normal flesh, zombie and bone golems. Only Anatomists with the Knowledge (Undead Lore) skill may create bone or zombie golems.

**Surgical Alteration (Su):** The Anatomist has learned enough of the surgeons art to change the appearance of the Human (or demihuman) body. Such transformations may:

- ❖ Change the appearance of another character, remove scar tissue. An Anatomist with the disguise skill and who has studied a person may change a person's appearance to match the appearance of someone else.
- ❖ Modify physical ability scores (Characters may reroll their ability scores for Str, Con or Cha, adding the Anatomist's wisdom modifier to the total). Characters are stuck with the second roll, which may be lower than the initial score. Such a low roll represents failure on the part of the anatomist.
- ❖ Reshape a character's body physically. Such a process is time consuming, but the anatomist may change the patient's height, weight, or length of limbs. Such surgery is always painful and deforming to the patients.

Evil Anatomists have been known to experiment on patients, reducing ability scores or changing a character surgically to appear as a monster. Such use requires a Dark Powers check.

**Dissection:** To keep his class skills sharp, an Anatomist must make one dissection per week. Failing to do so gives him a -1 penalty on all of his Heal skill checks until he meets the requirement. Anatomists with the Knowledge (undead lore) skill may substitute any manner of corporeal undead for a normal cadaver.

## CLASS VARIANTS

### Necrologist

The Necrologist is an Anatomist that has a morbid fascination with undeath, and specializes in attempting to improve the living by blending his understanding of life with his fascination of unlife.

#### Requirements

- ❖ Anatomist Level: 3rd
- ❖ Knowledge (undead lore): 4 ranks

#### Class Features

Replace **Graft Appendage** with **Graft Undead Appendage (Su)**: This is the same as the Anatomist feature of the same level, but the Necrologist is able to replace the living limb with a member of the same type from an undead source. The member has all the powers it would normally possess if it was still attached to the undead it came from. This process gives the recipient a permanent +1 negative level, and there is a 10% chance that when the patient dies he will rise as an undead of the type that he received the graft from.

Replace **Organ Transplant** with **Undead Organ Transplant (Su)**: The Necrologist may attempt to transplant the organ of an undead into the body of a

living person. Any special benefits are left up to the imagination of the DM. Again, check failure runs the possibility of sensory impairment or death.

Replace **Create Lesser Flesh Golem** with **Create Lesser Hybrid Golem (Su)**: See below for details on Hybrid Golems

Replace **Create Flesh Golem** with **Create Hybrid Golem (Su)**: Hybrid Golems are variants of the standard Flesh Golem that mingle undead parts with the parts of normal cadavers. Such changes are generally small, and usually add a single special undead attack form or special ability to the regular powers of a normal Flesh Golem.

### Machinist

The Machinist is an Anatomist that mingles a fascination with mechanical devices with his desire to heal the sick.

#### Requirements

- ❖ Anatomist Level: 3<sup>rd</sup>
- ❖ Craft (clockmaking): 5 ranks

#### Class Features

Replace **Graft Appendage** with **Create Clockwork Prosthesis (Ex)**: The Machinist's understanding of the working of the human anatomy allows him to create a mechanical prosthesis. Such work takes 2d4 weeks and costs 100gp per week. Such prostheses are surgically grafted and can only be removed surgically, or by the attack of a sharp weapon.

Replace **Organ Transplant with Mechanical Organ Transplant (Ex)**: The Machinist's studies have led him to experiment with mechanical replacement organs. Such organs must be custom made, and require 1d4 months to build at an expense of 300 gp/month. Any special benefits are left up to the imagination of the DM. Again, check failure runs the possibility of sensory impairment or death.

Replace create **Lesser Flesh Golem** with **Gain Henchman**.

Replace **Create Flesh Golem** with **Create Mechanical Man (Su)**: At this stage the Machinist has studied enough human anatomy to replicate it mechanically, creating a Mechanical Man. The Mechanical Man is little more than a human shell around which the anatomist has placed mechanical replicas of internal organs. Use the statistics of a Flesh Golem.

Replace **Create Zombie Golem** with **Create Mechanical Golem (Su)**

Replace **Create Bone Golem** with **Gain Henchman**.



# THE ARCHANGEL AND THE YABA

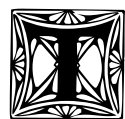
A BRAZILIAN EXPANSION TO THE GOTHIC EARTH GUIDE TO VOUDOU

by Luiz Eduardo Neves Peret  
rakshasa2001@hotmail.com

*"Proud is the King,  
Prisoners he makes none.  
Wives he has many  
Justice he applies with swiftness.  
But, alas! He must not face those who died,  
executed or sacrificed. lest they haunt him through  
eternity"*

—Pierre Verger,  
*African Legends and Songs of the Orixás*

## FOREWARD



The present article is intended as a tribute to the culture and history of the African-born and their Brazilian descendants, who contributed so much to the development of the largest South-American nation. The original African cult and its Brazilian branches have been adapted for the specific purposes of the D&D game, without changing their essence. This article could be a helpful resource for those who would like to play an expanded, continental version of the Voodoo world, since the Brazilian version of the African cults has become a distinct religion and has mingled with the larger society in an entirely different manner. Rather than simply being another Guide to Voodoo, this text explores the historical roots of Brazilian religious syncretism.

## THE ARCHANGEL AND THE YABA

A TALE OF LOVE, FREEDOM, AND CURSES

Since the late 1500's, the Portuguese had relied on African slaves as a cheap labor force, and the gigantic proportions of their largest colony, Brazil, had made slave traffic a profitable enterprise. As the local natives proved unwilling to give up their freedom and often preferred death to slavery, the Portuguese court had made sure that, along with every few ships carrying noblemen, armies and immigrants, an impressive amount of African slaves came in too.

All slaves were baptized and given Catholic names as soon as they arrived, for no Catholic slave master would have pagan slaves. They were thought the basics of the Portuguese language and were immediately sent to sugarcane and coffee plantations, or to the mines. Salvador had been the capital of the Colony since the 16th century, and the largest population of African-born was concentrated here. It also became the birthplace of a double syncretism, which would generate the religion known as *Candomblé*.

First, African slaves from different places, who spoke different languages and worshipped different deities, were forced to work together, eventually developing relationships and mixing their cultures. Then, as they wanted to follow their traditions without attracting unwanted attention, they started to venerate Catholic saints, learning of their lives and deeds, and comparing them with the African gods, making associations and effectively disguising their true worship practices. Some slave masters knew the truth but, fearing the devotional power of African magic as much as the threat of a revolt, let their slaves proceed. A few white men and women even let themselves be

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: GOTHIC EARTH PEOPLE

initiated in the cults, nursing desires for riches, power or love.

Naturally, with the coming of the Red Death to Brazil, the African gods lost their connection with their worshippers, but a few facts made Brazilian Candomblé distinct from Haitian Voodoo. The first was the enormous number of Africans who had come from a single nation, named Ketu. In that nation, as with many other African nations, it was a common belief that the governor was a direct descendant of a god, and in that specific case the god (or “Orixá” [ory-SHAH] in their common language) was named “Oxossi” [osh-OH-ssy], the Hunter of a Single Arrow. The Red Death realized that Oxossi’s devotional power kept him too close to humans, and feared that other Orixás might increase in power and stand as a force against Evil. So its European and Arab minions systematically destroyed the nation of Ketu, city by city, doing their best to scatter the population, hoping to diminish or even vanquish the power of the Hunter. But the scheme backfired. When the Ketu finally disappeared and all its population was brought to Brazil as slaves, even though they were mixed with the people of other countries and beliefs, the whole cult of Oxossi came with them, effectively supporting a large amount devotional power to that entity. In the mid-1800s, children of Oxossi founded the first *Ylê*, (“house” or “temple”), at Salvador. The other Orixás and their followers gathered around this place, disguised as adherents of the Roman Catholic Church, and their powers and influence over the local society increased.

The second fact was that, as there was a lot of miscegenation and cultural exchange in Brazil, the interracial relationships grew in a totally different manner from that of Haiti. When Brazil became a free nation, at 1822, Emperor Pedro I, who signed the Declaration of Independence was, at the same time, Prince of Portugal. The Royal Family was the same in both countries and, aside from a few skirmishes here and there, serenity reigned most of the time. Brazilian history was not devoid of revolts and attempts at independence by armed groups, nor of slave rebellions, but the overall feeling was that of peace and tolerance.

It was in this rather peaceful environment that, by 1851, Emperor Pedro II prohibited slave traffic and trade with Africa. By that time, many slaves had already bought their freedom through hard work and savings, and a few of them decided to travel back to Africa and relearn their traditions at the source. Some would stay for less than a month, while others would take part in several initiation rites and spend a decade or more with their kinsmen.

They would trade their modern knowledge and European-style education for secrets and mysteries of the Orixás. When those men and women came back,

one by one they restructured their beliefs and reinforced the power of their deities.

In 1888, Princess Isabel the Regent signed the “Lei Áurea” (Golden Law), freeing all Brazilian slaves once and forever. By that time, a free mulatto young man named Pedro worked at the Institute of Law and Medicine (later named University) of Salvador and managed to learn a lot from both fields.

Having recently arrived from an 11-year stay in Lagos, Nigeria, he was nicknamed “Archangel”, for his spiritual role was that of a watcher and protector of African culture. In Lagos he had been made *Oju-Obá*, the “Eyes of Justice”, and given an assignment as representative of the ancient traditions. He was protégé of a powerful Yallorixá (female priestess) known as *Majé-Bassan*, who had introduced him to the secrets of the Candomblé before sending him to Lagos.

His mission was very important: he influenced several European scholars and sages to consider Candomblé as a serious religion and study it, contrary to the common belief that the Orixás and their cults were little more than superstition. He even managed to change the minds of several professors and doctors who had so far adamantly defended the thorough annihilation of the African “irrational beliefs” in the light of science and Catholic traditions. Anthropologists came from Europe in response to his letters, and a few, mostly French, even became initiated in the rites. Through his influence, the African cults were condensed, strengthened and, finally, at the mid-1900s, they would be permitted to coexist with the official religion.

Like his guide, Majé-Bassan, Pedro Archangel was consecrated to the Orixá of Justice, Xangô [shan-GO], King of Thunder, and as an archetypal Child of Xangô, he was honest, just and hard-working, but also a bon vivant, always involved with two or more women at the same time. As a man who wanted to see people of all colors live together in peace, he would choose only the most beautiful and those with the strongest personalities, regardless of their origins, skin color or social rank.

This proved to be his primary weakness. One of his lovers, a young and lovely mulatto girl named Dorothea, could not understand the true meaning of his teachings, and she became obsessed with the idea of African-Brazilian people taking the place of the white men and women who had ruled the nation for centuries. Instead of believing in the equality of all ethnic groups, she believed in the superiority of the African-born and their children, and that the Europeans and their descendants should pay for all the years of slavery with deep pain and suffering.

When Pedro advised against her ideas and eventually left her without knowing that she was pregnant, she snapped. Frantically, she searched for

ancient and forbidden rituals, trying to find a way to subdue the Archangel to her will and make him either think like her or die. She then went to the Island of Itaparyca, where there was another man, a Baballorixá (male priest) called Martiniano do Bonfim, but better known as *Ojeladé*. *Ojeladé* also had recently come back from Africa and held political and religious power over a fraction of the Candomblé worshippers. His sect, though, had a darker side, as he followed the way of the Egungun (ancestors). Since its first time in Africa, the Red Death had noticed the possibilities of such a cult and managed to infuse it with dark power, twisting its goals and beliefs more and more. By the time the Ylê of Itaparyca was founded, all the Egungun had been turned into undead abominations, mainly zombies, juju-zombies, shadows, geists, wights and wraiths.

Because Xangô abhors undead and the Oxirás seemed to want white and black people working together towards a mutual goal, Pedro Archangel and his sect had always battled that group of dark priests, who wanted only to create havoc and kill those of European blood. Pedro knew that only misery and pain would come from a place like the Island of Itaparyca, “the swampy island where the dead freely walk and dance with the living”. His followers even helped the authorities hunt and imprison those people who went to Itaparyca to summon the dead and bind them into murderous or otherwise evil services.

Those practices were decreed unlawful, but *Ojeladé* always managed to escape and reorganize the cult. The island itself, full of dark swamps and impassable marshes, gave him shelter and disguise.

With the coming of Dorothea to the cult of Egungun, things became a lot more difficult for the cultists of the “bright side”. Through foul and unspeakable rituals that had never before been performed, and what seemed to be the direct influence of the Red Death, *Ojeladé* performed a ghastly ceremony, sacrificing twenty faithful members of the cult, who became undead servants, and partially implanting a powerful Egungun spirit in Dorothea’s body. She would become known to all as the Yaba, the Tailless She-Devil, a woman who could kill a man in a matter of minutes, through a mere act of passion. She has already attracted several good men to their dooms, disguised as a trollop, and has continuously confounded both the police and the Oju-Obá.

The time is now coming, when the Archangel and the Yaba will meet and embrace in a deadly dance. Every person in Salvador has heard of this tale, and although most people are placing their bets on the Archangel, it is well known that no man has ever resisted the deadly charms of the Yaba. The destiny of all African-born and their children, as well as the destiny of the cult of the Orixás, relies of the outcome of this encounter.

## PEDRO ARCHANGEL

**7th-level Baballowô (Diviner Mystic), Lawful Good**

<b>Armor Class</b>	8	<b>Str</b> 13
<b>Movement</b>	12	<b>Dex</b> 16
<b>Level/Hit Dice</b>	7	<b>Con</b> 15
<b>Hit Points</b>	48	<b>Int</b> 17
<b>THAC0</b>	18	<b>Wis</b> 15
<b>No. of Attacks</b>	1	<b>Cha</b> 12 (17 to cultists)

<b>Morale</b>	Champion (16)
<b>Damage/Attack</b>	by weapon
<b>Special Attacks</b>	“Orunkó”, spells, see below
<b>Special Defenses</b>	Foresight, spells, protected by spirits, immune to possession, see below
<b>Special Vulnerabilities</b>	Turned as a spectre
<b>Magic Resistance</b>	Immune to all mind-affecting spells, plus as noted above

Pedro Archangel is a 6-foot, slender man with tanned skin and deep, dark brown eyes. He is usually encountered wearing either working clothes or a finely, if simply, tailored suit. He divides most of his days between his work as aide at the University and his study, where he writes his books and pamphlets. At night, he is usually wandering the local bars and brothels, or visiting one of his several lovers, and at those times he will be wearing his most elegant, European-style clothes. When he visits his own Ylê or any other temple of the Candomblé, he always dresses in pure white, sometimes accented with very thin brown stripes.

## COMBAT

Pedro Archangel was trained as a Baballowô, a very rare diviner mystic dedicated to be a watcher, advisor and protector of his people. As such and because of his consecration to Xangô, he has major access to mystic spells of the All, Divination, Weather and Sun spheres, and minor access to the Elemental (Fire and Air), Protection and Wards spheres. Besides that, has been granted the power of foresight, which manifests in one of three ways.

First, when he is personally under threat of immediate danger, he has 50% chance of foreseeing the impending peril and the best course of action to take. Second, when the danger threatens a person who is directly close to him, he feels an urge to consult the Yfá, a set of sixteen African shells cast over a prepared surface. This divination has an effect similar to that of a Tarokka reading, although the Orixás speak to him in elusive and enigmatic ways, as if he had cast a *commune* spell. Third, whenever a follower of his

religion, or even a curious visitor, asks him about the future, he may once again consult the Yfá, but at such times the results are even more elusive and cryptic, unless the Orixás wish to give him a specific message. He can ask 2d4 questions to the Yfá about a specific person or a course of action, with 75% chance of receiving a direct, if somehow mysterious answer, before the communion weakens to the point where he cannot receive any coherent answers at all. He may check with the Yfá up to three times per week, though the Orixás may allow additional readings.

Besides this power, he has the protection of many lesser spirits who work for the Orixás. These are assume the shape of elderly African men and women dressed in plain white slave clothing, and manifest as greater geists or poltergeists, indicating solutions to problems, or effectively attacking an opponent to let him escape. Finally, as a Baballowô, he automatically knows the secret name (“Orunkó”) of each and every person who has been initiated into Candomblé. The Orunkó holds power over a person in a manner similar to a lich’s true name. Any person who hears his or her secret name spoken aloud by the Oju-Obá is unable to move or speak for 2d4 rounds. In the case of a person who has been consecrated to an Orixá through the initiation rites (the most common situation), the entity might temporarily possess that person’s body (50% chance during the day, 75% at night), and salute the Oju-Obá as a friend and ally, thus obeying his orders, even though the possessed individual might be his enemy. The Oju-Obá is an Ogan, a specially appointed servant of the Orixás, and as such, no spirit can possess him (he is also immune to *magic jar* and other possession spells).

In mundane combat, Pedro Archangel was extensively taught in the use of the military cutlass and the two-headed axe (sacred weapons of Xangô), the long sacrificial knife and the pistol. He rarely carries such weapons unless during a trip to the jungle or swamp in order to perform certain special rituals.

Pedro Archangel has two main weaknesses. The first is his passion for women, gambling and beverages. According to the legend, Xangô was prone to drinking, had three grand wives and several concubines, and the Oju-Obá acts according to this archetype. As long as the Archangel follows the mystical rules determined by his patron deity, he is considered a lawful good character, even though his behavior sometimes seems erratic. Due to his behavior, he has acquired many friends among women of ill repute and several enemies, including anti-African sages and authorities. The sub-chief of the Police Department, a tall, broad-shouldered mulatto man called Paulo Bento, is one of the fiercest opponents of African traditions. He despises his own origins and does whatever he can to prove that the followers of the Candomblé are secretly trying to usurp

the government. Only a few people know that, as a child, Bento was initiated in the secrets of Ogun, the Warrior-King, and as such he is vulnerable to his own Orunkó, as Ogun is quite unhappy with his attitude.

The Archangel’s second weakness is his inability to deal with the undead.

Whenever he is forced to confront such creatures, Pedro Archangel must succeed at a Fear check with a –2 penalty or flee in terror. As with all other priests of Xangô, he is unable to turn undead and all undead creatures save vs. his spells with a +2 bonus. So far he thinks the Yaba is merely an assassin trained by the Ojeladé, and her murders part of a ritual. As no one knows the Yaba’s true identity, the Archangel will suffer quite a shock when he learns the truth.

## DOROTHEA, THE YABA

### Possessed Human, Chaotic Evil

<b>Armor Class</b>	4	<b>Str</b>	19
<b>Movement</b>	12	<b>Dex</b>	16
<b>Level/Hit Dice</b>	6+3	<b>Con</b>	17
<b>Hit Points</b>	45	<b>Int</b>	13
<b>THAC0</b>	18	<b>Wis</b>	8
<b>No. of Attacks</b>	2	<b>Cha</b>	17
<b>Damage/Attack</b>	1d4+4/1d4+4		
<b>Morale</b>	Fearless (19)		
<b>Special Attacks</b>	Strength drain, charm gaze, wild dance		
<b>Special Defenses</b>	+1 or better weapon to hit, impossible to surprise.		
<b>Magic Resistance</b>	See below		

The Yaba is a unique creature, generated by the unholy union of young Dorothea and an undead spirit, named Egungun, which is similar to a shadow.

The ritual that created her could be repeated, but there were special circumstances involved. First, she willingly submitted herself to the ritual. Second, her confused feelings for Pedro Archangel, her love for him and her hatred because of his rejection, mixed perfectly with the chaotic anger of the undead monster. Finally, her hatred against the Europeans and their descendants was so intense that the Egungun was able to enhance its own hatred towards all living creatures.

The Yaba looks like a bald, black-skinned woman, with a threatening yet fascinating demeanor, pitch-black, bloodstained eyes and long, curved nails painted in bloody red. She dresses a flowing red and black skirt and has seven chains made of gold and brass around her neck and going down over her bare breasts. All in all, she is an exotic vision, able to freeze a man with a look. Every place she has recently visited smells of herbal cigars and strong alcoholic beverages. She appears only at night, usually at a dark crossroads, walking barefoot

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: GOTHIC EARTH PEOPLE

and shaking a brass bell on her left ankle, ready to attract her next victim to his death.

### COMBAT

The Yaba usually subdues a man with a gaze attack that works as a *charm person* spell, easily making him unable to attack her (save vs. spell to resist). When her gaze does not work, she approaches the prospective victim as a wild animal willing to be tamed, effectively seducing him with her savage beauty and personality. If the victim does not fall under her charm, she turns wild and attacks with brutal ferocity, slashing and piercing with her talon-like nails for 1d4+1 points of damage. Anyone touched by her nails must save vs. spell or lose one point of Strength for one hour. Her attacks may make cumulative losses. Any person reduced to 0 Strength dies, his body reduced to an empty husk that can be raised as a zombie afterwards. If a man falls under her charm gaze, she engages him in a wild night of passion and ultimately exhausts him, draining his Strength in the same fashion as described above.

Once per month, during the middle night of the new moon, when the skies are heavy and dark, the Yaba can perform the horrible Wild Dance, a ten-round ritual of spinning and jerking that summons 2d10 swampy zombies with maximum hit points (treat them as sea zombies), and the ghost of a 5th-level soldier (her first victim). Such creatures are all chaotic evil and totally devoted to the Yaba, and remain at her side for one hour after she finishes the Dance.

The Yaba is immune to life and mind-affecting spells, and to cold attacks.

Only weapons of +1 or better enchantment can hurt her. She suffers doubled damage from lightning, as it is Xangô's element, and can be turned as a spectre. Holy water causes her 1d4 points of damage per vial, and sunlight burns her skin for 1d6 points of damage per turn. She usually rests during the day in an abandoned house or under the mud at the swamps of Itaparyca.

There is a ritual that can save Dorothea's soul by isolating her from the Egungun (she must succeed at a system shock roll or die), but only if she agrees with the performance of such a ceremony, a very unlikely situation.

This ritual is similar to the 4th-level priest spell *spirit release*. In order for the ritual to be performed, she must first be restrained by a single man (a difficult task at best, due to her unnatural vigor and her ability to drain strength), and then convinced to go along with the ceremony.

The Yaba's main weakness is Dorothea's son, Pedro. If she is confronted with the fact that, while possessed, her absence as a mother is making him suffer, it might be possible to convince her to submit to the releasing ritual. Nevertheless, her mind is probably

beyond salvation, and if she dies, the Olejadé will most likely raise her as a powerful undead creature.

### SALVADOR IN THE 1890'S

*"Salvador has more than four hundred churches. more than one per day of the year. yet, all days are dedicated to the Orixás"*

—Pierre Verger,  
*Orixás*

Although the capital of the colony was transferred to Rio de Janeiro when the Royal Family arrived at 1808, Salvador maintains its status as one of the most developed cities in Brazil in the 1890's. The city stands by the Atlantic Ocean, with a large port and beautiful beaches. Sun shines over the region most of the year, but the rain showers are strong enough to sink boats and raze the smaller houses. The city is divided between the Upper Town, along the cliffs and hills, inhabited by noblemen and rich merchants, and the Lower Town, by the seaside, lair of the laborers, most of them former slaves and their families.

There are about 400 Catholic churches in the city, which sharply separate the African-born and their descendants from the Europeans and their descendants. There are religious orders exclusively for black and mulatto priests and nuns. For a long period, the Church of Rome has sent its eldest, most traditional priests to tend to the city's religious life and prevent syncretism. But a few such priests have understood the true, spiritual nature of Candomblé, and secretly they work towards a better mutual understanding of both religions and cultures. Some have even been initiated in the rites and have risen as shamans.

Since the recent appearance of the Yaba, many women fear for their brothers, husbands and sons, but the bohemian nights, which have made Salvador a famous city, continue with little change. There are several taverns, gambling houses and brothels scattered through the Lower Town, and even the Upper Town has its own share of such places, although most of them are well disguised.

### CANDOMBLÉ—INITIATION AND ARCHETYPES

Different from Haitian Voodoo, Brazilian Candomblé does not divide the entities in groups according to their concepts of goodness or duty, but instead have turned the Orixás into a large family with generic names.

From the more than 2,000 lesser entities known in Africa by the common name of "Orixá" or "Vodun",



less than twenty survived in the oral traditions brought to the colony with the slaves. Because of this, many spirits were mixed together by their worshippers' beliefs, which in turn gave them different forms and powers. Now, Candomblé priests believe that there is only one archetypal Xangô, but he possesses different "qualities", each one with a different name. In actuality, such "qualities" could be classified as distinct gods of thunder or justice, worshipped in different places in Africa, which gave up their names and positions in order to concede more devotional power to a single, gathering entity.

Each Orixá has his or her own archetype, a set of personality traits that accompany his or her "children" (which might be translated as "cheval" by a Haitian Vodou priest). When a baby is born within the ranks of the Candomblé, a Baballorixá (priest) or Yallorixá (priestess) or, more rarely, a Baballowô (male diviner priest), casts the shells of the Yfá to determine the child's guiding Orixá. Depending of the result, the child may be prepared from an early age to be consecrated to that Orixá in a complex ritual of initiation, which involves twenty-one days of isolation, many ceremonies in the dead of night and a three-month period of "purity".

During this time, the person must stay indoors after sunset, cannot drink beverages, smoke or have physical contact with other people beyond the strictly necessary. At the end of the twenty-one day period, the person has been initiated and the Ylê throws a large "greeting party" for the new initiated, where the mounting entity will say aloud its true name, or Orunkó. This is the only moment when this name will be spoken in public, and several people visit such parties only to take note of the Orunkó and guard it.

Most people are Yaô ("Bride of the Orixá", no matter their gender), and thus may be possessed by those entities or (more likely) by their servant spirits (described above). A few, though, are Ogan (males) or Ekedy (females) who, instead of being prepared for possession, learn how to play the drums and iron bells, how to dress the possessed Children and how to properly prepare the offerings, be they food, herbs or animals to be sacrificed. These people are specially consecrated so that they become immune to spiritual possession, but are also unable to perform any spells on their own, needing the assistance of a priest or priestess. It must be noted that the Archangel is the only exception to this rule, being able to cast spells as a Baballowô.

There are several cases of adults who have come to Salvador to discover their guiding Orixá, and subsequently accept the initiation rites described above. In this case, a PC might accept the ritual and become Yaô, with all the restrictions above. Only non-spellcasting PCs should be allowed to do so, though, as

it is equivalent to a religious initiation that would give access to mystic spells.

After at least seven years of intense training, the Yaô might become a Baballorixá or Yallorixá (the title depends only on gender) after performing another complex ritual that involves another period of twenty-one days of isolation and expensive ceremonies. After completing that period, the person has "graduated" and may perform as a priest. It takes about one and a half years to rise in level through normal means, so after this seven-year period the priest usually has attained 4th-level. There are two more main ceremonies in that person's life, which take place in cycles of seven years (at such times, the person is assumed to have risen in at least three levels). Due to the intricacy of the rituals, the large amounts of money involved in the preparations and the long intervals between those major rites, only a few selected people effectively rise to a position beyond 9th-level. Among a whole generation, only 1d3 male Yaô are able to become Baballowô, diviner priests with the spell access described in Archangel's profile. Although each Baballorixá and Yallorixá is able to cast the Yfá shells twice per week, they can only ask 1d4+1 questions about a specific matter and have a 50% chance of a comprehensible response, while the Baballowô can ask 2d4 questions and has a 75% chance of success.

It is important to note that every time a person who is consecrated to an Orixá in any way is exposed to that entity's allergen or forced to eat a forbidden meal, that character must save versus poison or become incapacitated and unable to cast spells for 1d4+1 hours. If the person willingly consumes forbidden meals, the Orixá might let the person resist the physical effects (automatic save), but at the same time the character is stripped of spellcasting until he or she performs an atonement ceremony on the entity's holy day of the week.

In addition to such particular restrictions, all those who follow the way of the Orixás are subject to two general periods of limitation. The first is that, once every week, on Friday, all Orixás "rest" and pay reverence to Oxalá, the Father of All Orixás. Because of that, from midnight to midnight, those entities are unable to manifest, either in physical form or by possession of a cheval. The Yfá turns silent, and all priests perform as if they were one level lower. The second, and more dangerous, is that, right after the Carnaval (Brazilian equivalent to Mardi Gras), for forty days, from Ash Wednesday until Easter, the link between the spirits and their followers is greatly weakened. No Orixá, not even Exu, is able to manifest or possess a body. All spells cast by priests of the Orixás work as if the spellcaster were two levels lower (this is not cumulative with the Friday penalty).

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: GOTHIC EARTH PEOPLE

Unfortunately, the Egungun are not hindered by such spiritual limitations.

The Yaba can still act on Fridays and during the forty-day taboo, but at these times she cannot come within fifty feet of a Catholic church or temple of Candomblé. As there are more than 400 churches all over Salvador, besides a few dozens of temples dedicated to the Orixás, and the Yaba is extremely confident on her own powers, she would rather wait to act in the days the Orixás can also interfere.

### THE ORIXÁS

As stated above, the Orixás are collective entities, and as such their level of power varies according to the aspect most revered by his or her particular worshippers at any given time. Some can be easily compared with the Haitian Loa, since they are probably local aspects of the same entities.

The interesting point about them is it that, according to the person's general demeanor, it is possible to guess that person's guiding Orixá.

Following the name of each Orixá there is a common greeting used by worshippers and visitors.

Unless otherwise stated, greater Orixás are assumed to have the powers of 12th-level mystics with high Intelligence and Wisdom (13–14). So far, this is the highest level a Babalorixá or Yallorixá can reach before he or she dies of old age. When this happens, it is a common belief that such a powerful priest(ess) has achieved high spiritual status and has joined that Orixá's court as advisor. The greater Orixás have AC –1 and can only be hit while possessing a living cult member. Lesser Orixás are generally equivalent to 9th-level mystics and have AC 0. Except for special occasions such as large religious festivals or important ceremonies, Orixás seldom stay mounted on a Yaô for more than one hour at any given time. Some Orixás may possess their Yaô at times of terrible danger, or to prevent the person from seeing things that are not intended for human eyes. Due to the diversity generated by the miscegenation, and the differences between two or more types or "qualities" of the same Orixá, these entities seldom, if ever, manifest themselves in physical bodies, unless at times of dire need.

They do suffer the same weaknesses of the Loa regarding the Red Death, and most try to keep a low profile.

Due to the larger extension of Brazil and the dispersion of the former slaves, the Orixás can wander along the major seashore cities, like Salvador, Recife, Fortaleza and Rio de Janeiro, but this last city is the farthest south they can go. From São Paulo on southwards, there are more immigrants of other places, mainly Italians, Jews and Germans. In such places, the African traditions are so weak, that they might as well

be considered nonexistent. Whenever a priest of Candomblé visits such lands, he or she performs as if two levels lower, and any attempted possession has an 80% chance of failure due to the lack of pure devotional power from the audience. Orixás cannot manifest in physical form in those southern places.

### EGUNGUN

"HYP~HYP!"

Egungun are not true Orixás. They originally were ancestor spirits, mixed with raw forces of nature. Then the Red Death came and they were the first to fall, becoming akin to undead monsters. Whenever an Egungun manifests, it generally does so in one of two manners: occupying a corpse, who then behaves as a common zombie (with 1% chance of coming as a ghoul instead) or forming an ethereal shape, similar to an undead shadow. Only the darkest and most powerful ritual can allow an Egungun possession of a living body, the physical manifestation as a more powerful corporeal undead or the ethereal manifestation as a wraith or ghost. The Yaba's Wild Dance is one example of such a ritual.

### EXU (GREATER ORIXÁ)

"LAROY~EH!"

Exu [eh-SHOO] is probably the most misunderstood of all entities. A neutral messenger of the other Orixás and at the same time a respectful member of their inner circle, Exu is represented by a gaunt male with black skin, wearing a strange black and red leather armor and a pointed hat which is white at one side and red at the other. Exu leads a legion of lesser spirits that he uses as messengers and sometimes as tricksters. He is mischievous and sometimes cruel, but delights more in creating conflict than outright destruction. He is also the Orixá that goes nearest to humans, commanding the crossroads and all ways in and out of troubles. He most likely is a local manifestation of Papa Legba, although his attitude towards humans is significantly darker. It is a common saying that "Exu gives one with his right hand and takes two with his left."

Exu is perhaps the only Orixá who can possess a person that in not initiated as Yaô, but at the same time only the most skilled Babalorixá or Yallorixá will consecrate a Yaô to him. He usually casts cantrips and Illusion magic (as a 12th-level illusionist) to misguide people. He can *detect lie* and use *ESP* at will, and once per week he can cast *time stop*. Although he is not normally willing to engage in combat, he can strike with his long sacrificial knife (3d6 points of damage; save vs. poison or suffer additional 2d6 points of damage, 2 hp if successful). Exu holds limited control

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: GOTHIC EARTH PEOPLE

over time, and as such he can forecast the future as a 12th-level Baballawô. He is also the master of all natural poisons, and only creeping vines, cacti and venomous plants can grow in any place consecrated to him.

It is common for Exu to possess two or more initiated people at the same time during the opening chants of any ceremony. It is considered a good omen if he manifests in such way. He accepts offerings of cachaça (a distilled sugarcane beverage) and toasted manioc flour with fried (or sometimes raw) chicken entrails. His Yaô are mischievous and tricky, skilled at conning and deceiving others, especially children dedicated to Oxalá (see below). His day is Monday, and he commands a host of lesser entities also known as Exu or Legba, some male, some female. All of them smoke cigars and drink cachaça, performing minor services for humans in exchange for such goods.

Exu also trades with the Vistani and a few of the lesser spirits he commands present themselves as “the Gypsy”.

### OGUN (LESSER ORIXÁ)

“OGUN PATAKORÉ!”

Ogun, the Warrior-King, has a generic similarity to Ogoun B’Koulé, but is unable to cast the lightning bolt, since that power has been taken a long time ago by Yansan and Xangô (see below). He wields a long sword or a long knife that receives a +1 enchantment while in his possession. Ogun dresses as a soldier fully clad in armor made entirely of mango leaves (which nevertheless give him AC 0). In Africa, Ogun was the first High King of the city-state of Ifê during the Iron Age, and because of that he has become the master of iron and steel. He can magnetize all edged, metallic weapons within 30 feet of him, whenever he enters combat, and receives half damage from such weapons. Weapons made of stone or bamboo cause him 50% more damage, as those are the weapons of Nanan Buruku. Ogun has a minor quarrel with his brother Xangô, as in life he stole his three wives and took them to Oyó, a neighboring city-state. But since Yobá, his third wife, was destroyed while in physical form, he joined Xangô in the fight against the Red Death.

Ogun receives offerings of black beans with onions and dog flesh, or fighting roosters. His mentality is completely battle-oriented, and he is quick to anger and slow to calm down. His behavior is lawful neutral most of the time, but when provoked he enters a chaotic battle frenzy that only ends when the last creature in sight lies dead on the blood-soaked ground.

His Yaô usually follow this same pattern. Ogun particularly dislikes Nanan Buruku and her followers (see below). His day is Tuesday, so his children try

their best not to enter a fight on this day, lest they lose their temper and enter a berserk rage until all around them are dead or unconscious (or they fall unconscious or dead themselves).

### OXOSSI (LESSER ORIXÁ)

“OKÊ~ARÔ!”

Oxossi, the Hunter of a Single Arrow, is one of the most actively revered Orixás at Salvador, since almost all of his nation has been moved from Africa. In that original land he has no more worshippers, and if he loses his current ones he will become inert, so he actively participates in most ceremonies and always asks for more people to be consecrated to him. Oxossi has the powers and abilities of a 9th-level ranger of chaotic good alignment. He is impossible to surprise, and moves in absolute silence through natural surroundings, with a 95% chance of hiding in such an environment. He usually fights with a long bow or a long hunting knife.

Oxossi is not troubled by undead, but hates poisonous snakes and will try to kill each and every one he finds. His priests have no power over the undead, but at the same time are the last ones to be attacked by those creatures.

Oxossi loves cooked corn and coconut but is highly allergic to honey, and his priests are strictly forbidden to even touch or smell it. He accepts any wild animal as an offering, except for snakes. His Yaô are active and resourceful, initiating several projects at once, but also lack strength of will to finish all of them. They are also highly sensitive to snake poison (–1 to their saving throw). His day is Thursday.

### OBALUAYÊ (GREATER ORIXÁ)

“ATÔ~TÔ!”

Obaluayê, the One who Must Not be Named, is the owner of all diseases. He covers his entire body and head with clothes made of straw (which act as *plate armor +1*), and people look down when he dances. While he does not employ any weapon, he is the king of all crawling animals, and may summon them to protect him or perform other services three times per day. He can also animate and control undead as a 12th-level priest. His touch carries several deadly diseases, like smallpox and measles, and he can choose which one to transmit (save vs. poison to resist contagion). If he removes his headdress during combat, his visage is so hideous that anyone looking at him must save vs. death magic or die immediately, while a successful save means blindness for 1d4 hours. He can use this power once per day. Most of the time, though, he comes to cure ailments instead of spreading them. He can cast

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: GOTHIC EARTH PEOPLE

*heal* twice per day, and can *raise dead* once per month. Because of his power, the Red Death wants to trap him in mortal form, but so far it has been unable to do so, as Obaluayê only manifests physical form in graveyards, where he moves in complete silence.

His priests can turn undead with a +1 bonus and also have a +1 bonus to saves against natural diseases. A Yaô of Obaluayê has the same chance of Moving Silently, Hiding in Shadows, Opening Locks and Finding/Removing Traps as a thief of the same level, but only in graveyards or similar places.

Obaluayê eats large quantities of popcorn, and his priests can cast a *goodberry* spell on this meal once per week. On the other hand, Obaluayê holds the pig, warthog, and boar as sacred animals, so his followers must not touch these animals or eat their meat. Any follower of Obaluayê who willingly eats ham, for example, loses his bonus against diseases and the undead. The day for this Orixá is Monday. His children are prone to suffer from childhood diseases before initiation, and may have scars from such ailments (they permanently lose one point of Charisma upon initiation).

They also suffer from self-pity and resignation, often having morale problems.

### OXUMARÉ (LESSER ORIXÁ)

Oxumaré, the Rainbow Serpent, is so old an entity that its true sex is imprecise. It usually manifests as a venomous snake, possibly related to Dambalah but different in several aspects. Oxumaré is a master of herbal medicines like his brother/sister Ossayn, but is a lot more secretive about its true powers. He has a quarrel with Oxossi, for Oxumaré was the King of Ketu before the Hunter came and deposed him (historically, this means that the nation who worshipped Oxumaré was conquered by the nation of Oxossi's followers). Oxumaré's primary weapon is his deadly snake poison, and in human form he can cast all wizardly spells with *rainbow* or *prismatic* aspects (which do have visual effects when he cast them). He also has chameleon abilities that conceal him perfectly in natural surroundings. He can summon and charm snakes three times per day. Oxumaré is neutral as a force of nature, but when coming to confront Oxossi, he manifests a neutral evil alignment.

Oxumaré eats frogs, fish, small birds and eggs, like a snake. His Yaô must care for snakes and other reptiles wherever they find them, otherwise they risk their patron's wrath. Oxumaré hates hunters, rangers and trackers, so his followers are forbidden to hunt wild animals, use bows or take the Hunting or Tracking proficiencies. Oxumaré is mostly worshipped as a distant, rare entity, as he spends most of his time deep in the forests (as a snake) or high in the skies (as

rainbow). He can only take one Yaô every seven years, and cannot possess two Yaôs at the same time in a one-mile radius. His Yaôs may cast *snake charm* once every seven days.

### OSSAYN (LESSER ORIXÁ)

“EW~EW!”

Ossayn, Lord of the Leaves, is an enigmatic figure. Although portrayed as male, he often takes female form. Many legends tell of how Ossayn seduced Oxossi and took him away from his many wives and concubines. Six months a year, Ossayn dresses and behaves as male, while the other six months a year he becomes a woman. In either form, Ossayn always dresses in armor made of leaves (which functions as a *scale mail +1*). He is a master of all plants and vegetation, and performs as a 9th-level neutral druid. Once per day he can *animate plant*, and once per week he can *animate tree* (the tree becomes a 12 HD treant under his orders for 24 hours). He knows the secrets of all plants and herbs, effectively creating magical potions or powerful poisons at will.

Although a lesser Orixá, all other Orixás respect him for his knowledge of plants, since leaves and roots take part on almost every ritual of Candomblé. Because of this, Ossayn is revered every time a person enters the jungle to look for plants for any ritual. Besides lighting a candle on the jungle border, an offering of a few coins and tobacco must be placed wherever the leaves are harvested, otherwise there is a 50% chance that the gatherer will become lost for a whole month or longer.

Ossayn shares the Thursday with Oxossi, and eats lots of chicken broth and porridges. His children are forbidden of eating seafood or even touch it.

They receive the Herbalism proficiency for free and may research potions that imitate various wizard spells of the Enchantment/Charm school. They tend to lead shorted lives than other initiates, as Ossayn jealously wants all of his children at his side. For every level beyond 5th, there is a cumulative 20% chance that the character might suffer from an incurable, deadly disease as a side effect of his or her dealings with herbs and poisons. His followers can easily become addicted to certain substances, drinking lots of mixed beverages or smoking an herbal pipe for several hours a day. This behavior usually counts for their reduced immunities against diseases. Children of Ossayn are also very seductive, and might carry one or more social diseases.

### XANGÔ (GREATER ORIXÁ)

“KAÔ~KABYESEE!”

Xangô, Master of Thunder, is considered King of Kings among the Orixás.

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: GOTHIC EARTH PEOPLE

According to legend, he was the fourth king of the city of Oyó, and had three wives, Oxum, Yansan and Yobá. When he was experimenting with a lightning-generating device, he accidentally destroyed the city, and suffering tremendous grief and remorse, he buried himself deep in the ground, becoming one of the Orixás. His three wives followed him in death and also became spirits.

In combat he wields an intelligent +2 *two-headed axe* that can cast a 9 HD *lightning bolt* three times per day. Xangô may force any other Orixá to assume physical form (except for Nanan Buruku, Yemanjá, Obaluayê and Oxalá).

His fire-based spells do one extra hit point of damage per die, and victims save with a -2 penalty. But for all his power, Xangô has terrible fear of diseases and undead. He must check morale at a -2 penalty every time he confronts undead, and he cannot stand the sight of rashes or any other skin diseases, running away from them as if affected by a *fear* spell. He fears the Red Death for its powers over the undead and the fact that it destroyed one of his three wives, but keeps this fear in check, as he does not want his power challenged.

Priests of Xangô have no power over undead. They can *call lightning* once per month, twice in August (Xangô's holy month), and among other Candomblé priests, their word is considered the law, as Xangô is the Ultimate Judge.

Xangô's favorite meals are okra cooked with a T-bone steak and shrimp, but he cannot consume alcohol or any food related to Nanan Buruku or Obaluayê, and the same restrictions apply to his followers. Xangô's day is Wednesday.

Currently, all of his priests are trying to understand what happened to Yoba, his third wife, but no one knows for sure (see below).

### LOGUN EDÉ (LESSER ORIXÁ)

“LOSSY~LOSSY!”

Logun Edé, the Godson, is a rare case, a lesser entity dedicated to hunting who, instead of being obliterated by Oxossi, became a lesser aspect and eventually received his parentage, becoming the only son of Oxossi and Oxum.

Due to this change, the original hunter was softened by the strong feminine aspect given by Oxum and now he is considered male six months of the year, and female during the other six. He shares some of his father's abilities, as a 7th-level chaotic good ranger. When in female aspect, Logun Edé can disguise himself as any woman he has ever seen, and his voice acts as a *charm person* spell.

Logun Edé has only a few devoted followers, and his power to possess his Yaô is waning from this world.

He can only possess 1d3 Yaô during a whole generation. Usually these are consecrated to Oxum before Logun Edé can approach them, and sometimes Oxum's influence is so strong that he cannot take over the initiate's body, so Oxum remains as the official guiding entity. This only adds to the rarity and the weakening of this Orixá. His priests are assumed to be either Ogan/Ekedy or priests of Oxum who can assume the powers and restrictions of Oxossi's priests for half of the year.

Logun Edé has a secret power, one that only the older and wiser priests know of: he is immune to the draining powers of undead creatures and can share this power with children of Xangô. This is a blessing he received ages ago by a mysterious entity, long before his first follower ever left Africa.

That entity told Logun Edé that one day, the King of Kings would need the help of the Godson. Should a priest of Logun Edé know of this, he or she might be able to perform a special ritual that would share this immunity with a child of Xangô for a limited time (about one turn per priest level).

This ritual takes a long time, uses quite rare and expensive components—including seven days of fast and prayers, a gold necklace, and milk from a human female, to name a few—and can be performed only by the most powerful priests. Any mistake might make the subject even more vulnerable to undead, or turn the subject into an undead creature.

### OXUM (GREATER ORIXÁ)

“YÊ~YÊW!”

Oxum is the Queen of Sweet Waters and Mother of Gold. She holds the power of fertility and withering. Her touch may increase or decrease a person's Charisma by four points at will and can *age creature* three times per day.

She sends enigmatic dreams to her followers and her answers are always cryptic when she is asked about something. This is because she once tried to usurp the power of the Yfá from the other Orixás and was condemned to know everything in advance but be unable to say it coherently. This only adds to her already chaotic good (highly chaotic) behavior. She wields a golden *dagger* +2, which may age any living creature struck by 1d100 years (save vs. spell to avoid). Oxum is also the Queen of Witches, and she is known to have seduced almost all male Orixás she met. There are legends referring to her as a wife of Ogun, Oxossi, Obaluayê and Xangô. Oxum may cast any spell of the Enchantment/Charm school up to 6th-level, as a 12th-level enchantress. Her beauty is so overwhelming that an enemy must save vs. spells every other round to

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: GOTHIC EARTH PEOPLE

attack her. If she sings or dances, the saves are made at a -1 penalty. Even undead are subject to this penalty.

There is a river called Oxum in Africa, which was a result of her tears when Xangô killed himself. The river serves as a spiritual anchor to Oxum, and her followers send people to Africa to collect those waters and use them.

Shamans dedicated to Oxum may use this water as holy water. She eats white beans, cooked chicken eggs and river fishes, but cannot stand the sight of a female duck. Her followers must give her offerings in gold, feminine adornments, mirrors and perfumes once per year, in December. They must also avoid swimming in any river, as such places are sacred to her. Before entering the water, a follower of Oxum must offer gifts to her and chant praises to her beauty and goodness, otherwise the person might suffer an accident and drown. Oxum's holy day is Saturday.

### YEMANJÁ (GREATER ORIXÁ)

“ODOY~YÁ!”

Yemanjá is the Queen of Salt Water. Formerly a lesser Orixá of the sand and beaches, Yemanjá was elevated in power a few hundred years ago, when the ancient Queen Olokun was trapped by the Red Death in her physical form as a giant squid and killed in North Africa. Yemanjá collected the blood of Olokun and that granted her an enormous boon in power. She has also learned the lesson and never manifests in physical form. She may send a vision of her human form to her followers, however, on New Year's Eve and only over a large body of water, such as the sea. That vision may speak and answer up to 1d4+1 questions, but then Yemanjá is unable to use this power again for a whole year. People send small wooden boats painted in white and carrying goods to her, similar to those gifts sent to Oxum.

Yemanjá blesses her devoted priests with the ability to *create water* (one liter of salt water) once per month and that water serves as holy water to them. They must avoid the meat of land-dwelling animals, eating only fish and seafood. She shares the attentions of her followers with Oxum in December and also has the Saturday as a holy day.

### YANSAN (LESSER ORIXÁ)

“Ê PA~HEY!”

Yansan, Queen of Lightning, was the first wife of Ogun to be taken by Xangô.

She took the secret of forging lightning with her, and although Xangô handles thunder, she still keeps lightning for her. She shares this power with Xangô and has the same combat abilities of a 9th-level soldier,

proficient in the long knife, the whip, the scourge and long sword. Yansan is the darker of Xango's wives, actually dealing with undead naturally.

She wields a black *scourge of undead control*, which gives the bearer the ability to *control undead* as a 9th-level priest. Yansan travels all places and knows all environments throughout the regions where the Orixás are worshipped, but once a year she must come back to a sacred bamboo grove and stay there for seven days in August. During this time, her shamans receive no spells.

Shamans dedicated to Yansan must steal a corpse from the graveyard and “plant” it on a special altar. This incurs in a Powers Check, but also gives them the undead control ability as priests of two levels lower. This power exacts another price: when the character dies, his body has 90% chance of rising as a Voodan zombie, even without summoning. To avoid this, a complex ritual must be performed once a year for seven consecutive years. Even if the ritual is completed, an evil shaman may summon the corpse back as an undead creature through the standard method. Priests of Yansan cannot eat or even handle pumpkins and related vegetables, and cannot touch goats.

### NANAN BURUKU (GREATER ORIXÁ)

“SALUBAH!”

Nanan Buruku is perhaps the oldest Orixá still worshipped, older even than the so-called Father of All Orixás. She is an old woman dressing in dark purple or pure white. Named the Mother of Those who Return, she is responsible for taking care of the dead, receiving them as beloved children who come back to the womb of earth. She no longer manifests in physical form, since she could only become corporeal as a priestly lich, and the Red Death would be quite interested in corrupting her in such form. She is even exempt when Xangô calls all other Orixás to become corporeal.

Nanan ruled North and Central Africa before the Iron Age and hates Ogun for having taken her rule. Because of that, her shamans cannot wield any metallic weapons or tools, not even kitchen knives and forks, and must learn how to work and fight with tools and weapons made of wood, coconut and bamboo. They turn undead as if they were a level higher. Nanan's holy day is Monday and, curiously enough, she receives the same food offerings given to Ogun.

### EWÁ (LESSER ORIXÁ)

“EWÁ~CY!”

Ewá, an almost unknown entity, has only been included because of her singular history. She was one of Obaluayê's wives, and her husband was quite

displeased at her barrenness. Once, she was washing clothes at a riverbank when a boy came running up and asked her for protection, for Ikun (Death) was running after him. She concealed him in a bunch of clothes and, when Ikun came and confronted her, she boldly reminded him that her husband was the King, and that she would not be interrogated. Death was enraged, but left to look for the boy at another place. She then let the boy leave, and Death never found him. As a reward, the boy—who turned out to be Orunmylá, the Keeper of the Secrets—gave her fertility, eternal youth and the power to know the truth about everything. Perhaps the Red Death fears that Ewá might know some secret to its destruction or imprisonment, because its minions have fiercely killed all those who were consecrated to Ewá. She does not manifest in the physical world, and can talk only through the Yfá, and then only at sunrise or sunset, when the sky is pink (her sacred color). She can answer only one question per month.

### YOBÁ (DESTROYED)

Yobá, the third wife of Xangô, disappeared in the 17th century. No one in the circle of Orixás knows what happened to her, but they have managed to discern that the Enemy was responsible.

Actually, Yobá was a proud and fierce warrior, and thought Africa should be kept free from foreign influence, by the use of deadly force if necessary.

When the Europeans arrived to buy slaves, she responded by appearing to her priests in the shape of a female werepanther warrior. The Red Death detected her in this form and trapped her. She was betrayed by a follower, murdered and skinned. Her black panther skin (that is guarded somewhere in Salvador, probably Itaparyca) still holds certain power, and can be used in rituals to inflict werepanther lycanthropy in a devoted minion. There might be a chance that the correct use of the skin might bring her back, but no one truly knows (except for the Red Death minions). As the skin has been corrupted and used for evil purposes several times, the chance of salvation is quite remote.

### OXALÁ (GREATER ORIXÁ)

“EPA~BABÁ!”

Oxalá, Father of All Orixás, the Elder King, was given the mission of commanding those powerful entities while they were to help their worshippers.

Unfortunately, Oxalá is prone to drink and wander away from his duties. Because of that, in the ancient times his powers were split between two isolated entities and weakened significantly.

Oxalá has an elder, more powerful aspect called Oxalufan, which has no less than Nanan Buruku and

Yemanjá as his wives. Oxalufan has the powers of a 12th-level shaman, and his touch can make a person lose memories of the past 1d10 x 10 years or age 1d4 x 10 years (save vs. spell to avoid those effects). He cannot come near palm wine or any other alcoholic beverage, cannot stand the smell of palm oil (all his food must be cooked in olive oil) and must wear clean white all the time. Simply staining his clothes with red or black strips him of all power until he can clean them again or change them. Oxalufan eats baked white corn grains, white rice and fish, and all his food must be totally devoid of salt.

Oxalá has another, younger aspect named Oxaguyan [osha-GUIAN]. This is his warrior shape, with the abilities of a 9th-level soldier proficient with the short sword and dagger. He wears a white and silver breastplate, wields a *short sword* +2 and can paralyze his opponent with a *gaze* attack (even undead can be affected) for 2d4 rounds. He has the same weaknesses of his elder counterpart, and eats baked white potatoes with rice.

When the Portuguese started their colonization of the African territory and slave trafficking in the seventeenth century, Oxalá came in person to lead a group of shamans of the city of Oyo against the colonizers. The Red Death took the opportunity to trap him in human form. Soon, a minion of the Enemy, which had been sent to undermine the rebellion, accused the Orixá's human shape of having stolen and poisoned Oyo's king's horse, in an attempt to murder the king himself through evil magic.

As the king fell sick and died, Oxalá was condemned to be sealed alive with his followers in an underground cave to starve to death. His spiritual powers allowed him to live seven years without food or water (although his followers all died), and at the same time, the other Orixás withdrew their favor from the nation. Crops withered and animals died, so that the people starved and weakened. Only when the new king discovered what had happened and freed the old man did plants and animals grow stronger again. But by that time, the nation was too impotent to resist. The king, himself a descendant of Xangô, performed a ritual with the priests of Yemanjá and Oxum, saving Oxalá's divine essence.

The elder spirit was able to return to the other world and from that day on he avoids physical manifestation, preferring to give advice through the Yfá.

His holy day is Friday. In respect for his elder position, all Yaôs dress in white during their initiation, and at the first Friday of every month, all Candomblé followers dress in white and avoid red meat and beverages. The first seven rain showers of January are called Waters of Oxalá, and can be collected and used as holy water by his priests. ☉

# DUKE LEOPOLD OF AUSTRIA

A VILLAIN FOR MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH

by Eric “e” Blaine

tomatodoh@aol.com



As far as the people of Gothic Earth know, Duke Leopold of Austria was a fairly typical member of medieval Europe’s kingly order. While civilized folk of the 1890s would find some of his acts most disagreeable (particularly his treatment of the serfs of both his lands and the lands in which he campaigned), he was by no means the worst the 14th century had to offer. By and large an unremarkable warlord, the most significant aspect of his life may have been how it ended. The common people of the Swiss city of Berne, armed only with pikes and halberds, slaughtered Leopold’s armored knights in what was to be one of history’s first examples of determined peasants breaking the power of the lordly. Today, Leopold is little remembered, earning no more than a footnote in some erudite scholar’s textbook.

But there was more to Leopold than the world knew—far more. Leopold of Austria drew power not only from an ancestral title and scores of hardened knights, but from the dark favors of the Red Death. Unknown to the rest of the world, the Duke of Austria practiced terrible and infernal rites which often required the sacrifice of innocents. Indeed, Leopold was one of the most devoted servants the most ancient of evil had in Europe.

When Leopold’s knights were scattered by the Bernese peasants, they scoured the battlefield for his corpse. Upon finding it, they removed his black heart, his foul mind, and his other corrupted organs. They then wrapped him in the tattered remains of his standard and threw him into a shallow grave beside several of his fellow pillaging knights. The Red Death, however, still had plans for the late Duke of Austria, and when came the next full moon Leopold rose again. Bereft of his vitals, and possessing an inhuman capacity for malice, Leopold had become a mummy. Unhappily, he is a mummy that has survived to torment the 1890s.

## DUKE LEOPOLD OF AUSTRIA

**Unique Mummy, Neutral Evil**

<b>Armor Class</b>	2
<b>Movement</b>	12
<b>Level/Hit Dice</b>	6+3
<b>Hit Points</b>	29
<b>THAC0</b>	13
<b>No. of Attacks</b>	1
<b>Damage/Attack</b>	1–12 or by weapon
<b>Special Attacks</b>	See below
<b>Special Defenses</b>	See below
<b>Special Vulnerabilities</b>	See below
<b>Magic Resistance</b>	Nil
<b>XP</b>	4,000

Leopold still wears the same armor he died in all those centuries ago. This dented, rusted suit of plate mail is covered in the Duke’s blood, which, horrifically, still looks fresh. Leopold himself, however, is very clearly dead. His right arm has been severed at the elbow, numerous gaping holes in his armor expose rotting flesh, and the left half of his skull has been crushed in upon itself—the remainders of the wounds which the people of Berne inflicted. The Red Death has given him undeath, but has chosen not to make Leopold’s body whole.

The Mummy is deeply ashamed of his injuries, and so hides his arm under a sinister black cape. His skull is frequently concealed under an ugly iron helmet. Leopold’s voice is a shrill, grating sound, which causes him further embarrassment. Thus, he only speaks when he absolutely must.

## COMBAT

The Duke’s wounds have no effect upon his fighting prowess. Possessing an unnatural strength and



## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: GOTHIC EARTH PEOPLE

knowledgeable of his full powers, Leopold is a formidable opponent. Most often, he carries a battle axe +3, for an impressive 7 to 14 (1d8 +6) points of damage per hit.

As a mummy, the Duke possesses several terrible, innate powers to make him even more dangerous. As with his mundane bretheren, Leopold causes a supernatural terror in any creature that should look upon him, requiring a saving throw versus spell or the victim becomes paralyzed with fright for 1 to 4 rounds. Unlike normal mummies, numbers will not help to ameliorate this condition; it takes effect whether he is seen by one person or one thousand. Further, there is no racial bonus to resist as there is for normal mummies.

Immune to turning, and able to control undead as a 6th-level evil mystic, the Duke is a particularly dangerous example of his malevolent kind. Leopold is, as are most undead, immune to the effects of hold, charm, sleep and cold spells. Should a resurrection or wish spell be cast upon Leopold, he does not, as is typical for his ilk, revert to a living form. Rather, he dissolves into a pile of foul-smelling black soot. This does not destroy him, as he will reform in his lair 101 days after the spell is cast. Thereafter, he will bear a vitriolic grudge against whatever force vanquished him. Leopold hold grudges for a long, long time. Only by defeating him in battle can he be truly destroyed.

Against foes he considers worthy, the Duke will fight with some small dose of honor, meaning he will fight on equal footing (as much as such a thing is possible.) He reserves this consideration only for a select few—cavalrymen, for example, being the closest beings Gothic Earth still has to the knights of old, or members of any noteworthy European noble family. Against all others, Leopold fights without mercy or principle.

Leopold does not possess the ability to curse his opponents with a rotting disease as other mummies can. Rather, he is able to summon forth a 8 die fireball three times per day.

As the bear was the symbol of Berne, whose people sent him to death in the first place, the bear holds an enormous grip upon the mind of the mummy. When confronted with something bearlike, such as a werebear enemy, a person wearing a bearskin cloak, or even a necklace made of bear's teeth, Leopold must role a saving throw vs. Spell with a -3 penalty or suffer the effects of a fear spell (Leopold saves as a ninth level soldier.)

Finally, as Leopold was once a member of the Hapsburg family, he still holds the royal family of Austria-Hungary in high regard. Unless he feels that no other alternative exists, or unless commanded by the Red Death, the mummy will not bring harm to any Hapsburg. If, however, he believes that a member has

betrayed the family in some manner, Leopold's fury would be unspeakable.

### CURRENT SKETCH

Leopold has devoted himself to the furtherance of his homeland, Austria, as a means of increasing the powers of the Red Death. Convinced that the world deserves to be governed by his dynasty (the Hapsburgs) under the auspices of the Red Death, Leopold constantly schemes to expand the bounds of the Dual Monarchy of Austria and Hungary. Within Austria-Hungary, Leopold strives to attain for his descendants the total subjugation of the people, indeed, to restore the age-old system of serfdom and virtual slavery which afflicted Europe for too many centuries. By and large, he is patient, cunning, and unscrupulous. He is also suspicious to the point of being paranoid, and many an unoffending soul has been struck down by the mummy for imagined wrongs committed against Austria or its royal family.

### LAIR

Castle Vrockstein, in the foothills of the Austrian Alps, looks for all the world as merely another crumbling fortress of a by-gone age. All that remains are a few, shattered walls, a single tower, and, unseen beneath tons of soil and earth, a dark labyrinth of twisting stone passageways. Here, Leopold holds a ghostly court, attended to by his undead forces. Within these darkened corridors, any spell cast has a +1% chance to attract the attention of the Red Death. Necromantic spells have a +3% chance. Further, mystics turn undead as though they were one level lower (in addition to suffering the effects of the sinkhole of evil.) Finally, as the stench of decay is everywhere within the labyrinth, any living being therein must roll a saving throw vs. paralyzation every turn or suffer a -1 penalty to his or her attack rolls.

### MINIONS

Leopold has two general categories of underlings, those that live and those that died long ago. The mummy commands a total of 240 skeletons, some of the warriors who rode with him to defeat in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Still clad in their age-old armor, and bearing the weapons they used in life, these skeletons are far more dangerous than their mundane counterparts. These skeletons are automatically under the control of Leopold, and thus are not counted towards the number of undead he may otherwise control.

**Leopold's Skeletal Warriors:** (240 total), AC 4, MV 12. HD 3, THAC0 17, #AT 1, Dmg by weapon (typically a longsword or battle axe), SD 1/2 Dmg from

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: GOTHIC EARTH PEOPLE

slashing or piercing weapons, immune to sleep, charm, or hold spells. SZ M, ML special, Int Non (0), AL Neutral, XP 175

The Duke also has at his disposal a qabal of adepts. Calling itself the Sons of the Old Duke, these Neutral Evil fellows are always natural-born German-speaking Austrians. Over half of them specialize in the Enchantment/Charm school, the remainder most often belonging to the Qabalist kit. The Sons use their arcane powers to spy upon the unsuspecting people of Gothic Earth, and, very often, to influence the world around them. Long ago their ancestors were the soldiers who held Castle Vrockstein, whom Leopold subjugated and taught the ways of magic. Only the most experienced of members ever meets with the Duke, and few have any inkling as to the nature of their master. The Son's of the Old Duke symbolize their order with a brass-colored triangle, upon which the words "Loyalty is its own reward" are written in German.

### ADVENTURE IDEAS

As one would expect from something as cunning and evil as an ancient mummy, the Duke has set into motion many dire plots to further the rulership of the Hapsburgs and the Red Death.

#### SPITE OF THE SPIDER

Firstly, Leopold has been growing concerned over the increasing intractability of the Hungarian minority within the Dual Monarchy. Fearing that unless something is done soon the Hungarians may break away from Vienna's control, or, even worse, usurp the power of Emperor Franz Josef, the Duke has devised a devilish plot to humiliate the Hungarians before the eyes of Europe. Come the next summer solstice, Leopold will send the Sons of the Old Duke to poison the wells and water supplies of the city of Budapest. Called Spider's Spite, the poison effects the mind of whoever imbibes of the defiled water, forcing them to make a saving throw vs. poison with a +2 bonus or become temporarily insane. Any character so afflicted automatically becomes chaotic evil and loses two points from his or her charisma, intelligence, and wisdom scores. An unnatural bloodlust will overcome the poisoned, thereby creating a homicidal maniac where once stood a simple townsman. Every two hours, an afflicted person can reroll the saving throw, this time with a +4 bonus, to resist the effects of Spider's Spite. However, every time someone drinks from the poisoned water supplies, he or she must make a saving throw with the original +2 bonus (the exception to this being those already suffering from the poison; they are not effected should they imbibe the befouled water.)

Leopold expects that perhaps no more than three people out of one hundred will succumb to the poison, but as Budapest is a city of many thousands, the chaos created will be horrendous. To add further mischief, the Sons of the Old Duke will then use their charm spells to alter the personalities of the remaining cityfolk, urging them towards violence and depravity. Meanwhile, fires will be set throughout the city, and a few unsavory ruffians will be hired to create riots and other civil mayhem.

Of course, Franz Josef will not stand for such anarchy within his empire, and will (with the Sons' subtle influence) dispatch his heir, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, at the head of an army to restore order. By then Spider's Spite will have been thoroughly diluted, and the Sons will have ceased their magical endeavors. To the whole world it will appear as though the heir to the Dual Monarchy has put down the violent, uncivilized behavior of his Hungarian subjects. The stature of the Hapsburg dynasty will be increased, while Hungarian statesmen will be at a loss to explain why their people acted so beastly. Hungarian influence within the Dual Monarchy will decrease, perhaps indefinitely.

The innocents who will suffer and die as a result of this dire plan are of no concern to Leopold.

### SOME LIKE IT HOT

While the Duke has come to accept that Austria-Hungary is stronger as an ally of the German Empire than as an enemy, he is not at all pleased that it is the Prussian Hohenzollerns, not the Hapsburgs, who rule Germany. After all, before the catastrophe of the Austro-Prussian war, it was Austria that was the preeminent power among the German states.

With that in mind, the Duke has decided to enact revenge against the architect of Austria's defeat, the former chancellor to the Kaiser, Otto Von Bismarck. Using a man named Count Helmut Schiemling, one of his most loyal minions, Leopold shall prove that revenge is a dish best served hot, not cold, as the saying goes. Next April first, the old chancellor shall hold a lavish birthday party to which Count Schiemling is invited. Once the guests are all comfortably asleep, Schiemling shall use Leopold's Cursed Brazier. This magical device has three abilities, all of which activate after the command word ("Hellfire") is spoken. First, the brazier produces flame (as per the spell) in the four compass directions. Unlike the spell, this flame will harm the user of the brazier. It functions as though cast by a fourth level mystic. Secondly, a fireball (as per the spell) emanates from the brazier, inflicting 9d6 points of damage to all within a 20 foot radius. Finally, the brazier will summon a 12 HD fire elemental, which will

be unsummoned after three hours have elapsed since the command word was uttered.

The Bismarck family and the guests, asleep in their beds, will be totally unprepared for the magical fire which will begin to consume the mansion of the old chancellor. Groggy from interrupted sleep, drink, and plenty of food, they should prove little threat to a fire elemental irate at having been pulled from its home plane. If all goes according to Leopold's plan, the authorities will find the Bismarck estate burned to the last stick with no survivors. Assuming those within perished due to a tragic, though mundane, fire, they will never suspect the real cause to be a centuries-old mummy.

Count Helmut Schiemling does not know the exact nature of The Cursed Brazier. His death is virtually assured, but this is a small price to pay for the Duke's revenge.

### THE IMAGINED ASSASSIN

In 1889, Rudolf, the son and heir of Emperor Franz Josef, committed suicide. The Dual Monarchy mourned the death of so promising a young man—all except Leopold. Convinced that some jealous villain had discreetly assassinated the Archduke, Leopold has gone to great lengths to uncover the hidden murderer. In fact Rudolf's death was the mundane though utterly lamentable suicide of a troubled young man. The Duke is convinced that a vast onspiracy was behind the murder.

In his paranoia, the Duke has come to believe that the assassin is none other than the Imperial Foreign Minister (depending on when in the 1890s your campaign is set, this is either Count Gusztav Kalnoky von Korospatak, who served as Foreign Minister until 1895, or Count Agenor Goluchowski, who served until 1906.) The Duke therefore plans to make a personal appearance before the Minister to force the diplomat to confess his crime. Accompanied by a few of his skeletal warriors the Duke expects no trouble from a solitary old man. Fortunately for the Count, the qabal known as The Watchers has come to suspect he may be in some manner of danger, and have dispatched several of their best agents to protect him. Even these brave mortals will be little match for the mummy, however, unless some unsuspecting heroes (say the PCs) intervene.

### TO KILL THE BEAR

Leopold desires, above all else, to enact revenge against those who killed him in the first place; the people of Berne. In the past, whenever he has attempted to burn the city to the ground, the mummy has always been thwarted by his aversion to the bear, the symbol of Berne. He would look upon the city's walls and see the

bear-flag flying, or wander the countryside and find a bear-track, or face mortal defenders who knew of his phobia. Unable to enact vengeance on his own, the Duke has devised a new plan.

There is an old legend of a dragon that once dwelled in the mountains above a village which, centuries later, would become the city of Berne. While the pharaohs ruled in Egypt, and the greatest technological advance to be found in the Alps was the bronze handaxe, this dragon afflicted great suffering upon the people of many villages. Unable to destroy the beast, the villagers turned to a mighty sorcerer who put the dragon into an endless, dreamless slumber, then collapsed the entrance to the beast's cave lair. Leopold believes the dragon sleeps still, and has dispatched 100 of his skeletal warriors to search for the cave. Digging ceaselessly among the snow banks of the Alps, these minions have as of yet managed to attract no attention from the people of Switzerland. Once the dragon has been found, Leopold will place Chains of Command (see *Dragon Magazine* #238, page 29) upon the creature and use his magic to awaken it from its sleep.

Such a creature, Leopold feels, combined with his army of undead warriors and evil qabalists, can destroy the entire city of Berne in one night of fire and death. Those who survive will tell stories of a gigantic reptilian monster breathing fire, of ancient knights clad in plate mail and bereft of flesh, of normal-looking human beings who are able to work all manner of deadly miracles, which the rational world of Gothic Earth will regard as hysteria born of great tragedy. Leopold will have his revenge, and the Red Death will have more misery and despair to delight in. Unless, of course, Leopold is somehow stopped.

**Author's Note:** I would like to dedicate this submission to the historians Barbara W. Tuchman and Edward Crankshaw. Mrs. Tuchman's work, "A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century" was the source of my depiction of Leopold of Austria and his death at the hands of the people of Berne. Mr. Crankshaw's work, "The Fall of the House of Habsburg," gave me an understanding of the nature and composition of the Dual Monarchy of the 1890s, in which the undead Duke could scheme.



# DIONYSUS AND CYZANNEA

## TWO OF A KIND, BUT OPPOSITE

by Luiz Eduardo Neves Peret

rakshasa2001@hotmail.com



At the very beginning of recorded History, in a time when fantasy and reality were one and the same in the minds and hearts of all, when true history was still passed from generation to generation mainly by oral tradition, highly mixed with tales of mighty gods and terrible monsters, in a time when the Red Death was not powerful enough to encompass more than a few lands around ancient Egypt, magic was much stronger and more present than in the later years. Alchemy was the most “scientific” form of experimentation used by mankind. In those distant days, legends abounded of gods, spirits, genies, angels and demons dealing with mankind. While many were probably fruit of fertile imaginations and the inability to deal with natural phenomena, a few were actually based on true facts. The following is one such tale, Having taken place in an ancient city-state, the capital of a long-forgotten realm. There are no clues as to where that realm would be today, or what extraplanar phenomenon originated the “Tale of the Twins.”

### THE TALE OF THE TWINS

*“They got married, had a daughter as beautiful as the sun and lived happily forever after. . . that was when the real problems started.”*

- Ana Machado  
“Twisted Fairy Tale”

“Once upon a time, in a far away land..

In the heart of a highly-forested kingdom, a place like those described in fairy tales, there was a princess, pure of heart and soul, a paragon of goodness and charity. Her appearance matched her inner beauty, and many suitors came from every land to court her. She,

however, was uninterested in marriage at that moment, and gently declined all proposals. There was much gossip in the court, that the princess’ younger twin sister would get married before her.

This gossip proved untrue, though. A very handsome, gentle and gallant prince from an unknown, distant realm came to visit the king and offer allegiance, as an ambassador for his own father. His manners and demeanor were quickly noticed by all nobles, and the princess was stricken by his charm, as if someone had cast a love spell upon her. The king was very happy, and they rapidly made arrangements, skipping bureaucracy and not asking any questions. Little did anyone know about the true intentions of the noble gentleman or, for that matter, of his true appearance.

The groom, in reality, was a powerful and wicked demon, a spawn of the Abyss who had come to Earth in ancient times, whose ultimate goal was to spread corruption everywhere. He was there to corrupt the princess, take over the kingdom, make it an outpost of the Abyss and ultimately send all souls to his unearthly home plane, to be turned into infernal soldiers.

Right after the ceremony, the king was struck down by an unknown disease and died quickly. According to law, the princess was to take over the throne after one year of funeral services. Her husband should become prince consort. However, the good princess fell sick herself, and the dark creature took the opportunity to seize the government, charming, bribing, threatening and even killing anyone who would stand on his way.

The common folk and gentry alike were frightened with this sudden change, but everyone greeted the news that their future queen was pregnant, not ill. She had a difficult gestation, and was unable to take the throne back from her despotic husband. Finally, in the seventh month, premature twins were born, one boy and one girl, after two days of excruciating labor.

Unfortunately, their mother did not survive.

The queen's twin sister, who was reasonably schooled in the arcane arts, immediately noticed that the twins were not normal children, even though they looked normal at a first glance. That confirmed her suspicions against her brother-in-law. She quickly fled the palace, taking the two babies with her. They went deep into the forest and settled down at a small cottage.

The two babies grew up at high speed, becoming young adults in less than one year. The boy's skin darkened until it became pitch-black, and his hair turned silvery gray. The girl's eyes became of a greenish yellow, and small, black bat-like wings grew on her back. Despite that, their aunt did her best to teach both of them the ways of goodness, of purity and honor that had guided her family for generations.

While her niece seemed to understand and follow her guidance, both moral and arcane, her nephew was constantly rebelling against her teachings, and looking more and more like his evil father. He soon developed a taste for weapons and bloodshed. Eventually, the young fiendish man murdered his stepmother and ran to join with his father. The evil creature revealed its true form to its son, involving him in his web of lies and deception. It told him that they had divine blood and a holy mission, to enlarge the armies of the Abyss and command all inferior mortals. Flattered by his father's sweet words, the young man believed he was some kind of divine heir, destined to rule over humans while they lived, and send their souls to the Abyss after they died. Little did he know that, in fact, he was a cambion, a half-breed of a demon and a human who, by the Abyss' standards, was considered a lowly creature. He followed his father's steps, tormenting his subjects.

His sister, however, was not inactive during this time. In fact, she had easily surpassed her aunt in the practice of wizardly magic, and with the aid of a band of adventurers, she managed attack her father's castle, just as the monster was about to complete a foul, bloody ritual to open a massive gate to what he believed was its home plane—he was not yet aware of the presence of the Red Death, blocking all means of communication with the Outer Planes. In a terrible battle, the princess managed to kill her father, although several of her companions died as well. Cursing his sister, the wicked young half-demon escaped through the gate, followed by her. The gate was not finished, and neither the young cambion nor his vengeful sister were able to control the destination of their dimensional trip. They both disappeared forever. Or did they?

### THE TALE CONTINUES...

By the turn of the century, several groups, qabals and societies were trying to call upon "the forces of the other side". It was like a fever in the late 1800s, especially among the rich and those who could afford to

buy ancient manuscripts and hire "witches" to "summon and command the forces of nature". Ouija boards, magic circles, Tarot and palm-reading, love charms and philters, dolls with human hair, hidden altars with burning incense, and the practice of calling out names of ancient deities and spirits in social gatherings became "fashionable" among several of the European wealthy and noble. Most such people were impostors, prestidigitators, or at best dabblers in magic, but (unfortunately for them) a few of them were actually able to commune with ancient powers and unleash magical forces that were beyond their own comprehension.

One such group of inexperienced young women was trying to perform a summoning rite, in the name of Dionysus, the ancient god of chaos and pleasures of the flesh, who supposedly also sponsored some form of mysterious magic. So it came to pass that the ritual attracted the dark and chaotic energy of the cambion, who was lost somewhere in space and time, trapped by the miscast gate. His twin sister obviously followed him, and that is how they landed in the middle of a old and defiled circle of stones somewhere in Europe.

Upon arrival, the cambion quickly took advantage of the situation he found. Assuming the identity of the god the young women expected, he built a small group of worshippers around him, mostly female. Using the powers and numbers of his followers, he managed to drive away his sister, calling her "Cyzannea", which means "poison ivy" in their own ancient language. He soon understood the new reality of his condition, realizing that he was unable to leave Gothic Earth, but considered it of little consequence. With his father either dead or banished back to the Abyss, he figured that his chances alone in his old homeland would not be promising. He also understood the need of keeping a low profile, at least until he could manage to achieve a position of power. Slowly, he is spreading his teachings and gathering followers to his newly formed qabal. Since the time of his arrival, Dionysus perceived the existence of a darker, more powerful force working throughout the ages. Even though he saw the evil such power was able to do, he was afraid of trying to contact it and being crushed right away.

With so many so-called "ancient and mysterious" secret societies flourishing in Europe, and rich, spoiled men and women dabbling in black magic and old religions, either just for fun or to gain power over other people, Dionysus feels at home. He sometimes presents himself as a man with experience in the supernatural, and when he wishes to plant a new cell of his qabal, he leads a small cult into a new place, pretending to be an avatar of the deity he impersonates. His followers are scattered but faithful. He has already made a few connections with powerful and rich people in several countries.

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: GOTHIC EARTH PEOPLE

In the mean time, Cyzannea has realized how vain she was to try to win alone in a foreign land. She managed to enter in contact with a few good-aligned qabals in the hope that they might know a way to find and destroy her hated brother. His connections have made him quite more difficult to locate now, and she knows he has powerful allies, although she is not sure of who these might be.

Cyzannea hates herself and all demonic entities. Since her arrival, she has studied the roots of several religions, in an attempt to better understand the nature of outsiders and their relationship to mankind.

### DIONYSUS AND CYZANNEA

Technically speaking, the two half-fiends are twins. Nevertheless, they are as different in appearance as in behavior and goals.

In his true form, Dionysus usually looks like a 6-foot tall, muscular man in his late 20s or early 30s. His skin is pitch-black and scaly, his short hair is silver and his eye pupils are orange. He rarely can be seen in such a spoiled young man, with smooth and slightly tanned skin, short pale blond hair, and green or blue eyes. He dresses in the finest possible manner according to the place he is currently visiting, and always has a smile and wise words ready for every situation. Sometimes, when he has recently moved from another city and does not want people to recognize his last identity, he changes his hair and eye color. When he wishes to look “divine”, he assumes a less human form, with bright eyes and hair. He always carries an exquisitely decorated long sword of ancient appearance. So far, only a few members of his private cult have seen him in his true appearance, and they either are dead, completely under his control or do not care at all, for they too are evil to the core.

Dionysus nicknamed his hated sister Cyzannea, which means “poison ivy” in their native tongue, because no matter what he does to stop her, she always comes back to thwart his plans and prevent him from getting the current object of his personal pleasure. She accepted the “fraternal gift” and likes to be called by that name, as it serves to remind her both of her life mission and of the fact that she considers herself a poisonous being, a social cancer like her brother. Although she perceives her own mission as necessary, she intends to live no longer than necessary to cleanse the land from her brother’s corrupting influence, for she sees herself also as a monster of evil nature and beyond salvation.

Cyzannea is a beautiful woman with milky skin, waist-long pale blond hair and light blue eyes. Although she likes to keep a constant shape, whenever Dionysus changes his hair or eyes, hers change too. This way, she always knows his current general

appearance. She dresses in a simple yet elegant manner, always carrying her backpack and a jeweled dagger, carved with ancient runes.

In her true form, Cyzannea is an alu-fiend, a beautiful but sinister female half-demon with budding black leathery wings, silver hair and greenish-yellow eyes. She avoids showing up in this form as much as she can, but whenever her brother assumes his true form, that forces her to shapeshifts as well, and vice-versa. Dionysus knows that and delights in changing forms when encountering her along with human allies, so that he may try to turn them against her, claiming she is also a demon.

### DIONYSUS

**Male Major Cambion (Half-Fiend) Fgt 10:** CR 12; Medium-sized Outsider (chaos, evil); HD 10d10+20; hp 65; Init +3 (+3 Dex); Spd 40 ft.; AC 17 (+3 Dex, +4 natural); Atk +16/+7 melee (1d8+6 +1 *longsword*) +13 missile (1d8 longbow); SA Half-fiend abilities, spell-like abilities; SQ acid, cold, electricity and fire resistance 20; damage reduction 5/silver, immune to poison, darkvision 60ft, spells, spell-like abilities, phylactery, telepathy; AL CE; SV Fort +10, Ref +8, Will +3; Str 20, Dex 17, Con 16, Int 17, Wis 11, Cha 17.

*Skills and Feats:* Bluff +10, Climb +15\*, Diplomacy +8, Disguise +11\*, Escape Artist +6, Hide +13\*, Intimidate +9, Jump +8, Knowledge (local history) +5, Listen +8, Move Silently +13\*, Ride +6, Search +6, Sense Motive +6, Spot +8, Swim +8, Tumble +9, Use Rope +9; Alertness, Ambidexterity, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Leadership, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (long sword), Weapon Specialization (long sword).

\* Being a cambion, Dionysus receives a permanent +10 racial bonus to Climb, Hide and Move Silently checks (already included here). All skill check penalties for armor are halved. When using *polymorph self*, he gains a +10 circumstance bonus to his Disguise skill.

### COMBAT

Dionysus avoids combat in public places, openly disdaining it as “beneath him”. In privacy, however, he enjoys hurting and slowly tearing a man to pieces with his *long sword* +1. He can fight two-handed, usually wielding a ceremonial knife (damage 1d4) with his left hand. Due to his supernatural senses, it is impossible for a mortal to surprise him, and he is never caught flat-footed. When facing powerful foes in front of his followers, he prefers to use his powers to great visual and moral effect.

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: GOTHIC EARTH PEOPLE

**Half-fiend Abilities (Sp):** Both half-fiends have the following spell-like abilities, cast at 10th level, once per day each unless noted otherwise: *Darkness* (3/day), *Desecrate*, *Unholy Blight*, *Poison* (3/day), *Contagion* (DC 14 + spell level when a saving throw is applicable).

**Spell-Like Abilities:** *Charm Person* (at will), *Fear* (at will, by touch), *Levitate* (7/day), *Polymorph Self* (3/day). These abilities function as the spells, cast as if by an 8th level sorcerer.

**Telepathy (Su):** Dionysus can telepathically communicate with any creature that has a language within 100 feet.

**Phylactery (Ex):** Dionysus' phylactery is his *long sword +1*, a gift from his father. If his body is ever destroyed, his life energy will fly to the sword and rest there for seven days. At the end of that period, he may try to dominate any human male within 30ft. (Will save, DC 19). A success indicates that the intended victim resisted is immune to that power for one day. A failure means that Dionysus has expelled the victim's soul and taken complete control of the body. In a matter of a few days, the victim's body and face change to match Dionysus' original form.

It is important to notice that he has told a few of his most faithful worshippers that, should he ever "die", his soul would merge with "his most trusted follower" who wields his sword seven days after his "death". With this promise of untold power and control over the qabal, more than one of these foolish evil men looks forward to the day he may willingly give his own body up to Dionysus. To keep the facade, the cambion can easily keep the outer image of the selected follower, making others believe he has actually merged with, and not expelled the person's soul. Dionysus counts on human greed and lust for power to keep strong bodies nearby.

The only way to kill Dionysus permanently is to destroy his sword. This will surely prove to be a very difficult task, since he carries it or keeps it nearby most of the time, and whenever it is not with him, a team of his best-trained followers (mid- to high-level fighters, rogues, assassins, and a few adepts and mystics) has sworn to protect it as a holy relic.

## CYZANNEA

**Female Alu-Fiend (Half-Fiend) Rog 3/Wiz 7:** CR 12; Medium-sized Outsider (chaos); HD 3d6+7d4+20; hp 43; Init +3 (+3 Dex); Spd 30 ft, fly 40 ft (poor); AC 18 (+3 Dex, +5 natural); Atk +8 melee (1d4+4 +1 dagger), +7 melee (1d6+3 quarterstaff); SA Half-fiend abilities, sneak +2d6, spells, spell-like abilities; SQ acid, cold, electricity and fire resistance 20; damage reduction 5/silver, immune to poison, alternate form, darkvision 60ft, evasion, spells, spell-like abilities, phylactery, telepathy, uncanny dodge; AL CN; SV Fort +6, Ref +8,

Will +8; Str 16, Dex 17, Con 16, Int 20, Wis 14, Cha 19.

**Skills and Feats:** Alchemy +12, Bluff +12, Concentration +11, Climb +10, Disguise +14\*, Escape Artist +10, Hide +11, Intimidate +11, Jump +10, Knowledge (arcana) +13, Knowledge (religion) +13, Listen +12, Move Silently +10, Search +12, Sense Motive +10, Spellcraft +12, Spot +12, Tumble +10, Use Magic Device +11, Use Rope +10; Alertness, Ambidexterity, Brew Potion, Dodge, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Disguise).

\* When using her alternate form ability, Cyzannea gains a +10 circumstance bonus to Disguise checks.

**Spells:** 0—*Dancing Lights*, *Detect Magic*, *Flare*, *Ghost Sound*, *Light*, *Mage Hand*, *Mending*, *Read Magic*; 1<sup>st</sup>—*Alarm*, *Burning Hands*, *Cause Fear*, *Chill Touch*, *Color Spray*, *Feather Fall*, *Identify*, *Jump*, *Silent Image*, *Spider Climb*; 2<sup>nd</sup>—*Arcane Lock*, *Daylight*, *Endurance*, *Fog Cloud*, *Glitterdust*, *Minor Image*, *See Invisibility*, *Shatter*, *Whispering Wind*; 3<sup>rd</sup>—*Dispel Magic*, *Invisibility Sphere*, *Magic Circle against Evil*, *Nondetection*, *Stinking Cloud*, *Vampiric Touch*; 4<sup>th</sup>—*Confusion*, *Detect Scrying*, *Emotion*, *Illusory Wall*.

Before her arrival at Gothic Earth, Cyzannea had honed her skills in magic, having reached 7th level as a mage. She has noticed that not all spells function as they should and that magic is rarer in this land than it was on her homeland, but her outsider blood allows her to keep most of her magic untainted by the Red Death, or so she believes (the normal rules for altered spells in Gothic Earth may still apply, at the DM's discretion). When a saving throw is applicable against her spells, the DC is equal to 15 + spell level.

## COMBAT

Cyzannea only fights to defend herself, unless the opponent works for her brother. Even then, she avoids killing an enemy. She favors her magical *dagger +1*, and usually fights with one dagger in each hand. Sometimes she prefers to use a common quarterstaff. Due to her supernatural senses, it is impossible for a mortal to surprise her, and she is never caught flat-footed.

**Half-Fiend Abilities (Sp):** Both half-fiends have the following spell-like abilities, cast at 10th level, once per day each unless noted otherwise: *Darkness* (3/day), *Desecrate*, *Unholy Blight*, *Poison* (3/day), *Contagion* (DC 14+ spell level when a saving throw is applicable). Cyzannea does not like to use such powers, though, since she perceives them as part of her "unholy inheritance".

**Alternate Form (Su):** Cyzannea can assume any humanoid form of Medium size as a standard action.

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: GOTHIC EARTH PEOPLE

This ability is similar to a *Polymorph Self* spell but allows only humanoid forms.

**Spell-Like Abilities:** *Charm Person* (at will), *Detect Thoughts*, *Dimension Door* (1/day), *Suggestion* (at will). These function as the spells, cast by an 8th-level sorcerer (DC 14 + spell level when a saving throw is applicable).

**Telepathy (Su):** Cyzannea can telepathically communicate with any creature that has a language within 100 feet.

**Phylactery (Ex):** Cyzannea's phylactery is her magic *dagger +1*, a gift from her deceased stepmother. If her body is ever destroyed, her life energy will fly to the dagger and rest there for seven days. At the end of that period, she may try to dominate any human female within 30ft. (Will save, DC 19). A success indicates that the intended victim resisted is immune to that power for one day. A failure means that Cyzannea has expelled the victim's soul and taken complete control of the body. In a matter of a few days, the victim's body and face change to match Cyzannea's original form. She hates the idea of having to use such power, though, for she values human life above everything else, but she knows she would be sacrificing one life for the salvation of many others.

## THE SORORITY OF FLESH

### A CHAOTIC EVIL QABAL

This sorority was created by Dionysus right after he arrived at Gothic Earth. He took as his first followers the greedy and lustful women who had attempted to summon the god of carnal pleasure. Several of them were wealthy and respectful members of European society, and that accelerated the spreading of his dark teachings. Currently, the Sorority operates in some European capitals and major cities, and has already stretched at least one branch to America and another to North Africa.

### MEMBERSHIP

Contrary to what its name implies, though, there are men in the ranks of the faithful. Dionysus wanted his personal entourage composed of strong and skillful men who would promptly jump forth to face death while protecting their beloved "Walking God". No one knows for sure if Dionysus has bound them to his service through Blood Oaths, or if they are really loyal to him.

Most members are, obviously, female Aristocrats, while some few are Experts of either gender) in various areas or Tradesmen. Only in the higher ranks (the Inner Circle) true Mystics and Adepts can be found. Dionysus' personal entourage includes men and women of different classes and levels, as mentioned above.

### SYMBOL

All members of the Sorority wear a small, discrete gold pendant representing a branch of grapevine. They must wear it when attending secret meetings, in order to be granted passage, but are not required to wear it on any other occasion. However, some of those who are more fanatic or willing to show their devotion wear it all the time.

### GOALS

The Sorority supposedly preaches "boundless free love and communion with ancient deities and long-forgotten rituals". Its claims have appealed to more than one male-oppressed woman in high places, who see membership as a escape route from the suffocation caused by the Victorian way of life. They promote secret gatherings, where they imitate Greek bacchanals, or at least what they believe such ceremonies were: meetings with lots of beverages, intimate encounters with total strangers, debauchery and excessive indulgence.

Dionysus and his most favored acolytes usually attend such parties and take advantage of those women in several ways. Blackmailing is common place after such parties, and that has often bought silence and favors quite efficiently, while the group slowly enlarges itself. The qabal's true goals are all related to its founder. Dionysus patiently awaits the day when he will subtly take over all countries, subduing all humans to his will. Then, through massive sacrifices and rituals, he intends to open a gate to the Abyss and fulfill what he believes was his father's "holy" mission.

☠



# THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO

THE AVENGING ANGEL A VERSATILE NPC FOR GOTHIC EARTH

by Christopher Miles

morganfino.slimecat@roystonvasey.co.uk

*"Happily, I vanquished death."*

—Edmond Dantès

## BACKGROUND



For young Edmond Dantès, the year 1815 should have been a happy one. After three months at sea as ship's mate aboard the Pharaon he returned to France to marry his beloved, Mercédès, and was to become ship's captain upon its next voyage.

Providence, it seemed, had blessed him with good fortune—but she had also cursed him with bitter enemies. His success in love and his advancement in rank aboard the Pharaon bred hatred and envy among his rivals, and a trinity of conspirators arose to dethrone him. The mastermind was fellow crewman Danglars, who conceived an elaborate plot to implicate Dantès as a Bonapartist collaborator. Joining him in this scheme were Mercédès' cousin Fernand, a jealous competitor for her affections, and the unwitting Caderousse, a simple-minded innkeeper.

Dantès was arrested during his betrothal feast and sentenced to imprisonment in the isolated Château d'If for a crime he did not commit. Fourteen years he spent in that dreadful place, a forgotten political prisoner. As Fortune would have it, he was not to pass his days in complete isolation. He made contact with a fellow prisoner, the Abbé Faria, with whom he communicated via a secret tunnel. Here Dantès received the benefit of Faria's great knowledge in the realms of science, history, religion, and much more. He also learned of an incredible fortune that the Abbé kept hidden on a tiny island named Monte Cristo, in the Mediterranean Sea, between Corsica and the island of Elba. When Faria suffered a fatal stroke, the grieving Dantès saw an opportunity for escape. He climbed inside the Abbé's

burial sack, substituting himself for the body of his departed mentor, and was carried outside the prison for sea burial by two unsuspecting guards. Thrown into the chill waters surrounding the Château d'If, Dantès struggled free of the burial sack and was rescued by smugglers. He convinced them to deliver him to the island of Monte Cristo, where he discovered the Abbé's treasure.

Suddenly endowed with unimaginable wealth and his rightful freedom restored, Dantès' thoughts turned to revenge. In 1829 he returned to Europe, concealing his true identity by means of several cunning disguises, and began meddling with the lives of the very people who had condemned him to imprisonment. With the stage set for him to enact his retribution, Dantès transformed himself into the wealthy, self-styled Count of Monte Cristo.

With his brilliant mind and slow-burning desire for revenge, Dantès visited grief and terror upon all those who had conspired to rob him of his liberty, his love, his happiness, and his innocence. He soon came to view himself as an instrument of God, punishing the wicked in the name of divine justice.

## EDMOND DANTÈS, THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO

**10th-level Human Sailor, Lawful Neutral**

<b>Armor Class</b>	10	<b>Str</b>	12
<b>Movement</b>	12	<b>Dex</b>	12
<b>Level/Hit Dice</b>	10	<b>Con</b>	13
<b>Hit Points</b>	54	<b>Int</b>	16
<b>THAC0</b>	11	<b>Wis</b>	14
<b>No. of Attacks</b>	3/2	<b>Cha</b>	14
<b>Damage/Attack</b>	By weapon		
<b>Special Attacks</b>	Nil		

<b>Special Defenses</b>	Night vision, photographic memory
<b>Special Vulnerabilities</b>	Nil
<b>Magic Resistance</b>	Nil
<b>XP</b>	2,000

*Proficiencies:* Navy pistol; Derringer; Rapier; Sabre; Dagger; Whip; Seamanship; Rope Use; Swimming; Language, English; Language, Italian; Etiquette; Disguise; Toxicology; Mesmerism.

## APPEARANCE

The young Edmond Dantès is described as a ‘fine, tall, slim young fellow of eighteen or twenty, with black eyes, and hair as dark as a raven’s wing.’<sup>2</sup>

When he is rescued at sea after fourteen years’ imprisonment, he resembles a brigand, with a heavy beard and thick black hair one foot long. He receives a hair-cut shortly after, and this is how Dumas describes the change in his appearance: ‘Dantès had entered the Château d’If with the round, open, smiling face of a young and happy man, with whom the early paths of life have been smooth, and who anticipates a future corresponding with his past. This was now all changed. The oval face was lengthened, his smiling mouth had assumed the firm and marked lines which betoken resolution; his eyebrows were arched beneath a brow furrowed with thought; his eyes were full of melancholy, and from their depths occasionally sparkled gloomy fires of misanthropy and hatred.’ He is variously mistaken for a Maltese, an Arab, and even a nabob from India.

Later, during the course of his scheme, Dantès disguises himself as the Abbe Busoni, an Italian priest. At one point he assumes the guise of a Tunisian who calls himself Sinbad the Sailor. ‘Although of a paleness that was almost livid, this man had a remarkably handsome face; his eyes were penetrating and sparkling; his nose, quite straight, and projecting direct from the brow, was of the pure Greek type, while his teeth, as white as pearls, were set off to admiration by the black moustache that encircled them. His pallor was so peculiar, that it seemed to pertain to one who had been long entombed.’

Later Dantès poses as an anonymous Englishman, before finally transforming himself into the Count of Monte Cristo. ‘The count appeared, dressed with the greatest simplicity, but the most fastidious dandy could have found nothing to (quibble) at... Every article of dress—hat, coat, gloves, and boots—was from the first makers.’

<sup>2</sup> All quotations are from the Wordsworth Classics edition, copyright Wordsworth Editions Limited 1997. Translations may differ in other editions.

## USING THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO

*‘I have descended from a planet called grief.’*

—Edmond Dantès

Crucial to Alexandre Dumas’ novel is the idea of the Count as an agent of Providence, judging sinners and condemning them to destruction, while doing his best to protect the good and the innocent. He is a prototypical vigilante-superhero, in many ways a precursor to Batman.

As the novel progresses, Dantès comes to question the role he has created for himself. Having originally considered himself an instrument of God, Dantès slowly realises the terrible consequences of his actions. He starts to question his motives—indeed his relationship with God. His psychological manipulation of the jealous Fernand, who is now married to Mercédès and known as Count Morcerf, drives the guilty aristocrat to madness and suicide. Worse, an unexpected tragedy occurs in the house of Villefort. Monte Cristo exposes the king’s procurer who originally sentenced Dantès to imprisonment as a poisoner, revealing that she has intentions of murdering her step-daughter Valentine. Madame de Villefort (the procurer) takes her own life, but also that of young Edward, the Villeforts’ son. When the Count realises what has happened—that he has not merely disgraced Villefort as he had hoped, but also contributed to the death of an innocent—he considers that he has passed ‘beyond the bounds of vengeance’, and that he can no longer claim that God is with him.

The novel ends with Dantès finally revealing his true identity to Baron Danglars, now bankrupt and outcast, and imprisoned by Italian bandits. The shock of the revelation turns Danglars’ hair completely white. His ultimate fate is unclear. Dantès, however, sails into the Mediterranean, and his last act in the novel is to unite young Valentine Villefort with Maximilian Morrel, her true love, and heir of the shipping family to which Dantès’ vessel, the Pharaon, had once belonged. These innocents, whom he has protected throughout the novel, can look forward to a happy future. As for the Count: well, that’s up to the DM.

There are many ways in which the Count of Monte Cristo might be introduced into a Masque of the Red Death campaign. The first task for any DM considering using the Count as an NPC is to decide whether he is to serve as an ally, or as an adversary. There is enough scope in the character to allow either possibility.

### THE COUNT AS AN AGENT OF GOOD

Let's assume that the story finished just as Dumas wrote it, and the Count sails into distance, intent on seeking out injustice and battling evil. He discovers the existence of the Red Death, and commits himself to destroying its minions wherever he should find them. He keeps old age and death at bay with his remarkable knowledge of medicine and biology, and keeps himself ever-youthful with specially prepared philtres (Note: Dantès would be almost one-hundred years old by the end of the nineteenth century). He surrounds himself with earnest warriors in the battle against evil. He might prove an invaluable ally, an excellent guide, a fabulous benefactor, and a useful motivator (or manipulator).

Another possibility is to explore the idea of Monte Cristo as a martyr figure. Perhaps he is slain in the battle against the minions of the Red Death, or is killed by Danglars (see below). In the wake of his death a secret society forms to honour his memory and continue his good work, naming themselves the Order of the Avenging Angel. They would value the power of science and the intellect, and its members might even adopt the same disguises that Edmond Dantès employed during his lifetime. The PCs might belong to this noble order, averting injustice and driving away the forces of darkness, or perhaps they simply cross paths during the course of an adventure, pursuing similar (or divergent) goals.

With these options in mind, the DM might wish to use Baron Danglars as a recurring villain. Having composed himself after his confrontation with Dantès, the Baron sets out to destroy his rival once and for all, aggrieved at his own humiliation and determined to recover his empire. Danglars might begin by jeopardising the marriage of Maximilian and Valentine. A distressed letter from the nuptials summons Dantès immediately, giving Danglars an opportunity to strike. Or, discovering that Dantès has found happiness in the form of Haidee (the Greek prince's daughter with whom he sails away at the end of the novel), Danglars sets out to crush that happiness. No doubt the Red Death would see fit to grant Danglars terrible powers over life and death. The PCs might find themselves pitted against the fiend Danglars as he seeks out his hated enemy. In another twist, he might even manipulate them into pursuing Monte Cristo, tricking the PCs into believing that the Count is an evil minion of darkness.

### THE COUNT AS AN AGENT OF EVIL

Imagine that Dantès were to proceed in his campaign of retribution without fully realising his dilemma, without questioning his motives, driven only by his lust for revenge at any cost. No doubt he would begin to attract

the attention of the Red Death. The DM might want to pursue the idea of the Count becoming an agent not of good but of evil, the Red Death feeding upon his hatred, rewarding him with an unnaturally prolonged lifespan or keeping him from ageing altogether.

Imagine that Dantès actually kills Danglars in cold blood, setting him firmly on the path of evil. He has the opportunity to repent – but would he? His long quest for retribution has reached its end, and the hatred that has sustained him since his escape from the Château d'If can do so no longer. He becomes vulnerable and confused—and such things are the delight of the Red Death.

The Count decides that his vengeance is not yet complete, that every last drop of blood must be wrung from his jailers, and begins pursuing his own brand of justice against anybody remotely connected with his imprisonment. Through the course of such a campaign he could conceivably fall prey to the many stages of corruption that mark an individual's approach to the status of darklord.

Treated in this manner, Monte Cristo would make a terrifying adversary. Though he has few special powers, he possesses a formidable scientific knowledge and a definite streak of ruthlessness. His situation is tragic—there is no chance of happiness for him. The wrongs he has suffered can never be put right, yet the Avenging Angel perpetuates his destructive vendetta endlessly. He becomes irrevocably consumed by his craving for vengeance, and is transformed into a creature of shadows who shall never rest, never cease his terrible mission, and never be satisfied. He is paranoid, sensing conspiracy everywhere he goes. He withdraws from the human sphere, for he cannot bear to perceive the ordinary joys that are forever lost to him. Taking this premise into consideration, a potential adventure hook might be that a Player Character is somehow related to one of the Count's unwitting victims, becoming drawn into his obsessive campaign as a result. Another possibility concerns the Count's fabulous wealth—perhaps the PCs are on a mission to recover a magical stone or valuable jewel, and they trace the object to the Count's incredible hoard. Perhaps there is an ancient curse upon the treasure—or perhaps Dantès finally realises that he has brought a curse upon himself, and enlists the help of the PCs to redeem him.

(Note that some modifications to Monte Cristo's statistics will be required should the DM choose to drag him into the realm of the undead.)

### FURTHER READING

The themes of revenge, betrayal, power, grief, hatred, injustice, romance, and intrigue presented in Alexandre Dumas' novel are particularly appropriate in terms of the Masque of the Red Death setting, and there is plenty

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: GOTHIC EARTH PEOPLE

of scope to introduce the Count of Monte Cristo into a Gothic Earth campaign, regardless of location. ‘My kingdom is bounded only by the world,’ he says, ‘for I am not an Italian, or Frenchman, or a Hindu, or an American, or a Spaniard—I am a cosmopolite. No country can say it saw my birth. God alone knows what country will see me die.’ He might travel to every corner of the globe, as champion or villain, either fighting evil or spreading it, according to the DM.

A note: any DM wishing to include the Count of Monte Cristo in his or her campaign is advised to read the novel, if only because it offers a wealth of adventure ideas involving European political and family intrigues, as well as offering a particularly beautiful description of the Carnival in nineteenth-century Rome, and an excursion into its catacombs. It is also quite valuable from a storytelling point of view, with its complicated and well-engineered plot, and for its depiction of the mysterious count, whose manipulation of the characters around him is worthy of the finest Gothic Earth villains.

An online version of the novel is available at [www.litrix.com/cristo/crist001](http://www.litrix.com/cristo/crist001).

Good summaries of the novel can be found at:

[www.novelguide.com/thecountofmontecristo](http://www.novelguide.com/thecountofmontecristo) and [www.classicnote.com/ClassicNotes/countofmontecristo](http://www.classicnote.com/ClassicNotes/countofmontecristo)

There are countless television and movie adaptations of the novel, from the silent era to the present day. Particularly good is the 1998 French TV mini-series produced by GMT, DD Productions and TF1, starring Gérard Depardieu. It incorporates the bulk of the novel, though some characters are absent and some are added, and the ending is slightly different. It is available on VHS and DVD, and can be ordered online at all the usual sites. Touchstone Pictures are releasing their own version, directed by Kevin Reynolds of ‘Waterworld’ fame, in October this year. Given the sheer size of the novel, one cannot be too hopeful that a two-hour motion picture will fully capture the literary Count.

However, as the Count himself says: ‘Wait and hope’.



# SWEET BAY VILLAGE

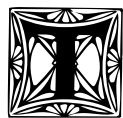
## ACCURSED SOULS FOR GOTHIC EARTH

by Luiz Eduardo Neves Peret

rakshasa2001@hotmail.com

*"Natural things, such as herbs and plants, have always played an important part in magic, be it evil or good magic . . . just as salt and water. Both are ancient symbols of life, but can be used in darker ways."*

—P. Williams,  
*The Practice of Magic and Witchcraft*



This is a scenario designed for Masque of the Red Death, but it can easily be adapted for Ravenloft or any other campaign setting. It has been designed for 4–6 characters, of levels 5–7, with regular equipment. Magical or silver weapons are not really necessary, but might be useful. While the region named Sweet Bay was originally inspired in a northern Brazilian legend, it has geographical features that can be easily adapted to several countries or even other worlds.

The scenario takes place at a long seashore with several small fishing villages, each separated from the next by a few days of travel over land and/or sea. A swampy area or salt marsh nearby will also prove useful. The residents should consist of simple and peace-loving commoners, mostly illiterate.

In an area like this, several such communities—while only a few miles away from each other—can spend a whole year of even longer without ever getting in touch, as they spend their days and nights on local activities and in prearranged fishing areas. Only during periods of insufficient food will two or more villages get together for a period while trying to find a better fishing site.

### SWEET BAY

There are places that look peaceful or even beautiful, yet are as dangerous as any dungeon or haunted castle.

The more quiet and harmless a scenario looks, either to experienced heroes or commoners, the more horror it adds when they find out the truth. This is the case for Sweet Bay Village, a small human fishing community on the shores of Sweet Bay. It is a calm, circular bay, about five miles in diameter and one thousand feet deep, thriving with fish, crab and shrimps. While most inhabitants would make visitors feel welcome, the bay itself holds a terrible history and a powerful creature whose heart is darker than the bottom of the sweet waters. Ironically, it also serves as home to the only key to salvation.

Sweet Bay's waters come from two large rivers, and its circular shape ends in a somewhat narrow opening to the sea. Because of this feature, its waters are fresh despite the open sea being just ahead. The village, along with its small port, is situated on the sandy beach directly across the bay from the opening to the sea. Only a couple of houses have been built on the peninsulas that extend out towards the narrow gap to the sea. The community has been founded by simple fishermen, men and women of tanned skin and hard features, who know little, if anything, of technological advances. People fish with homemade nets and harpoons, crossing the bay in small wooden or bamboo boats. Others collect coconuts, mango and other types of fruit. They make their own clothes, produce their own food and keep to themselves. Most are illiterate, but they have good knowledge of local herbs, weather and animals.

The seashore around the bay is mostly swampy, covered with salty marshes that serve as refuge to alligators, birds and turtles. Few people ever leave the village unless fishing, and all seem content with their lives. They are completely unaware of the evil they welcome into their homes. Their main concern with the supernatural has to do with the infamous "Boto" (BOE-toe), a mythical creature that supposedly inhabits the salty waters just outside the bay. Even those few who believe the tale of the "kidnapping dolphin" feel safe, however, since it is common knowledge that sea dolphins do not enter fresh water.

Sweet Bay Village has never experienced any disappearances since the town's most famous

fisherman, a young lad called Gooma, left the area with a foreign girl about two decades ago. Gooma's adoptive mother, an aged town counselor known as Grandmother Manuella, insists that the girl killed Gooma at the behest of the Boto and was later abducted by the creature, but only a few people actually believe her. Manuella insists that her prayers and concoctions have kept the Boto away from the village, but most people dismiss those words, as they know very little of the disappearances in the other villages.

### THE LEGEND OF THE BOTO

According to local superstition, the Boto is an ancient sea monster who takes one of two pleasant disguises in order to enter and leave fishing communities without being harmed. The first and most common is the shape of a blue-gray dolphin, who usually helps fishermen and can even save their lives should they suffer accidents in the sea. The second is that of a handsome young man, strong and supple, who comes to the shore under the full moon and kidnaps beautiful women (preferably maidens) and takes them under the sea as his lover. Those few who survive the experience, it is said, usually come back to their homes pregnant. Because of that, all fatherless children are known as "Children of the Boto".

Most people do not believe this tale, preferring to see it as a superstitious way to explain a young, unmarried girl suddenly showing up pregnant. As dolphins are a common sight in the waters around fishing villages, the tale of relationships between humans and dolphins developed into its current form.

The fact is, the Boto does exist. However, the creature was inspired by the legend, and not the other way around. The Boto is a maledictive shapeshifter, cursed to an eternal life of swimming the sea waters and seducing women to their deaths under the full moon. So far no woman has ever survived his underwater embrace, so there are no true "Children of the Boto", nor living victims to tell the truth.

### THE TRUE HISTORY

Manuella was the only daughter of one of the first families to make home in Sweet Bay. She was not a particularly beautiful girl, but had a kind heart and great talent for brewing any kind of broth, concoction or herbal medicine. She felt more at ease when collecting herbs and fungi in the swampy marshes around the bay, or gathering leaves and fruit in the forest, than in the company of other people, even those of her family. While other girls babbled about things like boyfriends, enchanted princes and so on, she dismissed the idea of

marriage altogether, finding true happiness only in her communion with nature.

As she grew older, it became clear that no man would propose marriage to her, but she seemed content with the life of a healer and, eventually, of town advisor. No one new more about plants and fungi than her, and her concoctions and medicines grew famous in the region. People from all over the salty marshes would come to ask her for healing aid or advice. She became more and more respected, although the attention started to annoy her a little. She was, after all, the very same shy, isolated person she had spend all her youth being. Meanwhile, she felt gradually more comfortable with the loneliness of the swamp, and it seemed to her that the winds whispered with the voices of the dead trees, that the mud ponds bubbled secrets to her, that each animal spoke softly, telling tales of ancient spirits and natural forces.

One day, she was surprised to find a basket in front of her door, with a baby boy inside it, and a note asking her to take care of the child, explaining that his true mother was an unmarried girl from a neighboring village, and according to the old custom she had to abandon her son—a "child of the Boto". Manuella had already passed her early forties, and at first she thought of giving the child to a family. However, something inside her was caught by the healthy, cherubic baby, and she decided to take care of him, at least for a while. Soon enough, she was so used to having a baby in her hut that she could no longer stay away from him for long. She gave the child all the love she could, and raised him to be a strong, handsome boy. He had the eyes of a pure blue that only the sea could match, and she decided to call him Gooma, which meant "sea jewel".

At the age of twenty, Gooma had become the best fisherman in all Sweet Bay. Also, he had grown quite handsome and strong, and several girls coveted him. However, no one dared come near him, as Manuella, now an old and venerable lady, had made it clear that Gooma's role in life was to take care of her when she finally retired. She did not show any signs of tiring from her life as chief town advisor and healer in her sixties, though, and so the people believed the boy would grow old before his adoptive mother finally gave up her activities. Over time, though, Manuella retreated from the village meetings and stayed alone, either in her hut or in the marshes, collecting leaves or roots. Gooma was one of the only people she cared to talk to. Sometimes he would convey her words of wisdom to the people who came to seek her help, and she would only treat directly those who had suffered dangerous accidents or were gravely ill.

However, all things change someday, and that happened to Gooma as well. He was used to attracting girls without even paying attention to them. But once,

during one of the rare meetings between villages as a result of a food shortage, Gooma met a young, beautiful girl called Kyta. She had eyes green as seaweed, and her carrot-red hair shone bright as the sun itself. Her voice was charming, and when she sang, his heart was hit. He fell deeply in love with her. She returned his feelings in a discreet manner, and they avoided the attention of both villagers' eyes. She was only seventeen, too young to be engaged, and knew all too well of Manuella's position, both in the village and in Gooma's life. Besides, in a few weeks both villages would depart, and they might as well never see each other again.

But the fire of passion burned deep in their hearts, and not even the sea and the distance could quench those flames. Gooma secretly followed Kyta's people whenever they went, so as to determine their new fishing spot and establish a plan to visit her more often, in order to eventually get her family's permission to date her. Manuella, though, noticed the fire in her stepson's eyes, and his disappearances for days on a row. She feared the worst, and went deep into the marshes, to collect herbs and commune once again with the spirits of the swamp.

When Gooma finally decided to tell his mother, she was incensed. She called him a "traitorous snake", said he was ungrateful of all she had done to him, and that he was denying her the only thing she had asked him in return for all those years of happy and healthy life she had given him. She said that, after all, she could expect nothing different from a "child of the Boto". Their argument grew hot, and he bitterly yelled that her jealousy was not that of a caring mother, but of a woman who had never been loved by a man. She struck him on the face, and he left in a hurry, promising to never come back.

Perhaps some of what he had said was true, perhaps not. The truth is, those final words had hurt her more than anything she had suffered in her life. Her heart grew cold and full of spite, and she hurriedly ran into the marshes after her stepson, yelling curses at "her disloyal son and his mistress," shouting to the winds and to anyone who would hear, that she would do anything in her power to just to give them a taste of her retribution.

So blinded was she by fury, that she slipped and fell in a quicksand pond. Surprisingly, she felt no fear of dying, but only regretted that she would be unable to exact her revenge. As she sank deeper into the pond, she thought, "At least, I will be part of my beloved swamp, and will die away from those people that could never do anything but ask for favors and medicines."

During the final, long minutes, her mind wandered, her son's bitter words still echoing in her thoughts. She rapidly saw pieces of her own, long and lonely life running in front of her eyes, and her son's angry face

haunted each memory, his eyes full of passion for the girl and traitorous anger for his own mother. She heard herself laughing at her own fate, and echoes of that laughter crossing the swamp, as her body sank completely in the quicksand. Then a strange, silent calm covered the place. No one felt it strange that Manuella and Gooma had left their hut unattended, since they often used to go into the marshes sometimes and spend a few days there, collecting herbs.

A few days later, under the full moon, a creature emerged from the pond. Green and filthy, with talons where nails should be, leathery skin covering her hunched body, Manuella had become a greenhag. Through either the force of her own will and spite, or by the interference of some outer force, she had not only survived, but also had at one time become part of the swamp and found new ways to exact her revenge. The reasons for the change she never discovered, and did not care about. All that mattered to her was her revenge.

Moving fast through the swamp, following her supernatural senses, she easily found the two lovers in a small cottage near the outskirts of Kyta's village, where they both had moved in. When Gooma left to fish, Manuella swiftly attacked the girl, who stood no chance against the monster. The hag pulled her limp body through the swamp and, opening a crack in a bloated dead tree, she hid it there. Then she performed a foul ritual involving blood and bone, and bound the girl's spirit to the tree. The earth around the tree grew barren and dark, as a sign of the curse.

Returning to the cottage before Gooma, Manuella prepared a magical potion and cursed it, saying:

*"Under the full moon, this brew you shall drink,  
Traitorous child of the Boto,  
And apart from the sweet water you shall stay.  
Into the sea, as a Boto, you shall live and think,  
Forever bound to salty water, so I say.  
Under the full moon you shall be,  
As the handsome lad you once were,  
Looking for your mistress, you here, she there,  
Until the time when your bodies are together  
again."*

When he arrived, starving and cold from the day out at sea, he was not surprised to find the cottage empty, since Kyta might be working somewhere else. He gladly served himself a bowl full of what he believed to be hot soup, and immediately felt great pain, and the urge to enter the sea to relieve it. Right after diving in, he turned into a dolphin and swam away, with no memories of his former life. The Boto had been born.

As Manuella spoke her curse, the words were magically written in the bark of the Cursed Tree.

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: GOTHIC EARTH PLACES

Neither Kyta nor Gooma can read or write, and no one ever comes near the tree since Kyta started to haunt the area, so the hag has not been concerned.

### ADVENTURE HOOKS

There are several possible approaches to this scenario, either alone or as part of a greater campaign. Here are a few suggestions.

#### HOOK ONE:

As the heroes travel along a coastal region (probably while running another adventure), they hear isolated tales of disappearances, and one or two unconfirmed reports of possible suicide attempts. All tales have one thing in common: they always involve women. In each case, the victim seemed to start acting in erratic, unexpected ways, and then suddenly disappeared one night. Some disappearances occur on the last night of the full moon, some a few days later. This might add a seed of doubt if the heroes immediately begin to suspect a lycanthrope.

Another important clue is that no woman acted as if being threatened or frightened in any way. At least one widow stopped mourning the loss of her husband and went on with her life, trying to reintegrate herself with the hard life in the fishing community, only to vanish a few weeks later. In more than a few cases, the women started looking more healthy and happy, and would fill other people's lives with joy and hope, singing beautifully, dressing their best clothes for no obvious reason, as if life had simply turned into a party. One or two of these missing women acted like that for one or two months before disappearing. So far, none of the females who displayed such behavior had been found, living or dead.

One important detail that the heroes must somehow figure out is this: the disappearances have been occurring for a long time—actually several years—but only one or two per year, and never twice in the same community on a row. When a girl vanishes in a given village, it is almost certain that the nearest villages have not had one such case for at least the last two to five years, so no one will link them. As there are many villages along the coast, and as most people are usually too busy to travel between them or to investigate the other occurrences, so far the locals have made no connection between any disappearances. It is up to the DM to slowly make the adventurers aware of the whole picture. In order to help the mood, the heroes should feel the strangeness of the situation and make the necessary connections without too much pressure, but they must see that something is happening in yearly cycles.

#### HOOK TWO:

The Boto might be directly responsible for the disappearance of a female friend of the heroes, or even a girlfriend. If the DM wants to give her a chance to survive and be saved, the heroes might return to a fishing village they have visited before, and notice changes in the behavior of the victim before she actually disappears. They might then rescue her at the last moment, learning of the true existence of the creature known as Boto. Local villagers will not believe them at first, since the creature's charm ability is very powerful and lingering.

#### HOOK THREE:

A female hero might be slowly entranced by the Boto, who follows her as she travels from place to place in a continuous campaign by the seashore. Her companions have little time to figure out what is happening before she jumps into the sea after her "love".

Either way, the heroes would believe the Boto is the villain. At this point, it does not matter if they successfully kill him, since the curse restores him after a few weeks. Eventually, the adventurers will hear once again of the entity, and might try another approach.

Their investigations should lead them to Sweet Bay Village, since it is the only place the creature cannot enter. Finally, they get to meet with Grandmother Manuella - who might even have helped them in a past adventure - and she will surely be afraid that they might discover the truth of the matter. She might arrange for "unfortunate accidents" in the marshes to help hide the truth. She will not come near the seashore, but might well use other agents to create incidents there and blame the Boto.

If the heroes investigate the marshes, they will meet with Kyta's geist. Alternatively, they might see her - and experience the fear of her illusions, or the melancholy of her song - before they ever hear about the Boto. With careful planning, the DM might show her as an evil ghost, a banshee or similar, making even more difficult for the heroes to figure out the truth.

### MAIN CHARACTERS:

#### GRANDMOTHER MANUELLA

**Greenhag (former 9th-level Expert), Neutral Evil**

**HD:** 9d8+9 (48hp)

**Initiative:** +2 (Dex)

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

**AC:** 22 (+1 Dex., +11 natural)

**Attacks:** 2 claws +13 melee

**Damage:** Claw 1d4+4

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



## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: GOTHIC EARTH PLACES

**Special Attacks:** Spell-like abilities, weakness, mimicry  
**Special Qualities:** SR18, darkvision 90ft.  
**Saves:** Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +7  
**Abilities:** Str 19, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 17, Wis 13, Cha 13  
**Skills:** Alchemy +15, Animal Empathy +8, Balance +11, Bluff +10, Climb +10, Concentration +12, Craft (Brewing) +15, Heal +13, Hide +14, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (local geography and history) +20, Listen +13, Move Silently +9, Profession (Herbalist) +15, Spellcraft +10, Spot +13, Wilderness Lore +20  
**Feats:** Alertness, Blind Fight, Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Great Fortitude

---

**Climate/Terrain:** Sweet Bay Village and nearby salty marches  
**Organization:** solitary  
**Challenge Rating:** 7  
**Treasure:** standard

As with several other small villages nearby, Sweet Bay Village has no mayor, nor a formal town council, and people rather govern themselves. The place is so isolated, stuck between the sea, a salty marsh and a deep forest, that no outside government does ever come to collect taxes or bring any improvements. The inhabitants acknowledge only their elders as figures of authority, and among those, everyone respects a woman they all know as Grandmother Manuella, so old that no one alive remembers her true age, and everyone accepts for a fact that “she has always been there to offer help”.

This wrinkled yet sturdy old lady seem to pay little attention to her own appearance, and in the rare occasions when she does leave her shack by the brink of the forest, she dresses in peasant clothes, a black scarf covering her thin, graying hair. Her eyes are black and deep as the seemingly bottomless waters of the bay. Her expression is stern and she rarely smiles. Some children think this is so because she no longer has any front teeth, but a few elders know the cause of her stony attitude: the loss of her stepson Gooma, a handsome young man who disappeared more than thirty years ago. No one does ever comment the matter with Manuella, for they know she blames a foreign girl named Kyta for having murdered him, and most people dismiss that as the ramblings of an old crone. The general assumption is it that Kyta and Gooma left the village together, and that Grandmother Manuella could not accept the truth and came up with a fantastic tale. Actually, the truth is neither the general assumption nor Manuella’s tale.

Manuella has improved a number of skills after the Change, and has kept all the knowledge she had before, resulting in some of her extraordinarily high skill scores. That makes this lonely greenhag more dangerous than a party of adventurers might expect.

She feels completely at ease in the salty marshes around Sweet Bay, and has a number of animal spies working for her. She is cunning and smart, but as with most hags, she has grown too proud of herself and will most likely underestimate foreign heroes. Her worst fears are of being somehow exposed - something she has successfully avoided for recent decades - and of confronting Gooma. Because of that, she’s terribly afraid of traveling through the seawaters, and keeps distance from any seashore. She feels confident that Gooma will never be able to approach her village again, since he is unable to swim into the Bay.

### COMBAT

Although she has all the powers of a normal greenhag (see the *Monster Manual*), Manuella will not start a fight unless deeply provoked and safely away from any villagers. She has maintained a masquerade for so long that she is certain that no one would dare challenge her while in town, where everyone would come in aid of the “good town advisor”. In the marshes, she will use her spell-like abilities and wilderness lore to her best advantage. If hard pressed, she will most probably swim away, but her enemies can be sure she will try to arrange for a bitter, frightful vengeance.

### GOOMA, THE BOTO

**Medium-sized cursed shapeshifter, lawful good (as human) / neutral (as dolphin)**

**HD:** 5d8+15 (34hp)

**Initiative:** +1 (Dexterity) +2 (Dexterity)

**Speed:** 30ft. (as human), Swim 60ft. (as dolphin)

**AC:** 14 (+2 Dexterity, +2 natural) as human; 17 (+2 Dexterity, +5 natural) as dolphin

**Attacks:** by weapon +4 melee (as human), or bite +6 melee (as dolphin), tail slap +1 melee

**Damage:** by weapon +1 (as human) or bite 2d4+1 (as dolphin), tail slap 1d6+1

**Special attacks:** charge 4d4+1, charm aura

**Special qualities:** dolphin empathy, plus blindsight (as dolphin), darkvision 60ft. (both forms), damage reduction 15/silver (as dolphin), binding curse

**Saves:** Fort +10, Ref +7, Will +7

**Abilities:** (human) Str 13, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 18 (dolphin) Str 15, Dex 17, Con 19, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 18

**Skills:** Balance +10, Hide +10, Listen +14\*, Profession (sailor, fisherman) +10, Spot +14\*, Use Rope +10, Wilderness Lore +12

**Feats:** Alertness, Skill Focus (Profession), Skill Focus (Wilderness Lore), Weapon Finesse (bite)

---

**Climate/terrain:** any aquatic (saltwater only)

**Organization:** solitary

**Challenge rating:** 5

# BOOK OF SACRIFICES: GOTHIC EARTH PLACES

## Treasure: nil

\* While able to use his blindsight, he has a +4 racial bonus to Spot and Listen checks.

During the three nights of the full moon, Gooma returns to his original shape. In human form, Gooma has retained the good looks of the time he was cursed, even though many years have passed. He is a strong, hardened young man, about six feet tall, with tanned skin, eyes of a pure marine blue and light brown hair. Should his curse ever be broken (see below), he might start to age once again.

Gooma's curse is to travel from village to village, swimming through the waves, fishing and always looking for his beloved Kyta. His mind does not accept the idea that she is dead and lost to him. As her ghostly manifestation is unable to ever approach the seashores and nearby towns (see below), he is doomed to wander forever and lure women to their deaths.

He has a few memories of his former life as a fisherman, and sometimes helps villagers in huge fishing trips with his acute senses and fishing skills. During other times, he stays out of sight, preferring to keep to himself, as he understands the damage he does to women around him.

In the meantime, he longs for female company, and his natural charms are more than enough to attract the attention of several candidates. When he participates in communal fishing, at least half a dozen females, among them young maidens, married women and even one or two elders, follow him all the time, tending to his needs. He is so enthralling that more than a few men actually become jealous of him. When he leaves a village, sometimes one or two women will try to follow him in vain. But, at least once per year, his curse makes him more and more attracted to a specific woman who somehow resembles Kyta. The resemblance does not need to be physical: she might sing the same songs, or walk in a similar manner.

Once Gooma determines the goal of his romantic interest, he will visit the woman more and more, coming with every full moon. Eventually, she becomes so entranced by his looks, his manners, and his charm ability, that she will willingly follow him anywhere he goes. At this point, by the last night of the full moon, he takes her to the sea, where they embrace in a passionate underwater dance. His kiss imbues his lover with the ability to breathe water while he retains his human shape in the water, and she goes farther and deeper with him into the sea. In the end, when he turns back into a dolphin, the poor victim has little hope of surviving, being so deep in the dark, cold waters.

As a dolphin, he looks like a seven-foot, healthy example of the species, with a bluish-gray rubbery skin and only one anomalous feature: his eyes are of same blue color as when he is human. He retains no memory

of his human form, but if the curse is acting, he will stay in the area near the village of his chosen companion.

## COMBAT

As a human, Gooma can fight with a knife or harpoon, but he is very unlikely to start a fight. His natural and magical charms are usually more than enough to calm down any prospective opponent.

As a dolphin, he can bite with his sharp teeth, slap with his tail or, if given space, he can charge and gore his victims with his bottle-shaped snout. He is a fast and strong swimmer, and can even push almost all of his own body out of the water in a straight position, as if walking on his tail. He can also jump vertically up to 12 feet out of the sea.

**Blindsight (Ex):** as a dolphin, Gooma can “see” by emitting high-frequency sounds, inaudible to most other creatures, that allow him to locate objects or creatures within 120 feet. A Silence spell negates this ability and forces him to rely on his normal vision and darkvision.

**Charm Aura (Su):** This aura works somehow like the 8th-level spell *mass charm*, cast by a 16th-level sorcerer. Will save negates, DC 22. A few days after he leaves, most people forget he has ever been there, unless he shows up again in the next month.

**Binding Curse (Su):** since his spirit is linked to the tree where Kyta's soul resides, even if his body is totally destroyed, Gooma reforms in the next full moon. His curse must be broken for him to be vanquished forever.

## KYTA

**Cursed greater geist (medium-sized undead), lawful good**

**HD:** 1d12 (8hp)

**Initiative:** +0

**Speed:** Fly 30ft (perfect)

**AC** 13 (+2 Dexterity, +1 deflection)

**Attacks:** nil (against ethereal foes, unarmed strike +0 melee)

**Damage:** nil (against ethereal foes, unarmed strike 1d2)

**Special attacks:** create illusions, song

**Special qualities:** undead, incorporeal, damage reduction 50/+5, immunities, rejuvenation

**Saves:** Fort +0, Reflex +4, Will +3

**Abilities:** Str –, Dex 16, Con –, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 17

**Skills:** Hide +14, Intimidate +5, Listen +15, Perform +10, Search +13, Sense Motive +5, Spot +15, Wilderness Lore +5

**Feats:** Alertness, Skill Focus (Perform)

**Climate/terrain:** 1-mile radius around the Cursed Tree

**Challenge rating:** –

**Treasure:** none

When Kyta was killed and her body hidden inside the Cursed Tree, her spirit was bound in such a manner that she cannot go farther than 1 mile away from her burial place. She manifests in the physical world as a vaporous image of her former self, a beautiful young female with flowing carrot-red hair and deep green eyes. She wears a white silk gown, but a more careful observer will see tiny bloody spots scattered throughout the fabric.

She floats through the dead trees and salty marshes. The position of the Cursed Tree, far away from the sea shore, prevents her from ever coming near any place Gooma might be visiting. It is her curse to wander eternally, looking for him while he is forever beyond her reach.

### COMBAT

As a greater geist, Kyta is utterly unable to physically interact with characters in the Material Plane, even when manifested. Against ethereal foes, she can attempt an unarmed strike, but most probably she will try to escape or make everyone pity her condition and let her go.

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

**Incorporeal:** Kyta can be harmed only by other incorporeal creatures or by magic weapons. Even those attacks that might hurt her have a 50% chance of being ignored, when the attacker is corporeal. She can pass through solid objects and always moves silently.

**Create Illusions (Sp):** Kyta is able to create illusions that emulate the effects of the 3rd-level spell *major image*, as if cast by a 8th-level sorcerer, once per round, at will. She normally concentrates on illusions that repeat her tale and attract potential saviors. Unfortunately, her illusions look quite “ghostly” and also *cause fear* (as the 4th-level spell), usually scaring people away from her.

**Song (Su):** Kyta sometimes sings a song of loneliness and sorrow, telling about her misfortune. This song can usually be heard up to 900 feet away. At 300 feet, the song has a mind-affecting (charm) effect, making people who hear it approach and feel sadness and melancholy. The person must succeed in two Will tests (DC 16): the first to avoid going to Kyta and the second to fight off the sadness. Melancholic characters suffer a -2 morale penalty on attacks, saving throws and skill checks. Those who succeed in their Will saves are not affected by the song for 24 hours.

**Immunities:** Kyta is immune to all magic except *limited wish* or *wish*.

**Rejuvenation (Su):** Even if her incorporeal manifestation is destroyed, Kyta reforms in 2d4 days. Even those spells able to affect her cannot vanquish her permanently. Her curse must be broken for her to finally find rest.

### BREAKING THE CURSE

It is not easy to break the curse laid on the couple. First, Kyta’s body must be recovered from the Cursed Tree - which is already a challenge in itself, for Manuella will surely have posted guards and set deadly traps in the marshes around the Tree. The body must be shown to Gooma in his human form, so that he finally realizes she is dead. Then they must embrace for one last time. This will release Kyta’s spirit and she will finally find rest. Gooma will be free from the seawaters - and most probably will be burning with the desire of revenge. It would be quite difficult for him alone to win a direct fight with the hag, and the heroes might feel the urge to help him - after all, Manuella is responsible for all of the disappearances and all these years of curses and sorrow.



# THE OLD BREWERY

## TENEMENT OF DEATH

by M.T. Kelly

mark7269@aol.com



No other building in America, possibly the world, had as many murders committed within its walls as within this 19th century New York tenement. The police estimated that, on average, one killing a day took place within this building over a fifteen-year period—a total of over 5,000 deaths.

### HISTORY

Built in 1792 as Coulter's Brewery in the old Five Points section of lower Manhattan, (the area surrounding the intersection of Cross, Anthony, Little Water, Orange, and Mulberry streets) it produced a beer famous throughout the Eastern states. It was condemned for use as a brewery in 1837 and transformed into a filthy tenement of 100 rooms, housing around 1,000 people. The building was five stories in height but only three floors had windows; many rooms received neither sunlight nor fresh air. Some children born there literally did not see the outside world until their early teens.

In this nightmare existence, men, women, and children committed murder and were, in turn, murdered, their bodies often left to rot or buried under the floors or in the walls. The occupants were divided about equally between blacks and immigrant Irish. All the basement rooms were occupied by blacks, many of whom had white wives, while the Irish tended to occupy the upper floors. On the first floor was a large room called the Den of Thieves, where more than 75 men, women, and children, black and white, lived without furnishings or conveniences of any kind. Many of the women were prostitutes who entertained their customers there, (at least, those customers brave enough to risk entry).

Throughout the upper floors ran a long corridor, aptly called Murderer's Alley, which led off to the individual rooms. In the 1850s, 26 people dwelled in one room no more than 15 feet square. In this room, a little girl was once foolish enough to show a penny she had begged for and was promptly stabbed to death, her body shoved in a corner for five days until her mother

dug a shallow grave in which to bury her. In 1850, an investigator discovered not one of the occupants had been outside the room for a week, although some had stood in the doorway waiting to attack a more fortunate dweller passing through the alley with food.

Throughout the Old Brewery, every imaginable criminal roamed—thieves, pickpockets, whores, and murderers. Twenty-four hours a day there were fierce fistfights and drunken orgies; screams of luckless victims and cries of starving children; and men, women, and even children writhing on the floor with delirium.

While the police knew murder was common and that many wanted criminals hid out in the Old Brewery, they seldom entered its vile confines. When they did, it was usually in groups of 40 or 50. If only five of six policemen entered together, they knew they might never emerge alive. More than likely, they would be murdered and every stitch of clothing stripped from their bodies.

Just as the police could not enter safely in small groups, the building's residents could not leave safely in daylight hours, unless they took some underground tunnels that snaked out through the Five Points. So greatly were these residents hated and feared that a denizen leaving the Old Brewery in daylight would be belted with brickbats thrown by pedestrians determined to drive him or her back inside.

Many of the inhabitants of the Old Brewery had previously been persons of some importance. It was said that the last of the Blennerhassetts, the second son of Harmon Blennerhassett, who had joined Aaron Burr in the great conspiracy to establish a Western Dictatorship, vanished into the Old Brewery never to be seen again. He and other persons of some consequence soon sank to the level of the rest of the residents, living and dying amidst the violence, insanity, and sexual promiscuity that were accepted facts of life within the Old Brewery.

Occasionally, missionaries tried to alter conditions in the Old Brewery, but being mostly Protestant, they were driven away by the Irish inhabitants who considered them heathens. Finally, the Missionary Society, with money from a fund drive headed by Daniel Drew, succeeded in buying the building for

\$16,000; the city contributed \$1,000 towards the purchase. In December 1852, the society asked the police to drive the inhabitants out so that the building could be razed in preparation for the construction of a mission house. The police had to fight many battles at close quarters to clear out the residents and gangsters, and at least 20 wanted murderers fell into their net. Children, never having seen the light of day, blinked in terror when brought outside. As the building was ripped down, laborers carried out sack after sack filled with human bones that they had found inside the walls, beneath the floorboards, or in the cellars.

### FORBIDDEN LORE

The Old Brewery is less of a breeding ground for the minions of the Red Death than one might imagine from its debauchery. While it's true that the Old Brewery did give rise to many who could have been useful servants of evil, few of them managed to survive long enough to be so. Frankly, life expectancy for anything within its walls was just too limited. There were tales of monsters within the Old Brewery. It was said that one of its denizens, a big brute whose name has long been forgotten, wrestled a giant dog creature to the ground and killed it with his bare hands before hacking it to pieces with a handy blade. If this is true, there is no evidence of it, for nothing other than human bones were pulled from the walls of the building.

About the only thing to come out of the Old Brewery that was of any use to the Red Death was a peculiar breed of Foul Rat which got fat feeding off the dead corpses in the walls and floors. These beasts were wise enough to make their homes outside or beneath the building or in the sewers and tunnels around it; only entering to feed on the corpses. Any of them found inside would, of course, have been killed, and occasionally even eaten.

Still this much death and depravity doesn't go unnoticed or unused by the Red Death. Perhaps this is what prompted Daniel Drew and the rest of the Missionary Society to take all of the measures they did. It's unknown whether these people were acting under the influence of one of the Qabals or were in fact members of one of the Qabals, but whatever the case, they managed to do something rarely done before: they almost completely eradicated the influence of the Red Death in that area.

Realizing the influence the Old Brewery had had on the surrounding area, the Missionary Society saw to it that the remains of as many of the corpses as could be clearly separated from one another were buried in separate graves on consecrated ground. This way, said one of the Society, there would be no one mass grave for the residents of the surrounding area to vandalize or defile. It would also undercut any ghost stories which

would sprout from its memory. As there were already several cemeteries for such nameless dead around New York, this was possible.

The laborers in charge of destroying the building were also aware of its fearsome reputation and saw to it that anything which could burn was burned and that the bricks were taken to a local quarry and crushed into sand to be used in concrete. The tunnel entrances were found as the cellars were excavated and cleaned out as well. Many more corpses were found there as well and even some more living people. Some of the men complained of large and particularly vicious rats down there. This prompted the city authorities to lay down a quantity of rat poison before sealing the tunnels or collapsing them. When the new mission house was built, there was absolutely nothing left of the Old Brewery. The Mission House was made of completely new materials and opened its doors some time later.

The Old Brewery still seems to exert some influence, however. The Mission, like most of its kind, takes in all kinds of people and many of them who spend the night there complain of horrible dreams. Some dream of being crammed into a small space with dozens of others, barely able to move or breathe. Others dream of wandering down a dimly lit corridor when suddenly they feel a terrible stabbing pain in their backs or see a swift movement beneath their chin followed by the sensation of their body being drained.

Still others dream of being in a terrible dark place where they can't see but are surrounded by terrible sounds and even worse smells. Other, more unique, dreams are also common. Many find the dreams so horrible that they can't even talk about them. This is especially true of women.

The Missionary staff, however, continue their work in spite of everything. The Five Points area has not improved measurably since the destruction of the Old Brewery and crime is still rampant. Oddly enough, none of the missionaries that work at this mission have fallen prey to crime or been corrupted by the surroundings. Many have retired from it early in life, however, which should show how draining this particular mission work is. Despite all their best efforts, the spectre of the Old Brewery still hangs over the Five Points like a pall.

*Source: The Encyclopedia of Modern Crime by Carl Sifakis. Smithmark Publishing.*



# A GUIDE TO GOTHIC BOMA

## COLONIAL HYPOCRISY IN NORTHERN AFRICA

by Eric "e" Blaine

tomatodoh@aol.com

### HISTORY

**B**oma, also called Lombi and Embomma, is the capital of the Belgium Free State, the enormous colonial possession belonging wholly to King Leopold II of Belgium.

Founded in the early 19th century as a Portuguese trading post, Boma lies some 60 miles from the estuary of the Congo River, along the northern shore. For many years, Boma's European population consisted of less than a score of hardy and disreputable soldiers-of-fortune, who, in addition to trading mundane items like ivory and foodstuffs, dealt in the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. Of course, no civilized nation participates in such wretchedness in the 1890s; indeed, the enlightened nations of Europe lead the struggle against the scourge of the Afro-Arabian slave-traders who afflict the Western coast of the Dark Continent.

The small city was the staging point for the few ill-fated attempts to explore the interior of Africa. However, nearly impassable terrain and raging cataracts, combined with virulent diseases and the tropical heat cut such expeditions short. Until very recently, the interior of central Africa remained a mystery to the rest of the world.

Boma became famous, however, not for sending forth an explorer but by lending aid to one. Henry Morton Stanley (of Dr. Livingstone fame) was making his way westward from Zanzibar in search of the headwaters of the Nile. Instead of locating the origin of that mighty river, his company of three rather useless white men and several dozen African porters came upon the Congo. Traversing along its course through rapids, waterfalls, thick and dangerous jungle, and hostile natives, the expedition would certainly have perished had not four of his porters managed to reach the city of Boma in time. Help arrived when all seemed

lost, and Stanley survived to publish his account of the journey down the Congo River.

Meanwhile, interest in Africa was growing in Europe, thanks to the exploits of those like Livingstone and Stanley. The charitable Leopold II, King of the Belgians, served as head of two philanthropic exploration societies. Leopold proceeded to make the Congo his special interest, sending missionaries and traders who would, in addition to supplying Europe with much desired ivory and hardwoods, help to elevate the primitive Africans out of their poverty.

Boma has since served as the capital of this expansive colony, which soon included a territory fully seventy-six times as large as Belgium. As the 1890s began, the city could boast a small-gauge trolley, a hospital (for Europeans only), a post office (for Europeans only), a Roman Catholic church constructed of iron, a comfortable hotel (for Europeans only), a military barracks, and numerous government buildings. A population of a little less than one hundred white men (very few white women share Africa with them) and some five times that number of Africans reside within the city. The governor-general lives within a bona fide Victorian mansion, which through its very existence helps to bring civilization to this savage land.

Further up the river, chartered trading-firms manage river stations that conduct commerce with the natives. These are only nominally under the authority of the governor-general, but that is of little concern. After all, the whole world knows that the benevolent King Leopold would never place unworthy men in positions of responsibility. In 1890, a black American named George Washington Williams published his Open Letter To King Leopold, listing all manner of wrongdoings. However, given the good name of the King, most right-thinking Europeans and Americans find it very easy to ignore these scurrilous accusations.

## FORBIDDEN LORE

The great evil of Boma is not some supernatural creature, but rather the inhuman cruelty that only human beings are capable of. Every offence that Williams lists is utterly and completely true; indeed, if anything, his letter fails to encompass all the evil he found there. Leopold is no philanthropist; he sees the Congo as nothing more than a source of riches for his personal control. The colonial military police, the Force Publique, is composed of mercenaries scraped together from the lowest pits of Europe and their African conscripts. The depravities these criminals committed against the often-helpless population of the Congo read like a handbook for damnation.

Firstly, each officer and government official carries with him a *chicotte*, a whip made of wound hippopotamus hide. This instrument leaves permanent, and very painful, scars. Over seventy-five lashes can prove fatal—punishments often proceed as high as one hundred and twenty lashes, and are dispensed for whatever reason an officer may deem worthy. There is no rule of law within the Congo.

The trading companies, with the aid of the Force Publique, will often take hostages from recalcitrant villages, demanding unrealistic amounts of ivory or, later in the century, wild rubber. When a village cannot provide the ransom, it is very often burned to the ground.

The white Force Publique officers fancy themselves as big-game hunters, and frequently kill any large animal they encounter for the sport of it (and since they carry high-powered rifles, this provides very little sport). Lions, deer, chimpanzees, elephants, all were slaughtered under the gun sights of the white men.

Slavery was practiced from the very beginning of the Congo Free State. Henry Morton Stanley's porters were not the happy volunteers featured in his two-volume account, but rather impressed labor. Stanley himself treated Africans with the cruelty of a sadist who only discovered his bloodlust late in life, though to Europe he was a civilizing friend to the Dark Continent. Indeed, some of the missionaries who had come to the Congo, who were supposed to be full of Christian charity, used slave labor. The Force Publique officers used slavery as a matter of course.

The greatest cruelty of the Congo, for which it will soon be made infamous, were the mutilations. Each African soldier had to account for every rifle cartridge he expended while on duty, to ensure that he was not wasting them on hunting (or worse, saving them for mutiny.) Thus, for every used cartridge, a soldier had to bring to his officer the right hand of his victim. Of course, since it is impossible to kill someone with every rifle-shot one takes, these soldiers often cut off the right

hands of innocent bystanders to fill in their deficient count. Due to this, handless Africans will populate whole villages.

Many prominent persons were to view these obscenities. Several genuinely earnest missionaries denounce the atrocities every chance they receive. What the young Joseph Conrad saw there was forever captured in his seminal novella, *Heart of Darkness*. Sir Roger Casement, a consul of the British Foreign Office, helped to stir official British condemnation of the Free State. The American missionary William H. Sheppard, a black man, worked to bring both his faith to the natives of the Congo and to expand the rest of the world's knowledge of their history and plight. In 1897 or 1898, a British shipping clerk working in Antwerp named E.D. Morel deduced what was occurring, and soon founded a society with chapters all over the world to protest against the Free State. Alas, the evil of the Free State proceeds unabated.

Two Force Publique officers in particular deserve condemnation. Leon Rom and Guillaume Van Kerckhoven are a pair of utterly revolting examples of humanity; often they would adorn their bungalows with the severed heads of innocent Africans. Each maintains a harem of chained concubines, and each does not hesitate to beat even children with the *chicotte*. It may be that Joseph Conrad modeled his "Mister Kurtz" on these two degenerates.

Of course, there do exist supernatural terrors in this ancient land. Legends tell of ruthless lizardmen that lurk within the swamps of the river basin—creatures that eat human beings alive. Others whisper of horrid greenhags, of serpents with human heads, and men that can assume the forms of animals. Still, there is no doubt that the greatest iniquity stems from the colonial officials and their otherworldly avarice.

## ADVENTURE IDEAS

There are many ways to get the characters involved in the Congo Free State. If they have established a reputation for dealing with the supernatural, they may be approached by the Belgian colonial staff to resolve some matter or another on their behalf. Perhaps the lizardmen have begun to rampage across the waterways, slowing the traffic of ivory and rubber, or perhaps some manner of lycanthrope has been sighted around Boma. Once in the Congo, the characters may have a chance to meet with one of the famous persons who made their names there, like Joseph Conrad and William H. Sheppard. No doubt they will come to see that the evil they have journeyed to confront pales in comparison to the evil of Leon Rom, Guillaume Van Kerckhoven, and other colonial overlords. Liberating enslaved porters and exacting justice upon the Force

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: GOTHIC EARTH PLACES

Publique would certainly prove to be a rousing adventure.

If one is less inclined to plunge into such realistic horror, there exist broad tracks of Congo forest that remain unknown to most of the world. Sent to discover the truth of rumors of ancient ruins, lost civilizations, prehistoric beasts and the like could certainly provide much excitement for enterprising PCs. Before too long, though, the true nature of the Free State should be made clear: no animal or monster is capable of the same evil as can human beings.

Another option would be for the characters to adventure in cosmopolitan Belgium and come across evidence of the barbarity of that nation's colony. Perhaps through working with E.D. Morel, perhaps while providing a service for King Leopold II or Henry M. Stanley, they come across a shipment of many thousands of leg-manacles or official reference to slave labor. This option provides the characters with an opportunity to strike at the financial institutions of the greedy Leopold, and offers an excellent way into adventures in the Congo. As bad as they thought it was, the PCs will soon discover that conditions of the Free State are beyond their imagining.

For further reading on the Congo Free State, read Adam Hochschild's informative and horrifying book "King Leopold's Ghost," published in 1998 by the Houghton Mifflin Company of New York and Boston. ISBN: 0-395-75924-2.





# SCILLY

## THE END OF THE WORLD IS JUST AHEAD

by Luiz Eduardo Neves Peret  
[rakshasa2001@hotmail.com](mailto:rakshasa2001@hotmail.com)



ometimes the unknown is not as far away as one might expect - or hope. In a world of shadows and mists, there are mysterious and deadly places just around the corner. This is the case of a small group of islands a few miles southwest of England.

The islands of Scilly are little more than a submerged mountain chain, surrounded by deadly coral ridges and banks of sand. In the ancient days, people who lived in the south part of England and challenged the seas fishing or exploring, avoided the area for they believed that the islands marked the last portion of land before the End of the World. There, the sea supposedly ran into gargantuan falls and from where no man could have any hope of ever coming back. They were not that far from the truth.

The islands are the southernmost pieces of land still belonging to the British archipelago, standing watch over the western side of the Channel. They share a unique geography and fauna, as the warm waters of the Mexican Gulf current, far to the southwest, bathe them continuously, bringing along several warm-water species of animals and algae. They are the only subtropical islands within British territory, and that warmer climate usually shocks with the colder winds coming from the north, causing terrible storms and high waves dangerously close to the land. These sudden changes in the local weather, coupled with sharp reefs around the whole extension of the islands and surrounding rocks, have been the reason for uncountable deadly accidents.

One of the most famous tragedies occurred in 1707, when the Royal Navy lost several ships to the ridges and gales. Hundreds of men died there, and the survivors came back feverishly babbling tales of strange songs echoing in the storm, sea monsters among the high waves, and ghost ships coming from the deep to raid.

Only a few people dared colonize those islands, growing crops on the irregular soil and herding sheep. Among them, tales and legends quickly spread of moaning sounds at night and flocks of sea birds that flew over the reef, their screeches and cries sounding like human screams of pain and sorrow.

Treasure seekers constantly visit the islands, looking for the resting places of pirate and merchant ships that crashed on the rocks and reefs. The warm, salty waters and the voracious animal life make sure that little organic matter is left behind from sunk ships. Just a couple of years after such an accident, it is difficult to find any wood left in the remains. Most corpses have turned into skeletons with ripped and torn clothes. The coral rapidly covers all ships and gear, and many look like natural rocky formations after a matter of years. Unfortunately for many adventurers who come treasure hunting, accidents are as common as they were a hundred years ago, and it is not uncommon for a boat that comes after wreckage to become part of it.

Among the most notable specimens found in the sea around the islands are multicolored jellyfish, which are common in the Caribbean and usually visit the area by the hundreds. Several schools of subtropical and tropical fish come regularly, as well as the various types of sharks that hunt them. This only adds to the danger that awaits those stalwart adventurers who do not watch their backs carefully.

As with all shipwreck areas, the Islands of Scilly have their own share of legends and fisherman tales. Stories of beautiful, phantasmal songs heard at night, strange lights shining inside thick fog banks, and phantasmal images of old ships moving through fearsome storms are quite common throughout the area and are known to sailors all over the British Isles.

Fishermen from south England avoid the place, even though there are lots of fish in the area. The inhabitants of the islands have lived here long enough that they seem undisturbed by any apparition. If they help spread the tales of hauntings and sea monsters, it might be either because they do not want too many people coming to bother their simple lives, or simply because that is the tradition among all seaside communities.

## FORBIDDEN LORE

There is a lot more to the islands of Scilly than most people can hope to know or understand. The islands

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: GOTHIC EARTH PLACES

were believed to be cursed since the ancient times, as they supposedly marked the end of the known world, even for the brave sailors who dared cross the ocean. Originally, a small school of sirens inhabited the farther, more isolated rock formations south of the larger islands. For centuries, they grew weary of the constantly increasing human explorations in the area (from early Phoenicians to Vikings, Celts and Romans), and used their magical songs and spell-like abilities in an attempt to drive off all ships, or sink them outright if they came too near their lair.

They were successful in the ancient times, being responsible for the first legends of sea monsters and charming songs that drove sailors to their underwater tombs. After the first contacts between humans and sirens, the Red Death noticed the presence of such creatures and began a slow process of corruption. Being part of the local environment and bound to the local waters, the sirens did not perceive the danger until it was too late. Their need for privacy, away from prying human eyes, turned into malicious delight in spreading death and suffering.

As human travel by sea developed, though, it became increasingly more difficult for the sirens to keep mankind away from their territory, even considering the already difficult natural weather and geographic conditions. Contaminated by the Red Death's influence, the sirens used the tools men had given them: they started to summon the spirits of the deceased sailors they had lured to death. Those restless spirits, whose corpses had been utterly destroyed by time and the sea, became bowlyns. The newer ships that were still in relative good shape and contained fresher corpses, especially pirate ships or treasure hunters, were cursed to become ghost ships, with crews of jolly rogers and sea zombies. Fortunately, such horrific vessels could only come out of the deep during the most violent storms, and then only at between sunset and sunrise.

In several historical events, the sirens and their servant undead were at least partially responsible for failed invasions against the British archipelago. They tore apart a fraction of the Spanish "Invincible Fleet" sent by King Phillip II, as apparently some of the British sea captains knew how to appease the local monsters, or how to avoid the lure of the sirens and other dangers of the waters around Scilly. The Royal Navy used this knowledge to their advantage when their enemies came close to England through the south passage, letting them crash and sink near the cursed islands and only then approaching to end the menace.

In 1707, however, when a large portion of the Royal Navy crossed the area, the sirens decided to end the human intrusions to their sanctuary once and for all. In the middle of a scary gale like no one before, a small force of ghost ships came forth from underwater and attacked the war vessels. Despite the surprise and

horror of the scene, the sailors fought bravely for their lives, taking several monsters with them to the bottom of the sea. Those daring soldiers were free from the sirens' charming and commanding powers, and their bodies could not be reanimated later as undead. At the same time, though, the storm and the sharp ridges sank most of the remaining ships, taking many lives at once.

The British sailors were very religious and several of them, knowing that there was an evil, supernatural conscience living in those waters, collectively cursed the perpetrators of their doom with their last breaths. While isolated last words were little more than screams of pain and rage, many were actually praying that a superior force might take care of the unknown monsters that were taking their lives. All those combined faithful prayers and brave cursing words were not enough to destroy the sirens, but at least were effective in lowering their powers. When the evil creatures had taken the shapes of seagulls in order to watch closely the deeds of their minions and savor the pain and suffering of their victims, they found out that they were unable to return to their natural shapes. In addition, they lost the control over the undead they had summoned. From that time on, a flock of seagulls kept watch over the coral reefs, their cries a mocking resemblance of their once beautiful voices. The remaining undead also stayed in the area, mindless and uncontrolled, still attacking any ship that approaches their lairs.

In the 1890s, the islands of Scilly are still considered dangerous to navigation. Most ships prefer the southeastern passage to the European coast, or go north of the islands when heading west. With the development of the naval industry, however, it is more difficult than before to stay away from the area. In the near future, with the upcoming World War and the possibility of new sea invasions against England, nobody knows what might happen. So far, air travel above the islands has little to fear besides the bad weather, but it is unwise to take chances. Even reduced to seagull shape, the evil sirens still hold some power over the region, and ghost ships can be quite unpredictable.

☠

# A GUIDE TO GOTHIC VLADIVOSTOK

## HORROR IN THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE

by Eric "e" Blaine  
tomafodoh@aol.com

### HISTORY



ladivostok, the capital of the Primorsky region, is about as far as one can get from Saint Petersburg and still be in the Russian empire. Meaning "Rule the east."

Vladivostok was founded in 1860 as Russian traders forged eastward through the vast expanses of Siberian hinterland. Its buildings hung around Golden Horn Bay like a string of weathered pearls, Vladivostok serves as Russia as its great harbor onto the Pacific ocean.

Little more than a minor trading post in those early days, Vladivostok grew into prominence once it was established as the base for the Russian naval squadron in 1872. Soon after, in 1880, it was awarded city-status.

What strikes travelers who are familiar with the rest of Russia is the over-all pleasantness of conditions in the city. Those Russians living in Siberia are generally better off and more contented than their European fellows, and those who live in the far east are better off than their Siberian fellows. Although there still exists social stratification, this is neither as insidious nor as oppressive as in Smolensk or Moscow. While all land in Siberia technically belongs personally to the Czar, there is usually no official interference should a settler want to build a homestead or establish a shop in or around the city. Such social mobility is almost unheard of in European Russia, and allows many to build their own homes who otherwise would be unable to.

Vladivostok can boast a museum, an electric cable-car station, a number of restaurants, a theatre, and a small university dedicated to the study of the east. In the center of town stands a monument to Admiral Nevelski which bears the words of the reigning Czar Nicholas I, "Wherever the Russian flag has once been raised, never must it be lowered."

The lands around Vladivostok grow all manner of plant life. In addition to the forests for which the region is famous, there are fields of millet, tobacco, and soybeans. The winter months are long and, while snowless, biting cold. The summer months can be numbingly humid, though spring and fall are frequently and majestically beautiful.

Unlike the colonial experiences of most indigenous populations, the local Chinese, Manchurian and Mongolian peoples of the surrounding areas actually welcomed Russian rule. The Russians themselves, regarded as semi-barbaric in the west, genuinely serve as a civilizing influence in Manchuria (into which Russia is expanding) by driving out bandit gangs that have afflicted the area for years, and by bringing economic improvements that effect all levels of society. While still falling into abusive behaviors at time, local officials could generally be counted on to treat peoples of all populations equitably.

In 1891, construction began on the great Trans-Siberian Railway, which will connect the millions of European Russia with the far-flung provinces, to be terminated in Vladivostok. This can only help to bolster the already expanding local economy, which does quite well trading Chinese pottery, Manchurian horses, Russian manufactured goods, and the cargos of European and American merchantmen. Vladivostok is a city on the rise in the 1890s.

### FORBIDDEN LORE

If the city of Vladivostok is anything, it is a place where many cultures meet and mingle. Aside from the great empires of China and Russia, many Koreans, Manchurians, and Japanese reside here. Traders from Germany, Portugal, America and Chile, among others, frequent the port. And wherever the peoples of the

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: GOTHIC EARTH PLACES

world gather, the horrors of the Red Death will worm their way amidst them.

However, Vladivostok is not without its protectors. A small but growing union of those acquainted with the supernatural has formed here; called the Hundred Hand Society, it is reputed to be nothing more than a small-time smuggling racket. Official communication from Vladivostok to Saint Petersburg speak of the Society thusly, so aside from some additional police inspectors, there has been no interference from imperial officialdom.

The Society is based in the library of the Oriental Institute, which, in addition to offering books on languages, geography and the sciences, possesses an expansive collection of folklore writings. Combining the centuries-old knowledge of Russia, China, Japan, Korea, Manchuria, and other lands, the library offers the Society the knowledge needed to do battle with creatures of the night. Those rumored to lead the “smugglers,” the retired Cossack General Zhavov, the Chinese pharmacist Dr. Kang, and a Japanese tobacconist named Madame Todo are often seen holding secretive conferences. Perhaps it is these three who marshal the Hundred Hand Society in its secretive struggle. In addition to the ruling triumvirate, as many as a dozen and a half can claim membership of the Society, helping to make Vladivostok one of the safest cities of Gothic Earth. The sharing of the occult knowledge of the many local cultures, and the bravery of its protectors, serves as a model of how through cooperation humanity may combat that greatest of evils.

The surrounding countryside, however, has no such protection. Siberian werewolves, drawn eastward by the increasing prosperity of the region, have followed more mundane Russians. The silver mines of the mountains have experienced an alarming spurt of accidents and animal attacks, as the werewolves seek to cut off the local source of the dangerous metal lest it be used against them.

Explorers and traders occasionally manage to find their way into town, ranting strangely about Korean burial mounds whose inhabitants are not truly dead. These wights have apparently become more active of late, ranging farther afield and carrying medieval implements of war. Legends tell of an ancient and cruel Choson king who demanded that his most powerful warriors follow him into death. It is possible that this long-deceased king now serves as the master of the wights, enacting some hateful mission upon the earth?

The Great Wall of China, said to be the world’s largest cemetery, is not too distant from Vladivostok. The many ghosts and spectres that haunt the area sometimes roam far from there, and at least one has been drawn to Vladivostok. Perhaps the increased interest of the living in the region, as Russian prospectors and surveyors travel thereabouts, offer

impetus to the troubled spirits to endanger those who yet draw breath.

Siberia is a land of vast wilderness, and one story which has begun to circulate among its people is that of the God-Bear. A creature of great power and inhuman savagery, most discount it as merely a legend of the ignorant local peoples. Still, the famous Russian zoologist Dr. Gregor Danilov hypothesized that the God-Bear may be a surviving member of a prehistoric and previously considered extinct species. His expedition in 1893 to the Kamchatka peninsula never returned to Vladivostok.

Vladivostok is a meeting place of not only peoples, but also the land and the ocean. Many of the merchant ships that frequent the great port have reported strange things on the high seas, things that no rational mind can quickly explain. In 1898, the steamer Motherland, returning to Vladivostok after completing a voyage to Hawai’i, was attacked by what the terrified crew called a monstrously sized octopus. The Ann-Marie, a merchantman out of San Francisco, witnessed the Motherland splitting directly in half, although it was too far away to discern the cause. The fact that each of the eight survivors whom the Ann-Marie managed to pull from the waters claimed to have seen the same creature, and that the Motherland had a reputation for being in good repair, lends credence to the fears that some titanic sea-monster patrols the waters around the city.

✠

JESSE AVILÉS

SAN BARTOLOMÆ

*No comment.*

[monk@coqui.net](mailto:monk@coqui.net)

ERIC "E" BLAINE

LEOPOLD OF AUSTRIA

A GUIDE TO GOTHIC VLADIVOSTOK

A GUIDE TO GOTHIC BOMA

To Matt, Eric, and Adam, Kirsten, college classes that leave me enough time and the inclination to read historical non-fiction for fun, and the greenery of our beloved Vermont.

[TomatoDoH@aol.com](mailto:TomatoDoH@aol.com)

SCOTT C. BOURGEOIS

THE JACOB GARVIN SCARECROW

I struggled for days trying to come up with a suitable submission for the Book of Shadows, and finally found a good idea while flipping through the *VRMHC Vol. 2: A Straw Golem*. No good example of such a creature existed, and this was my chance to make a contribution to my beloved Demiplane of Dread! Alas, I didn't make the deadline and the Jacob Garvin Scarecrow headed for the vast recesses of my C: drive for many months.

When *The Book of Sacrifices* began accepting contributions, I quickly re-submitted it. Lo and behold, it seems I have indeed created a creature worthy of Ravenloft. Now that I have given life to a Straw Golem... perhaps Glass or a Doll next time, yes? Mwehehe...

[black\\_marauder@hotmail.com](mailto:black_marauder@hotmail.com)

EDDY BRENNAN

UPIR LICHY

*No comment.*

[demongod@elhazard.net](mailto:demongod@elhazard.net)

ANDREW CERMAK

KARGATANE

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank John W. Mangrum and Joe Bardales for the numerous sacrifices each has made over the past few years in order to keep Ravenloft alive, and to wish each of them unqualified success in all their future endeavors. I'd also like to thank each and every fan who has made a monetary sacrifice and brought the latest incarnation of Ravenloft home with them; your support is appreciated more than you can know.

[cermak@kargatane.com](mailto:cermak@kargatane.com)

ERIC DASHEN

PHANTOM CARCASS

Known as Malcolm Harrison to the Taveners, Eric would like to thank his brother-in-law for introducing him to the world of D&D and Ravenloft. Eric is currently running a Ravenloft campaign and trying to pull together a website. Presently, he is slaving away in college, attempting to obtain a Theater Management degree.

[stagemanager27@hotmail.com](mailto:stagemanager27@hotmail.com)

DION FERNANDEZ

IGID RABI-I ☠ THE ASWANG

Creating Igid Rabi-i was lots of fun, especially since my inspiration came from listening to Vangelis's "Conquest of Paradise."

First of all, thanks to Ryan Naylor for letting me borrow some of his ideas about the Holy Empire (which reminds me—Ravenloft needs a Spanish Core domain, but that's just me talking).

The usual thanks to the people I mentioned last netbook, but I give special consideration to Cristina Gallardo, Russel Mendoza and Freeda Veluz. Thanks for accepting my invitation to enter this world.

And, yes, to Midge, my one and only Ivana Boritsi.

Luv ya. :)

[souragne@putanginamo.com](mailto:souragne@putanginamo.com)

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: CREDITS

### MARK "MORTAVIUS" GRAYDON

#### AVATAR OF THE WOLF GOD

I'd like to thank everyone who helped me with this article over the past two years. You know who you are. I'd also like to thank my editor, Tyner, who probably greatly increased my chances of having this article accepted. And finally, a big thanks to all the Kargatane for their continued work on Ravenloft, and without whom this book (and thereby my article) would probably not be present.

[Mortavius@cnx.net](mailto:Mortavius@cnx.net)

### ANDREW HACKARD

#### KARGATANE

In addition to echoing the great dedication at the start of the *Book of Sacrifices*, I would like to thank all the great fans who have supported the Kargatane for the past half decade (yikes!), the good friends who pushed me to take what has turned into a dream job at Steve Jackson Games, and most especially Andrew Cermak, John Mangrum, and Andrew Wyatt, for finally doing a Ravenloft campaign setting *right*.

[Andrew@kargatane.com](mailto:Andrew@kargatane.com)

### JAMES HARDIE

#### KNIFE OF THE GHOUL

This article is dedicated to the survivors of the incident at the barbeque. Now if you'll just let me out of this straight jacket I promise I won't touch that strange knife again

[confiscator@hotmail.com](mailto:confiscator@hotmail.com)

### ANDREW HAUPTMAN

#### THE HEAD HUNTER

I owe the inspiration for this fiendish serial killer to the classic Expert D&D module "Caster Amber," which introduced the brain collector to the D&D universe, and to the Kargatane, who have sponsored the *Children of the Night: Demons* netbook. This was my second submission for that book, but they wanted the first one instead. Here it is (finally) in all its slimy, bulbous glory!

[Quistar@aol.com](mailto:Quistar@aol.com)

### ERIC JEAN

#### VALERI ANTONIN

The author would like to thank Jason Ambrus and Kurt Wilson, his fellow players, and their legion Ravenloft avatars for their companionship in the Land of Mists.

The author would also like to thank Julien Smith for breathing life into the Mists themselves and providing the crucial DM information without which this article could not have been written. The author also would like to thank the Kargatane for providing him with the opportunity to take part in the development of the Ravenloft Campaign Setting.

Ever since the dark ages of the Black Box, the author has walked the Mists. One day he plans to heed the lure of the Dark Powers and step beyond the DM screen to at last make his own domain of Ravenloft."

[barbarossabrandy@hotmail.com](mailto:barbarossabrandy@hotmail.com)

### JALEIGH JOHNSON

#### TREASURES OF THE DEEP

I wanted to use a sea elf...somehow. That's about all I knew, and, eventually, "Treasures of the Deep" came forth, though not without a lot of mental tugging, twisting, and reeling in to get it done. My thanks to the Kargatane for accepting it and for their continued hard work and support of Ravenloft.

[jaleigh@atwood-il.com](mailto:jaleigh@atwood-il.com)

## M.T. KELLY

### THE OLD BREWERY

After reading much of the material for Masque I felt that more than anything, there were severe gaps with regard to the true horrors of the time period in America, those of crime. I see no referrals to the grassroots terrorism of the Ku Klux Klan or the savage street gangs which gave rise to the organized crime syndicates during Prohibition and survive to this day. Along with this article, I would like to issue a challenge to every contributor to this website: do the research. Learn about the crimes being committed during this time period and the crimes that would have been remembered by the criminals of the area. There are literally thousands of crimes which the Red Death could not help but notice during this time period. Most of them are terrifyingly violent. Many aren't even recorded as crimes. You'll find vampires and werebeasts terribly tame in comparison. Begin with the sources I listed if you need a starting place, and go from there. You will find America a place every bit as terrifying as any old European castle. I know I did.

[Mark7269@aol.com](mailto:Mark7269@aol.com)

## STEFAN MAC

### DR. HENRY MASHAM ☠ URBURD

Dr. Masham is dedicated to all of us who strive to make the world better, even at risk to ourselves. He is also dedicated to those who allow themselves to be misguided in the search for betterment. That being said, may the Kargatane continue to keep Ravenloft's darkness in all of our lives. The Urburd is inspired by various Scandinavian legends of abandoned children, and is one of the few things that has ever given me nightmares.

[mac\\_cosfilow@hotmail.com](mailto:mac_cosfilow@hotmail.com)

## MATTHEW L. MARTIN

### THE ILLITHID GOD-BRAIN

This idea for the Illithid God-Brain has been bouncing around my head for a few years now, but I never got around to writing it up until this autumn. Here's hoping this article helps add a Gothic touch to one of Ravenloft's most enigmatic domain lords.

Special thanks to John Mangrum, who's come up with many of his own ideas of Bluetspur that were incorporated into the article, and who's always willing to put up with a pesky fanboy. :-)

[m1marfin97@aol.com](mailto:m1marfin97@aol.com)

## CHRISTOPHER MILES

### THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO

Christopher Miles is the real-life manifestation of an on-line entity known as Morgantino Slimecat. He would like to thank the Kargatane for accepting the various sacrificial offerings he has made in recent weeks, and trusts that the toenail clippings and jars of phlegm are being put to good use. Christopher would also like to thank the ghost of Alexandre Dumas for his assistance with this article, but hopes he'll go away now that it's finished because he keeps dripping ectoplasm everywhere and won't help with the housework. Long live Ravenloft and MOTRD!

[morganfino.slimecat@roystonvasey.co.uk](mailto:morganfino.slimecat@roystonvasey.co.uk)

ALEX MIRANDA

THE LOVE-TORN GHOST & TANYA

I'd like to thank Linda Lobo for sparking the idea for the ghost. The house is as I pictured it the moment she told me her story: a ghost of ambiguous intentions atop a staircase; her great desire to climb the stairs, and the fear that she might be hurt once there. Also, my gratitude to Ryan Naylor and Stefan MAC who helped me in polishing the text. Finally, a big thanks to everyone in the MGNB for their creative ideas and all they taught me about Ravenloft.

Tanya came out unexpectedly. I was rewriting the background behind the idea of an obsessive ghost and the vengeance story kind of unfolded itself. It was at the last moment, when the article was completed, that I thought it worthwhile of the *BoS*. And here it is. On another tackle, let me just say that I don't view Vistani as evil. For me, they are always the absolute most of Neutrality. Of course, there is selfishness and evilness in neutrality sometimes, and thus Zulmira can appear to be quite cold-hearted and evil-minded. But if only the well being of her people interests her, it seems fitting that all the others be just tools... and that their fate doesn't matter more than the nails nailed to the coffin. I'd like to thank the authors of the Guides to Ghosts and Vistani for having written those books. They have greatly helped me in writing this article.

[alxpinfo@netscape.net](mailto:alxpinfo@netscape.net)

RYAN NAYLOR

THE JACKAL WHO WOULD NOT BE A  
COWARD

FELAURAGOTH & NOISES IN THE NIGHT

JORHLAN RAYTOR

KARGATANE

This year, I would like to thank the rest of the Kargatane for giving me the opportunity to work with them on this book and the other projects I've managed to foul up over the past few months. I would also like to recognize James, Nick, Aaron and Ryan for being great friends—without you, Felauragoth would never have got off the ground. Finally, I'd like to thank all those people who were forced to read my articles and find my mistakes.

For those who care: Felauragoth comes from my own campaign, although this version has been heavily altered to include the coolest mad witch in Ravenloft.

Jack Karn was inspired by a David Attenborough documentary, *State of the Planet*, and subconsciously by a host of other famous RL characters. And Jorhlan is the type of person I suspect that I'd be if I were as nice as I'd like to be.

[Schadenfreudel3@hotmail.com](mailto:Schadenfreudel3@hotmail.com)

CHRIS D. NICHOLS

CREEPING DOOMS

KARGATANE

Chris would like to thanks the Kargatane and Kargatane alumni for their continual support. It's been an honor and a privilege to be able to work with you once again.

[chrisnicls@hotmail.com](mailto:chrisnicls@hotmail.com)



## NATHAN OKERLUND

SAARKAATH ☠ ISLE OF RAVENS

LARS KERSKMAN ☠ CUMBRE DE ORO

MARCOS VEDARRAK

Lars Kerskman was inspired largely by the episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* in which a crew member de-evolves into a spider; it occurred to me after I wrote the article that if Spider-Man had been written as a gothic novel instead of a comic book, Peter Parker might have looked something like this. I'm also happy to bring back Vjorn Horstman, however briefly; he remains one of my favorite Ravenloft NPCs, and I'm always eager to give a good villain a little more screen time.

Cumbre de Oro represents my attempt to bring the legends of Eldorado to Ravenloft; I hope you enjoy the result. Particular thanks on this article go to Ryan Naylor of the Kargatane for allowing me to merge this domain with his excellent creation, Mictlan. The tropics of Ravenloft are growing...

Saarkaath is my attempt to resolve the question, "Can orcs and Ravenloft be reconciled?" The result may be slightly deformed and of uncertain ancestry—not unlike a native of Saarkaath—but is, I hope, worthy of a place in the Mists. Thanks to the Kargatane, especially Stu for his patient responses to impertinent questions, and to J.R.R. Tolkien, for inventing orcs in the first place.

The Lady of Ravens is based principally on Fuchsia Groan, from Mervyn Peake's *Gormenghast Trilogy*, with hints of Circe and Prospero (from *The Tempest*) mixed in for good measure. And, of course, no article involving ravens could be complete without a nod to Edgar Allen Poe—did you catch it? Thanks also go to the Kargatane for letting me bring a little more depth to one of the most enigmatic domain lords of Domains of Dread.

[sealionii@hotmail.com](mailto:sealionii@hotmail.com)

## JOËL PAQUIN

THE MORTS-QUI-DANCENT

I have two descendants so far. Thomas, 9, just started a promising D&D career (no, not in Ravenloft, not yet... I started softly \*grin\*). He invents monsters in his leisure time at school. I raise him so in the not-so-near-I-hope future, when I'll be senile (I mean more then now), he will teach me the changes between the 5th and the 6th D&D edition. My daughter Rosalie is 7. She convinced her friends that she is a vampire, also tells them horror tales and knows the type of breath weapon of dragons, according to their color.

I dedicate this article to them and to my lovely wife, Marie-Jo, who really has lots of patience with my numerous passions and hobbies. Then I want to thank the Kargatane for keeping Ravenloft alive. Well, I mean undead.

Oh? Me? I am playing D&D since, well, way too long (20 years this year...). And I'm a Ravenloft fan since the infamous "black box" release. During the day, I work in an gloomy Montréal downtown office domain, where the darklord is mad and really tormented, believe me.

[jopekin@hotmail.com](mailto:jopekin@hotmail.com)

## C.M. PARKER

THE ANATOMIST

First I want to thank the creators of the original Anatomist kit from second edition, their wonderful work inspired this class. In addition I want to thank my friends, Marion Carpenter and Janis Williams (for listening to my ideas and giving feedback), Joel Fischhoff (for recruiting Alan), and Alan Friedlander (for testplaying of the class), And to all my other players, without whom I would never get a chance to put my ideas to work. Thanks guys!

[Saraphim43@hotmail.com](mailto:Saraphim43@hotmail.com)

## BOOK OF SACRIFICES: CREDITS

LUIZ EDUARDO NEVES

PERET

ADDAR ☠ DIONYSUS AND CYZANNEA

SWEET BAY VILLAGE ☠ SCILLY

ARCHANGEL AND YABA

I would like to dedicate “The Archangel and the Yaba” to all African-Americans of North, Central and South America, those brave people who were dragged away from their homes and sold as slaves, helped built several free nations in a strange new world and still stick to their ancient traditions. May the Orixás always smile upon their children!

The sea has always fascinated me, at the same time beautiful in colors and sounds, overwhelming in its size, and deadly and terrifying. Scilly is only one of its numerous misterious places. I hope you enjoy visiting there someday!

I cannot express how happy I am to see the Twin Demons in the *Book of Sacrifices*! I would like to thank the Kargatane for this unique opportunity and also to thank John W. Mangrum for his supporting, kind words when this submission, originally designed for the *CotN: Demons* project, was turned down. If not for his compliments on my idea at that time, I might have never developed that into this article! I only hope you all enjoy using them as much as I have enjoyed creating them!

[rakshasa2001@hotmail.com](mailto:rakshasa2001@hotmail.com)

BLAIR PERROW

THE ZAPANGO SOCIETY

*No comment.*

[bperrow70@hotmail.com](mailto:bperrow70@hotmail.com)

ALEXEI PODGOUZOV

BLACKER&S AUTOMATIC HEAD

I am deeply grateful for the Kargatane for having chosen my article to be part of the latest *Book of S\_*. Today, I'm more excited than ever to see this netbook come out, and even moreso by the long-awaited event—the coming of Ravenloft into 3rd edition! Long live the Land of the Mists!

I would also like to express my fondest sympathy and gratitude to the dearly-departed Eeve Beiderbecke, one of the best and most beloved fans of Ravenloft. Eevee, even though you are no longer among the living, I wish you happiness wherever you might be.

[archloner@hotmail.com](mailto:archloner@hotmail.com)

WES SCHNEIDER

EXECUTIONERS

A nod to the Muses of madness, chaos, and frustration in my life. Here's to a more productive coming year.

[Dendread@home.com](mailto:Dendread@home.com)

STEPHEN C. SUTTON

LOCKNAR COVE

I have always been a fan of the Ravenloft setting and of the Kargatane website. I enjoy looking through the Secrets of the Kargatane when I'm not working on my degree in Biochemistry. I live in Sudbury Ontario, and though there is no mist-shrouded ocean nearby, the cold autumn nights and thick forests helped to inspire Locknar Cove. Anton Dusard, William Copperplate and the crew of The Grasping Claw owe their existence to few Ravenloft Domains, the movie The Goonies and an old Garfield Halloween special. I dedicate Locknar Cove to my parents, both my brothers and Halloween special ever shown on television.

[stephencsutton@hotmail.com](mailto:stephencsutton@hotmail.com)

## BRIAN M. SYLVESTER

### WILLIAM D'AMONTE

I would like to thank all the little voices in my head for their continual support, imagination and helpful advice. This article came to me while listening to a recording of Beethoven's "Für Elise", (which, by the way, is an excellent piece of music for d'Monte to play). Thanks to the kargatane for their interest, and I hope everybody enjoys what will hopefully be the first of many such essays.

[big\\_b\\_0000@yahoo.com](mailto:big_b_0000@yahoo.com)

## STUART TURNER

### MYTHS OF THE MISTS

#### KARGATANE

In my dedication in last year's *Book of Shadows*, I said, "I'm sure we'll all see Ravenloft live into D&D's third incarnation." Well... maybe I had some inside information, but either way it's been a great year for Ravenloft—seeing it back in print again is very exciting, and I hope it will draw more new fans to the setting. Many thanks to those in White Wolf who made the decision to add this little realm of horror to their catalogue.

As always, a big thanks to the rest of the Kargatane for their friendship and continued hard work on the netbooks. This is now my sixth year of being actively involved in the Ravenloft online community, and I'm still enjoying it.

[stu@kargatane.com](mailto:stu@kargatane.com)

## MARTIJN VAN ROOSMALEN

### JACQUES DU ALMOY

Jacques was 'born' when Walter (a player of my group and co-author of the article) became bored with his old character. He wanted a rogue, which wasn't as good-aligned as his old PC had been. He wanted a PC that would live on the edge. So I invented one. I combined two episodes from the X-files into this character. The first one was about a man that saw monsters everywhere, while nobody believed him. The second one was about implants into human bodies. I sketched the situation (and the real background) and Walter fleshed everything out. I use Jacques as a PC, but he could be used as an NPC as well.

I dedicate this article to my PCs, who have to deal with Jacques every day, to the Kargatane for keeping Ravenloft alive, to all other writers in previous netbooks which helped me flesh out Port-a-Lucine and to Marleen, for listening to all my stories about the Domains and supporting me.

[maroosmalen@zonnet.nl](mailto:maroosmalen@zonnet.nl)

## BRANDI WEED

### PRIKAZA

*No comment*

[brandi@dcn.davis.ca.us](mailto:brandi@dcn.davis.ca.us)

## ANDREW WYATT

### FORGOTTEN HORRORS

### MARKOVIAN BROKEN ONE

#### KARGATANE

What a year. There was a time when I doubted that we would ever see a new edition of Ravenloft in print. I certainly *never* suspected that I would be writing it. I hope everyone enjoys the old Lonesome Road monsters and the more "Moreau"-ish incarnation of the broken one. Thanks to my fellow Kargatane, WotC, White Wolf, all the fans, and, of course, my players ("What made you think you could take us?"). Special thanks to my new wife as of October 31st, Elizabeth, who has lived Ravenloft as much as I have this past year, God bless her.

[wyatt@kargatane.com](mailto:wyatt@kargatane.com)